

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

■ In November, Jacky Bibby, 52, of Whiskey Flats, Texas (near Fort Worth), first sat in a bathtub with 81 live rattlesnakes and then extended his own Guinness Book record by stuffing the tails of nine of them into his mouth. Protocol required that he band the tails together at the rattles and hold them in his mouth for 10 seconds while leaning forward. (The Associated Press reported that Bibby's day job is "marketing" for a drug treatment center.) (Also, in December, Brian Moffitt of Winnipeg, Manitoba, extended his Guinness Book record of 702 body piercings by inserting 900 surgical needles into his leg at the same time.)

■ Geologist David J. Siveter of Leicester University (England) wrote in the journal *Science* in December that he and his team had found a fossil 425 million years old that is probably the oldest record of an unambiguously male animal. They named the half-inch-long shellfish *Colymbosathon eclepticos*, which they said means "swimmer with a large penis," referring to its organ that is one-fifth of its body length.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Capitalism is using its money; we socialists throw it away."

— Fidel Castro

INDEX

Horoscopes

Sag, switch it up 2

Local

SMC goes green 3

Opinion

Kucinich or bust 4

People in the News

Chow Yun-fat sues 12

OPCO demise leaves finances unresolved

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

OCEAN PARK — The finances of a once-powerful neighborhood group may remain a mystery now that the organization has fallen apart and the man who has asked where the money went for more than two years has given up.

Tom Fuller, who was a member of the Ocean Park Community Organization, has been requesting financial records from the group's chairman, Rick Laudati since 2001. After a year of being ignored, Fuller filed a formal complaint in Los Angeles Superior Court, demanding that bank records be produced.

But Laudati and OPCO also ignored the formal request, which was filed in September of 2002. Every time a court hearing was scheduled, Laudati was a no-show. Each time that happened, Fuller was required to formally serve the court papers on Laudati to get another date set. After trying several times to locate Laudati, Fuller was able to serve him two months ago. But, once again, nothing happened at the courthouse.

Fuller, who got involved in OPCO in early 2001, asked to review the accounting books and finances, as well as a list of the organization's current membership. When his requests were ignored, it piqued his curiosity. Then it became a matter of principle for the Ocean Park resident.

"I don't have a huge desire to put Rick

in jail (for contempt of court)," Fuller said. "I'm tired of spending money to get him served and tired of fighting."

OPCO ENDS

As a result of the dispute, the organization has crumbled — its board of directors hasn't met in months.

When asked recently what the status of OPCO was, board member Laurel Roennau said, "I don't know, but when you find out, will you let me know?"

Roennau admitted she hasn't spent much energy on OPCO lately and doesn't know which board members have resigned. As far as Fuller's complaint, Roennau wants nothing to do with it.

"I stayed as far away as I could," said the Ocean Park resident who's been involved with OPCO since 1981.

Fuller said he's upset that the OPCO Board of Directors didn't push Laudati to hand over the financial records.

"I'm disappointed in all of the board members for not taking action on this," he said in a recent interview. "It's their responsibility to get Rick to produce."

Board member Mario Fonda-Bonardi said OPCO is a volunteer-based organization and it takes time to get paperwork together because its board members have time constraints.

"The board has addressed it," he said.

See OPCO, page 6

Dancing for dollars



Alejandro Cesar Cantarero II/Daily Press
Cassandra Rachel does a jig Sunday evening with Carlos Ramos, 18, while visitors to the Third Street Promenade look on. Foot traffic downtown was heavy Sunday, due in part to warm weather.



'Rico': 6 years on the streets

Community profiles is a weekly series that appears each Monday and delves into the people who live, work and play in Santa Monica.



BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

OCEAN PARK — Despite six years on the streets of Santa Monica, Alberto Rico said he refuses to panhandle or beg.

The 66-year-old native of Cuba, widely known by neighbors and friends as "Rico," instead said he mostly lives off a modest stipend he earns as a 15-year veteran of the U.S. Navy who fought in Vietnam.

Rico hopes to be "moving up" soon. But he also knows how hard that can be. In an

interview last week, Rico praised some of the work done by local social service providers, but suggested Santa Monica's 2,000-strong homeless population be put to work.

Over the years, Rico has befriended the community surrounding a staircase at Ocean Avenue and Pacific Street. Joggers there nod hello as they pass, residents stop to chat while walking their dogs, city workers honk and wave as they drive by.

"I don't go uptown, downtown, into town," Rico said. "This is my office. I'm here, seven days a week."

That is, until he finishes the last 100-plus days of parole he has to serve for violating parole on an earlier crime. Until then, Rico must stay within a certain number of miles of

See PROFILES, page 7

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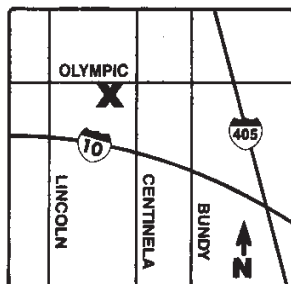
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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

The stars show the kind of day you'll have:

★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average
★★-So-so ★-Difficult



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Deal with personal matters head-on. Others respond to your questions, and you garner information through this process. You need to mellow out some. Investigate your options at work. Consider a home office. Discuss this "move" with those who might be impacted by it. Tonight: Happy as a clam at home.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Reach out for someone who is close to you. News from a friend touches you on a different level. Your creativity flourishes to new heights. Groups and friends seek you out for your opinion. Speak your mind. Tonight: Out and about.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Expenses could get out of control, but only you are to blame. Work buzzes with news and demands, as you assume more responsibility. Clear out as much work as possible, making time for a family member or roommate. Honor your family and foundations. Tonight: Pay bills.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ You're all smiles. Information comes out when you do needed research. Experts come forward with good ideas and solutions. Listen to what is shared. Return all calls, as a key message or news will be revealed. Tonight: Beam in what you want.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Your intuition works within a partnership or when relating individually. Money and emotions revolve around a partnership. Consider options involving these matters, but also express a willingness to brainstorm with others. You might be amazed by what comes out. Tonight: Take some time just for yourself.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Aim for precisely what you want, with the expectation of hitting the bull's-eye. Others pave the way to success, whether through support or suggestions. Lady Luck gives you an extra shove, too. Suggestions prove to be powerful. Tonight: Hook up with a friend.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Your intuition serves you well with those in charge. Your sixth sense carries you through the day. Work and your daily life demand your attention. Visualize what you want for yourself, physically and health-wise. Make necessary changes and appointments. Tonight: Take the lead.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Reach out for someone. You might hear interesting information. Sort through gossip and avoid coming to a conclusion that might not be well-founded. Read between the lines, and note what isn't being said. Tonight: Enjoy the movies.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Deal with others on an individual level, both personally and professionally. Avoid clumping people together in groups. Play with each situation individually. Balance your time carefully. Tonight: Charge your energy on the home front.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Defer to others, and you will be exceptionally pleased with the net results. Emphasize communication and understanding. Perhaps you need to detach some from a personal issue or problem. Look at the plain facts. Tonight: Go along for the ride.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Work at a more even pace. You don't want to drain your energy, though you certainly need to put in the extra hours financially. You also might opt to reorganize your finances. Your determination comes into play. Tonight: Do as much as you can, even if it means working at home.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Your imagination goes in directions you often fear to go. Listen well and use this powerful gift, especially as you try to appeal to someone. Walk in his or her shoes and think as he or she does. You'll gain unusual insights. Tonight: Don't think in terms of "Monday."

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

SMC lecture series goes green

By Daily Press staff

SMC's spring "Environmental Lecture Series," featuring a range of topics from smart cities to landscaping to the Santa Monica Mountains, begins March 11 with the lecture, "Why is sustainability so important?"

All lectures are at 6:45 p.m. in room 140 of the science complex, 1900 Pico Blvd. They are free and seating is on a first-arrival basis.

The series is sponsored by SMC's Center for Environmental and Urban Studies. The center, which is open to the public, features displays, a library and information center, video collection, native garden, and other services and activities related to environmental and urban studies. SMC has been offering a multi-disciplinary associate of arts degree in environmental and urban studies since fall 2001.

The lineup for spring is:

- March 11: "Why is Sustainability So Important?"
 - April 1: "What's a Smart City?"
 - April 22: "Santa Monica Mountains Night."
 - May 13: "SoCal Landscaping & Gardening: The Good, the Bad & the Ugly."
 - May 20: "Can Technology Solve Transportation Problems?"
- For more information, call (310) 434-4743.

Local architects honored

By Daily Press staff

Citing the innovation and sensitivity to preservation in the conversion of the mid-20th century Mobil Oil Building, Los Angeles, to a major multi-family housing structure, the California Preservation Foundation on Saturday bestowed one of four top design awards in the Adaptive Re-Use category on Santa Monica-based Killefer Flammang Architects.

Developed by the KOR Realty Group, the recently opened 322-unit building, now known as The Pegasus, at Sixth and Flower streets, was the only high-rise building in Los Angeles recognized in the adaptive re-use category.

Judges said the high caliber of the Mobil Oil Building's conversion "was ready proof" that the Corporate International Style was worth saving."

Addressing design issues, KFA principal Wade Killefer noted, "The building's mid-century modern clean lines and planes translated perfectly into a contemporary urban apartment building."

Distinguished by exterior vertical fins and center-pivoting casement windows, the building's original design was ideal for the contemporary statement that the developers wanted to pursue, Killefer added. Also, the interior's flat panel doors, nickel plated hardware and other character-defining features were highly harmonious with the open-plan design envisioned for the one and two-bedroom apartments, he explained.

Although some walls in the structure were removed, most of the existing features were retained — except those that needed to be replaced for safety requirements.

The one prominent feature distinguishing the roof, Mobil's "Flying Red Horse logo," was also removed to enable installation of a pool and recreation area with a breathtaking view of the city.

The first major office building constructed in Los Angeles after World War II, the 13-story, 500,000 square foot structure was the largest in Los Angeles in 1947.

By 2001, however, the building had been vacant for more than ten years, a victim of high vacancy rates for office space. But with the advent of downtown's new housing renaissance — kicked off by the success of the conversion of the Old Bank District into housing, which also was designed by Killefer Flammang — the new property owners launched their development plans.

The California Preservation Foundation award, presented at the San Diego Aerospace Museum, closely follows the accolade presented to the firm last week by the Los Angeles Business Journal as "Architect of the Year" for its overall work in downtown Los Angeles, where it is designing some 3,000 multi-family units.

surf report

A mix of steep NW swell mixes with NW wind swell today. Many spots miss the ground swell entirely (Northern LA) but the better exposed breaks of the South Bay see inconsistent waist-high surf.

OUTLOOK: By Tuesday afternoon and into Wednesday it also looks like we'll see some building short period NW wind swell from a storm that is forecasted to push down the coast in the next 24-28 hours or so.

Write us at wood@smdp.com and tell us what the surf is doing today at your local break. Epic.

Today the water is:

57°

	LOW TIDES		HIGH TIDES	
	LOW ONE	LOW TWO	HIGH ONE	HIGH TWO
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SUNDAY	3:45 AM	4:36 PM	9:48 AM	11:02 PM
MONDAY	4:30 AM	5:08 PM	10:28 AM	11:37 PM
TUESDAY	5:23 AM	5:38 PM	11:14 AM	N/A
WEDNESDAY	6:30 AM	6:06 PM	12:15 AM	12:15 PM
THURSDAY	8:03 AM	6:48 PM	12:59 AM	1:47 PM
FRIDAY	9:43 AM	7:45 PM	1:54 AM	4:15 PM

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The Q-Line

The recent debut of Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the Christ" has sparked a fervent debate in religious and non-religious circles.

Some feel the film is a true depiction of the end for Jesus Christ. Others feel it is anti-Semitic and inaccurate.

So, this week Q-Line wants to know,

"What do you think of 'The Passion' and why?"

Call (310) 285-8106 with your responses before Thursday at 5 p.m. We'll print them in Saturday's paper. Please limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.



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LETTERS

What about other donations to schools?

Editor:

Estate bequests to school districts, coupled with cash and property donations such as automobiles, mobile homes, airplanes and computers, are somehow never mentioned as helping to prop up the over-inflated school budgets. Neither is substantial income property holdings by the district, such as the Doubletree Hotel. The public ought to know all of the district's finances, and promptly about any sudden changes, such as the random (if only infrequent) windfalls to the schools, to better fairly adjust the huge amount of money it takes to actually balance their budget for them. If for example, a person dies, and wills \$3 million to the school district, it should reduce their current budget and direct burden to the community and state of California taxpayers, and not be put into a teacher's retirement fund, or sit in an account to generate interest which is used for something other than offsetting the current year's budget.

Any donations exceeding \$100 in value need to be used to reduce the current school budget and relieve taxpayers from continuously, ever-increasing school budgets due to far too many programs and additional personnel.

Don Johnson
Venice

Schools need reliable cash

Editor:

I applaud the Police Officers Association and Firefighters Union for their work in securing a competitive compensation package for their members. Our public safety officers deserve nothing less than to be the highest paid in the county. It's in the community's interest to offer police officers and firefighters a competitive wage and benefits package. By doing so, the city is able to hire the best candidates in the region. As a result, our community benefits.

However, anyone that implies that the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District does not need ongoing and reliable revenues is deeply mistaken.

If we are to provide a quality public education for all students and pay teachers (and other employees) a professional wage, we must allocate the necessary resources to our schools. We can't rely on the federal or state government to adequately fund our schools. The current administration in Washington is more interested in a war budget and tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans. Due to the unprecedented state deficit, Sacramento has cut school funding by more than \$4.5 billion during the past two fiscal years. The funding our public schools is the collective responsibility of the federal, state and local government.

According to the independent advocacy group Ed Source, "teacher salaries in California failed to keep pace with inflation from 1990-1999." As a result, it has been difficult for our district to recruit highly qualified teachers, especially in the areas of

math and science. Moreover, more than 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching. One of the primary reasons for the high turn over rate, teachers can not afford to remain in the profession.

If we are to attract and retain the best and brightest to the teaching profession, we must be willing to pay them a professional wage. The overwhelming majority of SMMUSD's teachers have advanced degrees.

However, due to the chronic under funding of public education, teachers continue to be paid less than a professional wage. With an annual salary of \$38,000, many of our beginning teachers need a second job to make ends meet. In addition, with a maximum salary of \$78,000 far too many of our veteran teachers (27 years or more) cannot afford to retire.

In addition, to the low pay, our class sizes are exceedingly large. Many class sizes at the high school level exceed 35. Our high school teachers are responsible for five instructional periods per day. The simple math, a SMMUSD high school teacher has a daily student caseload that exceeds 175.

For teachers the sound of the 3:15 school bell is not the end of our workday. For educators it is simply the end of the instructional day and the continuation of our workday. Long after our students go home, teachers spend countless hours correcting student papers, tutoring, preparing lesson plans, conferencing with parents and serving on committees. Teaching is not an eight to three job nor is it a forty hour work week. On average, classroom teachers work between sixty and seventy hours per week. These additional hours are not paid at an overtime rate — teachers don't get paid overtime.

At the same time, teachers today are being asked to do more with less. The era of accountability and standards has placed teachers and our profession under the microscope. We are scrutinized and criticized by many in the national media and the opponents of public education blame us for societal failures. Teachers and public schools are often labeled as failures. With the passage of the deeply flawed and highly punitive No Child left Behind legislation, the federal government has stacked the deck against teachers and teacher unions.

How are we to leave no child behind when we don't have the resources needed to do the job? How are we to leave no child behind when we teach in over crowded classrooms? How are we to leave no child behind when we cannot retain highly qualified teachers in the profession?

We need ongoing and reliable revenues to ensure that SMMUSD's teachers (Other employees) are the best paid in the county. We need ongoing and reliable revenues to lower class sizes. We need ongoing and reliable revenues to make certain that all children are provided a quality public education. We need ongoing and reliable revenues to protect the quality of life for all Santa Monicans. An investment in our schools today is an investment in our community's future.

The CEPS initiative would provide SMMUSD with the ongoing and reliable rev-

See LETTERS, page 5

Voters can choose hope or grope on election day



POLITI-GIRL

By Beth Solomon

Voting is fun. Where else do you get to make so many decisions, have so many options and not wind up with credit card debt? On election day, you make choices in just a few minutes that can change the world. And you get to feel so righteous for the rest of the day. Not to mention the "I voted" sticker that reminds everyone what an inspiring person you are.

Tomorrow's election offers great opportunities to say what you think, to make a strong statement, to give no quarter to the lesser minds who disagree with you. And there's not a damn thing they can do about it. Except thank you later.

So here are a few recommendations for tomorrow's vote. You don't have to agree with Politigirl, just do what she says.

VOTE NO ON PROPOSITION 57

Gov. Schwarzenegger is asking us to fix the budget by taking on another \$15 billion in debt. How much is \$15 billion? One way to look at it is this: \$15,000,000,000.00. And it's not just \$15 billion. The interest on the debt will approach \$7 billion, or \$7,000,000,000.00.

The Governor says we need to borrow the money. Because it will help us pay our bills, and stay out of debt. This might not sound logical at first. But it makes sense to a lot of people. For instance, the governor flew to New York recently for one of many big fundraisers. The purpose was to raise money for the California Recovery Team, his private campaign fund designed to help him help our state. Arnold asked New York donors — investment bankers and Wall Street types, nice guys, every one of them — to contribute \$50,000 to half a million dollars each to the California Recovery Team, which they gladly did. Then Arnold had enough money to buy some TV ads, about \$10 million worth, which are a great way to educate the public about his plan. The contributors were happy, because 50 grand is chump change when you're about to rake in \$7 billion in interest.

When the LA Times reported on the fundraiser, the governor's spokesman called it "unfortunate." I'll say. It's a crime that the campaign doesn't have a bigger broom to sweep up all the cash that's flooding their offices. See, that's what Arnold meant by "cleaning up" in Sacramento.

VOTE NO ON PROPOSITION 58

Here's one you'll like. The Governor has proposed another plan that "tears up the credit card for good" on all that bor-

rowing he's asking us to approve. Proposition 58 would require the state legislature to adopt a balanced budget at the beginning of each fiscal year. Which is great. Then, at the end of the year, if things didn't work out as planned and the budget was unbalanced, the Legislature could borrow more. With a Platinum Card. But that first credit card would stay torn up. Really. In bits and pieces. Never to be used again.

Some people question the honesty of this. But look at it this way:

Cost of a "one-time" bailout: \$15,000,000,000.00

Interest on the debt: \$7,000,000,000.00

Groping voters and not getting caught: Priceless.

VOTE FOR NICK PACHECO FOR DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Incumbent Republican DA Steve Cooley has been criticized for botching some of LA's biggest public corruption cases, including the Rampart police scandal and Newhall Ranch, in which the DA pulled defeat from the jaws of victory by "mishandling" search warrants, witnesses and evidence. More recently, Cooley did an impressive job of backing off a huge graft case. And he has effectively dismantled environmental crimes prosecution.

In fairness, Cooley has scored some big victories, like convicting dangerous

Beverly Hills shoplifter Winona Ryder. And finally nailing Symbionese Liberation Army "soldier" Sara Jane Olson — whose crimes took place in the 70s.

And the streets are so much safer, which is why kids are packing lots of lead, and using it, in south LA.

Democratic challenger Nick Pacheco has the strongest chance of beating Cooley. Pacheco was a prosecutor in the DA's office and then served on the LA City Council for four years, where he supervised the law enforcement budget.

You've heard of ABB (Anybody But Bush)? I'm for ABC (Anybody But Cooley).

Finally, there's the presidential campaign. I personally want Sen. John Kerry, a Vietnam hero turned anti-war activist and a serious environmentalist, to win the nomination.

But I voted for Rep. Dennis Kucinich. It's not just the Rainbow Bus — a group of unwashed college kids, drumming at campaign events. It's not just his veganism. Or his proposed Department of Peace. Voting for Dennis somehow feels like voting for a better planet, a better political system, a better philosophy of living based on respect and peace.

And other ideas that have no place in politics. Yet.

(Beth Solomon is a Left Coast writer reachable at bethsolomon@earthlink.net.)

OPINION



Making it in LA is breaking through the 'bigger than life' persona



HIP TO BE SQUARE

By Caroline Bodkin

I think some people grow up knowing they're meant for a bigger life. You hear actors and actresses say that all the time. I grew up thinking I'd make something big out of myself, that I would some day get that big house and sign those big checks, and be someone. I thought I'd make a big life. And I always thought I'd be providing that life, or at least I'd be capable of providing that life, for myself.

It seems my boyfriend, bless his heart, is beating me to the punch.

When I was single, I had no problem letting guys who asked me out pick up the check. They were the ones who asked me,

so I figured I was giving them a shot by saying "yes," and since they were often older and more financially stable, it seemed OK.

I'd pay for things often enough if it lasted beyond two dates, but otherwise I didn't feel guilty letting them go for it if they offered.

But lately — especially since I lost my job and have been faced, once again, with the "why aren't you making more out of your life?" question, I've felt like I'm leading double lives.

In one of them, I'm a struggling 24-year-old, trying to figure out what to do with her life. In the other, I'm the happy girlfriend to a successful executive, confident in her own abilities as well as proud of his.

The first persona is not expected to do more than make this month's rent. The second can hold her own in a financial duet, and pick up even a pricey dinner.

I live the comfortable life of the latter — I get to live in a cute house in a nice neighborhood and eat out. I was just taken

to a beautiful hotel for a Saturday night away.

But in reality, I'm still the former, trying to make it. I couldn't take myself to those meals, or to that hotel. I worry about bills and groceries and paying for the dentist.

When we go out to dinner, I stare anxiously at the bill, embarrassed that he's paying for it again and feeling guilty at not being able to do my share. On one hand, I'm aware that if I were just the struggling 24-year-old, I wouldn't be worried about not being able to grab the check because what struggling 24-year-old can?

But on the other hand, since there I am, post dinner and in front of the check, and not paying again, I feel like the lesser half, the mooch, the failure.

So given that I love the guy, plan on staying with him forever, and can be nothing short of overwhelmingly grateful for the good fortune in our lives, how do I show my appreciation while masking my discomfort at not being part of what makes it happen?

How do I say "it's so amazing that you're thoughtful and generous enough to take me on this weekend away" even while I'm worrying about paying off my school debt and making my share of the rent next month?

I don't know if it's a gender thing, an age thing, a generation thing, or an individual pride thing. Or if one week of unemployment has already made me crazy.

I just wish I could get it together.

I have had every opportunity in the world and here I am, griping about having more than I deserve.

I guess there are just some days when I wish my being able to pick up the random check for breakfast felt like more of an accomplishment, and less like a token.

(Caroline lives in Los Angeles and wonders daily if she will miss her calling. You can e-mail her at hiptobesquarebybodkin@yahoo.com.)

LETTERS

LETTERS, from page 4

enue we need and the community expects. After much analysis and debate, the Santa Monica Malibu Classroom Teachers Association endorsed the initiative.

We did so with the full knowledge that the initiative would not harm city employees or union members.

SMMCTA is grateful to the City Council for their past support of our schools. We welcome any proposal that provides our public schools with the reliable and ongoing revenues we so desperately need. To date, the CEPS initiative is the only viable option to ensure the continued excellence of our local public schools.

Harry M. Keiley

President, Santa Monica Malibu Classroom Teachers Association

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LOCAL

OPCO dispute split its board of directors

OPCO, from page 1

"We put our books together and our membership lists. But Tom was asking for more than that."

Fuller still hasn't been provided any documents though some of them were given to board members last summer.

"It's a simple request and when I ask a guy a question, I deserve an answer," Fuller said.

Fonda-Bonardi said Fuller's court complaint is largely the reason the organization fell apart.

"It was the chilling effect of Tom Fuller," he said. "It's an organization with a bunch of volunteers that don't want to put up with the grief. People do this because they love this community, not to deal with legal crap."

Fuller said he never intended to send OPCO into a tailspin.

"It was not my desire to put OPCO out of business," he said. "At the end of the day, OPCO was destroyed not because of me, but because of Rick."

Laudati couldn't be reached for comment. He has declined to talk to the Daily Press in the past.

Close to a dozen board members have resigned over OPCO's inaction in the past year and a half. Board members Audrea Golding Bitler, Ted Winterer and Elan Glasser attempted to work out a resolution with the board to get the finances released, but they resigned in the fall of 2002 out of frustration that no progress had been made. In early 2002, Bob Loftus, Joe Pipersky and Bill Sunblad resigned over the financial questions.

An all-woman slate of activists filled the empty seats in an effort to recharge the organization. Beth Leder-Pack, Susan Love Loughmiller, Gaile Price and Rev. Sandie Richards took the three-month appointments. The only one that appeared to be involved until the end was Love Loughmiller.

Loftus, who now lives in Topanga, said the organization needed leadership and unfortunately, egos got in the way. He added that Fuller probably was too antagonistic in his requests and Laudati suffers from "control issues."

"Neither side is blameless," Loftus said. "But (Fuller) made a request under the by-laws that should have been addressed."

"A member shouldn't have to sue to get information that is explicitly allowed under the by-laws," Loftus added. "(Laudati) should have stepped down if he didn't want to deal with the difficult and contentious issues."

But Laudati had a core group of supporters within the organization. Roennau is one of them.

"He held the organization together and I'm surprised he was able to do it this long," she said, adding that OPCO serves as an important resource for residents. "They are losing a valuable outlet for their voices."

WHERE'S THE MONEY?

OPCO was formed in 1978 as a community organization for the Ocean Park neighborhood as a nonprofit corporation. Under California law, it's required to provide its membership with financial records, according to Fuller's complaint. It's unclear how much money OPCO

has collected from its members, how many members there are, and what the dues structure is. Some estimates put the organization's membership between 150 and 500.

The last bank statement that was made public sits in a file in City Hall that details OPCO's finances from December 1999 to January 2000. At that time, OPCO had \$2,933 in a Wells Fargo Bank account. During that month, deposits totaling \$220 were recorded and \$240 worth of withdrawals were made — all of which were made from ATM machines in cash.

OPCO has been one of Santa Monica's oldest and most powerful neighborhood groups. It was also considered the most respected neighborhood organization because of the stances it took on issues within the city. One of OPCO's functions is to review development projects and then recommend to the Planning Commission and City Council that they be approved or denied.

"The organization is necessary and I'm sad to hear they've ended," said Loftus, who was involved in the organization since the 1980s. "OPCO was awesome. There was a time when we were doing some great things and it was great serving the community."

But the organization had its share of problems — like most political groups do.

"It had a habit of (wasting) a lot (of) time," Loftus recalls. "It wasn't being run like an organization and a corporation, which it is."

City Councilman Herb Katz agreed. He remembers when City Hall gave OPCO \$102,000 as a one-time contribution when he first served on the council in the 1980s.

"They just piddled it away," Katz said. "I think they misused the city."

That's not to say that OPCO didn't do some important work at its peak. It was heavily involved in development issues along Main Street, and fought to protect the neighborhood's historical charm and its locally owned businesses.

And the issues facing the neighborhood aren't going away — development pressures, parking and traffic — could ruin the area if no one pays attention, residents say.

AN OPCO REBIRTH?

Fonda-Bonardi said there has been some discussion about resurrecting OPCO again — but the commitment from residents has to be there.

"Issues come up and there really isn't a forum for the neighborhood to debate the effects," Fonda-Bonardi said. "Squabbling weakens the organization."

"But it's a cyclical thing and an organization that has been around as long as this one, it's going to go up and down," he added.

If OPCO does resurrect itself, it's first order of business most likely will be getting its finances in order.

"If OPCO resurfaces, the board will be part of my complaint," Fuller said. "It's their fiduciary responsibility and until they comply with this, they shouldn't be doing anything."

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LOCAL



Community Profiles

PROFILES, from page 1

his parole officer in Van Nuys, whom he sometimes struggles to regularly meet with.

Rico didn't want to discuss the original crime, preferring to put it behind him. Adrian Rico, his daughter, a worker at the Los Angeles Police Department, said she wasn't sure exactly what the offense was, but that it happened in the 1970s, adding Rico spent nearly two decades in prison because of it. Rico's parole officer didn't return calls seeking comment.

The Daily Press sat down recently with the man who first came to Santa Monica 28 years ago as a visiting seaman, asking for his take on the state of the city.

What's your're favorite thing about Santa Monica?

"The people are courteous, very courteous. If you respect people, they respect you ...

"Sometimes, we get people, aggressive panhandling, being violent — the people are scared and I don't blame them. But I've got respect."

There are myriad services for homeless people who want help in Santa Monica. Do you take advantage of any of those services?

"Like with the VA, the VA in Long Beach, I want to get in, but I'm in line.

"I take a shower under the pier ... I got a mailbox over at (Ocean Park Community Center), that's where I pick up my check and I wanted to get into (another) shelter, but every time I go they say, 'You got to come back in two weeks' ... and I'm not a begging person. I'm 66 years old.

"At OPCC, you're supposed to check with them

every day. But every time you go up there, you see people, they're drinking, they're getting into fights ..."

Many local residents and businesses want to see the city cleaned up. Do you think Santa Monica has a large homeless population?

"No. That's bullshit. I don't know how many cities you've been in, brother. LA has the biggest population.

"The area right here where I'm at is very small. I don't know about up in the parks, where people are drinking — I stay away from that. My life is getting short."

What do you think the city could do to help improve the homeless situation?

"By give 'em some work they can do. Believe me, the people out here would be glad to have jobs ...

"This old man here (gestures to another homeless man) picks up cans every day. He will work. I will work ... Let them sweep up the parking lots here. Let them clean up."

One of the local City Councilmen has suggested just that — asking all homeless people to work for the community's betterment. Do you think that would work?

"Yeah, we will clean up the beach, anything. Just give us minimum wage, something, so we can get some-

thing to eat and find a place to stay. We need some work, man, to get in the system.

"I don't panhandle. I never panhandled in my life. I will work for it before I ask you for a penny. I have nothing against people doing it, I just don't do it."

What about the homeless people with serious mental or addiction problems? How should the city handle those situations?

"Some got drinking problems. Some been cooking some (drugs).

"Instead of putting them in prison, they should put them somewhere where they can get help. It costs so much for someone to go to jail — taxpayer money. For what? For panhandling, for having two or three joints. Open up a clinic where they can get some help."

What would you be doing if you weren't here?

"I'd have an apartment. I'd like to do some painting, you know painting walls and houses ... I plant grass. I can operate a forklift. I'd be working ..."

What about a dream job — if you could be anywhere, doing anything at all?

"I'd like to be on a ranch, where I could be around some cows. I'm a country kid. I pick cotton and cut (sugar) cane ... I'd like to live that life again."

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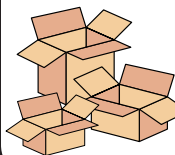


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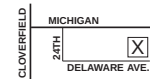


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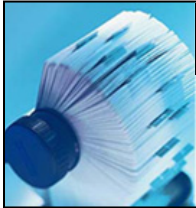
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Chow Yun-fat sues tabloid over alleged injury

HONG KONG — Action star Chow Yun-fat is suing a tabloid magazine over a story claiming he sought treatment for an injury, newspapers reported Sunday.

Chow, who starred in Oscar-winning "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and "Anna and the King," filed the defamation lawsuit against Easy Finder on Saturday, the South China Morning Post reported.

The Chinese-language magazine article claimed that Chow injured himself during filming, according to Ming Pao, a Chinese-language daily.

The lawsuit says Chow is healthy and has "suffered loss and damage to his professional career as an actor and in particular an action movie star," as a result of the Jan. 28 article, according to the Post.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages and an injunction to stop further publication of the claims, the report said.

Easy Finder's editor-in-chief could not immediately be reached for comment. Easy Finder has refused to publish an apology, despite a demand from Chow's lawyers.

LISBON, Portugal — Ex-Beatle Paul McCartney will open this year's Rock in Rio, joining more than 70

performers for the six-day event that starts May 28 in Lisbon, organizers said.

McCartney's appearance will kick off his 13-city "04 Summer Tour."

Sting, Britney Spears and Guns N' Roses also will perform at the festival scheduled for the last weekend of May and the first of June.

The festival is modeled on a previous one in Brazil.

ATHENS, Ga. — Singer Carole King crooned "You've Got a Friend" in Athens as part of a two-day tour of Georgia for friend John Kerry.

The singer-songwriter sang the praises of the Massachusetts senator during visits to Athens, Atlanta, Augusta and Savannah. She performed and answered questions from the audience about Kerry during stops.

"We are part of a movement," King told about 200 people Saturday at a downtown Athens coffeehouse. "Everywhere I go I see a light in people's eyes. It is the light of hope."

King touted the Democratic front-runner for his integrity and his experience and contacts on Capitol Hill. "He's smart," she said. "He has a plan."

King performed and answered questions from the

audience about Kerry during her stops.

RADNOR, Pa. — The task given to Johnathon Schaech wasn't the easiest: Present a well-balanced portrayal of one of the most demonized figures in religion.

Although Schaech said his lead role in the upcoming ABC biopic "Judas" has been a challenge, it has also taught him a thing or two.

"A lot of religious individuals won't accept him as anything more than just a betrayer of Christ," Schaech told TV Guide. "When you give him a heart and say he's misunderstood, they don't want to hear that."

The television movie, scheduled to air March 8, tells the story of betrayal from Judas' point of view.

"We were trying to construct a psychological profile so you could see why he was doing what he was doing," said the Rev. Frank Desiderio, a Catholic priest who was the film's executive producer. "I hope it reveals Judas' humanity."

The movie should also benefit from being televised shortly after the release of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" in theaters.

"They're riding its coattails," Schaech said.

DID YOU KNOW?: Baseball stars from the National League and the American League played the first All-Star Game in 1933. The National League has won 40 of the 73 games. The game ended in a tie twice. In 1961 rain in Boston prevented extra innings and the game ended in a 1-1 tie. And in 2002, the game went 11 innings with the score knotted at seven before it was finally called off due to a lack of pitchers.



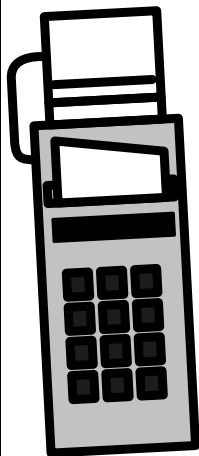
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