

**SIR State Officers, Regional Directors, Area Governors, Big Sirs, Little Sirs, Past Presidents, and State Activity Chairmen:**

You are all cordially invited to attend a Celebration of the resilience of our membership throughout this Pandemic, with no business being conducted, and the **only agenda is to have fun and reacquaint** the Branches with one another. Most of the information that you need is contained on the next two pages. By the way, there is **NO COST** to attendees. We are limited to 200 attendees so make your reservations soon.



If you have any questions please call me at 510-865-5000.  
Stu Williams  
SirInc President 2021

### Publication Deadline for Future Issues

*SIR Happenings will be published Quarterly*

*Deadline for future issues will be:*

- *January 15 for the February Issue*
- *April 15 for the May Issue*
- *July 15 for the August Issue*
- *October 15 for the November Issue*

**SIR Happenings is published by the Information Systems Committee.**

Send news and questions to:  
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### SIR Publicity

<https://www.wearsir.com/>

Keep up-to-date

<https://sirinc.org/>

#### **2021 STATE OFFICERS**

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**ASSISTANT SECRETARY** Lee Moy

**STATE TREASURER** Roy Hodgkinson

**ASSISTANT TREASURER** Ronald K. Saltgaver

**CHIEF ADMIN OFFICER** Dean Steichen

# Welcome Celebration

reacquaint ourselves  
with fellow Sirs

14 September 2021; 9am-3pm  
Chardonnay Golf Course-Napa  
2555 Jameson Canyon Road



## Putting Contest— 10 am

participation encouraged  
sign up with Mark Stuart  
RSVP (916) 218-2287  
[mss95678@hotmail.com](mailto:mss95678@hotmail.com)



## Wine Tasting

available pouring  
sampling Napa wines  
Dennis Pangburn  
(707) 224-9231  
[pang1@comcast.net](mailto:pang1@comcast.net)



## Invitation

SIR State Officers  
Regional Directors  
Area Governors  
Big SIRs  
Little SIRs  
Past Presidents  
State Activity Chairmen

## Accommodations

8 on-site dry camping no charge  
contact Bobbie Hairston  
(707) 252-0252; [forebjeepers@yahoo.com](mailto:forebjeepers@yahoo.com)

Elks Lodge \$40 donation  
full hook-ups, WiFi  
access to bar & restaurant  
Must be an Elk member  
Rick Kindle (209) 652-8608  
[rick@kindleandassoc.com](mailto:rick@kindleandassoc.com)

## Licensed Raffle— 1 pm

gift baskets and Napa wines

Book Hotel Rooms in Fairfield

We are asking that each Branch attending  
bring a gift basket as a donation  
to the raffle to help offset the cost  
of the lunch and encouraging the  
SIR Camaraderie Spirit

Prizes will be awarded to the top gift baskets.  
Raffle tickets will be sold for the cost of  
50 tickets for \$20

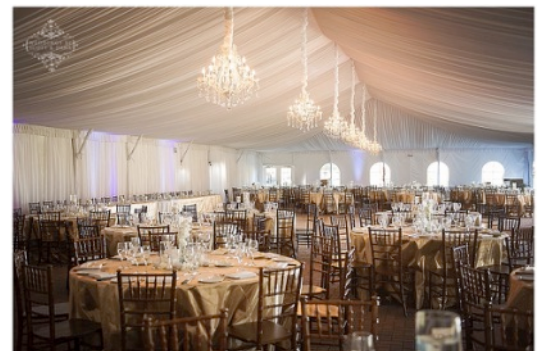


## Noon Luncheon

held in the tented grove  
nestled between the golf course  
and vineyards

## Menu

Tri tip or chicken  
corn on the cob  
salad, ranch style beans  
rolls/butter, dessert  
Napa wine



RSVP-Reply to Constant Contact-see mailer dated 7/19/2021  
Limited to the first 200 confirmed reservations;  
first come, first served; Deadline: August 10th, 3 pm.

"Take me Home  
take me home  
to the place  
I belong."



Welcome!!!  
State SIR Town Hall  
Chardonnay Golf Course  
Sept 14, 2021  
9am-4pm

## **“Come for the Fun, stay for the friendship”**

\$20 for 50 raffle tickets will most certainly improve your chances of taking home a generous gift basket donation contributed by participating branch Big/Little SIR & State officers.

Proceeds from the auction will help offset event expenses: putting prizes, awards to the *best* gift baskets, and a classy sit-down cloth covered table luncheon. The special SIR happening will take place in the tented grove nearest the golf course and the Napa vineyards.

Chef's menu: Tri-tip or chicken, corn on the cob, salad, ranch-style beans, rolls/butter, dessert, and a glass of wine.

RSVP-Reply to Constant Contact—see mailer dated 7/19/2021; Limited to the first 200 confirmed reservations; first come, first served; Deadline: August 10th, 3 pm. ATTN: Branch Big Sir, Little Sir, State Standing Committee Chairman, State SIR Board & Officers, Regional Directors, Area Governors, and special guests: SIR Happenings Editor Jerry Sabo & Assistant Editor, Sammy Lum.

Lee Moy

Live Longer, Live Happier, Join SIR  
WWW.WeAreSIR.com  
May 25, 2021

Distribution: 2021 State Board and Area Governors and All 2021 General Members

Fellow Sirs,

In 2019 and 2020, UCSF and SIR conducted two highly successful surveys of Sir participants. UCSF found the results both very informative and useful. They are particularly enthused about using SIR members as a source of survey participants as there is relatively little survey data for men with our particular demographics.

The success and the enthusiastic reception these surveys have received prompted the SIR State Board on May 11 to approve a new State Activity, "Sirs Helping Medical Science." The Board feels that this is an excellent way for SIR to help improve medical science and provide assistance in shaping local and national senior men's health care.

We are now soliciting Sir members to participate in the activity. At the current time we anticipate that your participation can take two avenues:

- Participating in selected, highly confidential surveys regarding participant's opinions on a series of health topics regarding senior men, and
- Allowing the activity members to become familiar with studies regarding senior men's health in which they may wish to participate.

We anticipate that your time participating in surveys will be minimal.

Our Activity Committee, overseen by the State Board, will thoroughly vet opportunities for activity members' participation. Only participation with major and highly respected health care organizations who will ensure appropriate confidentiality safeguards will be considered before contacting activity members to determine if they wish to participate in specific projects.

The Co-Activity Chairmen are  
Ed Benson, Past State President and current SIR/UCSF representative  
Dave Gonzales, Region 4 Director and Chairman of SIR's Image Building Committee.

We heartily encourage you to agree to participate with us in this groundbreaking new activity by replying to this announcement with your agreement. Should you wish to leave the activity at any time, a brief email or other contact will be honored as immediately as possible. Should you have questions, please feel free to contact Ed or Dave.

Best regards, and we hope you will join us in this groundbreaking effort for SIR,

Ed Benson, Co-Chairman, [ebensonbwa@aol.com](mailto:ebensonbwa@aol.com)  
Dave Gonzales, Co-Chairman, [yogonzo@yahoo.com](mailto:yogonzo@yahoo.com)

If you want to participate, please reply to this email.

Tell us you want to be apart of the "Sirs Helping Medical Science."

Please provide  
Your Name  
Email address  
Branch  
Birthdate (to be used depending upon the study based on age groups)



San Mateo

# Sons in Retirement

“There are no strangers here, only friends that haven’t met.” W. B. Yeats

## Next Generation of Battery Technology

### 5-Minute Charge for Electric Cars

“The factory production of rapid-charge batteries means that recharging could soon be as fast as filling up gas- or diesel-powered vehicles,” says environmental reporter Damian Carrington of *The Guardian*.

( Israeli company StoreDot developed the new batteries that have been manufactured on standard production lines. Carrington quotes StoreDot’s CEO Doron Myersdorf, “The number one barrier to the adoption of electric vehicles is no longer cost, it is ‘range anxiety,’ You’re either afraid that you’re going to get stuck on the highway or you’re going to need to sit in a charging station for two hours. But if the experience of the driver is exactly like fueling [a gas- or diesel-powered car], this whole anxiety goes away. “A five-minute charging lithium-ion battery was considered to be impossible,” he said. “But we...are releasing engineering samples from a mass production line. This indisputably demonstrates that it’s feasible and commercially ready.”



Existing Li-ion batteries use graphite as one electrode, onto which the lithium ions are loaded to store charge. But when these are rapidly charged, the ions get congested and can turn into lithium metal and short circuit the battery. The StoreDot battery replaces graphite with semiconductor nanoparticles into which ions can pass more quickly and easily. These nanoparticles are currently based on germanium, which is water soluble and easier to handle in manufacturing. But StoreDot’s plan is to use silicon, which is much cheaper, and the company expects these prototypes will be available later this year. Myersdorf said the cost would be about the same as existing Li-ion batteries. Elon Musk of Tesla recently tweeted, “Battery cell production is the fundamental rate-limiter slowing down a sustainable energy future. Very important problem.” Tesla and dozens of companies around the world are developing fast-charging batteries based on silicon electrodes. “I think such fast-charging batteries will be available to the mass market in three years,” according to Chao-Yang Wang of Pennsylvania State University’s Battery and Energy Storage Technology Center. “They will *not* be more expensive, [and will] ...allow automakers to downsize the onboard battery while still eliminating range anxiety, thereby dramatically cutting down the vehicle battery cost.”



Wang’s group is testing a Li-ion battery system that operates at 140°F, enabling Li ions to move faster, but avoiding battery damage caused by higher temperatures. This system fully charges in 10 minutes.

Thus proving...

## ...You’re Never Too Old to Shine !

As the modern “Renaissance Man”

Yogi Berra, a famously muddled thinker, was quoted as saying, “You’re never too old to enjoy your youth.” Indeed, “old age” is less and less limiting as folks stay healthy and active well beyond the traditional benchmark retirement age of 65. Is 80 the new 40? Or, is 100 a better benchmark? Following are examples of some incredible athletes, adventurers – and otherwise just plain folks – who accomplished some (often) lifelong goals while in their 70’s, 80’s, and 90’s, and eveal age 100.



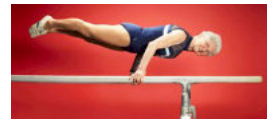
**Himalayan Mountaineer** In 2002 at age 70, **Yuichiro Miura** became the oldest person to reach the summit of Mount Everest. He did it again at age 75 and age 80, and plans to make the climb again in 2022 at age 90. He had to overcome a variety of medical issues to complete his journey for the third time, including multiple heart operations, pelvis surgery, and a battle with diabetes.

**Formula 1 Racer** In 2017 at age 79, Irish driver **Rosemary Smith** became the oldest person to compete in a Formula 1 car. While she has many trophies from racing rally cars in the 1960s, driving the much faster Formula 1 cars had been a lifelong dream. She has spent her recent years running a driving school and campaigning for better education for young drivers.



**Multiple Marathoner** In 2014 at age 91, Harriette Thompson broke records as she completed her 15th marathon. The second-oldest marathon runner in U.S. history, she broke the U.S. record for the fastest time in her age group. She began running in 1999 and ran her first marathon at age 76.

**Competitive Gymnast**, In 2012, Guinness confirmed that grandmother Johanna Quaas is the oldest active gymnast in the world at age 88. She participated in her first competition in 1934 and is still competing. Her husband of 50 years, Gerhard, is a gymnastics coach.



**Multiple Scholar** In 2007 at age 95, **Nola Ochs** became the oldest college graduate, receiving her Bachelor of General Studies at Fort Hays State University in Kansas, fulfilling her lifelong dream of earning a degree. However, she didn't stop there. In 2010 at age 98, she became the oldest person to receive a master's degree. She tells her grandchildren, "If I can do it, you can too."

**Oldest Marathoner** In 2016 at age 104, **Fauja Singh** competed in the Mumbai Marathon to become the world's oldest marathoner. He appeared in a 2004 Adidas ad campaign and carried the Olympic torch in both the 2004 Athens Olympics and the 2012 London Olympics.



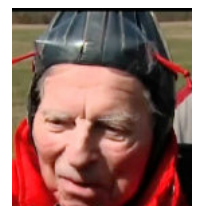
**Intrepid Sailor** In 2011 at age 77, **Minoru Saito** became the oldest person to sail solo and non-stop around the world. Even more amazing, it was his 8th time doing so, when he broke his own record set in 2005 at age 71. Due to multiple delays, his circumnavigation lasted 1,080 days.

**Ironman Nun** An Ironman (Ironwoman!) competition involves completing — in one day — a 2.4 mile swim, a 112 mile bike ride and a grueling 26.2 mile run (a marathon). While this is difficult for folks in their prime, Catholic Nun **Sister Madonna Bruder** has competed in 45 of these grueling races and continues to compete at age 86.



**Cuba to Florida Swim** In 2013 at age 63, **Diana Nyad** became the first person to complete the swim from Cuba to Florida without a shark cage, 53 hours after leaving Havana. The extreme challenges and hazards included asthma attacks, inclement weather, jellyfish stings, dehydration, hypothermia, and exhaustion. She told reporters, "you never are too old to chase your dreams...."

**Seasoned Skydiver** In 2011, **Fred Mack** celebrated his 100th birthday by skydiving in a 13,000-foot tandem jump. He had flown planes in the 1930s and helped design fighter planes during WWII.





## Ignore That Number; Get Vaccinated Best to End Fixation on Herd Immunity

The *Herd Immunity Threshold* in epidemiology refers to the mathematical tipping point in an infectious disease outbreak. When a certain percentage of people are immune, either through infection or vaccination, a virus runs out of places to spread. The epidemic or pandemic fades, and life goes back to normal. In his May 18th NPR blog, National Public Radio Senior Editor and Correspondent Geoff Brumfiel calls for America to end its fixation on herd immunity, echoing the advice of expert epidemiologists. "... We're focusing too much of our time, our effort, on quibbling over a number," says University of Texas (Austin) Professor Lauren Ancel Myers, who heads the university's COVID-19 Modeling Consortium. Instead, Meyers and others say the public should follow one simple piece of advice: *get vaccinated*.

Brumfiel reminds us that "The threshold for herd immunity can vary widely from disease to disease." And with so many unknowns about the coronavirus ... most good faith estimates of the threshold needed to reach herd immunity have fluctuated from less than 60% to more than 90%. "I think if we could go back in time and they were completely honest, both the public health advisers and the political leadership would say that's the wrong approach," says University of Edinburgh professor of public health Devi Sridhar. The term circulated in political circles and newsrooms throughout 2020. "When the first vaccines rolled out in December, presidential adviser Dr. Anthony Fauci began talking a lot about it, with a best guess goal of 75% to 85% nationally. 'If you get that level of herd immunity, you could essentially crush this outbreak in this country,' Fauci said during an NPR interview." Brumfiel muses: "The appeal of this notion is clear. Achieving herd immunity sounds like a simple goal that spells the end of the coronavirus. It feels concrete — something to grab onto in a time filled with so much uncertainty, a finish line for which to strive."

It's also complicated by the fact that we may not have an even distribution of immunity.

The herd immunity threshold is usually presented as a single, overall percentage of a population. But in a given city, "...you may hear numbers like 50% of a population are immunized. But is that really 50% in every single neighborhood? Or do we have some pockets of very high levels of immunity and other pockets of low levels of immunity?" The distinction matters. If one part of a city is immunized and another part isn't, then an outbreak could still spread quickly in that unimmunized area and overwhelm hospitals. And paradoxically, the herd immunity threshold doesn't actually mean there won't be new infections at some point in the future. "Even after you've reached the herd immunity threshold, you can still get little stuttering chains of infection going on within that population," says Stanford University Biology Professor Erin Mordecai. "It's just that on average the disease won't grow at that point." Harvard Epidemiologist Marc Lipsitch emphasizes that, "...people talk about herd immunity as if it's sort of the end point, you either have it or you don't, and once you have it you keep it...when that's not true...." Factors such as the spread of new variants or a time of year that drives more people indoors, or otherwise leads to more mixing, can cause huge swings in how many people need to be immune to reach or maintain herd immunity.

Brumfiel reports that, "Since December, there have been real-world complications that have clouded the outlook for reaching the herd immunity threshold. Data out of Asia and Brazil suggests reinfection may be more common than originally thought. Vaccine hesitancy has emerged as an issue, as has the rise of more easily transmissible variants, which can drastically drive up the percentage of people who would need to be immunized to get to herd immunity. Based on current conditions, and the fact that young children are not yet eligible for vaccination, Lipsitch believes as much as 90% to 100% of adults would need to get vaccinated to cross the threshold.

But that could all change again in the future, depending on new real-world conditions. And "...in the end, Morde-

cai says, it may not matter so much, in terms of corralling the virus enough so that the number of severe cases of COVID-19 significantly drops. Our vaccine campaigns rarely reach the level that we actually have herd immunity to an influenza virus.... Yet most years we're able to avoid major pandemics of the flu." "A combination of immunity through vaccination and prior infection provides a high enough level of protection that the hospitals are never overwhelmed," she says. Even though COVID-19 is a far more serious disease, "...that's the kind of thing that could happen with it." Brumfiel summarizes: "...none of the scientists interviewed thought herd immunity threshold is the right goal for the public to worry about — they urge emphasizing vaccination instead." Sridhar points to the origin of the herd immunity discussion: "Many high-income countries, because they have people who are very, very clever, have tried to use math to outsmart a problem that is basically common sense. More infections are bad, and the way to stop them is to get vaccinated. It's that simple." Meyers says that, "...while computer models have been extremely helpful in this pandemic as a warning to policymakers, and to devise local policies for cities and states, the elevation of the herd immunity threshold in particular hasn't been useful." Instead, she says, the computer models all show a clear way forward: "Every vaccination gets us a step closer, every vaccination makes our community, our society a safer, healthier place."



## For Singing in the Shower **Lean on Me**

by **Bill Withers**

Sometimes in our lives We all have pain, we all have sorrow. But if we are wise,  
We know that there's always tomorrow.

Lean on me when you're not strong I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on For  
it won't be long 'Til I'm gonna need somebody to lean on.

Please swallow your pride If I have things you need to borrow For no one can fill those of your  
needs That you won't let show.

You just call on me, brother, when you need a hand We all need somebody to lean on. I just might  
have a problem that you'll understand, We all need somebody to lean on.

Lean on me when you're not strong And I'll be your friend I'll help you carry on For it won't be  
long 'Til I'm gonna need somebody to lean on

You just call on me, brother, when you need a hand We all need somebody to lean on. I just might  
have a problem that you'll understand, We all need somebody to lean on.

If there is a load You have to bear That you can't carry I'm right up the road I'll share your load If  
you just call me.



Singer-songwriter Bill Withers first released **Lean on Me** in 1972, the year *Billboard* ranked it the number seven song. *Rolling Stone* ranked it number 208 in its *500 Greatest Songs of All Time*, and it is one of only nine songs that reached number one on the U.S. Singles Charts with versions recorded by two different artists. His inspiration was the strong community of his hometown of Slab Fork, West Virginia, where he had lived in a decrepit house in the poor section of his town. [From time to time, the *Bulletin* publishes lyrics of well-known songs about friends and friendship. The objective is to entice members to sing (or at least hum) these songs in the shower, during a walk, while gardening or whenever. The designing & transparent purpose is to more deeply embed the “friends and friendship” focus of SIR into Member’s minds. Ed.]

## Smartphone Photo Contest May Winners



**FIRST PLACE**  
Rick Dusine



**SECOND PLACE**  
Frank Schwarz



**THIRD PLACE**  
Frank Schwarz



**HONORABLE MENTION**  
Alan Melnicoe





# BRANCH 8 JULY

**HOTLINE**



"MAKE NEW FRIENDS FOR LIFE"

Editor: Chuck Joyce

WHAT IS SIR?

<https://youtu.be/5j5WsvKp5s>

Branch 8 Website:

<https://www.sirbr8.com>

Branch 8 Website:

<https://www.sirbr8.com>



Ken Main



Ray DeWit



Chick Lowry

We are all looking forward to getting our activities back and up and running as the State opens up the economy. Many of the activities have either started in June or are planning on re-starting (no plans are needed this time) in July. One of our newest activities, **Sirs in the Garden**, had its inaugural meeting at Heather Farms on June 16th. Here's to returning to "normal" and getting back to meeting and greeting face to face.

The **18-hole out-of-town two-day tournament** is progressing well, but there were (at this writing) still available spaces, so contact Bill Koski for details.

The 33rd (yes you heard that correctly) **annual Don Atwater Invitational 9-hole golf tournament** is planned for July 22nd at the Diablo Hills Golf Course; a banquet dinner and awards ceremony will follow the golf tournament at the course.

The **annual BBQ** is also progressing well and is planned for August 17th at Cowell Park. Check with Dan Crowley for details and sign up for a fun time in the August sun.

Due to a lack of interest, the Genealogy activity has ceased to exist effective in June. Thanks to Dan Smith for attempting to make this work.

A special committee, headed by Ed Benson, is still working with the Rossmoor Sir Branch 81 in an attempt to re-start their monthly luncheons as a Branch 8 activity. Interest within Branch 81 appears to be waning however, as approximately 20 members have shown interest in continuing. The committee will be meeting with the former Big Sir of Branch 81 in June to discuss options.

With the loss of Genealogy, Branch 8 has 59 activities (including 3 events), of which 38 are co-ed (39 if **Sirs Giving Back** becomes co-ed).

**Your ACC members:**

**Ray deWit, Ken Main & Chick Lowry**



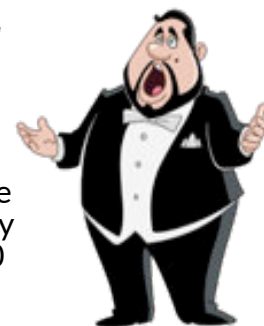
I just talked with the manager of the Walnut Creek Century 14 theater. Summer Bolshoi Ballet is back - even though they are "encore" performances. On Sunday, July 11, they will be screening the beautiful ballet *Coppelia* and on August 1 it will be *The Sleeping Beauty*, which got a rare 100% rating from Rotten Tomatoes. You can find quick sketches of both online. Century Pleasant Hill is showing them as well. Just like pre-pandemic! They will be screened at 3:00pm.

And what's more, the summer opera encores are returning to the same theaters, starting with *Porgy and Bess* on July 14, Bizet's *Carmen* on July 28, and finally Puccini's *Tosca* on August 4. The operas show on Wednesdays at 1:00 pm and 6:30pm. It appears that the regular live in HD opera season will be transmitted to these local theaters, starting with Mussorgsky's *Boris Gudunov* on October 9.

Welcome Back!

E-mail: [dbushn@swbell.net](mailto:dbushn@swbell.net) 925-838-3914

Assistant Chairman: **Richard Remley**,



## LUNCHEON RESTART STATUS

The Branch has enacted a protocol requiring a liability waiver for communicable diseases and tracking membership COVID 19 vaccinations. The protocol requires the member and any guest be either fully vaccinated or have been tested negative within 72 hours of an event. Membership has been solicited for the liability waiver and vaccination status. The Membership Secretary has imputed the results into the database, including their partners where applicable. His last update was that all but 20 of our 279 members have responded.



Luncheons going forward will be RSVP with the previous attendance requirement no longer applicable. We recognize that because attendance will be completely voluntary there is a lot of uncertainty at this point as to how many of our members will attend. Indications are most will, but it is likely a lower percentage of members will attend once it is voluntary than attended when it was mandatory.

Once reserved, the member is expected to attend and will be responsible for its payment. Attendance will add Constant Contact emails to the existing email and telephone message contact services to facilitate making a reservation. Reservations will be verified for vaccination status. The deadline for

making the reservation will be the Wednesday before the luncheon, similar to when cancelling a required attendance. We may have a waitlist to fill openings resulting from cancellations after the deadline. This planning is complete.

Payment will be as before, pay at the luncheon. This means that the Treasurer will continue with a process as before.

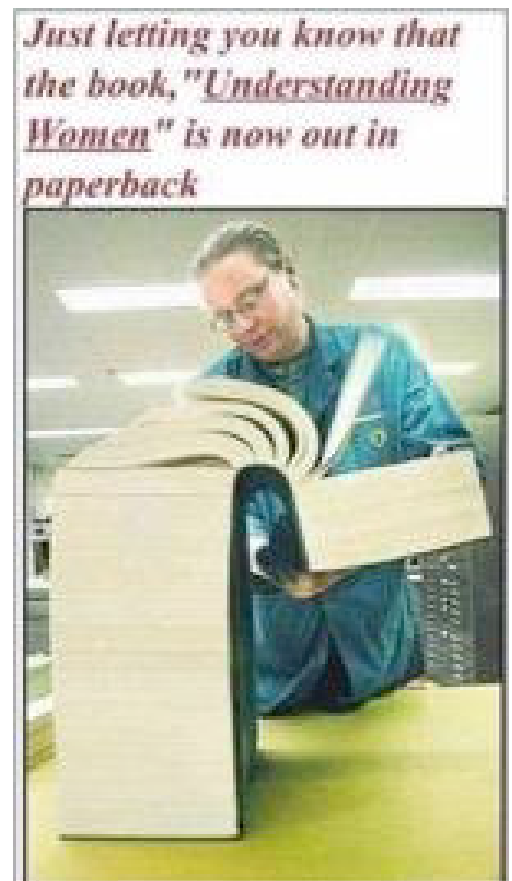
Badges have not been fully resolved. Resolved is we will not need to use the badge box to determine who is missing. Permanent badges will be only to identify ourselves. We will not print temporary badges at the luncheon. Not resolved is that the branch has no one who has agreed to manage this service. We are looking for a volunteer.

This brings us to the "meat" of our mission. Steve Schramm's last contact with Hilton is that they are now starting to plan for this service. My casual contacts with membership have found that there is interest in going elsewhere, such as Boundary Oaks, if food is better and less costly. We could consider buffet service, although we understand that there is more food waste with a buffet.

Whatever, we know that we need to reach out to membership with a Constant Contact email survey as to what they want. We will call the committee together after BEC to develop and execute this survey.

June 15th when the state opened up has come and gone. As expected, we are not totally back to normal.

- **Dan Smith, Chair Luncheon Restart Committee**





## WOODPECKERS



**Thom Watkins  
Chairman**

On May 28, the BEC voted to allow 'indoor' Activities to resume in-person meetings as long as the members attending the meetings were fully vaccinated.

Woodpeckers resumed their in-person meeting on Saturday, May 29, but not in their normal meeting location Thom Watkins' workshop, but in Thom's backyard. The group consisted of the "Core members": Bob Wheaton, Dennis Reschke, Jackie

Kaneshiro, and Thom Watkins. The goal for the day was to put up the structure for a gazebo; a kit for which was purchased at Costco. We started at 10:00am and finished around 2:30 that afternoon.

We decided to meet again on the Woodpeckers' regular meeting day, the first Saturday in June (12th). The goal for the day was to attach the roof and finish the details.

The finishing touch was provided by Jackie as he attached the Registration Plaque. The day ended around 5:00pm with grilled hot dogs, macaroni salad, and beverages-of-choice. Whew!

To celebrate the "Gazebo Raising," and as a Thank You to the crew, Thom and Paula (Mrs. Woodpecker) hosted the guys and their spouses to a BBQ dinner: appetizers - Margaritas and Jalapeno-Artichoke Dip; Main Course - of smoked beef ribs, coleslaw, and roasted corn-on-the-cob;

Dessert - Homemade Mint Chocolate-chip ice cream.

Thom Watkins Chair,  
925.330.3780



[thomwat831@gmail.com](mailto:thomwat831@gmail.com)



**Tom Hodgson  
Chairman**

## WRITING YOUR LIFE STORY

WYLS (Writing Your Life Stories): SHARE YOUR STORIES WITH FRIENDS WHO ARE INTERESTED: Once a month, One Page Memories from your past, Triggers for more stories.

WYLS has evolved from creating a book to sharing short one-page stories from our past with friends. Since March we have continued our monthly meetings using Zoom. A few days before our monthly meeting, each member writes a short one-page story about an event from their past. It can be from a suggested topic or about anything they find interesting. The meetings start with a few minutes of catching up with what everyone has been up to, then each person reads the story they have written. This always generates memory triggers for the rest of us and there is often a few short comments after each reading. After everyone has read, we spend 15 minutes writing another story about some new memory that has just come to mind. Then each of us share that story. and current activities with friends that are interested. And at the same time document what went on in your life for your kids and grandkids who, someday, may wonder who you were and what your life was like. Please email Tom Hodgson [horsecarriage@sbcglobal.net](mailto:horsecarriage@sbcglobal.net) or call 925-818-1533 for more information or to join the group. 925-818-1533.





### Post-Pandemic Restart Songs:

In the April 2020 issue of the BARK, as all SIR activities came to a pandemic-induced halt, then Little Sir Gary Bondi admitted he was suffering from cabin fever and offered us a selection of song titles that seemed to fit the times, such as Can't Feel My Face by The Weekend, Don't Stand So Close to Me by The Police, and All By Myself by Celine Dion.

Now that we are resuming in-person activities in SIR and in our daily lives, Gary and I hereby offer a new set of song titles that seem to fit the times.

Enjoy!

- *The Way We Were* - Barbara Streisand
- *Back in the Saddle Again* - Gene Autry
- *New Beginnings* - Day Dreamer
- *Start Again* - Seven Lions
- *Brand New Day* - Dua Lipa
- *Getting Better* - Beatles
- *Ready to Go* - Republica
- *Don't Stop Believing* - Journey
- *Carry On* - Nora Jones
- *Starting Over* - Peg Young
- *Begin Again* - Purity Ring
- *Everything Has Changed* - Taylor Swift
- *New Rules* - Dua Lipa
- *Start Over* - Beyonce
- *Brand New Day* - Sting
- *Start Me Up* - Rolling Stones
- *Together Again* - Emmylou Harris
- *Courtesy of Sirs Gary Bondi and Gordon Boulton*



**NEW Member**  
Neil Wheeler, Badge #24

### GLOBAL FORUM: (Article by Marvin Mai)

**Global Forum in-person meetings have been approved by our BEC. Our first in-person meeting will be held on Friday, July 16 at 10 am.**

A lively discussion about global events and forecasts for the remaining year would include:



Afghanistan: what happens after U.S. withdrawal? U.S. after the G7 meeting, how has our reputation improved? What's the feeling about Biden and Putin meeting? U.S. Navy worried about China's expanding naval capabilities, now loading anti-ship missiles on subs, what other actions are possible?

All SIR members are invited to join this monthly confab at **4743 Woodview Drive**, (South on Summerfield Rd to the end, turn left up the hill about 1/3 mile, the house is on the left.)

**PARK IN THE DRIVEWAY OR IN THE BAY  
ACROSS THE STREET, AS THERE IS  
NO PARKING ON THE STREET.**

Should you have any questions, please contact Marvin at [maimarvin57@gmail.com](mailto:maimarvin57@gmail.com) or give him a call at 545-2224.

**In keeping with all of the COVID-19 and SIR protocols we ask that you let Marvin know if you will be attending the in-person meetings to enable him to verify that you have the SIR waiver and vaccination record on file.**

Below is the schedule of dates for SIR Branch 17 in-person Global Forum discussions slated for **monthly**, on the second Friday of the month.

**Fridays: Aug. 13, Sept. 10, Oct. 8.**





## The Big Sir Says . . .

### *Fifty Years of Friendships*

As we prepare to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mission Trails Branch, a few things come to my mind that I want to share with you.

First, think back to 1971 and recall what you were doing, where you lived and what was happening in the world. While those things were happening in your life, a group of 100 men decided to form a new branch of SIR and applied for a charter for the new branch. One of our early members made a very special wooden case for our charter. In addition to the charter, there is a list of the 100 charter members who originally formed our branch. On the back panel of the Charter Box there is a list of the names of every man who has served as a Big SIR for our branch. When you come to the picnic on August 18<sup>th</sup>, you will be able to see the charter box that has been handed down to us. The men listed there laid the foundation for the great SIR experiences we get to enjoy now 50 years later.



From the very beginning of our branch, music has been a central part of our luncheon meetings. The Trail Birds have used a parody written by one of our members to introduce our speakers throughout our history. Currently, our parody writers are Bob Simon and David Skurnick and they are preparing something special for the anniversary celebration at Blackberry Farm next month.

While our activities make membership in SIR both interesting and fun, it is the friendships that matter the most. I think that is why I always look forward to the third Wednesday of every month when I know I will see so many good friends. Even if we just say, "Hi" and chat for a couple of minutes, feeling connected to so many good men always lifts me up. That is why our first in person gathering at the Anniversary Picnic is so important and why our first luncheon meeting at the Elk's Lodge on September 15<sup>th</sup> will be exciting.

I'm looking forward to seeing you soon! **Stan**  
[stanbarkey1@gmail.com](mailto:stanbarkey1@gmail.com)

### **EL Corte Madera Creek Hike**

Our June Branch 35 hike was so well attended that we had to split into two groups. We had three guests, four women, and 19 hikers split into Group 1 of 12, and Group 2 of 7 hikers. The photo shows Group 2 on the trail above the skull shaped rock formation.

We discovered the day before our hike that Sam McDonald parking area was closed for resurfacing. Our hiking group demonstrated amazing flexibility by relocating our hike to El Corte Madera Creek Preserve in less than 24 hours. This hike was an advanced hike (greater than 5 miles and 900 feet ascent/descent). Our hikers were rewarded with the extra effort with a shady hike in the redwoods down to El Corte Madera Creek, back up to a Vista point, and the Tafari Sandstone Formation.

The Sam McDonald Park hike is rescheduled to July 16<sup>th</sup>. This is a moderate hike through the redwoods up Alpine Creek to the Heritage Grove, up to the Sierra Club Hikers' Hut for lunch, and back down through the grasslands with amazing views.

### **Branch 35 Monthly Spouse Hikes**

Our hikes are designed to encourage spouse participation. Initially, we will visit large nature preserves in the local area that will not require carpooling. There will opportunities to socialize and get to make new friends. Pack a lunch and we will stop at a scenic spot to eat, and enjoy nature. Any Branch 35 member, spouse, or friend who is fully inoculated and able to enjoy a moderate hike of up to 5 miles and less than 900 feet elevation gain is invited to join us.

Hikes will occur on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month. Save the date our next hike on July 16<sup>th</sup>. If you wish to join our July hike, send an email to Peter Thurston, [peterthurston@gmail.com](mailto:peterthurston@gmail.com).

If you wish to join the Branch 35 Hiking activity, contact Peter Thurston, and he will add you to our Branch 35 hiking distribution list. Further details about our July hike will be sent to the hiking distribution list about two weeks before the hike.

Peter Thurston, SIR Branch 35 Hiking Chairman



Group 2 at Tafari Sandstone Formation





# PLACER GOLD

ATTACH  
FIRST CLASS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
STAMP HERE

## SIR Branch 37 Bulletin

FOUNDED JULY 1958

Org. March 6, 1972



**Big Sir  
Woody Shields.**

For those Sir's not in attendance for our May 6th zoom meeting, you missed an outstanding guest speaker Don Wolfe. As mentioned earlier Don flew the Boeing 747 for over 20 years including 5 years in the Fleet Week Airshow held in San Francisco. Don discussed the complexities and challenges of operating an airliner designed for high altitude flying in a low altitude airshow environment. As allowed our Branch will have a "pilot" luncheon at the Elk's Lodge on June 3rd. Due to Elk's protocols this luncheon is limited to a maximum of 50 guests, 4 guests per table and lunches to be served on a "grab and go" process i.e., no table service. Since we are limited to 50 guests for this "pilot" luncheon an invitation was sent to branch 37 members who participated in our recent survey, answered the survey, and returned said survey stating they would attend the luncheons and comply with all protocols, sign required waivers and show proof of COVID-19 vaccination.

The BEC, Little Sir Gary Willett and I are extremely excited about this first step in restarting our lunch program. Hopefully as restrictions lessen, we can open our monthly luncheons to the entire branch 37 members and guests but, all members and guests must be in compliant with SIR State, and Branch 37 protocol's along with the signed waiver and vaccination information. This requirement will stay in place until further notice.

Included in this bulletin are copies of the protocols and waiver form for your information and use.

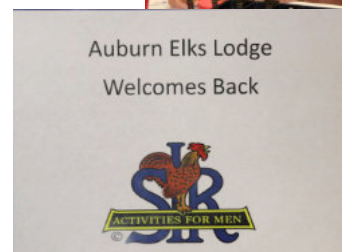
State Protocols for Minimizing COVID-19 Liability  
Branch Protocols for Minimizing COVID-19 Liability  
SIR Event Waiver and Release of Liability for Exposure to COVID-19

I look forward to the day I stand in front of ALL members and quests, ring that bell and say, "Sir's Meeting come to Order".  
Your BIG Sir Woody Shields

**Our April speaker was Don Wolfe. He flew the 747 for over 20 years including in the Fleet Week Airshow. Great presentation. We all hope he will come back in the near future**



First Post COVID-19 SIR Meeting







**Wes Murakami**

Born on December 13, 1941 in Gilroy, California. He graduated from San Jose High School in San Jose and then went on to college at San Jose State. He then attended Dental School at Howard University in Washington, D.C. He served in the U.S. Dental Corp before setting up his Dental practice in Fremont which lasted 44 years. He lives with his wife Mary of 31 years in Livermore. Wes loves golf, landscaping, gardening and traveling all over the world.



**Jerry Reynolds**

Born July 29, 1938 in Peoria, Illinois. Jerry graduated from Oakland High School. He went on to Armstrong College in Berkeley where he majored in accounting. Started working for a CPA firm in Oakland but quickly got started in real estate in 1964 working for Alter Real Estate and Insurance. In 1976 Jerry became a Mobile Home Dealer as well as opening up his own Real Estate Firm. He lives in Union City with his wife Jacque of 55 years. His interests are antique cars, backgammon, fishing, poker, and photography. He has also served as the chairman of the Pathfinder Days, an annual event. Jerry attends Newark Presbyterian Church.

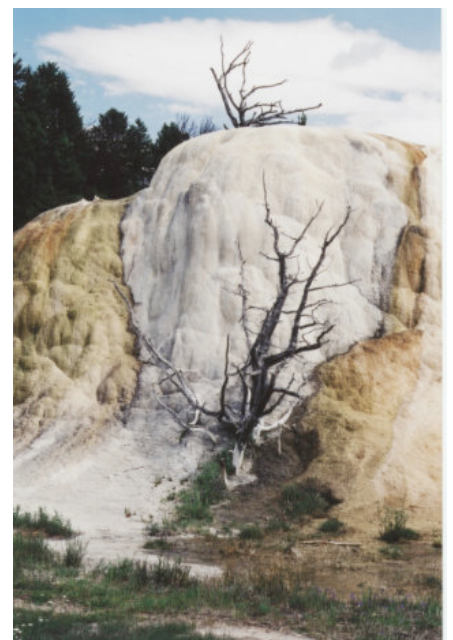


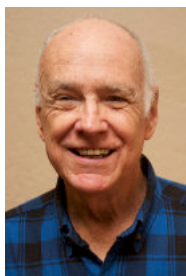
**Bob Cooper**

Born on June 17, 1945 in Oakland. He graduated from Mt. Eden High School in Hayward where he was raised in the same house but attended seven different schools in seven consecutive years. Bob went on to graduate from San Jose State University with a B.S. in accounting. Commissioned into the U.S. Army in 1968. Went to Vietnam and was discharged in 1970. Bob then worked as an internal auditor for a large company before going on to be a postal inspector. His interests are wine tasting, cruising, gambling and traveling. He has lived in the Warm Springs area of Fremont for the last 50+ years.



*Our photographer, Bruce Robers shared two of his pre-digital photos of Yellowstone Canyon and Mammoth Hot Springs.*





### ***Are you SIRious? Bruce Roberts, Editor***

***Our Big Sir Larry Jett has been very active in the restoration of collector cars for decades with a decidedly emphasis in cars built by the Chrysler Corp. Perhaps because his first 3 cars as a teen were pre-war Dodges, or because he spent 4 years working for the Chrysler/Plymouth Division as a District Manager (the liaison between the factory and 22 dealerships in Northern CA) he built a 6 car garage and shop behind his Newark home to contain the collection.***

After selling my Millbrae Shell station in 1964, I bought a 1960 Chrysler 300F hardtop coupe in preparation for an August marriage and became an apostle of the "Lettered" Chrysler 300s made from 1955 through 1965. In the eleven years these cars were built, about 16,000 total, these expensive and powerful coupes and convertibles were the 'halo' cars for the factory, intended to draw buyers to the sales floor and then sell more sensible vehicles: not unlike Thunderbirds and Corvettes for the other guys. These grandfathers of today's Chrysler 300s started out in 1955 with 300 Hemi-engined horses and peaked with some optional 400+ horse models just a few years later. After the initial car in 1955, each newer year model was named 300 B,C,D,E,F,G,H,J,K,L. They became known as The Banker's Hot-rod or The Beautiful Brute. I was unable to use my four-year-old 300F for my honeymoon as returning from Army Reserve training in Utah in July's heat near Bonnevillie, the mean speed indicated was in excess of 100 with some runs to 130. The 413 dual 4-barrel engine (carbs not north to south, but east to west on 30 inch 'ram' intake manifolds) got so hot it froze solid between Winnemucca and Lovelock. Sadder but wiser soldiers took the Greyhound to the Bay Area and the car was flat towed over the old Donner Pass behind a Pontiac Ventura to Millbrae. The Chrysler had to weigh 400 pounds greater than the tow car. He certainly earned the \$150 he charged me! My fiancée wasn't too unhappy because she always thought the car was much too 'showoffy' to her taste. 24 years later when I bought an identical 300F, she loved it. See how maturity (like good red wine) can be acquired with age?

Five years later from wedding day, I am the leasing/fleet manager for Millbrae Chrysler-Plymouth-Imperial where Millbrae BART is now. I come to work to find a 1961 300G coupe parked where trade-ins sit until they are wholesaled. I asked the sales manager what they had allowed at ACV (actual cash value...not what the new car buyer thought they got) and it was \$300. So I gave him \$350 for it. Certainly, didn't need it, as I had a New Yorker as my 'demo' but it was great fun to have another LETTER for a few months. They are currently worth up to \$50k.

Next was the original 1955 300 coupe that started it all. I was having some work done on the 1957 DeSoto Adventurer in Redwood City and the proprietor tells me a young man working a few doors down told him he had a 1955 Chrysler 300 that he was in financially over his head when he really wanted to restore a Camaro. It was original to a fault and had seldom left Contra Costa County. I paid him his asking price of \$3,250 and as I closed the door to his workplace, I heard the young men whooping and hollering about the old guy that just paid full price for that old car. With a \$5k paint, \$500 used interior and some wire wheels, our family enjoyed the car for 6 years before Chrysler Corp had 'sellers' remorse' and bought it back for \$25k to loan to journalists to drive when they were reviewing the new crop of front wheel drive 300 sedans in 1998, as an historical reference. A year later I chatted with David E Davis, previous editor of Car and Driver and founder of Automobile Magazine in a Williamsburg Chrysler 300 Club convention and he tells me that he drove my car for a week. How do you know it was mine? Because it says on the glove box door...." Larry, please don't drive this car over 139.346 mph. Tim Flock 1996". I'd taken the glove door to a previous club meet in Charlottesville including the racetrack visit and he had autographed it with the time-slip info from his Daytona record setting run in a similar car. Tim won 39 NASCAR races in his career.

The final LETTER of the Chrysler's series was the 1965 300L, which had evolved to not much more than a sales competitor to the New Yorker and had much the same drive train. An optician friend had inherited it and it was too thirsty for him, so he asked me to sell it for him. After a week of driving it, I sold my 560SEL company car and used the 300 for 2 years. There also was a 300D (1958) for a while while searching for the second 300F (1960) both of which were considerably more interesting than the 300L.

Now the star of the 300 Show, a 1957 300C convertible bought from an automobile pawnshop in SF. The paint was down to the primer, the leather and top were tattered, and it would not start. When the flatbed was unloading my wife exclaimed "You paid \$15,000 for that car in terrible shape?" I had



to explain that even if the paint and seats were pretty nice, they all would have to be replaced anyhow and the more dramatic the change, the easier it is to write the checks. It won multiple awards including the Franklin-Templeton award at the Hillsboro Concours for most elegant post-war open car and made the cover of the expensive Collectible Automobile Magazine. She changed her tune when we received a check for \$100,000 when it sold some years ago. Other complete restorations include a 1933 Chrysler, 1966 427 Hemi Charger, 1951 Cadillac convertible, 1962 Imperial convertible, 1948 Chrysler street rod, 1966 300 convertible, 1961 ram-induced Dodge, and a dozen others that were just fun to own but not rebuild or refresh.

### C300 Screensaver



**300F for 2008  
Calendar**



**300L Rear Deck**



**Three 300's**



**300 C Cote**



**1966 Chrysler 300**



**C300 Screensaver**





300's Four at a Time



*The view in Larry's Garage  
October, 2020*





# The ROOSTER

The Monthly Bulletin of

Sunnyvale Branch # 62

**SONS IN RETIREMENT**

**A Non-Profit Organization of Retired Men**

**Devoted to the Promotion of Independence and Dignity in Retirement**



## **SIR Travel – Branch 62**

**Travel Chairman: Jim Hohenshelt (408 394-7226).**

**Assistant: Roy Jordan (408 735-8765).**

We (Branch 62) hope to reschedule our one-day trip to the Chinese Exhibit at Blackhawk Museum - Terra Cotta Warriors when the Covid situation permits. We are also investigating the possibility of a bus tour (approximately 2.5 weeks) along the

eastern shore of the Adriatic – **Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Slovenia, perhaps Albania**, around March or April of 2022. Trip would likely include Dubrovnik, Kotor, Sarajevo, Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Lake Bled. If you might be interested in such a trip, we suggest you call Jim, indicate your interest and discuss the possibilities.

The Area 11 Coordinated Travel Committee has dissolved. Branches will still sponsor trips when the Covid situation improves. Brochures for these trips will be available on <http://sirbranch125.org>. There are no trips scheduled with the State SIR Travel Committee.

**Reminder:** Trips organized by Sons in Retirement (SIR) are available to SIR members, their spouses, siblings, children, grandchildren, also to guests and widows of SIR members.

## **MEETING CASH AWARDS**

Beginning in January, in addition to \$25 cash birthday awards at our Monthly Zoom Luncheon Meetings there will be one additional \$25 cash attendance award.

Remember, you must be present on Zoom video or telephone to be eligible to receive an award. Be involved and have a shot at these riches.

### **May Winners:**

Birthday Prize: Bob Cheney

Attendance Prize: Roger Falberg

## **Branch 62 Web Site**

Have you visited our web site lately?

Want to read the joke from the luncheon?

Need to contact the speaker?

Forget the luncheon's speaker details?

Want to see what other members are doing during COVID-19?

Want to read back issues of the Rooster?

Get all of this and more on our Web Site

at: <https://sirinc2.org/branch62/index.php>

Heber Slusser

[branch62sir@gmail.com](mailto:branch62sir@gmail.com)

## **9 HOLE GOLF**

Nine-hole golf is played at Sunken Gardens at 9AM each Wednesday. We currently have four players and can get tee times for more. We don't play as a tournament; we just enjoy a round of golf and the friendship of our fellow Sirs. Come out and play. Please let me know if you want to join us.

Tom Birley

9 Hole Golf Chairman





## Fairwell, Jamestown



**Jack Devlin**

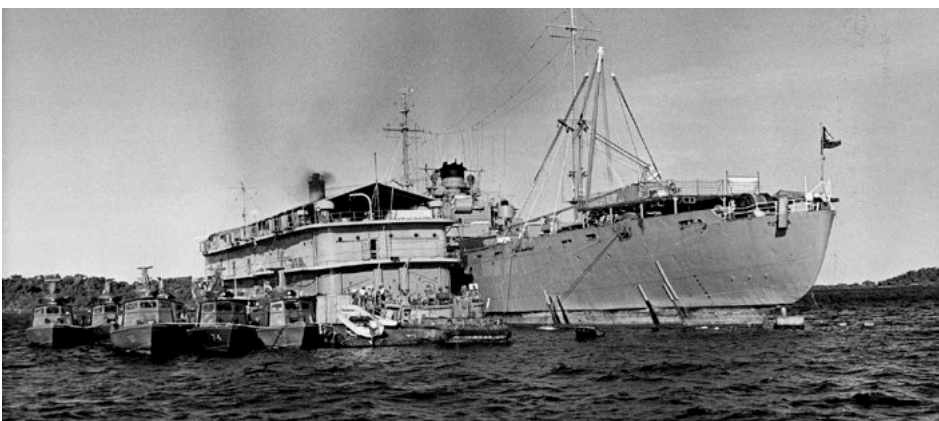
I was on active duty with the U.S. Navy from March 1964 through May 1968. Moving between duty assignments always seemed like a well supervised experience including my transit to sea duty in and around Viet Nam. What follows is an odd exception - my departure from the USS Jamestown.

My tour of duty aboard USS Jamestown (AGTR3), a navy electronic communication research ship, ended on October 3, 1967 after fourteen months of duty with operations in the South China Sea and Gulf of Siam. It was finally time for me to return to the United States. My previous transit between duty stations, except for personal leave, was arranged for and supervised by the military. One reason for this was that I worked in an area that required a Top Secret (Code Word) security clearance. What happened at An Thoi, instead, had a vague "Twilight Zone" feeling.

After collecting my orders and personnel record, I climbed to the Jamestown's weather deck to discover that we were anchored in the bay at An Thoi. I saluted the Officer of the Deck, the ensign, and then climbed down a boarding ladder with my seabag into a whaleboat to begin my trip home. As the boat pushed away from the Jamestown, I began to realize that I had no idea what would happen next.

A short boat ride brought me to a boarding ladder of the floating base (everyone referred to it as a barracks barge). I was escorted to a sleeping berth, pointed toward the chow hall, and left alone. After settling in my berth, I took a walk around the ship and discovered that Jamestown was no longer anchored where I left her. I read a bit and then headed for the mess hall in hopes of filling some information gaps on how to get from a barge in the Gulf of Siam to Travis Air Force Base.

Spotting a few less preoccupied sailors, I sat down in hopes of learning something useful. My new shipmates explained that this was a hub of Swift Boat operations. The sailors I met were PCF support and not patrol crew, but they knew the routine. They told me that Swift Boat patrols departed at around 0800. I also learned that, once ashore, I should flag down a mail plane that came every two days and hitch a ride to Saigon. The plane apparently landed on a jungle air strip up from the beach on the island. I now understood the next two legs of my journey would depend on the goodwill of both a Swift Boat commander and a Navy pilot. The mail plane was due the next day.



I got directions to the PCF operation center and made my way there. An off-duty crew member told me the best thing to do was to show up at 0730 the next morning with my sea bag and ask one of the crews to help me get to the beach. Not wanting to miss an opportunity, I got little sleep and was at the staging area by 0730. I contacted a crew member who said taking sailors to the beach had become part of the routine. The Swift Boat was designed for close-in coastal and river operation so had a shallow draft even when heavily loaded. This was a bonus given that there was no pier at the beach. I didn't worry about getting my feet wet - though I probably should have.

I dumped my sea bag aboard the boat, and we were under way promptly at 0800. I notice during final preparation for the patrol that the sailors were responsible for ensuring food, water, and ammunition that would sustain them until they returned the following day. I also noticed a slalom waterski propped against a bulkhead. Given the stories I'd heard about mines, firefights, and other mayhem in the coastal waters and rivers they were about to patrol, water skiing seemed like a risky proposition. A gunner's

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mate told me that things could become very tense on patrol but there were long periods of boredom, and this was one way they could speed up the passage of time; after all, with almost 1,000 horsepower, the PCF could easily pull a skier. Being target practice for Viet Cong snipers did not strike me as a good time.

We shortly nosed up to the white sand beach. I was able to jump from the bow to avoid wet feet. Once on the beach, it occurred to me that I had no means of contacting the ship, let alone the PCF that just backed away and departed for patrol duty. I also did not know precisely where to meet the mail plane that I had been told would arrive in about an hour.

I scanned the embankment that ran up from the beach and spotted a path heading toward what appeared to be a jungle plateau. I headed up the path until I saw what appeared to be a small shack near which there were several people. As I drew closer, I could see two other sailors and a man in civilian dress who appeared to be Vietnamese. I then spotted a Pepsi sign on the front of the shack. I was not expecting a pop stand!

It turned out that, despite the sign on the front of the shack, there were no Pepsi Colas to be had. The soft drink merchant could offer a can of Birley's orange soda and a couple of other options with Asian markings that seemed dubious to an itinerant sailor. I gave the vendor a dollar (worth about 45 million Vietnamese Dong) and declined to take a beverage.



The two sailors were both also heading for Saigon and the mail plane was expected to arrive shortly. The process began to seem promising as I looked out at a broad swath of cleared jungle foliage covered with what appeared to be a wire mesh forming a runway. That "Twilight Zone" feeling persisted.

In due course, a plane approached, circled, and landed on the mesh runway. It was a twin-engine propeller driven plane but not a large one. I had flown on a Navy R4D (otherwise known as a DC-3) and this plane was less than half that size. My best guess was that it might have been a Cessna or Beechcraft. The plane taxied to the far end of the runway then turned and headed toward where we stood.

The pilot deplaned and walked to where the three of us stood. He could see that we were all in traveling mode. Without preamble, he informed us that there were only two seats available on the plane. I was suddenly assaulted by fear: I had no idea how to communicate with anyone should I be stranded. The Vietnamese pop-stand operator did not appear to possess the necessary technology and the idea of spending the night (or possibly two nights) in the open on the edge of a jungle air strip had no appeal whatsoever.

The pilot could see that none of us was anxious to remain behind and kindly offered a solution. He would take the three of us if one would be willing to make the two-and-a-half-hour flight to Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon lying on mail bags in the fuselage of the plane. We drew straws. I drew the mailbag "seat" but still considered myself lucky not to be left behind.

I climbed aboard the plane, crawled over the three seabags behind the two passenger seats, and stretched out across the mailbags otherwise filling the cargo area. Light filled the space but there were no windows available to me, so I was unable to see the terrain passing below us as we flew north toward Saigon. I was also unable to arrange myself in any way except prone on the mailbags the available space being insufficient to allow sitting up. My separation from the other two sailors and the plane's motors made it impossible to have a conversation. I was probably fortunate not to have visibility to our take-off from the jungle runway.

The clock headed toward mid-day as the plane cruised northward. Tropical weather would ordinarily have made the air hot and damp. Fortunately, there was enough ventilation to keep me from feeling like a turkey in a slow-roast oven during the flight. It wasn't plush, but it could have been worse. Other than my white uniform accumulating grime from the mail bags, the remainder of the flight was uneventful. I began to relax, not knowing that my biggest challenge had yet to appear.



Tan Son Nhut air base was near the heart of Saigon and was operated primarily by the US Air Force in 1967. Back on the ground, the pilot pointed in the general direction of the passenger terminal and told us where to find a bus stop. Things were looking up! Though we were still on a self-guided tour, it was beginning to feel more civilized.

Terminal staff directed us to a desk where reservations could be made for outbound flights. I was booked on a flight a few days hence. The Departure was late at night, but there would be plenty of time to get back to Tan Son Nhut. The reservationist provided directions to a Saigon hotel where I could stay while waiting for my departure. It was recommended that I take a taxicab from the air base to the hotel and use the same transportation when returning for the flight. The hotel was unremarkable but provided basic services - food, laundry, etc. - so the intervening days would be reasonably comfortable. I remember that there were no windows, as such, but large openings that could be closed with shutters in case of bad weather.

Travel day arrived. We were advised to arrive a couple of hours ahead of flight time as check-in could be tedious. A taxi delivered me at the main entrance to the terminal with what seemed like plenty of time. That would have been correct but for one more surprise.

I passed preliminary check-in by displaying my boarding pass and ticket and was directed to a line of mixed military and civilian passengers. The line moved forward slowly each person shepherding luggage as they moved toward the boarding area. Flight departure time was 2400. I reached the head of the line at about 2330. The uniformed person checking identification for the last time also checked shot records. I now learned that my shot record was not up to date. I could not board the plane unless this was rectified, but how?

I asked for advice and was told that there was an all-night dispensary on the base. I could catch a bus in front of the terminal and the driver would know where to go. The check-in official agreed to mind my seabag while I went off in search of a solution to this new challenge.

A military bus was stopping in front of the terminal as I walked out. The door opened and I explained my predicament to the driver. There were five passengers on the bus. The driver and all of the passengers were dressed in US military uniforms. The driver turned to the passengers, quickly explained my problem, and asked if anyone was in a hurry. The time being late, no one had urgent matters to mind, so the driver took me directly to the dispensary and waited outside while I went in to confer with a medical corpsman.

Inside I explained my problem and the shot record was duly updated, but without the bother of injecting vaccine. I re-treated to the bus, rode back to the terminal, walked to the head of the now short line, presented my shot record to the official, and boarded the plane!

We flew to Japan where we stopped to take on fuel for the remaining flight to Travis AFB. The flight duration was around fourteen hours. Once we were out of Viet Nam, however, it didn't really matter. One stop for fuel at Yokota Air Base, Japan, and the flight went straight to Travis. It was entirely anti-climactic after my adventures traversing Viet Nam. My duty station was Skaggs Island on the north shore of San Pablo Bay. I served there before my stint in Viet Nam, so it was like coming home. Perhaps the best thing about leaving Viet Nam was that I missed the 1968 TET offensive - a disastrous turning point in the war for the U.S. - by a couple of months. I completed active duty at Skaggs Island and left the military in May of 1968.



You can get a feel for the Jamestown if you visit SS Jeremiah O'Brien at Pier 45 near Fisherman's Wharf. Both ships were built during WWII - same hull but different superstructure. Jamestown was scrapped in 1970 after spending a few years in the Suisun Bay mothball fleet.

***Editor's Note: Sorry, but I did omit some details from the Jamestown story. Each month, the "Rooster" carries a rather lengthy, but interesting Member Story. This is the first submission from Branch 68. Thanks.***



Tom Egan's group that meets for lunch every Tuesday at BJ's in Terra Linda decided to take the show once again on the road. 5 of us from the group took the Smart Train from San Rafael to Santa Rosa for a fun wine ride and lunch at Jackson's in Railroad Square. We boarded the train around 10 am and shared a bottle of wine while enjoying the countryside of our fine county. We arrived in Santa Rosa too early for our reservations at Jackson's, so we decided to stop at Chevy's for a couple of quick ones before heading down the street. At Jackson's we got a large table at the rear with a good view and great food. As per usual we had some strange and funny conversations, one being "What was the greatest Western ever made", now that brought up some opposing views. At the end of the trip, we once again stopped at Chevy's for a cold one before reboarding the train back home. If you are looking for fun conversation and lunch, you might think about joining us on Tuesdays

*Photos and Report by Kent Dutrieux*



Alan Rossi, our newest member will be submitting a small column each month. You can use this information to wow friends and loved ones. Enjoy!

Recently, a friend in Piedmont, CA. bought Jack Benny's vintage car that appears in the old TV shows. He paid \$11,000.00 for it. I also just learned the woodchipper in " Fargo " was purchased and brought back to the owner's hometown, Delano, Minn. And that they yes, you betcha- will bring it out during the town's 4th of July parade every year.  
Alan Rossi



# SIR Solano Branch 88 Newsletter

January  
2021

*"Live Longer, Live Happier, Join SIR"*

State Web Site – [sirinc.org](http://sirinc.org)  
Chapter 88 Website – [sirinc2.org/branch88/](http://sirinc2.org/branch88/)



## Membership – Gary Savelli



### Attendance

Hang in there everybody. This virus vaccine is here. Give it some thought about getting it. Keep wearing the

mask and stay safe and healthy and do your part to help keep this virus from spreading. Hopefully, we will see all of you at the next possible luncheon.

### Reminder

If any of you owed for membership this year, it has been suspended to the end of the year. The 2021 dues are also suspended until further notice.

### Membership

We currently have 138 members in SIR 88. Thank you to those who have sponsored them. We need to keep SIR going and growing. We hope you want to continue with us in the year of 2021. Let's pray this year will be better.

## Bocce Ball (Co-Ed) –

Steve Smith



### Standings

Season 4/30/21 to 10/08/21

### Week #1

SIRS 88 COED Bocce started April 30 with 64 players. All but four attendees had verification of their COVID-19 vaccinations. Those four certified they were vaccinated. Masks were not mandatory due to recent changes in CA regulations for use of masks outdoors.

Thanks to everyone who showed up and especially to the temporary captains who made the effort to make it all work. Much appreciated!

| Name            | Team # | Wins | Losses | Points for | Points Against |
|-----------------|--------|------|--------|------------|----------------|
| COVID Relief    | 3      | 3    | 0      | 36         | 14             |
| Rolling Thunder | 8      | 2    | 1      | 31         | 22             |
| No Name #1      | 1      | 2    | 1      | 29         | 27             |
| High Fives      | 5      | 2    | 1      | 24         | 22             |
| Bocce Joy       | 2      | 1    | 2      | 27         | 29             |
| No Name #6      | 6      | 1    | 2      | 22         | 24             |
| Palino Busters  | 7      | 1    | 2      | 22         | 31             |
| Bocce Warriors  | 4      | 0    | 3      | 14         | 36             |

DO YOU EVER GET UP  
IN THE MORNING,



LOOK AT YOURSELF IN  
THE MIRROR AND  
THINK... "THAT CAN'T  
BE ACCURATE."



# THE ROOSTER TALE

## History & Wine

### The Middle Ages or GOD & Wine

By John Benbow, SIRS Wine Group

Among the ancients, wine carried great symbolism. It was considered the blood of the vine. Some philosophers believed eternal life was the prerogative of the immortal gods, but drinking wine made any temporarily their equal. Wine also often symbolized laughter, love, and purification.

Muslims (though not all of them) eventually forbade the drinking of wine. The theologian, Nabulsi, believed it a drink of divine love. Ibn Arabi called wine "the symbol of the knowledge of spiritual states." Other Muslim theologians did not agree.

It fell to the Christians to preserve and advance viticulture and enology. After the barbarian invasions of the 6-9th centuries eliminated competition, monasteries flourished among miraculous vineyards. They did not make just communion wine either. Monasteries lived by their own resources; they both consumed and sold the product. Both the Old Testament and Christ's teaching accepted wine; St. Benedict defended it but wrote that one pint of wine a day is enough.

A peculiarity of monastic life was that monks had to learn sign language for use during periods of silence. Moving the forefinger up and down the end of the thumb at eye level meant "pass the wine please".

The monks not only made great advances, but they also wrote about them. They spread the word as they spread the gospel. One happy accident resulted from the necessity of hiding provisions from marauders (and taxmen). Shipping barrels were hidden away in underground rooms. The cellar was a revolutionary discovery (being stored in attics had done it no good at all).

Monastic heroes of wine were many, most notable were St. Martin and friar (Dom) Perignon. The legend of St. Martin was that this devout viticulturist was so absorbed tending his vines that he forgot about his donkey who nibbled the plants down to the wood. The monks shed tears when they saw the unexpected pruning. When they tasted that year's wine, they wept again – for joy. Hand pruning in the Loire had just been invented.

St. Martin was known to have encouraged the improvement of a local species of wild vine. Successful grafting led to the Chenin Blanc of today. In 1096, Pope Urban II found a vine said to have been planted by St. Martin – still bearing fruit after 6 centuries.

Dom Perignon was born the same year as Louis the XIV. At 20 he became a monk in the Benedictine Monastery at Verdun. A man of incredible memory and palate he moved to the monastery at Hartville's where he became steward of their 40 hectares of commercial vineyard. He noted that still wine sometimes would become effervescent with a second short-lived fermentation. Although natural sparkling wine had been around since at least 931 when noted in royal decree, Dom Perignon induced the second fermentation at a given time, regulated it, and kept its effervescence by re-introducing the cork. At age 60 he had true champagne and had discovered removing the lees through freezing the bottle neck. It became wildly popular with the rich and richer. Madame de Pompadour said it was the only wine a woman could drink without looking ugly. The monks liked it too, as did merchants, and virtually everyone else fortunate enough to taste it. Dom Perignon died happy in 1715; he was buried among his vines.



Covid 19 variants (ever changing)





The Branch is initiating a Photo Sharing Contest

With so many Branch Activities restarting, there are ample opportunities to share pictures that you can take at the BEC approve activities that you participate in. Request that you submit an interesting picture or two that you take during a Branch activity—Golf, Trails, Bocce, Wine Tasting, etc. We will publish the pictures on the Website and select one or two pictures for publication in the monthly Rooster Tale every month.



We will select the **BRANCH PICTURE of the YEAR** and offer a prize at the end of the year—at the Christmas Party. **The winner will be recognized and awarded with a certificate & a gift.** So get your cameras and mobile phones ready to snap those interesting pictures. **Please submit the pictures to the EDITOR or Webmaster**  
Jerry Foster— [jerryf@coremsg.com](mailto:jerryf@coremsg.com)  
Ramesh Thadani—[thadanir@yahoo.com](mailto:thadanir@yahoo.com)

Based on the recommendation from fellow Sir Don Gifford and his wife Donna, Tish and I decided to pack a picnic lunch and drive over to Beek's Bight to see the super bloom. As we finished our lunch, a Sac Bee reporter and photographer walked up and started chatting with us. We told her that we had been living here since 1991 and had never seen anything like it. She took pictures of us and another family and the next day it appeared on the front page of the Saturday digital edition (there is no printed edition that day). Since then, word has spread and the story has been broadcast on several TV networks and even in the Bay Area. Unfortunately, many people have walked on the flowers, trampling them down, trying to get a colorful shot to post online. But all we did was to show up.

Mark





# The Town Crower

Volume 38, Number 2

The Monthly Newsletter for SIR Branch 103

January 2021

Stanislaus SIR Branch 103

## Travel

By Bill Stires

### Top of Switzerland and Oberammergau, Germany and the Passion Play August 27-September 7, 2022

Price: \$4,725 double occupancy (Land only) Airfare will be added in October 2021. Deposit of \$750 per person to hold reservation by June 15, 2021. This trip was cancelled in 2020, and there are only 10 spots left for our group. We will not receive any more after June 15, 2021. Highlights:

- 2 night stay in Zurich, Switzerland
- 1 night stay in Interlaken, Switzerland
- 2 night stay in Brienz, Switzerland
- 2 night stay in Lucerne, Switzerland
- 2 night stay in Oberammergau and the Passion Play
- 2 night stay in Munich, Germany

Contact Bill Stires at 209-988-5445 if interested in this trip.

**If interested in any trips, call Bill Stires at home phone 209-544-2684, cell phone 209-988-5445, or email [bstires46@gmail.com](mailto:bstires46@gmail.com) to receive a reservation form. Friends, neighbors and relatives can go on any of the SIR trips.**

### Holland Tulip Festival Tour Featuring Mackinac Island's Grand Hotel May 12-19, 2022

Price: \$3,895 per person, double occupancy,  
\$5,375 single. Deposit \$650 per person

Final payment January 10, 2022

Trip highlights: airfare into Chicago, returning from Detroit, gratuities for tour manager and bus driver, spend one night in Chicago with a guided tour of the city, attend the annual Tulip Festival in Holland, Michigan, visit Veldheer-DeKlomp Musiekparade (music parade), spend two nights at the Grand Hotel, the crown jewel of Mackinac Island, tour Mackinaw Island via a horse-drawn carriage, take the River Rouge Ford Factory tour, \$40 in Mayflower Money. As this trip was cancelled last year, it will fill up fast.

### Laguna Arts Festival Pageant of the Masters in Southern California July 25-28, 2021

Price: \$1,995 Double, \$2,490 Single.

Total payment with reservation form.  
**COVID-19 VACCINATION NEEDED FOR TRIP**  
**Private bus for our group will be provided**  
**Trip is still available for other passengers**

Trip includes: Round trip airfare, deluxe motorcoach transportation, 3-night stay at Best Western Plus in Long Beach, tour of Ronald Reagan Library, gondola cruise, dinner at Naples Rib Company, roundtrip transportation aboard the Catalina Express, Avalon scenic tour of Catalina Island, tour of Mission San Juna Capistrano, admission into the Sawdust Festival, dinner at Terra Laguna Beach, reserved main tier center seats for Pageant of the Masters "Made in America" theme, guided tour of Los Angeles, admission to the Space Shuttle Endeavour exhibit, 5 meals: 3 breakfasts and 2 dinners, all taxes for features, all gratuities for bus driver and guides. Early reservation is urged to insure main tier center seating.

### Trip to Louisville to Nashville September 16-24, 2021

Price: \$3,995 per person, double occupancy  
\$5,093, single occupancy.  
Pay in Full by June 15, 2021

Featuring a tour of Churchill Downs and the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, including 2 nights in Louisville, Asheville, and Nashville. Tour features included: Roundtrip airport transfers, Airfare into Louisville, returning from Nashville., 8-day guided tour with tour manager, guided tour of Churchill Downs, home of the Kentucky Derby, 9 nights first class accommodations, 12 meals. Gratuities on all included features, bus driver and tour guide. Space is limited and sold on first come basis only.



## Branch 103 General Membership/BEC Meeting

**June 23, 2021 11:00 am —1:00 pm**  
**Golden Corral Buffet & Grill**  
**3737 Mc Henry Ave.**

## LADIES' DINE-OUT

The Ladies' Dine-out will on June 24, 2021 at The Fruit Yard Restaurant, 7948 Yosemite Blvd., at 11:30 am. All SIR wives/significant others are invited to attend. No reservation is required, however, all will be required to provide a copy of their vaccination card.



## Bowling

### SIR AND CLASSY LADIES LEAGUES

Dust off those bowling balls and get ready for winter leagues starting in August. Both leagues will return to Mc Henry Bowl with the same times on Tuesday afternoons. The leagues are tentatively set to begin with a meeting on August 3, with practice after the meeting. The leagues should start on August 10, 2021. All bowlers will have to provide vaccination proof and sign an activity waiver. Definite information with dates and times will be in next month's newsletter. Mc Henry Bowl is now open for practice. Summer leagues have begun and have open spots. If you bowl in any summer league, you will receive a pass to bowl 3 free games daily through the summer. The leagues are non-sanctioned, so there is no need to pay any membership fee to bowl. Call Mc Henry Bowl at 571-2695 to get on a summer league



|                 |           |      |
|-----------------|-----------|------|
| Don Stevenson   | 6/02/1950 | #41  |
| George Dunham   | 6/03/1950 | #71  |
| John Murray     | 6/05/1952 | #18  |
| Dennis Hermreck | 6/05/1956 | #53  |
| Darwin Skiles   | 6/06/1937 | #100 |
| Martin Fauria   | 6/18/1958 | #4   |
| Pete Maxim      | 6/19/1943 | #19  |
| Bill Axtell     | 6/26/1947 | #90  |

**Note: Remember your \$10 Branch 103 Membership dues for 2021. Must be paid by August meeting to participate in any SIR activity. Write check to SIR 103**



By Gary Del Nero

Jim Bickner had some skin cancer and had surgery during an office visit. All is going well. We lost Jim Cloward last month, a card sent to family with our condolences. On a positive note, hope to see a lot of you this month at our meeting. Awesome get to meet in person again. Please keep me informed of any changes to someone's health, a passing, etc. Please let me know for our sunshine area. Always pleased to let someone know that we are concerned and care about them via our SIR's 103



# The Mountain Messenger

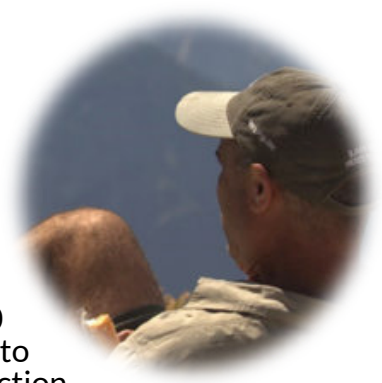
January 2021

Branch 152 Arnold, CA

Volume 32 No. 1

## TRAVELS WITH DAVE - Dave Baugher

**A**hh, May, what a great month! We had a family get together for my birthday in San Diego, where my daughter Katherine and I got to complete a part of the Pacific Coast Bike Trail. Afterward, Luann and I took a separate trip to the Redwoods National Park near Trinidad, which the Pacific Coast Bike Trail also traverses. The Pacific Coast Bike Route travels from Canada to Mexico. Never heard about it? Let me tell you about the Pacific Coast Bike Route. In 2014, my daughter Katherine and I began an annual father/daughter bicycling trip along the Pacific Coast Bike Route. This is a continuing adventure in progress; we have completed approximately 900 miles of the 1,850 mile long route to date. My birthday gave us an excuse to get together with the family in San Diego. We completed the southern section, bicycling from La Jolla to the Mexico U.S. border and celebrated my 59th birthday. The Route was put together by the Adventure Cyclist Association and travels 1,850 miles, passing through 3 US States. The route begins in Vancouver, British Columbia, and heads south through the suburbs of that large city. Following the coastline, it's a magnificent ride through Washington and Oregon. Crossing into California near Crescent City, the route traverses the redwood forests of northern California, then crosses the Golden Gate Bridge. Carmel, Big Sur, and the beach cities of Southern California follow. The trail ends at the International Friendship Park, located right at the U.S./ Mexico border. The annual bike trip has had its ups and downs. Biking along with the seaside towns and beaches of Southern California during the summer is like living in a Beach Boys song, all smiles and endless sunshine. On the other hand, some of the rougher parts in Northern California found my daughter sobbing in the tent at the end of a hard day. In Northern California, along the Avenue of the Giants and Highway 101, the route goes through Redwood National Park. As mentioned, Luann and I just took a quick trip to the area in late May to see the park and to hike a few trails. No biking this time, just hiking. Most memorable is Fern Canyon. Located in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, it takes a bit of work to get to Fern Canyon, but it's worth it. This spectacular canyon is a hidden paradise of ferns lining a narrow gorge carved out by Home Creek. Some of the seven different ferns clinging to the steep cliffs are ancient species, with ancestry tracing back 325 million years. Several scenes from Jurassic Park 2 were filmed in the area.



Yep, May was a great month. But June! Time for golf, lounging by the pool or lake, going trout fishing, and hanging out with friends and family. It's also the month when I get ready to continue my journey along the Pacific Crest Trail. You have read about my leaving California, traversing Oregon, and now preparations are progressing to enter the wilderness of Washington. Washington Wilderness? More to follow....

**A**h, June - time for golf, lounging by the pool or lake, going trout fishing, and hanging out with friends and family. It's also the month when I get ready to continue my journey along the Pacific Crest Trail this year in the wilderness of southern Washington. So let's discuss trail plans... In 2014, I began hiking the Pacific Crest Trail. A 2,650-mile long National Scenic Trail, the PCT hugs the crest of the Pacific mountain ranges: the San Bernadinos, Sierras, Trinities, Cascades, and circumnavigates the volcanos of the Northwest. Last year I stopped my trek at the Columbia River's "Bridge of the Gods" on the border of Oregon and Washington. This year, I will resume hiking on July 7th at the same bridge and head into Washington with two other hikers. The plan is



to cover 250 miles over 20 days and end my hike at Snoqualmie Pass in Central Washington. This year, the trail will lead me along the flanks of Mt. Adams and Mt. Rainier, crossing glaciers and rivers swollen with milky-white glacial runoff. In this section, the trail crosses the Goat Rocks Wilderness and a special 3-mile section called "Knife Edge." You get the picture. I'm often asked, "How do you prepare for these hikes?" It's easy – I point to my head. You have to really want to do it. You must be mentally tough, and parts of your psyche must be a steel fist. Yet, on the other hand, according to my copy of Gray's Anatomy, the human head weighs between 8-12 pounds. The variance is probably due to the absence of any common sense when I decide to head out on these hikes. Heading out on a hike like this always involves a comedy of trains, planes, and automobiles. This year is no exception. I'll be flying from Sacramento to Portland, then bumming a ride from relocated Californians to the trailhead. In the end, I'll reverse the process by bumming a ride from relocated Californians to public transportation, taking me to the Seattle-Tacoma airport for a flight back home. Another common question that new hikers ask (I'm expecting this one from my trail companions this year) is, "When does the pain stop?" or "When do you stop hurting?" This is a funny question, often asked with sincerity and hope. But pain is a part of these hikes as are the pine trees, the Douglas firs, and thick-bark cedars. The truth is the pain never stops; it merely ebbs and flows with the conditions and people on the trail. So when does the pain stop? "Three months," an answer that rattles in mind for a few moments; however, the full answer is "three months after you get off the trail."

*Now you know the reason for seeing me walking stiffly every August. But a stroll on the golf course or a float in the lake always helps with those stiff knees. I'll let you know how the hike goes next month....*

ARNOLD SIR ANNUAL 9-HOLE GOLF TOURNAMENT  
August 24, 2021  
SEQUOIA WOODS COUNTRY CLUB  
2:00 PM Shotgun Start  
12:30 PM Check-In and Ball Park Lunch on the Patio

Nine Hole – 4 Man Teams (ABCD Pairings) – Fun Format Field Limited to 36 Players

Cost: (Includes Green Fee – Cart – Lunch – Sweeps)  
SWCC Member w/ Cart Lease or Trail Fee \$15.00  
SWCC Member w/o Cart Lease or Trail Fee \$25.00  
Non-SWCC Member \$40.00

To Sign-up Call or e-mail: Brian Raley – [bplaguna1999@yahoo.com](mailto:bplaguna1999@yahoo.com) – 209-795-2876 or  
Jim Walton – [jwalton2176@comcast.net](mailto:jwalton2176@comcast.net) – 415-699-9396

Reminder: SIR Waivers and a Copy of Vaccination Card on file is Required for Participation



*At the recent Branch 152 picnic; Dick Watson (above) received his HLM award from Derek Southern, and Rick Kindle presented an overdue Area Governor citation to Dale Decker. Another special guest was Paul Squeri.*







**"The SIR" ~ LAKE TAHOE BRANCH 160 ~**



**CHARTERED APRIL 22, 1991**

**MEMBERSHIP OPEN TO MEN REGARDLESS OF AGE, RACE, COLOR, OR RELIGION  
GETTING TOGETHER FOR LUNCH AND ENJOYING OUR VARIOUS ACTIVITIES**

## **HIGH MOUNTAIN NEWS**



### **President's Message June 2021**

**Hello Fellow SIRs:**

Hope this finds you all doing well. We had our first live meeting last month and it went very well. The meeting was held at Carson Valley Inn, and our luncheon buffet was excellent.

I would like to welcome our new members from last month and welcome them to this month's meeting. If you would like to help our organization become better, we have a few vacancies that need to be filled, so come to the meeting and find out more about where you can help. I would like to thank Larry Coffman for setting up the Reno Aces game. We had great seats, and everyone had a great time. Larry is scheduling another outing to the Reno Aces so be sure to contact him and get your name on the list.

I hope to see everyone at our next meeting on June 28, 2021, at Carson Valley Inn. BEC meeting 10AM, Social hour starts at 11:00 AM with lunch being served at 12:00 PM with general meeting to follow. Hope to see a lot of you on the golf course. Stay safe and travel safe.

Respectfully, Big Sir Joe Tomlin



 **ROSTER CHANGES**

Please post these changes to your Branch Roster –

**Add One New Members 😊**

**Steve Fierro 221 Gold Hills Drive, Carson City  
NV 89706 Badge #115, 775-351-2258,  
Email homeskillit1954@gmail.com**

The Reno Aces Game was a great outing, seats were great, free hats, and \$1.00 hot dogs. There were, 15 Sir, family and friends who attended the game against the Sacramento River Cats.



**ACTIVITIES REPORTS (Branch 174 & Branch 171)**

Golf-18 holes, Golf-9 holes, Walking-Original Group, Walking-Senior Strollers, Walking-Big Hikers and Bocce have been approved by the BEC for re-opening. Approved Covid protocols need to be followed. See individual activity reports below for the latest news on activities that have recommenced, either in-person or via Zoom.

If you participate in a volunteer organization that you think other Branch members would like to participate in, please send your email address or phone number and your volunteer organization to Tom Farr and it will be highlighted in the Branch Newsletter. Interested branch members will be able to contact you via a phone call or email to discuss opportunities with your volunteer opportunity with you. For your information, this is not a Branch activity.

**FISHING - AREA 16: KARL DROESE (Br. 171) 376-0468, Big Fish HARRY SHERINIAN 510-207-7067**

All SIR members and guests are welcome, and indeed encouraged, to participate in fishing trips as well as attend the monthly meetings. Contacts are Ron Lew 925-550-4166 and Carl Moyer 925-685-5243. Next meeting will be at the Legends restaurant at the Diablo Creek golf course on Port Chicago Highway and Highway 4 on Thursday, July 22nd, at 8:30am.



*Pete Gates, Karl Droese, and Paul Dubow are pleased with these trout and salmon caught at Lake Don Pedro*

Our local trout season has ended. As the water in our local lakes warms, catfish are planted instead of trout, and so we must venture into the piney woods for trout now. But, Gordon Linebaugh, Brion Beetz, Phil Scimonelli, and Carl Moyer managed to catch a few from San Pablo Reservoir. Pete Gates organized a venture to Don Pedro lake where he, Phil Scimonelli, Paul Dubow, Gordon Linebaugh, Jack Wadell, and Karl Droeese caught trout, kokanee, and king salmon. Brion Beetz went to Colorado to catch a Splake trout, part lake, part speckled (brook) trout from shore. Tom Kostik went to Pinecrest lake and caught many trout and bass. Ben LaSala caught trout from Lake Berryessa and Comanche. Ken Bellinder caught smallmouth bass from Berryessa. Carl Moyer and Brion Beetz captured rockfish on the big water. Bob Stein, Brion, Carl, Gordon Linebaugh, Stan Wong, and Lee Clark got halibut and stripers from the bay on party boats. Stan Wong and Brion Beetz went to Tomales Bay to dig up limits of delicious cherrystone clams. Tom Kostik, Ken Bellinder, Terry Miller, Dick Thomson, caught stripers and sturgeon in the delta. Pedro Contreras flew to Hawaii for some delectable ono (wahoo).

A representative walk recently taken:  
 A new hike in the vicinity of Inspiration Point. It's the gated-off section of El Toyonal from Wildcat Canyon Rd out and back, a little over a mile each way. You'll walk along under a continuous arch of trees among horse pastures and parkland on perfect pavement with glimpses of San Pablo and Briones Reservoirs. The road is shaded and wind sheltered its entire length.







**Did I read that sign right?  
TOILET OUT OF ORDER. PLEASE USE FLOOR BELOW.**

**In a Laundromat: AUTOMATIC WASHING MACHINES: PLEASE REMOVE ALL YOUR CLOTHES  
WHEN THE LIGHT GOES OUT.**

**In a London department store:  
BARGAIN BASEMENT UPSTAIRS...**

**In an office: WOULD THE PERSON WHO TOOK THE STEP LADDER YESTERDAY PLEASE BRING  
IT BACK OR FURTHER STEPS WILL BE TAKEN.**

**In an office:  
AFTER TEA BREAK, STAFF SHOULD EMPTY THE TEAPOT AND STAND UPSIDE DOWN ON THE  
DRAINING BOARD.**

**Outside a second-hand shop: WE EXCHANGE ANYTHING - BICYCLES, WASHING MACHINES,  
ETC. WHY NOT BRING YOUR WIFE ALONG AND GET A WONDERFUL BARGAIN?**

**Notice in health food shop window: CLOSED DUE TO ILLNESS.**

**Spotted in a safari park: (I sure hope so.) ELEPHANTS, PLEASE STAY IN YOUR CAR.**

**Seen during a conference: FOR ANYONE WHO HAS CHILDREN AND DOESN'T KNOW IT,  
THERE IS A DAY CARE ON THE 1ST FLOOR.**

**Notice in a farmer's field: THE FARMER ALLOWS WALKERS TO CROSS THE FIELD FOR FREE,  
BUT THE BULL CHARGES.**

**Message on a leaflet: IF YOU CANNOT READ, THIS LEAFLET WILL TELL YOU HOW TO GET  
LESSONS.**

**On a repair shop door: WE CAN REPAIR ANYTHING. (PLEASE KNOCK HARD ON THE DOOR -  
THE BELL DOESN'T WORK.) Proofreading is a dying art, wouldn't you say?**

**Man Kills Self Before Shooting Wife And Daughter This one I caught in the SGV Tribune the other  
day and called the Editorial Room and asked who wrote this It took two or three readings before  
the editor realized that what he was reading was impossible!!! They put in a correction the next  
day.**

**Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says Really? Ya' think?**

**Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers Now that's taking things a bit far!**

**Panda Mating Fails; Veterinarian Takes Over What a guy!**

**Miners Refuse to Work after Death No-good-for-nothing' lazy so-and-so's!**

**Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant See if that works better than a fair trial!**

**War Dims Hope for Peace I can see where it might have that effect!**

**If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last Awhile Ya' think?!**

**Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures Who would have thought!**

**Enfield ( London ) Couple Slain; Police Suspect Homicide They may be on to something!**

**Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges You mean there's something stronger than duct tape?**

**Man Struck By Lightning: Faces Battery Charge He probably IS the battery charge!**

**New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group Weren't they fat enough?!**

**Astronaut Takes Blame for Gas in Spacecraft  
That's what he gets for eating those beans!**

**Kids Make Nutritious Snacks Do they taste like chicken?**

**Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half Chainsaw Massacre all over again!**

**Hospitals are Sued by 7 Foot Doctors Boy, are they tall!**

**And the winner is... Typhoon Rips Through Cemetery; Hundreds Dead Did I read that right?**

***Fred said the contributor this month wanted to remain anonymous. Can you blame him?***

**These jokes were submitted by Sir Mark Mahoney**

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales.

The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible.

The little girl said, 'When I get to heaven, I will ask Jonah!'

The teacher asked, 'What if Jonah went to hell?'

The little girl replied, 'Then you ask him!'

A Kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work.

As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was.

The girl replied, 'I'm drawing God.'

The teacher paused and said, 'But no one knows what God looks like.'

Without missing a beat or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, 'They will in a minute.'

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six-year-olds.

After explaining the commandment to 'honor' thy Father and thy Mother, she asked, 'Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?'

From the back, one little boy (the oldest of a family) answered, 'Thou shall not kill!'

The children had all been photographed, and the teacher was trying to persuade them each to buy a copy of the group picture 'Just think how nice it will be to look at it when you are all grown up and say, 'There's Jennifer, she's a lawyer,' or 'That's Michael, He's a doctor.'

A small voice at the back of the room rang out, 'And there's the teacher, she's dead.'

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The nun made a note and posted on the apple tray: 'Take only ONE. God is watching.'

Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table, was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies.

A child had written a note, 'Take all you want. God is watching the apples...'

**BOCCE BALL: Steve Patton (Br. 171), Ed Protiva (Br. 174)**

The season has started!!! We had our first game May 21. You could be a part of this great group of guys. Our bocce ball games are played every Tuesday and Friday from 10-12 at the Moraga Commons Park located at the corner of Moraga Road & St Mary's Rd next to the bandstand in the Town of Moraga. The game consists of 4 players on each court, creating 2 teams of 2 members each. Each team has one player at each end of the court. Sign up now by calling Steve. SIR protocols are in effect for participation including masks, waivers, and proof of vaccine. We collect two dollars per person.





### Editor's Note:

Missing from the last issue of the SIR Happenings were the "Consumer Tips" from March, April and May. For some reason or other Sir James Quon didn't get these items to me for the May issue so I have included all of the current and missing Tips from Sir Quon.

## CONSUMER TIPS MARCH 2021

### Consumer Tips, General Items

**How to clean your laptop<sup>1</sup>:** In summary, there are two cleaning protocols that can easily be done by the casual user. A quick/light cleaning will take about 5 minutes and deeper cleaning procedure can take 15 minutes.

#### ■ Here's What You'll Need:

**Microfiber cloth:** Any microfiber cloth will do, but if you don't have any freebies that came with eyeglasses, TVs, monitors, or laptops, we like these [MagicFiber ones](#). For most, this is the only thing you'll need. **Compressed air (optional):** If you can open your laptop and remove the bottom panel (that's a big if), then compressed air is useful for blowing dust out from the fans. Any brand will do—we've used [Falcon Dust-Off](#). **Screwdriver (optional):** If you can open your laptop, you'll generally need tools to do so, and if you're lucky, you can remove the bottom of the laptop with a [Phillips head screwdriver](#). If your laptop has Torx (the screw that looks like a star) or other speciality screws, you may need a [precision toolkit](#).

**Cotton swabs and 70% isopropyl alcohol (optional):** Any brand of cotton swabs and isopropyl alcohol will do.

#### ■ Quick Clean Procedure:

Power down the laptop, unplug it, and remove the battery if you can.

Wipe down your whole laptop with a dry microfiber cloth. This will pick up the majority of dust and light scuffs. If there's stubborn dust, hair, or leftovers crammed between any keys or design embellishments, give the keyboard deck a series of short blasts of canned air to remove it (don't hold down the canned air's nozzle because this creates condensation).

If you spilled something on your laptop, or the keys and trackpad look reflective with finger grease, it's time to do a deeper clean. Lightly dampen the microfiber cloth with a small amount of water and give the laptop case another wipe-down. Don't forget the trackpad/trackball, but be careful not to press down too hard when cleaning it. And don't ever spray or pour water directly onto the laptop.

For stubborn stains, grab a cotton swab, dip the swab into isopropyl alcohol, and then use the swab to focus on any trouble spots. This is acceptable only for certain materials, typically harder, nonporous plastics (including the [keyboard on MacBooks](#)), so do a spot check first to make sure the alcohol doesn't cause any issues.

You should not use isopropyl alcohol on softer plastics, like the material often found on some palm rests, and it may cause issues with some key materials, so always try water first to see if it'll suffice.

To clean the screen, we'll return to our old friend, the microfiber cloth. For glass screens that have fingerprints, take a dry microfiber cloth and wipe the screen down with a little pressure. If the screen isn't glass, use a light touch to gently wipe away any dust. If the screen has more-stubborn residue, like sneeze drops or soda spots, dampen the cloth with water and wipe the screen again. Don't ever spray water directly onto the screen. In our experience, special screen-cleaning sprays aren't useful.

To remove sticker residue - start with a little water on a microfiber cloth to see if that's enough to remove the residue. If it doesn't work, experiment with a small amount of isopropyl alcohol. If the alcohol doesn't work, a product like [Goo Gone](#) might prove useful as a last resort, though we've always found that isopropyl alcohol works with most stickers. Goo Gone has the same cautions for nonporous plastics and can stain some surfaces.

■ **For A Deeper Cleaning:** Depending on the type of laptop you own, you may be able to remove the bottom panel and clear out dust in the fans. This isn't an issue with every laptop, but if you've noticed the fans on your computer kicking on more than usual or that they're making strange sounds, then it's worth cleaning.

Power off your computer, and then remove the bottom panel. This requires a screwdriver, often one with a special bit for electronics. Remember where you remove each screw from—some laptops use different-length screws for different parts of the chassis.

Once you have access to the bottom of the laptop, use short bursts of canned air to blow dust out of the laptop. Do the same to the vents and fans, but hold the fan blade in place to prevent it from spinning too fast. Once the dust is cleared out, you can replace the bottom panel and screws.

<sup>1</sup>**Note:** Summarized from [www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/](http://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/), courtesy of Nancy Lewis

■ **Got A Package You Didn't Order?** A Growing Internet Shopping Scam has recently become more prevalent. The FTC and cyber experts have been warning consumers about “brushing” schemes. Third-party sellers on Amazon, eBay and other online marketplaces pay people to write fake positive reviews about their products or do it themselves. To be able to post the reviews, these “brushers” need to ‘trick’ the selling site into making it appear that a legitimate transaction took place. So, they’ll use a fake account to place gift orders and address them to a random person whose name and address they find online. This creates a tracking number, and when package is delivered, it allows the brushers to write a ‘verified review.’ If you’re on the receiving end, you are not charged for the item since it came as a “gift.” But, you are left in the dark as to who is repeatedly sending the ‘mystery packages.’ Nothing bad has happened to you or will happen to you. If you call the seller/shipper, they won’t know what’s transpired and will be confused. It’s not illegal to send customers un-ordered merchandise as long as they are not billed for it. But FTC has long gone after marketers that use fake reviews. This is fraudulent activity. Amazon’s policy prohibits this “brushing” activity, as do most other online marketing companies. The ‘damage’ to all of us is the potential of ordering specific, quality merchandise but, in fact, end up buying inferior products due to the misleading reviews. If you receive merchandise you did not order, inform the seller/shipper so they can delete the fake reviews and track down the offending person/s.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> **Note:** Excerpt from San Jose Mercury News, Feb. 2021.

■ **Minimize Windshield Wiper “chatter.”** The rainy season is upon us. Even if your windshield wiper blades are in good condition, they can still “chatter/judder” as they sweep across your windshield in the rain. Oil and other contaminants from the roadway are splashed up onto the glass as you drive. These contaminants can settle at the far end of each blade’s sweep to create a small area of a different frictional quality. Run your fingers over this contaminated area and you can feel this road film. To eliminate this phenomenon, keep some hand wipe or lens cleaning towelettes handy in your glove box or center console. When this irritating chatter occurs, simply use a moist, treated towelette to clean that road film off the glass. **Tip:** *During the Pandemic, retail stores, restaurants and other consumer services places will often have treated sanitation hand wipes for public use. These will work as well. Warning – do not use these sanitizing towelettes to wipe down your Infotainment Touch Screen in your car. They could remove the Anti-Glare Coating applied by the manufacture and will make your screen more difficult to view due to increased glare.*

■ **To Write Superscripts/Subscripts in MS Word:**

A superscript is a character, symbol or number set slightly above the normal line of text. It is always smaller than the usual font and is typically found in mathematical or scientific formulas. If you need a superscript in your Word document, here's how to go about it.

**1. Click where you'd like the superscript to appear.** If you already typed what you want in the superscript, highlight that number, character or symbol.

**2. Click the X<sup>2</sup> button.** You can find the superscript button on the 'Home' tab. It's located near all the font options.

**3. Type your superscript.** Type whatever you want to be included in your superscript. It should immediately be set above the normal text line and be smaller.

■ **Clean and Lube Your Sliding Glass Door Track Guides**



**Open the door and vacuum the tracks.** Use a vacuum attachment to reach into the corners of the tracks. Try to lift up any larger pieces of dirt or debris so that it's easier to complete the rest of the cleaning.

**Mix 1 cup (240 ml) of water with a drop of nonabrasive cleaner.** Put a couple drops of cleaner, such as Murphy Soap, denatured alcohol, or dish soap, into a bucket with a cup of warm water. Mix the solution together.

**Scrub the tracks with a nylon or wire brush and cleaning solution.** If you don't have a wire brush, you can use a toothbrush instead. Dip the brush into the solution and scrub on the inside of the tracks. Work your way from one side of the tracks to the other and concentrate on problem areas where there is stuck-on dirt.

**Wipe down the tracks with a rag or paper towels.** Once you've scrubbed the tracks, wipe them down with a paper towel or dry rag. Remove any traces of dirt in the tracks.

**Spray a silicone lubricant onto the tracks.** It's important that you clean your tracks first before you lubricate them. You can purchase a silicone lubricant online or at a department store. Point the end of the nozzle towards the tracks and pull the trigger to spray the lubricant into the tracks. Do not use a petroleum-based lubricant. Those will attract dust and dirt and make the track sticky in the future.

**Wipe down the tracks with a dry rag.** Once you're done spraying the tracks, wipe down the excess lubricant with a rag. This will also help spread the lubricant so that it's equally distributed on your tracks.

**Spray lubricant into the hole on the edge of the door.** Your sliding glass will probably have a hole on the side. Look for the hole in the door over the tracks or on the inside of the door. Place the straw attached to the lubricant into the hole and press the trigger. This will lubricate the wheels that are inside of your door.

- **UV Eyeglass Lenses:** Polarized Sunglass Lenses do not protect against UV light spectrum. The only way to determine if the lenses are UV light filtering, always look for a label on the eyeglasses at the time of purchase. The UV filtering option is available on prescription lenses merely by asking for the option.
- **How Much To Tip Hotel Concierge:** Tip \$5 to \$10 for theater tickets or dinner reservations; \$20 + for special services, no tip for standard services (opening doors, getting directions to a nearby destination, recommendations for places to dine, etc.).
- **Clothes Washer Steam Option:** Consumer Reports does not recommend buying the Steam Option on new Washers/Dryers. They can use up to 600% more energy and increase the amount of water by 18 more gallons used. Yet, for all that, CR tests show no improvement in stain removal, washing capability or elimination of bacteria.
- **Retail Closing:** The entire chain of Fry's Electronics has closed down by the end of February 2021. There are no retail electronic parts and supplies stores left in the Bay Area. This leaves Best Buy as last remaining Consumer Electronics and Computer Store chain store in the area.

### **Food News, Trends and Tips:**

- **A Good Reason to Keep Your Kitchen Knives Sharp** – Do you cry when cutting/chopping onions? This could be due to the use of dull knives. A sharp blade will cut through the onion meat quickly, easily, cleanly and with much less 'bruising or damage' to the onion. This means there will be less loss of onion juices onto your hands and cutting board. It's the fumes from the juices that irritate your eyes!

- **Brava Garden Eatery** – This is a relatively new place on Main St. in downtown Pleasanton started in 2019 by a young couple from Argentina. The menu is Italian with some Argentinean items added. On Mondays, they feature more Argentinean items on the menu. It's nice to have Argentinean cuisine added to the Tri-Valley area. The food is excellent. Pastas are Al Dente. Empanadas are moist and nicely filled. They have a very nice patio out in back for outdoor dining under current Covid restrictions. The space they occupy was formerly the Uptown Burger. Reserved spaces in the adjoin parking lot still bear the Uptown Burger identity and are available for use by Brava customers.
- **Eataly is Coming to the Bay Area!** Eataly is an Italian Food Market complex featuring quality delis, bakeries, meat markets, restaurants, gelato shops, wine shops, etc., all housed in one convenient, multistory building. This is a new development in the U.S. They were started in 2007 in Turin, Italy. There are now locations in NYC, Toronto, Boston, L.A., Las Vegas and now, Santa Clara. They will be situated in the Westview Valley Fair Mall scheduled for opening later this year. For more information about Eataly, go to: [https://www.eataly.com/us\\_en/](https://www.eataly.com/us_en/)
- **Locanda Amalfi, Pleasanton is Now Open** – This is the third restaurant by Enzo Rosano and joins sister restaurants Locanda Ravello, Danville and Locanda Positano, Lafayette. Locanda Ravello seems to be very popular with the locals. All three have outdoor seating that meet current Covid requirements for table service.
- **Campo Di Bocce Closes** – By now, you may have heard that this interesting and entertaining dining venue in Livermore has closed, permanently. Unfortunately, they are another 'victim' of the Pandemic. Their Los Gatos location is "temporarily closed." Their future business may also be in jeopardy. Only time and the Pandemic will determine if their Los Gatos location will survive.
- **Ostro, Scheduled to Open in Walnut Creek** – It was just announced that this new restaurant will open in late 2021. This will be located in the now vacant space formerly occupied by Chili's. The principal owner behind Ostro is Feras Gaban, co-owner of **Manakish Oven and Grill**, a popular Mediterranean restaurant that opened in Walnut Creek a little over a year ago. The exact concept and format is not yet been announced.
- **Augie's Montreal Smoke Meat** – Has moved from its original location to the former Brennan's, 700 Essex Way, Berkeley, CA 94710. Montreal smoke meats are well known in Canada and the Northeast. Think of it as a slightly more spicy version of NYC deli Pastrami. It's excellent! They also serve Smoked Turkey, Latkes, Cole Slaw, Poutine and Smoked Meat Mac & Cheese.
- **Eat 'The Concord Taco Trail!'** – Per The Diablo Magazine, Concord has more than its fair share of good Taco places. They suggest a culinary treat awaits folks willing to 'eat the Concord Taco Trail! There are far too many Tacquerias to list them all but they do recommend the following: El Faro, Los Portales Tacqueria, Mercado Del Sol and Tortileria El Molino. Ask for "Quesabirria," a new taco 'flavor' of beef & cheese taco filling,. It's not on most menus but it is popular with the local folks.
- **Ghost Kitchen Concept Continues to Grow** – The concept of a shared kitchen facility for smaller independent restaurants was started some years ago as a cost cutting measure. The Pandemic has put even more pressure on restaurant owners to reduce costs during this very difficult period. "Shared Kitchen" has recently opened to provide food prep services in the East Bay for Wise Sons Jewish Delicatessen, Proposition Chicken, Mixt, Saucy Asian and Senor Sisig. Recently opened Saga Kitchen produces all the menu items for 3 independent Asian restaurants in Alameda. The Vine Kitchen, another shared facility unaffiliated with Local Kitchens, opened its doors last week to supply San Jose restaurants Left Bank Brasserie, LB Steak, Mac'n Cheese Shop and Skewery by Meso. There will be more 'Ghost Kitchen' operations opening in the near future as a way to combat rising labor costs.
- **2 New Restaurants Opening in The Veranda Shopping Center, Concord** – **CRUMBAL COOKIES**, A high-concept cookie and ice cream chain is opening its second Bay area location (the first is in Brentwood) this year in the Veranda Shopping Center. **CREPE LA FONTAINE**, a creperie by the folks behind Walnut Creek's authentic French bakery, Brioche de Paris will be opening soon.



# CONSUMER TIPS APRIL 2021

## Consumer Tips, General Items

■ **Removal of a Stripped Screw:** When trying to remove a screw with a stripped head, take a flat, wide rubber band and lay it flat across the screw head. Using your screwdriver (slotted or slotted), press down hard onto the rubber band and screw head while turning the screwdriver. Hopefully, the extra rubber material is enough to add some extra grip for the screwdriver to turn the head of the stripped screw. If the above doesn't do the job, your next best bet is to purchase a Screw Extractor Set. Here's a link to this tool set from Amazon for just \$12.99: <https://tinyurl.com/3mxz6anc>

■ **Hazardous Waste Disposal:** It's lurking out in your garage and underneath the kitchen sink. Household hazardous waste-unused paint, solvents, motor oil, herbicides, pesticides, pool chemicals, automotive chemicals, drain cleaners, batteries, and more. It's stuff that accumulates and clutters because you don't know how to dispose of it properly. The good news is if you still possess your dangerous goods, that means you haven't sent it to a landfill, incinerator, or poured it down a drain - actions that create pollution and put sanitation workers at risk of injury. And besides being a bad idea, depending on where you live, improperly disposing of household hazardous waste can be illegal.

In general, if a product is labeled with "Caution," "Warning," "Danger," or "Poison," it deserves special handling. Examples include Paint (both latex and oil-based), varnish, stains, and polyurethane, Home, lawn, and garden chemicals used for pest, insect, and weed control. Anything containing mercury - old fluorescent light bulbs and tubes, thermometers, thermostats, and barometers. Gasoline and most car-care products-used motor oil, transmission fluid, brake fluid, antifreeze, windshield wiper fluid, gear oil, and gas additives, batteries, flammable cleaning solvents such as kerosene, turpentine, varsol, mineral spirits, parts cleaners, floor strippers, rug cleaners, and spot removers, adhesives and hobby chemicals, cosmetics, nail polish and removers, corrosives such as muriatic acid and lye, oven and drain cleaners, swimming pool chemicals, propane tanks, etc.

Municipalities operate drop-off sites or sponsor special drop-off days. To find one near you, visit [Earth911.com](http://Earth911.com), which maintains a database of drop-off sites plus their contact information, days and hours of operation, and which materials they accept. Before you go, call ahead or check the facility's web site to confirm that the site accepts the materials you intend to bring. Note that facilities typically accept waste only from residents of their municipality, so bring a driver's license or other identification. These sites do not accept waste from businesses.

Unlike compact fluorescent light bulbs, which contain a small amount of mercury and should be treated as potentially hazardous, LED bulbs can be safely thrown in the trash or recycled. If your municipality doesn't recycle LEDs, drop them off during your next trip to retailers such as Home Depot, IKEA, or Lowe's, which offer bulb recycling bins.

Many retailers accept single-use and rechargeable batteries for recycling or proper disposal. While rechargeable batteries are overall better for the environment than single-use ones, rechargeables often contain toxic heavy metals (such as nickel, cadmium, and mercury) - so don't toss them in the trash. Find nearby recycling drop-off sites on [Earth911.com](http://Earth911.com) and [Call2Recycle.org](http://Call2Recycle.org). You can bring car batteries to most household hazardous waste drop-off facilities, but car battery retailers also accept them for recycling; there may be a small disposal charge.

Many disposal and recycling locations do not accept latex paint because it is water-soluble and does not present the hazard that oil-based paints do. However, latex products still contain pigments and other chemicals; do not empty excess latex paint down your household drain or a storm sewer. If there is less than a quarter can left, leave the can open and let it evaporate. If there is more, use an absorbent commercial paint hardener or cat litter - to solidify the remaining paint. You can then dispose of the paint can with your normal trash. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Source: Bay Area Consumers' Checkbook, Vol. 18m Winter/Spring 2021

■ **New FTC Website to Makes It Easier To Report Fraud:** The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the government's fraud-fighting agency, received 3.2 million consumer complaints last year dealing with everything from identity theft to online shopping problems. The FTC just launched a new website, [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](http://ReportFraud.ftc.gov), which makes it quicker and easier to report scams, fraud, and bad business practices.

Fill out the online complaint form, and you'll get a tracking number that can be used to update your report if something changes. The site also sends an email with the next steps you should take. The FTC won't take action on behalf of individual consumers. But filing a report will help it and law enforcement agencies that use its information to fight fraud.

■ **Amazon Prime Membership Worth it?:** Most Prime subscribers signed on for expanded free-and-faster shipping and to stream free movies, TV, and its Prime-exclusive Amazon Originals content. But a \$119/year (or \$12.99/month) subscription also offers:

**Unlimited photo storage/backup.** This is our favorite freebie. Plenty of cloud-based companies offer to store your digital stuff, but most cap it at 5GB, and you have to pay up if you need more. Because our kids are so darn photogenic, we need more—a lot more. With Prime, you get free unlimited full resolution photo storage/backup plus 5GB storage for video.

**Music streaming.** Companies like Apple and Spotify offer unlimited listening libraries, but charge for them. If you have Prime, you get its similar ad-free, on-demand music service at no cost.

**Free e-reads.** Unlimited free access to more than 1,000 e-books and magazines. Prime members also get early access to one soon-to-be-released "editor's pick" title each month.

**Free Twitch subscription.** Prime members can subscribe to one channel per month for free. (This has value only if you are a 'gamer'.)

**Access to Prime Wardrobe.** Buying clothes online is a pain. With this program, you can select up to eight items at a time, try them out for free for up to seven days, then return what you don't like. You get charged only for what you keep.

**Discounts on many household and personal-care products if you sign up for regular delivery.** For example, you can get a 20 percent discount off diapers and baby food. The company makes it easy to turn off subscriptions, skip a shipment, or get an extra order if you're too fully stocked or need more.

**Free Prime memberships for students.** Hey, college kids also get to mooch off Amazon! You can sign up for its "Prime Student program using an email address with an "edu" domain. After the trial, you get to keep going for half off the regular \$119 rate.

**More Perk Providers.** Other groups offer even more perks. Good places to go hunting for them include credit unions, USAA, and college alumni groups. Many large employers offer benefits such as discounts on mobile phone plans and free gym memberships; Check with HR. Seniors, armed forces members, teachers, and healthcare workers also often get perks like special hotel rates, retailer discounts, and free coffee!

**The Retail Store Landscape Continues to Shrink:** Let's face it, retail stores are closing all over the country. Here in the Bay Area, Fry's Electronics has permanently closed all its stores. Many strip malls have many shuttered stores and offices. Office Max and Office Depot have merged resulting in less places to buy office supplies. In olden days, most everything was available on a local basis. Now, online shopping is often the only alternative to get some things. Shopping online saves a lot of independent trips for many various things. I believe it saves me a lot of time and gas by buying most things from home using a computer or Smartphone.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Consumer Reports, February 2021 edition

■ **Get the Last Drop Out:** When using viscous gels or liquids such as shampoo and body lotions from plastic pump bottles and the pump no longer pumps because the fluid level is below the level of the pump intake tube. Yet, there's as much as 20% still remaining in the bottom of the bottle. To get the remainder out, try this – place the near-empty bottle in a small metal mixing bowl standing it tilted about 30° to 45° from vertical so that the fluid can collect mostly in one corner of the bottle. Leave it in that position for a day or two so the slow flowing liquid settles into that one corner. Take an ice pick/awl or some other sharp instrument to poke or drill a hole in that corner. Now, you can access that remaining lotion/gel simply by squeezing the bottle with the pump still tightly attached. You can squeeze the fluid into your hand or into another suitable container. You can open a new jar of product and use some so it is not completely full. Remove the pump and hold the old container with the leftover product inside directly over the spout of the newly opened bottle and squeeze the remainder of the product out into the newly opened bottle. Replace the pump on the 'full' bottle and properly dispose (recycle) the old (now empty) plastic bottle.

■ **Review Your Home and Auto Insurance.** If you have not audited your home and auto insurance in a long time, now is the time to do so. Home and auto burglaries have been on the rise since the Pandemic arrived. Did you know that most auto policies cover the theft/damage to the vehicle but not the contents in the vehicle? Does your premium credit card provide basic coverage for your rental cars? Check your policies for coverage, deductibles and limitations. Do you need a 'rider' attachment for special coverage.

■ **Mobile Covid-19 Virus Home Test Kits Now Available.** If you need quick access to a Covid-19 Virus Test, go to DoorDash.com. The cost is about \$120, Some US residents can now get a DIY Test Kit alongside a meal after food ordering service DoorDash announced they'll deliver at-home tests to cities across the country. Two types of tests will be available - a nasal swab or a saliva sample - the



company said. Both can yield results within 24 to 48 hours. It is the first such scheme to be launched by a delivery service.

"Amidst the pandemic, one of our priorities has been to make health and wellness essentials more accessible for customers, and we will continue to expand our offerings in the healthcare space," a spokesperson for DoorDash said. DoorDash is offering polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test kits from Vault Health and Everlywell. Such tests can pick up smaller amounts of the virus that other tests might miss. They can be ordered in two ways: via the DoorDash app or through Vault Health's website. Delivery via the app is available in 12 cities including Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Minneapolis, and Phoenix, with plans to expand. Ordering via Vault Health's website allows users in 20 cities - including Houston, Las Vegas, and San Diego - to have a test kit delivered to their door.

- **Pick Up Small Pieces of Broken Glass:** If you break a glass or some other glass object on the kitchen floor or counter, don't try to use your fingers or hand to pick up tiny shards of glass. Instead, grab a piece of bread and press it down over the area. It should pick up those little pieces you don't want stuck in your fingers or the bottom of your feet! A small, wireless handy vac (Dustbuster or similar device) is even better, if you have one.

- **Polarized and UV Blocking Lenses.** From a technical point of view, polarized lenses are made with a special filter that blocks **horizontal bands of light**. While at first this may not seem *that* useful, it's important to know that *glare*, the squint-inducing light reflected off of surfaces like car windows in summertime traffic or off the surface of water (lakes, ponds, rivers, oceans, etc.) is transmitted in these **same horizontal bands of light!** In effect, polarized lenses block that glare to provide more clear and defined vision. Polarized lenses are also useful in the detecting flaws in critical metal parts. Minute cracks and stressed/work-hardened areas can often be seen in the reflected light off a smooth, metal surface. **UV Blocking lenses** are used to block out harmful Ultra Violet light rays. Think of UV filtering lenses as "sun block" for your eyes. Both Polarized and UV Filtering lenses are available as options in prescription eyeglasses. When shopping for OTC, non-prescription sunglasses look on the attached tags/packaging for the above features.

- **Alkaline Batteries:** When shopping for Alkaline batteries for your cordless/portable devices, don't think of private or off-branded products as being inferior to name brands. Per CR, most private/off-brand batteries are made by the name brand manufacturers. So the private branded Alkaline batteries from Costco, Amazon, Walmart, Best Buy, CVS, RiteAid, Kroger, Sharper Image, etc., are usually equal to the name brands. As an example, Costco's Kirkland Signature Alkaline batteries are made by Duracell and are identical to the Duracell brand units except packaging and printed graphics. Alkalines have a 10-year shelf life so don't worry about buying in bulk. Alkalines contain 3 to 5 times more power than the inexpensive, carbon-zinc standard batteries. Alkalines work best in low-power, low drain applications.

- **New TV Series:** Two new series are now available for viewing on your broadcast channels. For a superb travelog experience, tune into "**Aerial America/Greece/Britain**" on the **Smithsonian Channel**. These are extremely informative, interesting and really beautifully edited and photographed. Don't miss these if you are a history buff or have a curiosity about people, places and things. And for those with a high culinary interest, there's "**Top Chef Season 18**" premieres with a supersized episode on **Thursday, April 1, on Bravo Channel**. This new series is filmed mostly in and around Portland, OR.

- **Topgolf Complex coming to San Jose:** Topgolf's official Instagram account states that the north San Jose venue is slated to open sometime in April. Topgolf operates high-tech driving ranges that allow people to hit golf balls equipped with microchips that record distance and accuracy. The venues typically also include dining and drinking establishments. These facilities are suitable for group gatherings with competitive activities and prizes. They are also available for corporate events. In north San Jose's Alviso district, the Topgolf complex features a large curving structure along with a huge golf driving range. The structure appears to have three levels. A lengthy driving range and circular targets for golf shots are also visible.

Among the amenities touted: A wine bar, game-watching bar, outdoor patio, conference rooms, and 120 bays from which people could hit golf shots. Currently, there are Topgolf locations in Las Vegas, Roseville and Portland with many more throughout the U.S. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Source: San Jose Mercury News,

## CONSUMER TIPS MAY 2021

### Consumer Tips, General Items

▪ **Beware of Home Warranty Reviews** – Be wary of online search results for home warranty reviews. Some appear to be sham rankings, likely paid for by the touted companies. For instance, some sites with generic domain names pop up in a search, ostensibly listing the best home warranty companies. One company appears as "best overall" on one site and is the top-listed home warranty company on another site with a slightly different domain name. If you look up the company through the Better Business Bureau, though, you can see it has received more than 10,000 complaints in the last three years, and more than 4,000 in the last 12 months alone. Despite these complaints, it gets a B rating from the BBB. Don't trust the customer testimonials that appear on a home warranty company's website, either. You'll likely find mostly five-star ratings and rave reviews. One company offered glowing reviews on its website, but on the BBB's website, the firm received a one-star rating on average based on 593 customer reviews. It, too, got a B rating from the BBB.

The BBB's ratings are based on:

- The number of complaints
- The size of the business
- How well the business responded to complaints, how quickly the complaints were resolved and whether the business made a good faith effort to resolve complaints

A better approach might be to look at BBB's website for companies rated "A" or "A+" plus and contacting them directly.

#### Bottom line

If you decide to go with a home warranty, be sure to check its rating with the Better Business Bureau, and don't assume a B rating means "above average."

Also, take the time to closely review the contract describing standard coverage, optional coverage and upgraded items. Understand the limitations. It may not be necessary to pay a higher premium for optional or upgraded coverage. Premiums, exclusions and caps on benefits vary widely, so shop around.

You have a choice of paying annual premiums for peace of mind or building an emergency fund for unexpected expenses later on. It may be better to rely on an emergency fund than to pay premiums for a home warranty contract that may or may not be needed.

▪ **Truly Good Ice Cream** – Salt & Straw might be some of the best ice cream you'll ever be able to buy, commercially. *Salt & Straw began* as a food cart on Alberta Street, Portland, Oregon and three months later the company opened its first brick-and-mortar location. Since opening in 2011, *Salt & Straw* has opened three other locations in Portland and offers a home delivery service throughout the US. The company packs its ice cream in dry ice and kraft paper. Salt & Straw has locations in Portland, Los Angeles, Anaheim, San Francisco, San Diego, and Seattle. Salt & Straw is partially owned by film star and wrestler Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. Flavors offered at the ice cream shop vary depending on the seasons and ingredient availability, as all main ingredients are locally sourced. A list of regular Salt and Straw flavors follows (though these differ by location):

- Double fold vanilla
- Pear and blue cheese
- Sea salt and caramel ribbons
- Chocolate and gooey brownies
- Strawberry balsamic and black pepper
- Coffee and bourbon



■ **Shortages In The Land Of Plenty** – The Pandemic has many unforeseen consequences. Gasoline and other fuels delivered by tanker truck – As the Pandemic allows us to become less restrictive, damage to our workforce has already been done. The labor force has been highly impacted. So many jobs were lost that people dropped out of their normal field of work and tried to establish new careers in order to survive. This means there is a huge deficit in jobs and some career areas. An example is the Hospitality Industry (restaurants, hotels, entertainment, domestic and foreign travel, etc.) that has taken a huge hit. This will result in shortages in the service areas (truck drivers, public transportation workers, retail services, etc.) because of the infrastructure required to distribute goods and services. Restaurants have been severely impacted – over ¼ of all restaurants in the U.S. have either shut down, many of them permanently. In trying to reopen or return to normal operations, they are now faced hamstrung by the lack of qualified workers as a large portion of that workforce has ‘pivoted’ by going out their professional work area. Same with the trucking industry – lack of qualified drivers has already resulted in shortages many basic products and services. Gasoline will, again, become scarce or more expensive as the general public attempts to returns to normalcy. The lack of experienced/trained drivers, commercial driving schools have already caused price for gas to rise to over \$4/gallon. This will, in turn, cause other disruption within our society. And the ripple effect will negatively impact our business economy for the near future. Rental Car companies sold off much of their inventory during the Pandemic to reduce operating costs in an attempt to survive. Now, the shortage of rental cars has resulted in either no cars available or at incredible high cost to even loyal customers (some rental companies charging as much as \$350/day). This is, of course, a blow to the travel industry. Even basic grocery and daily living items inventory – anything delivered by truck – has already been affected.

■ **Don't Shirk On Your Daily Dental/Mouth Hygiene** – Brushing your teeth twice a day can reduce your chances of contracting pneumonia. This simple/basic regimen is required of patients in many hospitals.<sup>1</sup> Use an inexpensive breathing exerciser. Example: Voldyne 5000 Volumetric Exerciser, available from Amazon for just \$6.49!

<sup>1</sup>Source: Kaiser Permanente

■ **Parklet Potential Danger** – In a past issue I warned of the danger of being run down by errant vehicles when seated at restaurants with curbside and window tables located adjacent to vehicle parking spots. This same warning applies to newly installed ‘Parklets,’ installed during the Pandemic to allow expanded, outdoor table service. In most establishments, there is little or no attempt to keep vehicles from intruding into this seating area. Avoid these exposed tables if there are no barriers to protect you from errant drivers.

■ **Duct Cleaning** - Although duct-cleaning operations may insist that duct cleaning is essential for your health, the evidence does not support their claims. While it intuitively makes sense to clean ductwork—after all, you dust and clean the rest of your house, so why not clean your ducts?—the fact is dust that settles in your ventilation system generally stays where it is, unlikely to become airborne unless disturbed. Under most circumstances, it is inert and harmless, and stirring it up with cleaning equipment actually creates bigger problems.

Little research has been done on the effects of duct cleaning. U.S.- and Canadian-government studies and health professionals who have investigated duct cleaning stop short of recommending against it, but neither do they endorse it as a routine measure.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Source: Yahoo News Today

Note: This month's edition is, unfortunately, much shorter than normal. I apologize for the meager notes for this edition. Unfortunately, I am attending to a family issue that required my immediate time and attention. Hopefully, next month's edition will return to normal. Thank you for your patience.

# CONSUMER TIPS JUNE 2021

## TIPS AND GENERAL ITEMS

■ **Reducing Scar Tissue** – If you have red, raised scars on your skin that are easily visible can often be treated with Mederma Scar Gel or Cream. Some of us are Keloidal, a condition resulting in raised scar tissue after an injury has healed. These are pink or reddish, raised, unsightly scars. To reduce or even eliminate them, treat them with Mederma Scar Gel or Cream. It works well to reduce the swollen look of the scar so it will blend into the surrounding skin tissue.

■ **Proof of Vaccination** – Upon completion of your Covid-19 vaccination procedure, you will have a completed Vaccination Card that can be used to verify you as being relatively safe to others for spreading Covid. Some folks laminate this thin paper card for to make it durable for keeping it in your wallet. However, when and if it becomes necessary to update the info in the event of future booster shots or other developments, the lamination makes it impossible to add updated data. It would be better to make a photo copy or take a picture of it with your cellphone and store it in memory for quick retrieval when needed to demonstrate ‘proof of vaccination.’ Keep the original in a safe manner similar as your passport or other important I.D. documents.

■ **The Average Lifespan of Major Appliances<sup>1</sup>** – This often comes up in when deciding if you should repair or replace these expensive household devices. The following average life spans are listed below to help you in your decision process.

> **Refrigerators:** According to the 23rd annual portrait of the U.S. **appliance** industry, standard **refrigerators** usually last anywhere from 10 to 18 years, with an **average life** expectancy of 14 years. Compact **refrigerator lifespan** is even shorter, ranging from 4 to 12 years with an **average life** expectancy of 8 years.

> **Freezers:** On average, the life expectancy of a refrigerator-freezer or chest freezer is 16 years. Freezers typically last anywhere from 12 to 20 years.

> **Washer & Dryers:** CR members expect a **washer and dryer** to last **10 years**, on **average**, according to our 2018 survey. Most major manufacturers say you can expect at least that. Speed Queen is unusual in that it claims its machines can last roughly 25 years.

> **Dishwasher:** The **average lifespan** of a modern dishwasher is approximately **6-10 years**. Over time, major components like the motor or pump may wear out, and out-of-warranty repairs can easily run \$400-\$600 or more once parts, labor and trip costs are calculated.

<sup>1</sup> SOURCE: Consumer Reports

> **Computer Wireless Trackball Mouse:** Need a new or better mouse for your PC/Laptop? I recently received a Logitech M570 Wireless Trackball Mouse as a gift to replace my 10+ year old Wireless Logitech Mouse. This newer one is a major improvement. For starters, it is both PC and Apple compatible. Next, it's a 2-piece unit. The old one was 3-piece (wireless sender + receiver + trackball device). The new one is all contained in one unit. The battery life is greatly extended – up to 18 months instead of the old 2/3 month lifespan. It's true 'Plug n Play.' No more pairing of trackball to sender required. No tools are required to easily pop out the trackball for cleaning. The cost is only \$34 from Amazon. The old one was \$98!

■ **A Bidet In Your Own Home:** Years ago our son gave us a Bidet Toilet Seat that was easy to install and worked wonderfully well. We never had to sit on a cold toilet seat. It gave us over 15 years of comfort and really clean bottoms. But, alas, it recently became a casualty of wear and old age. We immediately replaced it and we are, again, happily enjoying the benefits. It's easy to install – just like replacing a standard toilet seat with the addition of a very simple hookup to the water supply line to your existing toilet. The job can be done in just 15 to 20 minutes using simple household tools – pliers, adjustable wrench and a slotted screwdriver. The Bidet Toilet Seat kit comes with an easy to install “T” valve for easy water hookup. Installation can easily be done if you are handy with tools. If you need a plumber or handyman to install it, it should be at the minimum cost for a house call. The units cost is \$220 to \$290 from Amazon depending upon features desired. The following are the benefits: 1. No more sitting on a cold toilet seat. 2. The bidet has adjustable water and seat temperatures and water stream pressure. The gentle stream of warm



water washing your tush is most pleasant and does a far better job than toilet paper. 3. There is a big savings in toilet paper. 4. And if you get the higher end ones, a drying fan of warm air is also provided. However a built-in dryer feature is not really necessary because natural air drying will occur in a very few minutes. 5. Even the lower end models feature a memory setting for two people – water and seat temperature, position of the nozzle and, of course choice of front and rear wash cycles are saved in memory with custom settings. Electrical hook up is super easy – simply plug the unit's power cord into a common, standard 110/120 V outlet.

■ **Alien Tape:** A video review of the widely TV advertised Alien Tape reveals a lot that is not shown or stated on those fabulous TV ads! **First**, The 17 lb, holding power is highly inaccurate. The TV image shows putting heavy objects on porous surfaces such as brick and cement substrates. User testing has shown even 10 lbs. is too much to hold even for a day. And the instructions say to use it on smooth, dry, clean surfaces, very unlike the TV images! **Second**, don't believe that it's reusable. The holding strength of the adhesive is significantly degraded after the first application. And when rinsing the used tape off with water of any debris left behind and imbedded into the adhesive coating, the holding power is even further degraded. **Third**, when rinsed with water, the tape tends to shrivel and become tangled within itself, rendering it a mess to untangle and smooth back out. **Third**, when removed from painted wallboard, it ripped the wall surface off at the spot of adhesion. And the object being put on the wall can also be damaged. A 10 lb. box of nails failed after a few minutes and when the Alien Tape was removed, it tore the cardboard material of the nail box. This does not meet the parameters of "removable." Removability should mean no damage to either substrates (wall or cardboard box).

Source: YouTube

### **KITCHEN AND FOOD TIPS**

■ **Avocados** - When shopping for fresh avocados, look for just a hint of softening at the stem end of the fruit. Never choose Avocados when they are cold because they will feel very firm/hard. Typically, they are stored in refrigerated spaces in the markets and put out on the shelf/bins in the morning. Shop in the afternoon after the fruit has had a chance to come up to room temperature.

■ **Romaine Lettuce** – These are smaller, easier to handling during prep, sized better for many applications and last longer at home in the refrigerator. Artisan romaine has the refreshing crunch of Iceberg Lettuce and the sweet flavor of a Romaine Heart. They are often packaged three in a plastic bag. The price is a bit more but they're well worth the slightly higher price.

■ **English cucumbers** - Cucumis sativus, were actually bred to create a **cucumber** without some of the more undesirable characteristics that this vegetable has, such as a tough outer skin, large seeds, and a bitter taste. They are also known as hothouse **cucumber**, burpless **cucumber**, seedless **cucumber**, and European **cucumber**. They are often individually vacuum wrapped in plastic to protect their thinner, more fragile outer skin. This also keeps them fresher longer after you bring them home.

■ **Mixing Dry Powder in Liquids** – When mixing drink dry mixes into liquids and using a spoon to stir-mix it into a thoroughly mixed solution with no clumps, lumps can be challenging. Use a small, battery operated Milk Frother. They are available on Amazon for \$10 or less! Get one that has it's own stand so you can leave it on the counter next to the sink for easy and quick access. The following link is just one of many models: <https://tinyurl.com/vmrcfcf3>.

■ **Shelling Hard Boiled Eggs:** Here's a super easy way to quickly peel the shell from hard boiled eggs. Even eggs that were not cooked in the specified procedure to ensure easy peeling shell as recommended by cooking gurus. All you need is a medium-size Mason Jar and lid or any other similar container with hard sides and bottom. All you need do is fill the jar to about 1/3 full with ordinary tap water. Drop your hardboiled egg into the jar, screw the lid on and vigorously shake it. The egg will 'self peel' inside the jar. Simply retrieve your peeled egg and dump the shells and water down the garbage disposal. Because we are facing a drought this year, you can save the water and strain the shells out of it to discard. It won't matter if the eggs you want to shell are cold, old, room temperature, etc. It should work on any hard boiled egg.

■ **Better Instant Coffee** – Instant coffee mixes are super easy to use. They have been around for decades but none are nearly as good as freshly brewed coffee. Starbucks introduced their VIA Instant Coffee and is a marked improvement. Trader Joe's now offers a Cold Brew Instant Coffee that I believe is even better and closer to fresh, brewed coffee. Try it. You might like it. And it is considerably lower in cost than Starbucks VIA.

**New Small Appliances in the Kitchen:** The last few years has seen a proliferation of many new kitchen small appliances that are designed to make cooking more fun, simpler and more foolproof. Here's a little rundown on them from CR.

**Multi-Cooker** (Instant Pot is the most popular).

One-pot meals that would typically require hours to cook take half the time using a multi-cooker's pressure cook mode. It can steam, sauté, and slow cook, too (though our tests show that slow cookers are still

better at that particular task).

**Common mistakes to avoid:**

The pressure cooking mode requires liquid to work properly. But the liquid will not evaporate, so use less than you usually would or your dishes could turn out watery and bland.

**What's new:** Certain models have separate broiling lids, either included or sold separately, that allow you to crisp up your foods once they're cooked. We're also seeing models that can dehydrate and perform as a sous vide (precision temperature water bath) unit.

**For your feast:** Take advantage of the speedy pressure cook mode to make otherwise time-consuming dishes, such as wild rice and Mac & Cheese.

**Toaster Oven.**

A toaster oven can bake, roast, and broil, and is up to most any task your full-sized oven can accomplish but just on a smaller scale. That makes it a smart standby when the oven is occupied or when you're cooking for just a few people.

**Common mistakes to avoid:** As with baking in a full-sized Oven, a dark-colored pan accelerates the transfer of heat, possibly causing roasted vegetables or cookie bottoms to burn. So use a light-colored pan instead, or lower the temperature by 25° F.

**What's new:** In the past five years, certain toaster Ovens have added features such as air frying, convection, dehydrating, and slow cooking. **For your feast:** Consider the toaster oven a trusty sidekick to your full-sized oven, great for baking rolls and casseroles, and roasting meats in smaller portions.

**Air Fryers:** Air fryers circulate hot air around food to cook it quickly and create a deliciously crisp texture using less fat than deep-frying. With just 1 or 2 tablespoons of olive oil, Brussels sprouts and cauliflower come out tender yet irresistibly crispy, asparagus is beautifully blistered, and salmon fillets are moist inside and nicely browned outside. You can even use an air fryer to bake: Banana bread emerges with an extra-crispy top. All the air fryers in our tests turn out nicely cooked food. The biggest differences are their capacity, how easy they are to use and clean and how much noise they make.

**Common mistakes to avoid:** Food can cook unevenly or turn out soggy if a batch is too large. For best results, don't overfill the basket, and shake it every 5 minutes or so for even browning.

**What's new:** Air-frying has become so popular that we're seeing this function added to all kinds of other appliances, including toaster ovens, microwaves and multi-cookers. We tested the function as part of the evaluation of the toaster oven, microwave and multi-cooker models that feature it in our tests and all of them made delicious, crispy foods such as chicken, fries and spring rolls.

**For your feast:** Use it to roast potatoes or cook veggies for your holiday meals.

**Note:** We use it a lot to freshen up baked and deep fried goods, fresh and day-old pastries, frankfurters for hot dogs, left over steaks and roasts. Refresh fried foods. Fried chicken/shrimp from commercial vendors reheated in an air fryer comes out, sometimes, even better than when it was finished at the store. All pastries such as Croissants, Apple Strudel or Butter Horns from Costco, supermarkets or real bakeries come out fantastic! But when reheating fried or baked foods, let the item rest about 5 minutes before consuming. That allows the exterior to crisp up. Use it in a two-step process to re-warm or defrost bread, buns, rolls and other baked, roasted or fried item, first in the microwave (thaw/warm the interior) that leaves them soft and spongy. Put them in the air fryer to crisp up the exterior and it might be better than freshly made.

**Blender:** Sure, blenders are great for smoothies, but you can also use them to make a velvety purée or sauce to go with your favorite foods. Some can even heat ingredients using the friction of the blades, so you don't have to separately heat up, say, soup.

**Common mistakes to avoid:** Hot ingredients can cause certain blenders to malfunction. Check your blender's manual to see whether hot ingredients can be used. If the blender lid doesn't have a vent hole, heat will build up pressure, which can cause the lid to pop off.

**What's new:** A growing number of models can heat ingredients while blending, so you can prepare soup without using the stovetop.

**For Your Feast:** Make a soup or an herb sauce to accompany the meal.



**Source:** Consumer Reports

### **Automotive Items**

If you're shopping for a new car, it might be helpful to know the best and the worst of the brands for reliability.

**Best:** Lexus, Mazda, Toyota, Porsche, Genesis, Hyundai, Subaru, Dodge, Kia

**Average:** Nissan, Honda, Infiniti, Audi, Lincoln, Ford, BMW, Buick, Chrysler, Mitsubishi, Mercedes Benz

**Worst:** GMC, Tesla, Volvo, Chevrolet, Jeep, Volkswagen, Acura, Alfa Romeo, Cadillac.

**Note:** The above are listed in descending order; Source: Consumer Reports

### **Three Features That Save Lives**

1. Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB)
2. Pedestrian Detection (usually a part of AEB)
3. Blind Spot Warning (BSW)

### **Two Features That Make Driving Easier and Safer**

1. Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC)
2. Lane Keeping (LKA)

### **Customer Satisfaction of Infotainment Systems by Brand**

Ranked in descending order within each category.

**Most Satisfied:** BMW- iDrive; Fiat-Chrysler - Uconnect 4; Hyundai/Ford/Lincoln - Sync; Genesis - Genesis Display; Hyundai/Kia - Hyundai Display & UV03; Porsche - PCM; Tesla - IVI

**Average:** Audi - MMI; GM - GM Infotainment; Infiniti - Infiniti InTouch; Nissan - NissanConnect; Subaru - Starlink; Volkswagen - MIB II; Volvo - Sensus.

**Least Satisfied:** Acura - AcuraLink; Honda - HondaLink; Lexus - Remote TouchPad/Remote Touch; Mazda - Mazda Connect; Mercedes Benz - Comand; Toyota - Entune.

**Note:** Source for all automotive items in this issue are from various editions of CR.

## **CONSUMER TIPS JULY 2021**

### **CONSUMER TIPS, GENERAL ITEMS:**

■ **The latest news on Alzheimer's research.** One big development is something called "Alzheimer's in a Dish." They've been able to form mini Alzheimer's brains, with plaques and tangles, in a petri dish by using neurons from patients. That work was done at Massachusetts General Hospital and is a very big advance because you will be able to see if a drug works quickly. They can screen hundreds or thousands of drugs in months, compared to a more costly, time-consuming process using mice.

### **What are some preventive measures people can take on their own?**

**Diet.** People on vegetarian or Mediterranean diets have cleaner brains in regards to Alzheimer's pathology than those who eat a diet rich in saturated fat. A vegetarian diet has been associated with reduced amyloid pathology in the brain. Reducing vascular risks, controlling blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, weight—all of those have been shown to reduce your risk for developing dementia. Be mentally and socially active.

**Hearing loss** may be one of the biggest potentially reversible factors for Alzheimer's risk. **Studies have shown that if you have hearing loss for a long period, it causes shrinkage of brain regions that are very close to the memory centers.** So hearing aids and regular hearing tests are very important.

### **What about sleep?**

We know that sleep is when the brain boosts our immunity and archives our memories. We know that sleep is important for clearing toxic proteins from the brain. All those are crucial. So yes, it is important to get a good night's rest for a healthy memory.

### **Much of the treatment and therapies seems to be targeted for those in the early stages. What about those in the middle or later stages?**

We have medications on the market that treat symptoms of those in the middle stages, but we haven't found anything to fix the damage in the brain once it has occurred. That is why there is so much urgency to develop preventive strategies.

## What impact has the pandemic had on Alzheimer's patients?

It prevented Alzheimer's patients from getting proper care during the last 12-15 months. More people with Alzheimer's died during the pandemic than with any other disease. There are some studies that have suggested there is an increased incidence of dementia among Covid survivors. We may end up with a new term, Covid dementia.

The research on Covid vaccine technology has really given a boost to the field in terms of rapid mobilization of resources and working with regulatory agencies. I'm hoping that will spill over into other fields, like ours.

## What prevents people from getting tested?

**Fear.** Alzheimer's is the most feared disease, even more so than cancer. People fear losing their independence, their identity and having to give up everything, from driving to managing their accounts. But a lot of patients who are diagnosed and in early stages can still drive and manage. It requires coordinated family planning around it to see what can and can't be done.

Others think that it's not worth getting evaluated because nothing can be done about it. But if you don't get evaluated, you don't know if it's Alzheimer's or something else. I had a patient who thought he had Alzheimer's but it turned out to be a severe vitamin deficiency. We corrected it, and his cognition was back to normal.

It's also important for people to get tested so they can make plans, including financial ones.

Source: Wall Street Journal, By Clare Ansberry, June 7, 2021

## ■ SUNSCREEN PRIMER: CHEMICAL VS. PHYSICAL SUNSCREEN

These two types of sun protection work in different ways to protect your skin from the sun's rays. Which one is best? Whichever you'll use generously over and over (with broad-spectrum protection and an SPF of at least 30), says the American Academy of Dermatology. Here's how they work:

**CHEMICAL:** Using a chemical reaction (ingredients include avobenzone and oxybenzone, among others), these products are absorbed into the skin where they trap UV light, turn it into heat rays and release them from the body. They're best when you need a water or sweat-resistant formula that absorbs quickly.

**PHYSICAL:** These sunblock products contain mineral ingredients like zinc oxide and titanium dioxide that work like a shield, sitting on the surface of the skin (sometimes leaving a white residue) and reflecting the Sun's rays. Because they're not absorbed, they are often more tolerated by sensitive skin types.

■ **A REALLY GOOD CELLPHONE APP – GOOGLE LENS:** This is a free app for Android and Apple Smartphones. Google Lens lets you search what you see, get things done faster, and understand the world around you—using just your camera or a photo.

## SCAN & TRANSLATE TEXT

Translate words you see, save a business card to your contacts, add events to your calendar from a poster, and copy and paste complicated codes or long paragraphs into your phone to save time.

## SCAN CODES

Quickly scan QR codes and barcodes.

This is simple and very easy to use. First, download the app from the App Store. It's free and works on Android and Apple phones. Simply use your Smartphone to take a photo of something, someone or a place and click on your Google Lens icon. The app will search for the item/place against images in the Google data base and show you similar items, places, identify what your photo is, etc. and provide information that you may use to shop for products, items, places, etc.

## PLANTS & ANIMALS

Find out what that plant is in your friend's apartment, or what kind of dog you saw in the park.

## EXPLORE PLACES AROUND YOU

Identify and learn about landmarks, restaurants, and storefronts. See ratings, hours of operation, historical facts, and more.

## FIND THE LOOK YOU LIKE

See an outfit that catches your eye? Or a chair that's perfect for your living room? Find similar clothes, furniture, and home decor to the one you like.

## KNOW WHAT TO ORDER

See popular dishes on a restaurant menu based on reviews from Google Maps.

### ■ LOCAL DINING TRENDS:

► **CUPCAKIN' BAKE SHOP COMING TO WALNUT CREEK:** Cupcakin' Bake Shop, the Steph Curry-favorite located in Berkeley and Oakland, is coming to downtown Walnut Creek this summer.

Owner-baker Lila Owens is moving into the former Kara's Cupcakes spot which closed in 2020 after more than 10 years at 1388 N. Main St. Owens is known for her from-scratch-daily cupcakes in 20 or so flavors, from Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough and Lemon Cream Pie to Funfetti and Gluten-Free Lemon Blackberry. She makes vegan cupcakes, too, in flavors such as Vegan Milk Chocolate and Banana Chocolate.

Cupcakes cost \$3.95 each, or you can get one dozen mini cupcakes for \$23.40. A soft opening is slated for July 1, with a grand opening planned for July 3 from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Owens started her baking career with a home-based cupcake catering business in 2007. Seven years later, she opened the first Cupcakin' Bake Shop on Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue, followed by a second shop inside Oakland's Swan's Market and third location in Berkeley's Gourmet Ghetto, in the space previously occupied by the 65-year-old Virginia Bakery.

■ **LB STEAK Brings Prime Cuts to San Ramon:** A dozen years after opening its first upscale Silicon Valley steakhouse, the Left Bank/Vine Hospitality restaurant group has expanded to the East Bay. LB Steak featuring an upscale ranch-themed decor - is now open at City Center Bishop Ranch in San Ramon, with outdoor seating and limited in door dining and bar seating. The steakhouse is an offshoot of noted chef Roland Passot's Left Bank Brasseries in Menlo Park, Larkspur and San Jose. LB Steak caters to the steak lover with a menu of prime Angus cuts aged in-house, A5 wagyu from Japan's Hokkaido, Miyazaki and Takamori prefectures and - thanks to the French influence of Passot - a temperature guide that allows customers to order their steak cooked to any one of six levels, from "blue" to "well done" (or in French, quelle horreur). Signature items on the menu include a 48-ounce Tomahawk rib-eye for two, 50-day aged pork chop and maple glazed pork belly and, from the seafood side, Maine Lobster tail, lobster bisque and whole Branzino. Dinner is available nightly. Soon Lunch and Happy Hour will be added to the San Ramon location.

Source: [izavoral@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:izavoral@bayareanewsgroup.com)

■ **SAN RAMON, CA – Crumbl Cookies, a gourmet cookie shop, is coming to San Ramon next month.**

Crumbl Cookies will be located at 152 Sunset Drive and offer a rotating menu of six cookies each week, alternating between choices from its repertoire of 130 cookies, said Arlene Wall, an owner of the San Ramon franchise. More cookie recipes are in the works but guests can always count on finding Crumbl's best-known milk chocolate chip cookie, plus a chilled cookie, which is typically topped with icing. Other Crumbl flavors include chocolate cupcake, lemon poppyseed, lime and peaches n' cream. Crumbl will sell beverages such as milk and chocolate milk, and eventually plans to sell ice cream too, Wall said. Anyone with a sweet tooth can swing by to pick up Crumbl Cookies in the company's signature pink box beginning July 9, on the date of its grand opening in San Ramon. The store will be open from 8 a.m. to midnight. Wall and her co-owners plan to open three additional Tri-Valley locations in the future in Dublin, Livermore and Walnut Creek. Crumbl has franchises across the country, including in Bay Area locations Brentwood, Rohnert Park and Concord.

■ **How to Tell If Eggs Are Bad:** All egg cartons and trays sold in Australia must be marked with a best before date and this is the easiest and most reliable way to check whether eggs are still ok to eat. The best before date signifies the end of the period in which eggs are safe to eat and is calculated as six weeks from the day the egg is packed into the carton. But what if you've stored your eggs without the carton? Well, in short, you should always store eggs inside the carton you bought them in, inside the fridge. Egg shells are porous and the carton helps protect the eggs from any potential contamination.

If you don't have the best before date, it's sometimes possible to determine a bad egg simply by smelling it. Good eggs don't smell at all but off eggs will emit a slight sulfuric smell that warns you something isn't right. If you're unsure, crack the egg onto a clean plate to smell it properly. If there's any pungency, throw away the egg and wash the plate thoroughly. A cleaner and un-



doubtedly more fun method is to conduct the egg floating test. This is not a myth; fresh eggs sink while bad eggs float to the top. Simply fill a bowl with cold tap water and place your eggs in it. If they sink to the bottom and lay flat on one side, they are fresh and good to eat. A bad egg will float because of the large air cell that forms at its base. Any floating eggs should be thrown out.

#### ■ AUTOMOBILE ITEMS:

▶ A little scratch or chip in the paint of your car, it isn't worth the expense of fixing it up professionally. Of course, the unfortunate downside to this is that you end up driving around with unsightly scratches on your car. We bet you didn't know you could cover those up yourself! All you need is a little bit of nail polish. As long as you can match the paint on your vehicle pretty closely, a little bit of nail polish will cover up the scratches well enough that nobody would notice if they weren't looking for them. Note: Nail Polish is not UV resistant and may fade considerably when regularly exposed to sunlight. *See note below for outdoor paint vehicle codes.*

▶ Pick up some silicone cupcake wrappers and slip them into your car's cup holders. They'll keep all that loose change organized, and are easy to remove and clean, keeping the cup holders pristine.

▶ If you need to make some space in your backseat, pick up some carabineer hooks and attach them to your headrests. They can be used to hold bags, groceries, umbrellas, and etc.

▶ If you need a place to keep your purse, bag, or mask without your stuff going everywhere, simply attach a Scotch Command Hook at floor level or below your dashboard. That keeps everything you need accessible, neat, and tidy.

*Source: definition. Org/car hacks*

Note: An exact match Touch-Up Paint for your vehicle is available at modest cost at your local vehicle dealer or Auto Supply Stores. You will need your vehicle's paint code. To find the location for this code, Google "Where is the paint code on a 2015 Subaru Outback?" as an example.

▶ **CAR CARRIERS/RACKS EFFECT ON GAS MILEAGE:** Have you ever wondered about the gas mileage penalty there is for leaving an empty car-top carrier or rear trailer hitch mount on the vehicle for regular operation? CR has done some testing and this is what they found. They found the fuel economy loss can be as low as 2% and as high as 19%, depending on the type of car and type of equipment carrier. A roof rack on a Nissan Altima traveling at 65 mph cost the Altima an 11% fuel economy penalty. When CR added a cargo carrier to the roof rack, mileage dropped 19%! They also tested a 2019 Toyota RAV4. Since SUVs are already shaped like refrigerators, fuel economy is worse to start out with but dropped less during testing. The RAV4 saw only a 2% drop from the roof rack alone and a 13% drop when the cargo pod was added. The bike rack that attaches to a tow hook behind the car did less damage to the car's fuel economy, averaging a 2%-3% loss when not carrying bikes.

*Source: Car Talk website at [www.cartalk.com](http://www.cartalk.com).*

■ **HOLD YOUR KEYS TO YOUR HEAD TO EXTEND THEIR RANGE:** It sounds stupid, we know, but we swear it works! If your keys don't have much of a range, hold them right under your chin and press the button again – the fluids in your head will act like a larger antenna to extend the reach of the signal just a little bit. Seriously, if you don't believe us, just try it for yourself!

*Source: definition.org*