

The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 101 No. 5

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

January 30 - February 5, 2015

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

County grand jury investigating Stilwell era

■ What went wrong, and why?

By PAUL MILLER

AFTER RECEIVING requests from a citizen group and the Carmel City Council, the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury is conducting a wide-ranging investigation of city hall during the tenure of city administrator Jason Stilwell, and is expected to release a report on the scandals by this summer.

"We'd like to understand how we managed to get into the situation we did, and how we and other municipalities can avoid it in the future," resident Richard Kreitman said. He and a group of supporters filed a complaint with the grand jury Nov. 9, 2014.

Mayor Jason Burnett also sent a letter to the grand jury asking for an investigation. His letter, dated Nov. 5, 2014, "requests the Civil Grand Jury to review our organization, our corrective actions and make any additional recommendations."

Since then, the grand jury, which consists of 19 volunteer members selected by the county's superior court judges, has been investigating Carmel, and has called numerous witness-

es to testify about the series of scandals that occurred while Stilwell was in office.

According to Kreitman's complaint, those problems included:

- Unfair treatment and terminations of city employees;
- Extreme lack of transparency and non-responsiveness to Public Records Act requests;
- Fiscal irresponsibility regarding legal exposure and expenses;
- Fiscal irresponsibility regarding outside consulting services;
- Loss of institutional memory and deterioration of city services, and
- Cronyism.

His complaint lists 12 city employees who were either fired, put on leave or resigned under protest while Stilwell was in charge.

The complaint asks the grand jury to "determine what lapses in city governance and oversight failed in Carmel-by-the-Sea and permitted this to go on."

See **JURY** page 13A

Surfer charged with beating landlady

By KELLY NIX

A 63-year-old man police say severely beat his landlady at her house last week has been charged with attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon, while his friends this week called him "easy-going" and "nonviolent."

The Monterey County District Attorney's Office this week charged Marc Cross with the two felonies after Monterey County Sheriff's Office deputies arrested him Jan. 24 on suspicion of beating his landlady, Karen Jones, 62. Cross is in county jail with bail set at \$1,030,000 while Jones is at Natividad Medical Center with critical injuries.

According to the sheriff's office, which responded to Jones' house at 26256 Camino Real (just outside the city limits), deputies found Jones laying in her front yard with blunt force injuries at about 6:10 p.m. Cross was found in his room and was arrested.



Marc Cross

See **SURFER** page 12A

Airport: Retaining wall won't always be so ugly

By KELLY NIX

IT MAY look like a prison or a Mayan Temple now, but the new retaining wall that looms over Highway 68 will look quite different in a few years, Monterey Regional Airport officials told The Pine Cone this week.

The imposing wall under construction at the east end of

the airport is part of a \$52 million runway safety project to meet federal safety guidelines. The conspicuous barrier has been the topic of many a conversation.

"What I hear people say," Airport Deputy General Manager Mark Bautista said Wednesday, "is that it looks like a medieval castle."

But there are plans to make the wall as least intrusive as possible. Its six tiers, which will support the crushable concrete at the end of the airport runway to slow down errant planes, will be planted with a variety of vegetation, including environmentally sensitive species, in order to conceal it and restore habitat.

"Each tier is set back by about 10 feet," Bautista said. "On each one of those levels, we will plant a lot of the endangered species we had to remove before we started the project."

Seeds taken from plants at the site before construction began, including Yadon's piperia and Monterey spineflower, are being grown by a Santa Cruz nursery, Bautista said. In fact, much of the replacement vegetation has already been planted and is being irrigated.

And scores of oak trees that had to be removed for the project will be replanted on the sides of the wall, though not at the end of the runway since an aircraft could

See **WALL** page 23A

Trial opens for drunk driver in Pebble Beach crash that left two dead

By CHRIS COUNTS

ACCUSED OF driving while intoxicated and causing a car accident that left two Pebble Beach women dead, Stuart Elder of Pacific Grove was put on trial Thursday, charged with gross vehicular manslaughter and other offenses.

In opening statements, the prosecution and defense offered differing views on what happened April 7, 2013, when Elder's 2009 Cadillac Escalade struck a 2005 Ford Freestyle driven by Sharon Daly while he was traveling southbound on Sloat Road in Pebble Beach.

Daly, 72, and her passenger, Linda Larone, 65, died in the crash. A passenger of Elder's, Selvia Gattis of Pebble Beach, was seriously injured in the collision.

Prosecutor Meredith Sillman told Monterey County Superior Court Judge Pamela Butler and the jury she plans to

See **TRIAL** page 13A



PHOTO/PAUL MILLER

The enormous set of retaining walls looming over Highway 68 near Canyon del Rey Blvd. has been compared to a fortress, but will look better when the landscaping is in, airport officials say.

Bertie Elliott gives record-breaking gift of \$101M to Northwestern University

By PAUL MILLER

SHE'S A familiar face around town — especially from her involvement with the Sunset Center renovation and her support of the local schools. And most people know that Bertie Elliott is investor Warren Buffett's sister.

But Elliott's well known sense of civic responsibility has taken on a whole new dimension with the announcement this week that she has given \$101 million to Northwestern University, her alma mater. The gift, which comes on top of millions in earlier donations she's made to the school, is the largest donation in the university's history.

Elliott, her husband, David Elliott, and her big brother, Warren, were in Evanston, Illinois, Wednesday for a ceremony honoring her for the donation.

"This gift of more than \$100 million from alumna Roberta Buffett Elliott brings her total giving to

almost \$110 million, which will be used to create the Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Studies," university president Morton Schapiro said at the ceremony, which was attended by more than 1,000 people. "Thank you, Bertie, for the trust you have shown in us," he said. "We will not let you down."

The head of the school's board of trustees, William Osborn, praised Elliott for her "extraordinary, record-breaking generosity," which he said would "positively and forever transform our global studies programs and amplify Northwestern's impact on the world."

The university said her gift would be used to "support students, faculty and academic programs that advance global issues through research, scholarships, travel grants, fellowships and more."

"I'm very pleased to be able to support the important work that Northwestern does in interna-

See **DONATION** page 23A



PHOTO/BRUCE POWELL

Bertie Elliott with (from left) Northwestern University president Morton Schapiro, Warren Buffett and David Elliott at a ceremony Wednesday honoring her for her gift to the school.