TOPANGA NEW TIMES

VOICE OF THE MOUNTAINS

November 13, 2026 Vol. 7, No. 23



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ON THE COVER

The overwhelming majority of voters on November 3 voted for change in the biggest blue wave in more than 50 years, one that not only swept through Congress, but also turned state and local governments blue nationwide. For those who participated in the blue revolution the feeling is one of hope and relief...and maybe just a little bit of *schadenfreud*.

Cover Art & Design by Urs Baur ■

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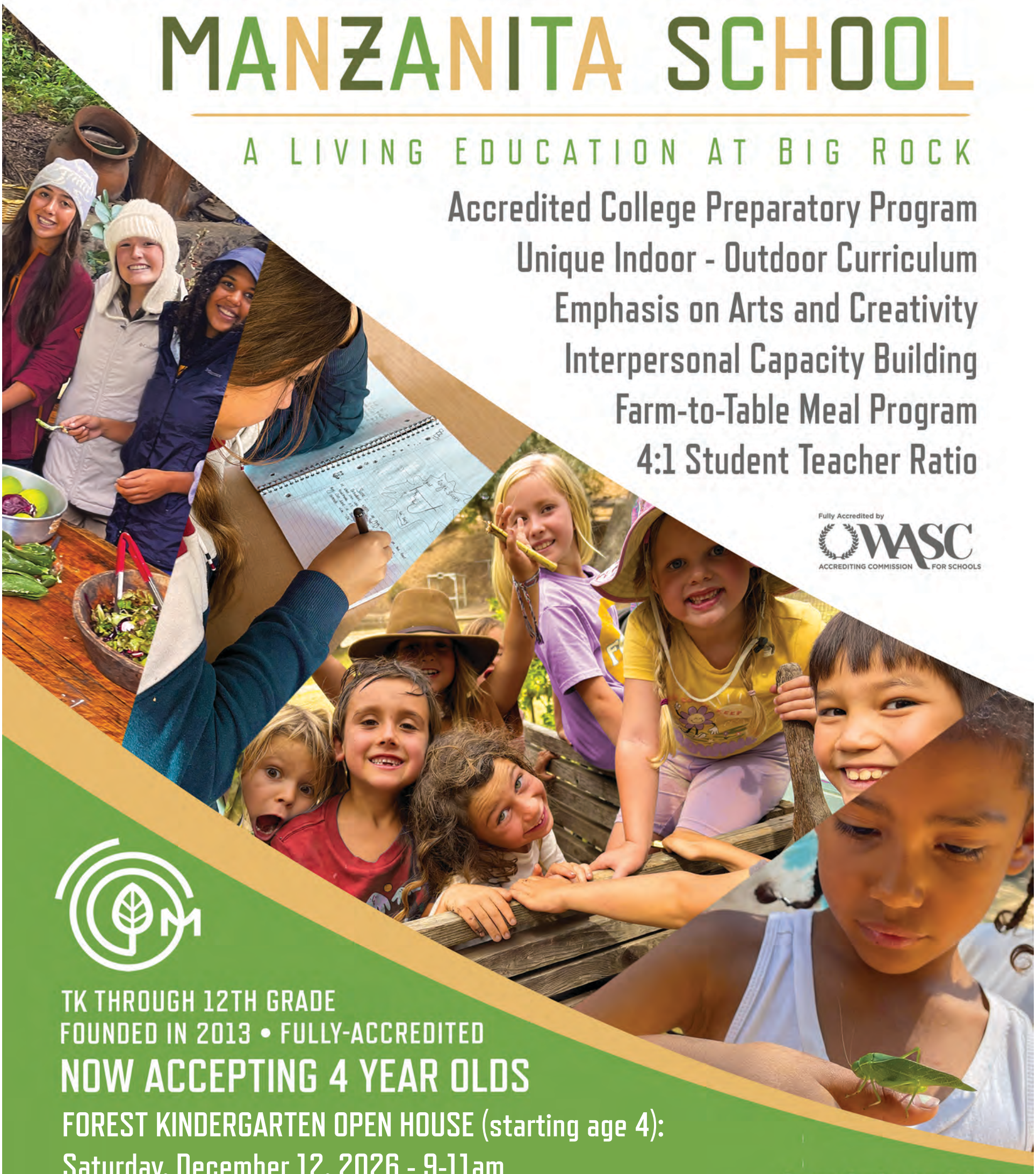


Longtime Topanga resident and TNT reader Neville Agnew sent us the photo of a new ALERTCalifornia installation high above Topanga.The program, operated by UC San Diego in partnership with CALFIRE, uses 360-degree rotating camera systems placed at fire lookouts and mountain peaks throughout California, including many in the Santa Monica Mountains. Fire lookout cameras are not new, but the technology continues to evolve, making them increasingly powerful tools for fire protection. "It's on the lookout 24/7 and can see 60 miles by day and double that by night," Neville writes. "This is an example of the benefit of AI and science and tech in public service. And the public can see what it is seeing." To learn more and take a look at the view from any of the AlertCAlifornia cameras, including this one, visit *https://alertcalifornia.org/*

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FALL 2027-28 ADMISSIONS OPEN!

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artbeat



Deb Ryder at the Canyon Bistro, November 21.

Join us for some great food, wine, and a special musical performance with Deb Ryder and Alberto Dal Pino at Canyon Bistro & Wine Bar, on Saturday, November 21 from 6:30-9pm. Performance will be in the dining room, and reservations are required. Make your reservations now at: *canyonbistrotopanga.com* ■

newsbeat

Canyon Sages Happenings

Canyon Sages presents: Understanding Your Medicare Choices a special online event, Wednesday November 18, 6pm - 7pm

Are you on Medicare or do you want to be? Do you have questions about what plan is the best plan for you? Do you understand how to enroll or change your plan? This important Sages program is led by Bruce Johnston, a licensed broker with decades of Medicare experience. Bruce Johnston will present a primer on Medicare and answer all your burning questions. Open Medicare enrollment ends December 7.

To attend the event, email Wendy Forrester at *wendyforrester85@gmail.com* to receive your Zoom invitation and link.

A few reminders to keep on your calendar as we head into the holiday season:

November 18: Medicare Presentation

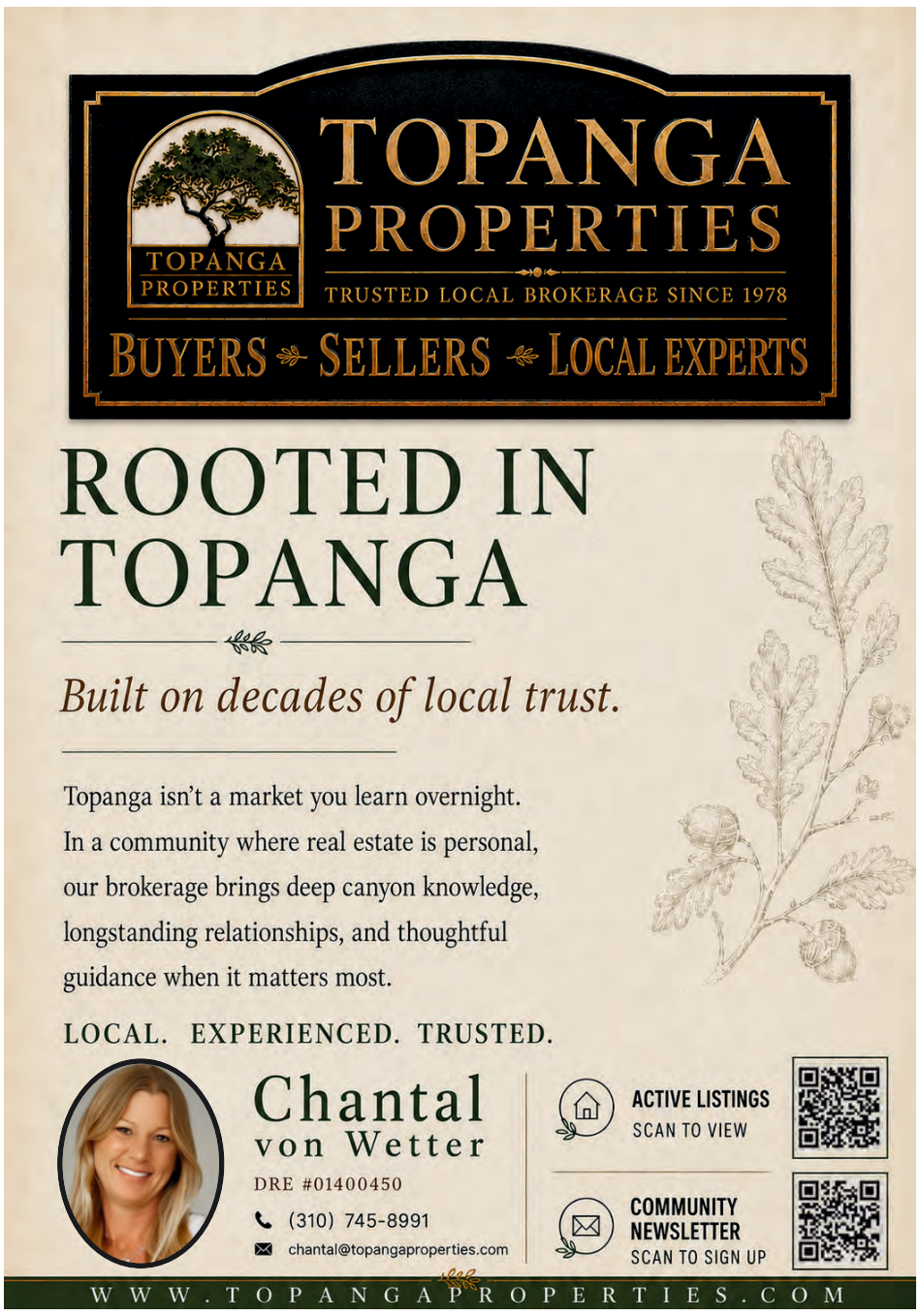
November 19: Emergency Preparedness for Seniors. Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness (TCEP) is hosting a very important meeting at Topanga Library focused on emergency preparedness for our senior community. Learn all about safety alerts, warnings, evacuation planning, staying connected during emergencies and power outages, transportation, medical considerations, pet safety and utilizing a support network in an emergency. For information contact Seychelle at *seychelle@tcep.org*. There will be refreshments and representatives from the County on hand to share information and answer questions. This is Wone you won't want to miss!

December 6: Annual Holiday Dinner! The Sages will celebrate the season with a special holiday meal together.

Thank you to Karen Dannenbaum, Joe Grassi and the kitchen volunteers for planning and preparing these delicious dinners and to TCC for supporting the free healthy dinners. For information and to volunteer contact karen.dannenbaum@gmail.com

There will be NO Friday dinner in December, as the Holiday meal will be replacing it. . ■





EDITORIAL

The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. —Martin Luther King Jr.

This month, that arc spread across the nation like a rainbow. Voters unhappy with the state of the nation delivered a resounding rebuke to President Donald Trump. Democrats are celebrating their biggest congressional landslide in 50 years, and ballots continue to be counted in close races and the victory continues to grow.

This year's primary is a vivid reminder that actions have consequences and that every vote counts. The people we elect to local, state, and national office have the very real power to make lives better, or worse. This year's majority is committed to fixing the things that have been broken, and moving the nation forward. It's up to us, the voters who elected them, to make sure they know what we want, need, and hope for.

More than twenty years ago, California officials listened to activists and scientists about the desperate plight of mountain lions and other wildlife in the Santa Monica Mountains, and began considering ways to enable wildlife to safely cross the 101 Freeway, one of the busiest roads in the county.

The Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing is scheduled to officially open on December 2. Building it was a massive, multi-agency undertaking that involved activists, scientists, engineers, politicians, and the public. There was opposition—people who do not value wildlife—the process of getting this project from a concept to reality was a marathon. The bridge, which spans 11 lanes of traffic and a side road, is already attracting the attention of the local wildlife. On October 28, National Park Service scientists captured remote camera footage of an animal climbing the southern slope of the not-quite finished overpass.

When the 101 was built it isolated the Santa Monica Mountains from the Simi Hills. Mountain lions, facing extinction because of this suddenly imposed genetic bottleneck, became the poster children for the campaign to build the overpass, but this bridge will also help a wide range of animals, big and small. Remote cameras will reveal which species are the first to find and use the overpass. The first mountain lion is likely to make headlines, but many smaller species will also benefit, from birds to badgers. Whether we see them or not, these animals will be able to pass freely over an almost impenetrable barrier for the first time in half a century. It isn't always possible to fix the damage we cause to the environment, but there are ways to help when enough people care.

For the mountain lions of the Santa Monica Mountains this bridge brings the promise of desperately needed genetic diversity and the opportunity for young cats to disperse out of the mountains. This species will continue to need all the help it can get, and that includes the help of Topanga residents. There continues to be an increase in rodenticide poisonings in the Topanga area. The big cats and other wildlife consume rodents that have been poisoned with slow-acting rodenticides, resulting in severe illness and death. Poison Free Topanga is a great resource for alternative options and ways to coexist with wildlife in the canyon: *www.posionfreetopanga.*

We've barely had time to pack the Halloween costumes away and dig out from under the avalanche of political fliers and election materials that somehow ended up on the dining room table, and here it is almost Thanksgiving.

Here at TNT we want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all of our amazing readers, advertisers, and contributors. Topanga is a remarkable, beautiful and special place, and the people who live here and love the canyon are some of the best people anywhere. We couldn't do this without you!

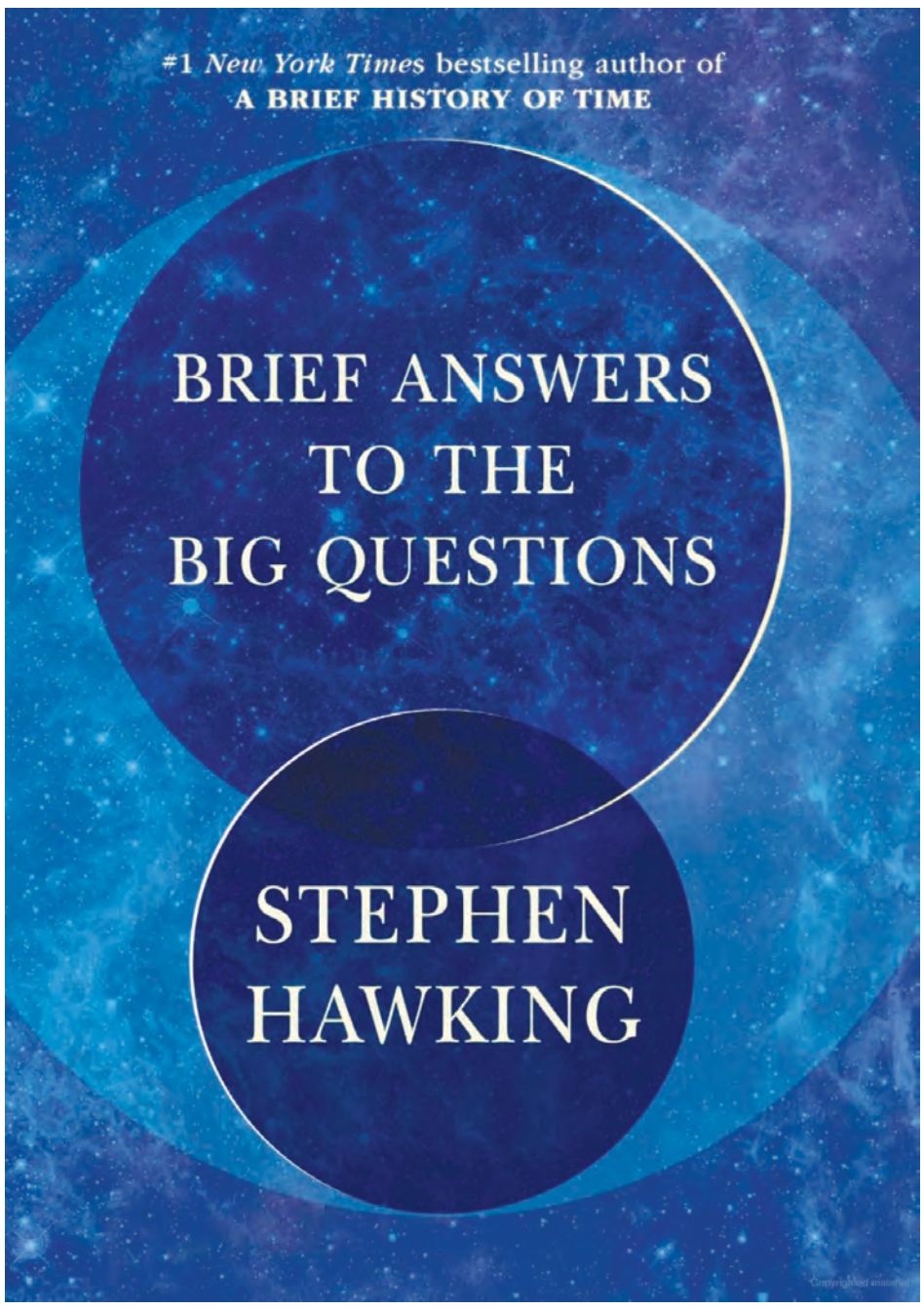
Stay safe, be well. Happy Thanksgiving! ■



BOOKS & SUCH

Big Questions

by Jimmy P. Morgan



My buddy JMo (Jay-Moe) is an astute observer of the human condition but it wasn't always that way. You see, for the better part of the twenty-first century, as a result of a snowboarding accident, JMo has spent most of his hours in a series of wheelchairs; each new one equipped with growing sophistication. Today, without the use of arms or legs, he toggles a chin drive that propels him through his days while assistive technology allows him to use an iPhone, including phoning, texting, navigating, and speaking with Siri. Since much of that technology has only been around for a brief time, JMo often quips, "If I were destined to break my neck, I definitely picked a good time to do it."

I met JMo years before his accident while he was still in high school and I now spend hours with him every month. Knowing him as I do, I think it safe to say that the course of his life was altered that snowy day in ways well beyond the devastation to his physical self.*

It is as if being freed from the burden of attending to his physical needs—although he is an expert in assisting others how to assist him—his mind has had hours on end to watch and consider the behaviors of others. So deep is his attention to his surroundings that, if he spent an afternoon with several other people who were asked later to give an accounting of what had occurred and what had been said, the most reliable telling would most certainly come from JMo. It is not just a matter of recollection, either. It's as if that damned chair has freed his mind to ponder the world in a manner that most physically-able people are unlikely to do; a gift for patient observation, deep introspection, and amazingly unique reflections on people and the world we occupy.

I think of all this now after reading *Brief Answers to Big Questions* (2018) by globally renowned scientist, theoretical astrophysicist, cosmologist, mathematician, and thinker, Stephen Hawking. Diagnosed with ALS in 1963 at the age of 21, he was confined to a wheelchair by the end of that decade until his death in 2018.

While JMo was not a brilliant scientist before his accident, Stephen Hawking was. So, by comparing the two, I suppose I am suggesting here that Stephen Hawking's brilliance did not simply shine through his physical deterioration but that much of that brilliance had evolved throughout his life in part *because* he was confined to that damned chair.

Whether or not you buy that one, it is clear that, much like JMo, Hawking's failing body invigorated his cerebral self. If you consider JMo's accident and Hawking's diagnosis as a sentence of sorts—a fate which befalls many millions —it is only those few who actively decide what they shall do with that sentence; not only to get the most out of life, but to consider seriously what strange advantage may derive from it.

"Before I got motor neuron disease I was bored with life, but the prospect of an early death made me realize life was really worth living," Hawking said in a 1992 BBC interview.

There is courage in that statement that mirrors what I have seen in my friend. And all that is my way of suggesting that when Stephen Hawking offers up answers to "Big Questions," we should all take heed. For instance, in an effort to inform what science has to say about questions that have plagued humankind for hundreds of thousands of years, Hawking wastes no time addressing the G-word. While assuring readers that he has no interest in offending those of faith, he pretty clearly answers the question, at least for himself, by pointing out that we are all made of "stardust" and to that dust we shall return.

It is not surprising that, as a man of science, Hawking writes that "[s]cience is increasingly answering questions that used to be the province of religion." When we think of ancient civilizations and the gods they created to explain the mysteries that surrounded them—lightning, lights in the sky, tides, and so on—his supposition is hard to refute. "Nowadays," he adds bluntly, "science provides better and more consistent answers, but people will always cling to religion, because it gives comfort, and they do not trust or understand science."

He does, however, square his commentary about the existence of God by adding what many people of faith have more recently concluded in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence explaining the mysteries of the world. "One could define God," Hawking poses, "as the embodiment of the laws of nature."

Other questions seem to carry a little less politically correct baggage such as *is there other intelligent life in the universe?* As to the evolution of human-style intelligence elsewhere, Hawking suggests that: "It is more likely that evolution is a random process, with intelligence as only one of a large number of possible outcomes."

He hypothesizes that the development of human intelligence on Earth was dependent on several factors. For example, sixty-six million years ago, an asteroid or comet crashed into Earth killing the dinosaurs. Since these collisions with planets are inevitable, he offers that since we have gone so long without another such collision, it is perhaps just a matter of luck that allowed the time necessary for human intelligence to evolve.

"Other planets in the galaxy on which life has developed," he considers, "may not have had a long enough collision-free period to evolve intelligent beings." This is the kind of fascinating insight found throughout Hawking's thought-provoking book.

Hawking also gets pretty technical by asking *What is inside a black hole?* "A black hole," he explains, "is a region where gravity is so strong that light cannot escape." Hmmm?

Is time travel possible? Hawking shares a great deal of "space-time" talk popularized by Albert Einstein. He then seems to come at this one cross-wise by asking "if time travel will be possible in the future, why hasn't someone come back from the future to tell us how to do it?" As any good scientist will do, Hawking conducted an experiment on the possibility of time travel by sending out invitations to a party in which only time travellers were invited. "To ensure that only genuine time travellers came," Hawking jokes in all seriousness, "I didn't send out the invitations until after the party."

And if time travel is indeed possible, the corollary question is *Can we predict the future?* The answer here may not be as rewarding as you might expect but be reminded that the most important thing isWW the query. This highlights the repeated point that Hawking made throughout his life; science is not the answers we come up with, but rather, science is founded upon the questions we ask ourselves.

In a more practical conclusion to this sometimes mind-blowing book, Hawking asks *Will we survive on earth?* He reminds us that "the Earth is becoming too small for us. Our physical resources are being drained at an alarming rate. We have presented our planet with the disastrous gift of climate change. Rising temperatures, reduction of the polar ice cap, deforestation, over-population, disease, war, famine, lack of water and decimation of animal species; these are all solvable but so far have not been solved."

As to the likelihood of another interstellar collision which might threaten humanity, Hawking writes gloomily, "The last big such collision with [Earth] was about sixty-six million years ago... and it will happen again. This is not science fiction; it is guaranteed by the laws of physics and probability."

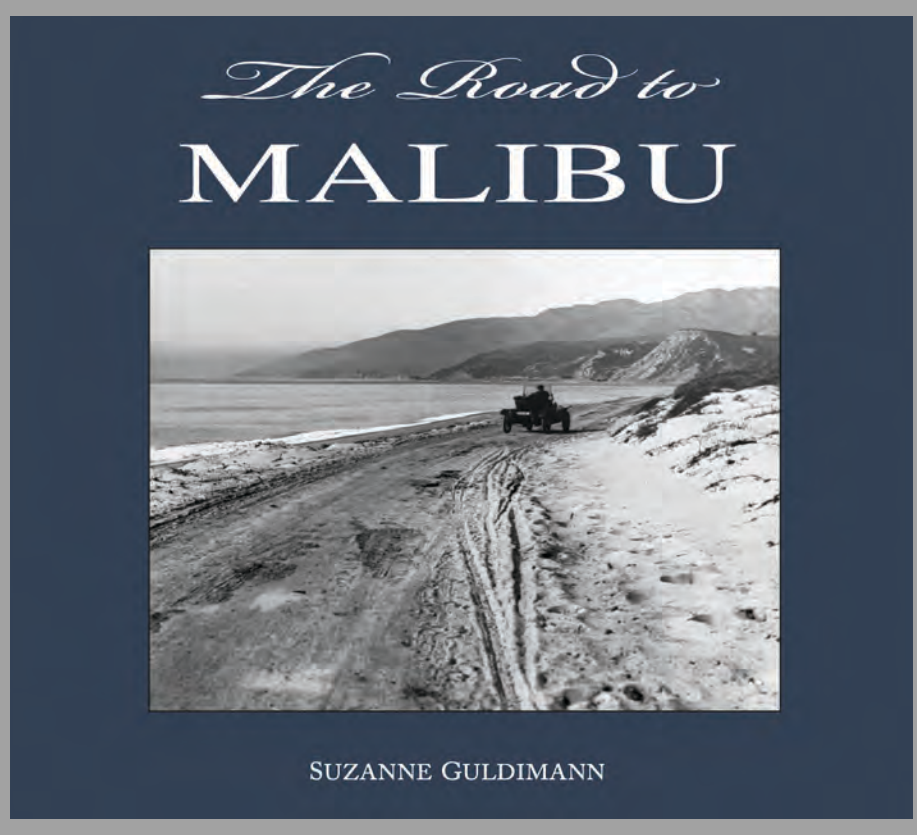
Sometimes science can ruin your day. ■

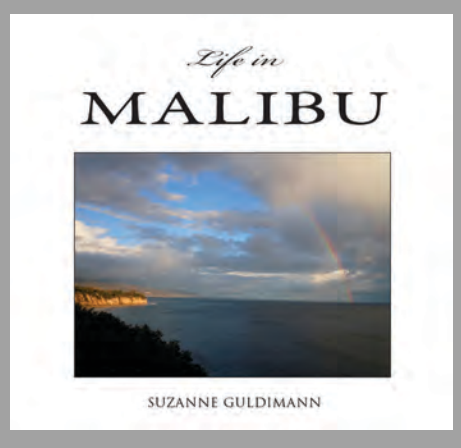
*Check out my TNT Storyland series "Wednesdays with JMo."

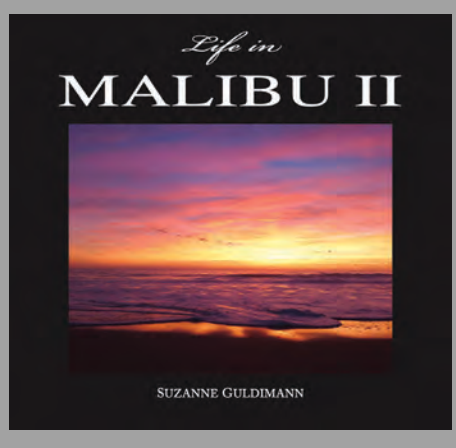
https://topanganewtimes.com/2022/11/18/wednesdays-with-jmo/

Jimmy P. Morgan is a retired American History Teacher who writes about Politics, Social Justice, the US Constitution, Culture, Education, Baseball, Books, and more. You can find him on his deck reading or just go to his Substack for more of his musings: JimmyPMorgandayz.substack.com or email JimmyPMorganDayz@gmail.com

The Road to Malibu is author and Topanga New Times editor Suzanne Guldimann's third book in her *Life in Malibu* series. Featuring surfers, cowboys, silent film stars, a determined heiress, a forgotten city, lost landmarks, the history of one of the world's most storied roads, and an exclusive look at life on the Malibu Rancho when it was owned by the Rindge family and off-limits to the world, *The Road to Malibu* is a wild ride through more than a hundred years of local history!







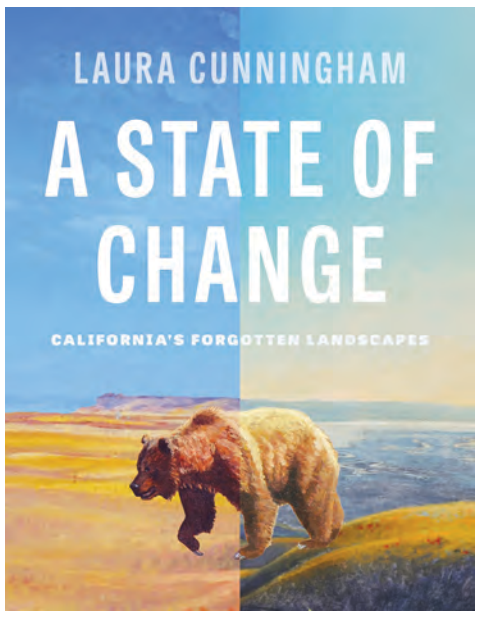
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Local Authors and

Every holiday season, TNT showcases some of the newest books that are written by local authors, or of local interest. We do our best to include as many local authors as possible. If you know an author—or are an author—who has published a new book this year, please let us know!

Authors have been hard hit by skyrocketing printing and shipping costs. Even works released by the big publishing houses face the challenges of an internet infested with AI and hostile algorithms, but there are still poets, philosophers, historians, cooks, artists, and free thinkers out there pursuing their dreams.

Supporting authors helps to ensure that real books, good books, and not just AI slop, continue to be written, and we can't think of a better gift than a good book, especially one with a sense of place, and that is the unifying theme of all the books presented here. As always, everything on this list is rooted in the California landscape.

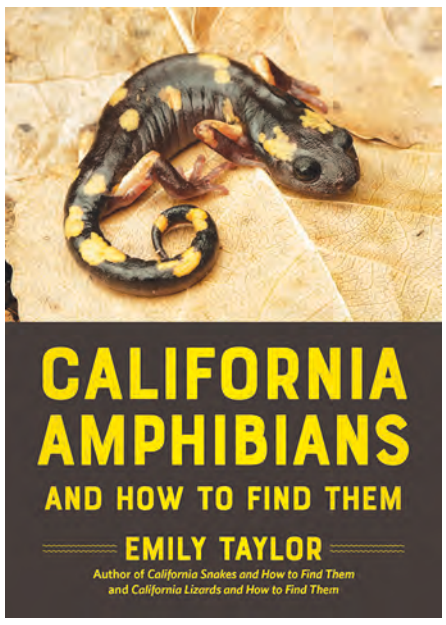


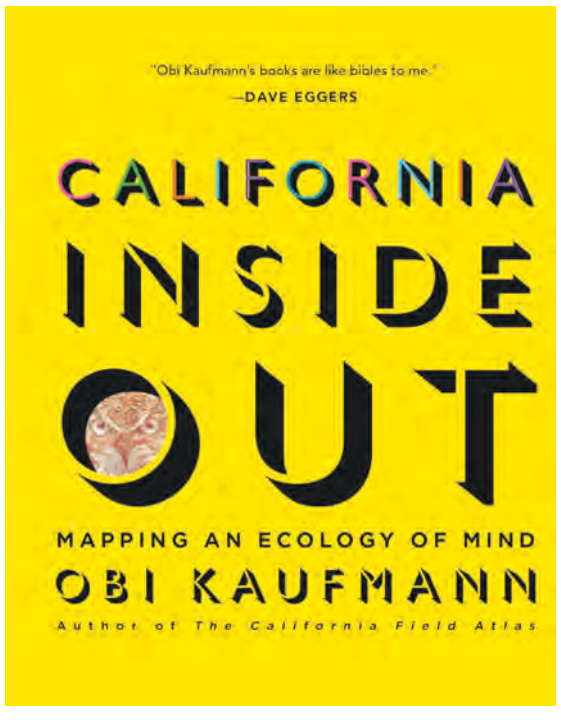
A State of Change: California's Forgotten Landscapes. Laura Cunningham. Heyday Books. $55.

Author and artist Laura Cunningham's beautiful and inspiring A State of Change: California's Forgotten Landscapes became an instant classic when it was first published more than twenty years ago. This reissued edition is even more glorious than the original edition, with new material. The author's meticulously crafted illustrations reveal what the California landscape once looked like, contrasting these visions of the past with contemporary landscapes. The illustrations are informative and fascinating but also beautiful. The new edition includes Cunningham's thoughts on the return of wolves to the California landscape, the use of fire by Indigenous people, and the potential for regenerative agriculture to transform the land in new and more positive ways. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in the ecology of California, but it is also beautiful and compelling.

California Amphibians and Where to Find Them. Emily Taylor. Heyday Books, $25.95.

Topanga is home to an impressive number of native amphibians—from the California newt to the Western pond turtle. This book is an ideal way to get to know these wild neighbors better. Emily Taylor is a professor of biological sciences at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo who researches reptiles and amphibians. She is also the author of California Snakes and How to Find Them and California Lizards and How to Find Them. Like her previous two guide books, this one is entertaining as well as informative. Taylor makes her subject accessible and fun for everyone—young nature enthusiasts, the newly curious, and longtime naturalists. The book is illustrated throughout with abundant, detailed photographs that help make identification much easier. *www.heydaybooks.com/catalog/california-amphibians-and-how-to-find-them/*



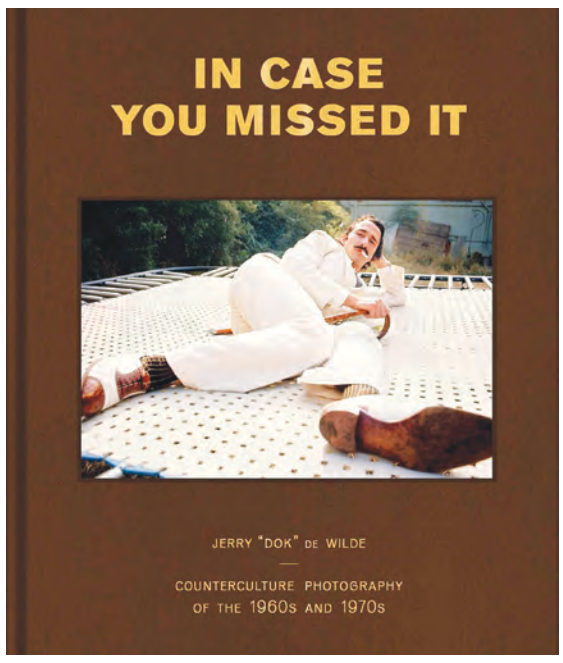


California Inside Out: Mapping the Ecology of the Mind. Obi Kaufman. Heyday Books, $20

In his newest book, naturalist, poet and artist Obi Kaufman challenges the reader to reevaluate the accepted history of California, and find beneath it the true story of Indigenous erasure, the exploitation of people and natural systems, and the increasing separation of people and place, with the hope that the future can be different. This is a passionate book filled with both sorrow and with hope. Illustrated throughout with the author's signature watercolor illustrations, California Inside Out provides food for thought and for the soul. *www.heydaybooks.com/catalog/california-inside-out/*

Greetings from Malibu: A Memoir in Kelly Tourgman. Violet Tiger LLC. $45.

Malibu resident Kelly Tourgman's *Greetings from Malibu,* is the perfect holi anyone who loves local history and Malibu s The book is packed with full-color postcards tha the 1920s to the present. They form a timelin revealing how Pacific Coast Highway, local and buildings and even beach culture hav over the decades. Tourgman has collected, and curated this fantastic collection of ephem historical notes, personal reminiscence, and ev the messages written on the backs of the car also a smattering of her own photographs. It's book and a lot of fun. *www.greetingsfrommali*

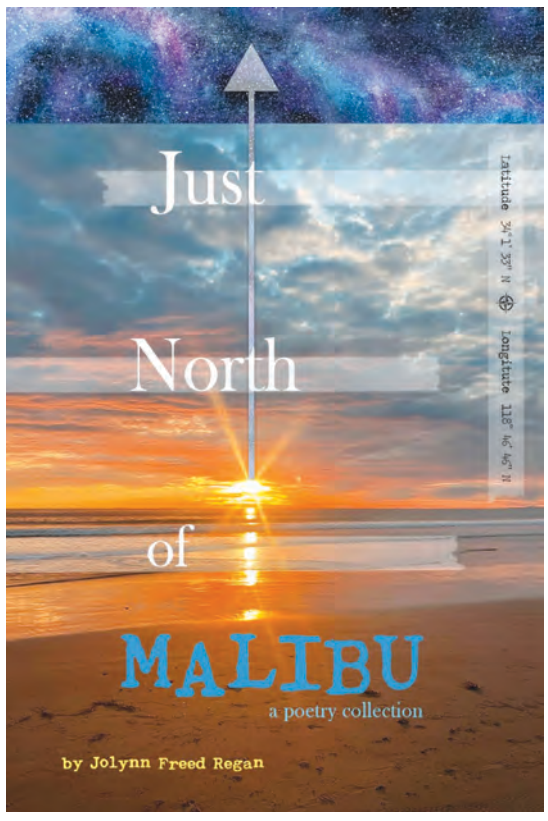


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La Copine: New California Cooking f Desert. Claire Wadsworth, Nikki Hall, with Ber $45

Authors and life partners Claire Wads traded their lives in the fast-paced world restaurant of their own in the desert near Jos illustrated cookbook is both an adventure sto of La Copine—the restaurant's name mea cookbook filled with recipes from the high The recipes range from basic to ambitious, of the menu. Photographs include beautiful landscape. It's a delightful—and delicious—d *www.abramsbooks.com/product/la-copine_97*



Pr

lov ru Th the ev *pr*

d Local Interest

Postcards.

new book, day gift for surf culture. at date from e of Malibu landmarks e changed researched, era, adding ven some of ds. There is a delightful *bu.com*



In Case You Missed It: Counterculture Photography f the 1960s and 1970s.

Jerry de Wilde. Angel City Press. $60.

Travel back in time to the psychedelic 1960s and '70s th photographer Jerry "Dok" de Wilde, for a first-person erspective on the countercultural revolution in and around os Angeles. The photos presented here are often intimate, ersonal, and sometimes gritty. This is not a Topanga book, ut it documents the movement that continued to define opanga's cultural and philosophical identity. "Jerry de Wilde's orgeous photography captures a deeply intimate portrait of lost era—Los Angeles in the 1960s," the publisher writes. It's n apt description. *acp.lapl.org/book/in-case-you-missed-it*

from an Oasis in the n Mims. Harry Abrams.

sworth and Nikki Hall of Los Angeles for a shua Tree. This lavishly ory about the creation ns "girlfriend"—and a ly successful venture. and cover all aspects food and the desert esert sojourn. *https://781419778223/*

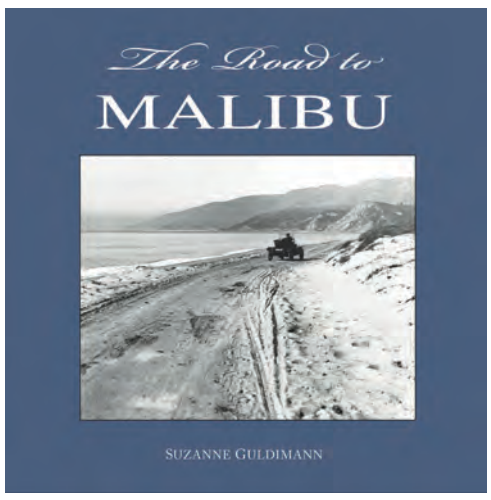


Just North of Malibu. Jolynn Freed Regan. Malibu North ess. $14

"My poems reflect the Malibu I know—a destination for nature vers, surfers on the hunt, families raising children and animals nning wild," writes poet Jolynn Freed Regan, describing her book. is slender chapbook is full of vivid imagery drawn from Malibu, e Santa Monica Mountains, and Los Angeles. The poetry is ocative and conveys a powerful sense of place. *http://bottlecap.ess*

Books of Note for the Season

by Suzanne Guldimann



The Road to Malibu. Suzanne Guldimann. West of the Moon Books, $45

Topanga New Times editor Suzanne Guldimann has a new book out this year—her third local history. It's a wild ride through Malibu's past, with a deep dive into the history of Pacific Coast Highway, chapters on cowboy and surf culture, the Malibu Movie Colony, the Rindge family, who once owned all of Malibu, and an in-depth look at the amazing tiles created by Malibu Potteries in the 1920s. The book is illustrated throughout with historic photographs—some of which have never been published before—and with postcards, matchbooks, vintage advertisements, and other ephemera. *www.amazon.com/author/suzanneguldimann*

The Sensual & Innocent Earth. Sarah Irani. Datura Blossom Press, $18

This collection of essays and meditations on life is heartfelt, intensely personal, and pure Topanga. The book is filled with reflections on nature, life, and the author's connection with the earth and with Topanga's wild plants, native and non-native, and her philosophy of life, and it is illustrated throughout with her sketches. The author describes it as "...a journey, both mystical and practical, through the magic of the plants of Topanga Canyon, California, and also a land beyond and to come, the land of ancestral memory." www.sensualearth.net



My Gums Are Bleeding. *Miles Erickson. PUG-W. $22*



Cartoonist and writer Miles Erickson was raised in Topanga. His absurdist webcomic *My Gums are Bleeding*, is a sensation on Reddit and TikTok. The webcomic is now a book. that brings together many of Erickson's best comic strips. His work is a satiric commentary on pop culture. It is clever, witty, geeky, and frequently dark. It's not for everyone— Erickson takes a razor wit to contemporary internet tropes, which might leave those who are not current on pop culture trends with the feeling that some of his humor has just gone whooshing over one's head, but the collection is thoroughly engaging. *https://mygumsarebleeding.com* ■



Randy Neece and Joe Timko have created heaven on earth for dogs in Topanga at Canyon View Ranch. All photos courtesy Randy Neece and Joe Timko unless otherwise noted. This map of Canyon View Ranch was drawn by Nina Rae Vaughn—the same artist who illustrates Disneyland's park maps.

Topanga's Wonderland of Wagging Tails

Claire Fordham Interviews Randy Neece and Joe Timko of Canyon View Ranch, who have created dog heaven on earth

Deep in the canyon is a magical place where dogs come to have the time of their lives. They can stay just for the day or sleep over.

Randy Neece and Joe Kimko, a couple for 42 years, got the idea for Canyon View Ranch when they were visiting Disneyland, thinking: *this, but for dogs.* And that's what they've built over decades. The ranch even has its own illustrated map, drawn by Nina Rae Vaughn, the same artist who illustrates Disneyland's official park maps.

"We've created a place where people feel good about leaving their dogs, rather than guilty about it," said Randy.

Boarders sleep in crates with birdsong and classical music piped throughout the day and night as they slumber in a doggie dormitory decorated with fake foliage and flowers. All perfectly tasteful, of course. Meanwhile, the temperature is set at a balmy 69 degrees.

If dogs don't like sleeping in a crate or want to bed down with a sibling, there's a mudroom, lounge and reception area where they can snooze on pillows. Pampered pooches can even be chauffeured to and from home for an extra fee. Clients love that. This has the added advantage of not clogging the road leading to the ranch with clients' cars. The average number of dogs per day is 55, with room for 60.

Some clients are wealthy, but most are regular folk. All the clients have one thing in common—they love their dogs and treat them like family. When they go to work or on vacation, they want to know their dogs will be happy and well looked after.

There are two separate playgrounds: Adventureland for big dogs and Munchkinland for smaller breeds. Each has its own swimming pool, underground tunnels, and plenty of room to frolic.

However, it's not all fun and games. Canyon View Ranch is also a training facility where wet-nosed family members learn the quiet command and where behavior issues are overcome.

"A lot of clients bring their dog for training because it's a chronic barker. It barks at everything and won't stop," said Joe.



Randy Neece (left) and Joe Timko have created a Disneyland for dogs in Topanga. Also pictured are their Havanese: Ellie, 9, and Sophie, 4.. *Photo by Claire Fordham*

"I think most people can put up with a dog barking a little bit here and there. It's when it goes on and on. Then the owner yells at the dog, and the dog has no idea what the owner is saying. It doesn't understand the word quiet.

"So part one of our job as trainers is to get the dogs to understand the word quiet, then part two is to teach the owners how to give the command effectively, and part three is what to do if the dogs don't get it."

Walking around the ranch with Randy and Joe, we stopped at Munchkinland. One of the pups gave a little bark which was quickly nipped in the bud. The animal care specialist on duty put the dog on a leash and took it for a stroll away from the pack. A kind of pattern-interrupt. Saying "quiet" followed by a firmer "No. Quiet" if necessary usually does the trick, Joe tells me. If that doesn't do it, they use a squirt bottle.

Talking of water, the dogs drink and play in filtered water, as the ranch has a reverse osmosis water system. If that runs out, the dogs drink bottled water.





Munchkinland is a separate playground—plus waterfall—for smaller breeds.

Feeding time comes twice a day. They'll provide house food, but prefer clients to bring their dogs' regular food. "We like to keep the dogs on their usual diet, so it doesn't upset their stomachs by switching food on them," said Randy.

"It's a lot more work for us, but it's better for the dogs to give them their own food. And some are on supplements, vitamins and medication. We don't charge extra for giving those out, as some places do."

Every furry friend is offered a bath before they go home. "We like the dogs to go home smelling really good," said Joe. "They've been out playing all day long, slobbering on each other."

Randy and Joe's dogs, Ellie, 9, and Sophie, 4, are Havanese. Do they have a favorite breed to recommend?

"Any kind of poodle mix — like a Goldendoodle or Labradoodle," said Joe. "A poodle is a very smart dog. So you get the intelligence of a poodle and the personality of whatever the other mix is."

Tibetan Mastiffs can be tricky, say Randy and Joe. But even pit bulls and Rottweilers, who have a reputation for being aggressive, can be sweet if they are trained properly and not bred to be fighting dogs. "We have Rottweilers and pit bulls who have been coming here since they were puppies, and they are perfectly behaved dogs," said Randy.

"Labradors and Golden Retrievers are fun, but they can be very high energy. We're careful about evaluating dogs before we take them." And they have to be up to date with their shots.

If a dog gets a little too rambunctious with another pooch pal, it will be put on a leash and taken for a walk to calm down. "It's not that we don't want them to have fun," said Joe, "but we don't want it to escalate into something. We can tell whether a dog's putting up with it or has had enough of another dog getting in its face."

They avoid having balls for dogs to run after or toys to play with so they don't get territorial over them. "They have enough fun playing with the other dogs, splashing in the pools and running around," said Randy.

A number of clients lost their homes in the Palisades Fire. "We sent out a memo after we returned to the ranch following evacuation and told clients if you've lost your home, just bring your dog to us and we'll take care of her for free until you get settled and figure out where you are going to live."

When the call came to evacuate, clients (or emergency contacts) were called and told to meet at Ralph's parking lot in Woodland Hills. They put the 45 dogs in their air-conditioned truck and waited until every dog was collected.

"We could see flames and smoke, and it was pretty scary. But we didn't suffer any damage and all the dogs were safe," said Randy. The spectacular landscape at Canyon View Ranch remains pristine.

Overnight stays are $100 ($120 during holidays). There are no hidden extra costs. This place is like a cross between Disneyland and a five-star hotel. There are discounts for multiple dogs per family. Just as well, because one regular client has a canine quintet. Training comes with an added charge.

Canyon View Ranch is a well-oiled machine with an average daily staff of 16 to 18 people, depending on how many dogs are in residence. They are open 24/7, so someone qualified is on duty at all times. People are welcome to go and look around—just make an appointment first.

Ranch manager David Barrios has worked there for 27 years. Most of the staff are also long-termers. Despite being in their 70s, Randy and Joe have no plans to retire, they love dogs and this place so much.

Randy and Joe have this advice for dog owners, especially for larger breeds: "It's important to take dogs for walks or to a dog park. Get your dog moving, otherwise it will atrophy. Like people." ■

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Adventureland is built specifically for the larger dogs to have plenty of room to frolic.



Dog training is also offered to handle behavior problems

Claire Fordham is a British Transplant to Topanga. She has worked for the BBC, ITN and SKY News as a reporter, and wrote a weekly column for Britain's biggest selling newspaper, The Sun. Claire has written and published two books and helps other people write their memoirs. Claire is delighted to come full circle and write for her local publication. Telling other peoples' stories is her favorite way to write.

work + life

The "Rise" of Neurodivergence

by Olivia Pool



The other day I came across a meme on social media that read: "Why are there suddenly so many neurodivergent people?" And Dr. Jen Wolkin responded: "The same reason there are suddenly more stars after we built telescopes."

My background is in psychology, and I had not even heard the term neurodivergent until about 4 years ago so don't feel bad if it's relatively new to you too. Back then, I immediately looked it up and all I found was a couple of crappy websites that defined neurodivergent as a "catch all" term for anyone who had been diagnosed as depressed, bipolar, or had some other "disorder."

Today, the Cleveland Clinic shares this definition: "*Neurodivergent* is a non-medical term that describes a person whose brain processes, learns, or behaves differently from what society considers typical or neurotypical." It goes on to say that this "covers a wide range of developmental, learning, and neurological conditions rather than a single diagnosis" and that this is not an illness. Instead "neurodivergence is viewed as a natural variation in human genome rather than a defect or disease that needs to be fixed." And the Associated Clinic of Psychology says, "While neurodivergent individuals often experience functional challenges in standard environments, they frequently possess unique strengths such as heightened creativity, pattern recognition, or out-of-the-box problem-solving." The University of Washington says that "neurodivergence frequently includes, but is not limited to: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia (reading differences), Dyscalculia (math differences), Dyspraxia (coordination differences), and Tourette's Syndrome."

The small amount that I've shared here barely scratches the surface and it's not even that good of a scratch, in my opinion. This is a massive topic that deserves much more attention and detail, but we're going for a highlight reel today because information like this can and does affect people psychologically. So far it's been misunderstood and many neurodiverse people have been labeled as "less" in some way.

By nature, people fear things they do not yet understand.

For many years, most of the things listed above have been—and still are—labeled as "disorders," alluding to something being "wrong" with people, when in reality, their brains just work differently than a "typical" brain. Many autistic people are some of the most intelligent people you'll ever meet. Albert Einstein, Mozart, and Emily Dickinson? Not your typical noggins. There's an extremely high likelihood they were all autistic. And all those restless ADD/ADHD people who were highly aware of everything in their environment and who were often seeking new sensory experiences? Oh, like Leonardo da Vinci and Walt Disney? They pushed beyond the norms and we now stand on the shoulders of these giants. Were their lives easy? Did they have lots of friends who understood them? These alternative neurotypes are often struggling with things neurotypical people find easy.

We live in a world built for neurotypicals because that is what is more prevalent. Very simply, there are more neurotypicals than neurodivergents on this planet. Think about *this* for a moment: If the majority of the people on the planet were in wheelchairs, we would live in a world with a lot of ramps and different shaped doorways, and all the people who were walking on two legs would be outnumbered and most likely considered "odd." If we lived in a world built for autistics, people would likely speak very directly and truthfully to one another. Everyone would say exactly what they mean and there would be less guessing or miscommunications. It would also sound harsh to the neurotypicals who are more used to sugarcoated, more metaphorical language.

As you can see from these examples, we build worlds for the majority.

With technological advancements, we are learning more about the human brain than ever before. Because we now have this "telescope," we are finally starting to see all the neurodivergent stars that have been here all along. It's time for a world where various neurotypes are not just accepted and accommodated, but also celebrated.

We'd love to hear your personal experiences of how you have experienced the world from your particular neurotype. ■

Olivia Pool, MA is a Transformational Life and Conscious Business Coach with a Master's Degree in Spiritual Psychology, and over two decades of entrepreneurial business experience. www.oliviapool.com @oliviapool



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GOODLIVING

Decadent Herbed Cauliflower

by Nathalie Krull



Cauliflower combines with potatoes and fresh herbs in this recipe for glorious holiday mashed potatoes. It's an easy way to enjoy a lighter, healthier version of one of the season's most popular dishes. The herbs and browned butter elevate the humble potato to a holiday table standout. Substitute olive oil and non dairy cream or milk for a vegan version without sacrificing flavor or texture. This recipe is perfect for winter holidays or as a hearty everyday dish. *Photos by Nathalie Krull*



Forget about those boring side dishes...These decadent cauliflower and herbed-butter mashed potatoes serve up the ultimate rich, velvety comfort food experience by blending creamy gold potatoes with tender cauliflower and a luxurious, herb infused butter. By simmering fresh rosemary, thyme, and sage directly into brown butter, this recipe produces a deep, savory, complexity that perfectly masks the cauliflower while keeping the consistency impossibly light and fluffy. Every spoonful delivers that ultra creamy texture you crave.

By blending cauliflower into your mashed potatoes you significantly boost the nutritional value of the dish, while lowering its total glycemic load, increasing fiber, and antioxidants and reducing its calorie density. The simple addition keeps the comfort food texture you love while introducing powerful cruciferous benefits. It is the perfect, indulgent twist on a classic. An unforgettable side dish for the holiday table.

Ingredients:

3 pounds Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 1/2-inch chunks
1 medium to large cauliflower head cut into florets
5-6 large garlic cloves, peeled
1 cup butter; alternatively use vegan butter, or 3/4 cup of olive oil
4-5 sprigs of fresh thyme
1 sprig of fresh rosemary
1 sprig of fresh sage
1/4 cup heavy whipping cream or substitute of choice
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
1-2 tablespoons of olive oil
salt to taste

Let's make this...

Lightly coat the cauliflower florets, and garlic cloves in olive oil, place them on a cookie sheet, and roast them in the oven at 425 for 20-35 minutes until tender inside with deep caramelization on the edges. Stir or flip them halfway through to make sure they don't burn. Once done, remove from the oven and set aside.

Bring a large pot of water to boil, add the potatoes, and boil over medium heat until tender... for about 15-20 minutes. While the cauliflower, and potatoes are cooking, place the butter or butter alternative into a small pan with the fresh herbs, rosemary, sage, and thyme (reserve a couple sprigs of thyme for after cooking). Cook over medium to low heat until the butter is lightly browned, swirl it in the pan occasionally to infuse it with the herbs, and to make sure it doesn't burn...this will take about 8-10 minutes.

If you choose to use olive oil, cook on low heat for 5-10 minutes without smoking it. Remove it from the heat, and let it cool slightly before removing herb sprigs, and lay them on a paper towel to cool. When the potatoes are done, drain them, and then pour them back into the pot, add the roasted cauliflower, and garlic cloves, cook over medium heat stirring for about 2 minutes to help remove any additional liquid, and further soften the cauliflower. Turn off the heat, and add the browned butter infused with herbs. Use a potato masher, and mash until well combined. You can choose how smooth you would like to make it; I like it with some small cauliflower chunks in it. Add the cream, pepper, nutmeg, and salt to taste.

Remove the thyme and sage leaves that you cooked in the brown butter from their stems, and sprinkle them over the dish. Add a sprig or two extra fresh thyme leaves too. It's ready to serve, and enjoy.

Classic holiday food is expected this time of year. Most of us look forward to the holiday spread. Why not change it up a bit this year and serve up these better for you mashed potatoes? Sneak a little extra nutrition into your holiday favorites. See if anyone can even tell. This dish is proof that you don't have to sacrifice flavor to eat a little healthier. Making simple changes to your classic holiday meal might make a big difference in the long run. While a single holiday dinner won't derail your health, the festive season runs from November till the beginning of January. Introducing mindful changes like cauliflower potatoes reshapes family traditions, rewires your flavor preferences, reduces chronic inflammation, and may reduce cumulative winter weight gain.

Give them a try, and make a difference in the lives of your loved ones bite by bite. Wishing you good health and good luck on all of your cooking adventures. ■

Nathalie Krull homeschooled her children with other families in Topanga and has built her reputation over the years as a skilled and adventurous kitchen wizard. She is a holistic health coach, certified by the Institute of Integrated Nutrition. She approaches food as one part of a whole system approach to wellness. Reach her at nathalie@groundedwellness.net

STORYLAND


Pensive Maddie

Maddie Ellis & the Malibu Movie Colony

Chapter Twenty-Two

by Suzanne Guldimann

Maddie Ellis and the Malibu Movie Colony is an old-fashioned mystery serial set during the end of the silent movie era. All previous chapters are available on our website: https://topanganewtimes.com/storyland/

Maddie gazed critically at her reflection in the bathroom mirror the next morning. She looked for any sign that she might be turning into the sort of person her former friends had become. Her dark hair was a bit too long for the dictates of fashion, but the face that looked back at her was still her own. "Settle down," indeed. She made a face at herself and stuck out her tongue defiantly. She had no intention of taking up bridge or conformity, but she did need a haircut.

The downside of bobbed hair was that it needed frequent cutting. The look demanded of "the new woman" was a boon for hairdressers and a bane for fashionable ladies. Maddie had administered her first bob with the kitchen shears at the age of seventeen and never looked back, but her hair was unruly and grew fast. Her last trim had been in London. Maddie's neighbor, Bebe Daniels, who always looked impeccable, recommended her own hairdresser to Maddie. That was how she found herself seated next to Lulu Desmond at a salon in Santa Monica that afternoon.

"Oh, Miss Ellis!" she exclaimed. "I'm getting a wave. So tedious, but necessary."

Maddie hadn't recognized her at first, because Lulu's head was covered in curlers, each attached to an electrical flex and suspended from a ring hung from the ceiling. She looked like a modern-day Medusa, with her head covered in mechanical snakes, but this was "The Process" that created perfectly waved or marcelled hair.

Maddie had neither the need nor the inclination for such a thing. Her hair was naturally curly and her patience with the more exacting dictates of Madame Fashion limited, but she gave Lulu a sympathetic smile.

"*Il faut souffrir d'être belle*," she said.

"So true," Lulu sighed. "I like being beautiful, but I simply hate suffering, don't you? Bebe told me you were not amused by that taradiddle I told Polly Pollard. I am sorry. I thought it was a laugh."

"It was rather a shock," Maddie said. "But it's too late to do anything about it now."

"At least you came off better than Billy and I did," Lulu said. "'Childhood sweethearts,' and 'love's young dream.' Simply deadly!"

"I haven't seen it yet," Maddie confessed. "I'm not sure I want to."

"Oh you must!" Lulu exclaimed. "It's a scream. But I mean it. I owe you one for not telling Billy about Johnny and me at the coffee shop. Billy's a good friend, a real pal—we've known each other for ages—but he has an awful temper. I'm frightened of him sometimes."

"I would have thought Johnny was the one with the temper," Maddie said, thinking of how he had behaved towards Isabel Flores, and towards poor innocent Clarice Auclair.

"Oh no! Johnny's a lamb. There's no harm in him. I'm crazy about him. I couldn't believe my good luck when he broke it off with Isabel for me. I admit he's been moody since then, but I cheer him up. I always do. I just haven't been able to tell Billy. That's why I didn't want Billy to know you'd seen Johnny and me out on the town together. The party we went to that night we met you was a bust, anyway. We didn't stay long."

"What happened?" Maddie inquired.

"We were promised a genuine den of iniquity," Lulu said with relish. "But it was all very dull. Just a lot of people lying about on the floor in a dusty old room in an empty house, and such a drive. Right out in the middle of nowhere."

"Whose house was it?" Maddie asked.

"Oh, nobody's," Lulu was dismissive. "Those sorts of things move around, you know, from place to place. That's part of the fun. I'll let you know next time," she invited. "It's all word of mouth. But you mustn't tell Billy. He doesn't like me going to places like that. He wouldn't like it if he knew I went with Johnny."

Maddie reflected that Billy Worthington almost certainly did know. How could he not after Lulu's behavior at the beach party where she first encountered them?

"This one was different," Lulu was saying. "It wasn't the usual people. It was a flop, and it looked like a flop house." She wrinkled her nose fastidiously. "It smelled like one, too. So disappointing. I like sweet dreams as much as the next girl, if you know what I mean, but there wasn't anything to drink, or any music, or any comfortable furniture—or any furniture except for an old broken down sofa and some musty old pillows. I was hoping for something livelier, if you know what I mean. Something fun." Lulu giggled.

"It sounds like it might have gotten to be a hot time later," Maddie said.

"The fire?" Lulu said. "I didn't hear about it until later. We were long gone by then. Johnny knows a sublime place in town with a jazz band and real champagne. We went there instead and danced all night. It was heaven. No one dances like Johnny, and when he kisses me…" she shut her eyes and smiled.

Maddie was spared further details by the arrival of the hairdresser.

"You have some gray hairs, madame," he told her, disapprovingly. "I can touch them up for you. It would not take long."

"No thank you," Maddie said. A few gray hairs did not trouble her. She never bothered with hair dye. Gentlemen might prefer blondes, according to the irrepressible Anita Loos, but Maddie liked her hair the way it was. Her dark curls were an inheritance from her father, who had not lived long enough for his hair to turn gray. She was planning to embrace the experience. When the haircut was finished she shook her curls experimentally, admiring the hairdresser's handiwork in the mirror. She tipped him generously, said goodbye to Lulu, and left.

Maddie spent a pleasant afternoon shopping for a new dress to replace the lovely persimmon-colored one that was ruined during the rescue of Clarice Auclair. She found one in a color described as "California poppy" that was perfect. The helpful saleswoman tried to interest her in a hairband that would "perfectly complement the dress."

It was pretty. It reminded Maddie of the poppy crown worn by the eponymous heroine of L. Frank Baum's book *Ozma of Oz.* These poppies were made of silk and were white, not red like the ones in the book. Maddie had loved the Oz books growing up, and had read them to her younger siblings so many times she had whole passages memorized. "If the sleeper is not carried away from the scent of the flowers, he sleeps on and on forever," she said to herself, and that brought to mind Lulu's description of people lying about dreaming. "Sweet dreams," Lulu had said.

Poppies—real ones as well as those that grew in Oz—had the power to put people to sleep. That was because they contained opium. Opium? Maddie wondered. Opium that was, perhaps, smuggled in cocoa tins? Opium at a party where sleepers lay dreaming in an empty house? She wondered if she should mention this line of thought to Lieutenant McCay. She probably should, but how could she do so without incriminating Lulu? And why did that matter? If illicit activities were happening, wasn't it important to report all of the potential evidence, even if it implicated someone one knew? By her own account, Lulu left without participating in whatever was taking place.

Maddie found she was still holding the hairband. She handed it back to the saleswoman with a shake of her head, but she bought the dress, rejoicing that she had the resources to do so.

Maddie stopped for an early supper at the old seafood shack by the Santa Monica Pier. She used to take her little sister Anna here sometimes, when it was just the two of them against the world. They would eat clam chowder and walk to the end of the pier to watch the boats and the gulls and talk about the future.

Maddie ate clam chowder alone with her memories. Neither of their futures were the ones they had prophesied for themselves, but Maddie found—to her surprise—that she was happy. She felt a wave of contentment and belonging. She had come home.

The weather was mild and the beach was a popular destination. The pier was thronged with pleasure-seekers and the air smelled of popcorn, hot cotton candy, creosote, fish, and saltwater. She walked to the end and back again, lingering to listen to a jug band. The jug player was a big man with an earthenware vinegar jug. There was also a pair of tall, thin men who must be brothers. They played the washtub bass and the ukulele, while the chanteuse sang and played the washboard, with thimbles on her fingers. They sang the "Coney Island Washboard Blues," and the "Vo Do De-O Blues" and the "Memphis Jug Band Blues."

Maddie slipped a dollar bill into their tip jar. They were awfully good, she thought. Their sign said "we play for food." She hoped that would help them buy some supper that night. The chanteuse was crooning "Stealin', stealin', pretty mama don't you tell on me. I'm stealin' back to my same old used to be," as Maddie turned away. She ran right into a man and was almost knocked off her feet.

"Miss Ellis, I'm so sorry!" He exclaimed, taking her arm to steady her. "I didn't see you there. Didn't mean to mow you down."

Maddie found herself looking into the candid blue eyes of Billy Worthington.

"Here, let's get out of the crowd before you are mowed down again. What can I do to apologize for my appalling clumsiness?" He offered her a cigarette. Maddie declined.

"Don't smoke? Never do? Wish I didn't," he said. "It's so hard to stop once you start. What is your vice, Miss Ellis?" He smiled at her.

"Coffee," Maddie replied promptly. Her real vice was curiosity, and at the moment she was wondering why the charming and genial Billy Worthington had run into her and what he was doing there. He was dressed for an evening out, so perhaps he was headed to the La Monica Ballroom again.

"Coffee? That's not much of a vice," he said, still laughing.

"You have no idea, Mr. Worthington," she said.

"You haven't seen Lulu, have you?" Billy asked.

"I have," Maddie said. "She was getting her hair done. Are you meeting her?"

"Just a bit of dancing and perhaps a drink or two, you know," Billy said. "You're welcome to join us."

Maddie thanked him and declined. "It's a long drive home," she told him.

"I envy you," he said. "I've been wanting a Malibu beach house of my own for ages. You'll let me know if you hear of a vacancy won't you?"

Maddie said she would and they parted with a cordial handshake.

It was dark by the time she made her way back to her roadster. She walked quickly, the feeling of contentment dispelled by a growing twinge of anxiety. It was too late to stop at the Constable's Office on the way home, but she wrote him a note when she got home describing her conversation with Lulu about the "den of iniquity." She was careful not to name names, but it seemed important to let McCay know the details.

The lieutenant responded the following day with a note of his own that said, "We may have a line on something out there. Lay low and stay out of it."

That was hardly comforting. How could one stay out of something when that something involved the house one was living in?

Maddie put the note in her pocket and went out into the sunlight, careful to lock the door behind her. ■



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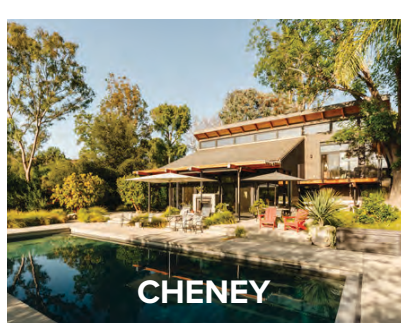
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