

The Carmel Pine Cone

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EXTREME SKIER BOUND FOR SOCHI

By CHRIS COUNTS

ON THE day she turned 24, professional freestyle skier Brita Sigourney received the ultimate birthday present — a spot on the United States Winter Olympic team. “I don’t think I’ll be forgetting this one anytime soon,” she posted on Instagram.

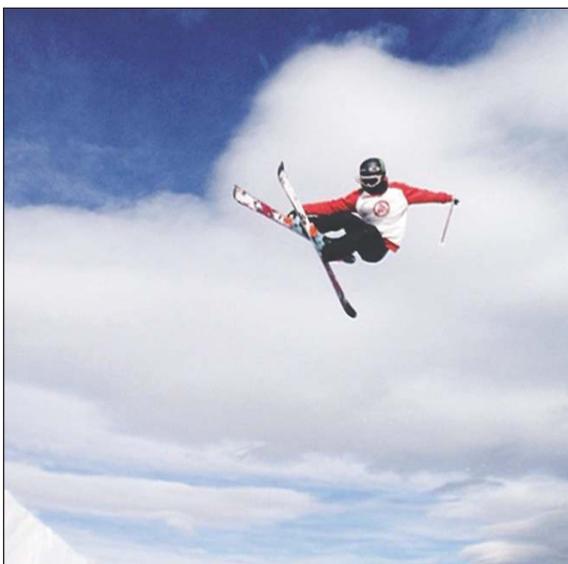
A Carmel native whose family has deep local roots, Sigourney will compete for a medal in the half-pipe skiing competition next month in Sochi, Russia, at the 2014 Winter Olympics. During a four-day Olympic qualifying tournament in Park City, Utah, Sigourney was told Jan. 17 that she had earned a place on the team.

Half-pipe skiing makes its Olympic debut at this year’s games. In the event, which has its gold medal round on Feb. 20, competitors from many nations will perform aerial tricks in what amounts to a giant, empty snow-coated swimming pool, and be scored for

difficulty and execution. It’s a spectacular sport to watch, but not for the faint of heart.

“It’s very dangerous and very difficult, but it’s also very fun,” explained Sigourney’s mother, Julie. “It takes a certain personality to gravitate to this sport. The skiers love the freedom of making up new tricks. They’re very casual, but as the same time, they’re very intense.”

Sigourney’s long road to Sochi began when her parents introduced her to downhill skiing just before her third birthday. She joined a team of freestyle skiers at Alpine Meadows in Lake Tahoe when she was just eight, and there she was introduced to the joys of moguls, aerials, and ultimately, the half-pipe. By 14, she was competing in those and other freestyle ski sports. With natural athletic talent — and two older brothers, Bryce and Brendan, competing in the same

See **SKIER** page 22A

PHOTO/PETER ADAM CROOK

Death-defying stunts are the essence of half-pipe skiing, an Olympic sport in which Carmel’s Brita Sigourney (above and right) will compete next month.



Council candidate gave fake address

■ Claims he did so for a good reason and does live in town

By MARY SCHLEY

WHEN LUCAS Austin filed his paperwork to run for Carmel City Council, he gave his home address as, “NW Dolores and Fifth” — a statement he now admits was not true. It also couldn’t be true because, at the age of 30, he’s not nearly old enough to live at Norton Court, the senior-housing development on that corner that’s owned and operated by the Carmel Foundation.

He listed the fake address, he told The Pine Cone, because his wife, Li, has a classified job for the U.S. Army which makes it necessary to keep their home address secret. He would not say what that job is, and insisted he and Li do live inside the city limits, but he would

not publicly disclose where. The couple owns and operates Mail Mart at Dolores and Fifth, and a photo on the store’s Facebook page shows them at the store, where she also

See **FAKE** page 23A

PHOTO/FACEBOOK

Lucas Austin and his wife, Li, who own Mail Mart on Dolores. He’s running for council but won’t say where he lives.

Groups call for small desal plant

By KELLY NIX

TWO ENVIRONMENTAL groups this week told the California Public Utilities Commission it should prevent the Monterey Peninsula from building a desal plant big enough to provide water for lots of record or for tourism “bounceback” from the recession, because the water might be used for other purposes.

Surfrider and LandWatch Monterey County are the only groups to say the

See **DESAL** page 21A

Panetta: U.S. faces significant threats

By KELLY NIX

IN A captivating but cautionary speech Thursday in Monterey, former CIA director and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said the United States must not let down its guard from what he said is a “very dangerous world.”

Panetta spoke before hundreds of guests at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula’s annual meeting at the Monterey Conference Center.

See **PANETTA** page 27A

‘Misty’ composer’s legendary concert

A Reminder - One Nite Only
ERROLL GARNER
with his trio will appear in
"JAZZ at SUNSET"
Monday, Sept. 19, 8:30 p.m.
SUNSET AUDITORIUM
CARMEL
All Seats Reserved
Prices 3.00 - 2:50 - 2.00 tax incl.
Tickets now at Abinante's, in
Monterey — Browse-Around
Music and Lial's in Carmel

This small ad from the Sept. 15, 1955, Pine Cone is about an event that has come to be regarded a milestone in the history of jazz, and which will be commemorated with a concert this week. See page 14A.

Operation Padre remembers Tom Coppinger

By MARY SCHLEY

THE DRIVING force behind the Operation Padre fundraising effort to overhaul the athletic facilities at Carmel High School, Tom Coppinger, died unexpectedly of a heart attack two days before Christmas at the age of 56. In the wake of his passing — memorialized at a gathering that drew an estimated 1,000 people to All Saints’ Church Jan. 11 — the remaining members of the fundraising group are hoping to collect \$500,000 in his name to fulfill the project about which he was so impassioned.

“He kind of took on this Operation Padre as a cause,” said former CHS principal and Carmel Unified School District Board President Karl Pallastrini. “And he did it in a way that was pretty remarkable. A lot of people say they’re going to do something, but this guy was the real deal.”

The group is raising money, which will be augmented by bond funds already dedicated by the CUSD board, to upgrade athletic facilities that were constructed in the

1940s and long overdue for replacement, if not dangerous, according to Pallastrini. The bond funds will pay for a synthetic turf field, track refurbishment and ADA access, while Operation Padre is hoping to pay for a new scoreboard, press box, entry promenade, bench seating, team rooms, storage building and visitor-side bleachers. The result will not only benefit football, but lacrosse, field hockey, soccer, track and field, band and cheer.

Pallastrini observed that Coppinger had a way of holding people’s feet to the fire — but in a really nice way.

“He just had a way of making everyone in the room freeze, because they just listened,” said Operation Padre cohort Tess Arthur. “He had a booming voice. His passions were so well put. He captivated a room unlike any other person.”

Arthur said the group is trying to raise \$1 million for the project and has so far gathered about \$200,000 in contributions and

See **COPPINGER** page 20A

PHOTO/COURTESY KARL EMPEY

Tom Coppinger at a community event, where he could often be seen. He died suddenly just before Christmas.