

INSIDE CONNECTIONS

PEACE CAMP	2
NOTHING SHORT OF MURDER	3
LIVING LIGHTLY	4
RIVERS OF BIRDS	5
DIALOGUE: TWO STATE SOLUTION	6
GUATEMALA MEDICAL MISSION	7
PEACE ESSAY CONTEST	8
GATHERING OF VOICES	9
DIALOGUE	10
ARTS	11

Modesto Peace/Life Center Board of Directors Afghanistan War Statement

The Board of Directors of the Modesto Peace/Life Center opposes President Barack Obama and Congress's expansion of the war in Afghanistan. Afghan and American deaths are escalating, and increased drone attacks in the Pakistan border regions have killed many innocent civilians in what international law regards as illegal extra-judicial killings. The President's laudable initiative in Cairo to mend relations with the Islamic world is being undermined by this war.



If we really want to aid the Afghan people, we must do what Afghans have been asking us to do: cooperate with them to develop their economy and rebuild and improve their infrastructure. For the last eight years the U.S. has directed less than 10% of its spending in Afghanistan on non-military projects, and much of that has been paid to foreign rather than Afghan contractors. Moreover, few have been held accountable for their work.

The Afghan people have known no peace for over 30 years. The cycle of violence that fosters more hatred and retribution must be stopped. In 2001 the United States started this war and is the main protagonist in continuing it. Our government now needs to help end it.

The following steps should be taken to end United States and NATO military intervention in Afghanistan and begin a new era of cooperative economic assistance:

- The U.S. and NATO forces need to withdraw from the

country by the end of the year.

- If agreed upon by all parties in the conflict, the U.N. or a regional organization should be called upon to help negotiate a peace settlement between the Afghan government and the insurgent factions.

- Countries bordering Afghanistan, especially Iran and Pakistan, should be included in these negotiations, since they have an interest in a stable and peaceful nation on their borders.

- Finally, the U.S. and NATO governments must provide development aid to help a new government

in Afghanistan rebuild its civil society and infrastructure.

We believe that, as a nation, we are betraying our highest values by continuing this war and perpetuating a culture of militarism. We are squandering our human and national treasure maintaining a massive war machine at the expense of our own and other people's lives and well-being. While we recognize the United States has the right to provide security for its people, we believe the Afghanistan War is morally wrong and threatens our very security.

Given our many pressing needs here at home, it's time to end this war and, propelled by President Obama's promised vision of hope, rebuild America.

Members of the Board: John Frailing, Shelly Scribner, Co-chairs; Keith Werner, Secretary; Jana Chiavetta, Michael Chiavetta, James Costello, Michael Lenahan, John Lucas, Dan Onorato, Norma Ovrachim, David Rockwell.

Prison Project: Save those samples!

By DAVID HETLAND

Once again the Inmate Family Council at the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla is collecting travel samples for the annual Holiday Gift Project.

Last December, in partnership with many churches and community groups, 4000 packets were distributed to the women, many of whom receive nothing else during the holidays. One group of inmates wrote, "Thank you all for putting together our gift bags. It means a lot to the women here to know they are not forgotten and that someone cares enough to put together a gift like this for us."

As summer vacation time approaches,

keep in mind the need for the following (all travel/sample size):

- Soap
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Skin/body lotion,
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes (regular adult size)
- Pencils (wood, full-size, eraser top)
- Tissue

Bring donated items to the Modesto Peace Life Center Office, (call 529-5750 to ensure the office is open).

For more information, call Shelly Scribner, 521-6304, or Dave Hetland, 388-1608.



Join us for family fun at this year's Peace Camp

By **KEN SCHROEDER**

This summer marks the 28th year that peace-minded folks have gathered in the Sierras for Peace Camp. Join us on June 25-27 at Camp Peaceful Pines for stimulating ideas, community and fun for people of all ages. The weekend will offer workshops, hiking, campfire, singing, a talent show, children's activities and delicious meals. Camp follows just after the summer solstice, so these will be the longest days of sunlight in the year. A full moon will be rising on Saturday.

This year's camp will feature an amazing array of presenters:

Tuolumne County's storyteller B.Z. Smith will share stories on Friday evening campfire. On Saturday morning, she will lead a workshop titled "Our Stories: The REAL World Wide Web" using Storytelling and Improv Games—all designed to build skills and confidence, to strengthen community connections. She says, "Come experience how the world shrinks as we feel our bond across the globe through stories. But most of all, come have fun!" B.Z. has been a part of the storytelling world for over 25 years sharing her stories in many places.

Also on Saturday morning, artist and teacher Linda Knoll will lead us in "Outdoor Sketching and Observational Drawing." Linda says, "First we'll create a simple sketchbook, then using a variety of mediums, we'll look at the nature around camp and record details in words and pictures. I'll include instruction on sketching techniques, light & shadow, and observing details." Campers with all levels of drawing experience may participate. Linda has authored and illustrated the new children's book, *Over in the Valley*.

On Sunday morning, Karlha Arias of the Tuolumne River Trust will present, "Know Your River, Love Your River" and discuss why we need to protect the river and how to become involved. Karlha is River Parkway Project Manager for the organization, which has offices in Modesto, Sonora and San Francisco. The group seeks a healthy river that is teeming with fish and wildlife, is safe for drinking, fishing and swimming

PEACE CAMPcontinued p. 3

Stanislaus CONNECTIONS

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Name _____

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28th Annual Peace Camp June 25, 26, and 27, 2010



Camp Peaceful Pines
near Pinecrest, California



Registration Form

Early Registration Deadline: **June 6, 2010**

Adults (age 18 and older)

1. _____ Address: _____
 2. _____ City/State: _____ Zip _____
 3. _____ Phone#: _____
 4. _____ Email: _____

Total x \$70 ----- \$ _____

Youth (ages 4 -17)

1. _____ Age _____ 2. _____ Age _____
 3. _____ Age _____ 4. _____ Age _____

Total x \$50 ----- \$ _____

Infant (ages 0 - 3) _____ Age _____ NO CHARGE

Early registration discount by June 6: subtract \$10 per person _____ (-) \$ _____

I need vegetarian meals _____ Voluntary Donation for scholarships \$ _____

Special Health needs, allergies, etc. _____

Special needs for cabin assignment: _____ **GRAND TOTAL \$ _____**

I can offer/need a ride Friday _____ Saturday _____

Make checks payable to:
Modesto Peace/Life Center
 P.O. Box 134
 Modesto, CA 95353-0134

There is an additional \$15 fee for each person who comes to camp without pre-registration.

Parent authorization for minor children (must be signed if applicable)

I give permission for decisions to be made in my absence about the need for medical care. I give permission for my child to be treated by a physician or hospital in case of an emergency. I understand and agree that the Modesto Peace/Life Center is not responsible for my child/children. I will not hold the Modesto Peace/Life Center, its officers or leaders liable for medical aid rendered.

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (PRINT) _____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian _____ Date _____

Note: *If adults bring children not their own, the parent/legal guardian of those children must complete and sign a separate parent authorization.*

For camp information and scholarship availability:

Call Ken Schroeder, (209) 526-2303.

Peace camp . . . from page 2

and is held in trust for our children and grandchildren.

Modesto artist Jim Christiansen will capture the weekend in sketches. Jim is very active organizing events and creating and displaying art in Stanislaus County.

Deborah Roberts will cook up some wonderful food in the dining hall.


At the 6,200-foot elevation in the Stanislaus National Forest near the Clark Fork of the Stanislaus River, Camp Peaceful Pines is located about 25 miles above Pincrest off Hwy. 108. Surrounded by tall peaks, the forested camp is has a creek running through it. Sunrise Rock, with views of the river valley, is a short hike from camp.

The camp features kitchen and bathroom facilities, rustic cabins and platform tents and a cabin for those with special needs. Campers share in meal preparation, cleanup, and other work. Families and individuals are welcome.

The \$70 fee covers the weekend program, food and lodging. Young people are \$50. Early registration, before June 6th, entitles registrants to a \$10.00 per person discount. Partial scholarships and day-rates are available. Registration forms are available in this issue or at www.stanislausconnections.org where they can be printed and mailed. The first ten families or individuals to register will get a cool peace bumper sticker.

Campers may arrive any time after 2:00 P.M. on Friday. Camp opens with supper on Friday and closes at noon on Sunday. Directions and information will be mailed to participants before camp. Information: Ken Schroeder in Modesto, 209-526-2303.

Peace Camp is organized by the Modesto Peace/Life Center.



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Random acts of outrage

By JOHN MCCUTCHEON

When I was a young man of 19 years I first ventured from my home in Wisconsin to the Appalachians thinking I was going there to find banjo players. I found much more. I found families and communities that welcomed me into their homes and hearts, began to claim me as an adopted son, and will forever have a place in my own heart. Most of the first places I landed were coal-mining communities and I quickly became familiar with the routine and the risks of this industry and the people who help make our nation run. So it is with more than a little personal interest that I have read any news from the coalfields the nearly forty years since.

This past Monday, the worst coal mining disaster in a generation occurred in the West Virginia community of Montcoal. Twenty-five miners were killed in a giant methane explosion and four more are still missing. Continuing high methane levels have prevented rescue workers from entering the areas they hope those four miners might be. Massey Energy Company, the largest coal company in central Appalachia operates the Upper Big Branch mine and has been cited for years for dangerously high levels of methane, coal dust, and inadequate ventilation. But even as recently as Thursday surviving miners asked for anonymity in relating past concerns

Reflection: Peace March in San Francisco

By SHELLY SCRIBNER

Where were you on March 20, 2010? The day the U.S.A. invaded Iraq with shock and awe 7 years ago.

Three members of the Peace/Life Center met and carpooled to BART to the Civic Center in S.F. to join about 5,000 others to march in the streets to show our outrage over the wars the U.S. is currently waging abroad. We wanted to show our outrage at the lost lives and the cost of these wars while people who, except the elite, are being hurt here in the U.S.A. in other ways such as becoming and remaining jobless and losing homes and educational opportunities..

A speaker said that he believed a general strike in this country might work to stop the madness of the killing. This was the most hopeful thing we heard.




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regarding mine safety for fear of losing their jobs.

Upper Big Branch is a non-union mine. Such miners who dare to complain about safety conditions have no protection against company retaliation. Nor do they have the leverage that union representation can provide in forcing what the company will not do and what the government, it's been proven, cannot do. To put this into perspective, the disaster that occurred at the Sago, W.V. mine in January 2006 occurred in a non-union mine on a federal holiday. There wasn't a union miner in America working on that day—until they reported for the rescue team at Sago.

Condolences are not enough anymore. Nor is outraged response enough to yet another, admittedly, preventable tragedy. Support for the rights of workers to report safety concerns without fear of intimidation and dismissal should come from all corners of society. Massey's pathetic offer to pay for miners' funerals should be coupled with a demand that they finally pay the millions of dollars of fines they have fought for years. Most importantly, they should be forced to abide by the most basic operating standards for mine safety. Anything less is worse than negligence. It is nothing short of murder.

Note: John returns to Modesto on Jan. 18, 2011.

Gala reception for the 57th Annual Spring Art Show

The Central California Art Association and the Mistlin Gallery will host a Gala Reception for the 57th Annual Spring Art Show on Saturday, May 8 from 6 to 9 P.M.

This is the largest art show of the year and features established artists from the Central Valley region. The award ceremony includes \$2,600 in prizes sponsored by local individuals and businesses. Guitar and vocalist, Neil Buettner will be featured and there will be wine tasting and hors d'oeuvres

Tickets are \$20, available at Mistlin Gallery and at the door. The Show runs May 8 to June 24, Tuesday to Friday 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Saturday noon to 4:00 P.M. The Mistlin Gallery is at 1015 J St., Modesto. 529-3369 or online at www.ccartassn.org

League of Women Voters candidates forums in May

Place: City-County Board room, 10th Street Plaza, downtown Modesto.

May 12, Wednesday:

Auditor-Controller, 2 candidates: 6:30 P.M. - 7:15 P.M.
Sheriff, 2 candidates: 7:30 P.M.- 8:15 P.M.

May 13, Thursday:

Clerk-Recorder, 2 candidates: 6:30 P.M. - 7:15 P.M.
Board of Supervisors, Districts 3 and 4, 5 candidates: 7:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M.

Putting things by

By JENIFER WEST

A while ago, I started learning to “put things by.” Charming old phrase – our forebears used it to refer to drying and canning the bounty from their backyard gardens. “Canning” is actually a misnomer these days – originally, food was preserved in metal cans; now we use special glass jars. Putting things by meant survival then, and it’s a pretty good idea these days, as well. And not only will it save you money, it’ll reduce your carbon footprint!

Before I dive into the various ways to put things by, here are a couple of tips that’ll make your culinary life easier: Onions, peppers, garlic and ginger can all be prepped ahead and frozen. Put chopped onions and peppers directly into (separate) freezer bags. Mince the ginger and garlic (again, separately) with a little oil and form into logs on a cookie sheet lined with plastic wrap. Freeze, then wrap the logs and put into freezer bags (garlic in one, ginger in another). Double-bag to keep them fresh; note what’s in each bag. To use, grab handfuls of onions or peppers; break off chunks of garlic or ginger. Also, leftover lemon, tomato, or fruit juice can be frozen in regular ice trays. Measure first, so you’ll know how much is in each cube. Pop out of the trays and store in a large freezer bag. (Again, double-bagged.) Note what it is and how much is in each cube on the outer bag.

Dehydration is a timeless food storage method, and can be done with equipment as simple as homemade screens & the sun, or as sophisticated as an electrically powered machine. I prefer the end results from a machine, so I dusted off my old dehydrator – and realized, after drying carrots for 24 hours instead of the typical 6, that it wasn’t up to the work ahead. Scouted around online, and soon received a shiny new Nesco model. Now I can dehydrate as much food as I can manage at a time, at record speed.

Came in handy when I lucked into 16 cartons of almost past-date liver, cheap. Boy, did that make me and my new machine popular with the leash-and-collar set! No need to cook it, but it’ll be much easier (and neater!) if it’s partially frozen.

Vacuum packing is a great way to store dry goods, and with a FoodSaver, it can easily be done at home. Tip: Get the attachments that let you seal both regular- and wide-mouth canning jars. (If you get the canister set, you can use any recycled glass jar, but I find canning jars easier to deal with.) Buy things in bulk, and repack them in quantities your family can use. (Wahoo – save \$\$\$, stock up on things you use – and reduce your carbon footprint in the bargain). Anything you’d have to refrigerate after opening needs to be refrigerated after you repack and reseal it. Use lids from things you’ve home-canned (if you do – and you should) – they’ll seal better than new ones. Though our family is small, I even buy things like mayonnaise in bulk, and repack into smaller jars. A canning funnel keeps the tops of the jars clean, ensuring a good seal. The vacuum-packed jars keep in the fridge long enough that

we virtually never lose anything. You can do this with other perishables, too – always refrigerate after you reseal them. You can vacuum-pack dried fruit (e.g., raisins), too. I’ve also done chocolate chips, nuts, etc. There is a question, though, about safety of foods with more than 3% moisture. As with anything, when in doubt, check with an expert.



reference material. The *Ball Blue Book (The Guide to Home Canning and Freezing)*, originally published by the folks who make Ball canning jars, is considered the ultimate canning handbook [available from Amazon]. You can also contact the folks at the UC Cooperative Extension or, if you’re lucky, trade a few hours of yard work or car wash for a lesson or two.

If you really get serious, consider investing in a pressure canner. It is an investment, but will expand your canning (and money-saving) options dramatically. You can use it to can soups, home-cooked beans, sauces, and even meat. Having those items ready after a long day’s work can save many a drive-through trip. As always, follow approved guidelines and recipes.

Finally, a grain mill is a good idea for anyone interested in putting a little food by. Most whole grains (except brown rice) will store almost indefinitely at room temperature (provided you keep critters out). Grains are more compact than flour, so you can store more in a smaller space. And, freshly ground flour not only tastes better, it’s better for you.

So, picture a Saturday morning – sun streaming in the window, homemade jam glistening on a slice of warm, homemade bread; jars of homemade salsa, chutney and mustard lined up neatly in the cupboard...

Ah, yes, it really is a great time to put a few things by!

Stanislaus ACLU chapter needs YOU now!

By FRED HERMAN

Friends of civil liberties and constitutional freedoms know that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has for 90 years been the Most Valuable Player in the nation’s fight to keep constitutional rights intact.

Begun to protect persons jailed for protesting World War I, it gained fame by supporting rights to teach evolution. It came west to back San Francisco dockworkers’ organizing, and fought interning Japanese-Americans during WW II.

The Stanislaus ACLU chapter was organized in 2003 as George W. Bush inflicted the abominable “Patriot Act” on Americans. Feds can STILL, just by saying “terrorist” and labeling you a security risk, read your mail, tap your phone, ransack your house without a warrant and cart you off to secret prisons and waterboarding without charges or *habeas corpus*.

Our chapter has fought a few meaningful battles, from opposing cops spread-eagling kids on sidewalks on suspicion of walking while Hispanic, to opposing vote-hungry county supervisors cancelling a belly dancing program at the library, as well as opposing fingerprinting of pupils and the racial profiling drivers.

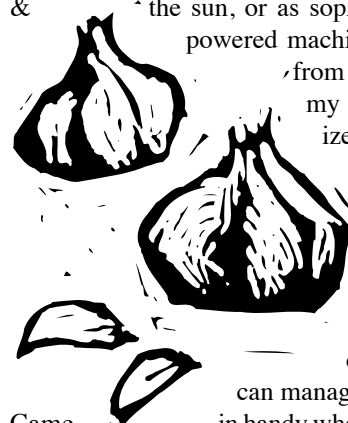
Stanislaus ACLU chapter leadership is decimated, exhausted, in desperate need of a few good people to pick up the torch. Interest waned after the last election, but most Bush era abuses remain firmly in place. Freedom needs protectors.

The chapter plans an open meeting from 6:30 p.m. until absolutely no later than 8 p.m. on Tuesday, May 18, at the Salida Library, 4835 Sisk Rd., near Kiernan. There will be no speaker, and only one subject on the agenda:

Do we keep up the good fight?

We need about a dozen folks to volunteer one hour every other month for board duty - unless a major cause requires special efforts. But everyone can do *something*. Without YOU, the Stanislaus ACLU chapter will become a historic footnote in the struggle for human rights.

Details: (209) 522-1571 or fred.herman@sbcglobal.net



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Rivers of Birds, Forests of Tules: Central Valley Nature & Culture in Season

By Lillian Vallee

66. Medicine Man

If he sees me weeding or picking the last (and sweetest) oranges, he leaves cover and finds me. He assumes what I have come to recognize as the “asking” position: motionless, silent expectation so strong it feels almost telepathic. Before he came to live with me, I would see him whenever I took out the trash: he kept to the edges of the alley. His whiteness was spooky and spectral. I wondered if I might be seeing things, but then he made his move, right into my front yard. I would find hollowed bowls under the ceanothus and white sage. He began sleeping under my bedroom window in the wild rose thicket and nibbling at its rosy new shoots. I marveled at his street smarts in the middle of a city full of unleashed dogs, pushy skunks, bullying cats and squealing, bunny-snatching kids.

There was something straight out of *Alice in Wonderland* about this white rabbit; he opened your mind to adventure. He wasn't the first rabbit to appear in the bunchgrasses, but he was the first permanent resident. No matter where he goes, and he travels a lot, he always comes back here. My sister, who loves animal symbolism, told me with a twinkle in her eye that she had read somewhere that the appearance of a rabbit meant a medicine man was nearby. An Indian friend added, with another twinkle, that the rabbit sounded more like a road man (an itinerant healer).

As we got to know and trust one another, the rabbit would take food from my hand, and that's when I saw the problem--one of his ears was horribly disfigured. Had he been bitten by a dog? Raked by a hawk? Nope. Mites. The rabbit had a mite infestation in his right ear and would lose his hearing, I was told, if it wasn't taken care of. Somehow I didn't see myself chasing the road man down the alleyways of my neighborhood to administer mite oil, but, as usual, my children spared me the effort. After a chase that rivaled the Keystone Cops (because of the position of their eyes, rabbits have 360 degree vision), the brilliant rabbit catchers brought a file box down over the poor exhausted creature and took him to a vet.

For every mite the vet scraped off that lucky Lagomorph's ear, I paid at least a dollar, but the best part, my children told me, was the delight on people's faces in the waiting room

when the technician announced, “Medicine Man is ready to go!” They said they had never seen so many *smiling* faces.

Ted Andrews, in his book *Animal Speak*, writes that “[t]he rabbit is an animal whose essence and energy is a paradox.” In myth and folklore the associations range from “the concept of *being*” (Egyptians) to “unclean because it was lascivious” (ancient Hebrews). Closer to home, among Algonquin Indians, “...the Great Hare is the animal-demiurge,” a sort of subordinate creator. In Chinese astrology, those born under the sign of the Rabbit or Hare (indistinguishable in folk belief) are said “to possess the powers of the moon.” This consistent association of the rabbit with the moon has to do not just with lunar dark spots in rabbit shape but also apparently with their predilection for frolicking on moonlit nights.



In their book, Caduto and Bruchac describe one such night in the woods after a heavy snowfall. They came to clearing and “[t]here we saw something that we will never forget. The wind had swept clean the frozen surface of the pond. The new snow lay all around the ice and there were at least four rabbits there. In the light and shadows of moon and trees it was hard to tell how many of them there were. And they were moving so quickly! As we watched, they ran in circles in the snow, making patterns with their feet, going faster and faster until they reached the smooth ice and slid across its surface. It seemed unbelievable but it was really happening. The light of the moon was bright on the snow and the rabbits danced and played in its light. We watched for a time and *then smiled*, turned and went on our way.”

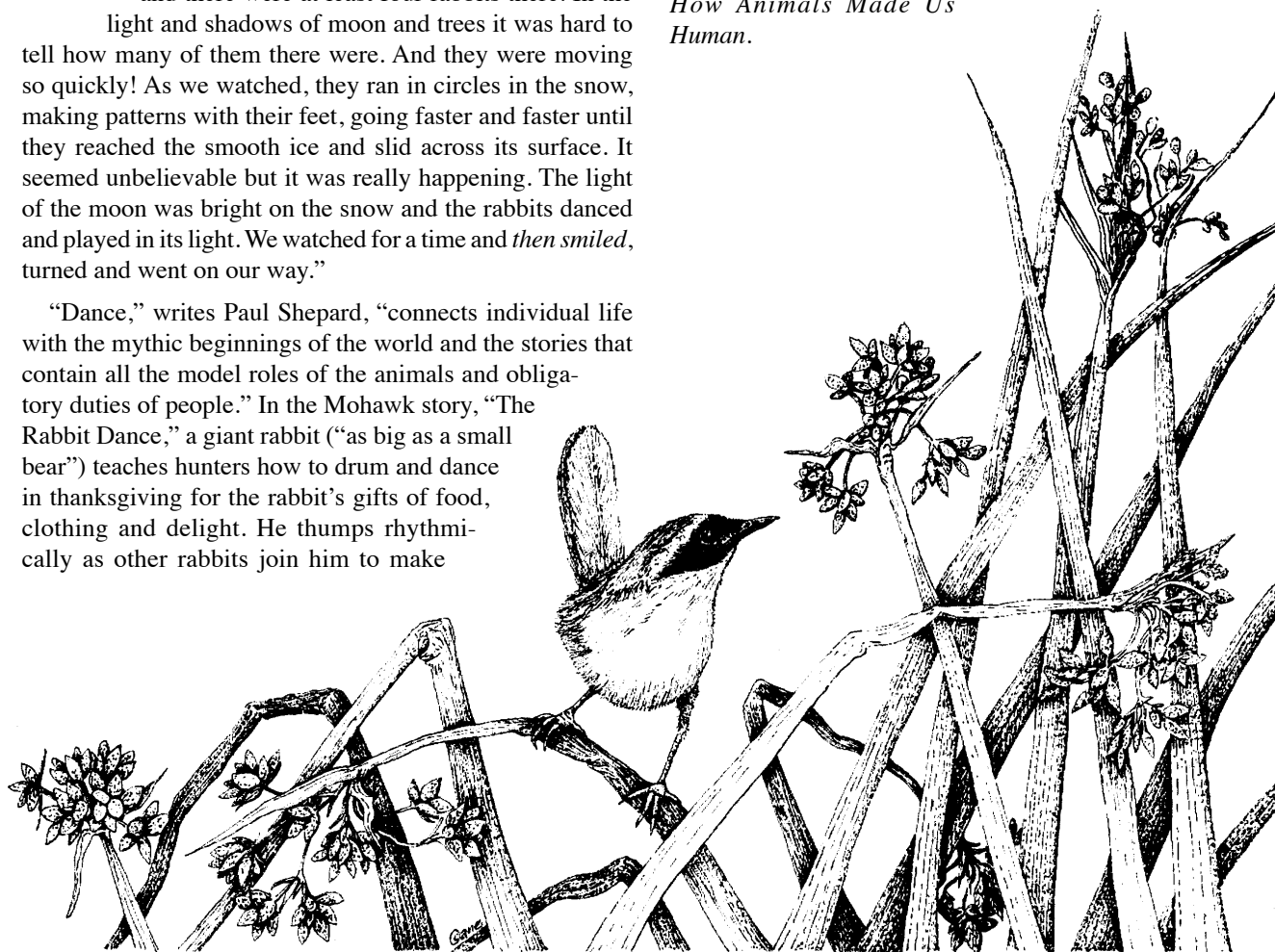
“Dance,” writes Paul Shepard, “connects individual life with the mythic beginnings of the world and the stories that contain all the model roles of the animals and obligatory duties of people.” In the Mohawk story, “The Rabbit Dance,” a giant rabbit (“as big as a small bear”) teaches hunters how to drum and dance in thanksgiving for the rabbit's gifts of food, clothing and delight. He thumps rhythmically as other rabbits join him to make

a big circle and dance. When the Rabbit Chief has finished drumming, the men go home without rabbits but with “a fine dance that makes the people glad.” “In story after story,” write Caduto & Bruchac, “a hunter goes out and comes back not with game, but with a lesson learned from the animals themselves.”

“The hare,” Shepard claims, “unlike his friends in Buddhist tradition, the monkey, jackal, and otter, does not trick and steal to escape or comply: when asked by a god for food he gives himself. *His spirit always defeats brute strength*, as in the tales of Br'er Rabbit or even Bugs Bunny.”

His spirit also defeats *brute indifference*, I think to myself as I administer another dose of antibiotic on toast to a much perkier rabbit. I spot him later, stretched out in the sun, saving his strength, no doubt, for those moonlit capers and maybe one really good dance lesson (if I throw in an apple slice and some rolled oats).

Sources: Michael J. Caduto & Joseph Bruchac, *Keepers of the Animals*; Frank F. Gander, “Cottontails in My Garden” and Henry Paul Jackson, “I Lived with a Black-Tailed Jack Rabbit” in *The Audubon Book of True Nature Stories*; and Paul Shepard, *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*.



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DIALOGUE: Is a two-state solution viable?

Ed. Note: Last month, we printed "Is a two-state solution viable?" written by Modesto Peace/Life Center board member Dan Onorato. In the spirit of open dialogue, we print a reader's response to that article and a reply by Dan Onorato.

Well what shall we call this last most recent issue of *Connections*? Shall we call it the anti-Semitic issue, the Palestinian issue, or the Onorato issue? It really doesn't matter because it is all the same. We have heard all of this before, yet the *Connections* Editorial Board continues to let Mr. Onorato use it for his propaganda purposes.

Mr. Onorato needs to get real. The reason that the Palestinians have lost so much land is because they have warred on Israel for the past 60 years. He seems to support the anti-Semitic position that only Arabs can live in the

The reason that the Palestinians have lost so much land is because they have warred on Israel for the past 60 years.

Middle East and that Israel must leave. I have never heard Mr. Onorato say one positive thing about Israel. He is clearly prejudiced due to being married to a Palestinian.

It is ridiculous to expect Israel to give up East Jerusalem. Its holiest site, the Wailing Wall, is in East Jerusalem and this is never going to be lost to Israel again. To have the city divided never made any sense.

To recommend that Israel become secular and abandon the two state solution is very disingenuous. This would simply mean that the Arabs would become citizens and take over the State of Israel. Israel is a theocracy and will remain a theocracy. Israel lost its homeland through the Diaspora and got it back in 1947. This was right and proper. Israel wants only to live in peace with its neighbors and is open to a peaceful two-state solution, which guarantees its safety from all of its neighbors and terrorists like Hamas.

Connections and the Peace Life Center need to support peace, not take sides in a war and certainly not to support anti-Semitism and allow itself to be used as a propaganda machine by the Palestinians. They are the aggressors having waged war for 60 years, not Israel. Israel has the right to protect itself and the United States justly stands by it in doing this.

On 04/07/10 I am embarking on an 18-day trip to Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. I will report objectively on my findings upon my return for a future edition of *Connections*.

Justice can only be found for all parties when all decide to stop warring and know that it will accomplish nothing and that it is fruitless. Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland found peace after many years of war; let us hope and pray that the Middle East will come to the same conclusion; war is unhealthy for all living things.

Ken Kohler
Modesto

Responding to Ken Kohler

By DAN ONORATO

It's clear that Ken Kohler and I see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from very different points of view, but it saddens me that Ken chose to attack me personally instead of providing evidence to support the claims he makes. His claims to the contrary, my hope is that both Israelis and Palestinians will forge a just solution to their differences so that together both can enjoy a lasting peace.

Just as I don't regard criticism of U.S. foreign policy as unpatriotic, I don't accept Ken's charge that I'm anti-Semitic simply because I write critically about Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories. For years I have written critically about issues involving injustice. For too long the accusation of anti-Semitism has been used to silence opposition to Israel's oppressive and illegal policies. Ken's hasty and unwarranted assumption that I'm "prejudiced" because I'm "married to a Palestinian" (my wife is from Latin America) throws into doubt the rest of his reasoning.

Regarding Ken's claim that it's "ridiculous to expect Israel to give up East Jerusalem," consider the following:

- 1. Except for Israel, no government in the world, including the U.S., recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The U.N.'s 1947 partition plan, which led to the establishment of the State of Israel, did not regard Jerusalem as part of Israel at all, but rather as a separate entity—a "corpus separatum"—under U.N. administration.
- 2. In legal terms, East Jerusalem is considered occupied territory by the U.S., the U.N., the European Union, the International Committee for the Red Cross, and the International Court of Justice.
- 3. Under international law, specifically, the Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention, occupying powers are clearly prohibited from transferring their civilians into such territories.
- 4. The international community has repeatedly and forcefully rejected Israel's claim to East Jerusalem. After Israel seized the area (as well as the rest of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights) during the 1967 war, the U.N Security Council, including the U.S., adopted several resolutions reaffirming that "acquisition of territory by military conquest is inadmissible." In 1971 Security Council Resolution 298, adopted with U.S. support, declared that "all legislative and administrative actions taken by Israel to change the state of the City of Jerusalem, including expropriation of land and properties, transfer of populations, and legislation aimed at the incorporation of the occupied section, are totally invalid and cannot change

that status." In 1980, when Israel adopted the "Jerusalem Law," through which it attempted to formalize its annexation of East Jerusalem and surrounding areas and to declare the city its "eternal and indivisible" capital, Security Council Resolution 478 said the law's adoption constituted "a violation of international law" and a "serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the

For too long the accusation of anti-Semitism has been used to silence opposition to Israel's oppressive and illegal policies.

Middle East." The resolution declared Israel's action as "null and void," and asserted it "must be rescinded forthwith." This resolution was adopted by a vote of 14-0; the U.S. abstained but declined to use its veto power.

(The above points are borrowed from Henry Norr's March 26 article, "When it comes to E Jerusalem, 'NPR' misleads and misinforms" from www.commondreams.org.)

Ken is correct in noting that one of Israel's greatest fears of a one-state solution is that Palestinians, whose birth rate is higher, would soon outnumber Israelis, and thus the central Zionist need that Jewish people control their own state and political destiny would cease to be assured. The two-state solution is a way to reduce Israel's fear, but as my article details, Israel's expansionism in both East Jerusalem and the West Bank, with its refusal to stop taking Palestinian land, is making this solution unworkable. Alternatives exist but any solution will require vision and courage from both parties.





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Modesto area “saints go marching in”

By LYNN M. HANSEN

Louis Armstrong’s popular, “When the Saints Go Marching In,” often came to mind when my husband, Richard Anderson, and I traveled to Guatemala during *Semana Santa* (Holy Week beginning Ash Wednesday and concluding with Easter Sunday) as part of a 24 member United Methodist Volunteer in Missions (UMVIM) medical/surgical team.

The mission of our team, led by Modesto’s Dr. Roland Nyegaard, was to serve the medical needs of Mayan people who traveled from far and near to the *Salud y Paz* Clinic. The clinic’s motto read, “On this mountain, God will provide.”

Team members also included Richard Anderson, Cindy Barton, Jim Brown, Kelly Brown (RN), Dr. John Chan, Betsy Dixon, Will Dixon (EMT), Nancy Fisher (RN), Gay Goss (FNP), Lynn M. Hansen, Marianne Hallum (RN), Dr. James Hoyt, Susan Hoyt (FNP), Pat Logan, Sheri Lowe (RN), Dr. Roland Nyegaard, Elise Palitz (RN), Julie Parish, Nate Parish, Dr. John Pfeffer, Dr. Seang Seng, Carol Shakespeare (RN), Dr. Bill Wilson (DDS), Jennifer Zimmerman (PA).

The colorful backdrop for our visit was Carnival, Mayan pageantry, Christian symbolism, steep narrow mountain roads with numerous blind curves between our hotel in Chichicastenango, and the clinic located at the 8,200 foot high community of Camanchaj, and traffic jams of cars, trucks, buses, motorbikes and tuk tuks (3-wheeled auto rickshaws) all honking horns while attempting to squeeze through very narrow streets.

Our team of “saints,” two surgeons, two general practice physicians, two nurse practitioners, a physician assistant, an anesthesiologist, a public health nurse, a dentist, six registered surgical and recovery nurses, Spanish/English interpreters



and lay volunteers, served 346 men, women and children that week.

Most of those treated were Mayans, who traveled long distances and waited many hours. One woman drove 13 hours over primitive mountain roads from the Peten in Northern Guatemala near the border with Belize with two unrelated parents and their children with cleft palates.

Team members entertained the waiting children with colored markers, white boards, plastic baseball bats and balls they had brought with them. I brought some bookmarkers with animal pictures on them. When I asked children the names of the pictured animals, one boy called a zebra a *caballo* (close enough) and one boy named a tiger *otro gato* (other cat).

The team performed 46 successful surgeries in four days, provided approximately 150 dental visits for fillings and extractions and about the same number for fungal infections, diabetes, parasites, fevers and other medical conditions. Six children received cleft lip surgeries, a gift that allowed them to speak more clearly and build self-esteem. Many women were helped with gynecological issues, and one

man who had a tumor the size of a football removed from the middle of his back is now able to sit in a chair and lie on his back.

We were saddened when the doctors were unable to do little more than clean a drainage tube and help relieve the pressure for a hydrocephalic newborn.

Patients were charged 20 Quetzals (roughly \$3) for surgeries and 10 Quetzals (\$1.50) for doctor consultations and medication.

Although our efforts in that small clinic were a drop in the ocean of poverty, we came home gratified by the smiles or hugs each of the team members received from grateful patients.



Though only a small number of people received much needed help, evidence that we had made a difference is affirmed by The Star Thrower story:

A man was seen walking down the beach throwing stranded starfish back into the ocean. Another man asked him why he was throwing them back, since there were too many stranded starfish to save them all and that his small act wouldn’t make any difference. The star thrower smiled and replied, as he threw another starfish into the ocean, “It makes a difference to that one.”

ACTION: For information about UMOVIM opportunities in Guatemala or other countries contact the VIM Coordinator Office, c/o Eddie Luchi, P.O. Box 980250, West Sacramento, CA. Phone 916-374-1584/Fax 916-372-5544.

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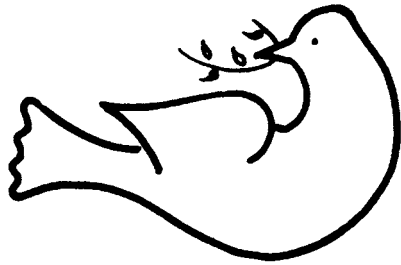
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Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free.

— The Dalai Lama

2010 Peace Essay Contest

“Imagine that you suddenly have the power to put into action a non-violent plan to bring about a more peaceful future that includes respect and fairness for all.”

The 24th annual Peace Essay Contest received 1015 qualifying essays from fifth through twelfth grade students from throughout Stanislaus County.

The word “peace” has many meanings, from the absence of war and armed conflict to personal inner serenity. All around the world people yearn for the opportunity for their families to live work and thrive in peace. They dream of a future where forces like injustice, poverty and racism no longer exist. Each writer focused on a problem preventing people from experiencing peace and explained his/her plan for bringing about change.

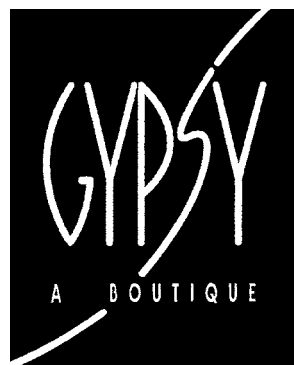
Sponsored by the Modesto Peace/Life Center, the contest is co-sponsored by the Modesto Junior College Department of Literature and Language Arts.

2010 Peace Essay Committee: Margaret Barker, Indira Clark, Pam Franklin, Elaine Gorman, Suzanne Meyer, Deborah Roberts, Sandy Sample, and Shelly Scribner.



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GEORGIA
ANDERSON

Division III 2009 Peace Essay Contest First Place & School Winner

Kalkidan Curtis

Oakdale Junior High School ~ Ms. Wegener

The Shoes of Another

A boy my age once looked at my shirt that symbolized peace and said, “That’s a nice message, but we’ll never get there.” I smiled and walked away; sometimes discussing issues with people gets quite depressing and frustrating. No one is stopping us from achieving peace but ourselves. We have the power to make this world more peaceful just by trying to better comprehend the losses and gains of one another.

“What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other?” a writer with the name George Eliot once questioned. Is it right for us to ignore the hardship of others, just because our lives are a bit more luxurious? No! I believe we have the ability to sympathize and try and understand the pains of the hungry, the tired, and the poor. Maybe we cannot fully grasp each other’s emotions, but we could try, and one way to do this is to promote a week of peace. I want kids at my school to realize what goes on around the world, and not jump to conclusions just because they are misinformed.

During Peace Week, kids will get a chance to learn about problems people from all parts of the world have to face everyday. Students would be given new identities for the week and get a chance to learn about the person whom they are representing, the hardships the person had to go through and the problems that prevented them from living a peaceful life. Kids would be strongly encouraged to try and put themselves in the shoes of their new identities. This would hopefully give student a broader view and understanding of global problems because I don’t think kids my age take the time to see the problems thrown at the rest of the world’s populace. There is no better place to be educated about world problems other than the schools we attend to become well educated.

People like Martin Luther King, Jr. will be our heroes during Peace Week to show students that we all have the power to act out against what we think is wrong. The main message during Peace Week would be, “Forget your wants and needs, stop thinking about yourself, and try to sympathize with the suffering of others.” Peace Week would be a chance for kids like me to imagine the struggles men and women go through for equality, the famine that paralyzes third world countries, racism people deal with, and better understand the driving force that fuels people’s actions.

Maybe we cannot directly walk in each other’s shoes, but we could try to understand what it would feel like to be someone other than ourselves. Understanding each other will give us reasons to help one another. Peace Week, I believe would be a great opportunity for teens like me to learn what lies beyond the borders of the United States of America, and be motivated to help those in need.

Dear Peace/Life Center

As always, the writing prompt was excellent! We have had several very thought-provoking and insightful class discussions from the brainstorming of ideas to the oral sharing of their essays.

Thank you.

Christine Malekos-Quick



To the Peace/Life Center,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity that you put forth with organizing the Peace Essay Contest.

I am very grateful to your organization for ceaselessly promoting peace and tolerance within the Central Valley and across the world.

With the Peace Essay, I was able to focus my thoughts and my passion, and do my part in working towards a brighter future.

I will be delighted to work again with your organization later this year and write again for the Peace Essay Contest. Thank you for your relentless efforts and support

*Kyle Ridenour, 2nd place, Division I
Oakdale*



**Is someone you
love gay?**

**Parents, Families and Friends
of Lesbians and Gays**

Modesto Chapter

meets on the
1st and 3rd Tuesdays from 7-9 pm
at the Emanuel Lutheran Church
324 College Ave.
Helpline: 527-0776
www.pflagmodesto.org

Visit the **Oakdale** satellite
Meetings on
3rd Wednesdays from 7-9 pm
“Golden Oaks” Conference Room
Oak Valley Medical Building
1425 West “H” St.
pflagoakdale@dishmail.net

Sabina the Wise

Abuela, I knew you not in your youth,
Smooth skin glowing,
black hair flowing,
Nimble feet flying,
on your way to the dance.

What were your joys?
What were your hopes?
What did you know?

Abuela, I knew you not
In your middle years,
Clothing children,
Plaiting hair,
Cleaning chickens,
Walking out on a marriage
To educate your daughters.

What were your hopes?
What were your regrets?
What did you know?

But Abuela, I knew you
In your later years,
Leaning back in your chair in the shade,
Bare toes dangling free,
Eyes sparkling,
Fingers flying,
Crocheting memories and hopes into dresses
For granddaughters,
Sewing prayers of safekeeping
For grandsons gone to seek
Fortunes in the North.

Abuela, I remember your warning:

“I shall have no grandsons born in America,
In America they sacrifice their sons to war.
In America, they send their sons to conquer
Vietnam.”



And Abuela, I remember you in your dying
years,
Leaning back in your chair in the shade,
Bare toes dangling free,
Your face a map of a thousand memories.
In your blindness you could not crochet,
In your blindness you wove
History and visions and dreams.

“I dreamed the sons of my grandsons have
returned,
Tall white men crowding the house.
But they mean no harm,
They are gentle, they show respect.”

“And I shall have no grandsons born in America
In America, they sacrifice their sons to war,
In America they send their sons south
To conquer Panama.”

— M. Villalobos, 12-93

Mother and son, Marianne and Rubén Villalobos, share a heritage of activism and inspired poetry

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

Rubén Villalobos is a private practice attorney and a Modesto City Schools Trustee. With the exception of a bit of entrepreneurial poetry in high school (selling sonnets for classmates to give to their sweethearts), his inspiration came from a poetry class taught by June Jordan at the University of California, Berkeley. While there he co-wrote *Poetry for the People: A Revolutionary Blueprint*.

Marianne Villalobos, Rubén’s mother, was raised in Modesto and teaches Spanish at Modesto High School. Marianne, the daughter of Peace/Life Center founding members Charles (World War II Conscientious Objector) and Florence Baker, says, “Writing poetry happens during infrequent bursts of inspiration.”

Rubén’s great-grandmother, Sabina Rodríguez, was a poet in the Panamanian oral tradition, composing décimas about her daily life. These poems were never published, but were carried down through her son, Juan Amado Deago. Her daughter, Ángela Deago, also was a poet. In the ancient tradition of the

Spanish *juglares*, Ángela’s poetry was an oral art. She had a gift for rhyme, meter and metaphor and an infallible memory. People would commission a poem in honor of some event, such as the enthroning of a queen of a local festival; then, Ángela would compose the poem while dicing pork or stirring cocada.

The poems Rubén wrote in college revealed family truths not previously understood. In “Tío Juancho,” he expresses his love for his other country, Panama, and his respect for all that the elders taught him.

“Sabina the Wise” was written by Marianne Villalobos and expresses the wisdom of a woman whose education came from life. Abuela Sabina was born before Teddy Roosevelt sent gunboats to the Caribbean to enforce the independence of Panamá from Colombia. Nearly eight decades later, she saw the signing of the Torrijos-Carter Canal Treaty, freeing Panamá from U.S. dominance. Near the end of her life, Panamá was invaded yet again by the United States. She knew something about the costs of war and the rewards of peace.

Tío Juancho

sing to me, tío
teach me the songs of the birds
i’ve never seen fly
teach me
the songs i do not
remember

tell me tío,
like you told me
when i asked you so long ago:
why does grass go to sleep
when i touch it?
why do weeds give me soothing milk
i can spread on my skin
to ease the sting of the mosquito
that doesn’t seem to bother you?
why does the cut banana tree
grow back right in front of me?
why do some bananas
stay small and brown and sweet
while some grow big and green
and not so sweet
but savory, cuando Mamacita, o
Yaya, o Mercedes
(pero nunca un hombre, never a man)
fries them and sprinkles them with salt?

tell me, tío,
how can you make cocada all day long

(all these years)

crack open the shells
with one blow of the machete and
give me the slippery sweet slime inside
that slides down my tongue

(all these years)

grate the coconut
mix in the honey above the fire
that boils the cocada and you

(all these years)

roll the still hot cocada into balls
and let them cool while you clean
the pot, the stirring stick and the machete
so they will be ready for next time
then call me over to try your fresh candy:

¡Ruben, ven acá!

sweat, still dripping from your aged face
as you hand me the biggest piece
and a bag to take home to america
before you remove
your sweat-soaked shirt and sun-soiled hat
replace them with the clean ones
you treasure so much,
then load up your cart and start down the street:



Cocada! Cocada!
dignified
(all these years)

sing to me your décima tío,
take me to our land
take me to my land
show me how to work
the ground abuela worked
how to feel the dirt
under my fingernails



show me the hut he built
where abuelita bore nine children
show me the land she loved
the land she left
the man she left
to educate her daughters
to give them a chance
because in the fields
they had none

sing to me, tío
sing me the songs that tell me why
the dormideros,
the milk plants,
and mis sueños Panameños
do not grow in this infertile land

take me by the hand
as you did so many years ago
at the deathbed of mi abuelo
as you did a few summers ago
at his tomb
the place where
abuela would rejoin him soon
close, but apart
in life, in death

take mi tío,
show me every plant
every mountain
every bird
every life-giving stream
but also show me
the dirty dollar
the endless squalor
bitter fruits of a broken pan-american dream

sing to me, tío
teach me the songs of the birds i’ve never
seen fly
teach me
the songs i do not
remember
or maybe,
the songs i never knew

— Rubén Antonio Villalobos

(Originally published in *Poetry for the People: Poetry in a Season of Love*, Poetry for the People Press, Berkeley 1994)

Animal Place: It's all about compassionate choices

By LOUIS and MARGARET DEMOTT-FELDMAN

Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances of survival for life on earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet. -Albert Einstein

On Saturday, March 13, we volunteered at the new Animal Place, a sanctuary for farm animals, outside of Grass Valley, California, which is in the process of opening this spring. Upon arrival, we were taken in by the beauty of the sanctuary, set on 600 acres of rolling grassy hills, meant to serve as a haven for animals that the Humane Society Legislative Fund refers to as, "creatures long forgotten in an otherwise animal-loving nation."

Since 1989, Animal Place has made its home in Vacaville, California, where a limited number of farm animals have lived out the duration of their lives naturally, with dignity and respect, thanks to the compassionate care of the Animal Place staff. In their new Grass Valley home, each farm animal species will have its own living area, more space and freedom to graze, move around and lie down on open farmland, and, for many, the good fortune to sleep in big barns, which are now being prepared for them by Animal Place staff and volunteers. This lifestyle will be in direct contrast to the lives that they

would have led if they had ended up in the traditional factory farm setting. Characteristically, this would have meant confinement, abuse, and existing solely for the utilitarian purpose of providing food for human consumption. The good news is that the smaller Vacaville facility will remain open after the Grass Valley sanctuary starts up its services for farm animals and will continue on as a rescue ranch for other farm animals and also for dogs.

Currently, eight regular staff members will run the new 600-acre animal sanctuary with long range plans to create an educational center that promotes *veganism*, a diet free of animal food or dairy products, and a lifestyle that does not rely on the use of animal products of any kind, including leather. There are plans to plant a large vegetable garden whose produce can be used in vegan cooking classes at the educational center. In addition, both a volunteer and an animal activist training center will be housed at the new sanctuary. According to Director Kim Sturla, "We want to provide an alternative lifestyle for farm animals and let people know there are ways to sustain ourselves other than by taking another's life. We also want to teach people how to prepare meals without reliance on meat and other animal products.

I sincerely believe that most people, if given the choice of eating without having to take another's life, would choose that option. At Animal Place, we want to provide people with information about that respectful and compassionate option."

As we walked the perimeter of a huge section of the sanctuary with Sturla and other volunteers and visitors, we observed many grassy, fenced-in areas shaded by huge trees, which will become home to a variety of farm animals. Volunteers were taking care of necessary tasks, including preparing eating troughs for chickens, installing wire meshing along the ground to prevent burrowing under sanctuary fences, and removing debris from the property around fence borders. Although the work is physically demanding, volunteers and staff agree that it is well worth the effort because of the mission of Animal Place, which is to promote respect for *all life forms*, including farm animals that are thinking and feeling beings.

After a full day of volunteering, workers were offered a full vegan meal, which they helped prepare, with all of the trimmings, including a vegetable protein "Celebration Roast," lots of fresh veggies, and the friendly company of fellow animal advocates who shared a special camaraderie with one another while savoring the sumptuous feast.

ACTION: *Connections* readers interested in advancing the objectives of Animal Place may contact the organization at www.animalplace.org. Tours are available, and children accompanied by an adult are especially welcome!

LA transplant having a ball in Modesto

By IRA WEST

As a newcomer to Modesto, I've been pleasantly surprised to find a welcoming scene for activists as well as a tight-knit progressive community. Coming from the Los Angeles suburb of Glendale via Provo, Utah (a story in itself), my wife Kathleen and I have found it painless to connect with like-minded people—not an easy thing to do in L.A., and virtually impossible in Provo.

I'm a retired high school history teacher. I happily gave that up after 30 mostly enjoyable years—we won't count those eight years teaching inmates in Soledad prison—to allow my wife Kathleen to take a job as rector of an Episcopal church in Provo. When that proved to be short lived, we headed for Modesto.

Not because Modesto promised to be a hot bed of liberalism, mind you, but strictly because the turmoil and defections in the Episcopal diocese of the San Joaquin Valley opened up the possibility of a job down the road. Why else, after all, would you willingly live in the Central Valley? For the scenery and weather? But hey, we thought, it's California, not Utah, so how bad could Modesto be (even if it initially appeared to be, how should I delicately phrase it, a "cow-friendly" town)?

Not bad at all. In fact, it's great! As Kathleen became comfortable at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where she's been volunteering, I started looking for "hopey-changey" things to do, and pretty soon connected with the Valley Progressives, a friendly, fun, and issue-oriented new group of activists. We most recently protested the appearance of Karl Rove outside the Doubletree.

In short order after that, I began a book group focusing on social issues, and we've just finished our first volume, *White Like Me*, by Tim Wise, this country's premier spokesman against racism and white privilege. We have lively discus-

sions the second Thursday of each month. (Up next: Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*.)

I then learned that the Coffee Party USA had started up operations as a counter to the infamous Tea Party, so I organized the Modesto chapter, which meets every two weeks at Queen Bean Coffee House. Our next gathering is on April 17 at 1:00 pm, and we'll be brainstorming when to meet with Rep. Cardoza or his staff to ask how he plans to limit the influence of Big Money on the legislative process. And give him a few suggestions too.

As a whole foods vegan for 22 years, my fondest wish has always been to hook up with local vegetarians. Sure enough, like manna from heaven, so to speak, I've been introduced to vegetarians who hope to go to restaurants en masse, order veggie food, and make a point to the owners that they would gain business by catering to vegetarians and vegans. If you'd told me about this nine months ago, I might have thought you were joking. How could such an organization exist amidst the large-truck-and-cowboy-hat set?

I'm also planning to meet people who belong to Cruelty-Free Consumers / Valley Ecology NOW at the Earth Day celebration on April 17.

And finally, as if to cap it all off, I've been introduced to folks who hold up the banner for peace and justice at *Stanislaus Connections*. Is this a great town, or what?

So why has it been easier to become active in Modesto than in L.A. or Provo? Utah County, of which Provo is a part, is considered the reddest county in the reddest state in the country. Enough said about that!

A vast megalopolis like L.A., while more liberal overall than Modesto, is too impersonal and disconnected to easily find kindred souls, let alone a cozy neighborhood group




Look for
CONNECTIONS
online at:
<http://stanislausconnections.org/>

How do you get to the Gallo Center? Practice, Practice, Practice...

By DANIEL NESTLERODE

Saturday evening in mid-March, the sun is setting over Modesto and sending laser-like rays into the large lobby windows of the Gallo Center. As picturesque as it is, the illumination seems unnatural for a night-time place like a theater. Its spilling reflected light against the back wall causing the bartender to shade her eyes. The marble floor is a sort of a pinkish tan and looks fragile in the natural light. I wonder how much time the folks at the Gallo Center spend cleaning it.

In this moment, I am scurrying across the lobby from the Foster Theater end to the 10th street end carrying a mandolin, a gig bag, three microphone stands, and one small powered speaker. I'm late. Tonight is my first gig with these folks and my first gig in this place. I'm a little nervous. And I'm a little distracted too.

I don't usually plug in, and I have not used this equipment in more than a year. Bluegrass is a genre that actively eschews amplification as much as possible. Bluegrass festivals that allow jamming by festival-goers have written rules against amplification. Lots of professional Bluegrass groups who tour the country perform with a single center stage microphone. They feature soloists by choreography, the soloist steps closer to the microphone, and most of the rest of the group step back.

The other folks, two guitarists and a bass player, are already there and set up. These folks have pick-ups in their instruments and amplifiers to plug in to. They plug a cord in the wall, a cord between the amplifier and the instrument, flip on the power switch, make a few adjustments to the volume and tone settings, and then watch me wrangle microphones, stands, and cables.

My set-up is essentially the same, except my mandolin lacks a pick-up. I need to use a microphone to amplify it. I'm also singing a tune or two, so I need a microphone for that as well. Both of these microphones get plugged into the small powered speaker I brought. Then I need to balance the output from each microphone so that the mandolin does not drown out my voice or *vice versa*.

Finally I am ready, and just in time too. "Downbeat at 6:30" means we start playing at 6:30 or else the bandleader will be annoyed and my tenure in this quartet will be short lived.

The band is set up at the west end (10th street end) of the lobby, facing east with the windows on our left. The room is huge and looks cavernous to a musician: three stories tall floor to ceiling with sonically reflective surfaces in the glass windows and the marble floors. I'm expecting that our amplification will bounce all over the place creating a lot of noise for the incoming patrons.

But I am wrong. 1) We're keeping the volume down. The amplification is just to bump the volume level up a hair or two above conversational levels. 2) The inside surfaces of the lobby are soft and curved. The floors under the balcony are carpeted, the seating is upholstered and heavily cushioned, the walls are curved and contoured. These elements combine to absorb sounds. 3) The lobby fills with people, and people are excellent at taming the sonic landscape.

I'm still distracted. New place, new band, new material. My concentration leaks, and as a result my playing stumbles in places. I really need to practice the B part to "Soldier's Joy" until I can play it at tempo without thinking about it.

Sometimes the second time through, the fingers on my left hand rebel and cause a train wreck on the fretboard of my mandolin.

Despite my tardiness and despite my struggle to concentrate in spots, the band acquires an audience. A semi-circle forms between the four of us and the nearest entrance. Everyone I can see is smiling. One or two adventurous people do a little dancing. Some are clapping along. An enthusiastic audience is an intoxicating sight for a musician.

Indeed, winning an audience is a musician's triumph. I imagine athletes feel something similar setting a personal-best record. The four of us walked into a lobby to play some music together and to see the show afterward, but we got much more than that. We got to move people. And we feel like all of the time and effort we spend learning material, practicing technique, maintaining our instruments, and dragging equipment around is worth it.

I have never busked before; never just started playing in a public place with an open case to receive tips. But I am interested now. A gig at the Gallo Center proved to me that people in Modesto are open to music that shows up in unexpected places. If the music is good, Modestans respond in kind. Keep an eye out downtown. You might see me soon playing for tips at the 10th street plaza. And don't be shy about stopping into the lobby of the Gallo Center some evening if you see a mandolinist in a band through the window. The Gallo Center checks tickets at the entrance to the theater, not the entrance to the lobby.

Classic Cafe Shalom features art festival, belly dancing

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

It's time for bagels and lox, kugel, blintzes, great music, dancing, and browsing at Congregation Beth Shalom's 40th Annual Jewish Food, Culture & (new this year) Art Festival Sunday, May 2 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., 1705 Sherwood Avenue in Modesto.

Local artists will show and sell a diverse array of arts and crafts. Soloist Eli Lester, a Reggae band, and strolling musi-

cians and vocalists will perform throughout the day, and belly dancing and Israeli folk dancing will share the stage.

The festival will offer a no host bar, traditional bakeshop and Judaica gift shop items.



ACTION: For information and tickets, call 571-6060. Purchase advanced tickets (\$10) at CBS or from any CBS member. Tickets available at the door (\$12).

LA transplant in Modesto

. . . from page 10

where you can socialize frequently with other people on your political wavelength. Just day-to-day survival often trumps anything else. In Glendale, I found it difficult to do more than my very taxing teaching job and volunteering for the teachers' union.

Modesto, on the other hand, still has that small-town feel-but with cosmopolitan habits. Nowhere else have we had the pleasure of attending a small party and spontaneously watching Bill Maher together, as we did recently. And with proximity to the Bay Area and the leavening provided by the most progressive community in the nation, you have a vibrant intellectual mix. Small enough to be community, but big enough (we hope) to make a difference. And you don't have to drive 30 miles on a crowded freeway to find it.

Indeed, if you don't live in a place like trendy Santa Monica

or the expensive West Side, you'd be hard pressed to encounter a convenient subset of people in LA, let alone the several you can be a part of here. There seems to be something toxic about the air there, beyond the inhalation of particulate matter. Even though my teachers' union did great work, for instance, it was hard to keep my focus and enthusiasm when opposing factions constantly engaged in back stabbing.

Not that it's perfect here, of course. When Kathleen and I were doing Democratic Party voter registration a few weeks ago, with some signs in Spanish, we got a few hostile stares and remarks as we sat outside a local market. We have our work cut out for us here. But it could be a lot of fun doing it! See you at the Sarah Palin protest in June!

Ira West has belonged to many activist organizations in the past, but has always considered himself a dilettante.

Stanislaus CONNECTIONS, published by the Modesto Peace/Life Center, has promoted non-violent social change since 1971. **Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the center or editorial committee.** CONNECTIONS encourages free speech to serve truth and build a more just, compassionate, peaceful and environmentally healthy community and world. We seek to enhance community concern, bridge interests of diverse groups. CONNECTIONS' editorial committee views peace as built on economic and social justice and equal access to the political process. We welcome pertinent signed articles - to 800 words - and letters with address, phone number. We edit for length, taste, error and libel. Deadline is 10th of the month. Send articles to Myrtle Osner, 1104 Wellesley, Modesto 95350, 522-4967, or email to osnerm@sbcglobal.net or Jim Costello jcostello@igc.org.

Photos and ADS should be submitted as high-resolution JPEG or TIFF files. Do NOT submit as pdf files if possible.

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