

STEPHEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

ONCE SAFE HAVENS, LIBRARIES NOW A SURPRISING BATTLEGROUND

Rancho Peñasquitos? Glimpsing The New York Times on my recent travels, I was surprised to see a story about the Rancho Peñasquitos branch of the San Diego Public Library. In case you missed it, the branch had a moment in the national spotlight when two local residents checked out nearly all of the books in the Pride month display.

The LGBTQ+-themed content, they said, was inappropriate for children — and unless the library agreed to permanently remove the offending books, they would keep them. In an email to the branch manager and library director, the residents said they acted “to protect our children and the community.”

This notion — of confiscating (or outright banning) books to silence certain voices and ideas — isn’t new or particular to Rancho Peñasquitos. The American Library Association documented 1,269 demands to censor library books or materials last year. More than 2,500 unique titles faced removal, a 38 percent increase

over 2021 and a record high. Half of the book bans originated in Florida and Texas.

What captured the attention of Times reporter Jill Cowan was our community’s response. After the Union-Tribune reported on the protest, boxes of replacement books arrived at the library.

Donations to the library system poured in, totaling more than \$15,000, an amount to be matched by the city. City Councilmember Marni von Wilpert spearheaded the effort, working with Library Foundation SD.

Way to go, San Diego. Even, and maybe especially, in our digital age, libraries serve as a trusted, reliable place for learning and connection. Libraries stand for and encourage the free exchange of ideas — including the ones we disagree with.

Today, some of the books that shaped my life — and the lives of many others — are being challenged by people who are offended by or afraid of the diversity of backgrounds, experiences and thoughts in their pages. But exposure to differences only en-

riches us as members of society.

Books like “Brave New World” by Aldous Huxley, “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee and “The Lord of the Flies” by William Golding have been challenged, banned or removed from libraries all over the U.S. My favorite tome, “Animal Farm” by George Orwell, made the list, too.

It was also banned in the Soviet Union, United Arab Emirates, Cuba and China.

The company we keep says a lot about us.

In Rancho Peñasquitos, the would-be book banners wanted to rid the library of any content depicting LGBTQ+ characters and families. It was hardly a grassroots initiative: Cowan reported that their email to the branch manager and library director matched a template posted online by an Indiana-based group called CatholicVote, which is not affiliated with the Catholic Church.

The group’s “Hide the Pride” campaign encouraged the action, calling LGBTQ+ books “pornographic and obscene,” and saying

they should not be available to young library patrons.

Unquestionably, parents have the right to voice concerns about particular books and what their children choose to read. But they cross a line when their opinions and actions deprive a whole community of a book in the name of protecting children.

In a recent post on Medium, librarian Oleg Kagan wrote about a time when a parent politely expressed concern about a novel that was shelved in the children’s area, which showed a mermaid’s breasts. She left the matter in Kagan’s hands, as library manager. He moved the book to the teen area after consulting with colleagues and supervisors.

Kagan acknowledged that some people would have argued that the book should be removed, rather than relocated. “But we don’t make our decisions in a vacuum of breasts, curse words, and provocative themes,” he said. Instead, Kagan explained, librarians take a holistic view of a book — its subject, themes, location in the library, and fit, in accordance

with the library’s collection development policies.

Those decisions aren’t made in a vacuum, Kagan noted; librarians are trained to respond to community needs and desires, and usually do their best to be responsive. A conversation with the library branch manager may have been more fruitful for the unhappy patrons than purging the Pride month display.

In a recent letter to Library Foundation SD donors and supporters, CEO Patrick Stewart shared a list of things each of us can do to preserve the inclusivity and intellectual freedom that libraries promote. At the top of Stewart’s list is reading banned books.

I’m on the hunt right now for my copy of “Animal Farm.” Re-reading its well-worn pages will have special meaning for me now.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC’s programming, visit ncronline.com.

HEPATITIS

FROM B1
two to six months. But people without symptoms must be diagnosed in order to receive a prescription, and that is where testing initiatives like the one at Father Joe’s come in.

Locally, the Liver Coalition of San Diego County is leading the region’s Eliminate Hepatitis C Task Force. Scott Suckow, the organization’s executive director, said that efforts have been under way to encourage all those who serve people who are at elevated risk of hepatitis C infection to refer clients for testing.

This year’s state budget allocates millions for hepatitis C screening and also for “harm reduction” programs such as needle exchanges, which have been shown to decrease the spread of infectious diseases among intravenous drug users. Men who

have sex with men are also said to be at higher risk.

In San Diego County, hepatitis C is estimated to kill about 60 people per year, which is a small number compared with major health threats such as heart disease or with public health threats such as the flu and coronavirus.

But modern medicine makes those hepatitis C deaths almost completely preventable. Why then, aren’t they already being prevented?

Suckow said the virus’s decadeslong attack gets overshadowed by the quick pace of most illnesses that incubate in the body and begin causing symptoms within days or weeks.

“That slow pace, that silent progress over longer periods of time, it just creates a lower sense of urgency than you see for different kinds of diseases that, you know, sort of race down the road with sirens,” Suckow said.



A registered nurse takes a blood sample from Marcy Campbell to test for hepatitis C last week at the Neil Good Day Center in San Diego. Campbell has been living on the streets for 11 years.

NELVIN C. CEPEDA
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San Diego’s task force is working, especially with community health centers such as La Maestra Community Health Centers and Family Health Centers of San Diego, to assure that clients at risk of infection are tested and to comb through health records and determine whether those who have been tested have actually received and taken the medication necessary for a cure.

For David Monvia of

Spring Valley, the positive test result came during a recent jail stay. The county is working with jails to make sure that all who enter the system are screened for infection as this group has a higher-than-average positive rate.

After he got out, he said, he made sure to visit a La Maestra clinic and take the medication even though the infection had not yet started causing symptoms.

“You want to try to live as long as you can, so this, to me, it’s just part of what you have to do to make sure you’re not saying goodbye too soon,” Monvia said.

This progression, said Dr. Winston Tilghman, a medical director in the county’s HIV, STD and Hepatitis Branch, illustrates what must be done in the real world to erase hepatitis C. Organizations whose main missions are something other than public health have to make sure that testing happens, and they also have to make sure that those who test positive are referred for treatment and that follow-up happens if patients do not show up.

“We really have an amazing opportunity here, because cure rates are reliably over 95 percent, and newer medications are much better tolerated with side effects that are very mild,” Tilghman said.

But a full victory over

hepatitis C will not be accomplished only by testing those in high-risk groups, Tilghman added.

“The CDC now recommends testing everyone age 18 and older for hepatitis C at least once in life, regardless of risk, and this is similar to recommendations for HIV,” Tilghman said.

Of course, testing often delivers good news. Back at Father Joe’s clinic, at a little past noon, a nurse approached Rick Walker, 64, with a yellow piece of paper in her hand.

“Ready?” she said, pointing to a line at the bottom of the page.

The line read: negative, a word that caused the man to lift both arms over his head and deliver a double thumbs up.

“Thank you,” he said, slipping the results into his backpack.

paul.sisson@sduuniontribune.com
blake.nelson@sduuniontribune.com

SMOLENS

FROM B1
with unsuccessful Poway City Council candidate Hiram Soto and defeated Assembly candidate Georgette Gómez — a former San Diego City Council member — is that all of them supported the proposed PROTECT Act.

Formally known as the “Preventing Overpolicing Through Equitable Community Treatment,” the proposed law for the city of San Diego is intended to limit so-called pretext stops. That’s when an officer enforces a relatively minor traffic law, like pulling over a car with a broken tail light, in order to investigate potentially more serious crimes.

Proponents say the

ordinance would help reduce the racial disparities in police encounters. Police say such stops are a valuable tactic in preventing and solving crimes. Crucially, the PROTECT Act would require officers to have “probable cause” to stop people — a higher legal threshold than the current standard of “reasonable suspicion.”

“Primarily, the biggest fight we have is over the PROTECT Act and also over police funding,” Wilson said in an interview.

“If you are supporting the PROTECT Act,” he added, “we are going to make that well known, no matter where you are running.”

Interestingly, the Deputy Sheriffs’ Association of San Diego is on the sidelines in the supervisor’s race, even

though its members are more directly affected by who sits on the county Board of Supervisors.

“We work very closely with the Deputy Sheriffs’ (Association),” Wilson said.

It’s worth noting that although a county supervisor or Assembly member does not vote on San Diego municipal policies, the districts in question do include portions of the city.

That’s not the case in Poway, where the POA’s political activities were more complex. For one thing, Wilson has said he’s planning to run for the Poway City Council next year. He said “that doesn’t factor into” the POA’s decision to oppose Soto.

Soto had been communications director for Alliance San Diego, an organization

that says it strives for a more inclusive democracy and supports the PROTECT Act.

The San Diego police union waged a stark digital and mail campaign against Soto, contending he supported policies that would make the public less safe — similar to the union’s message against Montgomery Stepe.

Soto, a former Union-Tribune reporter, lost in November by nearly 9 percentage points to Brian Pepin, political director of the Republican-leaning Lincoln Club and a favorite of developers.

Soto said the issue of development, and his desire to restrict it in Poway, was really driving the opposition. He pointed to contributions linked to development interests to the

police union committee.

In an interview, Soto said the POA was “using public safety as a front,” though he acknowledged “public safety is always a legitimate issue” in campaigns. For context, Montgomery Stepe and Gómez consistently cast pro-development votes on the San Diego City Council.

Wilson’s rise to the top post wasn’t the only thing that led the POA toward a more ambitious political presence. Calls for police reforms and budget cuts grew nationwide in the wake of George Floyd’s murder by a Minneapolis police officer in May 2020.

Staffing shortages and funding challenges are not unique to the San Diego Police Department. “Times are hurting for

police officers,” Wilson said.

Success for the POA in the supervisor’s race would not be without irony, however.

If Montgomery Stepe wins the seat outright on Tuesday, by gaining a majority of votes, or in a November runoff, she would be sworn in almost immediately.

If she loses, her term on the San Diego City Council runs through 2026.

What they said

Matt Rexroad (@MattRexroad), California political consultant, via X (Twitter).

“The school year should not start until after Labor Day.”

michael.smolens@
sduuniontribune.com

Life Tributes

The San Diego Union-Tribune

Everlasting memories of loved ones

William H. ‘Bill’ Kornik

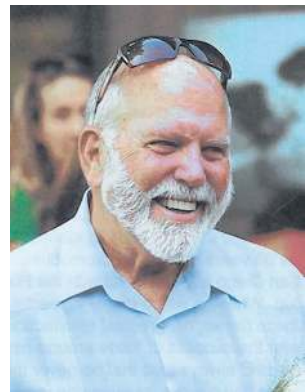
September 27, 1951 - April 11, 2023

ENCINITAS — It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved William “Bill” Kornik after a courageous and valiant battle with cancer, on April 11, 2023 at the age of 71.

Bill was born and raised in San Diego on Mt. Helix and attended Francis Parker, Spring Valley Jr. High, Grossmont High, New Mexico Military Institute and Colorado Alpine College.

Bill was known to be a man of many talents and interests. He developed a love of teaching and spent a number of years in Montessori programs in San Diego and Idaho. He continued with his father’s legacy with a career in the auto industry. Bill made many lifelong friends during his 35 years operating automobile dealerships in San Diego and Carlsbad with the Bob Baker Auto Group. While he was a highly respected and successful business owner, his greatest satisfaction came from helping foster the success of those around him.

Bill truly loved people



and always said that he never met a stranger. He always had a smile for everyone, and could literally talk to anyone about anything. He had a special way of making you feel as though you were the most important person in a room, and he made even the most mundane tasks of daily life not only fun, but memorable.

A lifelong surfer, Bill spent his spare time surfing locally or along the coast of California. He loved to travel and enjoyed surfing in Australia, Tahiti, Mexico and Hawaii in search of the perfect wave. Bill’s happy place was the Hawaiian Islands and he

particularly loved visiting Molokai.

Bill’s passion for performing and singing with his Ukulele was known to all who knew him, and he had an impressive collection. You could always count on Bill having a special ukulele with him at any given time, “just in case” the opportunity to play, presented itself. He was a devoted member and made many treasured friendships in the Ukulele Society of America, Moonlight Beach Ukulele Strummers and the George Formby Society.

Bill was an avid gardener, he enjoyed his Koi pond and was passionate about all things in nature. He was a member of the Southern California Plumeria Society and the San Diego Botanic Garden, which he loved visiting regularly with his family.

Bill is survived by his wife Sue of 44 years, his daughters Charlotte (Shannel) and Emily, his son Rory, his sister Pamela Brown, three grandchildren, nieces and

cousins. He is preceded in death by his parents Louis and Charlotte Kornik, brothers Daniel, Louis Jr. (Peck) and Steven.

Loved by all, cherished by many, Bill will be dearly missed. His memory will forever live on, not only in the hearts of his family but also in the many lives he touched as a dear friend.

Bill’s family would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Tyler Stewart and nurse Danielle Jakobowski for their excellent and compassionate medical care at UCSD. In lieu of flowers, please consider donating in Bill’s honor to the San Diego Botanic Garden or the San Diego Food Bank.

A Celebration of Life Event will be held on September 17, 2023 from 1-4 pm at Cape Rey Carlsbad Beach Resort located at 1 Ponto Road in Carlsbad. Please join us to share special memories of our beloved Bill. If you’d like to bring a ukulele we will have a Kanikapila. All ages are welcome.

Please sign the Guest Book online obituaries.sandiegouniontribune.com

Gertrude Ann ‘Gertie’ Magoon

December 31, 1930 - August 8, 2023

ESCONDIDO, CA — Gertrude ‘Gertie’ Magoon, 92, went to be with her Lord and Savior on August 8, 2023 following a period of declining health. Born December 31, 1930 in Escondido, Gertie was married to W.V. “Mac” Magoon for 51 years until his death in 2000.

After raising her family, Gertie earned her Bachelor’s degree and teaching credential in 1984, and taught 2nd grade at Escondido Christian School for nine years. Following her retirement, Gertie took up painting which became a favorite hobby.

Gertie was a member of Emmanuel Faith Community Church in Escondido for more than 70 years and she blessed many lives through her community service. She volunteered as an assistant chaplain at Palomar Medical Center Auxiliary, and served a month of missionary outreach at an orphanage in Romania. She volunteered weekly as the “Soup Lady” at



an Escondido homeless outreach program and continued into her 80s.

Gertie is survived by her five children, Duane of Ellensburg WA, Francine of San Diego, Tina of Meridian, ID, and Kevin (Sandi) of Oceanside, plus eight grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Private interment with immediate family will be held at Oak Hill Memorial Park in Escondido.

In lieu of flowers, donations to Interfaith Community Services in Escondido would be appreciated.

Please sign the Guest Book online obituaries.sandiegouniontribune.com