

MEDIATE THIS !

THE PLAYGROUND BULLY AND THE HEEDLESS MOTHER

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

Dear Mediator: My friends and I take our preschoolers to the neighborhood playground every morning. We enjoy one another's company, but two new arrivals are ruining our fun. A boy who is big and aggressive has been taunting our kids. His mom spends all her time on her cellphone. Today, we asked the boy to please play nice, and the mom stopped talking long enough to berate us for picking on her kid. Should we complain to the Park and Rec Department or to the police?

Alarmed in Peñasquitos

Dear Alarmed: The surest fix would be to find another play area with less drama. And it might come to that if the little boy starts posing a real threat to his playmates.

Right now, his verbal badgering is hurtful but not harmful, so seeking formal intervention would be an overreach. But your group doesn't have to quietly fume. A few basic conflict resolution tools could transform

this playground dynamic. It's important to remember that we can't perpetually shield our kids from bad behavior. This could be your opening to teach your children skills for managing conflict at every stage of life. You also have an opportunity to reach out to a family that may be in distress. The boy may be crying out for attention, struggling to fit in, or imitating adult behavior. The mom may be using her cellphone (as many people do) to wall herself off from strangers. Both might open up if they are welcomed into a social circle that offers warmth and respect.

Let's start with the skill set for interacting with a troublesome playmate.

Empathy is coin of the realm in conflict management. Explain to your children that sometimes a person who acts out is feeling alone or afraid. Because this boy is the new kid on the block, the others should take the lead in becoming better acquainted with him.

The best strategy for dealing with aggression of any kind is to remain calm and confident. Practice this



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The playground can be a place to introduce children to conflict resolution.

drill with your kids: Take a deep breath. Maintain eye contact with the boy. Don't react to his taunts. Instead, strike up a friendly conversation: "So what do you like best, the swings or the sliding board?"

The parents could use the same approach with the mom. It isn't clear if you even know her name or her son's name. The next time they

enter the playground area, greet them with waves and smiles. If you haven't introduced yourselves yet, find a way to do that.

Once you have broken the ice, consider introducing the kids to a new game based on the "talking circle" or circle dialogue, an indigenous rite in which tribal members gathered together to work through challenging situa-

tions. Maine Sen. Susan Collins made news in January when she held a circle to help avert a government shutdown. If it worked on Capitol Hill, it should work on a playground.

At an agreed-upon time, schedule a snack break from play, and arrange the kids in a circle. A "talking piece" (a twig or a little toy) gets pas-

sed from one child to the next. The child holding the piece speaks, and the others listen and wait their turns.

Ask each child to answer a question like "What is something that makes you happy?" or "Who is your favorite cartoon character?" The topic doesn't matter, because the goal is for the kids to connect on a personal level, which is how we begin building trust.

Reaching out to strangers in tense situations always involves risk. But ingrained hostility has no upside. At this moment in time, when society seems to be fraying at the edges, extending a hand in friendship is definitely worth the gamble.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as president of the San-Diego based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003.

Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution? Please share your story with The Mediator via email at mediatethis@ncrconline.com or as an online submission by visiting www.ncrconline.com /MediateThis. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

CAMP PENDLETON: LINDA MCINTOSH

Old wagon rebuilt at base landmark

A group of history buffs at Camp Pendleton rebuilt an antique wagon from the late 1800s that stands at the entrance to the nearly 200-year-old Rancho Santa Margarita Ranch House, a National Historic Site on the Marine Corps base.

The 19th-century wagon goes back to Camp Pendleton's pre-base days when the area was one of the largest cattle ranches in California.

The wagon was originally a gift in 1987 from a group of local horseback riding enthusiasts, the Padre Junipero Serra Riders — Las Tortugas to the base's commanding general in appreciation of the base's efforts to preserve the area's heritage.

The group rode across Camp Pendleton's backcountry and participated in equestrian events on base that often included an old-fashioned barbecue at the ranch house.

The ranch house was home to prominent early settlers in the 1800s and early 1900s, such as Pio Pico, the last governor of Alta California, the Forsters, Floods and O'Neills and later 35 Marine Corps generals starting with Maj. Gen. Graves Erskine in 1947 and continuing to Maj. Gen. Michael R. Lehnert in 2007.

"The wagon is a reminder of the rich history of the land known today as Camp Pendleton," said retired Marine Col. Richard Rothwell, president of the Camp Pendleton Historical Society.

But after three decades of exposure to sun and rain, the wagon became dilapidated and was an eyesore.

The nonprofit Camp Pendleton Historical Society put together a proposal in 2015 to replace the wagon with a similar one from the same period. The effort was spearheaded by retired Marine Col. Jim Williams, who was the nonprofit's vice president at the time and had connections with local riding groups and historical societies.

"Wagons like this have ties with the base's history, particularly the Rancho days when the base was a thriving cattle ranch," said Williams, a member of the Portola Riders, an Orange County-based horseback riding group that retraces some of the trails of the Portola Expedition. In 1769, Gaspar de Portola led an expeditionary force through Camp Pendleton.

The proposal was researched and written by the nonprofit's secretary, Bill Parsons, a retired San Diego County sheriff's



CAMP PENDLETON HISTORY SOCIETY

The Camp Pendleton History Society rebuilt a 19th-century wagon.

deputy. The group's events chairman, Mike Lewis, a retired Marine master gunnery sergeant, was in charge of finding the replacement.

Retired Army Lt. Col. Andrew Brochu heard about the group's efforts and offered to build a similar wagon of that period. Brochu was experienced in blacksmithing techniques used in wagon-making.

He had worked on a museum-quality restoration of an antique horse-drawn buggy, circa 1860s, and had reconstructed a Civil War-era cannon carriage that had been on display at the ranch house but was moved to the Marine Corps Mechanized Museum on base.

Brochu worked with the skeleton of an 1894 Studebaker wagon he and Lewis found in El Cajon.

To preserve the historical accuracy, Brochu refurbished the chassis, repaired the existing parts and reconstructed replacement parts from scratch for those that were destroyed.

"The Studebaker wagons proved to be of great value in numerous military operations, such as the Civil War, and were used in the early ranching days of the Camp Pendleton area," Brochu said.

The wagon is slated to be dedicated in a ceremony April 2 at the Rancho Santa Margarita Ranch House.

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THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

U-T podcasts, and an early look at A1

Union-Tribune readers have two new avenues to access unique content from the paper's editors and reporters.

A podcast called Under the Gavel that is currently focusing on the Rebecca Zahau wrongful death lawsuit case has joined other U-T podcasts, and the U-T Facebook subscribers page is showing a behind-the-scenes look at the front page. The A1 preview also welcomes reader interaction.

The U-T offers several podcasts — audio reports on happenings in the county — that can be listened to on smartphones, tablets or other devices that stream content. San Diego News Fix is written and produced by a three-person team every weekday. Lara Hochuli and Daniel Wheaton are the usual hosts. The podcast is generally a five-minute report on major stories. It's available on all podcasting platforms and smart speakers such as Amazon's Alexa and Google Home.

Wheaton also does Re:Focus, a podcast that goes online Saturdays. It features an in-depth look at a story from the week that affects San Diegans. One, for example, looked at SDSU, its new president and its plans for expansion to the stadium site.

Other podcasts are America's Finest Fantasy Football by U-T staffers Kevin Acee and Eddie Brown, which is produced during the pro football season; and food and drink podcasts presented under the U-T's Pacific magazine banner.

The driving force behind the podcasts was U-T video editor Hochuli. She said she has always liked the audio shows and wanted to bring them to the U-T. With her encouragement, they began last year.

"Podcasts are growing as a way to consume media," Wheaton said. "Unlike print or online, podcasts are an on-demand, passive media. You can be doing other things while you listen — commuting, exercising, cooking. They're also usually free, which tends to grab a younger audience."

The latest one is Under the Gavel, which began last month with the start of the Zahau civil trial now being heard before jurors in San Diego Superior Court. The trial started Feb. 28 and is expected to go for about a month.

The case has attracted national media attention. It centers on a lawsuit brought by the family of Rebecca Zahau. She was found dead July 13, 2011, at her boyfriend's mansion in Coronado. Her boyfriend's brother, Adam Shacknai, discovered her hanging from a balcony, her hands and feet bound.

The Sheriff's Department determined the death was a suicide. The Zahau family disagrees and filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Adam Shacknai. They accuse him of strangling her and making the death look like a suicide.

"The U-T is the best source of information on the case," Hochuli said. "Reporters with a lot of experience have been covering the story from the start. They have the knowledge about the case."

U-T video editor Lauren Flynn hosts Under the Gavel: The Zahau Case. Three shows have been produced so far, with more planned weekly as the case progresses. They feature audio from the courtroom as well as an in-depth interview with longtime U-T public safety and courts reporter Pauline Repard.

"Telling this story in a podcast is a good way to reach an audience even outside of San Diego," Flynn said. "You don't have to be close to it physically to be interested."

"The mystery and controversy surrounding this case fascinates me," she said. "It's so unusual, and it seems as if we may never know what really happened."

Flynn said the team aims to do more Under the Gavels depending on the cases.

U-T podcasts can be found on iTunes, Google Play Store, and on the U-T's website: sandiegouniontribune.com/podcasts. The News Fix can be accessed through the Alexa personal assistant.

The front page

If readers have ever wondered how the front page comes together, they now can find out. U-T Editor and Publisher Jeff Light and Managing Editor Lora Cicalo, or A-section editor David Clary, can be seen live on the U-T Facebook subscribers page about 5 p.m. Monday through Friday hashing out A1.

This is more than just a presentation of what is planned for the page. And that's what makes it unique. Light might question story play or photo choices and suggest changes. Readers can see a back-and-forth, plus they can offer feedback on the choices through Facebook comments.

The U-T's Facebook subscribers page provides a place for readers to talk about news with fellow subscribers and U-T staffers, in addition to watching the front-page rundown. Search on Facebook for "San Diego Union-Tribune subscribers" and request to join.

FROM THE ARCHIVES | LOOKING BACK OVER 150 YEARS

CROWDS CHEER MARINES' RETURN FROM KOREA

The San Diego Union-Tribune will mark its 150th anniversary in 2018 by presenting a significant front page from the archives each day throughout the year.

Friday, March 18, 1955

In March 1955, the First Marine Division was welcomed home to San Diego after spending nearly five years in Korea.

The Korean War began in June 1950. On Sept. 15, the First Marine Division led a surprise amphibious assault at Inchon, followed 11 days later by taking Seoul. The road ahead was marked by some of the fiercest fighting in the division's history in the Chosin Reservoir.

Officers and men of the First Marine Division and the First Marine Aircraft Wing suffered 28,205 casualties during the Korean conflict; 3,308 were killed in action. They were awarded 24,034 decorations for service in Korea, including 42 Congressional Medals of Honor.

Here are the first few paragraphs of the story:

RETURNING MARINES CHEERED BY 100,000 ON PARADE ROUTE CIVIC AND MILITARY WELCOME GIVEN TO FIRST DIVISION VANGUARD OF 5,500

By Rembert James, The San Diego Union's Military Editor

Fifty-five hundred members of the First Marine Division, arriving from Korea, were given a civic and military welcome here yesterday.

The returning Marines, first units of the 22,000-man division to reach the United States after five years in Korea, paraded up Broadway and along Sixth Ave. to Balboa Park.

They were cheered by crowds that police estimated at 100,000.

From Balboa Park, the Marines traveled in 190 buses and open trucks to Camp Pendleton, the division's home from 1947 to 1950. En route they passed cheering crowds, which lined Hill street in Oceanside.

The Marines arrived in San Diego aboard transports that left Inchon, Korea, on Feb. 28.

TO TRAIN HERE

Welcoming talks were given by Lt. Gov. Powers, Lt. Gen. William O. Brice, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps; Maureen Connolly, tennis champion; Mayor Butler, Supervisor Gibson, and O.W. Todd Jr., chairman of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce Homecoming Committee.

Brice said the division is being brought to California to be a trained and ready strategic force that can be moved anywhere in the world on 24-hours notice.



"You are to be the true amphibious force of our nation," Brice told the troops.

The assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. Henry R. Paige, said the division welcomed that role in world affairs.

'FIRE FIGHTERS'

"We consider ourselves fire fighters returning to Camp Pendleton to train, and to prepare to help put out other fires which might start anywhere in the world," Paige said.

Paige spoke at a luncheon after the parade.

The attack transports George Clymer, Renville, Talladega and Pickaway carrying the troops, arrived off Pt. Loma at 6 a.m. and reached Ballast Point at 8 a.m. Accompanying them was the attack cargo ship Winston and the high-speed attack transports (converted destroyers) Begor and Balduck.

As the vessels came into the bay, water-spraying fireboats of the city and the Navy circled them. Powerboats raced alongside, pulling girls on water skis. Several sailboats were among the greeting craft.

The ships were met also by boats carrying newspaper reporters and photographers and newsreel and television representatives. Copies of The San Diego Union were put aboard each ship.

THOUSANDS CHEER

As the ships docked, they were cheered by thousands of persons along the waterfront and crowded along the upper ramp of the piers. Bands from Mission, Pt. Loma and San Diego High Schools played.

The troop transports docked at Navy and Broadway piers. The George Clymer tied up at 8:50 a.m. at Navy pier. It was followed at short intervals by the Renville, Talladega and Pickaway.

The first man ashore was a Navy chaplain assigned to the Marines, Lt. Cmdr. R.E. Jenkins. Col. R.H. Ruud, commanding officer of the Fifth Marine Regiment, was the second man ashore. Capt. E. J. Broners, 27, of 1309 Carraway St., Oceanside, was third, and T. Sgt. R.W. Johnston of 542 W. Eighth St., Escondido, was fourth.