

The Carmel Pine Cone

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Mystery aircraft raising eyebrows

By CHRIS COUNTS

MORE ACCUSTOMED to seeing hawks and turkey vultures pass by their ridgetop homes, Big Sur residents have been startled by sudden presence of a flock of low-flying airplanes showing up in their remote community.

Yet calls by The Pine Cone to the Federal Aviation Administration, the United States Coast Guard, the United States Navy, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and Congressman Sam Farr's office have failed to turn up any clue about what the aircraft are, or who's flying them.

The descriptions of the aircraft fall into two categories. First, a large military-style plane has been observed on a number of occasions. Big Sur Volunteer Fire Chief Martha Karstens described it as "a big, lumbering monster" that "you can hear coming from miles away."

Resident Kodiak Greenwood said the plane flies "real low" and is hard to miss when it's passing through. "Everybody turns their heads and says, 'Whoa!'" he reported.

Second, a small prop plane and a twin-engine jet have frequently been seen together.

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PHOTO/KODIAK GREENWOOD

These two aircraft flying in close formation over Big Sur last week are among the ones that have people saying, "What are they up to?"

Fear of water shortage brings cuts in city budget

By MARY SCHLEY

WHILE RESIDENTS and businesses around the state are facing 25 percent water cutbacks because of the drought, officials at Carmel City Hall are confronting the possibility of even more drastic water restrictions in 2017 thanks to a state order protecting the Carmel River, and those cuts could do major damage to municipal revenues, according to city administrator Doug Schmitz.

The possibility is real enough that next year's capital improvements budget should be a lot smaller than this year's, the city council decided Tuesday night.

The \$3.75 million plan OK'd by the council for the 2015/2016 fiscal year includes \$2 million to pay for badly needed upgrades to the Forest Theater, along with a host of other projects, but represents a major reduction from the \$4.52 million earmarked for the current fiscal year.

"We're taking a restrictive view, because we don't know

See **WATER** page 13A

Woman crashes car through garage, lands in backyard

By MARY SCHLEY

AN ELDERLY Camino Real resident told police she couldn't get her foot off the gas when she crashed her BMW through the front — and back — of her garage before launching into the backyard, where the car wedged itself between two houses, Wednesday afternoon. Cora May Duke, 90, was apparently intending to back out of her driveway when she inadvertently put her car in "drive" and then stepped on the gas. When she started moving forward instead of backward, panic probably prompted her to step harder on the accelerator, thinking it was the brake.

Firefighters talked to Duke as she sat stuck in her car, which was wedged between the side of the house and the deck of the home next to it. An onlooker said she lives in one and rents out the one she hit.

Using a chainsaw — and apologizing for the noise it was making — firefighters cut away the trees and fence next to

the driver's side in order to free her, and then walked her to a waiting ambulance. Although she appeared OK, she was visibly shaken, and a medical crew gave her a thorough evaluation.

"She was fully alert and aware of everything that happened," Monterey Fire Division Chief Stew Roth said.

He summoned the Monterey County Urban Search & Rescue Team — a collaboration of Monterey, North County and Monterey County Regional fire departments — to shore up the garage, so that a California Towing crew could pull the BMW out of the backyard without the structure collapsing on top of it. Because a power line was attached to the building and gas service was nearby, PG&E shut down the utilities to the property.

"We didn't want something to drop and start a fire," Roth explained.

See **CRASH** page 8A

Canine center EIR points to traffic, noise

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE OPPONENTS of the proposed Carmel Canine Sports Center in Carmel Valley lobbied long and hard for an environmental impact report — and now they have one.

The report, which was released April 1, takes a close look at the plan for a private dog training facility on a 45-acre property located at 8100 Valley Greens Drive. The dog park's owners, Monterey County Planning Commissioner Martha Diehl, husband Ken Ekelund, and Ernie Mill, say it will "help preserve Carmel Valley's rural environmental and agricultural heritage, while providing a unique recreational amenity for dogs and the people who love them."

The project would include the construction of a parking

See **CANINES** page 25A

DISCOVERED IN WALL, REEL-TO-REEL TAPE BRINGS S.F.B. MORSE TO LIFE

By MARY SCHLEY

THE COUPLE who owned the house Carmel artist Steven Whyte and his wife, Ellen, bought in Monterey in late 2013 must

have had a mischievous streak. How else to explain the objects the Whytes found hidden in the walls as they removed the plaster while remodeling? One was an old hammer apparently used to build the home in 1947.

But another discovery was much more compelling.

"On a support between two studs was a reel of audio tape," said Steven Whyte, a widely known and highly successful sculptor who has a design studio on Dolores Street. "We thought it was quite exciting, because it's not somewhere it could have fallen to."

Instead, he said, whoever put it there obviously wanted someone to find it.

And that's when he reached out to me.

"I found a reel-to-reel tape, and it appears to be an oral history of the Del Monte Hotel," he said. He wasn't sure who the voice on the tape belonged to. It turned out to be Sam Morse, founder of the Pebble Beach Company and my great-grandfather.

Morse, whom practically everyone in our

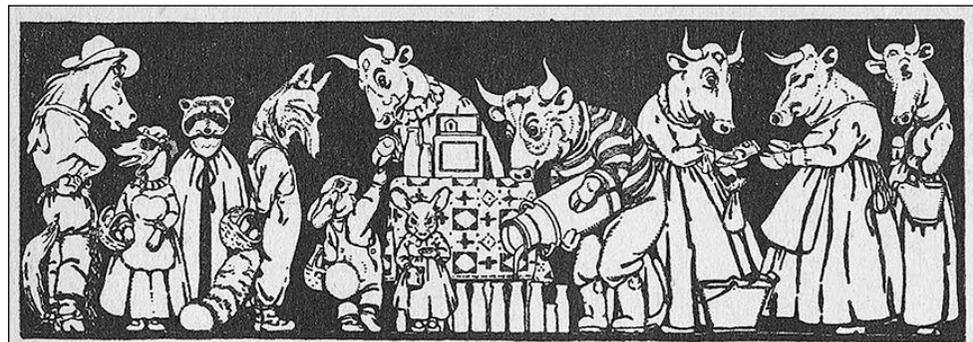
See **MORSE** page 10A



With the bust of his impish son, Corey (then 12, now 22) looking over his shoulder, sculptor Steven Whyte hoists the reel-to-reel player he bought so we could listen to a mysterious reel he found hidden in the wall of his house.

PHOTO/COURTESY STEVEN WHYTE

Have you seen this mural?



These happy cows by Jo Mora are a piece of Carmel history. They frolicked for years at two different businesses downtown, and then they vanished. A local art expert is waging a campaign to find them, and wants to know if you can help. See page 5A.