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East Sac artist Gregory Kondos dies at 97

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A Galapagos tortoise hatchling saved from wildlife trafficking.

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1109 Markham Way
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t: (916) 429-9901
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Cover photo by: Lance Armstrong



THIS 'n' THAT

by Carol Bogart

The Bad News Blues

I feel compelled to write about this. I don't want to. I hate this story and wish I hadn't seen the pictures. So forewarned, if you Google it, the photos are disturbing.

Late last month, Ecuadoran Customs checked a suspicious suitcase and found 185 little tortoises, no more than 3 months old, packed inside. Each tightly bound in clingwrap. Suffocating. Suffering. Ten had already died.

Galapagos tortoises. You know. The big ones. Had the trafficker delivered ANY to his black market buyer, the going rate PER baby Galapagos starts at $5,000.

Full grown, these tortoises are huuuuuuuuge. And, anymore, there aren't that many of them. The U.S. lists them as endangered.

Many such endangered species are teetering on extinction.

Trafficking would stop if there were no buyers.

California tries to protect endangered and native species. Example: Right now a solo gray wolf from Oregon is making its way across California (likely in search of mate, say those who track it). Each time there's a new sighting of OR-93, the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife gray wolf team exhales, relieved this wolf hasn't yet been killed by a vehicle or hunter.

Some years back, a different collared gray wolf from Oregon, OR-19, was found dead by the side of a California road. The official verdict: Parvo virus. (There's a vaccine for that, isn't there? Seems as though a wolf would be vaccinated for everything, including rabies, when it gets its tracking collar?)

The current collared wolf has made it at least as far as Fresno, reports the California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW). A Montana wolf at Yellowstone had a collar, too. That state's governor trapped and shot it. He was cited. Perhaps he won't be re-elected.

The deceased OR-19 was a young female. OR-93's a male. He's been roaming without mishap since last year in June. Made it to Yosemite – no female wolves – and kept on going.

California wolves were exterminated in the early 1900s for killing livestock. Not until 2011 was a gray wolf seen here again. Today in California, it's illegal to catch, harm, harass or kill them, the Trump era's gutting of the federal Endangered Species Act notwithstanding.

Not so in Wisconsin. In February at the start of 'wolf season' more than 200 wolves were slaughtered in just three days. About a fifth of the state's total wolf population. And nearly twice the legal limit. (Hunters complained the wolves killed more deer than they did.)

There's been an uproar about the overkill. Wisconsin's tribes are outraged. The state's department of Natural Resources says, "The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed gray wolves from the federal endangered species list on Jan. 4, 2021, returning management authority to state agencies." Since Montana's governor likes to trap them, maybe he'd give a few females to California before he's out of office.

Wolves are of little threat to people, says the CDFW. Our state is working with ranchers on ways to protect their livestock. In Africa, painting big eyes on the butts of cattle protects them from lions. (Scientists paint eyes on cow butts (for the animals' own good, really) - CNET). Fluorescent paint for 'butt eyes' that glow might scare off predators that hunt at night.

We could try that here to protect stock from mountain lions, and maybe wolves – if there's ever more than one in California.

Gray wolves are sometimes mistaken for coyotes, but the wolf is bigger, plus OR-93 has that purple collar. If you think you've seen any wolf, wolf tracks or a dead wolf, please report the sighting to CDFW, Gray Wolf Sighting Report (ca.gov), or call 1-(530) 225-2300. Questions, comments? Contact Carol at carol@bogartonline.com.

Local author releases collection of humorous stories about raising her two sons





Author and educator Kim Griffin has published her light-hearted and humorous collection of stories about her and her husband Patrick's experiences raising their sons, Brien and Matt. In #Curious Connections, Griffin reflects on unforgettable teaching moments, misadventures in learning new words, and sentimental memories to chronicle her boys' journey from childhood to adulthood.

"I wanted to share funny stories that occurred while raising sons," she said. "I captured the stories as they occurred and then ultimately started outing them in chapter form. I hope that readers will share laughter based on the relatable stories shared. My hope is that it will lighten the reader's day."

#Curious Connections explores the gamut of joys and challenges that parenting brings, especially when raising boys. Griffin lovingly retells how her experiences with her sons – often comical, and sometimes X-rated – brought happiness, laughter, and a welcome respite into daily life. Through #Curious Connections, Griffin also shares her boys' experiences traveling, growing in their independence, and becoming passionate about wanting to make a difference in the world.

"The curious connections that children make as they acquire language and journey through their teenage years into adulthood are central to this book," Griffin wrote in #Curious Connections. "Patrick and I have been blessed with raising two sons, Brien and Matt, both adults now. … As they grew, they amazed us with the innocent, and at times curious, connections that they made with language that brought belly laughs to family and friends. I hope these stories bring joy to you as well."

Ultimately, "#Curious Connections" is a testament to the power of parental love that documents the exhilarating experience of seeing one's child grow into the person they are meant to become. Readers will be warmed by Griffin's relatable perspective on parenting and observations of her kids' silliness, intuitiveness, and intelligence.

When she initially wrote the book she used the boys' middle names to save them from potential embarrassment. "As they grew from boys to men, I switched from their middle names back to their first names with their permission. When the book went up for sale on Amazon they shared the news with friends on Facebook. They are proud that their mom completed the book," Kim Griffins said.

Not just for parents, the lighthearted stories are meant to bring laughter to all readers.

"As a mom of girls, I found this book to be an intriguing look into life with boys," a reader wrote in a five-star review of the book on Amazon. "It was delightful and engaging. I read it all in one sitting. I think parents will find the stories relatable no matter if you have girls or boys."

"I happened upon this book by happy accident and it is just delightful," another reader wrote in a five-star Amazon review. "Stories of a mom raising two boys with her husband, the love this mom has for her family jumps off of each page. The author's writing style is so natural and engaging that you almost feel as if you're reading a letter from a good friend or family. Highly recommend this sweet book."

A writer and former faculty member at Sacramento State University in the communications and journalism departments, Griffin also worked for Dignity Health for more than two decades in a variety of roles including director of communications. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English with a minor in communications and emphasis in journalism from Santa Clara University and a Master of Arts degree in communication studies from Sac State.

Griffin began writing #Curious Connections after she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2013. All proceeds from the sale of Griffin's book will benefit the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and Dignity Health's MS Achievement Center to go toward research to find a cure for multiple sclerosis.

#Curious Connections is available through Archway Publishing, Barnes & Noble, and Amazon. For more information, visit www.archwaypublishing.com or call 888-242-5904.

East Sac artist Gregory Kondos dies at 97

Kondos was one of nation's premier landscape artists



Photo courtesy of Moni Van Camp

This painting by Gregory Kondos features Yosemite's Half Dome and the Merced River.

By Lance Armstrong

Editor's note: This is part one of a two-part series about the renowned landscape artist Gregory Kondos, who grew up in East Sacramento.

Gregory Kondos, who grew up in East Sacramento, died on March 26 at the age of 97.

The Massachusetts-born Kondos, who moved to Sacramento with his family when he was 3 years old, gained fame for his landscape art that includes scenes of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, Yosemite, and coastal views.

His works have been exhibited in such museums and galleries as the Crocker Art Museum, the Rives Arches Museum in France, the National Academy of Design in New York, and the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.

Among Kondos' more noticeable, locally displayed works is his 510-foot-long glass mural, "River's Edge," at the Sacramento International Airport's Terminal A, and "Sutter's Gold," his 12-foot-long oil on canvas painting of the gold country at the same airport's Terminal B.

Those familiar with Kondos' artworks recognize that one of this artist's greatest talents as a painter was his mastery of the color blue, which dominantly appears in many of his paintings.

A graduate of local schools, including Sacramento High School, Kondos grew up attending the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, when it was located at 620 N St. The current church, just west of McKinley Park, was completed in 1951.

Eventually becoming a skilled artist, Kondos won many awards, and he was also one of only 11 California artists to be elected to the National Academy of Design.

Kondos was recently praised by California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) President Robert Nelsen.

"He's been very close to the university and we gave him an honorary doctorate of fine arts (in 2016) to celebrate everything he's done for painting, for the community, for always being there," Nelsen told the East Sacramento News. "He had a big soul and a big heart and a great eye."

Kondos' connection to the university began many decades ago.

After serving in the Navy during World War II, he attended Sacramento State College (SCC), as CSUS was known at that time.

He earned a bachelor's degree in art at that institution in 1951, the same year of his first marriage – to Rosie Thalas.

Six years later, Kondos earned his master's degree in art from the same university.

The path to Kondos' recognition as a highly respected artist included his many years as an art instructor.

see Kondos page 5

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Photo by Lance Armstrong

Sacramento artist Gregory Kondos, who grew up in East Sacramento, is shown in his home studio in downtown Sacramento.

Kondos:

continued from page 4

From 1953 to 1956, Kondos served as chairman of the art department at Elk Grove High School, and he later spent nearly 30 years teaching art at Sacramento City College, and serving as that college's chairman of the art department.

SCC's art gallery has been known as the Gregory Kondos Gallery since 1982.

Kondos began the first of his many years as an exhibitor at Gump's Gallery in San Francisco in 1962. During the same year, he exhibited his works at museums in Southern California.

In 1963, Kondos spent time as a guest art instructor at the University of California, Berkeley.

It was also during the 1960s that his works were part of a group exhibition at London's Piccadilly Gallery, and an exhibition at the Allan Stone Gallery in New York.

Kondos' works were exhibited at a show in Athens in 1975, and he traveled in France on a painting trip two years later.

His time in France also included creating sketches in the studio of the famous French artist Paul Cézanne.

While in France again in the early 1980s, Kondos experienced the loss of his wife, Rosie Thalas, who died of cancer.

Kondos was married to his second wife, Moni Van Camp, for the past 25 years.

From 1990 to 1993 and again in 2007, Kondos was an artist-in-residence painter at Yosemite National Park.

He also enjoyed a home that he purchased in Puylaurens, France.

In 2010, Kondos joined Wayne Thieubaud and Fred Dalkey in a group exhibition at Sacramento City College.

During the same year, Kondos traveled in China with the Chinese-born Sacramento artist Shimo.

Returning to China two years later, Kondos became the only non-Chinese artist to have his art accepted into the permanent collection of the then-new art museum in Shanghai.

Two years ago, with his wife, Kondos donated his giclée on canvas art piece, titled "River's Edge #3," to the city of Elk Grove for its new community center.

During the Sept. 25, 2019 presentation of that artwork, Kondos described his continued dedication and love for art at the age of 96.

"I ask my wife, Moni, I don't know what day it is or what time it is," he said. "I just work through the day. My savior is my art."



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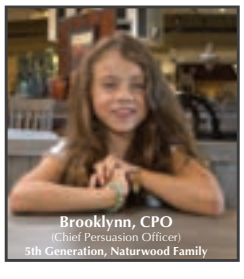
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