

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Woman displaced in Valentine's Day apartment fire

■ Cat fled but was found and returned

By MARY SCHLEY

FIREFIGHTERS RESCUED a woman screaming for help inside her smoke-filled Pacific Grove apartment early on Valentine's Day, and police officers rescued her cat the next day, enabling the two to reunite Monday.

The blaze, sparked by a portable heater that caught a bathroom rug on fire, was discovered after a neighbor in the woman's Arkwright Court complex heard a smoke alarm sounding and called 911 around 4:15 a.m. Feb. 14, according to Monterey Fire Division Chief Paul Goodwin. When the first engine crew arrived, firefighters could see the unit, located on the third floor, was filled with smoke and hear the alarm, but they didn't know whether anyone was inside.

They forced the front door open and heard the woman yelling, "I'm on fire! Help me, I'm on fire!" Goodwin said. In the smoke and gloom, the woman, 58, lurched around a corner, coming face to face with a fire captain, who took hold of her and led her out the door into the fresh air.

"She was not on fire," he said. "But she was in the smoke and appeared to be disoriented."

Firefighters used a portable water extinguisher to douse the small blaze that was filling the apartment with smoke and heat, discovering a portable heater face down on a rug in the bathroom.

"It appears the heater had been moved or thrown into the bathroom and caught a small rug on fire," Goodwin said.

MFD deputy fire marshal David Reade said investigators also found two melted holes in the carpet on the bedroom floor. "One was cold to the touch, and the other was warm and still had an electrical appliance melted into it," he said. Reade could offer no further explanation for how those burned spots tied in with the fire in the bathroom and said he left the scene intact so the insurance company could salvage

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PHOTO/MONTEREY FIRE DEPARTMENT

A tipped-over space heater can start a fire that will cause a lot of damage. In this case, though, the cat was fine.

## VIPs start to line up behind Cal Am project

By KELLY NIX

CONGRESSMAN SAM Farr, a former state assemblyman and a leading Monterey Peninsula conservationist have announced their support for a water supply plan from California American Water that includes a desalination plant in Marina, provided Cal Am accepts some changes proposed by local mayors.

In recent letters to the California Public Utilities Commission, Farr and former State Assemblyman Fred Keeley backed the position taken by six Peninsula mayors who said they would endorse Cal Am's desal proposal if the company alters the project to make it more appealing to ratepayers. Monterey Bay Aquarium head Julie Packard is also backing the plan.

"I believe the conditions the [mayors have] proposed for the project go a long way toward building community consensus on an issue that has long divided the Monterey Peninsula," Farr wrote in a Feb. 22 letter to CPUC President Michael Peevey.

Farr's letter was attached to Feb. 22 testimony by Carmel Mayor Jason Burnett on behalf of the mayors — collectively known as the Monterey Peninsula Regional Water Authority — to the CPUC for consideration of Cal Am's desal proposal. Burnett is vice president of the mayors group.

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## If a law expires and nobody notices, does it make music?

By MARY SCHLEY

THE ORDINANCE adopted in 2005 that allows restaurants and bars in Carmel to have live music expired more than a year ago, but nobody realized it.

That is, until associate planner Marc Wiener discovered that the law — which overturned a 66-year-old ban on venues that serve alcohol from having live musicians entertain their customers — included a sunset clause effective Nov. 6, 2011. The law amended Carmel Municipal Code sections on "public peace, morals and welfare" that made it illegal for anyone to hold a public dance "or any form of entertainment" or play live instruments anywhere alcohol was sold and served.

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## Gas pump skimmers linked to ID theft

By MARY SCHLEY

FOR THE second time in the last few months, police have linked identity theft to credit card information stolen from the pumps at a Forest Avenue gas station, Pacific Grove Police Cmdr. John Miller said this week.

Last Thursday, a victim of identity theft contacted PGPD, and investigators were able to trace the stolen credit card information back to the 76 station on Forest Hill — the same station from which customers' credit card numbers were stolen late last year.

"Police immediately responded to the gas station, and, with the cooperation of the gas station management, inspected all gas pumps for a skimmer," he said. Skimmers are small devices thieves surreptitiously attach to the pump at the point of sale to collect vital credit and debit information. They come in various forms and can be

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## Big Sur boulder-hop ends with rescue of mom, 3 kids

By CHRIS COUNTS

THANKS TO the efforts of the Monterey County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Team, Big Sur's latest foolish hiking adventure has a happy ending.

According to Sgt. Joe Moses, on Feb. 24, an Atascadero woman, her two 12-year-old sons and 9-year-old daughter attempted to follow Villa Creek (65 miles south of Carmel) downhill about 2.5 miles to Highway 1.

After dropping his family off in the Big Sur backcountry, the woman's husband drove to where Villa Creek meets the highway and awaited their arrival.

But darkness arrived before the hikers did, so the husband drove a short distance to the tiny hamlet of Gorda and contacted law enforcement.

"He was a little nervous," Moses said. "He figured someone tripped and fell."

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## GHOST HUNTERS SEARCH TOR HOUSE FOR JEFFERS, FIND HIS WIFE INSTEAD

By CHRIS COUNTS

IN ADDITION to being one of America's greatest poets, it appears the late Robinson Jeffers was also a marketing genius.

In his poem, "Ghost," Jeffers said he would one day haunt the home he built, Tor House on Carmel Point. Intrigued by the poet's prophesy, the producers of a television series, "Ghost Adventures," sent host Zak Bagans and a crew of paranormal experts to investigate. The show devotes an episode, "Tor House," to Jeffers. It made its television debut on the Travel Channel last November and is available on Netflix and YouTube.

In an effort to prove Jeffers' ghost does indeed haunt the Carmel landmark, Bagans and his team interviewed local authorities and subjected the building to a variety of tests using gadgetry that looked like it came right out of "Ghostbusters."

And after spending one spine-tingling

night in the spooky old stone house, the crew came to the conclusion a ghost does inhabit the place — but it doesn't belong to Jeffers. Instead, it belongs to his wife, Una. According to them, an image captured by a thermal camera — which looks like a bright-pink blob — is likely Una. And they heard her say a few words as well.

Before embarking on his search for Jeffers' ghost, Bagans examined the poem, "Ghost," in which Jeffers describes a future encounter with a mortal and his poodle. In the show, Tor House Foundation President Vince Huth reads the poem.

"I imagine 50 years from now a mist gray figure moping about the place in mad moonlight examining the mortar joints, pawing the parasite ivy," read Huth, channeling the late poet.

Bagans points out that 2012 is precisely 50 years after Jeffers' passing — a sure sign

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Taken from the television show, "Ghost Adventures," this eerie screen shot shows what a seance must have looked like in the Tor House — if Una Jeffers had conducted one there. According to the program, her ghost lives at the house now, and the foundation that operates it hopes you'll take a tour to see for yourself.