



MENDO
Bear invasion
threatens local
Mendocino
family home **1**

HOME
Annual
Mendocino
Garden Contest
announced **5**

FAMILY
Three beloved
pets missing,
dog-knappers
suspected **3**



Mendo Mercury

LOCAL • TRUSTED • MENDOCINO



MENDOCINO, CALIFORNIA

Daily

NO BED BUGS IN MENDO

By Smacky Lope

(Mendocino, CA) You can finally sleep tight, Mendocino, without fear of letting those bed bugs bite. A recent infestation scare at the Mendocino Bed & Breakfast nearly led to a community bonfire of all linens last week, but has now been confirmed as merely a grotesque poison oak rash.

The threat of a bed bug infestation created a great deal of anxiety for the business community, which worried that tourists would shy away from our unique little town.

"I knew it was poison oak immediately" said dermatologist Dr. Damian Taggart, "It is too bad the B&B waited so long to return my call. The entire town was as nervous as a cat on a hot tin roof! The mayor was ready to hit the panic button!"

Please see **BED BUGS**,
Page 9

VANDALIZED HOUSE!

DISASTER BARELY AVOIDED

By Dottie Hand

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Harker arrived home around 5 pm on Thursday to discover their house had been vandalized, and by no ordinary burglar.

"Flour had been spilled all over the kitchen," Joyce Harker said. "We could see huge paw prints in the flour. Each paw print had five toes, just like a human, but huge claws. My husband is a hunter, and he quickly realized our invader was a bear."

The bear had roamed through the house, but the kitchen was a particular disaster. The bear had torn cabinet door off their hinges, ripped open drawers, and ransacked the pantry, all in search of food.

Please see **VANDAL**,
Page 9

LIGHTS IN THE SKY

REPORTS OF STRANGE LIGHTS, SHAPES ACCOMPANY STORM



By Billiam Rodge

While the city battens down for what is almost certainly going to be a storm to remember, residents are reporting strange objects and lights seen among the clouds.

"I've never seen anything like it in my 72 years on this planet," said Wyatt Smith. "I've seen strange things happen during storms, the light changes to orange or to green. I've never seen the sky turn purple before."

Residents have been calling the 911 center to report the strange sightings. Some say the clouds have been taking on unnatural, even neon, hues. Others report seeing dark shapes floating between the clouds. The occasional report notes the presence of an otherworldly humming sound.

When asked what they think the cause of the lights are, many residents responded with "aliens" with varying

degrees of sincerity.

"Let's put it this way: if I didn't believe in spacemen before, I sure as hell do now," Smith said. "Something out of the ordinary is going on up there."

A friend of Smith's interjected, saying that the lights weren't coming from the sky, but rather they appeared to be originating from inside a home in the city.

"I won't say who they are, because I don't want them to come after me," the anonymous source said. "But there's all sorts of lights and noises coming out of that house. That family is crazy. I keep calling the cops but they refuse to do anything about them."

She said the odd noises have kept her awake at night and have even caused her to hallucinate.

"I keep dreaming about the little boy who used to live in that house," she said. "I have

no idea how the family is doing this, but it's a nuisance and it has to stop."

The lights, if they exist, are finicky. This reporter stood on the roof of the Mendo Mercury for about an hour without seeing anything unusual.

Sheriff Chet Powell, who is organizing emergency efforts prior to the storm touching down on the coast, says he doesn't have time to talk about "ghost stories." He said all first responders are on edge about the approaching storm. He noted that he had arrived at the regional 911 center yesterday afternoon with a stack of large pizzas, a gift to emergency responders who are on red-alert in the wake of the impending storm.

"Do you want to help me lay sandbags or are you going to stand there wasting my time?" Powell asked this reporter.

BIG STORM COMING

By Billiam Rodge

(Mendocino, CA) By noon yesterday, cars were lined up down the block from gas stations. And by 3 p.m., the grocery store shelves were picked clean. Businesses everywhere were boarded up, their owners trying to protect them from flooding and looters.

A storm off the coast is expected to strike Mendocino later this evening. Forecasters predict that the city will be smacked with hail, winds in excess of 60 mph and a whopping 24 inches of rainfall.

Sheriff Chet Powell advised residents to wait out the storm in their homes, but said an emergency shelter is open in the Mendocino High School gymnasium.

"Stay at home if you can, but don't be stupid about it," the sheriff said. "If you think your home could flood, get over to the gym right away."

Volunteers worked all morning, stocking the gymnasium with water and blankets. In spite of the sudden and severe nature of the

Please see **BATTEN DOWN**
Page 3

TRAGEDY AT GLASS BEACH

Yesterday, as Melinda and Bert Norman were strolling along Glass Beach, they came upon a horrifying sight: the body of a diver who had been washed up on shore.

"He was wearing a wet suit, and had kelp wrapped all around him like leafy green ropes," said Bert Norman. "We immediately called 911, but it was too late to revive him."

The man was in his late 40s or early 50s. His identity has not yet been released, pending notification of his family.

Officials say they could tell the man had been abalone diving since he still had an abalone iron with him, which is used to remove the sea creature from the rocks they cling to.

Please see **TRAGEDY**,
Page 3

LOST HIKERS FOUND

By Lance Hamstrong

The two hikers who had been missing for over two days were successfully rescued yesterday by a camper. Fortunately, they managed to survive the ordeal unharmed. The lost duo, the brothers Harmon and Michael Pashington, were lost in Jackson State Forest for 55 hours, but their nightmare ended mid-afternoon yesterday when they wandered into Camp One and were taken in by a camper who was able to feed and shelter them.

"We were out there two days longer than we planned," said Harmon, "so to say we were unprepared is the understatement of the year."

Michael, 32, was visiting his older brother in San Francisco on vacation from his home in Chicago and was eager to get an outdoor experience. Harmon had done some hiking over the summer with friends but had not been out on his own before. Between the two of them, the brothers had two quarts of water and



Jackson State Forest where the hikers were lost.

Please see **LOST HIKERS**,
Page 4

INDEX

Reports of Strange Visitors
May Be Hoax.....page 2
Pancake Wars.....page 4
Metro.....page 5

Happily Ever After.....page 5
Things to Do In Mendocino
Countypage 6
Calendar.....page 6
Ask Nana.....page 8

Classified Ads.....page 8
Horoscope.....page 9
Editorial.....page 10
Obits.....page 10
Sports.....page 12

STORM COMING! FULL 5-DAY FORECAST, page 12



SHERIFF: REPORTS OF STRANGE VISITORS MAY BE HOAX

PARANORMAL SIGHTINGS

By Billiam Rodge

(Mendocino, CA) Sheriff Chet Powell wants Mendocino pranksters to know two things: 911 is not a toy and it's a felony to disrupt emergency services with bogus crime reports.

Powell made his comments Tuesday, after the 911 center had been pummeled with reports that strange, government-like agents had been harassing Mendocino-area residents. The alleged agency, which calls itself The Charter, according to the callers, has been reportedly spying on people. Callers sometimes claim the agents force their way into homes and interrogate people before mysteriously vanishing.

"We've looked into it and no such agency exists," Powell told reporters. "We've asked everyone we could think of in both the state and federal governments and they all say the same thing: there is no such thing called The Charter."

The sheriff said that his detectives combed the greater Mendocino area and have found no evidence of the strange visitors, who are often described wearing dark spacesuits and who talk with flat, monotone voices.

Powell believes that reports of the mysterious organization are the result of an Internet hoax.

"I'm not that old," Powell, 56, said. "I know what kids get up to on the Internet. Have you heard of this Slender Man thing? I imagine it's a lot of fun for the people who make these

calls, but that's no excuse to put people's lives at risk by tying up our 911 operators with stupid stories."

It is a felony to make false reports to 911, Powell said.

Many of the reports seem to involve one family from Mendocino. The Charter agents are said to interrogate local residents about the family in question. Powell would not release the family's name because they have not been charged with a crime.

"Listen, we talked to the family and they're as confused as we are," Powell said. "They haven't done anything wrong. They're a little strange, sure, but they're good people and they don't deserve this kind of abuse."

The Mendo Mercury used 911 records to contact some of the callers who have reported The Charter. One man, who asked to remain anonymous, said he took offense at Powell's remarks. He said he was afraid for his life after two strange individuals apparently broke into his south side apartment.

"They kept asking about this family, if I knew them, if I could tell them anything about them. It was creepy! The entire time they stood in my way so I couldn't get out of the apartment. I thought I was being robbed or arrested or worse!"

The man also reported that a strange humming sound accompanied the visitors. He said it gave him a headache.

"I know that sounds crazy, but it happened," he said.

The man said that the

agents left as strangely as they arrived.

"The humming sound got so loud that it hurt. I cringed and covered my ears and when I looked up they weren't there anymore," he said.

The man criticized the sheriff's remarks. He accused Powell of spreading "disinformation" about The Charter.

"Is Sheriff Chet Powell in cahoots with these monsters?" the man asked.

Barbara Ott, a professor of religion and folklore at San Francisco State University said that she thought the calls were an "urban myth in action." She said that the story possibly had roots in the alien and conspiracy theory communities.

"Stories of the so-called 'Men in Black' are much older than the movie with Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones," she said. "This is an enduring American legend about government agents who harass people who witnessed supernatural events."

One of the earliest stories about Men in Black dates back to 1947 when UFOologist Harold Dahl claimed that a man in a dark suit pressured him to not talk about his alleged UFO sightings, Ott said.

"This is pretty standard folk-spirituality," Ott said. "Fears of some vaguely-defined Other who has a physical form and exists only to wreak havoc on one's community. There's no need to take these stories seriously. That's how witch hunts got started."

GOING SOLAR?



Solar panels like this have caused controversy in Mendocino.

THE REAL COST OF EFFICIENCY

(Mendocino, CA) The recent installment of solar panels in one home owner's yard has become the center of controversy for the residents of a small Mendocino neighborhood on the east side. Sandra Buttin had the solar panels installed in her front yard as a part of a state-wide initiative to conserve energy but not without a fight from her neighbor, Deborah Harolds. Harolds has filed multiple complaints against Buttin under California's nuisance law, claiming the panels are an eyesore and disturbance due to the alleged increased foot traffic they have caused.

"I'm sure they're efficient, but really, at what cost? They're the first thing I see in the morning and the last thing I see before I go to bed at night. If the world were ever covered in those unsightly things it would cease to be a world worth saving," asserts Harolds. "They weren't here when I moved in and I don't want to see them now."

Buttin had the solar panels installed three weeks ago and the argument has since succeeded in dividing the neighborhood. Protestors have gathered around Buttin's lawn holding signs with messages about green energy and the small cost of eyesores compared to the large cost of dwindling resources.

"I'm certain this is only going to end in more people coming by to look at the panels and ask questions about them. I'm the only person in this neighborhood, maybe one of the only people in Mendocino, with solar panels. Now that people know they're here, of course they'll want to know more about them," Buttin says.

"I personally would have been fine if [Harolds] was the only person to ever see these, but now I'm glad the conversation is on the table," Buttin continued. "I hope it will encourage more people to do their part in saving the planet in the face of adversity."

INTERNATIONAL MANHUNT ON FOR WISH UPON A STAR! EMBEZZLERS

(Mendocino, CA) In the wake of a \$5 million embezzlement scandal, officials with the Federal Trade Commission are warning consumers to do their homework on a charity before making a donation.

"You can't buy stars, solar systems, galaxies, comets, or black holes," said FTC spokeswoman Cheri Black. "No one is authorized to sell those. Any deeds you get from such deals are not legally binding."

That advice came after prosecutors filed a 200-page indictment against the Wish Upon a Star! Foundation, a charity that purported to sell stars and planets to donors with the promise of shar-

ing the profits with cancer researchers. The owners of that "charity," Bill and Georgia Hayes, are accused of embezzling that money and fleeing the country. Not a dime of the \$5 million went to cancer research, Black said.

"It's important to do research before donating to a charity," Black said. "Call the Better Business Bureau to find out whether a charity is on the up-and-up. Facebook posts from your aunt don't count."

Black was referring to Wish Upon a Star's viral social media campaign. People who donated to the foundation were given a "deed" to a star or a planet, which they were able

to share on their Facebook profiles. Donors were told they could own their own personal star, which they could use to wish for a cancer-free future. This generated publicity for the scam, prosecutors allege, allowing Bill Hayes to fleece more people out of money.

"It was pretty clever," Black admits. "People who purchased a star were given a vague set of coordinates so they could find it with a telescope. Bill Hayes knew that most people would never actually try to pinpoint their star."

Federal law enforcement believes Bill and Georgia Hayes transferred their money into an overseas bank ac-

count before fleeing the country. An international manhunt is on for the couple. There are very few leads, but a picture was posted yesterday to Bill Hayes' Instagram account, showing the alleged conman riding in what appears to be a new speedboat. He's shown making a rude gesture at the camera, a possible insult to federal investigators who are searching for him.

"Powering On! on a permanent vacation!" the Instagram message reads. "Try and find me, (expletive)."

The speedboat is just one of the new toys the Hayes' are alleged to have purchased with the stolen money. Among

the others were homes, cars, gym equipment and an all-expenses-paid vacation to a health spa called "Portals Bermuda."

The health spa was owned at one point by Mendocino local Lucius Selig, who used the moniker "Master Lucius" in his dealings with the public. Selig, the former owner of the self-help program "The Power of Positive Mechanics," has been criticized for his message of selfishness at the expense of others. The slogan "Power On!" is a reference to Selig's teachings. Selig declined to comment to The Mendo Mercury when asked if he had any connection to the Hayes family.

COLLECTIVE ART SHOW

By Mark Wise

Elizabeth Allen Gallery will be hosting an art opening, *What Remains*, in April. Original pieces by local and resident artists, Anna Marquez, Wes Sanders, Piper Pastore, Damian King, and Simone DeSilva will be featured.

All of the artists have pieces focusing closely on themes of decay, remnants, death, and dying. There will be works of glass, mixed media sculpture, and fabric projections. The mediums range

from interactive holograms to raw meat.

Opening night will feature performance art, spoken word, musical performance, and live painting. There will also be an open-to-the-public round table discussion focusing on the Westernization of death and dying, and how it impacts our daily lives.

"*What Remains*" opens April 20th, 6-9 p.m. at Elizabeth Allen Gallery.

The Mendo Mercury



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EDITORIAL

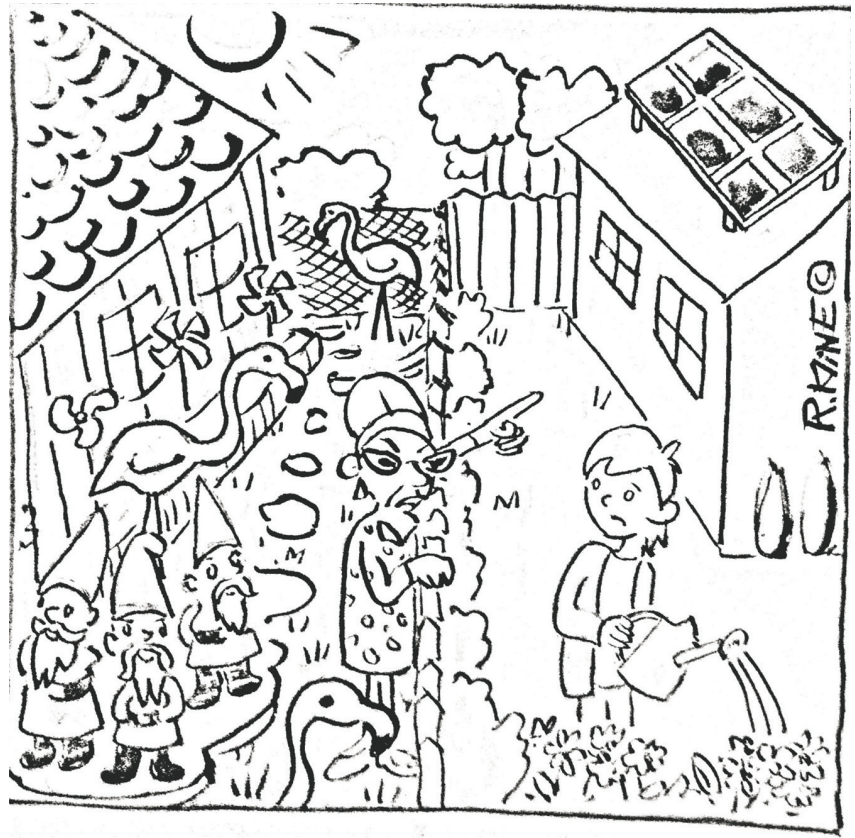
SOLAR PANEL CONTROVERSY

It seems as if the recent controversy around the solar panels in one secluded Mendocino neighborhood has become nothing more than a melodramatic production.

As one “neutral” neighbor, William Miles put it, “Solar panels or no solar panels, their health food groceries are still picked by farm workers and their iPhones are still the product of marginal slave labor. Those both win the Who-Should-Be-the-Most-Ashamed contest.”

Deborah Harolds, beyond her claim the solar panels are

an eyesore, has no real ground to file complaints beyond a self-imposed principal, a borderline personal vendetta. This isn’t to say the protestors in front of Buttin’s lawn are operating by any other standard. Seeing as the police have no grounds to take any further legal action beyond receiving Harolds’s multiple complaints against the solar panels, the argument has no real consequence to anyone besides Harolds and Buttin. If anything, this is a painful reminder of California’s need to re-examine its nuisance law.



“You know, those panels really make the neighborhood look tacky.”

INVESTIGATE POSITIVE MECHANICS!

Bill and Georgia Hayes are enjoying an all-expenses-paid vacation to an unknown destination, courtesy of the well-meaning people who donated to their sham Wish Upon a Star! Foundation. Federal prosecutors accuse the couple of embezzling close to \$5 million from the organization and fleeing the country. That money, it pains us to say, was intended for cancer research.

Their very prominent (some would say obnoxious) social media campaign sold property rights to stars and planets. By donating to cancer research people could own their own alien world, complete with a “deed” issued by the foundation. Donors would then post the deed to their Facebook profiles.

The campaign spread like a virus, with some kind-hearted (but foolish) donors becoming emperors or empresses of whole star systems. The campaign overstayed its welcome quickly. Perhaps some of the more cynical people in our community are smirking now that it’s been revealed as a scam.

As our reporters pore over the monstrous 200-page federal indictment against Bill and Georgia Hayes they notice that a certain organization appears again and again: The Power of Positive Mechanics. Positive Mechanics is a “self-help” religion, the marketing arm of which is even more ubiquitous (and obnoxious) than Wish Upon a Star’s. One can hardly buy a coffee in this community without one of its followers bothering you for a donation while waving a pamphlet under your nose.

Bill and Georgia Hayes were clearly fans of Positive Mechanics. They attended no fewer than three week-end seminars (combined cost: \$6,750) in the month leading up to their arrest. Georgia Hayes purchased weekly “Zone of Influence Realignments.” These sessions were led by Positive Mechanics founder “Master” Lucius Selig (combined cost, a shocking \$25,000).

This does not include the voluminous one-time donations Bill Hayes made to the church. Bill’s connection to the inner circle of Positive Mechanics is undeniable. Until the time of his indictment, the church had a picture of Bill Hayes shaking hands with

Selig on their website. Selig stated of Bill Hayes: “He is a divine being who, thanks to the teachings of Master Lucius Selig, manifested enormous wealth and generously shares it with Positive Mechanics.”

Selig declined to discuss the Hayes case with our reporters.

What else did you teach Bill Hayes, “Master” Lucius Selig? Did you teach him how to steal millions of dollars from people who wanted to help fight cancer? Do you know where he and Georgia are hiding right now? Speak up, Selig! We demand that federal agents investigate you and your “church” to the fullest extent possible.



“What an eyesore!!”

MENDOCINO MEMORIES

These snippets from yesteryear were culled from old newspapers stored in the Mendocino County Library.

DECEMBER 30, 1865
Masonic Lodge members voted to take steps to build themselves a meeting place.
Next member meeting would be held to decide future meeting strategies and times.

DECEMBER 21, 1909
Fred Seymour arrested for seining salmon on the river.
Seymour had explained to the warden he was taken by a spell of nostalgia and found himself in a daze that could only be cured by the taste of fresh salmon. Seymour, mostly due to his age, was let off with a fresh salmon and a ten dollar fine.

JULY 10, 1920
Coasters were startled when a very strange object appeared on the ocean, from the North.
Coasters had reportedly stated the object resembled what assumingly used to be a fish of sorts, although lacking in fins. No follow up to the incident was pursued.

JULY 26, 1922
A local rancher rounded up two exceptionally wild bulls in the Laguna.
The bulls were known killers, having already attacked multiple people. The bulls had taken over a certain portion of a small ranching community and were patrolling the area, which was largely deserted, as no man or animal wanted to put themselves in harm’s way.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1874
Local voters cast ballots to form special tax district in order to be free from paying tolls when crossing the river on a bridge.
The voters in favor said the river crossing toll reminded them too much of the fee one must pay, at the end of one’s life, to the boatman in order to get to the other side. Those voting against thought the loss of the archaic toll ritual would be a loss to the overall “local charm” of Mendocino.

NOVEMBER 10, 1926
Local radio fan gets himself an antipode.
Arthur Lemos, overcome with experimentation, picks up a station in Sydney, Australia. But after a while he suffered a bout of disappointment with station in the world down under. Thus he searched elsewhere, eventually receiving a station from Japan.



ALEXANDER “LEX” SELIG

OBITUARIES

NAN ROSE HALSTEAD
Nan Halstead, 81, was born October 31, 1935, in Waukesha, Wisconsin. She follows her loving husband and her two children, Bertrand and Bernard (causalities of the Vietnam War); she is survived by her sister, Judy Furtado. Services will be held at Hillcrest Funeral home, Sunday at 1 p.m.

PRESTON HOLCOMB
Preston Holcomb, 38, died last evening due to injuries sustained in an auto-accident. He was born July 14, 1978, in Bainbridge, Washington. Preston wore a ring on his right hand, but authorities have been unable to contact any immediate family. If you have any information about Mr. Holcomb or on how to contact his family, please call the Mendocino Police Department.

VIVIANNE DARKBLOOM
Vivianne Darkbloom, born April 22, 1929, in Kamchatka, Russia died last evening in her sleep at the age of 87. She follows her husband, Vladimir Darkbloom, and is survived by her daughter Ada Veen. No funeral has yet been set.

ALEXANDER “LEX” SELIG
Lex Selig, just 10, passed away Tuesday of an undetermined illness. Lex was born in Mendocino and lived here all his life. He was surrounded by his family when he fell asleep in the unknown. He is survived by his mother and father, Nicolae Selig and Piper Pastore, and his twin sister, Morgan Selig. Services yet to be announced.

OLIVIER BARBER
Olivier Barber, local pet store owner and beloved public speaker, died yesterday afternoon after a two year fight with cancer. He is survived by his wife Hilda Barber, five cats, and three English Setters. A memorial for Olivier will be held at Barber’s Pets on School Street in Mendocino this Wednesday at 1 p.m.