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Afghanistan: a tragedy?

By JOHN MOREARTY

There's villainy, and there's tragedy. Villainy we understand—wicked men, evil deeds. But tragedy is a good man, confused and proud, going too far and bringing down disaster.

First, villainy. The national debate about escalating our invasion of Afghanistan brings to mind four villainous invasions.

Tolstoy's War and Peace tells the story of undefeated Napoleon who invaded Russia in 1812 with 600,000 men. The Russian army fought one bloody battle, then retreated deep into their own countryside. Napoleon's army took Moscow without a fight, managed to burn it down, and fled through Russian rains and snow; 400,000 of them died (not to mention Russians).

In 1941 Hitler sent his invincible tanks into Russia. Defending their homeland, the Russians ate rats in Leningrad for 900 days, and fought from the cellars of Stalingrad, re-supplied at night by rowboats. The Russian winter destroyed Hitler's armies, and he went down.

In the late nineteenth century the British Empire tried to bring the blessings of European civilization to Afghanistan. But Pashtun tribes hid in the hills with homemade rifles and shot them down. Rudyard Kipling, who loved the Empire, sang the story:

"When wounded and left on Afghanistan's plain, And the women come out to cut up your remains"

In the nineteen eighties the Soviets, embarrassed by un-armed freedom movements in Poland and Czechoslovakia,

Afghanistancontinued p. 8

IRAQ: After six years of war...

By PEGGY GISH

Christian Peacemaker Teams

After six years of war, Iraqis are living with: **The deaths of an estimated million Iraqi civilians.** (See <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSL3048857920080130>)

A devastated society and infrastructure. Water is still contaminated. The average Iraqi has an average of four hours a day of electricity, and the poor have inadequate medical care.

Continuing economic crisis. Sixty percent of the families rely on the food rations, which have been reduced. Unemployment is over 50%. Prices of food and fuel have increased, but not wages.

Widespread anger and despair about their living conditions.

The threat of torture, coerced confessions, and false imprisonment. Iraqis are in control of prisons and "security," but Iraqis often feel terrorized by special-forces police, trained and equipped by U.S. personnel who also trained death squads in Latin America. Many Iraqis say that the ways of Saddam continue.

Never knowing when the terrorist attacks might begin again. Violence on the streets in Central and Southern Iraq has decreased in the past six months due to repressive control,

IRAQ: After six years . . .continued p. 10

City of Modesto announces the
20th Annual
**EARTH DAY IN THE
PARK FESTIVAL**



Graceada Park
Needham & Sycamore, Modesto
Saturday, April 18, 2009
10 AM - 5 PM
Visit the Peace Center's booth

New YouTube video on Israel-Palestine

The National American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has completed its first Middle East video and posted it to YouTube. "Israel-Palestine: A Land in Fragments" dramatically details in two minutes the land issues involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Watch it at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ewF7AXn3dg>

Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) sponsors speaker

The Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) presents an Introduction to the Works of Guy Finley, on Sunday, April 5, 2009 from 3:00p.m. - 5:00 p.m. at the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), 700 McHenry Ave # B, Modesto. Watch a video lecture given by Guy Finley. Q&A will follow.

Guy Finley directs the non-profit Life of Learning Foundation whose purpose is to help individuals realize that the relationship their heart longs for already exists. Over one million copies of Finley's 35 books and audio programs have been sold in 16 languages worldwide.

Cost: \$5 or \$10 donation, more or less. For information, contact Dolores Chávez, (209) 505-7002, dolores.gloria@hotmail.com.

Special "themed" poetry slam to support the Haven

There will be a special poetry slam highlighting Sexual Assault Awareness Month on Wednesday, April 8, 2009, sponsored by Haven Women's Center of Stanislaus. \$150 in cash prizes will be awarded. Topics can include Relationships, Men/Women, Hope, Love, Father/Motherhood, Children, Sexism, Respect, etc.

The slam will be held at the Prospect Theatre, 520 Scenic Dr. Modesto, 95350, 7:30 p.m. (Get there early for a seat!) OPEN SLAM. Be there early to sign up to slam (6:30 p.m.).

For more Modesto Poetry Slam info, visit: www.SLAMONRYE.com. Visit the Haven at <http://www.havenwomenscenter.org/>

Inaugural San Joaquin Writers' Workshop

By PAULA SHEIL

The inaugural San Joaquin Writers' Workshop will be held on Saturday, April 4, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Danner Hall at San Joaquin Delta College. Hosted by the Writers' Guild (publishers of *Artifact* and *Poet's Espresso*), the day-long event features Pulitzer Prize-nominated and Grammy-nominated poet Michael C. Ford, along with local poets "Jimi" Choice, Roger Naylor, Michael Duffett, Monika Rose, Richard Rios and the collaborative group, Poets on the Roof.

For \$15, writers of all forms of poetry can work together and network. Morning coffee, lunch and an open mic and reception are included.

Register at www.sanjoaquinwritersworkshop.org

NAACP celebrates 100th birthday, recognizes MPLC and Fred Herman

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

The Modesto Peace Life Center for Peace, Justice and a Sustainable Environment and Fred Herman, founding editor of Stanislaus Connections and long time civil and human rights advocate, were among the local groups and individuals recognized for their noteworthy contributions in the area of human and civil rights by the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored [All] People (NAACP) at a recent celebration of the national organization's 100th birthday.

Also honored were Wanda Pruitt, president of the Central Valley Black Educators Association, an advocate group for student rights; Juanita Jackson, long time Westside commu-

nity activist; the King Kennedy Board of Directors, supporter of numerous social and human rights programs for disenfranchised populations, the Stanislaus Pride Center, support organization for the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender population, and Advocates For Justice, provider of pro-bono legal assistance to low income individuals.

ACTION: The event was a fundraiser to provide scholarship money to deserving youth. To learn more about and support the organization go to www.naacpmodesto.org or call 882-1480.



US Torture: voices from the "Black Sites"

From The New York Review of Books

The April 9, 2009, issue of *The New York Review* offers first view of American torture inside secret prisons.

The United States tortured prisoners, according to a secret report on "The Black Sites" by the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], excerpted in great detail in the new issue of *The New York Review of Books*. The report, whose findings are made public for the first time, details in specific and explicit terms the various methods and "enhanced techniques" the CIA used to interrogate prisoners in a secret "global internment system" set up at the direction of President George W. Bush less than a week after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

The report is summarized and analyzed in a lengthy and definitive article, "US Torture: Voices from the Black Sites," by Mark Danner, a longtime contributor to *The New York Review* and author of *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib and the War on Terror*.

The accounts of the detainees themselves, including the most prominent captured in the War on Terror, describe their detention from the time they were secretly brought to "the black sites"—secret prisons around the world, including in Thailand, Afghanistan, and Poland, through the interrogations using "waterboarding," beatings, and other techniques.

Danner, who has covered the torture story in *The New York Review* since 2004, reporting extensively on Abu Ghraib and the Iraq War, analyzes the current debate over torture, the harm it has done and continues to do to the country, and the possibility of meaningful Congressional investigations, bipartisan "truth commissions," and perhaps prosecution of those who have tortured.

Online: "US Torture: Voices from the Black Sites" is available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22530>. A podcast with Mark Danner discussing the article is also available.

Register Early for Peace Camp NOW!

Attend Peace Camp on June 26-28, 2009

Application form available at www.stanislausconnections.org

Register before June 1 for a discount.

Register before May 15; get a free, cool peace bumper sticker.

Stanislaus CONNECTIONS

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How wonderful it is that nobody need
wait a single moment before starting
to improve the world.

— Anne Frank *Dairy of a Young Girl*
Young German Jewish diarist (1929-1945)

2009 Peace Essay Contest

Our world is filled with a variety of peacemakers. Some make the headlines while others quietly work behind the scenes. Some deal with international situation while others work in their own communities. They may be as close as a family member or next-door neighbor, or as far away as someone on the other side of the globe. The focus of each person's work may differ, but common to all peacemakers is a commitment to using nonviolent principals and actions to nurture and encourage a more peaceful world. The 2009 Peace Essay Contest invited students to study *living* peacemakers in our community and throughout the world. Each writer nominated one of these peacemakers whose work inspired them, to be the 2009 Peacemaker of the Year.

The 23rd annual Peace Essay Contest received 448 qualifying essays.

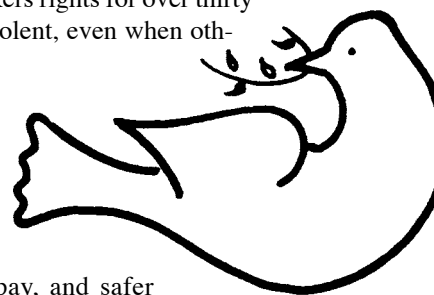
Sponsored by the Modesto Peace/Life Center and by the Modesto Junior College Department of Literature and Language Arts, the contest was open to all students, grades 5 – 12, who live or attend school in Stanislaus County.

2009 Peace Essay Committee: Margaret Barker, Indira Clark, Pam Franklin, Elaine Gorman, Russ Matteson, Suzanne Meyer, Deborah Roberts, Sandy Sample, and Shelly Scribner.

Elizabeth West Division IV ~ First Place Winner Fremont Open Plan ~ Ms. Pollard Dolores Huerta

I nominate Dolores Huerta for peacemaker of the year because I think that the work she has done to help people is really amazing. She has founded or co-founded many organizations that work to help farm workers. She worked with Cesar Chavez., and founded the Dolores Huerta Foundation. She has been working for farm workers rights for over thirty years. She has always stayed nonviolent, even when others didn't.

Huerta co-founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), with Cesar Chavez, and was second in command to him until his death. Together they formed a union to help get farm workers health care, safe housing, better pay, and safer working conditions. They went all over the United States asking people to boycott table grapes to get better pay and working conditions. Multiple times they were threatened with violence, and some of the organizers were killed. In September 1988, in front of the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, Huerta was beaten by San Francisco police resulting in several broken ribs and the removal of her spleen. The beating was caught on camera and broadcasted on news. Instead of using violence she sued the SFPD. After winning in court, Huerta



used the settlement to fund the Dolores Huerta Foundation. The foundation does community service, as in tutoring children, planting trees in poorer neighborhoods, and running a program where college students can spend their spring break touring farms, attending community meetings, and staying with host families to have a first-hand experience.

Huerta was raised in the farm worker community of Stockton, California. During her teaching career, "I couldn't stand seeing kids come to class hungry and needing shoes," she said, "I thought I could do more by organizing farm workers than by trying to teach their hungry children."¹

At a time when most women stayed at home, Huerta had to balance raising eleven children with being an activist leader. She never really thought of herself as a housewife, she thought it was more important to give her children a sense that they could change the world.

I think that Dolores Huerta should be the peacemaker of the year because she took care of big problems without violence. Because of the Dolores Huerta Foundation, younger genera-

tions will carry on her work for equal rights. She was beaten, people who worked with her were murdered, but they never reacted violently. That is what I think is really amazing about her. No matter what happened to her, she continued with her peaceful, non-violent protests. Because of her work, many people are inspired to help farm workers.

¹ Proclamation of the Delano Grape Workers for International Boycott Day. May 10, 1969.

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Division IV Peace Essay Contest winners. Photo: Jim Costello

Harvest of the month

By ANNE SCHELLMAN

Horticulture Program Representative and Nutrition and Garden Coordinator, University of California Cooperative Extension

Many people are familiar with University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) programs in the areas of 4-H Youth Development and Agriculture and Natural Resources. This article introduces the program area of Family Nutrition Services.

Last summer, Theresa Spezzano (M.S. Nutrition) began working in Stanislaus County as the UCCE Nutrition, Family and Consumer Sciences Advisor. One of her programs involves reaching out to schools to provide educational materials on nutrition and health. Recently, she decided to implement a program called "Harvest of the Month" which introduces students to a new fruit or vegetable each month.

The idea behind the program is to expose children to fruits and vegetables they may not have tried before. While tasting the new food at school, students also learn about its history, nutritional value and what a serving size looks like among other things. See the following website for more information: <http://www.harvestofthemoth.com/product-list.asp>.

So far, we have used produce donated from local Wal-Mart and Save Mart stores. We appreciate these generous donations and are looking for more, as we must provide at least 300 students with a sample to try on a monthly basis. Also, our program is growing and we expect to have more children participate during the 2008-2009 school year.

We deliver produce to each school by the same date each month for consistency. If you know you will have extra produce after your harvest and would like to make a donation, please contact Anne Schellman at (209) 525-6824 to see if your produce matches our needs. We have limited storage facilities and would need to pick up or have the produce delivered close to the date when we will be handing it out.

Visit the UC Cooperative Extension Office at 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite A in Modesto. Email the author at aschellman@ucdavis.edu

Free 411 for cell and home phones

Submitted by SHELLY SCRIBNER

When you need to use 411 information option, dial 1-800-FREE-411 (1-800-373-3411) or 1-800-GOOG-411. You will incur no charge. This works on your home phone also. For verification, see <http://www.snopes.com/inboxer/nothing/free411.asp>



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Documentary slated for Earth Day at the State Theatre

By SUE RICHARDSON

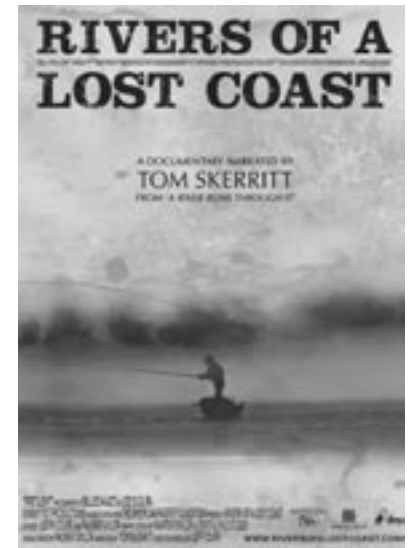
In honor of Earth Day, The State Theatre presents the documentary *Rivers of a Lost Coast*, by Central Valley filmmakers Justin Coupe and Palmer Taylor, Thursday, April 16 at 7 p.m. Admission is \$9. Coupe, also the film's director, researcher and co-writer, will be on hand to discuss the film.

The 84-minute documentary, narrated by Tom Skerritt who found one of his finest roles as Reverend Maclean in *A River Runs Through It*, traces the story of two fly fishermen whose unique lives and spirited feud becomes a metaphor for the decline and ultimate closure of California's North Coast fisheries. Coupe, who lives in Sacramento and is a board member with the Capital Film Arts Alliance, researched *Rivers of a Lost Coast* over more than four years to create what he calls, "A story about time and place, about a California that was." The story, which begins in the '40s and was tied to an elder generation, prompted Coupe and Taylor to work feverishly to gather first-hand accounts about the fading culture. Also fading was the once-remote and beautiful North Coast region, a sportsman's paradise until its decline ultimately lead to its complete closure in 2008 by state and federal agencies.

The documentary's subjects, Ted Lindner, the stern authoritarian, and Bill Schaadt, the reckless talent, were two of the most successful and dedicated anglers fly fishing ever pro-

duced. With origins tied to the golden years of California's Russian River, these close friends would eventually become bitter enemies. And through their story, the history of this region is told starting in the '40s through the '90s in what Coupe says is a "rare perspective," and adds, "Our documentary provides a symbolic, melancholy reflection on a wild California that has been lost to the growing metropolis."

To learn more about the film go to www.riversofalostcoast.com. Purchase tickets online at www.thestate.org or at The State Theatre box office, 1307 J Street, Modesto, from noon to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday, by phone at 209-527-4697, or up to one hour before the film.



The Story of Stuff: another way

By ANNIE LEONARD

From its extraction through sale, use and disposal, all the stuff in our lives affects communities at home and abroad, yet most of this is hidden from view. *The Story of Stuff* is a 20-minute, fast-paced, fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns. The Story of Stuff exposes the connections between a huge number of environmental and social issues, and calls us together to create a more sustainable and just world. It'll teach you something, it'll make you laugh, and it just may change the way you look at all the stuff in your life forever.



It'll teach you something, it'll make you laugh, and it just may change the way you look at all the stuff in your life forever.

The YES! Education Program and Free Range Studios (producers of *The Story of Stuff*), present teaching resources on consumption and sustainability at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=2268>

WATCH: The Story of Stuff and read our review.

UNDERSTAND: The Bigger Picture gain a deeper understanding of consumption with these YES! Articles.

TAKE ACTION: 10 Little and Big Things You Can Do and YES! Stories of real people making changes.

The Story of Stuff website has many more resources, including an annotated script of the movie, a detailed glossary, facts, tips for holding a screening in your classroom or community, and more. Visit <http://www.storyofstuff.com/>

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

By Lillian Vallee

54. Cunning Work

Last summer, my colleague and friend Michelle Christopherson and I discovered that our mothers had returned to us, independently but at about the same time, an old piece of embroidery we had sewn as girls. The pieces, lovingly saved by our mothers, had a cranky little cat ironing on a days-of-the-week runner (Michelle's) and a ring of morning glories embroidered roughly with thick floss in bright colors (mine). The morning glories brought back memories of summers spent on the front porch of our house in Detroit with my mother and her friends, who would mend clothing while discussing the day's events. A family friend, Teresa Rachmaninow, had presented me with a red and white sewing basket; I must have been nine years old, but I remember the freedom and power of realizing all the things I could now make or fix with a simple needle and thread. I had not yet discovered the story of the powerful Chinese heroine in "A Woman's Love," a tale told by the Uighur people: prowess with a needle enabled a young woman to believe she could do anything.

A half century later, I am sitting on my patio in Modesto, and I am translating sprays of blooming native plants into the poetic names of hand-dyed silk floss: Willow Green, Jewel Blue, Silver Fox. Keen observation of the natural world is the first skill one must master for good work, and I am translating the colors of fuchsia-flowered gooseberry, golden currant, hummingbird sage and ceonothus into thread—the gift of plants (cotton, flax) or of animals (wool, silk) about to be used in reciprocal celebration. This new passion is the result of a year of monthly meetings with Michelle after we both decided to resume our lost art. We set lovely tables, bring out the best porcelain cups, and make strong tea, in addition to the seasonal lentil soups and Bundt cakes. As English teachers, we reclaimed our ten-year-old selves and their embroidery first by buying a stack of embroidery *books*. Now we teach each other new stitches and talk.

The beauty of learning stitch work on the porch among my mother's friends was being privy to adult conversation. Young girls are hungry listeners. The beauty of getting together with a friend today is the same: conversation free of all constraint. Done without company, the work is quiet, meditative, perhaps even prayerful. It is stillness without idleness and being mute

in order to express. Time materializes as fragile spray or twining vine, as thought, observation, design, spirit and intent. No wonder needlework figures in fairy tales and myths as possessing a power equal to or greater than any weapon. And it is usually a saving grace; women weave, embroider and mend in order to rescue—a lost child, wayward spouse, brothers turned into swans. Delicately worked cloth could buy back a stolen infant or make a lover's clothing as "hard as iron." Ariadne's thread guided Theseus out of the labyrinth.

Women's needlework has long been seen as a mildly subversive activity, a realm of autonomy free from the exigencies of political or ecclesiastical authority. Working with thread processed from plant or animal fibers represented an old relationship with nature and a body of knowledge predating Christianity. "The Church, predominantly a man's world," writes Helen Stevens, "feared the power of women's skills with needle and thread, which in popular belief were still bound up with the thread of life which held body and soul together. Wise women and midwives carried with them a twisted thread to symbolize the mysterious entry into life from the womb, and garments were never mended whilst worn, in case the cutting of the thread brought ill luck, or even death, to the wearer." Needlework could not be separated from working magic and thus was banned on certain saints' days.

Nonetheless, Stevens continues, the fifty scholars who translated the Authorized Version of the Bible, under the patronage of King James I in 1611, referred to spinning, needle work and embroidery as "cunning" work and to those who practiced it as "wise-hearted," as if "the idea of embroidery as somehow magic and powerful was too deeply rooted to be questioned." The apex of embroidery skill is certainly ecclesiastical embroidery, using silver and gold thread in an amazingly durable technique, called "surface couching," of tacking the gold thread to the vestment or altar cloth with silk strands.

Michelle and I discovered the pleasure of small but exquisite embroidery tools—fine-pointed needles, birch wood and slate hoops, tasseled scissors in the shape of a stork or butterfly. Yet an even greater surprise was the truth of a statement made by Stevens in her book of embroidery history and instruction: "...it is impossible

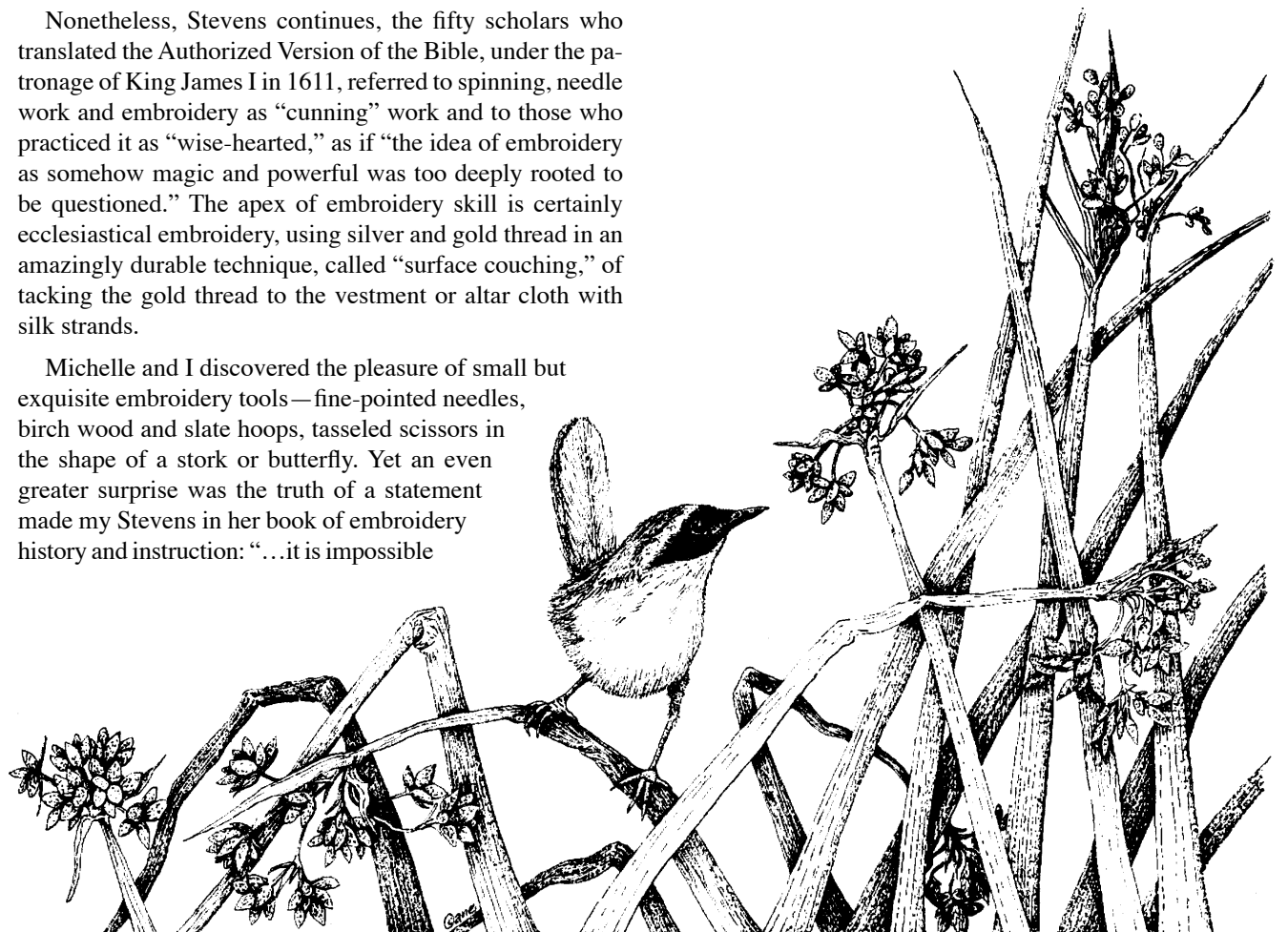
to escape the implication that the mystical power wielded by a slender needle and thread far exceeds its physical strength." Our needlework was leading, inadvertently, to small acts of personal courage: Michelle took on her fear of water and began swimming lessons. I took on Eros and began writing poetic "torrents."

At our last session, Michelle was showing me how to do the "moss" stitch, which makes tiny dandelion stars like asterisks. Her husband Eric had joined us for a slice of poppyseed cake. "Women should rule the world but this is why they won't," he said and we all laughed. Our Chinese heroine became king and then taught her husband how to rule wisely, so she could return to embroidering flowers ("Her skill... was second to none").

I think about her as I hang the discarded silk strands in the trees for the birds to weave into the hoops of their nests "to decorate what is plain and to bind what is loose."

ACTION: Need a thread to guide someone out of a labyrinth? Visit *Elegant Stitch*, 664 Bitritto Court, Modesto (visible from Kiernan)

Sources: Helen M. Stevens, *The Myth & Magic of Embroidery*; Kathleen Ragan, *Fearless Girls, Wise Women & Beloved Sisters*.



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Mitchell's challenge: After Gaza, five questions

By SANDY TOLAN

The deep irony of the Israeli-Palestinian “peace process” first struck me in 1996 as I was driving through the West Bank from Hebron to Jerusalem. I had turned off the potholed main road that passed through Palestinian villages and refugee camps and headed west into Kiryat Arba. In that Israeli settlement, admirers had erected a graveside monument to Baruch Goldstein, the settler from Brooklyn who, in 1994, gunned down 29 Palestinians in Hebron’s Cave of the Patriarchs. From the settlement’s creepy candlelit shrine I cut north, and soon found myself on a quiet, smooth-as-glass “bypass” road. The road, I would learn, was one of many under construction by Israel, alongside new and expanding settlements, that would allow settlers to travel easily from their West Bank islands to the “mainland” of the Jewish state.

How strange, I thought naively, as I traveled that lonely road toward Jerusalem on a gray winter afternoon: Isn’t this part of the land that Palestinians would need for their state? Why, then, in the middle of the Oslo peace process — barely three years after the famous Rabin-Arafat handshake on the White House lawn — would Israeli officials authorize construction that was visibly cementing the settlers’ presence into Palestinian land?

Twelve years later, these post-Oslo “facts on the ground” have all but doomed the traditional path to peace. The two-state solution, the central focus of efforts to end the tragedy of Israel and Palestine since 1967, has been undermined by the thickening reality of red-roofed Israeli settlements, military outposts, surveillance towers, and the web of settlers-only roads that whisk Israelis from their West Bank dwellings to prayer in Jerusalem’s Old City, or to shopping and the beach in Tel Aviv. So dense had the Israeli West Bank presence become by 2009, so fragmented is Palestinian life — both physically and politically — that it now requires death-defying mental gymnastics to imagine how a two-state solution could ever be implemented.

Five Questions for an Israeli-Palestinian Future

Former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, Obama’s respected, fair-minded Middle East envoy, will bring his considerable skills to bear on this ever more daunting problem. It is Mitchell’s widely acknowledged fairness that has prompted jaw-dropping comments from some hard-line pro-Israeli lobbyists and Christian Zionists who became accustomed, under George W. Bush, to getting whatever they wanted; this in itself is a signal that Obama’s approach to the region may represent a genuine break from the past.

To an honest witness like Mitchell, for whom the facts and the aspirations of both peoples seem to actually matter, it may become quickly evident that the traditional two-state solution is now on life support. Seeing that, he would do well to keep an open mind and be prepared to ask some hard questions. Among them might be:

1. What does the unending march of Israeli construction actually mean for a “viable, contiguous” Palestine?

The only way anyone can viscerally understand the thousand cuts inflicted on the two-state solution is by driving through the West Bank. I’ve crisscrossed this landscape a hundred times since 1994, and never has the hardware of settlements and Israeli military control been so dense. Since the beginning of the Oslo “peace process” in 1993, the West Bank Jewish settler population has jumped from 109,000 to 275,000 — and this doesn’t include the Jewish “suburbs” in East Jerusalem, which

bring the total settler population to nearly half a million. Some 230 settlements and strategically placed “outposts” are now strung along hilltops across the West Bank, towering above whitewashed Palestinian villages.

The ragtag outposts, technically forbidden under Israeli law but encouraged by some within the government, are meant to connect with larger settlements to form an everlasting Jewish presence on Palestinian land. It’s no longer possible to drive any significant stretch of the West Bank without encountering a settlement, military post, settler road, surveillance tower, roadblock, stationary checkpoint, or “flying” checkpoint. The



number of West Bank barriers (roadblocks, checkpoints, and other obstacles) has increased nearly 70% in the last three years, and now exceeds 625 — this in a land about the size of Delaware.

How all this could be removed in order to create a “viable, contiguous” Palestinian state seems, increasingly, a question without an answer. During the Camp David talks in 2000, and in more recent discussions between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, there was much talk of large, consolidated “settlement blocs” and land swaps to facilitate a contiguous Palestine.

To the extent an unbroken Palestine was ever possible — and there was much behind-the-scenes debate about this, even among American negotiators at Camp David all the way back in 2000 — the facts on the ground, placed there deliberately by Israel, have by now made the issue virtually moot. Maps of many would-be “solutions” show the West Bank fractured into pieces, cut up by walls, settlements, military posts, and “security zones.” Far from the two-state solution

envisioned in the wake of the 1967 war, today’s maps tend to look like advertisements for a sci-fi movie entitled “The Incredible Shrinking Palestine.”

2. How can a viable Palestinian state exist when a city of 20,000 Israelis sits in the middle of it?

In 1978, Ariel, the city of Jewish settlers, was founded, over U.S. and international objections, in the heart of the West Bank district of Salfit. Fully one-third of it juts onto Palestinian land. Israel’s “security barrier” (known as the “apartheid wall” to Palestinians), which ostensibly follows Israel’s border with the West Bank, in fact doesn’t; at Ariel it veers east 11 miles to enfold the full settlement in its embrace. For this reason, Ariel’s leaders say confidently that their settlement, essentially a bedroom community for Tel Aviv with its own university and industrial park, is “here to stay.”

Indeed, the removal of Ariel — a red line for the Palestinians — has been mandated in almost none of the peace plans going back to Camp David, including the 2001 informal Geneva peace plan much heralded by the Israeli and American peace camps. That is why Ariel’s city fathers feel comfortable in sending its young “director of community aliyah [Jewish emigration to Israel],” Avi Zimmerman, raised in West Orange, New Jersey, across the U.S. to recruit more American Jews to move to the settlement. “It’s the ingathering of exiles,” Zimmerman told me, standing on a hilltop above Ariel. “You have to make sure there’s a constant flow of people.”

For Palestinians who live nearby, the existence of Ariel and other settlements makes traveling anywhere a nightmare. Osama Odeh, born in the village of Bidya (which means “olive grinding stone” in Arabic), told me that, if he wants to visit friends in a village five miles away, he must drive east, then south, then west, crossing multiple Israeli military checkpoints where he will have to show documents, open his car’s trunk, and face questions about his intentions and past whereabouts. The journey could take an hour. Or two, or three. “It becomes forty kilometers, instead of three or four,” he points out. “It’s ridiculous. In the name of security, they can turn your life to hell.”

For the many villagers without a car, the trip simply becomes impractical, thus encouraging political and social disconnection. “All the time they are expanding,” Odeh says of the settlements. “You feel trapped. Villages that have been there for hundreds of years, now they feel like they are fragmented.” According to U.N. maps, Palestinians are restricted from entering some 40% of the West Bank, while the major Palestinian cities now essentially function as isolated cantons.

Some Israeli negotiators, including deputy speaker of the Knesset Otniel Schneller, a longtime leader of the settlers’ movement, have called upon Israeli engineers to design workarounds. Their answer: a network of tunnels, “flyover” ramps, and bridges to ferry Palestinians under and around the settlements. For Schneller, these concrete fixes would keep a prominent Jewish presence in “Judea and Samaria,” while allowing Palestinians ostensible “freedom of movement” through tightly controlled funnels: Not exactly what Palestinians had in mind during the decades of their liberation struggle.

3. What kind of Palestinian state would have its capital in a village far from Jerusalem’s Old City and virtually sealed off from huge portions of the West Bank?

about Palestinian and Israeli realities

Palestinians have always insisted on having East Jerusalem, including portions of the Old City which encompass the Muslim holy sites, as their capital. At Camp David in 2000, PLO leader Yasser Arafat refused an American-Israeli offer of a “sovereign presidential compound” beside the Muslim holy sites. He derided it as “a small island surrounded by Israeli soldiers.” More recently, Israeli negotiators have reiterated their intention to hold onto the Old City and its holy sites. They have suggested that the actual Palestinian capital should be located in some of East Jerusalem’s Arab “neighborhoods” — actually, small villages never considered part of Jerusalem by Palestinians, but now incorporated into greater Jerusalem, thanks to the redrawn administrative boundaries of Israeli city planners.

Even were the Palestinian capital to be located in the Old City, its ability to govern the rest of Palestine would still be hamstrung. Since Israel’s capture of East Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli government has built a ring of Jewish “suburbs” around Arab East Jerusalem. Nearly 200,000 Israelis now live there. This ring essentially seals off East Jerusalem from Bethlehem, Hebron, and Palestinian villages to the south.

One of the last pieces to snap into place was Har Homa, a settlement built between Jerusalem and Bethlehem on a hill known to the Palestinians as Jabal Abu Ghneim. I recall seeing the hill from Bethlehem in 1996. By then, Israeli chainsaws and earth-moving equipment had already sliced lines into the hill’s conifer forest, giving it what looked like a bad haircut. Palestinian activists, desperate to hang onto this part of the West Bank, had set up a 24-hour emergency camp, pledging not to abandon their peaceful protest until Israel withdrew its claims.

Today, the trees are gone, replaced by long rows of new white houses for Israelis. “This is the last resort from which you can establish the umbilical cord between Bethlehem and Jerusalem,” said Jad Isaac, director of the Applied Research Institute, a Palestinian think tank in Bethlehem. “So the construction of Har Homa destroys the peace process. Unless Har Homa is totally destroyed and returned to the Palestinians, there is no peace.”

For Bethlehemites like Isaac, the wedge of Har Homa and the other East Jerusalem “suburbs” effectively renders moot Palestinian aspirations for a contiguous state. If any doubt about this lingered, Israel’s separation wall put an end to it.

Driven into the land at the northern end of Bethlehem is the 25-foot-high concrete curtain with two narrow, single file pedestrian lanes running beside it. Each is about 150 feet long, framed by steel bars from concrete floor to metal ceiling. These give the few Palestinians with permits to travel from Bethlehem the inescapable feeling of moving through a cattle line. (Actually, Palestinians prefer a poultry analogy, calling the lanes ma’atet al-jaaj, the chicken-plucking machine.) When I walked through the line, emerging near the southern edge of Jerusalem, I gazed back on the northern face of the wall, stunned at a banner unfurled beneath the gun turret and watchtower. From the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, it proclaims in Hebrew, English, and Arabic, “Peace Be With You.”

4. How can you build a viable state by negotiating only with the weakened representative of one Palestinian faction?

Even if the obstacles outlined above were to miraculously disappear, George Mitchell’s work could be badly crippled by an outdated American strategy of dealing only with Fateh and

its leader, Mahmoud Abbas. Long backed by Americans as a Palestinian “moderate,” in the wake of the recent Israeli offensive in Gaza, Abbas has lost virtually all credibility among his people. (As of January 9th, he also technically ceased being the Palestinian president.)

Despite the death and destruction of these last weeks, Hamas is increasingly seen by observers in the region as gaining strength in the West Bank, while firmly holding power in Gaza. “The Islamist movement is going to come out of this war strengthened politically vis-à-vis its rival Palestinian factions, including Fateh, and the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah,”



wrote the shrewd political analyst and former Palestinian labor secretary Ghassan Khatib in a commentary for bitterlemons, a website run by Israeli and Palestinian analysts. He added, “The Israeli war on Gaza, which increased public sympathy with Hamas... [has] further shifted the balance of power against Fateh in the West Bank and left the Palestinian Authority politically very vulnerable.”

Indeed, some West Bankers, who hold no brief for Hamas, are echoing the words that many Lebanese said of Hezbollah in the wake of the 2006 war in Lebanon: “They put up a resistance for 22 days — Fateh leadership did and said nothing.” The Palestinian-American journalist Lubna Takruri wrote me from Ramallah this week. “People in the West Bank are still smoldering that while they were watching all these worldwide protests here, Fateh forces were preventing the Palestinians from protesting against the Israelis at checkpoints. This was huge. It made people feel like the PA [Palestinian Authority] was doing Israel’s work for them, while Israel handled business in Gaza.”

Early signs strongly indicate that the Obama team will

continue the strategy of propping up Abbas, with credibility-destroying “help” from the CIA, while refusing to deal with Hamas until it recognizes Israel. Clearly the Hamas charter is despicable: It describes the Jews as aspiring to “rule the world,” and declares that the elimination of Israel would be a historic parallel to the defeat of the Crusaders by Saladin.

American and Israeli officials have, however, ignored more subtle signals from Hamas — which was, after all, brought to power in free and fair elections — that it would abide by the expressed will of the Palestinian people for coexistence with Israel. One of the strongest signals was the 2006 “Prisoners’ Document,” initiated by leaders of Hamas and the imprisoned former Fateh leader Marwan Barghouti, that called for negotiations with Israel in pursuit of peace. The Bush administration, siding with the Israelis, who insisted that there was “no partner for peace,” chose to ignore such signs and so undermined any efforts toward a Fateh-Hamas unity government.

It would be disastrous for Mitchell to go down this same road. Hamas is here to stay. These last weeks, Israeli dreams of defeating it in Gaza have been shattered, and any attempt to deal only with the rickety shell of Fateh will ensure that the U.S. obtains the same bleak results. The fact is: engaging Hamas will be a much better way of keeping the rockets silent.

5. Given these immense obstacles, is a viable, contiguous, sovereign Palestinian state even possible anymore? And, if not...

Given the overwhelming odds facing a two-state solution, a strong American negotiating presence will be necessary, of a sort not seen since... well, ever. The hallmark of the last eight years (and to a large extent the previous eight Clinton years) has been an utter lack of American pressure on Israel. This has been in no one’s interest, including Israel’s.

Ehud Olmert, who in 2008 spoke — apparently sincerely — of Israel’s need to withdraw from “most or all” of the West Bank settlements, received no support from Washington for saying so. In the vacuum of American leadership, Olmert capitulated to the settlers’ bloc in his ruling coalition. Hence, the arrival of yet more Israeli facts-on-the-ground on the West Bank. This American administration has to do much better.

The last 16 years have also been marked by an inability to see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through anything but Israeli eyes. Now, Mitchell will, hopefully, bring a willingness to understand six decades of tragedy through two sets of aspirations: this will be essential if a just, lasting piece is to be forged. This will also have to include confronting one of the most vexing issues of all, that of the 4.4 million Palestinian refugees and the insistence of many of them that they be allowed to return to their original homes in what is now Israel. This is, of course, a red line for Israelis who insist that the “right of return” would mean the end of their state.

Essential for George Mitchell in all of this will be an openness and a creativity absent from American diplomacy since the violent birth of Israel and the Palestinian catastrophe in 1948. Increasingly, small groups of Palestinians, a handful of Israelis, and even motivated outsiders like Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, are looking at coexistence anew, by exploring the possibility of a third way. The alternatives differ sharply: some call for a one-state solution; others for a bina-

Afghanistan: A Tragedy?

decided to show they were still tough guys. They flooded half a million men with tanks and helicopters into Afghanistan. But the Afghan tribes, armed by the CIA, defended their home turf from caves in the hills, and bled the Reds for ten years. In 1989 the Soviets quit, the Berlin wall came down.

Now for potential tragedy. I've read Barack Obama's books; he is a very good man—compassionate, dedicated, smart and bold. He is confronting major elements of the ruling class in order to put America back to work, building a better society. But Hillary was right. Mr. O doesn't know much about war and peace. He chose some dangerous advisors—National Security Advisor James L. Jones, National Intelligence Director Dennis Blair, Pentagon Chief Robert Gates, Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, and Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn—a fistful of hawks eager to escalate the \$2,000,000,000+ a month we the taxpayers are pouring into the Afghan war.

Actually, pouring it into a desperately poor rural country: chief export opium, literacy rate 28%, the world's highest infant mortality rate, terrible roads, brutal weather, mountains that are a guerrilla's paradise. Hundreds of heavily armed warlords, no memory of a centralized state (people ridicule President Karzai as the Mayor of Kabul), 80,000 police officers who are notoriously corrupt.... A former Afghan interior minister calls his country "a theme park of problems."

There are voices of common sense. Head of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen calls for a "whole government approach," putting money, personnel, and policy emphasis into diplomacy and economic development. General Petraeus calls for new diplomatic and economic commitment from Washington, and reaching out to Iran, which has lost thousands of soldiers in battles with Afghan drug kings.

Obama's daughters heard a speaker at their school recently: American mountaineer and trauma nurse Greg Mortenson who, over the last fifteen years, has helped build eighty schools for Muslim girls in the mountains of Pakistan and Afghanistan, to the applause of their parents, many local clergy, and indeed of the Supreme Council of Ayatollahs in Iran. (The story is in his book, *Three Cups of Tea*.) Sasha and Malia, tell your dad.

President Obama should beware the example of Lyndon Johnson—another good man who chose to be sucked into the quagmire of a war and went down in disgrace. Afghanistan equals Vietnam with mountains.

So which advisers will Obama listen to? Which advisers will We-the-People compel him to heed?

... from page 1

I shuddered when I heard this brilliant young president tell the Congress on February 24,

"I will not allow terrorists to plot against the American people from safe havens halfway around the world."

It's true, he did say "with our friends and allies, we will forge a new and comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan to defeat Al Qaida and combat extremism." But

"I will not allow"? Listen to that word, "I".

Who does he think he is, Abraham Lincoln?

His hero Lincoln sent over half a million men to their deaths in the bloodiest war up to that time in human history. It's true, the North "won" the war—if you ignore the fact that in the mind of many Southerners, the Civil War is not over.

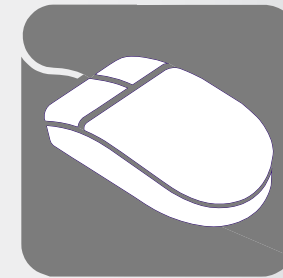
But Robert E. Lee did not have nuclear weapons. Pakistan does. Many voices are warning that Obama's war against the Taliban is driving them precisely into Pakistan. If they destabilize the government of Pakistan, what then? Can you picture the Taliban with nukes?

This article draws heavily on a magnificent piece of journalism, "Team Obama's plan for Afghanistan is a disaster in search of a strategy" in Jim Hightower's monthly newsletter, the Hightower Lowdown. Online at www.hightowerlowdown.org. Also available in the mail, cheap: 866-271-4900, toll-free.

The Brave New Foundation has produced a powerful eleven-minute video on Afghanistan, with compelling testimony from a host of knowledgeable sources. It's available on the web, <http://rethinkafghanistan.com>, along with a petition urging Congress to have oversight hearings on Afghanistan. Help hold our government accountable; stop the tragedy.

We must learn, actually, to not have enemies, but only confused adversaries who are ourselves in disguise.

—Alice Walker to Barack Obama, Nov 5, 2008.




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An Evening with
DAVID SEDARIS





Saturday, April 25, 2009
7:00 p.m.
Performing and Media Arts Center
Main Auditorium
Modesto Junior College, East Campus


Sedaris is the bestselling author of *Me Talk Pretty One Day* and *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim*. With sardonic wit and incisive social critiques, Sedaris has become one of America's pre-eminent humor writers. The great skill with which he slices through cultural euphemisms and political correctness proves that Sedaris is a master of satire and one of the most observant writers addressing the human condition today. He is the author of the bestsellers *Barrel Fever* and *Holidays On Ice*, as well as his latest book *When You Are Engulfed in Flames*. His original radio pieces can often be heard on National Public Radio's *This American Life*. In 2001, Sedaris became the third recipient of the Thurber Prize for American Humor.

—Times Literary Supplement.

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Lin Sexton: Peacemaker through the arts

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

For three years, Lin Sexton has led Memorial Hospital's Writing Through Cancer program, and currently leads her seventh cancer-writing group. She also facilitates art writing for the hospital's Complementary Therapies Art Program, helping survivors write about the process of making art. "I am amazed," says Lin, "at the healing power of writing one's experiences, and the remarkable benefit of having other people listen to that writing. It's a joy to encourage people who are not writers to simply remember, write, read their work aloud, and see the immediate benefit of that process."

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Lin's early years were filled with public performances as a singer. A theatre major at CSU Stanislaus, Lin has won many awards in acting, including the Governor's Medal of Montana. She was one of the founders of the Denair Gaslight Theatre. Her work includes free-lance writing and directing of television and radio commercials as well as acting and singing in musical theatre productions in Northern California.

Lin has written, staged and toured dozens of dramas and musical theatre productions, and her material has been performed in the USA, Canada, England, New Zealand and Australia. She has penned journal articles, music, gift books, published lyrics and poetry, writes a regular column and serves as a professional ghostwriter. She is employed as Director of Worship Arts at the First Baptist Church of Modesto and also coaches acting at Center Stage Kidz in downtown Modesto.

Most recently, Lin has been working in Slovenia, where since 2001 she has yearly taken a 30-member performing group from Modesto called New Hope. The group presents a show of music, drama, media and dance--all in the Slovene language--in theatres across that country.

"I simply want to be 100 percent who God made me," she says. "My life's mission is to reflect God's love and glory, to be a peacemaker, and inspire people through the arts to know the Great Artist."

Lin has been married to Cliff for 36 years. They have two sons, also residing in Modesto, California.



Black Flags

Black flags, torn, uneven
 Black flags against ancient sand
 Made from cotton, ragged edged
 We walk through the Old City
 Through the souk, the Arab Quarter
 Shop doors close as we pass, locking
 audibly
 Heavy air hot with tension
 Then the sound of one door opening
 We enter the shop
 A room crammed with beads and leather
 The boy closes the door behind us
 His eyes huge, dark, wide, scanning for
 danger.
 He whispers, "Missus, PLO strike day. If
 we open
 They burn us down. But we are hungry,
 Missus!"
 We make a hurried purchase – a frantic
 grab for something on a shelf
 Give him extra shekels
 Then run across the city to the wall
 Now aware of the meaning of black flags
 Run to the Church of Saint Anne
 Step inside
 And morph from squinting strangers
 To quiet pilgrims
 Relishing safety
 Imagining history
 Someone begins to sing
 In a language we don't know
 Amazing Grace
 We join in our native tongue
 Ethiopians enter
 Smiling and eager to sing
 Our song echoes in the stone chapel
 Three languages
 One song
 In a temporary peace
 Jerusalem longs for

Sand and Space

Once deserts were boring beige expanses
 To be endured on the way to somewhere –
 How long it took – a lifetime –
 To see the beauty of azure kissing granite,
 sand and cactus
 reaching up to praise the Great Artist.
 How long it took- a lifetime –
 to notice nature's momentary dance of
 color
 after the rare rain –
 To hear the subtle symphony of desolate
 space:
 thunder, silence, insects, wind.
 We had to live first for a while,
 to graduate from life's boot camp
 and pick our way through the once daz-
 zling garden of options,
 wandering through brilliant careers,
 inhaling fragrant possibilities around us,
 rushing toward a thousand vivid bright
 potentials
 and tripping over passions here and there.
 But deserts?
 No time for such wastelands then.
 We needed scars.
 We needed older eyes
 To see the loveliness of nowhere.

Lin Sexton
 Previously published in Writing Through
 Cancer, Volume 1
 Memorial Cancer Services, Modesto, CA,
 2006

Home For The Night

For a moment at sunset, the wild roses
 glow.
 Intoxicated by the smell of new wet grass
 and spring,
 they cling to her.
 She blushes at their return -
 a fleck or two of stubborn red
 still visible in her weathered face
 like a women's lipstick after dinner.
 She, the grand old mothering barn
 stands afield, sagging doors wildly open
 calling her children home for the night.

Is she patient, or simply unaware
 they are not here, but scattered.
 Tools, machines and wagons, two ponies
 and a wall of livery,
 stale bricks of hay, feed sacks, and three
 cows.
 Some sold at auction by barking, crusty
 ranchers
 and others ornamenting movie sets some-
 where –
 looking noble, serving no one.

Yet she continues calling,
 Receiving a cat or two, a dozen doves and
 an owl,
 Her peak roof crown decayed,
 She will someday simply fall.
 But for now, unfamiliar boys on dirt bikes
 charge through her
 As if she were a secret tunnel in some
 foreign war.



PG&E customers address global warming through tax-deductible “ClimateSmart”

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

The first-of-its-kind ClimateSmart program, established in 2007 through Pacific Gas and Electric Company, “... illustrate[s] the opportunities that exist to address global warming, and the power of individuals to send a message that personal action is both possible and significant,” according to Dan Kammen, Professor, Energy and Resources Group, Goldman School of Public Policy and Director, Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory, the University of California, Berkeley.

By adding a voluntary, tax-deductible donation to monthly PG&E bills, customers can fight against climate change and reduce their individual household carbon footprint by balancing out home greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through environmental conservation, restoration and protection projects.

Sixty eight per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions from a typical home come from natural gas use. Through 2009, the monthly cost for ClimateSmart participation is \$0.00254 per kilowatt-hour (for electricity) and \$0.06528 per therm (for natural gas), or about \$5 a month for the typical Northern California home.

One hundred per cent of ClimateSmart payments support projects that reduce or absorb GHG emissions by conserving and restoring native redwood forests or capturing methane gas from dairy farms and landfills.

Voluntary carbon storage projects like the Garcia River and Lompico Headwaters illustrate how California forests and forest landowners can help the state achieve its ambitious goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 according to Mary Nichols, Chairman of the California Air Resources Board (CARB). “By purchasing offsets that are verifiable under CARB-approved protocols, PG&E has demonstrated that corporations can make progressive decisions about investing in real, measurable reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.”

All PG&E-owned office and maintenance buildings are enrolled in the program, committing more than \$1.5 million in shareholder funding to ClimateSmart projects. “Since PG&E became the first participant, tens of thousands of organizations and residential customers have joined. 236,058 metric tons of GHG emission reductions have been recorded since the program’s inception in June 2007. A number of new projects are being considered.

ACTION: Learn more about ClimateSmart at the following websites: <http://www.joinclimatesmart.com/>

Current Projects
<http://www.pge.com/myhome/environment/whatyoucando/climatesmart/climatesmartabout/projects/index.shtml>

RFP for new projects in California that reduce, avoid or sequester GHG emissions <http://www.pge.com/myhome/environment/whatyoucando/climatesmart/climatesmartrequests/>

Six years too long – military families call for end to Iraq War

From Military Families Speak Out

On the eve of the sixth anniversary of the beginning of the war in Iraq, Military Families Speak Out, the largest organization of military families to oppose a war in the nation’s history, is calling on the American people to push President Obama to bring an immediate and complete end to the U.S. military occupation of Iraq. In a statement the organization said:

Six years after the Bush administration (with the majority in Congress complicit) made the grievously flawed decision to deploy the U.S. military to invade Iraq, the military occupation continues and Americans and Iraqis are still dying in a war based on lies.

Recent news accounts report the weariness Americans feel on the eve of the sixth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, and how their focus has turned to the woes the crashing economy has brought. But it is a different weariness felt by today’s military families. For us, not only is the economy in shambles, but every day that this war continues is another day when so many of our loved ones are in harm’s way. For Iraqis, every day that there are U.S. troops in Iraq is another day that their country is under occupation. The fact that every month this continuing war drains \$10 billion from an economy in crisis seems lost in the day-to-day dramas of lay-offs and foreclosures.

President Obama’s promise that all of our troops will be out of Iraq by December, 2011 will be cold comfort to the military families for whom this timeline makes no changes to deployment cycles set up under President Bush. These families’ sons and daughters, husbands, and wives, sisters and brothers, fathers and mothers will come home from first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth deployments changed forever by lifelong injuries to their bodies, minds, and spirits. Over the next two years of the Obama plan, some families will receive loved ones home from Iraq in flag-draped coffins, while others will witness loved ones who return, only to take their own lives because of what they’ve seen or done

IRAQ: After six years...

but this control has not resolved deeper problems. Iraqis in these areas wonder if the lull in the violence is temporary and still live in fear. They believe those doing greater acts of terror have simply moved to other areas such as Mosul and Baqubah, where high rates of violence continue.

Increasing violence against women and the loss of women’s rights and freedoms.

Their children growing up seeing violence and killing as the norm.

Pollution from the radioactive depleted uranium used in U.S. weaponry, which has caused cancers and birth defects.

Election fraud and the killings of candidates and elected officials. Irregularities in the most recent election left about 100,000 Kurdish Iraqis unable to vote. Kurds in Kirkuk and other northern disputed areas are afraid of civil war between Arabs and Kurds, because of election manipulations.

in a war that should not be happening.

Military Families Speak Out asks President Obama: “How many more deaths are you willing to accept in a war that you agree should never have started?” Not one more death is acceptable to us.

Military Families Speak Out asks Congress: “When is the time for you to step up to the plate and stop paying for this war with lives that should not be lost, and with money America does not have?” We say: Not one more day, not one more dime, not one more life.

It is long past time to bring our entire military home from Iraq. Continuing the occupation won’t bring Iraq any closer to political reconciliation. Our military presence in Iraq is a cause of violence there, not its solution.

As military and Gold Star families, we are dedicated to doing everything in our power to bring this misbegotten war to an end - now. We know that many in America are struggling with the impacts of a failing economy. But we want to remind the people of this country that military families and our loved ones are also struggling daily with the impacts of this on-going war that is being conducted in all of our names, with monies borrowed from all of our grandchildren. Military Families Speak Out asks the American people: “Will you join us now, on the eve of the seventh year of a war based on lies, in calling for an immediate end to the U.S. military occupation of Iraq, for all of our troops to be brought home now, and for them to receive the care they need when they return?”

Members of Military Families Speak Out and Gold Star Families Speak Out are available for interviews including those whose loved ones are now serving in Iraq or will soon be sent there, those whose loved ones suffered physical and psychological injuries in Iraq, and those whose loved ones died as a result of the war in Iraq.

Military Families Speak Out (MFSO); <http://www.mfso.org/>

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Turkish, Iranian, and Syrian attacks on Iraqi civilians. The U.S. government has allowed Turkish military planes to fly over Iraqi airspace and has given Turkey military “intelligence” to bomb Kurdish villages along Iraq’s northern borders with Turkey and Iran, causing destruction of hundreds of villages and displacement of villagers.

The internal displacement of 4.5 million Iraqis who have fled their homes.

Forces telling Iraqis that only violence and surrendering their civil rights will bring them security.

Words cannot express the anguish that the Iraqi people have experienced in these last six years. Occupying forces have exacerbated ethnic conflicts and oppressive political forces in their country. The ongoing war has caused suffering and hardship that will probably continue for generations.

To ask questions, send messages to peacemakers@cpt.org



Above: People march in San Francisco on March 21 on the sixth anniversary of the Iraq War.
Photo: Jana Ciavetta

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Middle East

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tional state ; others for an Israeli-Palestine confederation or a Middle East Union

The words "single state" spark a visceral fear among many Israelis who see this, too, as the end of the Jewish state. But the dreams of what Albert Einstein called the "sympathetic cooperation" between "the two great Semitic peoples" are rooted, in large part, in the history of progressive Zionists, who, like Einstein and the great Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, believed in their bones in a just coexistence. Buber advocated a binational state of "joint sovereignty," with "complete equality of rights between the two partners," based on "the love of their homeland that the two peoples share."

For many, the two-state solution remains, in the words of former U.S. Middle East negotiator Aaron Miller, author of *The Much Too Promised Land*, "the least bad alternative." But should George Mitchell take an honest look at the immense obstacles now involved in a two-state solution and determine that they are insurmountable, he would do well to remain open to other possibilities, and bear in mind the words of Albert Einstein.

"No problem," said Einstein, "can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it."

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Meet our cartoonist

Julia Bolton Mensinger's inspiration for her *cartoons* comes from reading international and local newspapers, current affairs publications and listening to NPR. Her outlook on life has been influenced by an idyllic, English upbringing, and much worldwide travel. She has lived in Modesto for a quarter century and finds that she can express and visually share many of her thoughts and emotions. Her latest cartoon series focuses on 2009, a year of great change.



Darling; nothing lasts forever.

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