

Daily Pilot

SUNDAY, JUNE 13, 2021 /// Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent /// dailypilot.com

GIRLS' BASKETBALL



SAGE HILL players celebrate a 62-55 win over Ontario Christian in the CIF Southern Section Division 3AA girls' basketball final on Friday.

Photos by Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer



SAGE HILL'S head coach Kerwin Walters cuts down the net following Friday's comeback victory over top-seeded Ontario Christian.

Electrifying!

Sage Hill rallies from a nine-point deficit in the second half to beat the top-seed in the CIF Southern Section Division 3AA championship game.

BY ANDREW TURNER

The Sage Hill School girls' basketball team had suffered heartache on the court, and more than that off it.

In the previous five seasons, the Lightning had earned one playoff win in four of them, but

that was as far as Sage Hill would go.

Sage Hill graduated from contenders to champions with a second-half comeback to beat top-seeded Ontario Christian 62-55 on Friday night in the CIF South-

See **Sage Hill**, page A6

O.C. Fire Authority's 1st female pilot files discrimination suit

BY RICHARD WINTON

Helicopter pilot Desiree Horton had more aerial firefighting experience than any of her colleagues at the Orange County Fire Authority when she arrived from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection two years ago to become the local agency's first female pilot.

But that did not stop the OCFA from firing her before her one-year probationary period had ended and labeling her untrainable despite more than 30 years as a pilot, 16 of those battling fires for state and federal agencies.

Horton is now suing the OCFA for sexual discrimination and seeking to end what she and her attorneys call a "boys club men-

talities." Horton said she knows there is a "real risk she will be blacklisted" from the profession she loves, but she must fight for those who will follow in her footsteps.

"I cared about protecting life and land across the state. It was my dream job. I am an Orange County resident," Horton said Wednesday at a news conference explaining her decision to litigate. "It is clear to me that the OCFA set me up to fail, and I was never given the opportunity to succeed."

"I want my job back. Let me fly," she said.

The suit, which was filed last month and seeks unspecified damages from the fire authority

See **Suit**, page A5

2 Long Beach men are charged in alleged abduction, rape in H.B.

BY CITY NEWS SERVICE

Two cooks were charged Friday with allegedly kidnapping and sexually assaulting a 27-year-old woman in Huntington Beach.

Florentino Contreras Bacilio, 47, and Angel Lopez Evaristo, 30, both of Long Beach, were charged with single counts of kidnapping to commit rape and sodomy, and two counts of sexual penetration by foreign object, all felonies.

The two were accused of kidnapping the victim in downtown Huntington Beach on Sunday and later releasing her on Pacific Coast Highway south of Warner Avenue, where someone driving by saw her and called police, according to Huntington Beach police.

The woman was taken to an area hospital and later released,

police said.

Police said the defendants did not have a prior relationship with the woman. The victim was walking home just before midnight when she was abducted, according to the Orange County district attorney's office.

The men were accused of dragging the woman into their vehicle and then gagging, choking and sexually assaulting her until she lost consciousness during the attack, prosecutors alleged.

The woman was pushed out of their vehicle when she woke up and started struggling with the two, prosecutors alleged.

The defendants could each face up to 57 years to life in prison if convicted at trial.

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2 found dead at massage parlor

The bodies of a man and a woman were discovered June 5 in a Costa Mesa strip mall with a rocky past.

BY SARA CARDINE

Costa Mesa police are investigating the deaths of a man and woman whose bodies were discovered June 5 at a massage parlor inside a Fair Drive complex that's been in the city's crosshairs for years for ongoing illicit activities.

Costa Mesa police spokeswoman Roxi Fyad confirmed officers were called to a location on the 400 block of Fair Drive after 8 p.m. June 5 and that two deceased individuals were discovered on the property. Further details on the incident were not being made public, pending toxicology reports and official causes of death from the Orange County coroner's office, Fyad said Tuesday.

Erica Arellano, a supervising deputy coroner, identified the two deceased individuals as Lynne Charles Vandervall, 51, of Irvine, and 39-year-old Baixue Ren, whose city of residence had not yet been established.

Whether or how the two decedents may have known each other remains unknown, but an online listing for Six Stars Massage in the city of Westminster lists Baixue Ren, of Santa Ana, as the business agent.

Arellano said Ren and Vandervall are thought to have both died

See **Massage**, page A5



Photos by Drew A. Kelley

A PUBLIC candlelight memorial hosted by Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley was held on Friday at the Avenue of the Arts Hotel in Costa Mesa for the more than 5,000 Orange County COVID-19 victims.

Costa Mesa candlelight vigil honors nearly 5,100 O.C. lives lost to COVID-19

BY SARA CARDINE

Residents joined regional elected officials, essential workers and members of the faith community Friday to honor the memories of the nearly 5,100 individuals throughout Orange County who have lost their lives

during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a candlelight vigil at the lake behind Costa Mesa's Avenue of the Arts, citizens reflected on the lives lost to the coronavirus as tea lights were lit for each of the 5,095 countywide deaths recorded by the Orange County Health Care Agency Friday.

Participants were encouraged to bring photographs, flowers and other mementos to the ceremony, which featured brief remarks from area elected officials and moving musical tributes.

The event took place on the fi-

See **Vigil**, page A4



MEMBERS OF Costa Mesa Fire and Rescue take part in the vigil.

forum

COLUMN | PATRICE APODACA

Increase in gun violence in the U.S. calls to mind a work of science fiction

When I was a teenager I read a lot of science fiction. One book that made a particular impression was “The Naked Sun,” written in the 1950s by Isaac Asimov.

It’s a murder mystery set in the future on a planet where humans have little physical contact, relying instead on robots and other technology to interact with one another.

I’ve thought about this book occasionally during the past year-plus, marveling at the real-life parallels as we have experienced physical distancing, more limited in-person contact and an intensifying reliance on technology. I mused about how science fiction writers have sometimes shown themselves to be more prophetic than even they might have imagined.

But now my thoughts return to this story for another reason. I must warn readers that a major spoiler lies ahead, in case anyone is considering checking out this 60-plus-year-old book for the first time.

The fictional detective who solves the case figures out that the killing occurred as a result of a roboticist manipulating a robot to hand a weapon to the victim’s wife during a heated argument, when the woman was at the height of her emotional distress.

I can’t speak to what the author intended us to glean from this plot twist, but I consider his insight into human behavior relevant to our modern debate over gun violence.

Few among us would disagree that we must work to reduce the number of shooting deaths, which occur across the nation with alarming regularity. In California in the past few weeks alone we’ve had more horrific examples, including what authorities characterize as a road rage incident on the 55 Freeway in Orange that resulted in the death of a 6-year-old boy, and a mass shooting at a light-rail yard in San Jose.

The latter occurred not far from the quiet neighborhood where my son lives. These days, we grimly acknowledge every time the unthinkable happens, it appears that nowhere is safe.

But why do I refer to Asimov’s book? It’s because we as a society resemble the

fictional roboticist. We readily hand over deadly weapons, even weapons of war, to pretty much anyone who wants them.

Then we wring our hands and offer condolences every time angry, unstable people use those weapons to commit atrocities. Afterward, most of the time, not much changes.

The statistics paint a bleak picture.

Last year, gun violence killed nearly 20,000 Americans, more than any other year in at least two decades, according to the Gun Violence Archive. Nearly 300 of the victims were children. Another 24,000 people in the U.S. used guns to commit suicide.

The vast majority of these deaths were not in mass shootings and didn’t make front page news, yet they are all equally tragic.

It’s not as if we don’t have any answers. We know that we need a comprehensive, multifaceted effort. It should be grounded in the acknowledgment that gun violence is a public health crisis, best addressed by the fostering of strong, healthy communities; more research; and robust violence intervention programs and mental-health initiatives.

But it can’t stop there.

A Scientific American analysis of dozens of studies found that, counter to what gun-rights advocates believe, gun ownership does not deter crime. It also reported that homeowners with access to guns were more likely to be murdered.

Other research has found that the presence of guns increases the likelihood of death in cases of domestic abuse and suicide attempts.

Such findings haven’t resulted in moderating gun ownership. Indeed, record gun sales have been reported in the United States during the pandemic.

More common-sense firearm regulations must be part of the solution, including universal background checks and increased restrictions on the sale and use of large-capacity magazines and firearms — the kind of modest measures that are continually blocked by the gun lobby despite being supported by a majority of Americans.

Yet for what seems like an eternity we have remained stuck in our sad and infuriating loop of outrage followed by little to no ac-

It’s not as if we don’t have any answers. We know that we need a comprehensive, multifaceted effort. It should be grounded in the acknowledgment that gun violence is a public health crisis...

tion. Even the legal tools we do have, like California’s “red flag” law that can alert law enforcement to potential threats, are only used haphazardly.

And in a development condemned by gun control advocates, earlier this month California’s 30-year-old ban on assault weapons — one of seven such statewide bans — was put in jeopardy when a federal judge declared it unconstitutional. He gave the state 30 days to appeal.

The overarching obstacle to substantive change lies embedded in our culture. The American identity itself is wrapped up in our love affair — some would call it an obsession — with guns.

Many of us — perhaps a minority but a powerful one — view gun ownership as a sacred right, enshrined in the Constitution, fundamental to our national identity and therefore not to be questioned or limited in any way.

While I hate to be pessimistic, I fear that this aspect to our national psyche may never be dislodged, not enough to stanch the epidemic of gun violence at any rate.

So let’s at least be honest about the terrible price we pay for clinging so rigidly to an idealized image of guns that is far from the reality of the brutal world we have created.

PATRICE APODACA is a former Los Angeles Times staff writer and is coauthor of “A Boy Named Courage: A Surgeon’s Memoir of Apartheid.” She lives in Newport Beach.

MAILBAG

H.B. council has sole dibs on choosing Ortiz’s replacement

In the 2020 elections, a record number of Huntington Beach residents decided to gamble with their votes. They bet on the long shot: a brash, inexperienced, ill-informed, former athlete and social media darling to be a City Council member. At last Tuesday’s Huntington Beach City Council meeting, that bet on the long shot went bust with the resignation of Tito Ortiz.

Anyone surprised by Mr. Ortiz’s sudden resignation clearly hadn’t been paying attention. While some speculated Mr. Ortiz, a novice to elected public service, would “grow into the job,” this was wishful thinking. During his brief tenure, his most significant accomplishment was to make H.B. the punchline of jokes throughout our state, across our nation and indeed even around the globe. He seemed to move effortlessly from one controversy to the next, all while posting his regrettable exploits as content on his social media accounts.

True to form, Mr. Ortiz’s surprise farewell address (season finale?) was straight out of “Reality TV: 101” as he attempted to paint himself the victim of far-flung conspiracies, behind-the-scenes backstabbing and the target of nonexistent media cabals. Perhaps the most telling statement of Mr. Ortiz’s farewell was also the most obvious: “... this job isn’t working for me.” With this simple six-word phrase, Mr. Ortiz summed up perfectly his failure as a public servant: Public service isn’t about you; it is about those you serve.

As made evident by the public comments at Wednesday night’s special council session, some are already focused on who will replace Mr. Lightning Rod. Less than 24 hours after the resignation, those with aspirations to fill a still-warm seat were already spinning rationales and staking their claims. Never mind that the Huntington Beach Charter is quite clear about the council

See **Mailbag**, page A4



Dolce&Gabbana



Oliver Peoples



Gucci



Vacheron Constantin



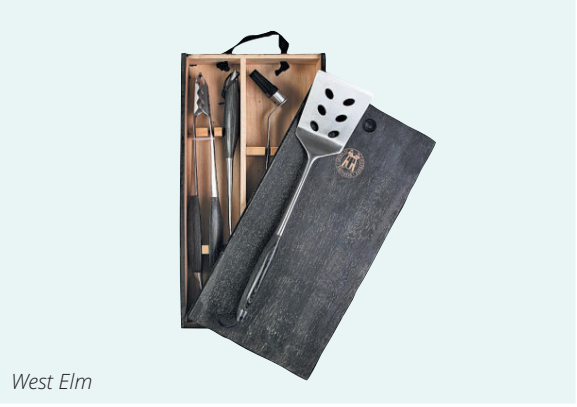
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forum

A WORD, PLEASE | JUNE CASAGRANDE

Oxford comma enthusiasts are mistaken about the superiority of their preference

There's a growing fanaticism in this country — a belief system so extreme its followers are impervious to all logic and facts. If you don't agree with them, you're beneath contempt.

If you try to reason with them, your words fall on deaf ears, or worse, you're accused of complicity in any number of blood-curdling atrocities. And though this dangerous extremism has been simmering for decades, the advent of social media has hastened radicalization, posing a threat to reasonable people everywhere.

I'm talking, of course, about the Cult of the Oxford Comma, which reared its ugly head recently on Twitter when an obscure California attorney tweeted an example of the Oxford comma's supposed superiority.

The tweet was an image of a Politico headline: "How Harry Reid, a Terrorist Interrogator and the Singer From Blink-182 Took UFOs Mainstream." Above the image was the lawyer's commentary: "And always remember to use the Oxford comma, kids."

The dog whistle was heard far and wide. About 8,000 Oxford comma fanatics retweeted it and

Both methods are correct. But don't tell that to Oxford comma cultists... And don't tell it to the countless thousands of internet denizens who supply "proof" of the Oxford comma's superiority in the form of a cartoon about JFK, Stalin and strippers.

80,000 liked it. They agreed that, without an Oxford comma after "interrogator," the headline suggested that Harry Reid was not just a former United States senator but also a terrorist interrogator and the front man for a rock band.

In the replies, hundreds of cultists took shots at the headline writer.

"I didn't know Blink's singer was named Harry Reid," one replied.

"People who do not use the Oxford comma deserve a hefty fine, a 90-day jail sentence, and a day and night listening to lectures by Alan Greenspan," another insisted.

Strong words from true believers. There's just one problem.

They're wrong. An Oxford comma would not improve the Politico headline. Instead, it would make it ambiguous.

The Oxford comma, also called a serial comma or series comma, is the one before "and" in a list of three or more items. So it's the second comma in "The flag is red, white, and blue."

The Oxford comma is optional. The Chicago Manual of Style, followed by many book and magazine publishers, says to use it. But Associated Press style, followed by most news media, says to skip it: "The flag is red, white and blue."

Both methods are correct. But don't tell that to Oxford comma cultists like the judge who, in his zeal to promote his comma

cause, screwed up a 2017 court ruling. And don't tell it to the countless thousands of internet denizens who supply "proof" of the Oxford comma's superiority in the form of a cartoon about JFK, Stalin and strippers.

Their devotion blinds them to the fact that, while an Oxford comma can sometimes remove ambiguity, other times it creates ambiguity.

To see why, it helps to understand appositives. An appositive is a noun that amounts to a repeated reference to another noun: "Your father, a true gentleman, is loved by many." Commas set off appositives, which is how we know "a true gentleman" is appositive to your father. Your dad and the gentleman are one and the same, and the commas tell us so.

In the Politico headline, inserting an Oxford comma would suggest "a terrorist interrogator" might be appositive to Harry Reid — he may be the interrogator: Harry Reid, a terrorist interrogator, strikes fear in the hearts of Al-Qaeda members.

But wait, cultists say. Without an Oxford comma, the headline

means Harry Reid is both a terrorist interrogator and a singer. Wrong.

True, an appositive can have two nouns: Your father, an officer and a gentleman, is loved by many. But you need the comma after "gentleman" to make it appositive. Otherwise, you're talking about three people: Your father, an officer and a gentleman walk into a bar.

The same is true for our Politico headline. If you were to put a comma after "the singer from Blink-182," you would be creating a two-noun appositive to Harry Reid. "How Harry Reid, a Terrorist Interrogator and the Singer from Blink-182, took UFOs Mainstream. But without a comma after Blink-182, there's zero ambiguity. The original headline can only mean these are three different people. So an Oxford comma would make this headline worse, not better.

JUNE CASAGRANDE is the author of "The Joy of Syntax: A Simple Guide to All the Grammar You Know You Should Know." She can be reached at JuneTCN@aol.com.

Sean Thomas Dunne

1980 - 2021

Sean Thomas Dunne of Orange County, California, passed away in the City of Santa Ana at the age of 40 on June 2, 2021, after a lifelong battle with addiction. Throughout Sean's life, his passions and ideals burned brightly. Among his inspirations and struggles were an ingrained aversion to conformity and a burning romance with street culture. Sean had amazing compassion for those less fortunate and he had been witnessed on many occasions asking a vagrant if they were okay or offering his last cigarette to an unknown down-and-outer. He was coined a "peace punk" in his school days.

Sean was born in the Bronx, New York in 1980. He always felt a strong connection to the borough of his birth, where both of his parents were born and raised. Sean is survived by his father, Lawrence Dunne; mother, Kathy Moore; sister, Christine Maurice; and brother, Steve Palumbo. He is also survived by his estranged, but not forgotten, brother, Brendan Dunne; and his son, Robin Lawrence Dunne, of whom he was very proud.

Sean will be lovingly remembered by all for his works as a performer, musician, and published writer. He will also be remembered for his mission to live by the tenets of brutal honesty and to "talk pretty," his local awe-inspiring rap battle triumphs; and the moments of warmth, friendship and true connection that he found with many of those he encountered along his storied journey.

The memories of Sean will be celebrated privately and individually across various states by each of his surviving loved ones.

Dear Sean: For the gifts you have given us, we are truly grateful. And for everything else, you are wholly forgiven. There is no circumstance that can hold you back now. You are finally and truly free.



Dulyce S. "Dee" Turner,

March 27, 1934 - February 2, 2021

Dee Turner, a wonderful mother and wife died peacefully on February 2, 2021 at her home in Corona del Mar. She was 86. Dee was born in Seattle, the daughter of George & Dulyce Stone. She attended Garfield High School and went on to the University of Washington to pursue her degree in nursing. During her freshman year she met Jim Turner. Following college in 1955 she married Ensign Turner and embarked on life as a navy spouse. She gave birth at each of their postings – Oakland, Guam, Naples & Pasadena. Dee & Jim shared a beautiful life together for 65 years.

Dee began her nursing career when the family settled in Pasadena. She started at LA County Hospital. Their move to Newport Beach led to her career with Lescoulle Nurses Registry and stints at Hoag Hospital where she tended to many of Newport's finest including John Wayne. In the early 1980's Dee began her studies as a Nurse Practitioner student at Cal State Long Beach. During her training, she attended University of California Irvine's Endocrine Clinic, where she was observed to have unusually advanced clinical skills. Thus, after her Certification as a Nurse Practitioner, she joined the UCI Diabetes Research Program, where she stayed until her retirement, spending more than 10 years at UCI. She was an indispensable clinician caring for diabetic patients in the Program's Diabetes Clinic. She participated in a multitude of clinical research projects, being a coauthor on many studies. Her last publication was in 1995 in the prestigious journal of Diabetes Care. Dee was also the lead Nurse Clinician for the Diabetes Program's implantable insulin infusion device studies, of which UCI was the leading center in the world by number of patients cared for and number of publications from UCI's investigators' findings using these devices. Dee was a very special and talented Nurse Practitioner. None of her colleagues will ever forget her as a caring and thoughtful person and health care provider.

Dee loved spending time with her family. She truly was the matriarch of the Turner Clan. The family's Sunday gatherings are legendary. Christmases, Thanksgivings, birthdays and fierce rounds of Bridge, not to mention chess, gave her great joy. Trips to Yosemite were a favorite. Dee was always ready to travel by car, plane, train or boat. Dee showcased her creativity through quilt making, cake decorating, needlepoint and more. Often bestowing an original piece on a lucky relative. Dee was the repository of family history and events. Her genealogical research took the family back centuries. She was forever inquisitive and genuine and she built new friendships easily. This charming and inspirational woman loved Italy, conversation, language, books, and music (Luciano Pavarotti, Dean Martin, Neil Diamond, & Rod Stewart).

In addition to Jim, Dee is survived by her children Jamie (Nadine), Ken, Gary (Jennifer), & Jon (Martha); grandchildren Kendyl Loven (Josh), JC Turner, Amanda Turner, Jack Turner, Samantha Turner, Allyson Juan (Allan), Madison Turner, Warren Turner (Alyssa), Harrison Turner, Cory Turner & Sean Turner; and four great grandchildren Isla, Liam, Maverick & Declan Loven.

A celebration of Dee's life will be held on Saturday, September 25th.

MAILBAG

Continued from page A3

having sole authority for appointing a replacement.

Some simply couldn't resist the opportunity to reframe this decision as a referendum on "the will of the people," whatever that means. In the interest of our collective sanity, let's relax, slow down and sit this one out. Our City Council will make this decision, and I'd guess they'll lean toward selecting someone with a track record of public service and not the slightest hint of a social media empire.

The residents of Huntington Beach have endured



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

MAYOR PRO TEM Tito Ortiz resigned from the City Council on June 1. Only the City Council can replace him, a reader writes.

enough needless distractions. Everyone in our community would benefit

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

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turn out for a community photo at 10 a.m. Tuesday in front of City Hall.

"Everyone who has been fully vaccinated is welcome," Kempf said. "Please wear something yellow — like a hat, shirt, blouse, skirt or pants — or bring yellow flowers," she added.

For my part, let me say this: "Many people have been traumatized by the events of the last 16 months. They either know someone who contracted COVID, lost family members to the virus or suffered financial losses. Tuesday's community photo will be a great way to reconnect with old friends and look ahead to the future."

If you would like to participate in the community photo, call (949) 338-5071.

Denny Freidenrich
Laguna Beach

Wear yellow June 15 in Laguna

Some call it a red-letter day, but I prefer to think of it as a yellow-letter day in Laguna. That is when people in town officially will be able to reemerge from COVID-19 restrictions and celebrate their post-pandemic lives.

With these thoughts in mind, Mayor Pro Tem Sue Kempf and I are inviting friends and neighbors to



Drew A. Kelley

DEBBIE LUMPKIN, Supervisor Katrina Foley's chief of staff, speaks on her behalf during Friday's vigil.

VIGIL

Continued from page A1

nal weekend before California businesses are set to fully reopen Tuesday, after 15 months of restrictions, and statewide rules on mask-wearing continue to ease.

Orange County District 2 Supervisor Katrina Foley said she organized Friday's vigil after attending a similar remembrance May 19 at Fountain Valley Regional Hospital and Medical Center.

There, employees honored the lives of coworkers who had succumbed to the virus, some after caring for

patients with COVID-19. "[My team and I] were so moved, I said we should look at doing one of these programs for people all over the county," Foley said. "As we move into the June 15 reopening and more of a celebratory mood, I'm worried people get lost and be forgotten," she continued. "So, I think it's important for us to pay our respect."

The battery-powered tea lights are to remain lit throughout the weekend for anyone wishing to visit the memorial and pay tribute on their own.

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MASSAGE

Continued from page A1

sometime around midnight that Saturday night, roughly eight hours before their bodies were discovered. They were found at Lucky Spa, a massage parlor operating in a unit at 440 Fair Drive in Costa Mesa.

The address is well known to city officials, who have taken a series of legal actions against property owner Dennis D'Alessio and a string of itinerant tenants operating illegal marijuana dispensaries as well as massage parlors, where undercover police operations have turned up evidence of prostitution, according to one complaint filed by the city.

"This has been a problem site for, gosh, 10 years or more," said former Mayor Katrina Foley, now a county supervisor. "The police have done so many undercover investigations at that site — there are multiple legal actions. I'm also concerned about human trafficking [that might be going on there]."

Costa Mesa City Atty.



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

THE COMPLEX at 440 Fair Drive, where two people were discovered dead at a massage parlor.

Kimberly Hall Barlow confirmed by email Thursday officials have been engaged in an ongoing legal battle over activities at the property for years and, on April 23, obtained a preliminary injunction against multiple dispensaries op-

erating there.

"The city has been in litigation relating to this property at various times for illegal activities, including dispensaries and massage businesses, since at least 2011," Hall Barlow wrote, describing administrative

and criminal citations dating to 2004.

In an 89-page lawsuit filed on April 20, 2011, attorneys representing the city declared seven massage businesses and three marijuana dispensaries operating at the site public

nuisances and sought a court-ordered injunction to have them temporarily or permanently shut down.

The document provided details on multiple undercover operations conducted by members of Costa Mesa police's special enforcement detail from July 2010 through February 2011. Officers visited the massage parlors posing as customers and were offered sex acts in exchange for money on multiple occasions by practitioners at all businesses.

"During separate undercover operations at the seven massage establishments, officers received agreements to engage in prostitution," the document reads. "Several criminal violations were observed at each location."

In addition to repeated offers of "happy endings" — a term referring to stimulation of a customer's genitals at the end of a massage, usually for a fee — officers noted improperly attired and sometimes topless masseuses, practitioners using multiple, and often rotating, aliases, doors with locking mechanisms and businesses with-

out a manager on site, among many other violations.

Hall Barlow said Thursday all the massage businesses at the site have "been under investigation for some time" but added the nature of those investigations could not be disclosed. She said one person identified as a manager was arrested on Dec. 30 and that other citations may have been issued to that same individual or at the same address.

Calls made to D'Alessio and a Newport Beach branch of Nevada-based property management company D'Alessio Investments, LLC requesting comment were not immediately returned Friday.

Foley said, following the news of the recent deaths on the property, she planned to reach out to the district attorney's office.

"We have to get somebody to do something," she said. "I don't know how long this has to go on before some agency does something."

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SUIT

Continued from page A1

and lead pilot Jack Matiasovich, alleges that since Horton joined the Orange County agency from Cal Fire in 2019, she was subject to "unfair scrutiny by the male pilots, crew chiefs and helicopter technicians." She also was held to higher standards than her male counterparts and not given the same training opportunities, the lawsuit states.

Horton, who had broken a similar glass ceiling for female pilots at Cal Fire, said that at the OCFA, she was undermined, disrespected, disparaged and made to feel as though she were incompetent because she was a woman.

"Desiree is a trailblazer who has risked her life countless times to save the homes of Californians. ... All

she wants is to be treated equally," said Jen Rangel, one of Horton's attorneys. "She had been warned the OCFA was a boys club."

When Horton began working for the OCFA, she had 9,000 hours of flight experience. Rangel said that unlike some of Horton's colleagues, who learned to fight fires from the air while on the job, the veteran firefighting pilot had been doing it for more than a decade. Her hiring came with strings that new male employees did not face, the lawsuit alleges.

"Despite passing numerous in-house flight evaluations and obtaining instrument flight rating, the OCFA falsely claimed she was not good enough," the lawyer said.

"OCFA air operations lack transparency, standardization and documentation in training and evaluation of its fire pilots.

Rangel said a third-party management assessment of the training found it "was replete for abuse."

The Orange County Fire Authority did not comment on the lawsuit.

Female pilots are rare, making up less than 7% of those licensed across the nation. And female helicopter pilots are rarer still. Among female fire pilots, Horton is one of only a handful.

Once dubbed "Chopper Chick" in less enlightened times, Horton became a regular on Los Angeles TV as a news chopper pilot, known for filming infamous car chases and other incidents at the start of her flying career.

She broke into firefighting as a relief pilot for the U.S. Forest Service, working for that agency from 2005 to 2013, when she was hired by Cal Fire, the third-largest firefighting department in



DESIREE HORTON is suing the Orange County Fire Authority to seek an end to what she and her attorneys call a "boys club mentality."

Courtesy
Desiree Horton

the nation with large aerial operations. She flew out of San Bernardino, tackling some of the most dangerous terrain and wildfires in the nation.

When she joined the OCFA, Horton became one of about 20 women among a force of more than 1,200. That 2% female presence is way below the national lev-

el, said OCFA fire Capt. Lauren Andrade, who supports Horton's efforts to end discrimination.

"I wish I could say this is the first time I have heard of a firefighter being discriminated against because of their sex or race, but that is far from the truth," the 17-year firefighting veteran said.

Andrade said the department has a "pattern of discrimination" against underrepresented groups.

"Enough is enough," Andrade said. "It's time to pull back the 'orange curtain' and hold people accountable."

RICHARD WINTON writes for the Los Angeles Times.

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TRACK AND FIELD

CdM girls take fourth place at CIF Division 3 championships

BY ANDREW TURNER

Fans of track and field have been accustomed to seeing all four CIF Southern Section divisional finals contested in one location at the same time.

The section separated the four divisional finals this year, so the Division 3 track and field championships had the appearance of a CIF preliminary meet at Estancia High School on Saturday.

The intensity of the CIF finals remained, however, and with a small group of qualifiers, the Corona del Mar High School girls did about as well as they could have hoped.

Led by three top-two finishes from junior Caroline Glessing, CdM finished in fourth place with 47 points.

Glessing ended her afternoon with a victory in the



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

CAROLINE GLESSING of Corona del Mar finishes second in the 100 meters during the Division 3 track and field meet.

200-meter sprint in 24.51 seconds.

She also was the runner-up in the 100 (12.17) and the long jump (18 feet, two inches). She set personal records in all three events, securing 26 points for her

team in the process.

"I came in, and I was really determined to PR," Glessing said. "That was my goal before even getting first, second or third, so for me, I'm super happy I PR'd because that was my goal,

and I was able to contribute a lot of points for my team. I just came in very determined. I worked really hard this year, so I'm really happy about today."

Senior Coco Chinnici placed third in the 400 with a time of 58.99 seconds. She did so while running in an outside lane, outperforming her seed to earn another six points for the Sea Kings.

"I knew that I had to go quick on that first 200 because I didn't have a great race last week, but my goal was to leave it all out there and I did," Chinnici said.

Corona del Mar coach Bill Sumner said that the Sea Kings brought 10 girls to the CIF finals. That included two relay teams.

The girls' 1,600 relay team of Sydney Sharp, Ellie Rosing, Melisse Djomby-Enyawe and Chinnici fin-

ished fifth (4:05.06) for CdM, which ended the season ranked ninth in the Division 3 poll.

Ariana Novela was fourth in the discus throw (117-10) and Shannon Strassman was fourth in the girls' pole vault with a clearance of 10-6.

Studio City Harvard-Westlake was the girls' champion with 93 points, ending a streak of five straight CIF titles won by Santa Margarita.

Laguna Beach distance runner Mateo Bianchi was a local standout on the boys' side.

Bianchi emerged victorious with a time of 4:12.46 in the 1,600 meters.

The race was filled with talent from South Pasadena, which had Andrew Villapudua (4:14.28), Andrew Parkinson (4:21.48) and Patrick Latting (4:22.34)

finish in the top five.

"It was a very strange season, obviously, a lot of question marks going into it, but I'm really happy with how it all came together," said Bianchi, who also finished second in the 3,200 meters. "I think we got all the right races that we needed to at the right times that we needed to.

"A lot of really good training, and now it's time for postseason. Time for it to pay off."

South Pasadena went on to win the Division 3 boys' title 72-66 over Bellflower St. John Bosco.

Jason Plumb joined Glessing as another Sea King to perform well in the long jump, leaping to a second-place finish with a mark of 22-9.

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SAGE HILL

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ern Section Division 3AA final at home.

The Lightning, who had several players arrive this season who played for the Mamba Sports Academy team once coached by the late Kobe Bryant, played a role so often embodied by their mentor on the court — that of the closer.

Freshman guard Zoie Lamkin drained a three-pointer with 1:12 remaining that put Sage Hill in front for good at 57-55. It came off a swing pass from Kat Righeimer, who had four points, six rebounds and four assists.

"We thought we were about to lose, but we had that Mamba Mentality to keep going and push through to the end," Lamkin said.

Lamkin, who finished with eight points, had a quiet game offensively up to that point, but the Lightning collectively looked to that shot as the moment that changed the game.

"We felt the momentum switch back to our side," junior point guard Isabel Gomez said. "After that went in, we knew we could finally close it out. We knew that we had the push and the spark to do it."

Sage Hill, which led 16-15 at the end of the first quarter, did not lead again until Emily Elliott sunk a pair of free throws with 4:50 left to give the Lightning a 50-49 lead.

Ontario Christian (22-2) led by as much as nine points in the second half.

Gomez finished with a team-high 21 points to go with five assists and five rebounds for No. 2-seeded Sage Hill (18-6).

Elliott added 16 points, nine rebounds, three assists



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

SAGE HILL'S Emily Eadie, Emily Elliott and Isabel Gomez, from left, celebrate as time expires.

and two steals, and Emily Eadie provided 13 points and 15 rebounds.

For Elliott, who graduated on June 4, it was all worth it to keep going with the team. The senior forward has signed with Cal State Los Angeles for women's volleyball.

She is used to soaring above the net in that respect, but she found herself and her teammates cutting one down after bringing the program its first championship.

"It was incredible," Elliott said. "I never thought I would see myself doing that one day, but here we are."

Eadie had eight points and eight rebounds in the first half, critical contributions from the freshman forward as the Lightning attempted to stay within striking distance.

Sage Hill was contending with a lights-out shooter in Ontario Christian's Chloe Briggs, who had 34 points, six assists, five rebounds and three steals.

"I knew it was going to be

a close game," Briggs said. "They're a really good team. They have a lot of solid girls. I was hoping to come out with a win. I thought we could do it, but at the end, we just fell short."

The Lightning turned to a double-team against Briggs, who had six three-pointers, to try to get some defensive stops. Madeline Martinez also had 12 points for the Knights, with all of those coming from beyond the arc.

"She is phenomenal," Gomez said of Briggs. "We knew that in order to try to get something going, we had to have a couple of empty possessions, and we got those."

Four players on the Sage Hill roster — Annabelle Spotts, Eadie, Lamkin and Righeimer — were teammates on the Mamba travel ball team that endured tragedy when a helicopter crash took the lives of Bryant and eight others.

Also lost in the accident were Bryant's daughter, Gianna, Sarah and Payton

Chester, Orange Coast College baseball coach John Altobelli, his wife Keri, and their daughter Alyssa, Edison alumnus Christina Mauser and the pilot, Ara Zobayan.

Sage Hill coach Kerwin Walters said it had been a tough 18 months going back to the Jan. 26 incident, and he said he felt in his heart that those the community had lost over that period were looking down on them.

"It's not a healing method, but it's a step towards healing," Walters said of winning the title. "I think it's a step towards our community staying tight and starting to recover from all this madness over the last 18 months."

"To be honest, I'm so happy to be with this group. I think this group has given me some serenity in all of the craziness that has happened over the last 18 months."

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