



# Holiday GIFT GUIDE

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# The Carmel Pine Cone

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YOUR SOURCE FOR LOCAL NEWS, ARTS AND OPINION SINCE 1915

## INCORPORATION DECISION DELAYED

By CHRIS COUNTS

FOR THE supporters and opponents of Carmel Valley's incorporation, a hearing this week must have felt like déjà vu all over again.

Two years after the Local Agency Formation Commission voted to require proponents to pay for an expensive environmental impact report — which resulted in an expensive lawsuit that LAFCO lost — the same commission met this week in the same Monterey County Government Building and discussed the same subject: Should residents have an opportunity to vote on Carmel Valley's incorporation?

**After three hours of pros and cons, LAFCO sets another hearing**

After listening to nearly three hours of testimony, the commission voted unanimously to delay making any decision on incorporation until a Dec. 1 hearing. The commissioners said they've been deluged with incorporation paperwork in recent days, and need more time to read everything.

The hearing — like its predecessor two years ago — offered a wide range of commentary, ranging from scathing and accusatory, to lighthearted and downright funny.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the two meetings was the fact that one of the speakers had grown several inches. Carmel Valley resident Emily Robinson, now 15, reminded the commission that she was in the first grade when the incorporation drive began. She urged

See HEARING page 9A

## C.V. attorney walks away from plane crash

■ 'I have a lot to be thankful for,' says Zan Henson

By KELLY NIX



PHOTOS/KELLY NIX

At CHOMP Wednesday morning, Zan Henson was able to smile through the pain of two cracked vertebrae after his 1970 Piper Cherokee crashed the previous evening just short of the runway at Monterey Peninsula Airport.

A RELAXING 10-day vacation in Baja California nearly turned into a tragedy Tuesday night when a Carmel Valley attorney returning home crashed his small plane at the entrance to a Monterey golf course.

Zan Henson was piloting a 1970 Piper Cherokee and was set to land at Monterey Peninsula Airport when all of a sudden, the plane lost power.

"The realization that, 'Oh my God, we have no power, we are going down' ... that was panic," Henson told The Pine Cone Wednesday morning while lying in a bed at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula.

Henson, who was with his best friend, Aptos attorney Jim Rummonds, tried to bring the plane down as safely as he could.

"I had a fleeting hope of landing it on the fairway," Henson said. "I was close."

See CRASH page 9A



## River School neighbor: Parking hazards drove me to complain

By MARY BROWNFIELD

THE MAN who has single-handedly delayed construction of new classrooms at River School came forward and identified himself this week.

Bart Hancock, who lives on Monte Verde, said his reason for complaining to Monterey County planners about proposed improvements on the elementary-school campus is parking, particularly for parents picking up and dropping off their kids.

'Most school days'

Traffic in the neighborhood at the start and end of each school day "jeopardizes the safety of adults and children alike, and impedes the flow of traffic through the area," Hancock said, and people park wherever they can, including in front of his house, which is across the street.

"There is some kind of incident on most school days as we watch the drama unfold in front of our house," he said. "People park in my driveway, blocking my driveway, on my property, double park, park in no-parking zones, by the fire hydrant, on the corners, pretty much anywhere a car will fit. It makes you feel like a prisoner in your own home. You just cannot plan on leaving your house during these periods."

Hancock, who said he is not the only neighbor to complain to the county, reported seeing parents and small children walking in the street because there is no space for them elsewhere, witnessing numerous near

See SCHOOL page 14A

## Ex-cop has unique methods for teaching teen drivers

By MARY BROWNFIELD



PHOTO/MARY BROWNFIELD

RETIRED AFTER three decades as a California Highway Patrol officer — including a stint as the governor's personal driver — Pacific Grove resident Richard Richards is not your average driver's ed teacher.

As an instructor with Drive Carmel, Richards is known to take his work to the next level. Sometimes, he'll reach over and shut the car off as the student is driving, to simulate an emergency. He'll have them pull up alongside CHP cars and talk to officers — many of whom he knows personally. He'll even let students make mistakes, as long as the conditions are safe, so they'll realize their errors and learn from them, and perhaps give up a little of the cockiness that tends to accompany adolescence.

See DRIVER page 10A

## Big Sur gets grant to cut fire-prone oaks

By CHRIS COUNTS

AFTER WATCHING disease-stricken tanbark oak trees light up like Roman candles during last summer's wildfires, Big Sur residents know how dangerous a lifeless tree can be. Thankfully, the task of removing the troublesome trees is not as difficult as you might think — and it turns out the government will help pay for it with tax dollars.

Bob Sayre — a Big Sur resident and vice president of the Monterey Fire Safe Council — has learned that grant money is available for rural residents seeking to remove tanbarks killed by sudden oak death.

A group of residents who live on Partington Ridge, with Sayre's assistance, recently received about \$44,000 from the council to help pay for the removal of at least 58 dead trees. Encouraged by the success of the project, Sayre has organized workshop at the Big Sur Lodge Conference Center for Saturday, Dec. 13, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

According to Sayre, United States Forest Service grants are usually matched with local funds, but the

See OAKS page 31A

Lessons learned while he was a CHP officer make Richard Richards an unusually qualified driving instructor.

From previous page

### Media's 'hypocrisy'

Dear Editor,

Thank you for such a poignant and well articulated editorial (Nov. 21) on the hypocrisy surrounding the media's voice

during this "economic tsunami." I'm afraid many people depend too much on the media as a basis for forming their own opinions. As a result, (pardon the cliché) the mixed messages spread faster than wildfire, as do panic and erratic spending behaviors. In addition, as a member of the media, it sad-

dens me to see the vulnerable public, which relies on us to inform them, be led by scare tactics and contradictory statements ... all just so newspapers and TV stations can get a catchy headline to increase readership or ratings. These same media outlets often make a feature story out of old, and frankly,

boring news by "spinning" it to satisfaction. I long for the days that real news will reemerge in national media. At least we have publications like The Carmel Pine Cone to share the stuff worth reading.

A. Stuart,  
Antioch

## OAKS

From page 1A

agency will accept residents' labor instead. "The granting agency considers a resident's personal labor that is directly applicable to the scope of the grant an 'in-kind' contribution, meaning that no money is involved, and instead hard work and muscle are contributed," Sayre explained.

Because of the fire risk — and because their neighborhood was hit particularly hard by sudden oak death — Sayre said Partington Ridge residents desperately needed help removing dead trees. He called the ridge "the most dangerous place in Big Sur for a fire to start."

Last spring, Partington Ridge residents identified 35 particularly vulnerable trees. They had hoped to remove them during the

summer, but the Basin Complex Fire got in the way.

"The bidding [for a contractor] was to open June 20, but the fire started the next day," Sayre recalled. Suddenly, everybody was too busy to do routine fire maintenance.

Amid the thousands of acres of destruction during the five-week fire, four Partington Ridge homes and one outbuilding were lost during the blaze, as well as several trees marked for removal. After the fire was contained, Sayre asked residents if they still wanted to go through with removing the dead trees the fire had missed. The answer was a resounding, "Yes."

Partington Ridge resident Toby Rowland-Jones, who nearly lost his home in the wild-fire, said his neighborhood is still vulnerable

to another fire, even with the massive burnoff. "It could still be pretty devastating," he said. "There's still a lot of fuel up here."

The winning bid for the project came from Andy Tope of Tope's Tree Service of Carmel Valley. After just a week on the job, Tope and his crew removed 35 trees, many with the aid of an 18-ton crane.

"I was really impressed," Sayre said. "I thought it would take three or four weeks. Some of the trees were 4 feet in diameter."

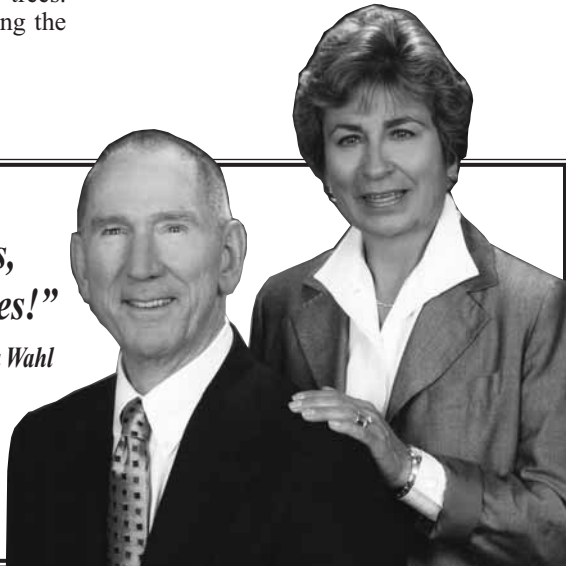
During the next few weeks, Tope and his crew took out 23 more trees, which Sayre described as "absolute monsters." They also removed countless tree limbs along Partington Ridge Road, making it possible for emergency vehicles to access even the most remote homes.

"Our goal was to get our new fire engine up to the top of the road," said Martha Karstens, assistant chief of the Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade.

As an added bonus, the residents stocked up on free firewood. "Our fireplaces will be warm this winter," Rowland-Jones predicted.

Sayre, who lives about four miles north of Partington Ridge, is simply glad the residents took advantage of the grant

opportunity. Now he's hoping more residents do the same. "I want people from Carmel Valley, Carmel Highlands, Cachagua and Palo Colorado Canyon to come to the workshop," he added. "There's a price we pay for living in the wilderness. You have to work hard to make yourself safe from fire. Winning a fuel reduction grant makes it easier for everyone."



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