

## SUNDAY VOICES

## Just another dog story

The creek is running high and fast in Low Gap Park and when I hike on the adjacent trail, I can almost feel the pulse of it inside my body. When Sia, my big, black, wonderful, Portuguese water dog mix was alive, we would walk to the park almost daily, all seasons, and the best part was always on the cold winter days when we would reach a certain spot by the bank and she would run down, jump in, submerge herself and laughingly dog paddle in the frigid water. When satisfied she would jump onto the bank and shake the water off her long, black, curly hair. She became riddled with bone cancer, and I had to put her down almost two years ago and ceased my daily exercise to the park. The sense of loss was too acute and more than I cared to bear on a regular basis, so I took my walks in a different direction and stayed away from the park for about a year.

I began to miss the woods and water and the temporary feeling of not living in town, so about a year ago I reinitiated my excursion north a couple of blocks on Spring Street, down the hill beside Pomolita's reading building, towards the track area where soccer teams practice at different times of the year and then across the softball diamonds where I used to play a mean second base on a variety of women's teams. I continued behind juvenile hall across from the blackberries that grow prolific in the summer and past the boy's baseball field and the makeshift home for the feral cats that Jo tends on a regular basis. When Sia was with me, Jo always had a special treat for her. The last leg of the journey included a short stint on Low Gap Road past the cemetery, high school and Ukiah Player's Theater and then the entrance to the park where I could lose myself and experience a sense of nature. The pain of her loss had subsided and it was good to be back again.

About four or five months ago I noticed a shepherd-like husky dog in the park unattached to a human being. I wondered about him and figured he lived in one of the houses nearby. Each day I

Sunday view  
BY KAREN RIFKIN

returned he was wandering in a different location, and I soon realized he was a stray. I began feeding him occasionally and noticed others were doing the same as he had both a water and food dish. I started thinking about taking him home. I really didn't want another dog knowing how my four, semi-feral, backyard cats would react, but this dog needed a home.

One day as I was coming up to the park, the dog came walking up to me from quite a distance. All the other times I could not get near him and he seemed to have little interest in me. I thought this was it; he was coming home with me. But he would only get so close, always keeping at least 3 or 4 feet between us. I talked, cajoled and made nice but to no avail.

The storms came and I took a break from the park and temporarily forgot about him.

When the weather cleared, I returned to the park and realized the dog was gone. One afternoon as I approached the entrance I saw posted on the bulletin board a picture of him with a first person (dog) account written from the stray's point of view. It went something like this:

"I thank all of you for feeding me and caring for me during the last couple of months. I know how many of you were concerned about me, but I felt very wary about letting anybody get close enough to touch me or to take me home. People from the pound even came out a couple of times, but they couldn't catch me, either. I was starting to feel more wretched and alone as the rains came harder and the weather turned colder at night. One miserable rainy day a kind woman who had been feeding me for quite awhile stayed out in the rain with me for four hours. She just sat in the back of her pick up truck near where I was curled up under a

tree. She encouraged me verbally to come with her, but made no moves that made me afraid. I finally realized that she had the best of intentions, so I willingly hopped into the back of her pick-up truck. We drove home together and now I have a warm home where I am fed regularly with the love of this kind woman and her husband."

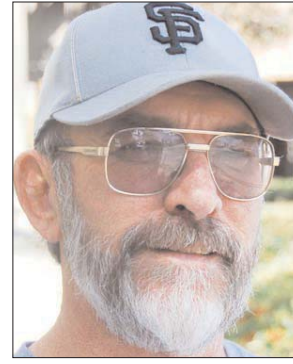
Well, I was so relieved to read this that I almost started crying right then and there. No more worrying about this poor creature left out in the cold, no more bringing food to the park, and no more thinking that when he was not visible that some terrible fate had befallen him. I gratefully put him out of my mind.

Last Sunday I took my grandkids to Low Gap Park and after walking the creek path we came across a small group of people who were playing Frisbee golf. I recognized Gracie, Benj's dog, who used to hang out with Sia occasionally when our paths crossed. I called her over so my grandkids could pet her; they have no dog of their own so I always welcome the opportunity for them to engage positively with one. As we were petting her, this big friendly husky nudged her head into the mix wanting to be part of our small circle. He had a great silky coat and a big flat head with lots of room for a kid's hand to feel its warmth and softness. We welcomed him in and then Benj said, "Do you know? That's the dog that used to live at the park." I stopped and looked up to see the couple that were with him. Again, my emotions overwhelmed me as I just stood there for a moment with nothing to say. Taking in the scene and finally finding my voice, I recounted my relationship with the dog and how grateful I was that he had found a good home. They told me how happy they were to have him. It felt extraordinary getting to meet these people and seeing this dog so strong and healthy. Benj suggested I write about it. Full circle. Happy ending.

Karen Rifkin is a Ukiah resident.

## ON THE STREETS

## Tell us something on your 'bucket list'



**Wes Graham**  
Journey Man/  
lineman  
Ukiah

"I want to go on a glider ride, and a hot air balloon."



**Kathryn Hoese**  
Unemployed  
Ukiah

"My bucket list is to live healthy... Everything else will just happen. Health will happen first."



**Sonny Hoese**  
Ukiah Valley Lumber  
Ukiah

"To live pain free... I'd like to travel the United States and take my grandkids with me."



**Drew Rhoads**  
Cal Fire Engineer  
Fort Bragg

"Diving in Chuuk Lagoon... there are a lot of wrecks and artifacts and I like to do wreck diving."



**Christopher Rowney**  
Cal Fire Unit Chief  
Ukiah

"I'm doing what I want to do before I die... That's one of the joys about this job."



**Pierre Boudreaux**  
Cal Fire Captain  
Leggett

"I want to go to Thailand... To eat the food, fishing and diving."

**Marc Komer**  
Library Advisory Board  
Member  
Willits

More letters on Page A-11

Photos and interviews by Sarah Baldik

## Letters

Continued from Page A-6

to Plowshares.

Speaking of which, who needs newspapers anymore? Close them down, save paper and ink. We could use newspaper offices for convenient neighborhood hydroponics shops.

A better use for the defunct library might be a museum for print media. We could have archival items such as books, magazines and newspapers on display, those quaint relics of a friendlier literary era. We might

have displays of charming posthumous heroes, collectively called "authors," you know people who actually wrote books and created culture. But who needs culture when we have the Internet? Right, Tommy?

Yes, let's unburden the taxpayers who have to shell out a few dollars a year for obsolete book warehouses. Let the hippies, the elders and crazies find another free place to hang out, like the Wal-Mart parking lot.

Mr. Kramer certainly has hit the nail on the head. Get rid of libraries, we don't need a free, safe, noncommercial place that

serves as one of our only surviving commons, a place to meet people, learn about new ideas such as tolerance (hint, hint), have free computer use and books, and oh yes, access to clean bathrooms.

One last thing, I think Mr. Kramer may be able to interlibrary loan the Cynics Coloring Book, but he'll have to get a library card first.

## Horse of another color

"I'd call him a sadistic, hippophilic necrophile," Woody Allen is supposed to have remarked once, "but that would be beating a dead horse." Well, yes - Woody was certainly right about that.

Just to show, however, that not everyone views everything the same way, there were once two parties who got into a dispute about a dead horse, and spent quite a bit of money fighting about him, too. The irony of the situation was not lost on Judge Roger Wollman, who had to decide the case. He began his opinion by observing, "Beating dead horses is the sport of appellate judges, a generally harmless pastime painful only to the readers of appellate opinions. Paying for the promotion of dead horses can be an expensive proposition, however, as the facts of this case make abundantly clear."

This lawsuit involved an unfortunate equine named Score. In 1983, a Minnesota partnership that invested in horses named Arabian Score purchased the colt from an organization that breeds horses. Arabian signed a contract and agreed to pay \$1 million for various services with another company, \$250,000 of which was to be for the "promotion" of the horse, namely "advertising and promoting Score as a

Judicial follies  
BY FRANK ZOTTER

2 Star Stallion."

If it's not clear what a "2 Star Stallion" is, Judge Wollman helpfully explained that, "As near as we can tell from the materials presented to the trial court, the Star Stallion Program is to the ranking of Arabian horses what the Mobil Guide is to the ranking of restaurants. This may not be a totally accurate description, but it will do for the purposes of this case."

It's always good when the judge can throw in a few extra facts like that to keep a case from becoming an unintelligible mess. Of course, this case was an unintelligible mess even with those facts, but at least he tried.

The partnership even went so far as to purchase a life insurance policy for the horse (never knew that there was such a thing, did you?) from an insurance company called Transit Casualty Company, and, sure enough, within a year, Score went to his reward, dying a premature death after only siring two foals. Unfortunately, however, Arabian was unable to collect on its

insurance policy, because, as Judge Wollman explained, "Transit Casualty Company (its name bespeaks its character?) went broke."

Arabian decided to sue the company to which it had paid all the money for the "promotion" of the horse; at that time, the advertising company had only spent about \$50,000, so there was almost another \$200,000 that Arabian thought it should get back. The trial court, however, ruled in favor of the advertising company, finding that, as strange as it may seem, it was not unusual for the company to promote deceased horses. (At this point, of course, one has to ask, "As what? As the choicest ingredient in dog food?")

Wollman's court reluctantly upheld the lower court's decision. He said that his court's reluctance "stems from the thought that spending \$197,108.86 to promote a dead horse borders on the bizarre." He added, though, that, "The parties to this agreement were sophisticated and, we assume, well-heeled businesspersons, however, and that which we find to be somewhat unusual may be commonplace to those who inhabit the wealthy world of the horsey set."

Or perhaps it merely illustrates Ernest Hemingway's famous comment

that the rich are different from you and me - because they have more money. (They're also different because they spend that money on things like Arabian horses, and on the promotion of Arabian horses - even dead ones - too.)

At least the attorneys for the horsey set aren't quite as bizarre. Judge Wollman related that, when presenting his client's case before Wollman's court, Arabian's attorney argued for the return of the \$200,000 by asking, rhetorically, "How are you going to show a dead horse?" Judge Wollman said that he had an answer ready, but that "Considerations of judicial decorum and a due regard for the financial loss suffered by Arabian dissuaded us from suggesting" it. What he wanted to suggest was that Arabian, or at least its advertising company, should have constructed a mausoleum for Score - an equestrian Lenin's Tomb, if you will.

But he held himself back. He did not so restrain himself in the opinion, however, thereby letting go of judicial decorum and his due regard for Arabian's financial loss.

Or, one might say, beating a dead horse's owner, just one more time.

Frank Zotter is a Ukiah attorney.