



## No Ship of Fools for These Cruise Acts

Page 6

## Game Plots

Don't Discount *Dragon*

Page 7



# Gold River Messenger

“Written by the people, for the people”

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Serving Gold River and Sacramento County

February, 2016

## COPS AND RELICS: NEW MUSEUM RECORDS LEGACY OF LAW



Page 2

## WHEN NOT MAKING A LIST IS A GOOD THING



Page 5

# Love is Abuzz at Golden Pond

Story by Karen DeVaney

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) -

Most of us have read myths or fairytales about clandestine or star-crossed lovers who found one another in the most improbable of places. We have perhaps experienced real couples who have riveting stories of how they stumbled into each other's lives. Love stories, whether true or imaginary, re-ignites that desire that lies in all of us to be loved and cherished, no matter our circumstance, no matter our age. Many people give up on ever finding love after a particular point in time; they chant misnomers that belie the truth—that love can be found anywhere, anytime.

Just such a love story unfolded at Golden Pond Retirement Community here in Sacramento.

It all began on a sunny summer day when Ruth McCubrey sauntered into the dining room for a bit of conversation and a meal. She never anticipated meeting Don Veille, falling in love, and eventually planning a wedding. But on Jan. 3rd, 2016, Ruth and Don, committed themselves to one another before family and friends. The heart-warming marriage ceremony included a concert pianist from the Sacramento Symphony, a gorgeous bride and handsome groom, and readings from the New Testament and from Kahlil



The wedding took place in the Performing Arts Center at Golden Pond, which was decorated with a candle lit walkway, flowers, and an ornate archway for the couple to recite their vows under. Photo by Ron Tan Photography

Gibran, the famous poet, On Marriage: One of the many touching lines in this poem read; “Love one another but make not a bond of love. Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your soul.” Ruth and Don choose this poignant piece for its significance to honoring one another as individuals.

The couple embraced the adage: “It's never too late for

love” but it was not “love at first sight” Ruth explained. “Don didn't like me initially; I was way too liberal minded for him.” That all changed when the couple began to converse on a regular basis in Don's apartment. They discovered, over two cold beers, they had more in common than they realized and each had a traveling past with

Ruth was the first woman to ever climb Mount Belukha (Russia) and she became “a hero in the Soviet Union.” She was decorated with a medal for her fortitude, and being a writer (as well as a teacher) wrote a book entitled: “How I Became a Hero in the Soviet Union.” Don lived in Egypt for five years when he took a job working systems for

Continued on page 5

## Nominate A Favorite Volunteer

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) - The Cordova Community Council is riding a magic carpet in search of nominations for the 2016 Community Volunteer Awards event: “Rock the Kasbah,” slated for March 11 at Rancho Cordova City Hall. The prestigious “Rancho Cordovan of the Year” award can honor an exceptional contribution to the community during the year or over a lifetime.

“This event may not be our largest, but it is the most inspiring,” said Executive Director Shelly Blanchard. “It is a chance for us to shine the spotlight on the most amazing individuals and organizations in Rancho Cordova—our volunteers.”

Blanchard said nominations often dig behind the headlines to find extraordinary acts of volunteerism that otherwise get overlooked. “That's why we open up the nominations to the entire community for those who have seen things others may have missed.”



Nominations often dig behind the headlines to find extraordinary acts of volunteerism that otherwise get overlooked.

Categories include: Distinguished Community Business Partner, Distinguished Community Service (Individual or group), Distinguished Community Service Organization, Distinguished Service by Faith Community, Outstanding Youth Service (Service by an individual teenager or youth service organization), Outstanding Service to Youth (Educator, Faith Leader, Coach or group serving youth in the community), “Couldn't Have

Continued on page 5

## Thomas DeWinter Carves a Legacy



DeWinter's wood comes primarily from tree trimming services in the surrounding area. Photo courtesy Jerry De Winter

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Thomas DeWinter is a “Jack of All Trades” kind of guy. His earliest memories are of drawing with his Italian grandmother. He spent 21 years in the U.S. Coast Guard traveling all over the world. When he got out, he created a successful business designing and remodeling kitchens and bathrooms. Somewhere in the midst of remodeling houses, Thomas began sculpting wood with a chain saw. This led to the creation of an array of life size wood sculptures, including figures of Pete Townsend of the Who, a leprechaun, a Native American, Jerry Garcia, Buddha, The Lone Sailor and last but not least, Snow White and

the Seven Dwarves. His wood comes primarily from tree trimming services in the surrounding area. He has a permanent installation of “The Lone Sailor” at the Coast Guard Air Station at McClellan. Thomas has won several awards in chain-saw carving competitions in California in addition to his woodwork he also works with oil and acrylic on canvas. He has a studio space at Artistic Edge Gallery, 1880 Fulton Avenue, Sacramento, Calif. 95825. He has so much work to show that a few months ago he expanded his single gallery space into a larger space.

Source: Artistic Edge Gallery and Framing ★

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# Cops and Relics

## New Museum Records Legacy of Law

Story and photos  
by Susan Maxwell Skinner

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)**  
- Sacramento's first Sheriff, Joseph McKinney, was elected at 21 years old and shot dead a few months later. The year was 1850.

Lore of Sacramento law evokes the county's unruly past. Before a jail was built, bad guys were tied to trees or held in dirt pits.

"There is no forgetting that our department started in the Gold Rush," said veteran employee Sharon Telles. "Thousands of men were walking to the gold-fields every day. There were riots and shootings. Sacramento was the wildest of Wild West towns."

The historian revels in department tidbits: early sheriffs, she notes, resided in the jail house. 1920s Sheriff Ellis Jones banged a pole on his bedroom ceiling when prisoners got rowdy above. Because his daughter took meals to miscreants, he dubbed his lass Sacramento's first female deputy.

Telles shows ancient jail meal trays, soldered with lead. "I never heard that anyone died from it," she pondered. Until the 1960s, deputies created their own uniforms from Army



Visiting exhibits, retired Lieutenants Harry Machen and Gil Magness suffer a short spell in the museum slammer.

surplus oddments. The first official female deputies were kitted in pencil skirts, high heels, and nylons. "They carried their guns in shoulder purses," she laughed. "Imagine asking a bad guy to

wait while you got your gun out."

And if Sacramento jail walls could talk, infamy would be recounted. President Ford's attacker Squeaky Fromme,

Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, bank robber Patty Hearst's accomplices, and serial murderer Dorothea Puente all cooled captive heels in the downtown slammer.

Telles served seven sheriffs and has established a museum to verify 165 years of local law history. In a former classroom at the Sacramento Sheriff's Academy, she displays artifacts to remind new recruits how tough their predecessors were. "Law enforcement is a calling," she declared. "I'm in awe of what it takes to get up every morning and do this job. If modern cops think they've got it bad, imagine what it was like to sweat in wool gabardine in patrol cars with no air conditioning;

without computers, and with little radio contact. These were the men and women that built this organization."

Museum exhibits bare her out. There are mothballed uniforms, clunky car radios, and a one-way glass used for vintage lineups. There are shackles, sap sticks, and gothic-looking cell keys. A recreation of Sheriff Duane Lowe's 1970s office includes his massive mahogany desk, his cowboy boots, and portraits of the steel Lowe rode at President Ronald Reagan's inauguration. A framed snap shows Lowe and Gerald Ford, hours before the president's near-assassination. Sheriff Don Cox is immortalized by gun belt and election posters. A 1950s picture shows him with movie star buddy Roy Rogers. Central to displays is a cell, complete with bars taken from the ancient Sacramento jail house, demolished in 1980. "Most of today's recruits have never seen a cell block," said Telles.

Current Sheriff Scott Jones was among her museum's first visitors. "This will introduce new recruits to the culture of the department," he approved. "I tell them the department is like a stream. They jump in and they're our future. But they need to know that there was a significant upstream, and about the people who got us to where we are."

Telles is part of that upstream. During the long career that promoted her from PBX telephone operator to sheriff's secretary and communications officer, she envied other cities' police museums and lobbied for a similar local set up. "When they demolished the old brick jail, we lost most of our historical documents," she lamented. "Precious

artifacts were just thrown away—that's men for you."

The historian began gathering relics in her final years with the department. Word of her quest spread. Families and retiring officers donated copabilia. Exhibition space did not materialize until after Telles' retirement. While working on Sheriff Scott Jones' election, she extracted promises from the campaigner.

"I hounded him," she admitted. "Some time after his election, his undersheriff, Rick Book, showed me a 40-ft classroom at the academy. He asked if it would do."



Old Folger Adam cell keys accessorize a 1915 prisoners' register book.

For the next two years, the tireless grandmother finessed design and display. Remodeling funds came from a benevolent foundation established by the wife of Bruce Verhoeven, a corporal killed during a 1973 robbery call.

"It's hard to tell the story of 160 years in 40 feet," conceded the curator. "We'll change exhibits regularly." Telles hopes veteran cops will help with docent duty. She also hopes more exhibits will materialize from retiring officers or police widows. "It's time to go through your garage," she urges them. "I know there's more treasure out there."

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Sheriff Ellis Jones and his posse were armed to the teeth to combat a 1927 Folsom Prison riot.

treasure is nevertheless its founder, who witnessed seven sheriffs’ administrations up-close and personal. Undaunted by their legends, she recalled the county’s top cops. “I started under Sheriff John Misterly,” she said. “He was intimidating at first. But I soon learned how much he cared about the staff he called ‘his girls.’”

“Sheriff Duane Lowe rode in on a horse in 1971. He whipped the department into the 20th Century. Robbie Waters and I

were at school together; he was a life-long friend, then he became sheriff. It was surreal. Sheriff Glen Craig was a true leader and my mentor; he gave women in the department a voice. Lou Blanas was our Mr. Personality; as sheriff, he was everybody’s buddy.”

She recalls Sheriff John McGinness with motherly fondness. “He began his calling as an Explorer Scout,” she said. “He worked his way to the top job. He’s a cop’s cop, with a mind

like a steel trap. His brain should be bequeathed to science.”

Current Sheriff Scott Jones earns her final accolade: “He kept his word and made my dream come true,” she smiled. “We now have our museum.”

The Sheriff’s Department museum will be dedicated in early 2016. Though designed for department staff and families, outside groups may visit by appointment. For information, call (916) 876-7497. ★

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**Crossword Puzzle on Page 5**

C	U	R	I	A		S	K	A			S	M	E	W
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**Sudoku Puzzle on Page 5**

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

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# Love is Abuzz at Golden Pond

Continued from page 1

General Dynamics after retiring from a prestigious 27 year military career. While in the Army, Don served in Vietnam and later was stationed in Kyoto, Japan at Camp Otsu. They had both traversed multicultural boundaries.

As an avid climber, Ruth once stayed at Mount Everest base camp for six weeks. She has hiked the world’s mightiest mountains in Nepal, Peru, Canada, India, and our own California Sierra’s. The telling of their tales transformed the relationship into a deep reverence for one another and love blossomed—despite the chasm of political differences.

Ruth, who taught high school English and literature for over 30 years, adores reading. Some of her favorite authors are J.D. Salinger, Jane Austin, and the beloved Mark Twain. She also has played classical piano since the age of four. Don, on the other hand, loves his football; his favorite team is the Rams.

When asked what they found most endearing about each other Don quickly replied that he couldn’t “give it a name.” I pressed him to list two qualities



On Jan. 3rd, 2016, Ruth and Don, committed themselves to one another before family and friends. Photo by Ron Tan Photography

and he blurted, without reservation, “I love Ruth completely.” Ruth, the quieter of the two, said of Don: “He is so kind, so enthusiastic, and so forgiving, and he loves me without reservation.” Ruth, who never expected to fall in love again, wears an exquisite diamond ring that Don gave her when he proposed after a trip to Los Vegas they took together. “We stepped off the bus and he gave me this.”

The wedding took place in the Performing Arts Center at

Golden Pond, which was decorated with a candle lit walkway, flowers, and an ornate archway for the couple to recite their vows under. After the ceremony, champagne and hors d’oeuvres were served amid the stream of congratulations and compliments to the couple. Ruth and Don are living a legend that love can still be found at any time in life as long as we open our hearts and minds...oh, and maybe a cold can of beer. ★

# Nominate A Favorite Volunteer

Continued from page 1

Done it Without You Award”, Rancho Cordovan of the Year.

**Criteria for selection include:** Actions of the nominee have inspired others to be active in their neighborhood or community, or are an exceptional example of civic engagement; Actions of the nominee have shown unselfish commitment in advancing values of the Cordova Community Council of volunteerism, promotion of Rancho Cordova as a “great hometown,” good sportsmanship,

citizenship and healthy lifestyles; “Rancho Cordovan of the Year” may reflect a significant achievement in 2012 or may be considered a “lifetime achievement” award.

Join the Cordova Community Council for “Rock the Kasbah,” a magic carpet ride evening honoring the best of community volunteerism. The event will include cocktails, dinner, awards program and a special performance featuring the cast of Aladdin Jr. from Sunrise Elementary School in Rancho Cordova.

Tickets for the awards event are \$25 each. Save the date—March 11th—for this fun and inspiring event. For reservations, email marie@cordovacouncil.org or call (916) 273-5704. To view past winners and their accomplishments, please visit www.cordovacouncil.org. Persons wishing to make a nomination may do so by filling out an online nomination form. Nominations are on-going and will close at 5 p.m. Friday, Feb., 5th.

Source: Cordova Community Council ★

# Golden State Water Increases Drought Patrols

**GOLD RIVER, CA (MPG)** - Golden State Water Company (Golden State Water) has increased drought patrols in Gold River and Rancho Cordova to enforce outdoor irrigation restrictions that were implemented to help the community meet its state-mandate 36 percent reduction in water use.

Golden State Water’s patrols are monitoring outdoor irrigation and issuing enforcement letters to customers who are not complying with current local drought restrictions.

“Our Cordova system that serves customers in Gold River and Rancho Cordova received a violation letter from the State Water Resources Control Board for falling below its 36 percent reduction mandate, and we have increased patrols to ensure customers are complying with drought restrictions that address outdoor irrigation days and times,” said Paul Schubert, northern general manager for Golden State Water. “During the first two weeks of increased

patrols, we issued 98 enforcement letters to customers to alert them of their violations and request that they make adjustments to avoid penalties.”

Current restrictions for Golden State Water’s local customers limit outdoor irrigation to one day per week, permitting even addresses (0, 2, 4, 6, 8) to water on Sunday and odd addresses (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) on Saturday. All outdoor irrigation must occur before 8 a.m. or after 7 p.m., and should not exceed 10 minutes per station.

Non-compliance with irrigation restrictions may result in the installation of a flow restrictor or termination of service along with associated fees. Restrictions do not apply for trees or edible vegetation watered solely by drip or microspray systems.

“We, as a community, have missed the state-mandated 36 percent reduction three consecutive months, and our cumulative reduction has fallen to 33.2 percent for the period from June 1-Dec. 13,” said Schubert. “It’s

critical that we regain our conservation momentum to avoid triggering additional restrictions, allocations and surcharges.”

Golden State Water’s Cordova System remains in Stage 1 of Staged Mandatory Water Conservation and Rationing (Schedule 14.1), which was activated on July 1, 2015, to help customers meet the 36 percent reduction mandate assigned by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Customers are encouraged to visit gswater.com/arden-cordova for weekly reduction updates, local drought restrictions and additional information about Staged Mandatory Water Conservation and Rationing. Please call Golden State Water’s 24-hour Customer Service Center at (800) 999-4033 to learn more about the drought and local conservation resources, or follow Golden State Water on Twitter @GoldenStateH2O.

Source: Golden State Water ★



By David Dickstein, Gold River resident

If you want to feel even better about living in Gold River, check out two government websites containing lists no one wants to make. Each is vastly different from the other, yet they both have to do with sick people. The other commonality is that Gold River isn’t on either, and that’s a good thing.

I’m happy to report that at press time our community neither had a registered sex offender nor a restaurant closed for health violations. While this doesn’t mean our community is completely free of sickos or diners who get sick, it’s probably safe to say that Gold River’s households and restaurants are more wholesome than places with residents convicted of sex crimes and business establishments slapped with red code violations for having an imminent threat to health and safety.

The bad news is one of the more cited cities on the Megan’s Law Registry of sex offenders and list of failed food facility inspections in Sacramento County is our direct neighbor to the west. At last check, Rancho Cordova had 102 sex offenders and several businesses selling food that earned the dreaded red placard.

Even more alarming as far as the federally mandated list of sex offenders is concerned, two of these criminals

# “Fool’s Gold” When Not Making a List is a Good Thing

live on this side of Sunrise Boulevard—in the mobile home park we pass several times a week. I think we can all give a collective “ugh” over that revelation. Both residents of the inaptly named Mobile Country Club are Caucasian males in their 70s and on the federally mandated Megan’s Law list for offenses to minors too heinous to describe in a family newspaper. Parents, especially, might want to read up on these hopefully rehabilitated men and all our other lovely neighbors at meganslaw.ca.gov. Learn their faces as it wouldn’t be far-fetched to assume we’ve crossed paths at such common places as Bel Air, In-N-Out or, not to get too alarmist, a public park. Food for thought.

As for food for eating, one also can’t be too safe. At the risk of sounding like a germophobe, before dining out or going grocery shopping in Sacramento County I go on emdinspections.sac-county.net/food. This service of the county’s Environmental Management Department provides free access to recent health inspections. Along with the dirty details, like discovery of rat droppings, insect larvae, and improper food storage and temperatures, you can check if the establishment is operating under the sought-after green inspection placard. If you see that the upper-most box is yellow with the words “CONDITIONAL PASS” or—horrors!—red with “CLOSED” inside it, I’d be leery about ever going back there.

For that reason I’ll never step foot again in the 99 Cents Only store on Zinfandel Drive. Last month it was

closed for vermin infestation. The inspector found rodent droppings and nesting material throughout the store along with gnaw marks on an avocado, a package of buns, toasted corn and other foods that I’ll bet made it to people’s homes before being discovered. The report says that a store employee claimed that a pest control service comes twice a week. Who do they use? 99 Cents Only Pest Control?

Back in August, New York Bagels in the Target center on Olson Drive was closed for a day after cockroaches were found in front of the baking oven. Roaches also shut down Restaurant El Botanero on Woodlawn Drive, off Coloma Road, for three days in June. Go back farther and the list of restaurants closed for one reason or another gets longer, of course, but doing so would be unfair to the many businesses that have passed inspections not with flying cockroaches, but flying colors after righting their wrongs.

That said, before anyone thinks the health department always gives this side of 95670 only clean bills of health, our nearby Chevys Fresh Mex, for one, has a history of infractions. It passed its most recent inspection a month ago, but in September the restaurant was caught with flies in the kitchen, uncovered food trays and instances of improper sanitation, among other violations. Closure wasn’t deemed necessary, and four days after getting a yellow “conditional pass,” Chevys was back in the green. Let’s hope it stays there. ★

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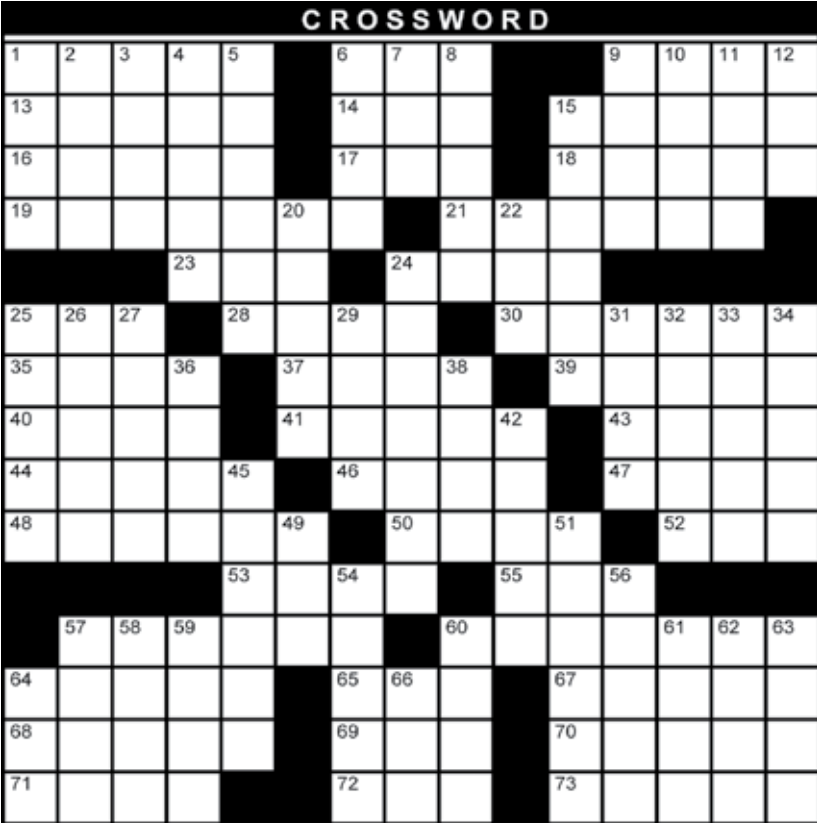
### CLUES

#### ACROSS

- Papal court
- Reggae precursor
- Eurasian duck
- Very small particles
- Politician
- Locker room infection?
- Actor \_\_\_\_ Fiennes
- Like King George, 1760-1820
- Salk’s conquest
- \*Ed of “Thinking Out Loud” fame
- “Straight Outta Compton,” e.g.
- L.A. landing spot
- Under the weather
- Madonna’s iconic stagewear
- Catcher’s catcher
- Approvals
- Chaps
- United \_\_\_\_ Emirates
- Time being
- Miners’ passage
- \*2016 Grammy nominations leader
- Popular pickling spice
- Fertilizer ingredient
- Mexican money
- \*Multiple winner Levine of Maroon 5
- Fate
- Former Speaker of the House
- Pilot’s estimate
- Back talk
- \_\_\_\_ he drove out of sight...
- \*What kind of Funk?
- \_\_\_\_ Shakes
- Willow tree
- Flow alternative
- Bottom-ranking employee
- Continually annoy
- Unagi
- Absurd
- Ayatollah’s home
- Marbled bread
- Formerly Hannah Montana

#### DOWN

- \*Ric Ocasek’s The \_\_\_\_ were nominated but lost
- Park City State
- Actor’s part
- Motivate
- Hindu retreat
- \*What Skrillex and Diplo do
- Ornamental pond-dweller
- Legal excuse
- \*\_\_\_\_! In the Name of Love,” nominated in 1966
- French Sudan after 1960
- \*Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” was on this label
- \*The \_\_\_\_, a band that never won a Grammy
- \*Best \_\_\_\_ Word Album category
- Relating to axis
- Frigid
- Reproductive organs of a flower
- \*Swift’s space?
- Forearm bones
- Plural of #40 Across
- \*Fetty Wap’s “\_\_\_\_ Queen”
- Scotch partner
- Like a snicker
- Audience’s approval
- MLK march site
- Kind of cell
- Corner of a diamond
- Wheel on a spur
- Vacation location
- Fancy marble used as a shooter
- \*No Doubt’s “\_\_\_\_ Kingdom” album, nominated in ‘97
- Expression of contempt
- Black wood
- \_\_\_\_-friendly
- Site of Leaning Tower
- \*Smells Like \_\_\_\_ Spirit,” Grammy loser in 1993
- Having the means
- Way, way off
- List of dishes
- Mars, to the Greeks
- \_\_\_\_-Wan
- Turkish title of respect



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Publisher, Paul V. Scholl

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## Gold River Messenger

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# No Ship of Fools for These Cruise Acts

By David Dickstein

Garry Carson has heard it thousands of times on cruise ship elevators and as passengers walk into the theater where he’s about to perform: “I don’t like magic, but let’s see if the guy is any good.”

Some entertainers would have bruised egos not being recognized in a crowded place, especially one as small as an elevator. But after working cruise ships for roughly 5 months a year for 18 years, the well-traveled comedy magician knows the life of taking an act on the road where there are no roads.

“These people are not there because they love or even like magic,” said Carson, pointing out a big difference between playing land-based shows and those on the high seas. Except for special sailings featuring live performances by major acts, virtually no one books a cruise based on the onboard entertainment.

Then there’s the matter of demographics. Carson has noticed that the funny stuff that kills in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia doesn’t get the same reaction in Asia. “I have to get into the mindset of not relying on the comedy being as strong as the magic and mystery or laughter being as loud if I’m performing in certain areas of the world,” Carson



Steve Moris brings his universally appealing act to the Regal Princess and other cruise ship stages year-round. Photo by David Dickstein



Comedian Chas Elstner adjusts his routine between West Coast and East Coast cruises. Photo courtesy Chas Elstner

said.

It’s not just an international hurdle for these guest performers; audiences on cruises out of Long Beach and San Pedro aren’t the same as those embarking in New York and Galveston. References about grunge rock and coffee houses might work on Alaskan cruises sailing out of Seattle, but greeted with crickets on itineraries originating from Miami.

This hurdle is higher for stand-up comedians, hypnotists and, as Carson knows, magicians because their acts inherently rely heavily on audience participation. As Carson noted during a recent Mexican Riviera cruise out of San Pedro, on the Norwegian Jewel, people go on faith, expecting to laugh if it’s a comedy act, be amazed if it’s a magic show and do both if a hypnotist is about to go on stage.

What’s a cruise ship entertainer to do?

“An old clown gave me this piece of advice: Never play the audience,” said veteran comedian Chas Elstner, who before doing stand-up on 300 cruises and at countless land-based clubs was going for yucks as a featured clown for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. “There are so many nuances that you just sort of have to play through it all.”

Elstner, from inside Carnival Conquest’s Punchliner Comedy

Club, elaborated on what types of nuances.

“Like with cruises out of L.A., it seems the first night is hit or miss,” he said. “They take a day to get energized. It can’t be because they’re tired from traveling since most live within a short drive to the port. I can’t figure it out. But then the second and third night, it’s like, oh my God, California audiences just become wonderful.”

For cruises out of the East Coast, New York in particular, Elstner said audiences take their time warming up to a comic. “They want you to prove you’re a funny guy first, and then they’ll allow you to do your act,” he said.

Tough crowds have also been the experience for master hypnotist Asad Mecci with cruises out of New York.

“You really have to hammer them right away,” said the Toronto-based entertainer. “New Yorkers want to see how confident you are on stage. If they feel as though you’re hesitating when you’re delivering your lines they will definitely make trouble for you. When New Yorkers love you they really love you. When they hate you they really hate you.”

Cruises leaving Los Angeles area ports draw audiences that are, in Mecci’s words, “more chilled out and relaxed.”

“It is stereotypical but it’s the

truth,” he said. “They’re a laid back, chilled out, relaxed, fun group of people.”

His take on audiences from southern states depends on whether they hail mostly from Dixie, meaning out of such ports as New Orleans and Mobile, or the handful of Floridian harbors.

“Southerners, in particular, are really rooting for you,” Mecci said. “Out of Florida you’ll get some cat calls and other types of heckling, where in New Orleans it’s dead quiet during the parts I’m telling jokes and tales.”

Mecci stopped short when asked which region of the U.S. spawns the most entertaining hypnotized subjects, but he did say that participants out of New Orleans are a blast.

“I just think their energy level is super high,” he said. “They’re excited to be in the theater watching the show and that kind of translates on stage as well.”

As a comic, turned cruise director, turned comic, Mark Hawkins has performed before audiences of all regions many times over. While he’ll respond with an “of course” when asked if L.A. cruisers are different than those from New York—“You can see that just walking around the ship” —he says that regional variances disappear as they enter the lounge.

“When they become an audience, the reality is people are people,” Hawkins said moments before taking the Punchliner stage aboard the Carnival Conquest. “The demographics are very different, but the people are very much the same.”

A pet peeve of Hawkins, one of the few he doesn’t joke about in his act, is the myopia of certain comics, particularly those who pander to audiences with regional material just for easy laughs.

“There’s comedians who bring a Southern act to cruises out of Texas and doing jokes that start with, ‘Hey, how many people here love the Waffle House?,’ and they get immediate applause. They are these things peppered in the act to get applause, and comedians who

do this annoy me because they’re insulting the audience. I hate when people say people in the South are stupid. They’re not. They’re smart, they’re cool, they’re hip, and you should treat them like they’re smart and cool and hip.

“It annoys me when comics complain about regional differences. Yes, they have different accents, but they’re still just people—they’re married, they’ve got problems, and when you stop treating them like they’re different they treat you with more respect.”

Hawkins describes his act as “very personal,” drawing much of his material from being a husband and father of two daughters just doing as best he can. “About 10 years ago I found there are certain things that are universal and I made the show as common as I could. It’s hard to offend somebody when I’m talking about me.”

Another cruise favorite whose shows are personal in nature is musical comedian Steve Moris. Working for Princess, Disney, Royal Caribbean, and Celebrity,

when he opened for the group and would jam with Brian Wilson and gang during concerts. Because his routines are heavy on classic Baby Boomer-era tunes, and yarns about how he and his siblings were parented and comical self-deprecation, Moris said he doesn’t feel the need to modify material based on where a cruise originates.

“No matter where I go working cruise ships, everybody loves the music—it cuts right through,” said Moris from the Regal Princess’ Vista Lounge, where he performed to an audience the prior night. “I don’t change the act because I talk about growing up as a Baby Boomer, and everyone can relate to what mom and dad did. The music I add to the act is universal.”

That doesn’t mean he considers his crowds as cookie-cutter. His takes on playing before East Coast and West Coast prove that.

“The toughest crowds I may have—may have—are from the New York area, which is ironic because both sides of my fam-



Comedy magician Garry Carson attempts to levitate a young cruise passenger. Photo courtesy Carson Entertainment

the Southern California-raised entertainer has performed on more than 600 cruises since 2004. With a guitar always within reach, his sets are sprinkled with Beach Boys music and two decades’ worth of stories harkening back to

ily came from Brooklyn,” Moris said. “And as for cruises out of Southern California, I don’t change any of my material—I just slow it down...he says laughing, quote/end-quote.” ★

## Cordova Choice Awards 2016

**Cordova Choice Awards 2016 will be held during the “Cork & Fork 2016” event to be held Friday, March 11th 6:30-9PM at the Sacramento Marriot Rancho Cordova**

### Instructions and rules for Cordova Choice Awards 2016

Business must be located in Rancho Cordova, Gold River, Mather, Anatolia, or Sacramento zip code 95827. All votes must be received no later than March 10th at 6:00 pm at the office of Messenger Publishing Group. Votes can be made either by mailing this form to MPG at 7144 Fair Oaks Blvd, Suite 5, Carmichael, CA 95608, or by completing the online form at [www.CordovaCoiceAwards.com](http://www.CordovaCoiceAwards.com). Only one vote per person. All voting entries must have complete information or the votes will not be counted. Cordova Choice Awards will be presented at this year’s “Cork & Fork” event. This year’s event will be held at the Sacramento Marriott Rancho Cordova on March 14, 2014 from 6:30pm - 9pm. “Cork & Fork” will highlight an evening of gourmet delights from some of your favorite restaurants, breweries and wineries. Please come out and support this event while giving back to the community.

### Goals of “Cork & Fork”

Support the Partnership's goal to build a strong community of children, youth, and families. Bring together like minded community members and socially conscious businesses. Generate awareness about the programs and resources the Partnership provides. Raise money to support the mission of the Folsom Cordova Community Partnership. To purchase tickets for this event please contact Chris Clark at 916.361.8684 ext 281 or via email [cclark@thefccp.org](mailto:cclark@thefccp.org). Mail your vote to: The Grapevine Independent, 7144 Fair Oaks Blvd., Suite 5, Carmichael, Ca 95608. You can also vote online at [www.CordovaChoiceAwards.com](http://www.CordovaChoiceAwards.com)



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# Game Plots

## Don't Discount *Dragon*

By Noah Howard

““That Dragon, Cancer”” is a unique videogame. It brings you through the experiences of parents struggling with their young son’s terminal illness, reflecting the tragic real-life story of the couple who created it. It is one of the most emotional games ever made, and it fully deserves its glowing review scores. It is, truly, the first great game of 2016. Or is it? A rift has developed within the gaming community over exactly what to call “That Dragon, Cancer”. Scroll to any comments section of any review for the title and you’ll be met with protests that, although “That Dragon, Cancer” is a powerful experience, it simply is not a “game.”

They argue that “Dragon” allows for no freedom for the player, has no traditional gameplay mechanics, is entirely linear, and doesn’t exactly let you “fail.” In their eyes, this disqualifies the title from “gamehood.”

This conversation is not new. It arguably started back in 2012 with the release of “Dear Esther”, an independently made, minimally interactive game that took under two hours to complete and had the player walking along an unbranched predetermined path. It’s admirers called it an “interactive experiment.” It’s deriders dubbed it a “walking simulator.”

Since then, the “Dear Esther” experiment has certainly come to fruition. Many games have come to adopt this minimally interactive structure, from “Gone Home” (2013) to “Everybody’s Gone to the Rapture” (2015). And every time such an experience arises, it’s met with the same protests that it is underserving of the title of “game.”

The question of whether or not “Dragon” fits any given definition of “game” seems irrelevant to what the gaming community should want to fit the definition of “game.”

The videogame medium is still young. It hasn’t figured out entirely what it is and what it wants to be. As a result, the very concept of a “game” is still fluid. “That Dragon, Cancer” and titles like it are emotionally resonant experiences that can compete in power with the highest art of other mediums. Artistic games push the storytelling boundaries of the videogame medium, and so heighten the depth and variety of the entire genre.

This is especially important considering the stigma that still surrounds games in our society. Videogames have not yet earned their legitimacy. Gamers are still looked down upon for enjoying their favorite entertainment medium in ways that cinephiles and tv viewers aren’t. The only way to break out of such a rut is to accept and welcome the artistic experiences like “That Dragon, Cancer”, and present the intimate personal face of gaming to the world rather than the “Call of Duty” shoot ‘em ups. If we exclude these



The videogame medium is still young. It still hasn't figured out entirely what it is and what it wants to be, and this very argument reflects that. So the question is, what is a "game"?

titles from the status of “game,” we eliminate our greatest asset in earning the cultural legitimacy we so crave.

The videogame medium is still young. It still hasn’t figured out entirely what it is and what it wants to be, and this very argument reflects that. So the question is, what is a “game”? Does a “game” require fun? No; there are plenty of games that specifically aim to make the played feel sad, guilty, stressed, or otherwise unpleasant. Does it require complexity, limitations for the user? No; everyday computer software has both, yet software isn’t a “game.” Does it require played freedom and choice? Multiple games have been made addressing this very topic: it is never possible to have truly free choice within the inherently-closed system of a videogame.

The truth is, there is no definition that fits. Using something akin to defining a board game excludes many experiences that the entire gaming community can agree is a “game.” And painting with too broad a brush inherently incorporates things into the term “game” that aren’t games at all but rather digital tools.

The question is, why does it matter? Developers of “That Dragon, Cancer”, and of the “walking simulators,” refer to their works as “games,” as do journalists and businesspeople. No confusion seems to have arisen. The best we can say is this: games are what games are. If it is generally called a “game,” then we should consider it one, and hope that a more inclusive attitude helps to mold the videogame identity over time. Until then? The community should stop its unproductive semantics debate. It ends up being just a silly game.

To respond to Noah’s articles email him at [digitalartsnoah@yahoo.com](mailto:digitalartsnoah@yahoo.com) ★

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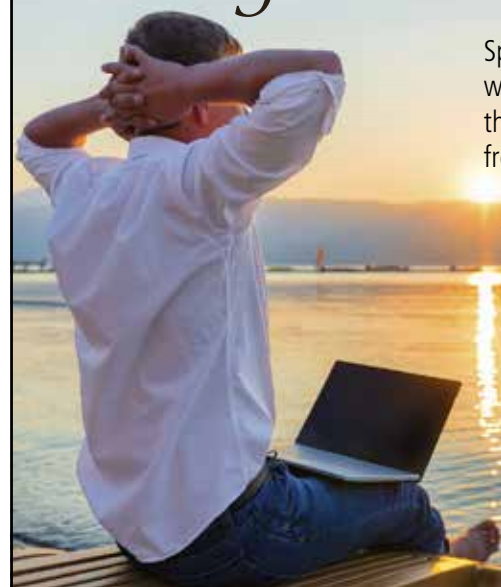
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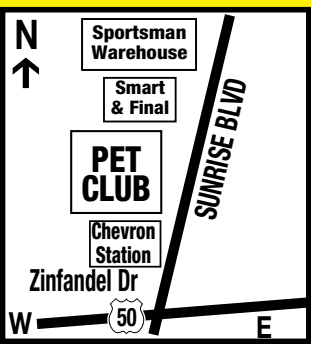
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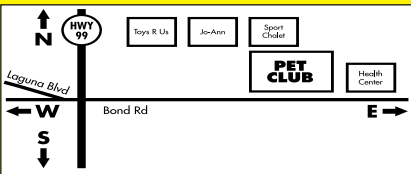
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