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Gratitude

in the midst of a global pandemic

see page 2

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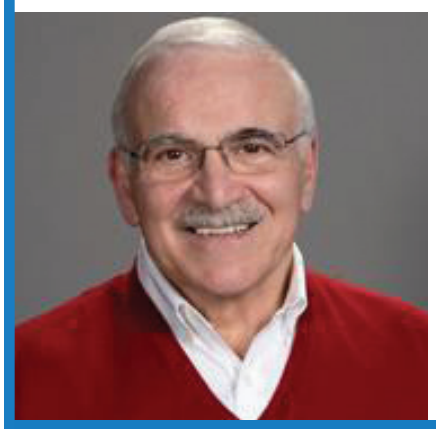

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Gratitude in the midst of a global pandemic



By Devin Lavelle

In a lot of ways, 2021 has been harder than 2020. While we can be grateful that the pandemic has become far less deadly, it continues to strain our families, our mental health and our economy. In the early days of the pandemic, we were buoyed by so many going above and beyond to bring joy and comfort to their neighbors and the world around them. We had hope that the end was just around the corner.

Twenty months into this pandemic, the hope of a quick ending, or the promise of getting through one last wave are long gone. Keeping up the efforts that were so motivating in 2020 has gotten harder and more tiresome – you can ask Monica, our Pocket News editor, about how bad I've become at meeting these deadlines. (Editor's Note: This Thanksgiving, I am grateful for all submissions and Devin's continuous support for the Pocket News and our community, in general.)

But as challenging as COVID's long tail may be, it makes it all the more important that we focus on the positive things in our life, the many

see Gratitude page 3

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Cover photo by: Devin Lavelle

Gratitude:

continued from page 2

things that we have to be thankful for.

First and foremost, I'm thankful for good health. While we had a COVID scare, we came through it without issue and my eldest son was able to get his first vaccine last week, bringing so much comfort in the knowledge that my family and my kids' classmates are that much closer to being truly safe.

I'm thankful that our neighborhood has one of the higher vaccination rates in the city. I'm thankful that, with everyone in my family vaccinated, we can safely be together for the holidays once again.

I'm thankful for my family – having so much time to spend with my boys and watch them grow into smart, caring, funny little dudes. I'm thankful that as we have spent more and more time together, confronting all of COVID's challenges, my wife and I have just become closer and stronger partners.

I'm thankful for the countless times that our community members have volunteered to help out friends in need, neighbors in need, total strangers in need.

I'm thankful our local businesses have proven so resilient and that so many in our neighborhood have stepped up to support them and keep them going through these challenging times. (And I'm thankful in anticipation of everyone's efforts to shop local this holiday season)

I'm thankful that my oldest son is finally able to enjoy an in-person classroom experience and that Ms. Flood at MLK has given him a truly wonderful one. And I remain thankful that my youngest has as nurturing of a place as Angel's Nest to learn and grow. There has never been a harder time to be an educator at any level and I am so grateful for everyone who cares for our kids.

I'm thankful that, as I write this, Sac State is one win away from an undefeated Big Sky season.

I'm thankful that our community has so many wonderful parks that I have had the unique opportunity these last several years to get to know and enjoy. But I'm especially thankful for the wonderful park we have less than a block from our house. With a nice playground, open grassy areas, lovely tree canopy and a great walking path, Parkway Oaks Park is pretty much a perfect neighborhood park.

It even has an interesting piece of public art in front of the gazebo. Kids love to climb on it and adults love to ask me what it is. I never knew – and my guesses reflected that. But I asked Junjie Yu, who supports the Parks Commission for the city and I am thankful for his help!

Junjie did some research and found out it is a cornucopia. It's sculpted by Jaap Bongers, a Dutch artist, who now teaches middle school in San Jose. The solid bronze statue was installed in 1991. And I am thankful that, while the last two years have been hard on my family, as it has on all of us, my cup does truly runneth over and learning about the meaning of that statue helped reconnect me with my appreciation for all the great things in my life and recognize the immense joy that still shines through COVID's fog.

Finally, I'm thankful for you, my neighbors, my friends, the people who care enough about our wonderful neighborhood to pick up our local paper and devote some time to reading about it. Our little corner of the world is a better place, because you care.

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Faces and Places: Costumed pickleball players take over Garcia Bend tennis courts



Photos by Stephen Crowley

Before All Hallow's Eve, neighbors gathered at Garcia Bend to play some pick-up pickleball. Organized by the Sacramento Dinkers, the inaugural Halloween Pickleball Party at Garcia Bend Park boasted a total of 76 sign-ups into the Playtime Scheduler app. Costumes were mandatory in order to attend the event and neighbors brought a plethora of food and ghoulish treats and appetizers to share. Source: SacDinkers.org











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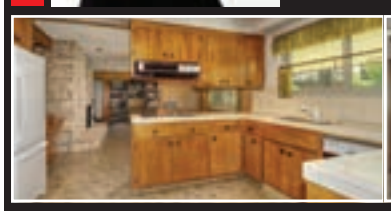

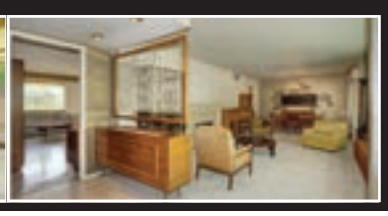



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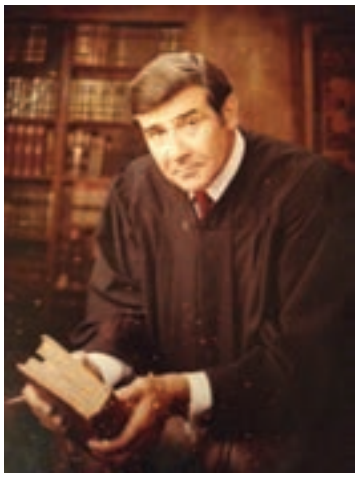
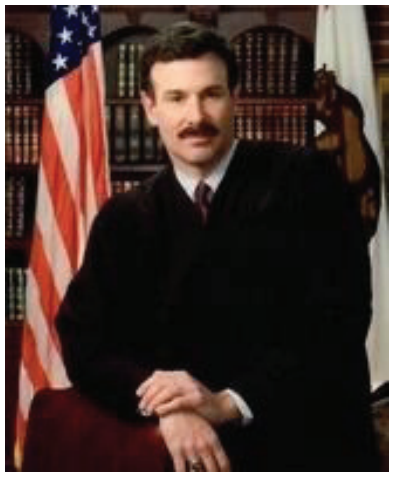
Sacramento judges honor the passings of father/son, Pocket resident judges









In a moving tribute, Sacramento judges lowered the flag and a bagpiper played in a final farewell to retired Sacramento Judge Michael G Virga and his father, Judge Michael J. Virga.

Son Michael, passed away this summer after a long and courageous battle with Lymphoma. His father passed away in July 2016.

Both were well respected and beloved members of the Sacramento bench and popular fixtures at the Sacramento Courthouse. Father and Son, both former Presiding Court Judges, both recipients of Judge of the Year awards, would have been greatly honored and humbled by the show of respect and admiration they received from their fellow judges.

The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department honor guard, accompanied by a bagpiper, presented both their widows, Betsey Virga, and Debbie Virga, with flags. Four generations of the Virga family were there to honor and pay tribute to their beloved patriarchs.

Both father and son graduated from Santa Clara University and law school. Both were long time residents of the Greenhaven/Pocket area. Both men above all, cherished family and friends and were well-known and respected in the community. Their lives were guided by principles of kindness, character and dignity for all and their legacies will live on in their families forever.





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Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

1. MEASUREMENTS: How many dry quarts are in a peck?
2. GEOGRAPHY: What's the name of the island where the Statue of Liberty stands?
3. MUSIC: Which composer is known as "The Waltz King"?
4. GEOMETRY: What is a three-sided polygon called?
5. ASTRONOMY: What is it called when three celestial bodies are arranged in a straight line?
6. TELEVISION: How many Huxtable children were in the long-running "The Cosby Show"?
7. MOVIES: What's the name of the town in the "Halloween" horror movie series?
8. SCIENCE: What does the acronym FM stand for?
9. LITERATURE: Which famous novel begins with the line, "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way"?
10. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What color is alabaster?

Answers

1. Eight
2. Liberty Island
3. Johann Strauss II
4. A triangle
5. Syzygy
6. Five
7. Haddonfield, Illinois
8. Frequency modulation
9. "Anna Karenina"
10. White

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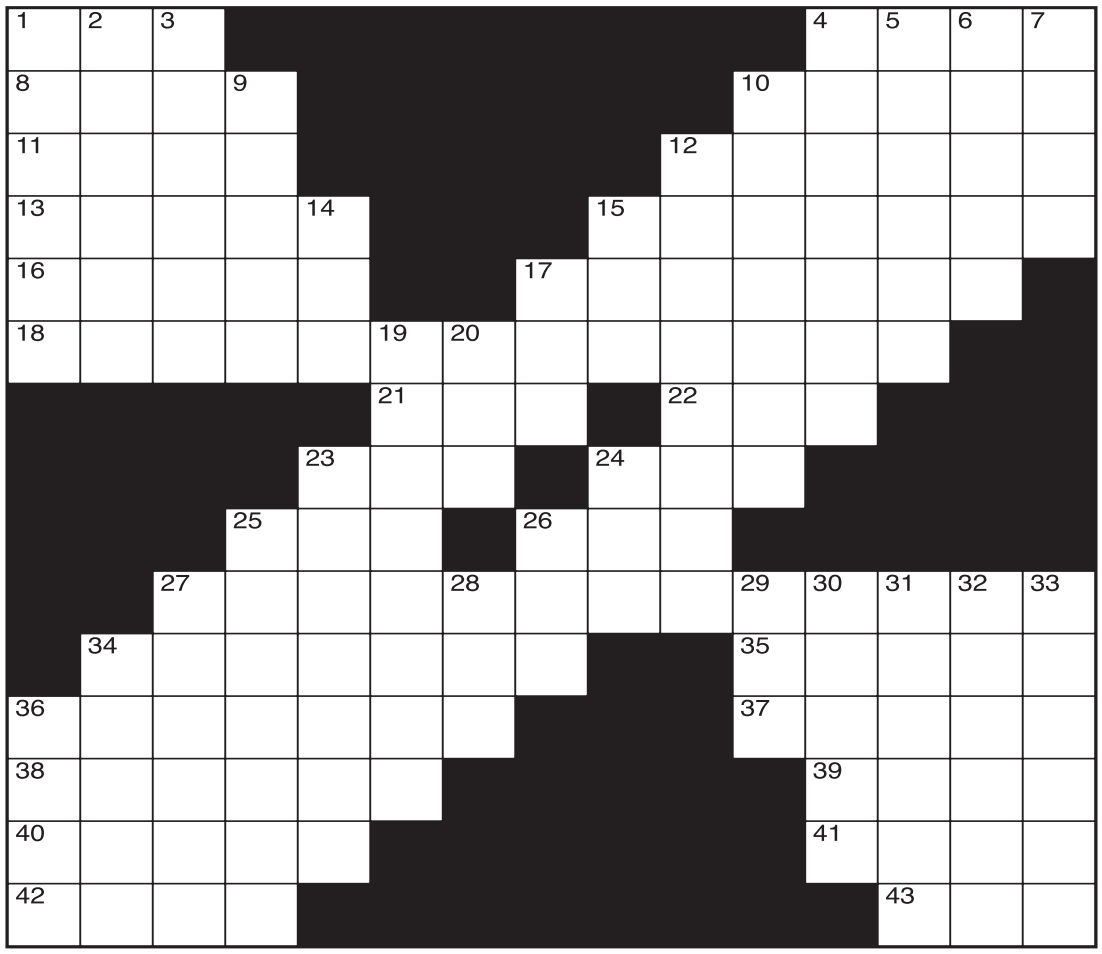
CROSSWORD



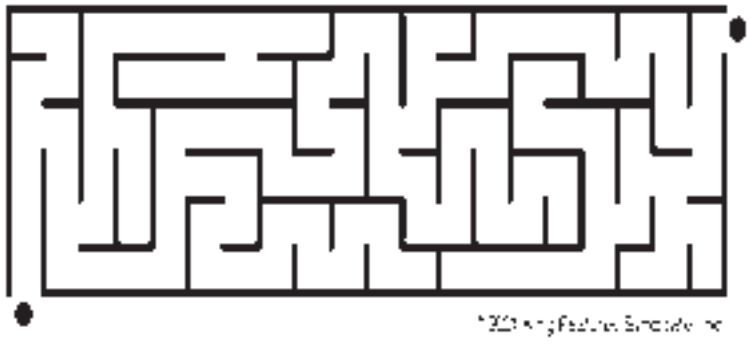
CLUES ACROSS

1. You fry food in it
4. Pesky insect
8. Gets older
10. __ Dern, actress
11. Uncouth man
12. One who sulks
13. Napoleon's king of Naples
15. One who swims underwater
16. Make amends
17. Expressions
18. Document format
21. What a beaver makes
22. Limb
23. Photograph
24. Golf score
25. Moroccan mountain range
26. Wrinkled dog breed: Shar __
27. 20th century sex symbol
34. Remedy for all diseases
35. Bluish greens
36. Moved swiftly
37. Type of units
38. Madames
39. Indian religious god
40. Potentially hazardous asteroids
41. Leak slowly through
42. An association of criminals
43. A way to push content (abbr.)

CLUES DOWN

1. Town in central Brazil
2. Large burrowing rodent
3. Nerve cell
4. Estimating
5. Bakers use it
6. Regions
7. Small lake
9. Environmentalist nun
10. More kookie
12. Announce officially
14. Israeli city __ Aviv
15. Title given to friar
17. Inches per minute (abbr.)
19. Buildings
20. Pouch
23. They steal on the high seas
24. It's mightier than the sword
25. Going off on a tangent
26. Monetary unit
27. Young woman
28. Type of bulb
29. Type of drug (abbr.)
30. City opposite Dusseldorf
31. Animal disease
32. Martini necessities
33. Elude
34. La __: Buenos Aires capital
36. An oft-enduring symbol

Kids' Maze





Community pays tribute to the late Dr. Herbert Yee

By LANCE ARMSTRONG

In what could have been recognized as "Herbert Yee Day" in Sacramento, Oct. 30 marked two celebrations of the late dentist, philanthropist and civic leader, Dr. Herbert Yee.

Herbert, who was well known in this capital city and beyond, died at the age of 96 at the Sutter Medical Center from health complications, including pneumonia, on June 26.

A private funeral service for Herbert was held a week later, and his family announced that a celebration of his life would be held later this year.

The selected date of Oct. 30 for his celebration of life was additionally significant, considering that Herbert would also be recognized at a separate event on the same day for his service during World War II.

Furthermore, both events were held during the month of his birth. He was born in Taishan, Guangdong, China in 1924.

The first of the gatherings to honor Hebert on that day was held in a packed room at the Sacramento Elks Lodge No. 6 building on Riverside Boulevard.

Herbert, who was a longtime resident of South Land Park, was recognized posthumously at the lodge during a ceremony celebrating Chinese American World War II veterans.

The event was presented by the Sacramento Lodge of the Chinese American Citi-

see Yee page 10



Photo by Lance Armstrong

David Yee accepts a congressional gold medal recognizing the service of his grandfather, Dr. Herbert Yee, as a Chinese American World War II veteran. Standing to the left of David Yee is U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Stephen D. Tom, who presented the award at the Sacramento Elks Lodge No. 6 building on Oct. 30.

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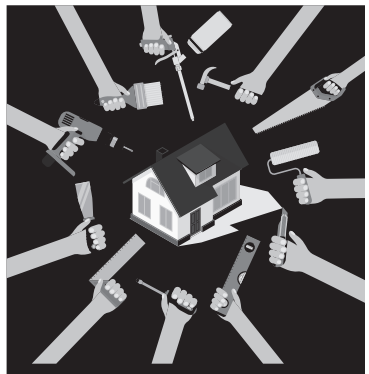

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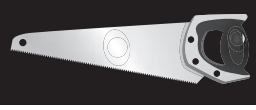

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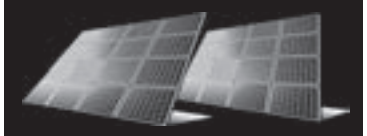

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zens Alliance, and the Chinese American World War II Recognition Project.

Sacramento City Council Member Rick Jennings, whose district includes the Pocket area, commended that project.

"We are grateful for the work of the Chinese American World War II Recognition Project and what they have done to secure a long overdue congressional gold medal, especially for our heroes," he said.

As a sort of prelude to the congressional medal ceremony, which was held less than two weeks before Veterans Day, a group of motorcyclists honoring fallen U.S. service members participated in and event in front of the lodge.

Those arriving for either of those gatherings passed small American flags that lined the entrance to the lodge.

During the second of those events, Herbert's grandson, David Yee, accepted the congressional gold medal recognizing his grandfather's Army service as a Chinese American in World War II. Herbert, who was a 1942 graduate of Sacramento High School, served in the Army Dental Corps from 1944 to 1945. He enlisted in the Army at the age of 20 at the Presidio of Monterey.

Presenting the award at the event was U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Stephen D. Tom.

This award is a fairly new honor, as it was created through bipartisan legislation with the passage of the Chinese American World War II Veteran Congressional Gold Medal Act, on Dec. 12, 2018. It was signed into law by President Donald Trump eight days later.

Desiring that Herbert would receive his congressional award in person, his family held a special, advance ceremony in Herbert's backyard last January.

After receiving this medal at that event, which was attended by a small group of his family and friends, Herbert expressed what the medal meant to him and his family.

"We will cherish it forever," he said. "We will guard it, love it, and pray for it. And I thank everybody here for your kindness, for your loyalty to our country and I'm very happy. May God bless all of us forever and forever."

David described the importance of this congressional gold medal, noting that it is one of the nation's highest civil awards.

"The congressional gold medal seeks to honor those who have done a remarkable achievement, that has impact on America's history and culture," he said. "During World War II, Chinese Americans displayed their patriotism, loyalty and courage, despite the inequity of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was in place at that time."

With the Chinese Exclusion Act in place, many Chinese served in the U.S. military during World War II, despite not being American citizens.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Magnuson Act to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act on Dec. 17, 1943.

While summarizing his grandfather's life at the congressional medal ceremony, David recognized one of Herbert's real estate investments, the Sprouts Farmers Market shopping center, south of the Sacramento Zoo.

Under a special arrangement with the organizers of the congressional gold medal award ceremony, Herbert was honored during the early portion of that event in order for his family and friends to make a timely arrival at his celebration of life.

The latter event was held at Del Paso Country Club, where Herbert was a longtime member.

More than 200 people gathered to celebrate Herbert's life, which included his arrival as a 6-year-old Chinese immigrant at the immigration station on Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay in 1931, and marrying the love of his life, Inez Fong, in 1945. They would eventually have four sons and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Herbert, in 1948, graduated as a dental surgeon from Stanford University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. He would ultimately spend more than 50 years in the dental profession, including serving as the dentist of the staff of two California governors: Edmund Gerald "Pat" Brown Sr. and Ronald Reagan.

Herbert was also instrumental in getting the International College of Dentists into China, and Vietnam following the end of the Vietnam War.

Throughout his life, Herbert held many leadership roles and he philanthropically contributed to many causes.

That philanthropy included the funding of the construction of a school near his hometown of Taishan. That institution opened in 1981.

Herbert's leadership roles included serving as president of the International College of Dentists, regent of the University of the Pacific, district governor of Lion's Club District 4 C5, and president of the Sacramento Chinese Benevolent Association.

He was also a board member of the California Museum and the California State Railroad Museum Foundation, and he served as the commander of Gung Ho American Legion Post No. 696.

Also a rich part of Herbert's life was his pride in his family's local history.

Herbert, who was a descendent of Gold Rush pioneers, helped fund the restoration of his great-grandfather's herb store in Fiddletown. The old store is now a museum, and Fiddletown is a registered California Historical Landmark and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Franklin Yee, 88, remembered his brother as a person who loved and respected his parents, Dr. Henry Way Yee and Hum We Fong Yee.

Dr. Henry Yee was a notable herbal doctor and chiropractor in downtown Sacramento.

Franklin also recognized his brother's accomplishments as an immigrant from China.

"He accomplished all that in his lifetime," he said. "It's amazing, and it's only in America that our system would permit an uneducated immigrant to go as far as he (did). There's no other country that can do it."

Franklin added that Herbert had a strong ability to excel in both the Chinese and American communities.

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Local ballet company to resume Nutcracker live

Land Park resident has leading role in holiday ballets

After almost two years of virtual and outdoor performances, Sac Civic Ballet and Deane Dance Center will resume their long-time tradition of presenting two one-act holiday ballets live on stage December 18 and 19. Sac Civic Ballet Company is a well-established pre-professional ballet company founded in 1946 by Barbara Crockett, and the Deane Dance Center is a local dance school directed by Allyson Deane and Don Schwennesen, both former dancers with the San Francisco Ballet.

Local Land Park resident, Ana Konovaloff, will be dancing the leading roles of the Snow Queen and the Rose in the Nutcracker Suite and will dance the lead role of the Dove, as well as other roles, in The Story of Noah's Ark. Ana is a Junior at Christian Brothers High School and a graduate of Holy Spirit Parish School. She has been studying dance since she was 3 years old and has studied in the summers at Sacramento Ballet Company and Boston Ballet. She is looking forward to dancing live on stage again.

The Story of Noah's Ark is a one-act version of Don Schwennesen's well-received, popular ballet. The Nutcracker Suite has the familiar roles, beautiful sets and costumes, and the wonder music of Tchaikovsky. The cast has over 50 dances, including guest artists, Macy Almendariz, Fiona Galvin, and Davis Bier.

This year the ballets will be presented at the Veterans Memorial Center Theater in Davis, 203 E. 14th Street, 95616, Saturday, December 18, at 7 pm and Sunday, December 19, at 2 pm. Tickets are $20 for adults and $15 for seniors and children. Tickets at the door or deanedancenter.com; call 916-453-0226 for questions. Masks required for patrons.



Photos by Mayumi Acosta

Ana Konovaloff to play the leading role of a local Nutcracker production

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"He was a leader in both areas, and he kept his Chinese traditions, heading the Yee (family) association, nationally, and yet he had all these other organizations, including the academic field of dentistry," he said.

Among Herbert's many friends at his celebration of life was Al Chew, who was also a past commander of the Gung Ho post.

Chew remembered his friend for his grand storytelling ability and quickness to compliment others.

"Not only was (Herbert) brilliant, but he was so friendly, and when you talked to him, you're just a listener," he said. "He's got so many stories to tell. He was always giving credit to people that affected his life, and he was never at a loss for words."

Barbara Folau, who was one of Herbert's caretakers, described him as a loving person with a good sense of humor, and a supporter of education.

"He (was) smart," she said. "I learned a lot from him. I always told him, 'You know, I wish I went to school.' And he would say, 'No, you can still go to school.' He was an encourager. He always wanted to push me. I miss him. Herbert was one of a kind."

Lonnie Wong, a retired Fox40 reporter, told this publication that he was impressed by Herbert's ability to accomplish so many things while maintaining his kind demeanor and humility.

"I think that's why there's so many people at this service is he had such a gentle nature," he said. "(He was) soft spoken, very sincere, always wanted to know how you were doing.

"(He was) very cordial, and you wonder, 'How did he ever get all those things done?' I think that was the amazing part of his character that he was able to accomplish all those goals and do it with a sense of humanity."

Donations in memory of Dr. Herbert Yee can be made to ACC Senior Services, the California State Railroad Museum Foundation, or a different charity of one's choice.

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