



# Stop Sign Changes on the American River Bike Trail

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# AMERICAN RIVER MESSENGER

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Serving Fair Oaks, Gold River, Rancho Cordova & Sacramento County

Second Edition for June 2013

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# CSLB Nabs Unlicensed Contractors



Unlicensed contractors pose huge financial risks for homeowners who hire people who have not been qualified to perform the work, or undergone a criminal background check.

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) – Three people who knew better than to perform contracting work without a state license turned up at a Contractors State License Board (CSLB) undercover sting operation in Rancho Cordova on June 6, 2013.

Unlicensed contractors pose huge financial risks for homeowners who hire people who have not been qualified to perform the work, or undergone a criminal background check, and who don't carry workers' compensation or general liability insurance if injury or damage occurs on the property. Unlicensed operators operate in the underground economy and create unfair business competition for law-abiding contractors.

CSLB's Statewide Investigative Fraud Team (SWIFT), along with investigators from the Department of Consumer Affairs' Division of Investigation and Sacramento County District Attorney's Office, cited seven individuals who illegally bid for landscaping, concrete, painting, fencing, tree, and plumbing work at a one-story residence.

"Contractors who have lost their license are fully aware that they are contracting illegally," said CSLB Registrar Steve Sands. "If you disregard contracting laws, you'll be caught and held to answer in Superior Court."

One of the former licensees, Anthony Eugene Bodiford of Woodland, doing business as Planet Rock Landscape, was arrested on misdemeanor charges of contracting without a license and illegal advertising after he submitted a bid for more than \$8,000 to do fencing and landscape work. Contractors can only request a down payment of 10% of the total estimate, or \$1,000, whichever is less.

Bodiford's contractor license expired in 2011. Two others with revoked licenses went to the sting house but did not submit bids, and will receive administrative citations for illegal contracting and advertising violations.

Undercover CSLB investigators mostly used the online bulletin board craigslist.org to identify potential suspects. Property owners considering improvement projects should

always consult CSLB's online instant license check to ensure that the contractor license is in good standing before hiring anyone to work in or around their home. In California, CSLB-licensed contractors are required for all home improvement jobs totaling \$500 or more in combined labor and material costs.

The seven people who received Notices to Appear in Superior Court all face misdemeanor charges of contracting without a license (Business and Professions Code Section 7028). First-conviction penalties for contracting without a license include up to six months in jail and/or up to \$5,000 in fines; subsequent convictions bring harsher penalties.

Six were cited for illegal advertising (Business and Professions Code Section 7027.1). State law requires that contractors include their license number in all advertisements, including online ads. Those without a license can advertise as long as the ad states they are not a state-licensed contractor, and the combined total of a project's labor and materials

costs is under \$500.

Suspects must appear in Sacramento County Superior Court, 720 Ninth St., Sacramento (MAP). A court date has not been determined.

### NOTICES TO APPEAR:

Larry Robert Leonard, Sacramento, contracting without a license, illegal advertising;

Antonio Martinez Torres, Sacramento, contracting without a license, illegal advertising;

Hardeep Singh Sandhu, Elk Grove, contracting without a license, illegal advertising, unregistered salesperson;

Anthony Eugene Bodiford, Woodland, contracting without a license, illegal advertising;

Melvin George Coleman, Sacramento, contracting without a license;

Jose Amadeo Reyes Estrada, Elk Grove, contracting without a license, illegal advertising;

Cirilo Otento-Portento, Sacramento, contracting without a license, illegal advertising.

Visit CSLB's website for tips about how to hire a contractor. [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov)

## State's Debt Not Addressed With New Budget

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) – The Legislature passed the 2013-14 state budget on June 14th – a budget that was negotiated among Democrats and with limited public review. The main budget measure – Assembly Bill 110 – passed with only partisan support by a vote of 28 to 10.

"The biggest goal of the Legislature should be to get control of the budget," said State Senator Jim Nielsen (R-Gerber). "But that has not happened. There are built-in cost increases that have not been addressed."

Negotiated behind closed doors, the total state budget spends approximately \$108 billion in general fund monies, which are spent at the discretion of the Legislature.

Despite its lack of transparency, the budget did dedicate \$2 billion to partially pay down the state's debt, restored the Adult Dental program and child care services, and provided some funding for trial courts.

This budget, unfortunately, prioritized new spending over a more fiscally prudent approach that pays off state debt and unfunded retirement liabilities. The Governor's own Department of Finance estimated that the state's unfunded liability on employee retirement pensions is at a cost of \$180 billion to taxpayers.

It did not address many of the problems with the Governor's public safety realignment plan, also known as AB 109. It allowed prisoners more good time credit than they ever had nor will ever earn.

"Without changes to realignment, criminals will be more emboldened by no consequences for their continued criminality and will only prey upon more of us. The time to fix AB 109 is now," said Nielsen.

Assembly Bill 110 is the main budget bill that must be accompanied by 21 trailer bills – which implements the budget.

Senator Jim Nielsen represents the Fourth Senate District, which includes the counties of Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity and Yuba. To contact Senator Nielsen, please call him at 916-651-4004, or via email at [senator.nielsen@senate.ca.gov](mailto:senator.nielsen@senate.ca.gov).

# Rancho Cordova Celebration Features Military Band



RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) The United States Air Force Band of the Golden West Concert Band will be the headlining

entertainment at the City of Rancho Cordova's 10th Anniversary Civic Events Day on July 1st. The outdoor concert will

begin at 6:30 p.m. in front of the Rancho Cordova City Hall, 2729 Prospect Park Drive.

From Travis Air Force Base, the Air Force Band of the Golden West is a select group of professional airmen-musicians who provide musical services for community relations and other events.

The Concert Band has performed for thousands of listeners in live concert appearances and for millions worldwide via its numerous recordings and television and radio broadcasts. Throughout its history, the Concert Band has collaborated with some of America's leading band conductors, receiving critical acclaim as one of the premier musical organizations of its kind.

"We're honored to help the City of Rancho Cordova celebrate its 10th Anniversary and get

a jump start on the 4th of July celebrations as well," said Captain Jason Plosch, the Commander/Conductor of the band. "It's going to be a great concert with something for the whole family so we hope to see everyone there."

Their concert will include military marches as well as jazz and pop arrangements, Broadway standards, and patriotic music, complete with instrumental soloists and vocalists.

"Rancho Cordova has a rich aviation and aerospace history, including Mather Air Force Base that thrived during its time," said Rancho Cordova Mayor Linda Budge. "As an All America City, we are proud to feature the Air Force Band of the Golden West to recognize our veterans and those who continue to protect us today."

Also during the concert, a complimentary hot dog reception featuring the "Rancho Cordova Dog" will be served to attendees.

The concert will follow a special City Council Meeting that will begin at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The public is invited to attend the meeting that includes special guests and presentations of the 10th Anniversary Time Capsule, Community Mosaic, and more.

The Monday night festivities are just part of the five-day anniversary celebration. For more information, visit [www.RanchoCordovaAnniversary.com](http://www.RanchoCordovaAnniversary.com) to learn about other 10th Anniversary activities.

Source: City of Rancho Cordova



# Stop Sign Changes on the American River Bike Trail



SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Beginning this week, 9 out of the 12 vehicle/bicycle intersections on the American River Bike Trail will change from four-way to two-way stops with vehicles

required to give right of way to bicycle riders, runners, joggers and walkers. During the past four months, Regional Parks’ officials met with interest groups and Parkway

supporters to announce the change. “We received positive feedback from our stakeholders, such as the Recreation and Park Commission, the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates and the Save the American River Association, to name three,” stated Stan Lumsden, Chief Ranger. “The reason to alter the traffic flow is simple and about safety. We have more bicycle traffic through the Parkway than vehicles and it makes sense to give the bikes the right of way. On the safety side, bikes can roll through the intersection allowing cyclists to keep up their momentum and avoid rear-end collisions.” The signage and pavement painting changes will take place this week and will go the length of the bike trail from Hazel Avenue downstream to

Discovery Park. The three intersections that will continue being four-way stops are: Nimbus Hatchery at Hazel Avenue; Lower Sunrise Recreation Area at the PCA Bridge; and Del Paso Blvd. Motorists and riders are urged to be observant of these changes and to obey the rules of the road including the 15 mile per hour speed limit on the bike trail. Regional Park visitors are reminded that all children under 13 years of age, in or around waterways, must wear a life jacket. It is a law in Sacramento County. For a complete list of rules and regulations that govern Regional Parks, visit [www.sacparks.net](http://www.sacparks.net). Call 916-875-7275 to report any law enforcement issues, non-emergency accidents, or maintenance issues. For emergencies, dial 9-1-1.

# Childrens Museum Plans 3 Wheels Days

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) - Free event features activities with trikes, bikes, and scooters Wheels Day will roll into the Sacramento Children’s Museum (SCM) on three Saturdays: June 29th, July 27th, and, August 24th, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Located at 2701 Prospect Park Drive in Rancho Cordova, SCM invites participants to bring their bikes, tricycles, and scooters and join Team Leo for a day of rolling and riding in the parking lot. The June 29thWheels Day will include bubbles, music, and a hydration station. At 11 a.m., a fire truck from the Sacramento Metro Fire

Department will be on display, plus firemen will talk about helmet safety. ““The Wheels Day events are open to children and their families,” said Sharon Stone Smith, SCM’s Executive Director. ”Don’t forget to bring helmets.” The outside activities will be free but general admission will apply for indoor SCM activities. For more information, please call (916) 638-7225 or go online at [sackids.org](http://sackids.org). Designed for ages birth to eight years, SCM’s activities enable children to “learn-by-doing”.

Source: City of Rancho Cordova



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By Pastor Ray Dare

# What People Will Remember About You?

no life vests on board. So they began swimming to shore in the frigid water. As they began to swim the current countered every stroke. The two other men made it to shore as they watched father and son drift out to sea, arm in arm. They said Dr. Littleford could have made it to shore too, on his own, but that would have meant abandoning his son Mark. The Coast Guard reported that they probably lasted no more than an hour in the freezing waters. They said that Mark being the smaller of the two probably died first in his father's arms. The father was willing to die with his son rather than abandon him. I'm sure you would do the same. But if we're willing to die for people we love, we should also live for them.

The Bible says, *"There are only three things that will endure – faith, hope and love – and the greatest of these is love."* 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NLT) God shows us how to leave a lasting legacy. Become a loving person. It's all that you will be remembered for, were you a loving person? Nobody's going to care about your business savvy, how many deals you closed, contracts you signed or your position in the company, but they will remember – "He/She loved me." People will forget what you say, but they'll never forget how you made them feel.

In your closing moments of life; what will matter most? I doubt very seriously that you'll be thinking about your bank statements, investment portfolio, trophies, certificates or degrees. At that moment, you won't care about your great accomplishments or the things and toys that you've acquired. One thing is going to matter most to you: people; your relationships. Why wait until it's too late and you can't do anything about it? The best use of life is love and the best time to love is now and the best way to love is time. Today is the day to begin loving the people in your life. You don't know how long you're going to have the opportunity. Circumstances change, people die, children grow up and leave home. You're not guaranteed tomorrow, so if you're going to express love you need to begin today.

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# Here Comes the Final Wave of Cell Phone and Texting Enforcement



To reduce the number of distracted drivers on Sacramento area roadways, and to test our enforcement tactics, law enforcement agencies in the Sacramento region will be conducting the final wave of three high-visibility enforcement efforts that will last through June 30.

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) – Drivers in the greater Sacramento region who are observed texting or talking on a hand-held cell phone will be targeted in a special enforcement operation that will last through June 30. Thirty-seven local police departments and the California Highway Patrol (CHP) will participate in the enforcement effort.

This is the third and final high-visibility enforcement period that was developed to test tactics that may be employed nationally in the future. In 2012, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) awarded the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) \$600,000 to fund three waves of enforcement along with the message “Phone in One Hand, Ticket in the Other,” designed to educate drivers about the dangers of distracted driving.

A total of 3,008 citations were issued during the first wave last December, increasing to 4,750 during the second wave in February. The special enforcement region stretches from Modesto to Marysville and from Vallejo to South Lake Tahoe.

“Distracted driving is a dangerous problem,” said OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. “For everyone’s safety, drivers need to focus on the road and refrain from talking or texting on a cell phone. California has strict mobile device laws in place and this “Phone in One Hand. Ticket in the Other” campaign offers a constant reminder to drivers to do the right thing and practice safe driving.”

Drivers caught talking or texting on a hand-held cell phone will receive a first-time ticket costing a minimum of \$162, with a second offense costing \$285. However, the goal of the special enforcement operation is not to issue tickets, but to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving.

The California Office of Traffic Safety offers these simple tips to keep you or someone you know from being a victim of distracted driving:

- While talking on a cell phone, up to 37 percent of the brain function needed for driving is used toward that conversation, rather than driving.
- Turn off your phone, and/or put it out of reach while driving.
- Include in your outgoing message that you can’t answer while you’re driving.
- Don’t call or text anyone at a time when you think they may be driving.
- Remember: Phone in One Hand. Ticket in the Other.

For more information on distracted driving, please visit [www.distraction.gov/sacramentoregion](http://www.distraction.gov/sacramentoregion).

Source: [katzandassociates.com](http://katzandassociates.com)

# Celebrating Rancho Cordova’s 10th Anniversary

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) – The City of Rancho Cordova is turning 10 on July 1st and will recognize the occasion with a special Civic Events Day on its official anniversary at Rancho Cordova City Hall, 2729 Prospect Park Drive.

The event is one of a series of 10th anniversary celebrations from June 30th through July 4th.

A special city council meeting will begin the evening at 5:30 p.m. in the David B. Roberts Council Chambers. Federal, state, and local officials have been invited to attend the ceremony to share anniversary wishes with the City. Other activities will include:

- Presentation of items for the 10th anniversary time capsule
- Unveiling of the Big Picture Community Mosaic
- Screening of the 10th anniversary Lip Dub music video
- Screening of the City’s 10th anniversary video, featuring remarkable Rancho Cordovans or former residents
- Introduction of the 10-year-old Rancho Cordovans
- Toast to Rancho Cordova’s next 10 years

The ceremony will adjourn to an outdoor party in front of City Hall at 6:30 p.m. that will feature a free patriotic concert by the United States Air Force Band of the Golden West Concert Band from Travis Air Force Base.

Art of Popcorn will serve complimentary gourmet kettle corn, and cupcakes will round out the evening with a sweet flair.

“Civic Events Day will celebrate all of the wonderful people and events that make Rancho Cordova a great place for music, food, and fun,” said Rancho Cordova Mayor Linda Budge. “We invite Rancho Cordovans and friends throughout our region to join us in celebrating our 10th anniversary.”

**Visit:**  
[www.RanchoCordovaAnniversary.com](http://www.RanchoCordovaAnniversary.com) for a full schedule.

# CSUS Hosts National Drum and Bugle Corps Competition

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) – With instruments in tow at the CSUS Hornet Stadium, Drum & Bugle Corps teams from around the country will compete at the 34th Annual Moonlight Classic on Sunday, June 23, 6-10 PM.

For the uninitiated, this non-profit event with thousands in attendance is the longest running of its kind in the western United States, and is a visual extravaganza of sight and sound. It’s often described as “marching bands on steroids.”

Competing corps can each include up to 150 youths, ages 8-21, comprised of marching percussion and brass, front ensemble (vibraphones, marimbas, and other percussion instruments), and color guard. The color guard component has evolved from merely carrying the flag to now including dance and props such as rifles, sabers, and other specialty items.

Each 11-minute performance – which can span the entire football field – will include all of these elements in a meticulously choreographed presentation. In one competition, a “field of mirrors” gave the illusion of doubling the size of the corps, turning it into a full-on Spartacus-inspired gladiator match.

Other sense-dazzling performances have included a presentation of The Who’s rock opera Tommy, a James Bond theme with the corps in tuxes, and a horse race – complete with track, accompanied by (of course) the William Tell Overture.

Military drills have graduated to big-time show biz, and the appreciative crowds – expected to be in the thousands again this year – love the show.

Video clips can be accessed at: <http://www.someinc.com/MC2013/Video>

Photos can be accessed at: <http://someinc.com/MC2013/Pics/>

Corps are judged on musical performance, general effect on the audience, and color guard.

Participating drum corps:

- Blue Devils – Concord, CA (14-time national champs)*
- Blue Devils B – Concord, CA (2-time national champs)*
- Blue Devils C – Concord, CA*
- Blue Knights – Denver, CO*
- Carolina Crown – Ft. Mill, SC*
- Mandarins – Sacramento (8-time national champs)*
- Pacific Crest – Diamond Bar, CA*
- Santa Clara Vanguard – Santa Clara, CA (6 times national champs)*
- Vanguard Cadets – Santa Clara, CA (2-time national champs)*

Tickets can be purchased at the S.O.M.E. website: [www.someinc.com](http://www.someinc.com) (or at the gate that night). General admission is \$20. Reserved VIP seating is \$30.

The Sponsors of Musical Enrichment (S.O.M.E.) is a non-profit California corporation founded in 1978 for the purpose of supporting local youth music organizations and the performing arts on a continuing basis. Funds raised by this organization are reinvested in the local community. To date, over \$2,500,000 has been granted to deserving groups and individuals.

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June 27	Vintage Faire..... Folk, Ballads, Americana .....	Rotary Club of Fair Oaks fairoaksrotary@gmail.com
July 4	Have a Great Fourth of July, there will be <u>no concert</u> tonight as we all celebrate the 4th	
July 11	John Skinner Dance Band..... Popular Dance Music.....	Swan Family Vision (916) 966-6080
July 18	Swing Masters..... Big Band Swing.....	Woman’s Thursday Club of Fair Oaks (916) 966-6080
July 25	Todd Morgan And The Emblems .....	Prometric Testing Center

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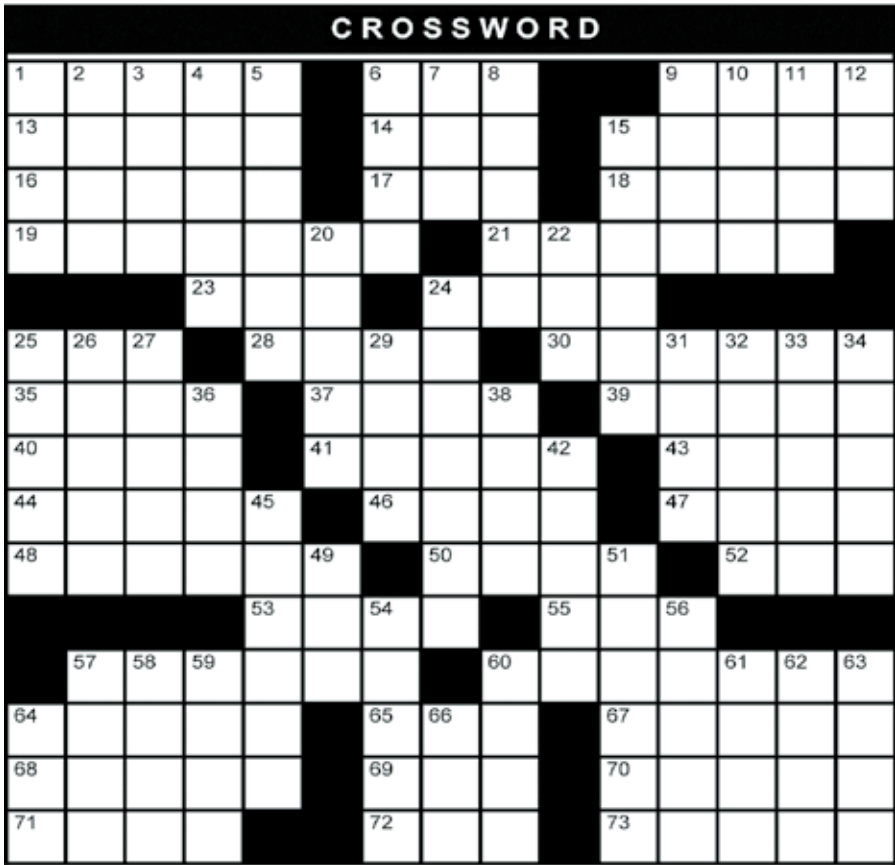
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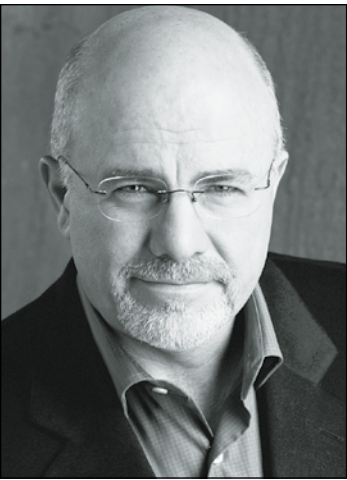
CLUES

- ACROSS

1. Inscribed pillar  
6. Make a choice  
9. He claimed that a little learning is a dangerous thing  
13. Admit  
14. Hawaiian dish  
15. Intro  
16. Round openings in architecture  
17. Reef dweller  
18. What #23 Across does out of tree  
19. "He hears America singing"  
21. What Beauty's Beast couldn't control  
23. Found on pines  
24. Do it till you drop?  
25. Disreputable vagrant  
28. Bulb site  
30. Fall asleep  
35. Eurasian mountain range  
37. Jockey's leash  
39. New York's Bloomberg, e.g.  
40. Customary practice  
41. Basic belief
43. Goose egg  
44. Former NBA players  
Archibald and McMillan, e.g.  
46. Ripped or separated  
47. Units of work  
48. Israeli money  
50. Century Gothic, e.g.  
52. Band performance  
53. Snorkeling site  
55. Black gold  
57. "He urged to not go gentle into that good night"  
60. "She knows why the caged bird sings"  
64. Fertilizer made by birds  
65. "Casablanca" player  
67. Warm  
68. Undo a bustle  
69. Before now  
70. Old-hat  
71. Makeup, e.g.  
72. Noisy talk  
73. Church assembly
- DOWN

1. "Like time in Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn"  
2. Georgia \_\_\_\_
3. Small ornamental case  
4. Jaunty rhythms  
5. "Subject of Blake's "The Tyger" or Bishop's "The Moose"  
6. Golf's U.S. \_\_\_\_  
7. "He loved a maiden named Annabel Lee"  
8. State of soil for supporting plant growth  
9. On some planes  
10. Thick liquid  
11. \_\_\_\_ pressure  
12. Emergency Medical Services  
15. Cheerleader's prop  
20. Separated  
22. Long, long time  
24. "The Bachelorette" to "The Bachelor," e.g.  
25. "His Love is like a red, red rose"  
26. Husband of Bathsheba in Old Testament  
27. Not glossy  
29. Kipling: "Never the twain shall \_\_\_\_"  
31. Stupely
32. Hearings or inspections, as of deeds or bonds  
33. Do like a blacksmith  
34. "He claimed that nothing gold can stay"  
36. Potato's soup mate  
38. Infamous Roman emperor  
42. Shaped to fit into a mortise  
45. Preacher's address  
49. Grazing spot  
51. Skintight hose  
54. Literary composition  
56. Apprehensive  
57. Ad jingle, e.g.  
58. Chance occurrences  
59. "Put a lid \_\_\_\_!"  
60. Crazy  
61. Past participle of "lie"  
62. \_\_\_\_ von Bismarck  
63. Like a hand-me-down  
64. Instinctive  
66. American Gas Association

For Solution See Page 7



Dave Ramsey is America's most trusted voice on money and business. He's authored four New York Times best-selling books: *Financial Peace*, *More Than Enough*, *The Total Money Makeover* and *EntreLeadership*. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 5,000,000 listeners each week on more than 500 radio stations. Follow Dave on Twitter at @DaveRamsey and on the web at daveramsey.com.

Resenting the Family Loan

Dear Dave,

I borrowed \$30,000 from my aunt to buy a condo eight years ago. We had a deal that she would get her money back, plus a piece of the profits, when it sold. If there were no profits, she would get back her original \$30,000. Recently the condo sold and I lost the money I put into it, plus my aunt's money as well. I make good money and don't have any other debt, but I'm a little resentful now that she wants me to pay her back. Do you have any suggestions?

- Christine

Dear Christine,

I don't want to be mean, but you have no right to be resentful toward your aunt. This is the deal you signed up for, and she did nothing wrong. Wanting her money back now isn't greedy or malicious on her part, and it's definitely not worth putting a family relationship at risk.

I know what you're thinking, because it's just human nature. You just went through a lot, and the situation didn't work out as planned. Plus, it doesn't sound like your aunt is hurting financially if she put \$30,000 toward helping you in the deal. Part of

Dave Says

you is thinking she has plenty of money, so why doesn't she just forgive the debt and forget about everything?

If you were barely scraping by, I might suggest that you sit down and talk with her over a cup of coffee, explain the situation and ask her to forgive the debt. Right now, the little girl part of you is whining, "Oh, come on. Just let me go!" But the grown-up Christine knows better. That part of you is whispering, "You know what to do..."

Pay her back as quickly as possible, and get this bad deal behind you for good. You said you make good money, so just take care of your responsibility. It'll hurt some, but it's better than taking a chance on ruining the relationship with a very generous and loving aunt.

- Dave

Watch What You Give Them!

Dear Dave,

I'm working on my debt snowball, and I'm trying to settle with a pushy collector. I don't have the \$9,000 I owe, but I have \$3,000 I'd like to offer as a settlement. Recently the collector has started asking for a lot

of information I don't feel comfortable providing. What should I do?

- Daniel

Dear Daniel,

Lots of times in these kinds of situations collectors are trying to gather up as much information as possible in order to sue you. Even if that's not the case here, there's no reason for you to be supplying them with a bunch of extra info. Just offer them the \$3,000, and make it clear that your financial coach—which is me—told you not to answer any more of their nosy questions.

Make sure they understand that your offer of \$3,000 stands as a settlement of the debt today. If they're willing to accept the offer, get a statement in writing saying that the \$3,000 represents payment in full before you cut the check. If they choose not to accept your offer, and they keep asking questions that are none of their business, just tell them to call back when they're willing to discuss terms. Then, hang up!

- Dave

\*For more financial help, please visit daveramsey.com.

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1			4			6	9
		7	3				
	5	4				2	
5				3	2		
		1			9		
		8	7				5
	4				5	9	
				2	7		
3	6			9			2

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

Come back every week for Sudoku!

For Solution See Page 7.

Business & Service Directory

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Sudoku Puzzle on Page 6

1	2	3	4	5	7	8	6	9
9	8	7	3	2	6	4	5	1
6	5	4	9	1	8	3	2	7
5	9	6	1	8	3	2	7	4
4	7	1	2	6	5	9	8	3
2	3	8	7	9	4	6	1	5
7	4	2	6	3	1	5	9	8
8	1	9	5	4	2	7	3	6
3	6	5	8	7	9	1	4	2

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By Ronnie McBrayer

I’m writing this article while sitting in my father’s chair. You know the chair of which I speak. It is that ratty old recliner that occupies the living room, den, or man-cave that no guest or other family member is ever allowed access. It belongs exclusively to my father.

So, how did I plant my butt in such an honored chair? Simple: It’s the best seat in the house, and my father isn’t here right now. While the master is away, I will occupy the throne; it is good to be king, if only for a few hours.

When I was a kid I really thought my father was a king, and not just because of his chair. I looked up to him as if he were a superhero who could leap tall buildings with a single bound, bend steel bars with his bare hands, catch bullets in his teeth, and defeat all of his arch enemies.

With hands the size of pot roasts and the strength of an ox, I was amazed at how he could lift me above his head, how fast he could run, and how there was nothing he could not do. “My daddy can beat up your daddy,” was a routine phrase on my lips.

And smart? Lord, yes, he was smart. He seemed to understand or know everything! He could do

# Thanks Dad for Wising Up

pre-algebra in his head and long division without picking up a pencil; he could read the hardest words, fix anything broken, and solve any problem. He might as well have been a king.

But as I got older, as a teenager, I discovered my father was growing remarkably stupid. In just a few short years, somehow, he became a backward, bumbling simpleton with not a clue as to how the world really worked.

He offered inane advice on everything from money and education to automobiles and the opposite sex. He set ridiculous boundaries in regard to my time, work, school, and friends. A few times he even dared to critique or forbid my well-made decisions. What an idiot.

Then, in my twenties, my father must have returned to school or started taking smart pills. His counsel improved dramatically – almost overnight. His words were far sounder than I could ever remember. It was obvious an old dog could learn new tricks. I was so proud of him.

And now, with growing children of my own, my father practically has a PhD. No, he’s not as big and strong as he once was, but he is absolutely brilliant, even smarter than before. His intellectual turnaround has been miraculous.

But what bothers me is the fact that I am my father’s son. See, I get more like him every day: The cadence of my voice, my mannerisms, the gray in my

beard, my dietary habits, my elevated cholesterol. So I fear I too will have a mid-life plunge into idiocy.

I don’t have a “chair” at home, but today my children look upon me with something akin to worship, as I looked upon my father. Tomorrow they will despise my advice, my words, and the limitations I place upon them because my IQ will have shrunk down to nothing as their own rises to near Einstein levels.

I know it is coming. I can feel it. Sometimes, just by the way my children look at me, or how they question my judgment, or when they angrily resist me, I can tell I’m getting dumber. I “just don’t understand.” I don’t “get it.” I’m standing in the way of their good time. It is all sure to get worse before it gets better.

But hopefully, after a decade or so on the dark side, my mental capacities will improve as my own father’s did. Maybe then I won’t be such a bonehead, and my children will find me worth listening to again.

It’s really too bad that we fathers take these short trips into stupidity when our children are at such vulnerable junctions in their lives. They sure could use a little help.

*Ronnie McBrayer is a syndicated columnist, speaker, and author of multiple books. You can read more and receive regular e-columns in your inbox at [www.ronniemcbrayer.net](http://www.ronniemcbrayer.net).*

# Can You Hear Me Now, Uncle Sam?

By Rev. James L. Snyder, D. Litt

You can imagine my feelings when I recently found out that good old Uncle Sam was checking up on my phone calls, email messages and the rest of the social networking. Finally, somebody is really watching out for me.

It is more than that. Somebody is so interested in my affairs they are getting involved in my telephone conversations. I must admit that at first I was a little suspicious about all of this.

For example: What does Uncle Sam know about me and my phone calls that I do not know?

I get an awful lot of telephone calls during the course of a week. Some are friends, some are family, some are trying to sell me the Brooklyn Bridge. Even if I lived in New York City, I would not want to own the Brooklyn Bridge. Can you imagine how much it costs to keep that thing up and running?

As I said, at first I was a little suspicious about somebody listening into my phone calls. Then I remembered that back in “the day,” everybody did that. We had what was called the “party line” telephone system. That meant that everybody was connected to everybody else.

My grandmother for example, lived in a valley up in the mountains. She was on the party line, of course, and everybody had a special ring. Grandma’s ring was two long and one short rings. Whenever the telephone rang, dear old grandmother knew who was being called and, being a nosy person, she usually listened into the conversations. I am not picking on my grandmother, for everybody did it. Everybody knew everybody was doing it.

It was gossipier’s heaven.

I think there is something to be said for everybody knowing everybody’s business. That way everybody is up and up on the things they are talking about.

Of course, there is a dark

side to it. I am semi-ashamed to reveal that I was part of that dark side.

Whenever anybody wanted to send out a rumor there was always the party line telephone system. My cousin and I got together and cooked up some juicy rumor about old Henry up the valley. Henry had never been married and was probably in his 70s at the time.

We started the rumor that Henry had a girlfriend.

It did not take long for everybody in the valley to know that Henry, who had been a bachelor for over seventy years, now had a special love interest. The big question coming through the party line was, who is this lucky woman?

Before long, this got a little out of control. Everybody believed that Henry had a special love interest and it got to the point that Henry himself believed he had a love interest.

I remember going with my grandmother to the grocery store and we happened to run into good old Henry. My grandmother, who was the queen of the gossipers, took this opportunity to speak to Henry.

“Oh Henry,” she said as we approached him. “I heard the news that you have a girlfriend. I’m so happy for you. You’ll have to bring her over to my house for coffee and cake some time.”

“Thank you, Mary,” Henry said with the biggest smile I have ever seen him wear. “I’ve never been happier.”

At this point, I did not know what to do. Everybody was so happy with this rumor, especially old Henry, that the truth would have destroyed the entire valley. I did think of starting a rumor that Henry and his new girlfriend had a fight and broke up. However, on second thought, Henry was so happy these days, I just hated to spoil his life.

I never knew how that turned out. The last time I saw Henry he

was smiling and thanking people for congratulating him on having a girlfriend. Some people need to feel happy, I suppose.

I guess it is my time to be fooled by my uncle, and I deserve it.

I really do not mind if good old Uncle Sam is going to listen in on my social networking “party line,” but I do have a few rules that I would like to establish.

Rule number one. Uncle Sam do not repeat anything you hear said on my “party line.” Let’s keep some of that stuff between us. Okay? Some of what you’re going to hear may not be altogether, what should I say, truthful. Especially, if you only hear a portion of the conversation.

Rule number two. If while listening in on the conversation of mine and the other party happens to be some salesman trying to sell me something, please feel free to butt into the conversation. After all, the salesman is trying to take a dollar out of my pocket and you know how much you want that dollar!

Rule number three. If the conversation you overhear is concerning you, keep in mind we’re talking about the “other” Uncle Sam.

It is hard to keep anything secret these days. In fact, there is not much to keep secret anymore.

The only secret I’m really interested in is what God has. His promise to me is, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3 KJV).

God hears me all the time and knows everything about me.

*Rev. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, PO Box 831313, Ocala, FL 34483. He lives with his wife, Martha, in Silver Springs Shores. Call him at 1-866-552-2543 or e-mail [jamesnyder2@att.net](mailto:jamesnyder2@att.net). His web site is [www.jamesnyderministries.com](http://www.jamesnyderministries.com).*



By Marlys Norris, Christian Author

There are not many roads to God, the Father and Creator of all that is. ONLY One road takes one into the presence of God and that involves believing and accepting His Only Son, Jesus Christ as Savior of your soul. He is either who He claimed to be or an imposter. *The evidence is in* all events of two thousand years ago when Jesus went to the Cross and died as the Lamb of God shedding every ounce of His blood, in accordance with His Father’s instructions. when He sent His Son to earth to be born in a baby in human form. Then, in three-days Jesus miraculously rose again. He was seen by hundreds of people and His

# Come Now !!

disciples in the Upper Room when He walked through a wall in His resurrected new body. The one disciple (Thomas) questioned and putting his fingers in the punctures in his hands and he believed.

An amazing child. Jesus went into a Temple and worshipped with the Rabbi’s of his day.

A child who regularly heard the voice of His Father and followed in obedience doing every act He was to do to reconcile man back into the grace of His loving Father. A gifted child with all the qualities of God, yet born to be like a man. One to understand our human natures of temptation, our fleshly desires and needs, man created in the image of God, yet missing the magnificence only dwells in God alone. God who came to earth to show us the power of faith and to destroy the works of His enemy who tries to steal our souls. The wonders and miracles of God’s Son Jesus Christ proved over and over to show us He is the great I AM.

Only Jesus is the doorway to eternal life and freedom from our

guilt and shame. He is the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life... He knocks on the heart of everyone to invite Him into their life. Then, He promises to never leave or forsake those who come and invite Him into their heart. So often too many people ignore the tender tap on their shoulder or the whisper of God that invites them to “just Come!” He has a peace that passes all understanding awaiting those who seek Him. The Word (Bible) tells us that when we “seek Him with our whole heart” He will bless our lives as we walk and learn of Him. The promise of God is: “Delight thyself in the Lord and He will give thee the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4 The Bible is filled with promises He desires to grant to those who read, study and follow in obedience. COME NOW, COME !!

*Marlys Johnsen Norris Award Winning Author Book: Recipes for a Happier Marriage Contact: [Marlysjn@gmail.com](mailto:Marlysjn@gmail.com)*



By Karen Anderson

There is a word we all use to create ourselves an “out” of something we don’t want to do or are afraid of. It can be viewed as a harsh word, so we use other words to get around it like, “I can’t right now,” or “I just don’t know.” But there is no way you can avoid what it means. The word is procrastination. Your response may be, “I really don’t procrastinate that much.” Oh really, how many times do you think to yourself “I know I should do this but I’d rather do that.” Then you decide that the situation can wait so again you procrastinate. Does that sound like an excuse to you? I too, have used excuses on situations that

# But I Don’t Want To!

need to be addressed to avoid the possible hurt. How silly is that? JUST DO IT! Just get it done and you will feel the freedom of taking charge and completing it.

Have you had a hard decision to make about someone? I had such a situation but I didn’t want to face it. I didn’t want to be the cause of someone being hurt, let someone else take the heat and not me. This is a feeling that none of us want to deal with, it is so *uncomfortable* that we will put it off, and put it off! In other words, we procrastinate, which is caused by fear. I kept thinking if I could just soften the blow maybe it won’t hurt her so much and especially wouldn’t put the guilt on my shoulders. Talked to everyone except the one person I needed to go to first...God. While I was writing the original letter, He had given me some options to still have her involved but with less responsibilities. The enemy attacked me again, convincing me that to have her step away from the project voluntarily was really best for her...Really? Again, not

the right decision, so I procrastinated again. If it was so great, why couldn’t I send the letter? God was blocking my decision because He knew it wasn’t right.

I finally decided I needed to follow God’s direction and just open my heart to Him and then through Him to her. I needed to not make the decision out of fear but with the attitude of love. His Word says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

So the next time you have something you have to, or need to do, don’t procrastinate, ask God for His direction, after all He knows what is best, not you. Don’t forget to include Him in all your decisions.

PASSAGE: 2 Corinthians 3:17

*Karen Anderson is an accomplished speaker, author, and chaplain. Her books are “Nikki’s Tail-Waggin’ Lessons” and “The Little Book of BIG Thoughts Series.” Contact her through her website [www.doablesteps.com/contact](http://www.doablesteps.com/contact) or follow her on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.*

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with Mary Jane Popp

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3) Walk 30 minutes daily. Your weight loss depends on it. We all sit too much! Walk at a moderate pace like you're doing more that strolling and leave Fido home if he stops and sniffs too much. Treadmill walking gets better results because the speed is more consistent.

4) Eat 10 servings of green veggies (especially leafy greens) daily to keep you feeling full and healthy! Leafy greens accelerate our weight loss. This is the ONLY food we undereat on as Americans. All greens rock, BUT make no mistake, avocados are not a green veggies. Fresh, frozen, are all good but canned should be your last resort.

5) Eat more fish for dinner. When it comes to losing weight, fish is better than chicken! The lighter and whiter the fish the better for your metabolism. We need to eat 1 gram of protein per pound of lean body weight to fuel our metabolism and keep our bodies

strong and healthy, not to mention tight and firm. The problem is that protein can also be high in fat. Lisa suggests choosing the following protein sources if you need to lose weight, body fat especially if you have a slow metabolism. The top five sources are:

- A. Complete protein shake 100% whey or Lean Bar. Both are lean and clean for faster weight loss.
- B. Egg whites
- C. Fish. All white fish is best and salmon and fatty fish should be limited to two times a week.
- D. Turkey breast
- E. Chicken breast

6) Keep your carbohydrates (yes, even healthy ones) to 75 grams for women and 100 grams for men or less. People just eat way too much oatmeal, bread, cereal, cereal bars, crackers, rice, pasta (even gluten free) potatoes, granola, juices, and snack foods. These foods raise blood sugar very quickly STOPPING fat loss immediately after eating. No amount of exercise can erase a bad diet, so start tracking your carbs and reading labels to see which foods have carbs, and you'll be shocked at how fast you can trim your waistline eating from the earth instead of a box!

Now you've got six of the top ten ways to boost your metabolism and get in great shape. I'll have the final five in my next column. Don't forget to hold on to this column so you can put them all together! If you want to check out Lisa Lynn's website, she has lots of info on it. It's [www.lynnfit.com](http://www.lynnfit.com). More to come! Lookin' and feelin' good with POPPOFF!!!

Join Mary Jane for the KAH! Noon News Monday-Friday and then again for POPPOFF 10 PM - Midnight.

## SHAPING UP !!! Part I

Are you an excuse maker? Want to get over it? Lisa Lynn has the answer to getting over those excuses for not getting in shape. And she shared her experiences with Dr. Oz, and me on my radio show POPPOFF. By the way, she has a personal approach. It's a been there, done that attitude. As a teen, she persevered to lose some forty pounds and keep it off despite her under-active thyroid. Lisa Lynn specializes in metabolic disorders and personal training. She's best known for her thirteen years as personal trainer to Martha Stewart who has said, "She's the only trainer that made a difference." So what are the top excuses we've heard over and over again for not exercising? How about "I don't know how to get started" or "I don't know what to do" or "I'm too exhausted" and finally "I hurt too much." Well, get over it with these ten things you need to do to get in shape fast. I could only get five of the ten in this column, so hold on to this column so you can coordinate with the next one. According to Lisa, you CAN get fit very quickly if you attack your goals with a sense of urgency the way celebrities do when they are getting in shape for a role. Think of it as a "Two Week-Ten pound" challenge. You have nothing to lose but weight.

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# Red, White and Ooh!

## Celebrating the Fourth with Fireworks

By David Dickstein

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) – America’s 237th birthday will soon be celebrated with fireworks that shimmer in the sky and gleam from the ground. Where you ooh and aah on the Fourth of July depends on whether you go public to watch an aerial display or private since local laws allow the sale and use of state-approved consumer fireworks in Sacramento County from June 28 through July 4.

That’s good news for local youth groups, service clubs, churches and other cash-strapped area non-profits hoping for booming business from a temporary wooden stand over seven toasty days.

Sunrise Little League, for one, plans to improve its ball field at C-Bar-C Park in Citrus Heights with proceeds raised from its TNT Fireworks stand at 7601 Sunrise Blvd. next to Safe Credit Union. Also in Citrus Heights, a new batting cage and fencing for its backstop are what Mesa Verde High School Softball Boosters is planning to buy with money earned from its TNT stand at 8477 Auburn Blvd. next to California Burgers. Out of its Phantom Fireworks stand next to Pastor Auto Care at 7920 Old Auburn Road, volunteers of American Legion Post #637 will raise funds for a local Boy Scout troop. In the next city over, the Antelope Community Tennis Association will raise funds to resurface courts and keep membership dues low with a Phantom stand next to Rite-Aid at 4300 Elverta Road.

In Carmichael, Glen Oaks Swim Club will help keep kids afloat as members with a Phantom Fireworks location near Quicker Stop Market at 6725 Winding Way. Over in Orangevale, food and other resources for needy local families will spawn from sales at the Assist Local Foundation’s Phantom stand adjacent to Dairy Queen at 9295 Greenback Lane. Meanwhile, Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church, which will run a TNT stand on its own turf at 11427 Fair Oaks Blvd., has earmarked proceeds for its youth, starting with summer camp scholarships. Bella Vista High School Band Boosters will offset competition fees, uniforms, insurance and other costs with funds raised at its TNT stand near the Olive Garden Restaurant at 5445 Sunrise Blvd. in Citrus Heights.

As volunteers for these groups work their mojo to move assortments and individually sold items, customers looking to get the most bang for their buck could become overwhelmed by the wide range of firework prices and performances. To help the patriotic and philanthropic, here’s our annual fireworks guide that includes all 11 of the new state-approved fireworks for 2013 along with the best returning items. Fireworks are listed by price and rated on a 5-star scale for performance, duration, distinctiveness and overall comparative value. Judges included firefighters of Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District, Station 65 in Rancho Cordova, where the test was conducted.

### New for 2013

• **Game Time (TNT), \$39.99** – This rookie scores with intense crackle and wide-spreading sparks in the late innings, but the height and overall performance aren’t powerful enough to hit it out of the park. *93 seconds. 3 Stars*



• **Phantom Phlash Phinish (Phantom), \$18.99** – Phantastic Phountain. Second-runner-up for “Best New Fountain” has strong duration, altitude, spread,



Citrus Heights resident Juli Johnson attracts customers to the Active 20-30 Club of Greater Folsom’s Phantom fireworks booth next to Dimple Records in the Sunrise Marketplace. Photo: David Dickstein.

titanium crackle and whistle. *108 seconds. 4 1/2 Stars*



• **Serenity (Phantom), \$15.99** – Noiseless fountain opens with lovely lava lamp-like lumps (thank you, nitrocellulose!) and peacefully pleases with seven colors and white chrysanthemums. *59 seconds. 4 Stars*



• **Phantom Spy-Ro-Mania (Phantom), \$14.99 for two** – A flickering fuse spirals around a tube of crackles and sparks, leading to a whistling tube sidecar that produces four deliciously irritating shrieks. Equivalent of TNT’s lower-priced **Spiral Lite** (\$5.99, 4 Stars) that debuted in 2003 and was, itself, a copycat. *34 seconds. 3 Stars.*



• **Surfs Up (TNT), \$10.99** – “Best New Fountain” runner-up. Gorgeous globes lead to a



wave of multiple effects worthy of exclams of “cowabunga!” Some of the best and widest-spreading titanium rain and crackles for the price. Just about the only thing lacking is an apostrophe in the contractive name. *58 seconds. 4 1/2 Stars*

• **Twilight Magic (Phantom), \$9.99** – Earns “Best New Fountain” honors for three exciting rotations of crackle-and-whistle and wide-spreading sparks at a comparatively super price. *57 seconds. 5 Stars*



• **Eenie, Meenie, Miney, Moe (Phantom), \$9.99 for four** – Sold as a set of four, these cutely named, but lackluster fountains all emit chrysanthemums and crackle, but blink at the onset and you’ll miss the pearl of blue, red, green or yellow that is the distinguishing feature. *42 seconds. 2 Stars*



• **Rainbow Rays (TNT), \$5.99** – Solid value-priced freshman delivers on height and crackle. Duration is one of the longest in the state at this price point. *56 seconds. 4 Stars*



• **Poopy Pooch (Phantom), \$5.99 for two** – It’s all business with this scatological novelty that has an ash-producing snake pellet squeezing out of a cardboard dog’s behind. Been sold by others for years under the name Poopy Puppy, but Phantom is the first to classy up California with this daytime item. They’re sold in pairs, so if the first doesn’t satisfy, there’s always No. 2. Yeah, we went there. *22 seconds. 2 Stars*



• **Cheeky Fountain (TNT), \$3.99** – Colorful sparks, silvery rain and crackling stars gush out of what resembles a fun-labeled kid’s juice box. Price is fair and so is the performance. *37 seconds. 3 Stars*



• **Recess (TNT), \$3** – Two whistles serve as the recess bell, and before playtime is over you’re treated to fleeting, albeit impressive altitude, crackles, chrysanthemums and multiple colors. *24 seconds. 3 1/2 Stars*



### Best of the Rest (4-5 Stars)

• **Opening Show (TNT), \$59.99** – Budget permitting, last year’s “Best New Finale” is a 500-gram must-have. The climax at the

2-minute mark is intense. Be no closer than 20 feet away for this one. *130 seconds.*

• **Delirium (TNT), \$49.99** – Fan-shaped 500-gram fountain is pricy, but its intensity and beauty are bona fide stunning. *133 seconds.*

• **Phantom Crown Jewel (Phantom), \$49.99** – Intense 500-gram display of white flowers, colored pearls, gold chrysanthemums and silver crackle. Packs a wallop, though that also reduces burn time. (Note: Prices for many of the items listed here have gone up due mainly to higher costs in China. Still, a \$20 price hike from last year, even though the cost is now on par with other 500-gram items, is a doozy.) *82 seconds.*

• **Peacock Tail Fan Fountain (Phantom), \$34.99** – Last season’s “Best New Fountain” builds excitement with each dazzling stage. Works out to 65 cents per second, but still a must-have. *54 seconds.*

• **Alpha Wolf (Phantom), \$24.99** – Green and purple drop-lets, gold shower and crackling stars finale are awesome. No whistles, doesn’t need them. *83 seconds.*

• **American Spirit (TNT), \$22.99 plus bonus** – This fountain of red, white and bluish stars, gold showers and decent whistles and crackles makes the cut because it comes with the pleasing, 90-second Sizzler Fountain. *80 seconds.*

• **O-Blivion (TNT), \$19.99** – This lord of the ring-shaped fountains emits multi-colored chrysanthemums with pine and impressive titanium crackles. *125 seconds.*

• **Pyropalooza (TNT), \$19.99** – Excellent height, crackle and vivid hues – a vivacious visual. *115 seconds.*

• **Hasta La Vista Baby (Phantom), \$19.99** – Like color and hate whistles? Then this is a solid pick with a screech-free spectrum of fast-changing colors. *125 seconds.*

• **Funky Monkey (Phantom), \$19.99** – This pyrotechnic primate features red pearls and a solid overall performance. *90 seconds.*

• **Mad Dog (TNT), \$17.99 for two (buy one-get one, or BOGO)** – More classic than rabic, this old dog spews amazing crackles, whistles and multi-color sparks. *80 seconds.*

• **Firecracker Fountain (Phantom), \$17.99 for two (BOGO)** – Lives up to its name with a remarkable crackling barrage alongside multi-colored pearls. *76 seconds.*

• **Phantom Night Owl (Phantom), \$14.99** – Phantom’s only internally glowing fountain

(eyes and mouth light up) has four loud screeches and an exciting overall performance. TNT discontinuing the similar-effected LOL Fountain makes this one even more unique. *65 seconds.*

• **Night Treasure (TNT), \$14.99** – Looks like a fan fountain, and it is, albeit only for the final 22 seconds. Still quite impressive. *98 seconds.*

• **King of Bling (Phantom), \$18.99 for two** – The crackles heard during the final third sound just like popping popcorn. Majestic chrysanthemums and whistle. Great value now that it’s now a BOGO. *90 seconds.*

• **Radiant (TNT), \$10** – Named “Best New Fountain” in 2011, this modern classic has a stunning performance for the price. Pushes the legal limit for spreading sparks and the fish effect is awesome. A must-buy. *93 seconds.*

• **Luck of the Irish (TNT), \$9.99** – Still holding its own after a dozen years, this classic features gold and silver spray, red and green balls, crackles and four super-loud whistles. *75 seconds.*

• **Lil Red Devil (TNT), \$9.99 for two (BOGO)** – Packs plenty of heat for the size and price. Ends strong with wide-spreading titanium crackling sparks. *35 seconds.*

• **Phantom Dragon Slayer (Phantom), \$9.99 for two (BOGO)** – Got some white, blue and lemon chrysanthemums, rowdy crackles and red stars going on. *66 seconds.*

• **Little Miss (TNT), \$4.99** – This value-priced opening act packs plenty of color plus silver rain and crackles. *47 seconds.*

• **Moondance (Phantom), \$4.99 for two (BOGO)** – Little dynamo emits loud crackles, purple pearls and glittering gold and white sparks. Note: Equivalent to TNT’s 17-year-old classic **Purple Rain**, \$5.99 for two. *45 seconds.*

*Putting on a decent fireworks display these days costs around \$150 plus tax. If you buy that, buy this:*

• **From TNT:** Perfect Show assortment (\$99.99), two Lil Red Devils (\$9.99 as a BOGO, lit together), two Radiants (\$20, lit together as your finale), one Surfs Up (\$10.99) and two 3-packs of morning glories (\$8.99 as a BOGO). Use your \$10 off coupon received by joining the TNT Club in advance at [www.tntfireworks.com](http://www.tntfireworks.com).



• **From Phantom:** Awestruck assortment (\$119.99, includes morning glories and bonus Electrical Shock fountain with coupon available at stand), two King of Blings (\$18.99 as a BOGO, lit together as your finale), one Twilight Magic (\$9.99), one Mystical Magic (free with coupon received by joining the Phantomizer Fireworks Club in advance at [www.fireworks.com](http://www.fireworks.com)).







# Sacramento Capitals Announce 2013 Single Match Tickets Now on Sale

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) – The 2012 Western Conference Champion Sacramento Capitals announced that all individual tickets for all home matches in the 2013 season are now on sale. Tickets are available by logging on to [www.SacCaps.com](http://www.SacCaps.com), emailing [tickets@saccaps.com](mailto:tickets@saccaps.com), or by calling (916) 304-5722.

The Capitals open the season with five straight home matches July 7, 8, 10, 12, 13 and con-cludes July 17 and 22. The July 17 match against the Texas Wild will feature the world champion doubles team, Bob and Mike Bryan.

The Capitals will have four returning players from the 2012 roster: Mardy Fish, Sam Querrey, Mark Knowles, and Ryan Sweeting. They will be joined by Taylor Townsend and Megan Moulton-Levy and will again be coached by Wayne Bryan in their bid to win the Mylan World TeamTennis Title in 2013.

Ticket prices are \$25-\$70 with discounts available for kids. Season tickets and five match package tickets are still available and they run \$112-\$392.

All home matches begin at 7:35 p.m. and are played at Capitals Stadium on the corner of Sunrise and Greenback in Citrus Heights. For more information, log on to [www.saccaps.com](http://www.saccaps.com).

Mylan World TeamTennis, presented by GEICO, showcases the best in professional team tennis competition, playing an innovative coed team format. Co-founded by Billie Jean King in the 1970s and based on a concept of gender equity, Mylan WTT offers unique access to the sport and some of its greatest champions who have played over the past 38 seasons.

Mylan WTT is well known for showcasing and introducing innovative elements to tennis including instant replay, coed format, cumulative and no-ad scoring, on-court coaching and timeouts, overtime and supertiebreakers, multi-colored courts and player names on the back of shirts.

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) is a minority owner and promotional partner of World TeamTennis. For more information on Mylan WTT, visit [www.WTT.com](http://www.WTT.com).

Source: [www.SacCaps.com](http://www.SacCaps.com)

Sacramento Capitals coach Wayne Bryan. Photo Courtesy Sacramento Capitals.

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# A Little Carnival Inspiration Can Help Cruise Hold-Outs



The Carnival Inspiration offers three- and four-day cruises out of Long Beach every week. Photo by David Dickstein.

By David Dickstein

“Too expensive.” “Sounds boring.” “I get seasick.” “I’ll be claustrophobic.” Nearly 80 percent of American adults have never been on a luxury cruise, according to the Cruise Lines International Association, citing these and other reasons for snubbing the chance to live the high life on the high seas. A lingering sour economy and sporadic news reports of norovirus outbreaks and ships losing power, sometimes running adrift for days, don’t help the cause.

Even with all this baggage, what a shame that so many people are missing the boat. Once the \$23 billion cruising industry gets away from the front page and back to the travel section where it belongs, this avid cruiser hopes the most ardent of holdouts can join the club of converts as I did a decade ago with an unforgettable Alaskan cruise. Cruise No. 12 is just weeks away for this former land-only traveler.

As for concerns over claustrophobia, seasickness or boredom that are preventing some of the resistant from stretching their inner sea legs - true, a cabin can feel cramped, but the hope is to spend little time there. True, nausea caused by rocking on water has been named the leading reason people don’t cruise. Actually, the vast majority of cruises experience smooth sailing, but if the motion of the ocean is of great concern, consider spending a few dollars more for a stateroom located mid-ship and over-the-counter remedies exist. As for boredom, if people suffer from that while aboard these floating resorts, it’s their own fault. Entertainment is omnipresent practically around the clock.

Not convinced? Then here’s a suggestion for the uninitiated: Consider taking a short, easy and affordable cruise out of Long Beach or, starting in September, San Pedro. If you hate it, you’ve squandered only 3 or 4 days and a few hundred discretionary dollars. Like it, and the bug that bites you may cause serious swelling -- to your travel budget, that is.

But first things first for a first-timer. After all, a fare of several thousands of dollars and being on water for too long a spell right out of the gate -- make that port -- might be too much, too soon. For about \$400, less or more depending on such factors as the location of the cabin and date of the sail, nautical novices can take a 3- or 4-day introductory course to cruising in a classroom called the Carnival Inspiration. Through at least April 2015, the 2,052-passenger liner sets sail on Fridays for 3-day cruises to Ensenada and Mondays for 4-day voyages that make an additional call at Avalon on Catalina Island.

Take the shortest of the cruises, which I recently did with an old college buddy while the wives stayed home. These 3-day escapes pack pretty much all the on-ship activities of a longer Carnival sail, right down to the one formal night in the dining room. It’s lobster and prime rib for everyone, and don’t feel guilty asking for seconds. Or thirds. Really, it’s OK. The food, thanks to Chef Jorg and his 100 cooks humming in the *Inspiration*’s galley, was better than what I’ve eaten on many longer cruises.

Quickie cruises can serve as a parent’s getaway as adult time is guaranteed with Camp Carnival, which offers organized fun for children by age group. While the supervised kidlets are swooshing

down the 4-story, 300-foot-long Twister Water Slide, grown-ups can work up a sweat at the gym while basking in a panoramic view off the bow. All that and unlimited food 24/7 is included in the price of the cruise, as is practically everything else outside the spa, casino, bars and shops.

Here’s what a typical 3-dayer looks like aboard the *Inspiration*, which since October 2011 has sailed under the command of personable Capt. Pierluigi Lanaro, an Italian-born Southern California transplant who has been with Carnival for 37 years.

Friday is embarkation, a usually painless process, and upon boarding most people head to Deck 10 for a lavish multi-cultural buffet. Newbies are encouraged to take the guided tour of the ship to help get their bearings. After the mandatory safety briefing, the ship and the more fun-seeking passengers -- the ones who give “booze cruises” their name -- truly come alive. Hang out with the party animals in the bars and nightclub. Or don’t. Roll the dice with excited gamblers when the casino is open. Or don’t. The *Inspiration* is by no means the largest ship in Carnival’s fleet, but there’s always lesser degrees of merriment at hand if that’s more your speed. Other sail day highlights include karaoke, trivia, rum cake sampling, a dance lesson, sing-along piano music, bingo and a teaser show on the main stage.

Saturday is mostly spent docked in Baja’s third-largest city. As destinations go, Ensenada isn’t all that inviting or exciting. It’s known for one super grande Mexican flag waving atop a 500-foot-high pole, shops carrying real Cuban cigars, a waterspout and a couple of popular cantinas. Strolling up and

down touristy Ave Lopez Mateos is generally meh and so are the cruise-organized shore excursions. Several tours are built around a visit to La Bufadora, a natural blowhole. There are advantages to staying on a ship or returning early on port days, especially when a port is blah. Swimming, soaking and sunbathing during these off-peak hours are idyllic for those looking to relax, and the spa often runs port day specials. Evening entertainment includes stand-up comedy and a production show called “Fiesta Latina.” First-timers are often surprised by the use of pyrotechnics and a live band, at least for the time being (read on).

As the only full day at sea, Sunday has a jam-packed schedule. The 1 o’clock hour, alone, has five activities going on in different parts of the ship, presenting a serious dilemma for art-loving men with hairy chests who know their classic rock trivia and have a child dreaming of building his or her own teddy bear while doing Pilates. Opting for the art auction gets you free glasses of champagne and an education in art appreciation. Booze cruises don’t usually bring out deep-pocketed serious buyers, but good deals can be found with a timely bid and a quality art auctioneer. The hand-embellished Duave giclee I won with Charles Warren’s bang of the gavel arrived in perfect shape from Park West Gallery. Before passengers pack for the next morning’s disembarkation (wait until sunup and you could miss out on breakfast), they are

treated to more stand-up comedy and “Shout,” the quintessential cruise ship revue. A mish-mash of choreography, music covering country, rock, gospel, surf, Motown, ‘50s do-wop and ‘60s psychedelic, an audience-participatory “Macarena,” fireworks -- the only thing missing from this musical smorgasbord are tunes recorded after 1996.

Because everything is so new and exciting, first-time cruisers may not notice what’s tired and dated about the *Inspiration*, one of the oldest ships in Carnival’s fleet, but much of that is already being addressed by the cruise line. The *Inspiration*, which had its maiden voyage in 1996 and hasn’t been refurbished since 2007, will be in dry dock for two weeks in November to receive “Fun Ship 2.0” upgrades. After tapping toes for nearly seven years, both “Shout” and “Fiesta Latina” are retiring in favor of new revues from Playlist Productions. Fresh shows are welcome, though we’ll see if show-savvy LA audiences embrace the smaller cast and canned music that are part of the fleet-wide retooling of the main stage productions. Upgrades to the Punchliner Comedy Club include TV personality and comedian George Lopez welcoming audiences with pre-recorded voice and video messages as part of his responsibilities as Carnival’s new “curator of comedy.” Also coming is “Hasbro, The Game Show,” an audience-participatory stage version of six popular games from the toymaker, including “Monopoly,” “Yahtzee” and

“Sorry.” Aesthetic and mechanical repairs that can only be done in dry dock also are scheduled.

The first sailing of the newly renovated *Inspiration* is set for Nov. 22. Two months later the ship will be joined in Long Beach by her year-older Fantasy Class sister. Starting in late January, several months after being dry docked for Fun Ship 2.0 upgrades, the *Carnival Imagination* will make identical three- and four-day roundtrip runs on Thursdays and Sundays, respectively. Not to be shut out on the SoCal booze cruise market, Carnival’s slightly pricier brand, Princess Cruises, is sending the *Golden Princess* to San Pedro from late September through early December for 3-day trips to Ensenada and a four-day that adds stopovers to either Santa Barbara or Avalon depending on the sail.

The cruise industry is making the graduation to more extensive cruises easy for Southern Californians. The 2,124-passenger *Carnival Miracle*, a 9-year-old ship that will undergo Fun Ship 2.0 upgrades in 2015, will operate seven-day Mexican Riviera and 15-day Hawaii programs seasonally out of Long Beach from October through April 2014. From San Pedro, a dozen other cruise lines offer an array of voyages lasting a week and longer. The most extravagant currently being booked is a 116-day world cruise on the ultra-luxury *Seabourn Sojourn*. Brochure price: \$196,799. A booze cruise this ain’t.



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