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San Diego Uptown News

A
friendship
blooms
Page 4



NEWS P. 3



A storefront for prefab homes

COMMUNITY P. 7



Mid-Century Modern
love affair

DINING P. 10



Happy Hour at Salt & Cleaver

TRAVEL P. 12



Sailing down the Danube

Index

Opinion.....	5
Poll.....	6
Classifieds.....	15
Business & Services.....	16
Calendar.....	18

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San Diego Community News Network

What intrigues them

Chefs, restaurateurs share their dining preferences

By Frank Sabatini Jr.

Forget the notion that chefs and restaurateurs who work 60-plus hours a week never have time to indulge in San Diego's teeming culinary scene. Though perhaps not as frequently as the people they feed, and rarely on weekend nights, it's practically an industry requirement they break away for meals presented by their competitors and colleagues.

With their discerning palates always in high gear, we asked several movers and shakers in the business what dish sent them over the moon in 2015, and what restaurant they haven't yet visited that sits at the top of their bucket list for the year ahead.



Stephen Gage (Photo by Rob Forsythe)

Stephen Gage, executive chef at Underbelly II, 3000 Upas St., North Park. 619-487-9909

Favorite dish: "For sure it was the clam chowder fries at Ironside Fish & Oyster. I call it 'the fat kid's dream.' It's much like poutine, but with thick clam chowder poured over the fries — a straightforward appetizer that's very satisfying and filling."

Must try: "A good friend of mine, Davin Waite, will be opening a small noodle shop in Oceanside right next door to

his other restaurant, Wrench and Rodent Seabastropub. He's very talented and always thinks



Lety Gonzalez
(Courtesy of Alternative Strategies)

outside the box so I'm super excited to try the food at his new place."

Lety Gonzalez, head chef at Uptown Tavern, 1236 University Ave., Hillcrest. 619-241-2710

Favorite dish: "I can't stop thinking about the Scotch egg I had at Soda & Swine's newest location in Liberty Station. It was perfectly soft boiled and wrapped in chorizo and panko crumbs. I've had Scotch eggs in other places, but this one melted

see Chefs, page 8

Spritzr: a new social network uses matchmaking

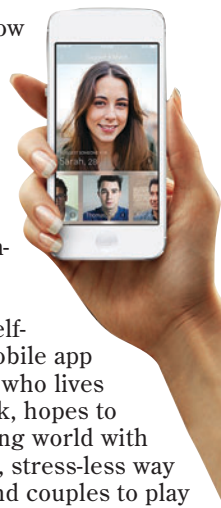
By Lucia Viti

Singles looking for love can meet through a variety of ways; serendipitously as the stars align with the heavens leaving everything to chance; through social circles — family, friends and co-workers; or through online dating services where computer algorithms promise the perfect soulmate upon completion of a lengthy, labor-intensive questionnaire.

Ask any busy single how tough it is to meet their match and you may be listening for hours. "It's just not that easy" is a common refrain.

Manshu Agarwal, a self-described mobile app matchmaker who lives in North Park, hopes to rock the dating world with Spritzr, a fun, stress-less way for singles and couples to play matchmaker.

The free app, currently only available for Apple devices using the iOS mobile operating system, is designed for "singles to mingle" while their single, partnered



see Spritzr, page 14

Top read stories of 2015

Ken Williams | Editor

Which stories piqued the most interest by San Diego Uptown News readers in 2015? Although we can't accurately measure the print readership, we get a clear snapshot of reader interest from Google Analytics, which tracks the number of views online at sdenn.com. So here are 14 most-read stories that engaged our readers over the past year.



The Flame nightclub in Hillcrest
(Courtesy of Location Matters)

No. 1. Park Boulevard nightclub the Flame is sold

By Ken Williams. Published Oct. 9. Read at bit.ly/1NbhWQ8.

Uptown News got the scoop on the sale of the vacant nightclub at 3780 Park Blvd. in Hillcrest. James Nicholas

of Clownfish Partners bought the property from seller Donny Duenas for \$1.9 million. That figure includes the liquor license for the Flame, a landmark lesbian bar that opened at this location in 1984. Nicholas told Uptown News that he will transform the single-story structure into a multi-use project by adding six apartments and a central courtyard. He said he plans to "restore the façade" of the vintage building and keep the iconic sign. He will lease the nightclub space through his brokerage firm, Location Matters of Del Mar. Since our article was published, Nicholas has created a website that documents the long history of the property, which includes its long run as a lesbian bar and a place of historical significance to the local LGBT community.



The TargetExpress store in South Park
(Photo by Ken Williams)

Nos. 2, 4 and 7. Coverage about TargetExpress.

Public interest grew intense regarding Target's announcement that it would be taking over the vacant Gala Foods store in South Park. People picked sides, and tempers became frayed during public meetings. In the end, there was very little that could be done by those who wanted to stop the project, since Target had no plans to radically change the historic building.

see 2015, page 19



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 SOLD 3BR 2BA + Den • 1352 sq ft \$585,000 2685 Wyandotte Av	 SOLD FIXER UPPER 2BR 1BA • 816 sq ft \$477,000 3441 Felton St	 SOLD 2BR 2BA • 1015 sq ft \$369,900 4021 Louisiana St	 SOLD TOWNHOME 3BR 3.5BA • 1204 sq ft \$540,000 2618 Lincoln Av	 SOLD 3BR 2BA • 1068 sq ft \$500,000 2094 Montclair St	 SOLD Multi-Unit Property • 1124 sq ft \$655,000 4676 E Mtn View Dr
 SOLD 1BR 1BA • 654 sq ft \$285,000 3790 Florida St	 SOLD 3BR 1BA • 1166 sq ft \$656,000 3312 30th St	 SOLD 1BR 1BA • 636 sq ft \$205,000 3030 Suncrest Dr	 SOLD 3BR 1BA • 1066 sq ft \$620,000 3078 Ivy St	 SOLD 2BR 1BA • 905 sq ft \$591,200 3381 Felton St	 SOLD 3BR 2BA + Den • 1204 sq ft \$510,000 1738 Pentuckett Av
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 SOLD 3BR 2BA • 1888 sq ft \$755,000 3496 Elsinore Pl	 SOLD 3BR 2BA • 1373 sq ft \$285,500 6811 Parkside Av	 SOLD 4BR 2BA • 1794 sq ft \$575,000 2981 Monarch St	 SOLD 2BR 1BA • 732 sq ft \$524,900 4087 Hamilton St	 SOLD 3BR 2BA • 1092 sq ft \$710,000 3620 Utah St	 SOLD 4BR 2BA • 1698 sq ft \$540,000 5556 Brunswick Av



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All properties shown are 2015 transactions



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Selling prefab homes

Storefront opens in North Park

(top row) Connect Homes will conduct three tours Jan. 12 on their prefab home in Bonsall in San Diego County. (Courtesy of Connect Homes)

By Margie M. Palmer

Building a home from the ground up can be stressful, which is why a growing number of people are exploring what prefab housing has to offer. If you've ever been curious about the process or have questions about how to get a project started, Connect Homes' new storefront in North Park is a great place to start.

The local brick-and-mortar is being run by Keller Williams Realtor Gavin Grant.

Grant worked as an architect before he moved to San Diego and got his realtor's license, he said, and it was during that time that he worked alongside Connect Homes founders Jared Levy and Gordon Stott.

"We all met when we were working at Marmol Radziner Prefab in Los Angeles and we did mostly single family residential projects," Grant said.

Levy and Stott eventually went on to win several national design awards for their homes, but they also felt there were quite a few problems in the prefab industry as a whole, including the model design segment.

"We stayed in contact after I left," Grant said, "and within a couple years of them starting Connect Homes they were able to come up with the right prototype. It wasn't until last year that they built their first home that was completed for a client."

The Sonoma-based home was featured in the June 2014 issue of Dwell Magazine, and the notoriety that Connect Homes received from that article prompted them to reach out to Grant to see if he'd

have an interest in helping them expand their sales team.

His background in architecture and his experience as a realtor, he said, made him an ideal candidate, especially since he'd be responsible for interacting with clients and meeting them on-site if they needed help finding land.

Grant said they wanted to keep the storefront in a metro area, especially since Connect Homes seems to fit well with a lot of the revitalization projects that are taking place throughout the city.

"We offer a lot less disruption to neighbors than traditional construction does. Traditional construction of a site-built home is a very linear process that involves demolition of



A view inside a Connect Homes prefab home in Orinda in Contra Costa County (Courtesy of Connect Homes)

the existing structure followed by pouring the foundation, framing and adding the finishes before it reaches completion," he said.

"With a prefab home we split the process into two. Two things



finish things within three to four months," Grant said.

The modules are delivered as complete as possible, which is one of the things he said that helps differentiate Connect Homes from its competitors.

"Our goal is to limit the amount of local site work," he said.

If you're interested in learning more about Connect Homes and are hoping to tour one of their completed properties, you're in luck. The company is offering a tour of their Bonsall property on Tuesday, Jan. 12.

"We'll be holding three tours on that day, at 1, 2 and 3 p.m.," Grant said.

Anyone who is interested in being added to the tour list can call 619-609-0010 to reserve a spot.

—Margie M. Palmer is a San Diego-based freelance writer who has been racking up bylines in a myriad of news publications for the past 10 years. You can reach her at margiep@alumni.pitt.edu. ♦

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A special kind of friendship

By Anne M. Haule

One Saturday morning I arrived early at Alexis' Greek Café on Fifth Avenue in Hillcrest. Even though it doesn't officially open until 11 a.m., Jorge, the proprietor, welcomed me in. A slim, nice-looking man with great dark hair and eyes, he handed me the menu as he wiped off the dozen or so white tables in preparation for the lunch crowd.

As I perused the plastic-covered menu with three columns of choices — including both Greek and American — I watched Jorge, clad in his long white apron, crisp white shirt and black slacks, continue to spray and wipe the floor-to-ceiling windows that offered his patrons one of the best people-watching views in Hillcrest.

I am originally from Chicago, where many downtown city diners are owned and operated by Greeks, and where Greek Town on Halsted Street is a local and even national attraction. So my nostalgia led me to become a bit of a regular at Alexis. Typically I order a Greek salad, pita, falafel and a glass of \$2.50 wine. Usually I come alone and listen to the classical music playing in the background and let my mind fantasize about the sun-filled Greek islands displayed in photos on the walls or ponder the lives of people passing by.

Without regard to the season (each being very subtle in San Diego) many of the pedestrians wear sandals, jeans, T-shirts and flat-brimmed ball caps some worn forward and some worn backward. Most are engaged

with their smartphones. There are young couples holding hands and laughing and there are just everyday folks in unremarkable garb coming and going at the corner bus stop.

As I sat there musing, I wondered if Nora, an older petite woman with bright blue eyes, clear skin and thick white hair, would show up today.

It wasn't long after Jorge pulled the cord lighting up the "open" sign that Nora daintily entered the café with the help of her wood cane. She was wearing her signature beige cotton hat and a bright green sweater over an orange shirt with disc earrings picking up both vibrant colors. She headed directly to her "reserved" seat next to the cash register.

I first met Nora over a year ago when we were the only two people in the café — each having an early lunch a few tables apart. I had smiled at her and said hello. She had smiled back and told me she couldn't hear well, so I needed to speak up for my voice to carry across the tables that separated us. I learned that she was a retired teacher living nearby and that her memory was fading and I should not be insulted if she forgot my name.

Over time, I observed that Nora and Jorge had their own ritual. He would greet her by name with a welcoming smile and ask her if she was hungry. She would say either "very" or "somewhat." She would next take her usual seat and he would bring her a diet cola with a straw. Today was no exception.

"Hello Nora, are you hungry ... what would you like today?"

"I am very hungry today ... but I never know what you have ... so

please decide for me."

"Let me see what I can put together for you today."

Before long, Jorge brought her a half of a toasted ham, cheese and tomato sandwich cut in half.

While she began to eat, Jorge had a little time between customers and began to fill me in on his friend. He recalled that she had been coming to his café for over 15 years — usually twice a day for an early lunch at 11 a.m. and an early dinner between 3:30 and 4 p.m.

He told me that Nora is always very friendly and enjoys talking with others while eating her meals. Frequently he will ask a regular customer dining alone to join Nora at her table so that she can enjoy the company.

Luckily, she likes a lot of different kinds of food, so he changes up her menu with an eye to nutrition and mostly finger-food for her ease in eating. He told me she used to have a glass of wine with her meal but switched to soda about a year ago when she began using the cane.

He smiles as he describes Nora as a happy person with a love for life. He explains that over the years her eyesight, hearing and memory have all declined but that these deficits do not deter her mobility and spirit.

He told me about her annual birthday parties at the café every July 23 when a dozen or so of her friends celebrate with food, wine and music. At her most recent party, she turned 93, he said.

When I asked about him, Jorge told me that he's from Mexico and has been at the café for over 20 years where he learned Greek

cooking from his former boss who was from Greece. He was proud to tell me that the café has been operating for 23 years and has mainly regular customers.

After Nora finished half of her half sandwich, Jorge took the other half and boxed it up for her telling me that she no longer eats very much at a sitting.

Finished with her meal, Nora was happy to answer my questions — although warning me that she is now "an ancient" and she often forgets in mid-sentence.

With a beautiful sparkling smile, she reminisced about her teaching days telling me how much she loved her students. She told me she was from Canada and of

Irish heritage. And that she is particularly fond of her middle name — Valentine.

When asked about family, her smile fades a bit as she tells me how much she and her husband had wanted children but were unable to do so. She told me her husband had died and apologized for forgetting his name.

Her smile reappears when she speaks of her friend, Jorge, telling me he is a "a splendid man, a good man and a true friend" and that his café is "her second home."

Pretending to be busy wiping a nearby table, I glanced in Jorge's direction and just in time to see him smile the loving smile of a true friend — and I ponder the unlikely and enduring friendship that blossomed over time in a very special café in Hillcrest.

—Anne Haule is a writer from Hillcrest who can be reached at annehaule@gmail.com.



Jorge and Nora
(Photo by Anne M. Haule)



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Letters

The real issue is homelessness

Re: “HBA: yes to National Main Street Program, no to historic district,” guest editorial by HBA Executive Director Benjamin Nicholls [Volume 7, Issue 24 or bit.ly/1RjVyHL] and “Guest editorial: A response to Benjamin Nicholls” by Nancy Moors [Volume 7, Issue 25 or bit.ly/1YibKJq]

Before I could respond to Benjamin Nicholls’ irrational commentary, Nancy Moors responded with just about all I needed to say, excellently and well documented.

Anyone who says there is and has been no development in Hillcrest/Uptown has large blinders on. There is and has been, for decades, major development and increased density and it continues.

As far as businesses closing, we cannot eat out every night, and we did not ever have really “high end” shops in Hillcrest. The trendy boutiques and gift shops do come and go for a variety of reasons.

I have lived here for 30 years. Hillcrest is not dying a “slow death” but neighborhoods do progress in cycles. Ben thinks we are in competition with North Park and they are winning because we have a 65-foot height limit. Huh? North Park and South Park have no buildings over three stories and they are doing great. (South Park created its present resurgence by down zoning decades ago to respect and preserve the neighborhood’s historic character.)

What is really bringing down Hillcrest is this — and more so than any other neighborhood, even downtown. The issue that is enormously challenging Hillcrest and Uptown, dwarfing the parking issue, is the HOMELESS ISSUE!

It is unrelenting, heartbreaking, disgusting and aggravating! OMG! It is worse than ever and apparently growing. It faces us every day, morning and evening, right outside our homes and businesses.

If Ben and the Hillcrest Business Association are really serious about assisting Hillcrest’s success, they will show up at the Mayor’s State of the City Address (Jan. 14, 2016, 6 p.m., Balboa Theatre) with placards demanding ACTION on the HOMELESS ISSUE NOW. This issue is harming central San Diego’s economic development all over, but in Hillcrest as a small neighborhood community it is overwhelming.

This is Hillcrest’s worst enemy.

—Deirdre Lee of Hillcrest/ Bankers’ Hill via Facebook

(Editor’s note: Actually, there are a number of buildings in North Park along transit corridors that are taller than three stories, including the San Diego County Credit Union tower at University Avenue and 32nd Street, La Boheme complex at Lincoln and 30th Street, and the housing towers along Park Boulevard.)

Reaction to Smart & Final Extra!

Re: “Smart & Final Extra! concept explained” [Volume 7, Issue 26 or at bit.ly/1QX2R9b]

Community members need to actually take the time to step

into a new Smart & Final Extra! store before rejecting the idea. I was skeptical about doing a regular shopping at S&F, but my husband had already scoped out one of the upgraded stores in another part of San Diego. Wow! Produce was fresh and flavorful, meat was high quality, and the shelves are stocked with all the foods in normal quantities for household shopping. The prices were significantly lower than Ralphs and Vons.

In recent months we’ve done some of our stocking up at Wal-Mart’s Super Store in the Eastlake area of Chula Vista and found that Smart & Final Extra! turns out to be better in final cost than Wal-Mart. We are running out of competition in supermarkets, with only Vons and Ralphs in that category. We can’t all afford to shop at Whole Foods for anything more than the occasional specialty item, and Sprouts offers good produce and groceries, but not for stocking up. So, before weighing in, I suggest giving them a tour and see for yourselves.

—Dennis Wood via Facebook

I don’t believe a word.

—John Fjorgen via Facebook

Unless they rip down that building, like what they did to Vons in Mission Hills, forget it. Paint and a new floor and sign won’t entice shoppers and [the store] will remain a swill pit — which will lead to failure.

—Kypt via Facebook

This is great! I think it will be a great addition to the neighborhood. I hope the process for this to happen is simple and doesn’t generate neighborhood opposition — this is so much better than the vacant building that sits there now after Haggen shuttered.

—Benny Cartwright via Facebook

That CEO is way too quick to volunteer that these would be non-union jobs for my taste. She’s very eager to hire a loss prevention team to protect her inventory, but won’t allow a contract to protect her workers? I’ll pass.

—Lian Shoemake via Facebook

[Editor’s note: The spokeswoman was the director of publicity for the Commerce-based Smart & Final company, not the CEO. She was answering my question about whether the jobs would be union or non-union.]

Demise of Antique Row

Re: “The Death of Antique Row” [Volume 7, Issue 26 or at bit.ly/1JcpZOi]

You know, one of the best ways to fight gentrification is to ensure an adequate supply of housing to meet demand. This generally means building dense, mixed use buildings that don’t always have free parking. It means buildings that could be four or five stories tall. It means places that are just hideous, like the Champs-Elysees. But San Diego votes against providing homes over, and over, and over again.

—Robert Lawson via Facebook

A recommendation

Re: “In the zone” [Dr. Ink’s review of Pacific Time in Linda Vista, Volume 7, Issue 26 or at bit.ly/1YNwjj]

You should have had a meat and cheese board. They are phenomenal!! Sandwiches are great too! Great spot, wonderful staff and awesome addition to the neighborhood.

—Ashley via Facebook

What’s in a name?

Re: “How University Heights streets got their names” [Published Nov. 11, 2011 or at bit.ly/1MDE42g]

Doug Sommer, I share your curiosity about Gunn Street. Chester and Douglas Gunn had a sister, Anna, who married George Marston in 1878. The house they built in 1905 on Seventh Avenue is open to the public. I have thought perhaps Gunn Street was named after Douglas Gunn, at one time the owner and editor of the San Diego Union.

—Jean Samuels via Facebook

—Send letters to the editor to ken@sdenn.com or via the San Diego Uptown News website or our Facebook page. ♦

Mark your calendars: community meetings

San Diego Uptown News encourages readers to make a difference in the community where they live. Here is a list of community organizations that meet in your area:

Adams Avenue Business Association Board of Directors: 8 a.m. on the first Tuesday of the month. Normal Heights Community Center, 4649 Hawley Blvd.

Bankers Hill Parking Committee: 5 – 6:30 p.m. on the first Monday. Merrill Gardens, 2567 Second Ave.

Burlingame Neighborhood Association: 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday. Mazara Trattoria, 2302 30th St.

Greater Golden Hill Community Planning Group: 6:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday. Balboa Golf Course Clubhouse, 2600 Golf Course Drive

Hillcrest Business Association Beautification Committee: 3 p.m. on the fourth Monday. 3737 Fifth Ave., Suite 202

Hillcrest Business Association Board of Directors: 5 p.m. on the second Tuesday. Joyce Beers Community Center, 3900 Vermont St.

Hillcrest Town Council: 6:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday. Joyce Beers Community Center, 3900 Vermont St.

Ken-Tal Community Planning Group: 6:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday. Copley-Price Family YMCA, 4300 El Cajon Blvd.

Mission Hills Business Improvement District: 3:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday. Visit missionhillsBID.com for meeting location.

Mission Hills Town Council Trustees: 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of alternating months. 902 Fort Stockton Drive

Mission Hills Town Council Town Hall: 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of alternating months. Francis Parker Lower School, 4201 Randolph St.

Normal Heights Community Association: 6 p.m. on the first Tuesday. Normal Heights Community Center, 4649 Hawley Blvd.

Normal Heights Community Planning Group: 6 p.m. on first Tuesday. Normal Heights Community Center, 4649 Hawley Blvd.

North Park Community Association: 6 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday. Lafayette Hotel, 2223 El Cajon Blvd.

North Park Main Street Board of Directors Meeting: 7:30 a.m. on the second Wednesday. North Park Main Street office, 3076 University Ave.

North Park Main Street Design Committee: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday. North Park Main Street office, 3076 University Ave.

North Park Maintenance Assessment District: 6 p.m. on the second Monday. North Park Adult Activity Center, 2719 Howard Ave.

North Park Planning Committee: 6:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday. North Park Christian Fellowship, 2901 North Park Way

Old Town Community Planning Group: 3:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday. The Whaley House, 2476 San Diego Ave.

South Park Business Group: 8:30 a.m. on the last Wednesday. Eclipse Chocolate, 2145 Fern St.

Talmadge Community Council: 6:30 p.m. on third Tuesday of odd numbered months. 4760 Miracle Drive (residential address)

Talmadge Maintenance Assessment District: 6:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday. Copley-Price YMCA, 4300 El Cajon Blvd.

University Heights Community Development Corporation: 6:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday. 4452 Park Blvd. Suite 104

University Heights Community Parking District: 6:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday. 4452 Park Blvd. Suite 104

University Heights Community Association: 6:30 p.m. on the first Thursday. Alice Birney Elementary School auditorium, 4345 Campus Ave.

Uptown Planners: 6 p.m. on the first Tuesday. Joyce Beers Community Center, 3900 Vermont St.

—Email ken@sdenn.com for inclusion of your organization or committee meeting.

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Guest Editorial

Retooling how HBA committees function

By Benjamin Nicholls

After the excitement (and eating) of the holiday season, it's almost a relief to see the new year arrive. The start of the year is a time for new resolutions and new ideas. For businesses and the Hillcrest Business Association (HBA), it's time to bring out new resolutions for how we can all work together to improve our business district.

This new year, the HBA is undertaking several changes to further tailor our programs. In order to focus our efforts, we need the input of business members throughout Hillcrest. We've created several ways for members to contribute.

First, we have created an online survey for our members. The survey has 17 short questions that seek feedback and ideas about how we're doing and what we should be doing. Business members are welcome to visit hillcrestbia.org to complete the survey.

Second, the HBA has re-organized how we manage our committees. We have restructured our committees around projects that people want to work on rather than having monthly committees. Rather than having monthly standing "catch-all" marketing or beautification committees, we have created committees that meet, complete a project and then disband (sounds simple, right?).

If you have an idea for a project, all you need to do is come to our Quarterly Open House and make a pitch. You could pitch ideas like a joint Hillcrest gift card, building a parking garage or a concierge tour

of the neighborhood. There are no limits to what we could do! If there are enough interested people who want to work on your committee, then we create it.

At the quarterly meeting, we'll also give feedback from the existing committees. There are a number of existing committees that are currently working on ideas that business people have had. We have the Video Committee that is working on promotional video that will play in hotels, a Homeless Outreach Committee that is working on how to address our homeless problem, and a MAD Expansion Committee that is working to expand resources for cleaning and beautification. We also have a committee that is working to produce the Taste of Hillcrest. And, finally, we have a committee that is working on addressing concerns about

the proposed SANDAG bike lanes.

You can be part of any of these projects or create your own ideas too. You can find out more about our committee structure at hillcrestbia.org/what-we-do/committees.

This new year, I encourage business people to make a resolution to get more involved in the Hillcrest business district. Keep an eye on your mailbox to find our when and where the next Quarterly Open House is. Join the dozens of volunteers that are already working to make our business district better. And bring your ideas too.

—Benjamin Nicholls is executive director of Hillcrest Business Association. ♦



San Diego Uptown News



Readers Poll

Poll Results

Do you make new year's resolutions and keep them?

14% Yes

43% No

43% Sometimes

New Poll

What do you expect happens in Election 2016?

- ☐ Democrats keep the White House
- ☐ Republican elected President
- ☐ Too early to predict

To cast your vote, visit sduptownnews.com.

A Modern story

The last hope for humanity: the Mid-Century house?

HouseCalls

Michael Good

Some things — usually the wrong things — tend to stick in one's mind. In the early 1980s, my college poetry professor said in passing that the 1960s were the last flowering of mankind. This was in a class about the drug-fueled literature of an earlier era, the 18th century pleasure-palace poetics of Samuel Taylor Coleridge ("It was a miracle of rare device, a sunny pleasure-dome made of ice!").

Not much else from that class stuck with me, other than the unintended lesson of "Kubla Khan" — basically never answer the door when you're in the middle of writing something (Coleridge lost his train of thought when a visitor came to his door, and never finished the poem). "Kubla Khan" remains one of the greatest examples of a lost poem in English literature, a reminder that, through inattention, something fabulous can be lost forever. As for the idea that the '60s were the last oasis of enlightenment before we descended into our present state of Internet-fueled anxiety, what had once seemed like the wacky musings of an inveterate hippy began to seem almost prescient recently as I was contemplating the current exhibit at the La Jolla Historical Society's museum on the disciples of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Poetry — and mankind — may rise again, but it's beginning to look like residential architecture may never regain the enlightened status it achieved in the '60s. This was a time when a house was defined by something other than the need to impress guests with the immensity of your square footage. The Mid-Century Modern and its cousin the California Ranch were hopeful and open-minded, democratic and accessible, full of integrity and invention; houses that testified to the triumph of technology, the value of a well-educated citizenry and the possibility of progress — for everyone. They were built of low-cost, mass-produced materials — that was part of their DNA. But the reason for using these inexpensive materials was to free up the budget for innovative design. The emphasis was on style and function, not square footage. No wonder most builders stopped making them in the '80s.

Between 1940 and 1980, millions of Mid-Century houses were built in Southern California, often in housing tracts, but also on vacant lots scattered throughout Mission Hills, Point Loma, North Park, Talmadge, Mt. Helix and La Jolla. Today, like the bungalow in the 1980s, their very ubiquity threatens

their survival. How could they be endangered if there are so many of them? But the Mid-Century house, particularly the Ranch, hasn't gotten much attention — or respect — from preservationists, and few have been designated as historic. So they're fair game for house flippers and home-gutters.

As for the Mid-Century Modern, it's being loved to death by Internet-educated buyers, who have adopted the open-it-up/brighten-it-up mantra, tearing down walls and slapping white paint on everything in sight before stopping to consider what is original and what is worth saving. As a result, there aren't as many intact Mid-Century Moderns in San Diego as you might be led to believe by all those real estate listings. And once a redwood wall has been painted over, or outdoor patio has been enclosed, it's hard to convince the Modern owner to return to the past.

The Mid-Century Modern and California Ranch houses share a common heritage — and some common features — but can be starkly different in appearance and philosophy. The Mid-Century Modern presented an opportunity for architects to design imaginative, artistic houses that were also affordable. They accomplished this by using innovative (and inexpensive) materials such as plywood, tongue-and-groove siding and roof decking, concrete block, aluminum sliding doors and plate glass. They also employed modern building techniques — post-and-beam construction, concrete slabs, mass-produced hollow core doors and flat roofs that didn't require trusses and used less roofing material. The effect was completely modern, forward-looking and unconnected to any previous historical style, creating an open appearance and blending the indoors and outdoors into a nearly seamless experience.

The California Ranch shared the Modern house's low-slung appearance and broad floor plan. But it was based on an historical precedent — the ranch house of the Californios, the early settlers of 18th and early-19th century California. This connection was somewhat fanciful, as the adobe houses, like the missions, were extensively remodeled over the years. San Diegan Cliff May, a descendent of the Estudillo family, created a very contemporary reimagining of the Mexican Hacienda in Mission Hills and Talmadge in the early 1930s. Over the years he modified his Ranch house, eventually producing a wood and stucco version that barely resembled his earlier haciendas. But many characteristics remained, including the single story L-shaped plan, oriented around a courtyard patio. May's main contri-



(l to r) Homer Delawie Mid-Century Modern in Mission Hills; the redwood façade of a Craig Ellwood Mid-Century Modern in San Diego (Photos by Michael Good)

bution might have been to turn the house around and wall it off, focusing family life on the backyard.

Those who subscribe to the Great Man Theory of Everything often credit Frank Lloyd Wright or Mies Van Der Rohe with the invention of Modernism. But it was really a group effort, a case of great minds thinking alike. (Same goes for the Ranch, despite May's outsized contribution.) Modernism was on everyone's mind 100 years ago. Writers, painters, dancers, poets, musicians, filmmakers, artists and architects — everyone was trying to break from tradition. For architects, all of this would have been nothing more than idle musing if it wasn't for a series of massive cultural shifts that took place between the 1930s and 1950s. (After all, Frank Lloyd Wright was able to build only four houses during the 1920s.) These four events made Mid-Century Modern possible:

The Federal Housing Administration: In 1934, the Federal Housing Administration created a booklet of guidelines that dictated how a house could be built if the buyer wanted to get an FHA loan. The first page of the booklet used the word "simple" five times to de-

scribe the government-regulation house. These guidelines killed the bungalow, with its elaborate built-ins and highly detailed wooden exterior. In the 1950s, builders were still following those guidelines, and the FHA was still denying loans for houses that were too elaborate.

The 30-year mortgage: Previously, homeowners saved until they could buy a lot, and got a short-term loan to pay a builder to build a house. The long-term mortgage and the GI Bill made the American dream possible. The FHA favored large builders and told them how to design housing tracts, with the arterial road system, shopping malls and freeways.

The automobile. Big developments such as Clairemont wouldn't have been possible without the automobile. Same goes for all the custom Ranches and Moderns dotting the hillsides of Mt. Helix, La Mesa, Point Loma and La Jolla. The automobile changed the way '50s houses were designed, too. The garage or carport was moved front and center. There was no longer any need for an alley. There was no longer any room for a porch. And America turned inward.

The television: The "front room" moved to the back of the house, where the TV, fireplace and sliding glass door leading to the patio resided. The television also invited Americans into the living rooms of their role models, the imaginary characters on situation comedies that became their friends. The nation was introduced to Mid-Century design by Rob and Laura Petrie. In the sort of weird twist that only happens in television, architect Craig Ellwood's family played his ideal family in photo shoots and ads for his home designs. And in an alternate universe, his wife, an actress, played the mother of a different family, on television in "Dennis the Menace."

In the early 1960s, as freeways and apartments began replacing bungalows, architectural historian Robert Winter began his campaign to bring respect to the all-too-familiar bungalow. He wrote books, he lectured to homeowner associations and historical groups, he even purchased and restored the bungalow of famed tile maker Ernest Batchelder. In San Diego, we have our Modern version of Bungalow Bob — Keith York, a Mid-Century fan who manages a website devoted to the subject ("Modern San Diego") and lives in a house by Craig Ellwood.

York has curated a show for the La Jolla Historical Society called "Frank Lloyd Wright's Legacy." Through his apprenticeship program, Wright influenced many Modern architects, including five who worked in San Diego. The exhibit at Wisteria Cottage, 780 Prospect St., includes period photographs, models, and furniture by these Modernists. There also is a self-guided automobile tour, which you'll find online as well. Like the Mid-Century Modern, the show won't last forever. It closes Jan. 17.

—Contact Michael Good at housecallssdun@gmail.com. ♦

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FROM PAGE 1
CHEFS

in my mouth and I didn't even need the aioli served on the side."

Must try: "I've never had the opportunity yet to try Solare Ristorante in Liberty Station. They have an authentic Italian chef who I follow on Facebook and Instagram. He goes to all his purveyors every day for fresh ingredients."



Sam Khorish (Courtesy of Heat Bar & Kitchen)

Sam Khorish, co-owner of Heat Bar & Kitchen, 3797 Park Blvd., Hillcrest/North Park border 619-546-4328

Favorite dish: "After living here for 20 years I finally went to Bronx Pizza for the first time, and the thin crust blew the socks off my feet. I got their white pizza with ricotta, basil and olive oil, and another one that I customized with tomato sauce, mozzarella, pepperoni and jalapenos. That's the one I still go back and get. It's the best pie in town."

Must try: "I've been dying to go to Chef Patrick Ponsaty's restaurant in Escondido called Belamy's. He won the 'Master Chef' title in France last year, and I had his food at Lowe's Coronado when he worked there, and loved it."



Molly Brooks-Thornton (Courtesy of Bankers Hill Bar & Restaurant)

Molly Brooks-Thornton, general manager and sommelier at Bankers Hill Bar & Restaurant, 2202 Fourth Ave., Bankers Hill 619-231-0222

Favorite dish: "It was the Tiger Bomb brunch sandwich at Tiger! Tiger! It's made with pork belly, arugula, Gruyere, a sunny-side egg and aioli — a great way to start the day, and it makes more sense to me than a pastry because it has all the major food groups in it."

Must try: "Since I'm becoming more of a connoisseur of ramen, I plan on going to Izakaya Masa in Mission Hills. It's the first thing out of people's mouths when you ask them where the best place to go is for ramen and Japanese cuisine in general. They're also open late, which is important when you work in the restaurant industry."



Johan Engman (Courtesy of Rise & Shine Restaurant Group)

Johan Engman, owner of Breakfast Republic 2730 University Ave., North Park. 619-642-0299 and Fig Tree Cafe 416 University Ave., Hillcrest. 619-298-2010 with additional Fig Tree locations in Pacific Beach and Liberty Station

Favorite dish: "The brisket with the house sauce at Brazen BBQ was the most amazing thing I had last year. I don't know how exactly they make it taste so good, but I've been back a couple more times for it."

Must try: "I've been hearing from industry people with very good palates about the Wine Vault & Bistro on India Street. It sounds like they always come up with new menus paired with wines, and I'm a big fan of that."



Hanna Tesfamichael (Courtesy of Hanna's Gourmet)

Hanna Tesfamichael, chef-owner of Hanna's Gourmet 2864 Adams Ave., Normal Heights 619-280-5600

Favorite dish: "A humble, but memorable meal I had last year was at Zimology 21 in the Gaslamp Quarter. Their chicken and waffle is to die for. The waffle was very light, and the chicken was moist inside with the perfect crunch outside."

Must try: "The next restaurant on my list is Meze Downtown. I've looked at their menu and see they put twists on traditional Greek food with untraditional ingredients, which is my kind of thing."



Russel Rummer (Courtesy of Bay Bird)

Russell Rummer, executive chef at Croce's Park West 2760 Fifth Ave., Bankers Hill 619-233-4355

Favorite dish: "It was the char-grilled Akaushi ribeye at Island Prime, which was one of the best steaks I think I ever had in my life. It literally melted in your mouth."

Must try: "What I am most excited to try is Richard Blais' Crack Shack. I can't wait to see the combination of his fine-dining training in a fast, casual atmosphere. And I love chicken with eggs!"

—Frank Sabatini Jr. is the author of "Secret San Diego" (ECW Press), and began his local writing career more than two decades ago as a staffer for the former San Diego Tribune. You can reach him at fsabatini@san.rr.com. ♦

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UPTOWN FOOD BRIEFS

BY FRANK SABATINI JR.



Kindred is “a vegan restaurant for non-vegans.” (Courtesy of SIMPATIKA)

A unique vegan restaurant flaunting a horned four-eyed wolf as its mascot has soft-opened in the space formerly occupied by **Alchemy** in South Park. Named **Kindred**, the venture was spearheaded by Kory Stetina, a self-described “metal-head and punk-rock dude of the ’90s” who got his feet wet running pop-up vegan beer dinners for a few years. The restaurant’s two other partners are acclaimed designer Paul Basile, and Arsalun Tafazoli, who separately operates a cache of local hotspots such as **Soda & Swine**, **Polite Provisions** and **Noble Experiment** under Consortium Holdings.

Basile helmed Kindred’s eclectic design, which meshes together Gothic and French-Victorian elements.

The concept features an ambitious cocktail program as well. Stetina sums up the food as “rich and creative.” The meals were created by head chef Jeremy Scullin, a native New Zealander who worked for acclaimed vegan restaurants in London, New York and Philadelphia. But the word “vegan” doesn’t appear anywhere on the menu.

“It’s because we want to destroy the stereotype that plant-based food is somehow less or different than non-vegan food,” said Stetina, referring in part to the chef’s “big, crushing sandwiches, baked pistachio-crusted tofu, and miso-cashew cheese balls that appear on a charcuterie board.

Kindred is open daily from 4 p.m. to midnight. Weekend brunch will be introduced in early January. 1503 30th St. 619-546-9653.

Look for burrito-size sushi rolls fusing Asian and Mexican ingredients together by the middle of January, as former **Project Pie** exec James Markham opens **Rolled Up** in the heart of Hillcrest, in a space that has housed a number of fleeting, casual eateries over the past decade. The concept will reportedly serve as a pilot for other locations, judging on how well consumers respond to rolls containing everything from crispy beef and pulled pork to five-spice chicken and seasonal vegetables. 3884 Fourth Ave.

Replacing the former **House of Khan** in Hillcrest is **Veganic Thai Café**, which opened Dec. 12 with standard Thai dishes, half of which are vegan and the other half vegetarian. The remodel stands out with colorful murals depicting Thai citizens dressed in ancient garb. 1417A University Ave. 619-230-5540.

Get your “third-wave” coffee drink at the new **Hawthorn Coffee**, which debuted Dec. 20 in North Park, operated by Kevin Redmond and son, Dylan. The aforementioned term translates to medium-roast coffees. “We’re lightening things up a bit and extracting as many flavors as possible,” Redmond said. “Some of the baristas we hired are familiar with the concept.” The shop, which features communal seating, sources from **Flying Goat Coffee** in North California and **Foxy Coffee Co.** in San Diego. 3019 Adams Ave. 619-501-4882.

(l to r) Dylan and Kevin Redmond are the newest brewers in North Park. (Courtesy of Hawthorn Coffee)



A favorite South Park hangout has closed for good. (Via Facebook)

Adam Parker of **Brabant Bar & Café** in South Park closed his Belgian-inspired eatery on Dec. 30. Parker opened the business two years ago with a few partners, some of whom are pursuing other business interests. He said the address will be taken over by **K&L Neighborhood Eateries**, which hasn’t yet announced its plans for the space. 2310 30th St., 619-516-5100.

The build-out is underway in a historic, 4,200-square-foot structure in Liberty Station for **Moniker General**, which will open in February as a modular retail store complete with a coffee bar spotlighting small-batch roasters, a taproom specializing in brews from North Brewing Company in Miramar and an outdoor patio. The project was launched by The Moniker Group, which introduced the multipurpose arts and business center, Moniker Warehouse, to the East Village 10 years ago. 2680 Sims Road, moniker-group.com.

—Frank Sabatini Jr. can be reached at fsabatini@rr.san.com. ♦

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COMING SOON
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There is some serious grub flying around Salt & Cleaver, mostly in the form of gourmet sausages served on house buns over beds of organic greens. But if you're on a booze crawl, the establishment feels like more of a drinking spot rather than a restaurant, given its inviting central bar, wood and brick walls, and towering chalk board listing the week's craft beers.

Aside from a few industrial design twists, Salt & Cleaver is Fifth Avenue's answer to a European pub. Both the staff and patrons are upbeat and unpretentious.

The mood was especially convivial on a cold, rainy Monday evening, when the windowed garage doors that are normally open to the front patio were rolled down, sealing in a larger-than-expected number of customers occupying nearly every stool at the bar.

Bad weather really does equate to better business, provided the place greets with a certain level of coziness inside. And a flat screen showing the Denver Broncos playing the Cincinnati Bengals fueled the intimate spirit in the room, mainly by the majority of Broncos fans.

Happy hour affords you \$2 discounts on all tap beers and wines by the glass, plus a dozen or so enticing cocktails that extend to a handful of others under the category of "Respect Your Elders," should you come knocking for a classic Manhattan or Sazerac.

After shaking off our wet umbrellas, my partner who eschews light, wimpy beer, settled in with a rich, smoked stout by Societe Brewing Co. called The Bellowsman. He approved of its choco-

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Dr. Ink

late and coffee notes, which I found somewhat soft-bodied when stealing a sip.

I ordered a stone fruit mule made with Tito's Vodka and a comforting measure of apricot-peach brandy that added subtle sweetness. The other components were perfectly balanced – ginger beer, bitters, and lemon. Served in an icy-cold copper mug, it ironically warmed me from head to toe and actually brought relief to a mild sore throat.

Food isn't discounted, but prices are reasonable and the selection is too tempting to pass up. On past visits, I've taken nose dives into the deep-fried "big daddy pickles" and chicken-mango sausage. This time around we went straight for the "bacon & bleu fries," priced at \$8.50.

Splayed across a cookie sheet, they were covered in green onions, big bacon pieces, blue cheese crumbles, and blue cheese béchamel sauce. What we thought would serve merely as a bar snack turned out to be dinner.

In addition to weekday happy hour, Salt & Cleaver offers various daily specials such as \$4 wells on Mondays; \$8 beer flights on Tuesdays; and half-price bottles of wine on Thursdays. For further details, inquire within, and you'll likely end up making this your one and only stop for the night. ♦

RATINGS

DRINKS: 

The stone fruit mule made with Tito's vodka, apricot-peach nectar and ginger beer was love at first sip. The list extends to about a dozen other well-conceived cocktails amid two-dozen beer craft beer choices on tap. The selection of wines by the glass is a footnote in comparison

FOOD: 

Sausages, loaded fries and various appetizers are hearty and top-notch. They're available at regular prices, but with many items costing less than \$10.

VALUE: 

With the \$2 discount on most drinks, a sturdy cocktail rings in at \$8, while any beer from the draft list can cost as little as \$4.

SERVICE: 

The entire staff seems to have graduated from the same school of cheerfulness. Everyone is chummy, fast and attentive.

ATMOSPHERE: 

A square, central bar dominates the intimate layout, allowing patrons to easily socialize and people-watch



The "bacon & bleu" fries
(Photo by Dr. Ink)

Just like old times



(l to r) Alaskan crab legs, prime rib with au gratin potatoes and veggies, and an appetizer of spicy shrimp; (inset below) the salad wheel (Photos by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

Restaurant Review

Frank Sabatini Jr.



In the late 1980s, with my friends Jim and Kelly, we held regular “JFK lunches” at what was known back then as The Hungry Hunter. Working less than a mile away at the San Diego Tribune in Mission Valley, we coined the mid-day outings on the first letters of our names after becoming instant fans of the salads made tableside, the bacon-loaded potato skins, and various sandwiches that I’d skip over in lieu of a charbroiled burger.

As young newsroom staffers on beginner’s pay, and when much of San Diego was gastronomically lifeless, we had found a fancy, doable alternative to the paper’s cafeteria food and the limited eateries at the nearby Fashion Valley mall.

Not until recently have I been back to discover the restaurant came under different ownership several years ago, and was renamed Hunter Steakhouse. And though the frilly country-kitsch interior design has been replaced with a more streamlined look, I was delighted to find that a lot hadn’t changed.

The layout remains the same; there are two ground-level dining areas, a lodge-like third dining room upstairs, and a subterranean bar lounge.

Entrees still include a partial loaf of dark bread served with honey butter, plus a salad constructed tableside by your server from a Lazy Susan filled with veggies, beans and seeds. Potato

skins still appear on the appetizer menu. And if you make it to dessert, choices such as turtle cake and New York cheesecake remain in the offering, allowing you to visually choose from a display tray. Now who does that anymore?

Hunter Steakhouse isn’t as quirky and iconic as its Hotel Circle predecessor, Albie’s Beef Inn, which recently closed after a 53-year run. But if you’re in the area craving prime rib, pork chops, lamb or baby back ribs, it’s the next best thing.

Returning for dinner instead of lunch, and with a companion who wasn’t part of my original squad,

in breading. We didn’t mind, although I could have withstood with a thinner mantle of jack cheese on top of them.

The plump shrimp, however, maintained their oceanic sweetness despite being plated in a zesty red sauce that could effectively turn chicken wings into Buffalo-style. Even with Cajun spices added in, the similarity to wing sauce was unmistakable, although we mopped it up joyfully with the accompanying slices of garlic bread.

Our salads followed. I opted for a kitchen-made Caesar while my companion became dazzled by the tableside production, if only for

Ordered medium-rare, the beef wasn’t as butter-knife tender as expected. But the flavor was on point, especially when dipping pieces of the meat into the semi-salty jus or the sinus-blasting creamed horseradish sauce. On the side, the au gratin potatoes he chose were good and goopy; contributing to a rich meal that he claimed took the bagginess out of his shirt in the end.

My crab legs were perfectly steamed, and served with their shells conveniently split lengthwise, hence preventing the carnage I cause when they’re not. A ramekin of drawn butter was presented on a little pedestal with a tea candle underneath to keep it warm.

As for the loaded baked potato and sautéed veggies sitting alongside (mostly zucchini), I poked into them a couple of times unfazed, as I never pay attention to whatever else is on my plate when big, sweet crab legs are involved. These were as marvelous as any you’d find in a highfalutin seafood restaurant, and at \$28 for a pound and a quarter, they’re slightly cheaper.

Hunter Steakhouse is like a solid friend who you can go years without seeing, and then pick up right where you left off as though you never lost contact. It will be especially familiar and reassuring the next time around, when I reconnect to the place at lunchtime for those skins and a burger.

—Frank Sabatini Jr. is the author of “Secret San Diego” (ECW Press), and began his local writing career more than two decades ago as a staffer for the former San Diego Tribune. You can reach him at fsabatini@san.rr.com.

Hunter Steakhouse

2445 Hotel Circle Place
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Dinner prices: appetizers,
\$7 to \$13; entrees,
\$17 to \$30
(includes soup or salad, vegetables
and choice of potato)



we began with crab-stuffed mushrooms as well as hot and spicy shrimp. The latter was probably added to the menu in the last few years for keeping seasoned diners awake while Aunt Mildred revels in the plain ole shrimp cocktail. I suspect the chipotle mac n’cheese and seared ahi with wasabi cream sauce are newcomers as well.

The mushrooms were your everyday button caps filled with crab that was overly camouflaged

the novelty of picking and choosing his fixings from the wheel of options. His dressing of choice was chunky blue cheese, the kind you rarely find anymore at other restaurants — thick and not cut excessively by milk or mayo.

The main event ushered in a three-quarter pound slab of prime rib for him, and a 1-plus pound serving of Alaskan crab legs for me. I was in heaven; him not so much.

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A romantic cruise on the Danube



(top) Riverboat in Regensburg, Germany; (l to r) horse carriage in Nuremberg, Germany; Christmas Market in Regensburg; chefs aboard Viking Alta; and sculptures of knights at Buda Castle in Hungary (All photos by Ron Stern)

Global Gumshoe

Ron Stern



Viking River Cruise's "Romantic Danube" tour sails one way between Budapest, Hungary and Erlangen, Germany. Passengers decide if they want to sail east or west along the Danube, depending from which city they'd like to continue their tour of Europe or fly home.

This cruise is offered from March through the end of the year. Every port of call along the route hosts a variety of artistic and cultural events in each month, but visitors in December, like me, enjoy the opportunity to visit their Christmas markets.

Viking Longships

Designed for comfort and smooth cruising on Europe's many rivers, Viking's fleet of elegant Viking Longships are, in essence, floating luxury hotels. The Alta, for example, has 95 exterior state-rooms with comfortable beds, an en-suite bathroom with shower, and

a 40-inch flat-panel Sony TV with an "info-tainment" system featuring on-demand movies, so guests can relax after a long day of touring.

The lounge is where travelers gather to watch the scenery go by, while enjoying a cocktail or pleasant conversation with their fellow passengers. Each evening, the ship's program director provides a briefing here about the following day's excursions.

Breakfast and lunch are served buffet style in the dining room, or you can choose daily specials from the menu. Lighter fare is offered in the Acquavit Terrace, adjacent to the lounge.

Dinner is casual and passengers are free to sit at any table they like. The tables are adorned with glistening white linen and sparkling stemware. The Swiss-trained executive chefs prepare upscale meals that represent the region and are artfully plated and presented, and complemented with wine from the ship's extensive collection.

After having perfected the river cruising experience, Viking seems to have great service down to a science — from the room stewards to the dining staff who all genuinely seem happy to be of service.

Budapest, Hungary

The Danube River runs through Budapest, dividing the two cities of Buda and Pest, which together make up the capital of Hungary. The Viking cruise ship, the Alta, is berthed near the famous Chain Bridge, constructed in 1849 and the first permanent



Guards stand at attention in Castle Hill in Budapest, Hungary.

structure to enable pedestrians and vehicles to cross the Danube from one city to the other. Like so many landmarks in Budapest, it was damaged during World War II and subsequently rebuilt.

After boarding the Alta, guests spend the night on the ship. The next day, you can take part in various optional guided excursions of the city.

One of the most famous landmarks here is located on the Buda side — Buda Castle. Situated on "Castle Hill," tourists can explore its varied turrets, porticos and passageways, and particularly enjoy the scenery overlooking the Danube.

One of the most popular spots in the district is Fisherman's Bastion. This ornate Gothic terrace with seven towers offers splendid views of the ships plying the Danube, as well as the city of Pest on the east bank of the river. In front of the bastion is the Matthias Church, more than 500 years old.

Vienna, Austria

In the evening, the ship sets sail east along the Danube to Vienna, the capital of Austria. Vienna is known by many nicknames because of its tremendous history. It was home to many notable composers throughout the decades, in particular Mozart, and is known as the "City of Music" and the "City of Waltzes."

Be sure to visit Vienna's Old

Town, where you'll be able to stop in and feel the majesty of half a dozen ancient churches including Stephansdom, or St. Stephen's Cathedral. This Gothic structure was consecrated in 1147 and has long been one of Vienna's most well-known tourist destinations.

The large open plazas and streets surrounding the cathedral are filled with pedestrians and visitors exploring the retail shops, sidewalk cafes and historical buildings and statues. While you are there, be sure to stop in at Demel, a historic pastry shop (founded in 1888) for some hot chocolate and a piece of strudel or cream cake.

Schönbrunn Palace is a must see, in particular for those interested in women's history. It was the residence of Maria Theresa — the only woman who reigned over Austria, Hungary and a host of other countries as the last ruler of the Habsburg monarchy.

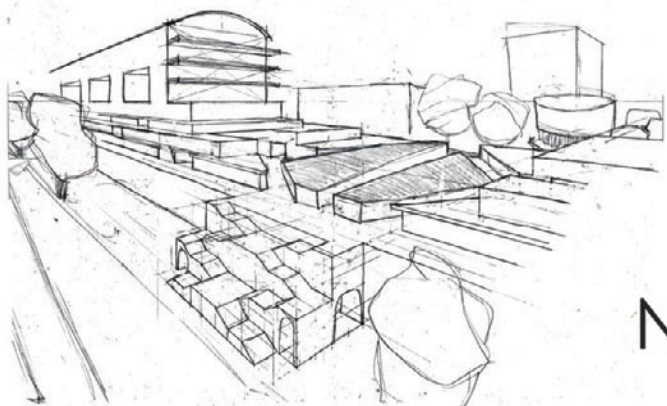
If you're taking this cruise during December, be sure to visit the expansive Christmas Market

see Travel, page 13

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Whenever you take a long-distance vacation in the United States, Canada or around the world, you probably plan your trip down to the last detail. But there's probably one eventuality you rarely consider — how are you going to get home, to your own doctor, if you or a family member needs emergency hospital-to-hospital care?

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Many other plans have fine print restrictions such as “nearest appropriate facility,” “medical necessity” and “no pre-existing conditions” that may make it difficult to return home using their plan. Air Ambulance Card does away with these obstacles and provides hospital to hospital transportation services.

There are various types of plans available, so don't be caught without this essential travel aid for your next trip.

FROM PAGE 12

TRAVEL

in Vienna, held at the Town Hall. Viennese and tourists alike throng through the red-roofed stalls, eating food while shopping for Christmas presents and decorations.



Buda Castle in Hungary (All photos by Ron Stern)

Melk, Austria

After journeying through the scenic Wachau Valley, the ship will dock at the city of Melk. Despite its relatively small size — only 5,000 inhabitants, it has many historical landmarks, including its Benedictine Abbey with a vast library of medieval manuscripts. Guided tours of several wineries in the area are also offered.

Passau, Germany

After a night cruise from Austria into Bavaria, the ship will arrive at Passau, famous for St. Stephen's Cathedral. St. Stephen was the first martyr of the Christian faith, and as such there are many churches in the Western world named in his honor. Worshipers and visitors alike will be awed by the cathedral's pipe organ, the largest in the world. It is not actually one single organ but rather several placed at strategic spots throughout the cathedral and controlled from a single console. Concerts are held at specific times on most days throughout the year.

Regensburg, Germany

Regensburg's Old Town is one of the best preserved in all of Europe, with more than 1,000 medieval buildings still standing. The Regensburg Cathedral, also called St. Peter's Cathedral (in honor of Simon Peter, one of the Twelve Apostles), dominates the city and brings worshipers and tourists from all the world. Guided excursions from the Atla include general city tours or ones focused on Jewish or WWII history. If you're here in December, explore the quaint Christmas Market and sample one of their half-meter bratwursts with a glass of local beer.

Erlangen, Germany

Erlangen is the last stop on this romantic route but not the end of your visit to Germany. Tour buses will take you to the historic city of Nuremberg, a half-hour away. Well known for the events that took place here prior to World War II (the Nuremberg Race Laws) and afterwards (the Nuremberg Trials of war criminals), today this city of over 500,000 inhabitants is an important industrial center with a burgeoning economy. In December, it is also home to one of Germany's largest Christmas markets. Regardless of the season, here you can sample some traditional fare such as small-sized Nuremberg bratwursts in a crispy roll with mustard as well as pretzels, German mulled wine (Glüwein), and many other local specialties.



View from the Danube on a foggy day in Passau, Germany

The route of emperors and kings

Up until the 20th century, sailing on the Danube was the easiest way to travel in Europe, especially for the members of the Habsburg monarchy who wished to visit their possessions. Today, sailing aboard a Viking river cruise ship is the height of luxury, and their attentive crew works hard to make sure that every aspect of your time aboard is enjoyable. If you want to see Europe in a unique way, consider taking this “route of emperors and kings.”

—Contact Ron Stern at travelwriter01@comcast.net or visit his blog at originalglobalgumshoe.blogspot.com. ♦



Visitors line up to get into Ruszwurm dessert shop in Budapest.

Where to stay

Burghotel
burghotel-nuernberg.de

Should you choose to extend your stay in Nuremberg following your cruise, the Burghotel is centrally located in the Old Town, still surrounded by its medieval walls. A short walk will bring you to the Christmas markets as well as to the main historical sites. Rooms are cozy and well-maintained. A hearty breakfast is included and WiFi hotspots are available for a small charge each day.



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FROM PAGE 1

SPRITZR

or married friends chime in with their own suggestions. Profiles are connected and authenticated via Facebook — with permission — and offer users the option to serve as matchmaker or dater. Profile details and matchmaking suggestions encourage daters to communicate via text. Confident to take it one step further, daters choose a rendezvous from Spritzr's pre-selected ideas or pick their own place to meet.

"Spritzr combines the benefit of personalized introductions with the convenience of online dating," Agarwal said. "Spritzr widens the pool of quality prospects while removing the pressure and awkwardness inherent in matchmaking; thus making it easier to initiate a relationship. And couples enjoy a rewarding way to match their single friends and fill that empty seat at the dinner table."

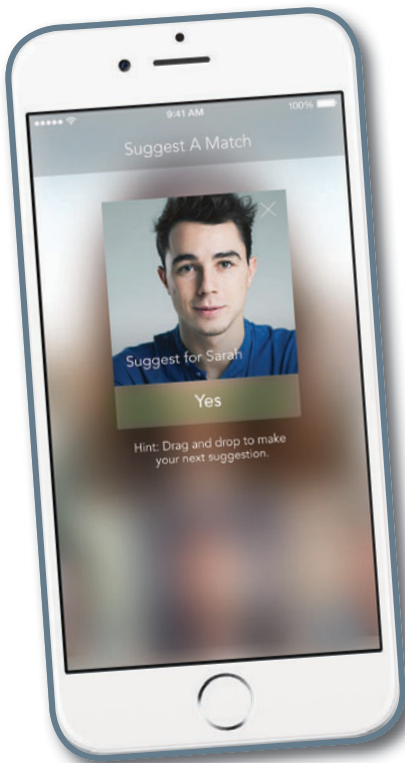
Agarwal's own brief yet informative profile includes photographs and requests information on relationship deal-breakers including location, age, height, sexual orientation, religious denomination, political status, levels of education and career, and the presence of children from a previous relationship.

"After that, everything is secondary," he said. "People don't want to be bombarded with questions. And there's no evidence that an overabundance of interest details proves to be helpful information. Spritzr is an external defense that uses friends to say, 'I think this person

would be good for you."

Agarwal described online dating as a gladiatorial arena that's broken.

"People waste time browsing, swiping and messaging based on computer algorithms that connect users to strangers," he said. "Facts show that less than one in four online daters find a relationship



The Spritzr app on an iPhone
(Courtesy of Spritzr.com)

and spend more time working online than out dating. Any other product with those results would be thrown away. But because there's no better alternative and singles are hungry for a relationship, they go back.

Humans are better matchmakers

than computers. By matching singles they already know, the creeps are removed and singles have a greater chance of finding chemistry."

Sporting an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering and an MBA from Columbia University, the former UK resident says he understands the pain of being single. Convinced that singles are desperate for something better than the "highly competitive, unfriendly, unhelpful, and ultimately less effective" online dating database, Agarwal said he intends to reach the masses with a recession-proof way to meet people through a social network.

Sixty percent of Spritzr's current users are daters while 40 percent serve as matchmakers. Singles can also get match suggestions from strangers within the Spritzr community. However, three people must choose the same individual before a match is recommended to ensure quality match suggestions. Users also earn Karma Points — bronze, silver and gold — based on successful matches to reap Spritzr VIP awards.

"We believe in our mission statement: Creating love in the world through friends," Agarwal said. "Named in recognition of a wine spritzer — Spritzr is a bubbly, friendly, low pressure, pay-it-forward way to add more love to the world. Spritzr is a friendly way to meet quality people with less shirtless selfies."

The Spritzr app can be downloaded through Spritzr.com or the iPhone app store. The Android version has not yet been released.

—Contact Lucia Viti at lucia-viti@roadrunner.com. ♦



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

9/6

Sudoku Puzzle

Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must every 3x3 square.

© 2009 CNS/websudoku.com

Puzzle answers on page 16

Uptown Crossword

License Game

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14					15					16				
17					18					19				
20				21					22			23		
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27	28	29					30	31						
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38			39		40				41		42			
43				44		45			46		47			
		48			49				50		51			
52	53							54						
55				56		57	58				59	60	61	
62			63			64					65			
66						67					68			
69						70					71			

CREATORS NEWS SERVICE

By Charles Preston

- ACROSS**

1 Second

5 Stockings

9 17th C. stringed instruments

14 Expose

15 Men's org.

16 Roast host

17 Londoner, for short

18 Mud specialties

19 Use a credit card

20 New Mexico's tag motto: Land of ____

23 Devoured

24 Poetry collection

25 Breadwinner

27 Part of a skyline

30 Confounds

32 Also

33 Move furtively

35 Pay for drinks

38 ____ vera

40 Fills up

42 Wash

43 Perch

45 Certain gin fizz

47 Type of shirt

48 Wild ass

50 Kind of course

52 Without another
- 54 Josip Broz

55 A Gardner

56 Arkansas' tag motto, once: Land of ____

62 Symbol

64 Poke about

65 Andy's radio partner

66 Coeur d' ____, ID

67 Hebrew month

68 Stare

69 Snooped about

70 Party spread

71 Burmoosed prince
- DOWN**

1 French clergyman

2 Rural dance

3 Writer Ambler

4 Scope

5 Svengali's forte

6 Skips

7 Noah's son

8 Let up

9 Chaste women, in Nero's time

10 Urchin

11 Rhode Island plate inscription

12 Slow, in Salerno

13 Passover meal

21 Acts like Rich
- 22 Buntline

26 Stagger

27 Asterisk

28 Explorer from old Venice

29 Minnesota plate phrase

30 Sacrificial site

31 Judge

34 Venture

36 Iris layer

37 Look searchingly

39 Serf, of old

41 "So much to do, ____ time"

44 Like an eagle

46 In ____; set

49 Cheat

51 Youthful period

52 Old Scratch

53 Convex molding

54 Angler's prey

57 Certain school, for short

58 Alley Oop's girl

59 Mosque prayer leader

60 Pith helmet

61 French river important in WWI

63 Compass pt.

Puzzle answers on page 16

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Snoopy plate campaign reaches its goal

Assembly Speaker Toni G. Atkins' AB 482, also know as the "Snoopy plate bill," was established in 2013 with the support of Jean Schultz, the widow of Charles Schultz, and the California Association of Museums.

The commemorative plates with an image of Snoopy's "happy dance" will raise money for the California Cultural and Historical Endowment and help fund the state's 1,400 museums.

After being signed into law later that year, backers of the plate have been seeking a minimum pre-order of 7,500 plates before the first printing could begin. Speaker Atkins recently announced a new incentive — called "Beagle Backers" which offered a free year of access to over 85 California museums — to garner more advance Snoopy plate orders.

On Dec. 16, it was announced that the goal had been reached, which clears the way for the Department of Motor Vehicles to begin production. Plates are \$50 each, personal-



Proceeds from the sales of the Snoopy Plate will go to the California Cultural and Historical Endowment.
(Courtesy of the California DMV)

ized plates are \$89, and annual renewal costs are \$78. To order the plate, visit snoopyplate.resources.ca.gov. ♦

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Sudoku
Puzzle from page 15

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

License Game
Crossword from page 15

A	B	E	T		H	O	S	E		V	I	O	L	S	
B	A	R	E		Y	M	H	A		E	M	C	E	E	
B	R	I	T		P	I	E	S		S	P	E	N	D	
E	N	C	H	A	N	T	M	E	N	T		A	T	E	
			E	P	O	S			E	A	R	N	E	R	
S	P	I	R	E	S		A	D	D	L	E	S			
T	O	O		S	I	D	L	E		S	E	T	U	P	
A	L	O	E		S	A	T	E	S		L	A	V	E	
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S	O	L	E	L	E			T	I	T	O				
A	V	A		O	P	P	O	R	T	U	N	I	T	Y	
T	O	K	E	N		R	O	O	T		A	M	O	S	
A	L	E	N	E		E	L	U	L		G	A	P	E	
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Durwood Murray as Decatur Bronson (Photo by Simpatika)

Christmas at wartime

Theater Review

Charlene Baldridge



Playwright Paula Vogel set out to write the great American equivalent to Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

You may judge for yourself. The result, titled "A Civil War Christmas," plays through Jan. 3 at Diversionary Theatre, featuring an ensemble company of nine-plus, for a little aural boost, the Encore Vocal Ensemble.

In the true sense of the word "ensemble" means "together." From my vantage point Sunday, Dec. 13, the ears would never have guessed. Although there are some fine singers in this ensemble, they fail to listen to one another and achieve a blend — even when it is as few as two singers — and the musical numbers (carols and music of the times) are many.

Hidden behind a sheer curtain, Encore doesn't help matters as director Kim Strassburger obviously intended. Despite her efforts and those of music director Tim McKnight at the piano and Kristopher Apple on fiddle, edgy vocalism and belt do not tend to blend.

What makes the experience of "A Civil War Christmas" worthwhile is the ingenious way Vogel weaves together a plethora of story threads that take place on Christmas Eve in 1864, less than four months prior to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln (Skyler Sullivan). The president has left wife Mary Todd Lincoln's Christmas gift at their summer home an hour's horseback ride away, and sets off to retrieve it, followed by a group of eventual assassins, among them John Wilkes Booth (Adam Cuppy).

Meanwhile, Mary Todd (Annie Hinton) decides to surprise Abe with a Christmas tree, but

because of the Civil War raging around them few trees have not succumbed to kindling for army campfires. She succeeds only to have the decorated tree stolen from the presidential residence.

On the other side of the Potomac, a free slave and her young daughter (Tanika Baptiste and Cashae Monya) flee the chaos of battle looking for safety in Washington, D.C. When the mother hides her child on a cart, it is with instructions they meet at Lincoln's home. The child, who becomes lost, is a symbol for the Christ Child, for whom there is no manger.

In another part of the forest, a young man (Julia Nardi-Loving) has fled his unhappy home to join the army. The lad leaves his faithful horse (Cuppy in one of the play's best and funniest cameos) in search of fodder and is captured by Union soldiers led by a freed slave captain (Durwood Murray), who nearly executes him.

Other ensemble members are the nimble Brian Bose in numerous roles and the vocally robust Taylor Henderson, who plays Mary Todd's seamstress and confidante. These are the main stories.

Scenic designer Kristen Flores presents a rustic room set up for a staged reading. The actors carry their scripts. Beth Connelly is costume designer, Curtis Mueller the lighting designer, and Blair Nelson the sound designer. Most character changes are effected by the addition of a cap or shawl.

Vogel piles on many stories and threads, including poet Walt Whitman's visit to a dying Jewish soldier. Though the onlooker is hard pressed to keep everything straight, the denouement(s) are heartfelt and rewarding. One

"A Civil War Christmas"

(An American Musical
Celebration in Concert)

By Paula Vogel

Directed by

Kim Strassburger

Friday through Sunday,
ending Jan. 3

Diversionary Theatre,

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returns home believing that in many ways Vogel achieved her purpose despite the not-quite-cooked musical elements here and the fact that even at two hours the piece seems weighed down by its own fascinating complexity.

—Charlene Baldridge has been writing about the arts since 1979. You can follow her blog at charlenebaldridge.com or reach her at charb81@gmail.com. ♦



Julia Nardi-Loving as Mary Todd Lincoln (Photo by Simpatika)

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The cast of The Metromaniacs. Photos by Scott Suchman, courtesy of Shakespeare Theatre Company.

UPTOWN CALENDAR

FEATURED EVENTS

Old Harbor Distilling grand opening
Friday, Jan. 1

The celebration for Old Harbor's grand opening will take place at SILO at Makers Quarter (753 15th St., East Village) and the nearly finished Old Harbor Sunset Bar (270 17th St., East Village). A free bus will be taking attendees between the two venues and there will be live music throughout the day by Wild Wild Wets, Diamond Lakes, Jimmy Ruelas, Sound Collage and more. Tickets include one drink ticket and proceeds go to David's Harp Foundation — a nonprofit helping "to inspire, educate and empower 'at-risk' and homeless youth to achieve academic success through music education, sound engineering and multimedia production." The party takes place from 11 a.m. – 10 p.m. Visit on.fb.me/1RBjebu for more information and tickets.

'Whales 3D'

Monday, Jan. 4

This documentary by Jean-Michel Cousteau will be shown at the San Diego Natural History Museum (1788 El Prado, Balboa Park) today through Sept. 6. The film explores everything from the coral reefs of the Bahamas to the exotic Kingdom of Tonga. The awesome film gives viewers an up-close view of humpback females with their newborn calves, singing humpback males and more. Narrated by Daryl Hannah. Admission to "Whales 3D" is included with admission to the museum. Visit sdnhm.org for tickets and show times.



Book clubs at Mission Hills Branch Library

Wednesday, Jan. 6 and Thursday, Jan. 7

The "Famous Book" club will meet on Jan. 6 from 3 – 4 p.m. to discuss "Absalom, Absalom" by William Faulkner. The Mission Hills book club will meet on Jan. 7 from 10 – 11 a.m. to discuss "Notes from the Underground" by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. New members are welcome to attend and participate in either or both of these clubs. Please read the book beforehand. Note: books are available at the library's circulation desk while supplies last. The Mission Hills Library is located at 925 W. Washington St. Visit them online at facebook.com/mhlibrary.

Live music: Lee Gallagher and The Hallelujah, Jimmy Ruelas and Mario Esteban and the Blessed Hellhounds

Thursday, Jan. 7

Hillcrest music venue The Merrow (1271 University Ave.) will host a trio of psychedelic rock acts for this rousing show. San Francisco-based band Lee Gallagher and The Hallelujah

is comprised of Midwest and Southern transplants that craft roots-based music. Their sound blends classic styles akin to The Band along with drawing contemporary comparisons like The Black Crowes and Heartless Bastards. Local musician Jimmy Ruelas is also woven into the psychedelic tapestry with his intoxicating vocal prowess that channels Marc Bolan and David Bowie. Rounding things out will be Mario Esteban and the Blessed Hellhounds a self-described "modern rock band with blues and classic rock influences." Tickets for this rockin' night are only \$5. Head to themerrow.com for tickets.

ASD Mornings

Sunday, Jan. 10

The second Sunday of every month the San Diego Natural History Museum (1788 El Prado, Balboa Park) opens early for adults and children on the autism spectrum (ASD) and their families, friends and caregivers. The program is designed to give members of the ASD community the chance to explore the museum in a quiet, less-crowded environment. "Ocean Oasis" will be shown in the theater at a lower volume and with higher light levels. There will also be a "quiet room" from 9 a.m. – noon if visitors need a space to decompress or desensitize. Attendees will also receive a special gift from the museum. Visit bit.ly/1TjvYkQ for more information, an online RSVP form and tickets.

RECURRING EVENTS

Select dates:

Canyoneers guided nature walks: These free walks are part of a countywide program by the San Diego Natural History Museum through June 26, 2016. A map and schedule of walks can be found online at sdnhm.org.



Mondays:

Singing Storytime: 1:30 p.m., learn what's going on inside your baby's mind, strengthen your bond and sing songs together at Mission Hills Library, 925 Washington St., Mission Hills, free. Library92103.org.

North Park Toastmasters meeting: 6:30 – 8 p.m., weekly meeting at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 3725 30th St., North Park. 8469. toastmastersclubs.org.

Open Mic Night: 7:30 p.m., the mic is open to you at Les-tat's Coffee House, 3343 Adams Ave., Normal Heights, free. Les-tats.com.

Karaoke: 8 p.m., your chance to shine on the big stage

at The Merrow, 1271 University Ave., Hillcrest. themerrow.com.

Tuesdays:

Curbside Bites: 5:30 – 8:30 p.m., gathering of gourmet food trucks at 3030 Grape St., South Park. Curbsidebites.com.

Tasty Truck Tuesdays: 6 – 9 p.m., Smitty's Service Station hosts

several food trucks under their well-lit shade structure, 3442 Adams Ave., Normal Heights. Sdfoodtrucks.com.

Uptown Democratic Club: 6:30 p.m., Joyce Beers Community Center hosts these meetings on the fourth Tuesday of every month. New members wanted. 1220 Vermont Ave., Hillcrest. Uptowndemocrats.org.

Open Mic Charlie's: 7 – 9:30 p.m. (except the third Tuesday), open mic night at Rebecca's Coffee House, 3015 Juniper St., South Park, free. Rebeccascoffeehouse.com.

North Park Brewer's Club: 8:30 p.m., monthly meeting of the club every second Tuesday of the month on the back patio at Thorn Street Brewery, 3176 Thorn St., North Park. Thornstreetbrew.com.

Wednesdays:

Wednesday Night Experience: 7 – 8 p.m., uplifting and spiritually inspiring experiences for all, weekly at Universal Spirit Center, 3858 Front St., Hillcrest, love offering requested. Universalspiritcenter.org.

Storytelling: 7 – 8:45 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month featuring members of Storytellers of San Diego at Rebecca's Coffee House, 3015 Juniper St., South Park, Suggested \$5 donation. Ages 12 and up. Storytellersofsandiego.org.

Thursdays:

Uptown Sunrise Rotary Club meetings: 7 a.m., weekly meeting at Panera Bread, 1270 Cleveland Ave., Hillcrest. Sdurotary.org.

Gentle yoga for seniors: 2:30 – 4 p.m., presented



by The Center and Silver Age Yoga Community Outreach (SAYCO) at The San Diego LGBT Center, 3909 Centre St., Hillcrest, free. Thecentersd.org.

North Park Farmers Market: 3 – 7 p.m., in the

parking lot behind CVS at 32nd Street and University Avenue, North Park, free. Northparkfarmersmarket.com.

Kornflower's Open Mic: Sign-

ups at 7 p.m., open mic (no poetry or comedy) 7 – 10 p.m. Family-friendly event at Rebecca's Coffee House, 3015 Juniper St., South Park, free. Rebeccascoffeehouse.com.

Liberty Toastmasters Club: 7 p.m., at Saint Paul's Community Care Center, 328 Maple St., Bankers Hill. Libertytoastmasters.org.

Kirtan Musical Meditation: 8:15 p.m., chant and sing contemporary mantras celebrating love and life at Pilgrimage of the Heart Yoga, 3287 Adams Ave., Normal Heights, donation requested. Pilgrimageyoga.com.



Cinema Under the Stars: 8:30 p.m., classic movie screenings at 4040 Goldfinch St., Mission Hills. Additional showings Friday – Sunday. Tickets start at \$15. Topsresents.com.

Fridays:

Memory Café: 10 – 11 a.m., second and fourth Fridays. Gathering place for those with memory loss, caretakers and those worried about memory problems in the Common Room at First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego, 4190 Front St., Hillcrest. At-will donation. Memoryguides.org and Firstuusandiego.org.

Preschool Storytime: 10:30 a.m., at Mission Hills Library, 925 Washington St., Mission Hills, free. Library92103.org.

Square Dancing Classes: 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., every Friday. No previous dance experience needed. Recital Hall, 2130 Pan American Plaza. \$50 for 13 classes. 858-277-7499 or circulators.sdsda.org.

Saturdays

Old Town Saturday Market: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., on Harney Street and San Diego Avenue, Old Town, free. Also held on Sundays. Oldtownsat-urdaymarket.com.



Golden Hill Farmers Market: 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., on B Street between 27th and 28th streets, Golden Hill, free. Sdmarketmanager.com.

Tai Chi Qigong: 10 a.m., all skill levels welcome in Balboa Park, Upas Street and Sixth Avenue, free. Call Chris at 619-504-1557.

Children's Craft

Time: 10:30 a.m., at Mission Hills Library, 925 Washington St., Mission Hills, free. Library92103.org.

Comedy Heights: 8 – 10 p.m., local comedians take the stage next to Twiggs Coffeehouse at 4590 Park Blvd., University Heights, free. Comedyheights.com.



Sundays

Free Pancake Breakfast: 8:30 – 9:45 a.m., every second Sunday this neighborhood breakfast precedes worship service and Sunday school at Normal Heights United Methodist Church, 4650 Mansfield St., Normal Heights. Email nancy@nhunited.org.

Hillcrest Farmers Market: 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., under the Hillcrest Pride Flag, Harvey Milk and Normal streets, free. Hillcrestfarmersmarket.com.



Karaoke: 8 p.m., your chance to shine on the big stage at The Merrow, 1271 University Ave., Hillcrest. themerrow.com.

To view local community organization meeting information online, visit: sduptownnews.com/community-organization-meetings.

—Email calendar items to ken@sdcnn.com. ♦



Michael Mizerany choreographs an evening of contemporary burlesque at Diversionary Theatre. (Courtesy of Michael Mizerany)

'In the Va Va Voom Room'

Thursday, Jan. 7 – Sunday, Jan. 10

This show at Diversionary Theatre (4545 Park Blvd., University Heights) promises an evening of contemporary burlesque. The show was conceived and is directed by Michael Mizerany — the provocateur behind "Hot Guys Dancing." Only five performances will be held so don't miss out. Tonight's performance starts at 7 p.m. Visit diversionary.org.

FROM PAGE 1

2015

2. TargetExpress fight spawns South Park town council

By Hutton Marshall. Published March 13. Read at bit.ly/1YqUkdE.

About 100 South Park residents and activists rallied on March 8 to protest Target's plans, and Uptown News reported that the event served as the inaugural fundraiser for the South Park Town Council.

4. Fight against South Park TargetExpress continues

By Dave Schwab. Published Jan. 16. Read at bit.ly/1k7ceVs.

Uptown News reported that community activist group Care About South Park and Mark Arabo, CEO of the Neighborhood Market Association (NMA), were lobbying against Target's proposal, claiming the corporation's plans threatened small businesses nearby.

7. TargetExpress to open in South Park in the fall

By Ken Williams. Published July 3. Read at bit.ly/1SJSO3H.

Uptown News covered the Greater Golden Hill Planning Committee meeting on June 22 at Casa del Prado in Balboa Park, where Target officials explained to a large gathering of concerned residents what the TargetExpress concept was all about. Target said the South Park store would be a "small format" store with a "quick-trip focus." Company officials listened to speakers who worried about more traffic in South Park or perceived competition to local businesses as well as those who were in favor of the project for the convenience of not having to drive to Mission Valley just to pick up diapers or prescriptions.



Entrance to Thomas Jefferson Elementary School (Via Facebook)

No. 3. Neighborhood schools are the new charters

By Andy Hinds. Column published Jan. 30. Read at bit.ly/1zlvU6.

Columnist Andy Hinds, a parent himself, made the argument that neighborhood elementary schools like McKinley and Jefferson were becoming like charter schools because of the involvement of highly engaged parents.

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The vacant Pernicano property (Photo by Ken Williams)

Nos. 5, 6 and 8. Articles concerning the long-vacant Pernicano's property in Hillcrest.

Nothing stirs up community interest more than rumors about this prime-location property that has remained vacant for decades.

5. Gilman talks about his property and Pernicanos

By Ken Williams. Published Sept. 11. Read at bit.ly/1OcQ690.

Businessman Morgan Gilman spoke exclusively with Uptown News about his property located at the "Hillcrest gateway" intersection of University and Sixth avenues — rumored to be part of a deal to transform the long vacant Pernicano property. Gilman told Uptown News that he had spoken to several developers who were interested in the Pernicano property, but said he learned that nothing serious had transformed.

"I did look at one plan that was intriguing," Gilman said. "It was an impact project. It was a mixed-use project with a boutique hotel, condos, retail space with community use integrated into it."

6. Buyer of Pernicano's property to speak to Uptown Planners

By Catherine Spearnak. Published July 31. Read at bit.ly/1IAabkT.

Uptown News reported that the Uptown Planners and the public might hear the first ideas about development of the long-empty Pernicano's Restaurant site when the advisory group met on Aug. 4. Jeannine Savory, Realtor for the property, told Uptown News that the family was in escrow with a specific buyer, who would be revealed in "one to two weeks." Savory said that the developer asked to appear before the Uptown Planners "because they want to be sensitive to the community and not compromise the integrity of the project." Turned out "the developer" never appeared at the meeting, only a Pernicano family spokesman. If there ever was a prospective buyer, the prospective purchaser was never identified.

8. Pernicano's buyer still hasn't closed the deal

By Ken Williams. Published Aug. 14. Read at bit.ly/1IAabkT.

Sherman D. Harmer Jr., president of Urban Housing Partners, emerged during the summer as the spokesman for the Pernicano family. He told the Hillcrest Town Council, the Uptown Planners and other local groups that there was a buyer for the Pernicano property with big plans to build a hotel with underground parking. Harmer also dropped the bombshell news at an Aug. 4 meeting that the unnamed buyer was also negotiating to purchase the Gilman property on southwest corner of University and Sixth avenues — a transaction that would double the size of the project and allow the buyer to create a true gateway to Hillcrest. As it would

turn out, Gilman would later say that Harmer's proclamation was premature ... and Uptown News would eventually learn that there was no buyer on the horizon.



The iconic North Park sign (Photo by Ken Williams)

No. 9. Transforming University Avenue in North Park

By Ken Williams. Published Aug. 14. Read at bit.ly/1fBE8GG.

Uptown News explained the dramatic changes coming to University Avenue in North Park, after the City Council voted July 27 in favor of a \$5.8 million project called the University Avenue Mobility Plan. "By improving traffic flow for vehicles, buses and bikes, and by adding sidewalk and crosswalk upgrades for pedestrians, the project will result in better transportation options throughout the core of North Park," Councilmember Todd Gloria told Uptown News. Key elements of the project include adding transit-only lanes; raised medians with left-turn pockets; enhanced pedestrian crossings and curb extensions/pop-outs; more traffic signals; and the repurposing parking spaces to accommodate the upgrades.



A homeless person sleeps behind a business (Photo by Ken Williams)

No. 10. Don't feed the homeless

By Ken Williams. Published Nov. 6. Read at bit.ly/1X2ZDPK

North Park residents have been meeting this year to discuss ways to resolve the homeless issue, included at a packed forum on Oct. 28 at the Lafayette Hotel. But advocates for solving homelessness in America's Finest City had a seemingly shocking response to those of us who desire to feed and clothe the misfortunate people who are living on the streets.

"If they ask you for money, don't give them any," urged JD MacDonald, head of the Uptown Community Service Center, a mail and computer center for the homeless in North Park.

Forum speakers stressed that our compassion towards the homeless is often misdirected and can make the problem worse.



A parklet in front of in North Park (Photo by Ron Sanchez)

No. 11. Tactical urbanism for Hillcrest anyone

By BJ Coleman. Published Jan. 16. Read at bit.ly/181rvBG.

When strategic planning cannot provide new outdoor public space, what are city dwellers craving

open-air gathering sites to do? One solution comes under the rubric of "tactical urbanism," in which individual residents and local businesses join forces to create their own small-bore outside areas, by bumping out sidewalks into existing street parking slots. These scaled-down takeovers of pavement for people's use are known as "parklets."

Uptown News explained what "parklets" are and how the city of San Diego was embracing the concept.



A biker uses a protected bicycling lane on Fifth Avenue in Hillcrest. (Photo by Hutton Marshall)

Nos. 12 and 14. The bicycling controversy in Hillcrest.

The clash between bicycling advocates and the business community got really heated in 2015, and Uptown News was there reporting the details.

12. Uptown planners reject SANDAG bike plan

By Hutton Marshall. Published March 27. Read at bit.ly/1PbNupY.

Hundreds packed the voluminous St. Paul's Cathedral in Bankers Hill on March 24 for the Uptown Planners meeting devoted to the SANDAG Bike Corridor through Uptown.

More than 50 residents and bicycle advocates gave public comment over the course of two hours. Approximately half spoke in favor of the SANDAG plans, which would construct several miles of protected bikeways through Uptown's urban core, while others criticized SANDAG for what they saw as an over-reaching or poorly executed plan.

After public comment closed, the planning board deliberated for another hour, eventually passing four unanimous motions condemning SANDAG's plan.

14. The sting of defeat

By Ken Williams. Published June 19. Read at bit.ly/1IZpl6V.

The Transportation Committee of SANDAG listened to more than 70 people who spoke in favor

of protected bicycle lanes in Uptown, and a handful of business leaders who were against them, then voted to approve a watered-down version of a compromise that had been reached by a coalition of stakeholders.

"As you can imagine, we as advocates in the bicycling community and more broadly, as supporters of safer streets and vibrant communities, were very disappointed with the June 5 vote by the SANDAG Transportation Committee to move forward with the constrained University Avenue segment of the Uptown Bikeways Project," said Andy Kopp, Bike San Diego board president.

Bicycling advocates told Uptown News that they were down, but not out.



The Hillcrest sign (Courtesy of Perlman Clinic)

No. 13. "What wrong with Hillcrest?"

Guest editorial by Benjamin Nicholls, executive director of Hillcrest Business Association. Published July 3. Read at bit.ly/1eeufOT.

Benjamin Nicholls, executive director of Hillcrest Business Association, addressed a question he had been hearing from people: "What's wrong with Hillcrest?"

In his guest editorial, Nicholls wrote: "Has Hillcrest lost its cool factor? It's clear that something is going on, but it's not a mystery. Hillcrest needs to grow and it isn't."

The guest editorial generated a slew of letters from readers who either agreed with Nicholls or disagreed with him.

—Ken Williams is editor of Uptown News and Mission Valley News and can be reached at ken@sdenn.com or at 619-961-1952. Follow him on Twitter at @KenSanDiego, Instagram at @KenSD or Facebook at KenWilliamsSanDiego. ♦

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