

# Daily Pilot & Times OC

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Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**LOCAL ARTIST** Ricky Blake sits with Victoria White's "Duke" during the grand opening of the Huntington Beach International Surfing Museum's new exhibit, "Duke's Dream Came True: Surfing's Road to the Olympics," on Thursday. Blake is a co-curator of the exhibit.

## Surfing exhibit examines Duke's dream come true

BY MATT SZABO

Duke Kahanamoku has a remarkable legacy that is still being felt more than 50 years after his death. Kahanamoku was a five-time Olympic medalist in swimming in the 1910s and '20s. Yet, it was his efforts to popularize surfing and bring that sport to the Olympic Games that helped make the Hawaiian an icon in Huntington Beach — otherwise known as Surf City USA.

Surfing's popularization and road to the Olympics are highlighted in a new exhibit at the Huntington Beach International Surfing Museum.

That journey is the focus of a new exhibit at the Huntington Beach International Surfing Museum. "Duke's Dream Came True: Surfing's Road to the Olympics" opened Thursday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Surfing finally became an Olympic sport in 2020, with Italo Ferreira of Brazil and

Carissa Moore of the United States becoming the first gold medalists. Duke's dream was finally realized. The exhibit tells the story of Kahanamoku's life, from the early 20th century growing up in Waikiki to his death in

See *Exhibit*, page A8

## Baby hawks hatch in time for spring

A pair of eggs found in an imperiled nest near Aliso Canyon came to the Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center 2 weeks ago.

BY SARA CARDINE

Just a few days into spring, chicks are hatching at the Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center in Huntington Beach, but these babies are not your typical Easter types.

Earlier this month the non-profit wildlife rehabilitation center got a call from a biologist who'd been called by a utility agency doing work in Aliso Canyon to retrieve two eggs from a nest perilously positioned on a power pole, according to Debbie McGuire, the center's executive director.

Inside the speckled dark beige orbs beat the tiny hearts of two red-tailed hawks. Because of its location near electrical infrastructure, the nest and its precious contents were at risk. Something had to be done.

The Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center, an Orange County haven for non-domesticated birds and mammals discovered misplaced, wounded or needing extra care, was far away one of the only possible places to take the still-shelled hawks with permission from state wildlife officials.

"Normally we only take in the eggs of threatened or endangered species," McGuire said Wednesday in between hatchings, adding the red-tailed hawk is a species whose status is consid-

See *Hawks*, page A3

## Gaza war threatens peace on O.C. Human Relations Commission

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

For Rabbi Rick Steinberg, a packed meeting of the Orange County Human Relations Commission in March proved to be a welcome reprieve.

Pro-Palestinian activists had dominated the past two meetings with calls for his removal from the commission after he voted against a statement denouncing Islamophobia in the wake of the Israel-Hamas War.

But on March 14, dozens of speakers offered hosannas for Steinberg, who serves as senior

rabbi for Congregation Shir Ha-Ma'lot in Irvine.

Supporters described him as an interfaith activist, trusted hate fighter and "mensch" while denouncing attacks against him as antisemitic.

"Let there be no doubt he opposes Islamophobia and mourns the loss of innocent lives," said Myra Firth, a Steinberg supporter, at the meeting. "If the resolution that started this was limited to that, none of us would be here."

See *War*, page A2



**AMERICAN LEGION**  
Newport Harbor Post 291 Cmdr. Evin Planto, President Mary Beth Martin and Squadron 291 Cmdr. Tim Sullivan, from left, look forward to celebrating its 100th anniversary.

Don Leach  
Staff  
Photographer

## American Legion Newport Harbor Post 291 set to salute its first century

BY LILLY NGUYEN

A handful of veterans and their families comprised American Legion Newport Harbor Post 291 when it started in April 1924. The fledgling group first met in a building located in a parking lot members affectionately called the "Hut."

In 1953, the city offered the organization a lease on a location on the Balboa Peninsula, abut-

ting Newport Harbor, and that is where it has remained ever since.

As Newport Harbor Post 291 prepares to celebrate its centennial this summer, it boasts a membership of nearly 8,000 across all its entities, which include an auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion.

Like other American Legion chapters across the country, Post 291 focuses on helping active

military personnel, veterans and their families. The post's auxiliary group provides care packages to deployed personnel, and its Sons of the American Legion holds fundraising drives. Post Cmdr. Evin Planto, who came into his position in 2021, said the post currently helps more than 20 people a month through its veteran emergency assistance

See *Legion*, page A3

**AT A PACKED** meeting, Orange County Supervisor Don Wagner, standing, expresses support for Orange County Human Relations Commissioner Richard Steinberg.



Eric Licas

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# Report reveals Laguna's ongoing housing challenge

City bolsters renter protections ahead of discussion RHNA numbers, lack of affordable units.

BY ANDREW TURNER

Laguna Beach remains challenged in adding to its affordable housing stock, according to an annual progress report presented to the City Council this month.

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment, a figure established by the Southern California Assn. of Governments, calls on the city to plan for an additional 394 housing units for the current cycle, which started in 2021 and ends in 2029.

Of those 394 units, the RHNA allocation tasks Laguna Beach with providing 277 new affordable units.

The city has yet to put a dent in that number, as no permits have been issued toward housing that would fall under the very low, low or moderate income levels.

Instead, so far this cycle, permits were given to 127 housing units that fall in the above-moderate household income category and 221 went to homes for those that fall in the above-moderate category, well surpassing the target of 117.

"The NIMBY [not in my backyard] spirit is alive and well in this town," resident Chris Quilter said at the City Council meeting on March 12. "It will continue to oppose any kind of intensification in any area of our city. I don't know what to do about that, except it's up to the council to really disappoint some of our residents and move forward on something that's

affordable somewhere in town.

"We have philanthropists who are willing to help, but they want to get things done in their lifetime, and that doesn't look too likely right now," Quilter said.

Senior affordable housing and artist live-work space have been hot topics in town. Action pertaining to the latter will be up for consideration at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, when the panel will look at establishing a tenant preference policy that would require housing development projects to set aside a portion of units for artists.

"We are attracted to Laguna because of the type of community that it is, our artists, our hotels, restaurants, all the amenities that we enjoy," said Jacquie Schaeffgen, a member of the city's housing and hu-

man services committee. "Yet many of those who make this community what it is, they can't live here. We can't house everybody, but we should do something."

Mayor Pro Tem Bob Whalen asked for an update on the city's plans to address the housing issue with five years remaining in the housing cycle.

"It does appear that we are tracking," said Jennifer Savage, the city's housing program manager. "The implementation programs are largely focused on removing barriers to housing construction, and we are making significant progress towards that end."

Savage added the community development department had previously taken measures to support the facilitation of accessory dwelling unit construction.

Councilman Alex Rounaghi expressed cau-

tious optimism that the city would be able to comply with the mandate to allow for affordable housing.

"As it relates to ... deed-restricted affordable [housing], there's only two ways to make that happen," Rounaghi said. "Land and money, and if we have both of those things, we can leverage tax credits, and we can make affordable housing happen."

## TENANT PROTECTIONS STRENGTHENED

In advance of the housing element discussion, the City Council passed an ordinance strengthening protections for renters.

Residential property owners will be required to provide notice to the city to terminate tenancy in no-fault evictions. Landlords will also have to notify the evicted party that a copy of the tenancy termination

notice will be provided to the city.

The ordinance came in response to complaints received by the housing and human services committee that landlords were endeavoring to raise rent rates by evicting tenants for substantial remodels that were not completed.

City officials noted in the ordinance that regulating the dealings of residential property owners and tenants would enhance fairness for renters.

"The tenant protection ordinance ... will help protect and preserve what was really our only affordable rental housing, the existing rental stock that's controlled by state increase," said Cody Engle, vice chair of the housing and human services committee.

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**ORANGE COUNTY** Human Relations Commissioner Rabbi Rick Steinberg speaks out against critics accusing him of Islamophobia during the O.C. Human Relations Commission meeting at Placentia City Hall Thursday, March 14.

## WAR

Continued from page A1

Steinberg nodded in agreement as the crowd applauded.

More than 1,100 Israelis were killed and 250 taken hostage in the brutal Oct. 7 Hamas attack. The Gaza Health Ministry death toll of the punishing Israeli airstrikes and ground invasion in the ensuing months has reached 31,500 people.

The uproar over the war overseas and rising hatred at home has raised questions from both sides about the commission, which is tasked with promoting harmony in a diversifying county where prejudice continues to plague its annual hate crime reports.

"We're glad the [anti-Islamophobia] statement passed," said Monica Rahim, senior policy and advocacy manager for the Council on American-Islamic Relations' Los Angeles chapter. "But for an organization whose role is to ease tension, conflict, discrimination and intolerance, we hope that all commissioners would adhere to those values."

Steinberg denies harboring any Islamophobia and deemed the commission statement in question as an objectionable "rewrite" of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's long history.

"Instead of dealing with any of the historical stuff, of which there are different narratives, I said, 'Let's just mourn the loss of innocent Palestinians,'" he said. "The prevailing opinion of the commission was to leave the statement as it was, so I couldn't vote for it in that vein."

Following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack and Israeli airstrikes on Gaza the commission called a special meeting to address an expected rise in local hate crimes through an original draft statement denouncing "hate and violence against Jewish and Palestinian people."

It began by noting that the Jewish community has already borne the brunt of faith-based bias in the county while labeling the Hamas attack as "horrifying" and "abhorrent."

The statement also expressed condolences for children caught in a "whirlwind of international violence," including Wadea Al Fayouma, a young Palestinian American boy murdered in an apparent hate crime near

Chicago.

Steinberg asked for revisions.

"Oct. 7 was a mass murder of Jews," he said during the meeting. "I don't know why we can't just talk about that exclusively and how it impacts the Orange County Jewish community."

Steinberg suggested changing the statement's title and deleting a paragraph which included the reference to Al Fayouma, whose murder he otherwise called an "awful hate crime."

But the special meeting ended with commissioners unable to agree on the draft and opting, instead, for a two-statement solution.

They debated language anew in November with a pair of separate statements on antisemitism, Islamophobia and the Gaza war.

Steinberg claimed the Palestinian and Islamophobia statement was "provocative" and "unfair" while challenging the inclusion of the Gaza Health Ministry's death toll, since it's Hamas-run.

"Hamas is responsible for the death of innocent Palestinians," he further argued.

Through revisions, the Islamophobia statement kept references to a multi-generational Palestinian struggle for "land and home" while also noting that thousands of Palestinian Muslims and Christians have already been "massacred" in the current war.

By the meeting's end, the antisemitism statement, which strongly condemned the Hamas attack as an act of terrorism, passed unanimously.

Steinberg and Commissioner Rhonda Shader, a Placentia city councilwoman, voted against the Islamophobia statement, which also passed.

CAIR-LA denounced Steinberg and Shader's votes.

Lulu Hammad, a Palestinian American activist who co-founded Yalla Indivisible and is the coordinator for the SoCal Ceasefire Coalition, caught up on the debates over the statements after the votes.

She was troubled by what she heard.

"It was extremely painful," said Hammad, who has lost seven extended family members in Gaza since the war's onset. "I hoped that there would

See *War*, page A3

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**RABBI RICK STEINBERG**, left, listens as Arie Shikler, a former cantor at the commissioner's congregation, defends him against allegations of Islamophobia at Placentia City Hall.

Photos by Eric Licas



## HAWKS

Continued from page A1

ered stable. "But this was a special circumstance, and we were there."

The eggs were gingerly transported to the facility on Pacific Coast Highway, where they were candled to assess the embryos' age and viability. While the biologist thought they might be in the early stages, McGuire said the candling light was blocked, suggesting maturity. Hawk eggs take about 28 to 35 days to hatch.

For the next two weeks staff kept watch as an incubator, designed to simulate the actions of watchful parents in the nest, turned the eggs to keep the nutrients underneath the shells flowing to the wee occupants.

Then suddenly, one of the eggs began to rock gently in a process called "pipping" — a sure sign baby was on the way.

And on Tuesday at 5:45

p.m., nearly an hour after the Wetlands & Wildlife Center closed for the day, the first egg hatched. McGuire and her team huddled as a naked, pink body lined with wet wisps of proto-feathers broke free of its calcium carbonate enclosure.

The still-blind baby, called an eyas, was placed in its own private room, where the sounds of red-tailed hawks played to approximate sounds that might be heard in a natural environment.

A second hawk hatched Thursday afternoon and joined its sibling in the isolation area. Because red-tailed hawks are predators, babies eat meat right away, as opposed to regurgitated material, said McGuire, whose team is making meals of frozen baby mice.

It will take around six weeks or so for the pair to begin the fledging process, but they will still need to be supported as they learn to fly and hunt inside the

safety of an aviary.

"They may have to go to the [Orange County] Bird of Prey Center or the Ojai Raptor Center for their final flight training," McGuire said. "We want to make sure we give them the very best chance of surviving."

Until then, the small birds will need to be closely tended to by humans, and great care must be taken to ensure they do not imprint onto people, which could incapacitate them in the wild or inhibit their ability to hunt.

To prevent that, Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center staff wear a ghillie suit — a shaggy green camouflage cover resembling a bush — and mirrored face masks that reflect the chick's own faces back to them.

Although the eyases must be kept tucked away from the visiting public, their arrival coincides with the start of a new "Wildlife Wednesdays" program,



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**A NEWLY HATCHED** red-tailed hawk, rescued from a nest on power lines on March 6, waits for a feeding at the Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center in Huntington Beach Thursday.

which allows visitors a weekly peek at the center's wards from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with a \$20 donation. A May 11 "Wildlife Baby

Shower" is also in the works.

The Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center is located at 21900 Pacific Coast High-

way, Huntington Beach. For more, visit [wvccoc.org](http://wvccoc.org).

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Dr. Daniela A. Bota, a neuro-oncologist at UCI Health

## LEGION

Continued from page A1

fund.

Planto estimated Post 291 made more than \$500,000 in donations and support last year to individuals and veterans organizations.

Auxiliary president Mary Beth Martin, who joined Post 291 about three years ago, said her father served in the military and her uncle was once a prisoner of war. She said she wanted to give back to a population that has been ignored and views the nonprofit as a support group for many former soldiers.

"They meet people who have similar backgrounds and experiences. You probably know that the rate for [veteran] suicide is very high, and so [American Legion] does a lot for that. We, as the auxiliary, try to support homeless veterans through the [Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center] in Long Beach. We try to adopt families during certain times of the year, so that we can

### HEAD CHEF

Ulysses Dominguez, far left, stands with his staff in the kitchen at the American Legion Post 291, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary in April.

Don Leach | Staff Photographer



help in that way. But the post is here for veterans, and we are here to support them," Martin said. "Anything we can help with, we do."

Planto said many of the post's members had traumatic experiences while serving in the armed forces. He said he never personally was "kicking down doors,

but I know some people who were in Vietnam. I know a guy who was a tunnel rat and a couple of people who did long-range reconnaissance, where they dropped you in a jungle and you ran around for 10 days. Those kinds of things stick with you."

Stanley Behrens, a 102-year-old veteran of the U.S.

Navy, was talking with other members of Post 291 on Thursday when he quipped that he joined it about 30 years ago because he wanted a place to bring his sailboat in. But he went on to explain the real reason was that because there were members of the American Legion that came to help him when he was

recovering from surgery.

"I wanted to pay back the Legion," Behrens said, adding that he's now working on a legacy fund to help it aid other veterans and their families.

David Heinle, who serves as a financial officer for the post, said he came from a multigenerational military family and served in the army himself when he turned 18. It took him about 15 years after leaving the service before he joined the American Legion because he missed hanging out with other veterans.

Sons of the American Legion Cmdr. Tim Sullivan said the legion's priority was to help veterans cope with returning to civilian life.

"We always say they're home physically, but they're not home mentally. So, we try to help them come all the way home," he said.

But despite the efforts the organization makes, including providing a place for veterans to gather, Planto and Sullivan both

said the American Legion has an image issue. Sullivan said people knew it better for partying than nonprofit work.

Planto said the chapter is striving toward overcoming that misconception so more people will volunteer to assist veterans.

Most of the local post's members range from 67 to 72 years old. Planto said he hopes the legion will be able to make renovations to the existing facility to make it more accessible and to attract a younger membership as its current members age out.

While no plans exist to mark the actual date of its anniversary in April, Planto said the organization is planning to stretch its annual Fourth of July pancake breakfast into a full weekend celebration. Planto said he's hopeful that, in addition to the breakfast, American Legion Post 291 will host an open community event that weekend.

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## WAR

Continued from page A2

be one resolution. I'm not comfortable with the way Steinberg is separating the two communities and assigning certain grievances to one and not the other."

When the commission met again on Jan. 11, Hammad helped organize a turnout of nearly 40 speakers who called on the commissioners to resign.

Steinberg faced accusations of being biased and even a "bigot" with activists claiming his vote served to increase the risk of hate incidents against Palestinian, Arab and Muslim Americans.

They also criticized him as a bully for statements he made about defunding Groundswell, a nonprofit that partners with the commission on its annual hate crimes report, after the group drafted a related statement of their own, which he found offensive.

Steinberg did not attend the meeting, but Shader responded to critics.

"I made every effort to try to vote for that resolution, because it was a strong resolution," Shader said. "Both of them were very good, but there was a historical reference that I felt this commission shouldn't really put out there as taking a stand on something because it's not our expertise."

By February, the Jewish Federation of Orange County had a letter supporting Steinberg read aloud at the meeting that month.

"Rabbi Steinberg is universally respected in our community and is known as a champion of the cause of fighting hate and discrimination," it read. "It is not only unjust to single [him] for removal because he disagreed with a statement he felt was inaccurate about the current war in Gaza; it is indeed anti-semitic."

The federation warned that Steinberg's removal would cause the commission to lose all credibility.

But the authority to remove commissioners rests

with the county supervisor or city selection committee that appointed them, not the commission.

Supervisor Don Wagner lined up as the first speaker to address the commission's March meeting and lent support to Steinberg, who serves as his District 3 appointee.

"Rabbi Steinberg has a straight and true moral compass," Wagner said. "He is going nowhere, if I have anything to say about it."

Towards the end of the meeting, Steinberg thanked all who spoke in support of him and hoped that there would be no further referendums on his standing as a commissioner.

He also criticized the commission and Groundswell for not backing him up publicly.

It's a sentiment he stands by after the meeting.

"Without question, I've been the victim of a hate incident at the very least," Steinberg said. "Here we have one of the commission's leaders experiencing hate and there's no response."

After Oct. 7, Groundswell has held a number of listening sessions for both communities and is looking to organize another interfaith convening on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict like the one they hosted in late 2019.

Pro-Palestinian activists decided against turning out to last commission meeting. Members say they are re-strategizing, especially with Wagner having signed onto the O.C. Board of Supervisors' own statement on the Gaza War, which was criticized as one-sided and Islamophobic by CAIR-LA and others at the time.

"What can we do with the commission to address this issue?" Hammad asked. "We're not going to keep showing up, giving public comments and getting no response or redress to what's happening."

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# Cosplayers get ready for WonderCon

BY JESSICA PERALTA

Enrique Munoz said that at age 7, he was having trouble reading and writing. Then he came across a “Spider-Man” comic book, and something about the imagery with words helped. By the end of second grade, he was reading at a third-grade level.

Now, Munoz owns Comic Hero University in Fullerton, open since December 2012, where he shares his love of comics with others.

“I owe a lot of my life to comic books,” Munoz said. “For years, I have been a firm believer that comics are for everyone, so I do what I can to get people excited about reading comics.”

Munoz — along with many other comic and pop culture enthusiasts — continues expanding his network of fellow fans and seeing creatives up close every year at the annual WonderCon, which returns to the Anaheim Convention Center this month, March 29 through 31. The San Diego Comic Convention (Comic-Con International), which also organizes Comic-Con in July at the San Diego Convention Center, puts on WonderCon.

“WonderCon has always been known as a friendly convention and continues so today,” said David Glanzer, chief communications and strategy officer for San Diego Comic Convention. “The show has expanded its areas of interest, as has Comic-Con, as comics and related popular art expand into new mediums. Perhaps the most obvious aspects of WonderCon is its relation to cosplay. WonderCon welcomes a great many fans who dress in costume and many often congregate in front of the convention center at the fountain posing for photographs from fans and professionals alike. That focus has resulted in

Janome America, the distributor of household and computerized sewing machines, being [an] exhibitor [at] the WonderCon this year.”

Munoz, who’s been attending WonderCon since 2005, said his main goal is to network.

“I have plans for a show of my own that centers around comics — theme being comics are for everyone — and I usually go to conventions to speak to creators and editors,” he said. “I go because it’s fun. I like to look at the comics and dream about getting books I don’t currently own. I like to see people in costume. I like to run into friends I made when I used to work the convention circuit. I like to make more contacts in the industry.”

He said that over the years, comic conventions like WonderCon have expanded their scope.

“Comic conventions used to be about comic books,” he said. “Comic conventions have now become a multimedia pop culture event. As comic book intellectual properties became much more prominent in the public eye, the more the publishers began to focus on the multimedia and less on the comics.”

Actor, singer and director Chris Villain, of Fullerton, is moderating two panels for Impact24 PR: “All in the Details: Costume, Makeup, Hair, and Production Design for Film and TV” and “4th Annual ‘It’s Alive!’: Designing Sci-Fi, Horror, and Drama Film and TV.”

“Participating in WonderCon is so special to me. I’ve been attending this convention for so long as a fan of all things pop culture, so to be side by side with the people creating some of the magic of this convention is the best feeling,” Villain said. “WonderCon is really like a home away from home for me. It’s an event that I attend to meet up with all my friends



Jessica Peralta

**COSPLAYERS DRESSED** as “Lord of the Rings” characters pose at WonderCon inside the Anaheim Convention Center in 2023. This year’s event returns the weekend of March 29.

and a place where we all get to take part in what we love.”

He said his shopping list for WonderCon is very long, and he’s always excited to check out the Artists’ Alley area of the show floor.

“This is where local artists, crafters and cosplayers sell things that they create,” he said. “It’s a must-see every year. That, and of course, all the incredible panels.”

Impact24 PR Client Development Analyst Kreesh Teli, of Orange, said Impact24 PR’s Panel Superblock series takes place on Saturday, March 30, starting at 11 a.m. and ending at 2 p.m. with three back-to-back panels spotlighting industry creatives from projects including “One Piece,” “Loki,” “The Traitors,” “Flamin’ Hot” and “Welcome to Wrexham.”

“Witnessing the sheer enthusiasm fans bring to support their favorite projects is truly remarkable,” Teli said. “We’ve had the pleasure of seeing attend-

ees arrive at our panels in cosplay inspired by the very characters the panelists have worked on. For instance, just last year, a fan cosplayed as Ellie from ‘The Last of Us’ because the show’s production designer, John Paino, was on our panel. Their impromptu photo session was a highlight, capturing a moment of pure fandom magic. It’s moments like these that make WonderCon unforgettable.”

FuseFX Visual Effects Supervisor Marshall Krasser, whose projects include “The Fall of the House of Usher,” is attending WonderCon for the first time and will be part of the “It’s Alive!” panel. He said he hopes to help pull back the curtain and reveal the start-to-finish creation and thought process behind the work.

“A lot of planning is needed to pull work like this off — maybe more than people imagine,” he said.

Mo Williams, of Los Angeles, is attending Won-

derCon as part of a live game called “The Gauntlet: A Dungeons & Dragons Adventure” on March 30.

“It is a competitive live-play session of DND [‘Dungeons & Dragons’] where characters from different famous fantasy/sci-fi worlds are all tossed together and must fight against each other for their heart’s desire,” he said. “We designed it to celebrate the 50th anniversary of ‘Dungeons & Dragons.’”

Last year was Williams’ first time attending WonderCon.

“I really love the community,” he said. “It feels inclusive and welcoming. It’s a place where I can share my passions with like-minded people.”

He said the tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) group, RolePlay GrabBag, that is putting on “The Gauntlet” just launched a YouTube channel to showcase the many different tabletop role-playing games they play.

“By doing a panel, we are able to show people what

we have to offer, drive traffic to our channel and build a community of collaboration with other groups, individuals,” he said.

Beyond cosplay, panels and a large selection of activities and entertainment, small (and large) business plays a big role on the show floor through exhibitors.

Franco Te co-owns Tee No Evil T-shirt business in Brea, which is themed around horror, anime and other pop culture designs. He said they’ve been attending WonderCon for nine years as a business.

“We love this event because we see a lot of our loyal supporters stopping by,” he said. “So many people said ‘hi’ last year. Hanging out with fellow horror fans and nerds is always fun.”

Chris & Jane’s Place: Zombie Gnomes Co-Owner

Jane DeRosa, of San Bernardino, said she and her husband started making zombie-themed yard gnomes in 2011 and have since created all kinds of gnomes and gnome accessories including middle-finger gnomes, mushroom houses and custom gnomes. They’ve been attending WonderCon as a business for about 10 years.

“It’s fantastic advertising for us. We also try to bring something fun and interesting for the crowds each year that draws their attention. Also sales are pretty consistently good each year. We have return customers almost every year, which is always wonderful to see,” DeRosa said. “WonderCon has such an array of people from all different fields that we get customers who want us to make custom pieces, wholesalers ... It’s hard not to feel inspired when you are around so many creative people.”

Jessica Peralta is a contributor to TimesOC.

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By Jacqueline E. Mathews

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53			54				55	56				57	58	59
60							61					62		
63							64					65		
66							67						68	

### SUDOKU

By the Mephram Group

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit [sudoku.org.uk](http://sudoku.org.uk).

				6	1			
8	1	2				6		7
			5					1
3						1		8
			6	3	7			
2	9							4
1				6				
5	4			2	8			3
			8	5				

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A7.

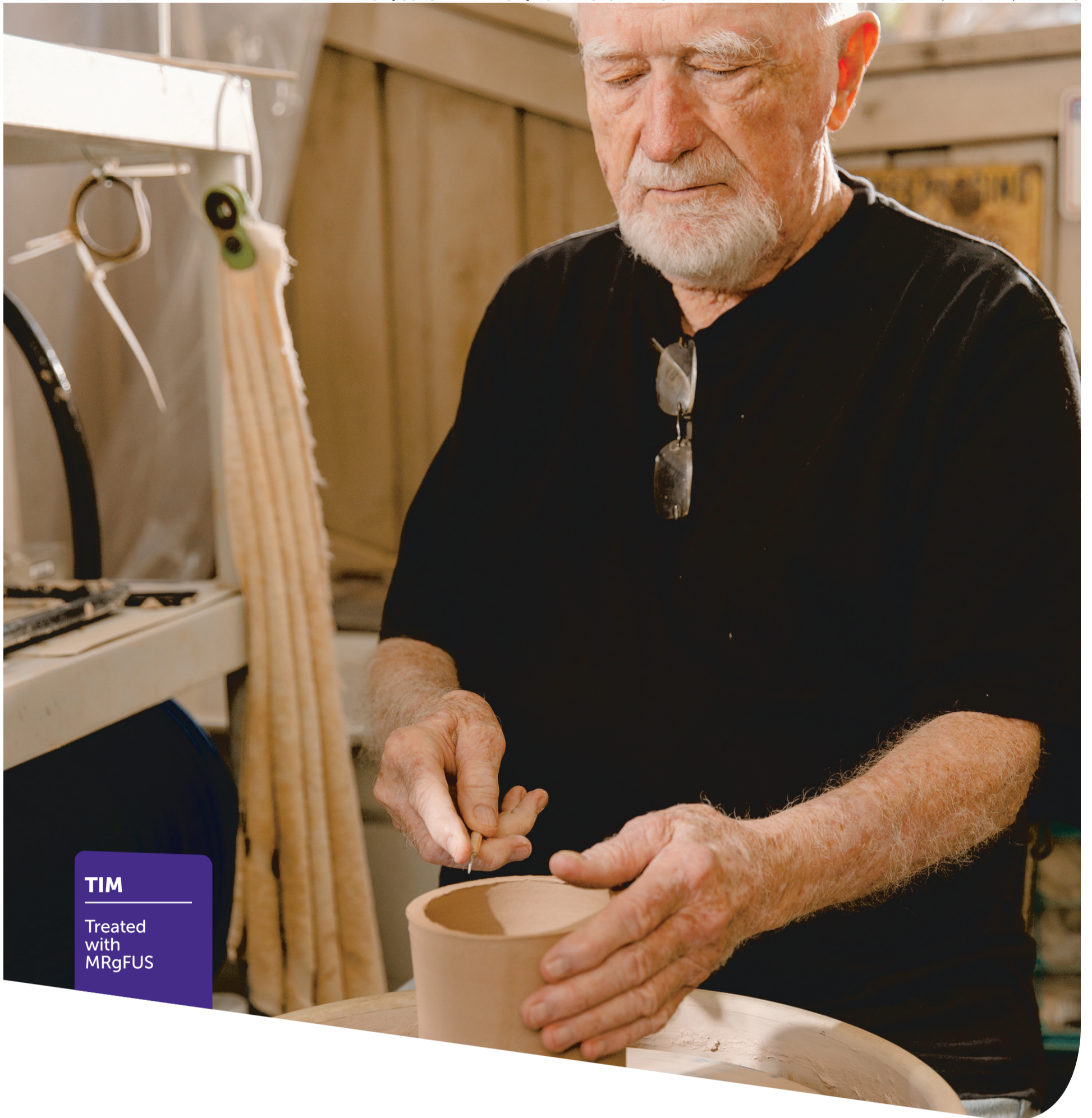
68 \_ gin fizz

#### DOWN

- 1 Southwestern people
- 2 Tied up
- 3 \_ is more
- 4 “Peggy” or “Panama,” e.g.: 2 wds.
- 5 Intelligent
- 6 Anecdote
- 7 Greek war god
- 8 Combine
- 9 York Peppermint
- Whereupon
- 11 Letter-and-picture puzzle
- 12 Sung drama
- 13 Unclothed

- 19 Happen again
  - 21 Alpo rival
  - 24 Has faith in
  - 26 “\_ ‘n Dale: Rescue Rangers”
  - 27 Frost, poetically
  - 28 Jason’s ship
  - 29 Sow or hen
  - 30 JPEG, for one
  - 31 Softcover books
  - 35 Disguising garb, for short
  - 36 MBA subj.
  - 37 Say no to
  - 42 Had the gumption
  - 44 Lean to one side
  - 46 Inflict a penalty on
  - 48 Hierarchy parts
  - 49 Zagreb native
  - 50 Supermarket path
  - 52 Powerful impulses
  - 54 Look to be
  - 55 Pub pour
  - 56 \_ in a lifetime
  - 57 Cook in hot water
  - 58 Comic Jay
  - 59 Barely beat
  - 61 By way of
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## forum

COLUMN | **PATRICE APODACA**

# Whatever its origins, latest oil sheen is a warning we must heed

About 2½ years ago, a pungent stench throughout coastal Orange County was the first signal to many residents that something was amiss.

The following days were harrowing ones, as the source of the odor — a ruptured oil pipeline near an offshore rig — spilled its toxic contents into the waters off

Huntington Beach. As the oil spread toward the coastline and tar balls

polluted our beautiful shoreline and fragile estuaries, we also learned that there may have been troubling delays in shutting down the leaking pipeline and in notifying authorities.

The resulting slick grew to as much as 131,000 gallons of crude oil, prompting officials to close the beaches in the area for about a week while they oversaw a massive cleanup effort.

I remember how angry I was at the time, because of the Faustian bargain we'd struck with an industry that fouls our environment for the sake of profits. We had allowed Amplify Energy, the Houston-based owner of the oil platform, and its platform operator subsidiary to continue pumping through aging structures, with insufficient oversight and despite a history of bankruptcy and regulatory violations.

So earlier this month when news broke that an



Allen J. Schaben | Los Angeles Times

**TAR BALLS** were visible on the high tide line as beachgoers visited Huntington Dog Beach on March 8. A roughly 2.5-mile-long oil slick had been spotted off the coast.

oil sheen was again spotted in the same area as the 2021 spill, it felt like déjà vu all over again.

The sheen was reported by the U.S. Coast Guard as measuring about half a mile wide and 2½ miles long. It was spotted approximately one-and-a-half miles off the coast. Meanwhile, some "tar patties" began showing up on beaches, but apparently not enough to warrant closing the area.

About 85% of the sheen, amounting to 85 gallons, was subsequently removed. Amplify denied involvement, saying it was "confident that the sheen is not

related to our operations." Suggestions were made that the sheen was naturally occurring.

The Coast Guard reported that the recovered oil appeared to be "lightly weathered crude oil" — that is, freshly produced local oil. It also said that the source of the oil might be natural seepage from the ocean floor, although it has stressed that the sheen's precise origin remains unknown and is still under investigation.

Officials projected a sense of calm authority over this latest incident, issuing statements assuring the public that the sheen

had been promptly contained and that steps were underway to protect beaches, wetlands and marshes. No public health threat from consuming fish from the area was detected. Only a few birds were found coated in oil.

So, to summarize, this latest oil sheen was minuscule compared to the 2021 spill, preliminary analyses suggest it didn't result from an accident, and authorities have the response well in hand. Whew! We can all relax now. Nothing to worry about. Right?

Wrong. While we can be relieved that this month's episode

didn't turn out to be a full-blown disaster after all, we should never lose sight of the fact that oil rigs pose an unacceptable, ongoing danger. Although new leases have long been banned by the state, just off the California coastline 27 rigs remain under existing leases — 23 in federal waters and four under state jurisdiction.

Let's take a trip down memory lane as a refresher on just how bad it can get. In 1969, a blowout of a Union Oil drilling rig platform off the coast of Santa Barbara resulted in a spill of 4.2 million gallons of crude oil into the ocean and onto the shore. Two years later, 800,000 gallons of bunker fuel spilled in San Francisco Bay.

The waters off of Huntington Beach were fouled by more than 416,000 gallons of crude oil that spilled from an oil tanker in 1990. In 2007, the San Francisco Bay was hit again, when a container ship struck the Bay Bridge and spilled 58,000 gallons of bunker fuel. Nine years ago a crude oil pipeline spilled 100,000 gallons into the ocean at Refugio State Beach in Santa Barbara County. Then, of course, Huntington Beach again in 2021.

It wouldn't be a stretch to imagine that there have been small leaks and spills that we've never heard about, or that more large ones could occur again, particularly given that the oil rigs are old structures — some well past their intended lifespan — which pose increased risk for

accidents.

Let's be clear about the price we pay for such mishaps.

Oil spills can be devastating to birds and marine life, and the negative effects can last for many years. In some cases, certain species have never returned to the areas impacted by oil spills. Beaches and wetlands are damaged, and the economic harm can be widespread as local businesses and fishing operations suffer.

Efforts to ban offshore drilling entirely have been long stalled, and the question of what to do with decommissioned rigs has proven to be controversial. Some have argued for keeping the old rigs in place because they have inadvertently become reefs that are covered in sea life. Others contend that there's no way to ensure that shutdown rigs will be safe.

Late last year, the Department of Interior's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement ruled that California's remaining offshore oil and gas platforms would be completely removed, but only after the wells are plugged and potential environmental impacts are assessed. But that could take a considerable amount of time.

In the meantime, let's hope that disaster doesn't strike again.

**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

## Readers decry aim to privatize H.B. library

By voting to explore privatization options for our city's beloved, award-winning public library, the tone-deaf conservatives on the Huntington Beach City Council have shown once again their true authoritarian colors. Despite receiving over 800 emails in opposition to the move and listening to 100 speakers object to privatization at the City Council meeting, the council voted 4-3 in favor of taking the next steps to outsource our library to profiteers.

Their request-for-proposal process is just a formality because the city for the past few months has been quietly exploring a proposal from private, for-profit Maryland-based Library Systems & Services, of which former Huntington Beach Mayor Mike Posey is a sales executive. If this deal is inked, Huntington Beach taxpayers would turn over their money to wealthy out-of-state investors who have no interest in our community.

Our library costs only 1.8% of the city budget. It has a mere 29 employees and is supported by over 1,000 volunteers. Its Friends of the Library group donates over \$300,000 for books and services. If a private corporation takes over, there will be no financial transparency. Our stellar library staff and services will be cut. Why would volunteers donate their time to make out-of-state investors rich while our library becomes a hollowed-out hub of a for-profit corporation? It didn't surprise me that a longtime volunteer told me this week that if the library is privatized, she will stop volunteering and will not step foot inside the building again.

**Carol Daus**  
Huntington Beach



James Carbone

**LIBRARY SUPPORTERS** attend Tuesday's Huntington Beach City Council meeting, during which members moved to accept bids for privatizing management of the facility.

I worked at the Huntington Beach Library for 32 years. From 2010 until 2020 when I retired, I was the senior librarian in charge of the children's department. I hired the best of the best. I wanted to leave behind a devoted staff who loved the library and the community and would promote the love of reading as much as I did. Now I'm afraid that could all be lost.

Mayor Pro Tem Pat Burns stated when the outsourcing company, most likely LS&S, takes over running the library, the staff will still keep their jobs. What he doesn't mention is all the employees will be laid off by the city and then rehired by LS&S. They will no longer be city employees, so their contributions to their city pensions will stop as will their city medical benefits. Employees will also suffer significant pay cuts. The LS&S equivalent to our library services assistant earns roughly \$16 an hour, according to job listings on the company's website. Kari Johnson, mentioned in the Daily Pilot article, is an award-winning storyteller and a library services assistant. LS&S librarian

salaries seem to range from \$22 to \$25 an hour. LS&S makes money by paying its employees very low wages. It doesn't give its full-time employees a pension but a 401K. It is known for having an extremely high staff turnover.

Most, if not all the Huntington Beach library staff will have to seek work elsewhere. As Laura Jenkins said in the article, a privatized library becomes a revolving door of workers. Why would our city, whose library has been awarded as having the best story-time in Orange County two years in a row, has a stellar literacy program and library staff who provide innovative children, teen and adult programs, want to do this to our public library? Council can claim they are saving the city money, but what are they losing in the process? Let's not be penny wise but pound foolish. People's livelihoods are at stake.

I also have no idea how the parent review board will work with LS&S, as this company will take over all book ordering decisions. How will H.B. taxpayers feel

See *Mailbag*, page A7

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**WOMEN'S SOCCER**

# Nighswonger moves from H.B. to soccer's world stage

BY SCOTT FRENCH

Jenna Nighswonger is living her dream, at least the first part of that dream: pulling on the jersey she's revered since forever, stepping into a line thick with legends, bidding to be part of, well, the grandest enterprise imaginable.



Courtesy of Getty Images | U.S. Soccer

**JENNA NIGHSWONGER** has been excelling at left back for the U.S. women's national team.

national team's transition following last year's World Cup failure to a more efficient, sophisticated and tactically diverse game model, one better suited for women's soccer's rapidly morphing global landscape and fueled by a new generation of hopeful stars.

The path forward is lengthy, nothing is guaranteed, and much of the work will follow the Paris Games. Nighswonger, who made her debut in December's twin friendlies with China, plans to stick around.

"This is something I've dreamed and worked for my whole life ...," she said. "The first game, I was definitely like, 'Oh my God, this is crazy. I'm playing for the national team.' The second game was a little bit of that, too, and I don't think I've lost that all the way. I'm still so appreciative of the magnitude of the situation and playing for the national team. I've started to get more comfortable and more confident, which is nice. ...

"I'm growing into [the idea that I belong], but I did feel like I belonged at

camp since I got there. That's a mentality you need to have, because it is a tough, challenging environment. I think I belong here. Yeah, as much as I'm filled with so much honor to be here, I think I deserve to be here. And I'm just excited for the future."

Her arrival was to be expected. The former Huntington Beach High talisman has played at the highest available level since before her teens. She has extensive youth national team experience, won an NCAA championship and was a first-team All-American at Florida State, and was called in straight off a Rookie-of-the-Year campaign — while adjusting to a new position with specific tactical requirements — for National Women's Soccer League titlist NJ/NY Gotham FC.

The December friendlies gained her admission to the Gold Cup roster, and she certainly impressed at left back in several different tactical systems across four Gold Cup games, three as the starter.

"We're really, really pleased with Jenna ...," interim U.S. head coach Twila Kilgore said after Nighswonger's brilliant finish in a sterling quarter-

final performance against Colombia. "She has a really good ability to read the game and play simply, and it doesn't hurt to have a left foot. She's capable of playing multiple positions, and I would expect at some point in her career that she'll play multiple positions for us."

Longtime U.S. standout Alex Morgan praises her teammate's "wicked shot, great cross" and knack for getting "herself in the right positions," adding that "Jenna really excites me."

None of this surprises Huntington Beach girls' soccer head coach Raul Ruiz, who worked with Nighswonger in her freshman and sophomore years before her focus turned to her development in Costa Mesa-based youth powerhouse Slammers FC. He used her primarily as a playmaker and flank attacker, and she provided 23 goals and 29 assists.

"She was a difference maker," he said. "She was a version of [Leo] Messi. She scored some goals that just left us with a 'Wow!' ... Players like her are hard to come by, and when they come your way, you just have to embrace it and enjoy it."

Nighswonger enjoyed her time as an Oiler. Most

important for her was playing alongside her best friend, Anna Carleton.

"That was this opportunity that I never thought I would have, because we played for different club levels, we were different ages," she said. "Having that opportunity is something I'll never forget. We still talk about games and how much fun it was playing together. High school soccer helped me create these memories that I'm just going to carry with me for so long."

Nighswonger rejoined Gotham just ahead of a NWSL Challenge Cup final against the San Diego Wave earlier this month, with the regular season starting the following weekend. The national team has two games in April and two more in June, and then off to Paris.

She hopes to make the trip.

"I've dreamed of playing in the Olympics and the World Cup," she said. "It would be incredible to represent my country on a stage like that, and represent myself. That's something I'm definitely working toward in these next couple of months."

Scott French is a contributor to Daily Pilot Sports.

**MAILBAG**

Continued from page A6

when the committee starts giving away the new books they reject to cities outside H.B.? Those books will have been purchased with H.B. tax dollars.

**Barbara Richardson**  
Huntington Beach

I was disappointed with the results of the March 5 election. However, I feel that the work of Protect Huntington Beach provided hope for the future of Huntington Beach. The work provided a higher level of citizen participation than we have seen in previous elections. Hundreds of ordinary citizens came down to the podium meeting after meeting to let the council know they disagreed with what the four conservative members were trying to do. Meeting after meeting we heard a new proposal, many of which were harmful to the city, from changing the invocation, altering the Human Dignity Statement and attacking the library system to settling a lawsuit regarding the air show, to name just a few.

Now on March 19 we again had two items on the agenda regarding the heart of this city, our library, which became a reality when citizens got together with the support of the council at the time. They made sure that we had the best architect and a system that had a well educated staff, community support with Friends of the Library and a library board. When the current council majority looked at the library, they saw a way of cutting costs and began a process that would literally be called "book banning." On March 19 they voted on whether or not to hire a firm to determine how our library could be privatized. Over 100 speakers from all walks of life, from high school students to senior citizens, were articulate in their reasons why the city should not privatize the library. Several librarians spoke up against the measure. However, as with every council issue, the vote was 4-3, and the measure to study privatization carried. Also put forth the rules that the committee will follow when they review children's books before they are purchased for the library. This was to make sure that our younger children are not exposed to "pornography"! This should be done by our well edu-

cated staff as well as the parents. Again, after much discussion, the vote was 4-3. I can only hope that with a continued questioning of what our council is doing, good governance will return. Protect Huntington Beach will not go away and the hundreds who support our work. We love our city and will do all we can to make sure it represents all of us.

**Shirley Dettloff**  
former mayor  
Huntington Beach

"Here they go again," to quote a saying from the right-wing's former favorite son, President Ronald Reagan. I say former because the new favorite is a certain ex-president who is currently under 88 state and federal indictments on suspicion of trying to overthrow the 2020 election. Now after voters just last week failed to checkmate their plans, the conservatives on the Huntington Beach City Council want to

do what they most love to do after they cuts taxes for the wealthy: privatization.

Privatize a library? Why not? Conservatives would privatize a tree if they think they could wring a profit out of its sap. Speaking of sap, this is a sappy idea, but it won't stop there. H.B., you had your chance to start turning back these autocratic conservatives, but apparently you didn't bother to come out to vote last week. Here in Costa Mesa, we got fed up with conservative overreach a few years back, so we turned out to vote and sent the zealots packing before they could do any more damage to our moderate city. I now look back at some of the things they tried to do in C.M., and they seem rather quaint compared to today's right-wing H.B. council.

Next up in November is the general and presidential election, which

See *Mailbag*, page A8

**CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS**

H	E	L	P	S	T	A	M	P	T	R	O	N	
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3	5	6	4	2	9	1	7	8
4	1	8	6	3	7	5	2	9
2	7	9	1	8	5	3	6	4
1	8	7	3	9	6	2	4	5
5	6	4	7	1	2	8	9	3
9	2	3	8	5	4	7	1	6

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A Times Community News publication.

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The Daily Pilot, established in 1907, is published Thursday through Sunday by Times Community News, a division of the Los Angeles Times. Subscriptions are available only by subscribing to The Times, Orange County.

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### EXHIBIT

Continued from page A1

1968, and how surfing was intertwined throughout it. It does it through 16 story panels as well as 18 original artwork pieces from figures also renowned in the surf culture world.

"We're going to keep this exhibit up all year," said Peter "P.T." Townend, the International Surfing Museum executive director. "We're going to have two new Olympic champions, right? So we'll do a refresh when we get the new champions. Hopefully an American wins one, and I can get one of them to turn up. Maybe Carissa will repeat."

This is the third exhibit at the museum in recent years, Townend said. The museum closed for a couple of months at the start of the year for a refurbishing, as well as to properly install the panels and art.

Townend, a Huntington Beach local, is a well-known figure in the surfing world in his own right as the native Australian who was one of the best surfers in the world in the 1970s and '80s. He is someone who surely appreciates Kahanamoku's impact.

"Sometimes you have to think bigger than doing it



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**RICKY BLAKE** shows some of the artwork reflecting the image and legacy of Duke Kahanamoku at the new exhibit at the Huntington Beach International Surfing Museum.

for the local community,"

Townend said of the exhibit. "We have this transient population in Huntington Beach with our four big hotels. People are going to want to come because it's about Duke Kahanamoku, and it's an Olympic year. That was my whole idea, timing-wise. And, of course, we want the Olympics in 2028

for surfing, right?"

The artwork in the exhibit — all of which is for sale — highlights Kahanamoku at different points in his life. Surf museum board member Ricky Blake, himself a local artist from Huntington Beach, was in charge of getting the artwork together.

Orange County native

Courtney Conlogue, a two-time U.S. Open of Surfing winner, contributed a piece.

Phil Roberts painted side-by-side portraits of Kahanamoku, one younger and one later in life. Victoria White used three surfboards to present him in a colorful way.

Then there is the detailed painting by Los

Angeles native Sandow Birk, whose work is often political. But for this work, Birk captured Kahanamoku giving a surfing demonstration near the Huntington Beach Pier, circa the 1920s.

"He was so stoked to go back to his surfing roots," Blake said. "I'm asking him to do this art, and he is so detailed ... There's not really any written history of [the demonstration]. There's little stories but not really any photos and no story in the newspaper or anything."

"There is no image of it, but now we have this. That's what is cool about being an artist. This is probably now the best image of that thing that happened."

Blake added that Kahanamoku would often return to Huntington Beach for the U.S. Championships in the 1960s, shortly before his death. He'd stay at the house of the owner of the former Sam's Seafood.

Thursday's ceremony included appearances by Huntington Beach Mayor Gracey Van Der Mark and Councilwoman Natalie Moser, as well as a blowing of the conch shell by Duke Aipa.

Conlogue and another two-time U.S. Open win-

ner, Huntington Beach native Brett Simpson, also were in attendance. At the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Simpson had the honor of coaching the U.S. Olympic team, and he used his instincts to help Moore come out on top.

"There was this right coming in out front and I said, 'Carissa, do you trust me?'" Simpson said. "She really likes a plan, she has to have a plan and she goes and executes it. But I said, 'Just trust me on this.' She's paddling out underneath the jetty, and she gets worked by a set. I could tell she's getting a little bit frustrated, but she stayed the course, she got out the back, and all of a sudden the heat just played out perfectly."

Simpson, who now works as a surfing ambassador for Hurley, said coaching Olympic surfing was "pretty darn special."

"For '28, hopefully we're right back out front here," he told the crowd at the ceremony with a smile. "Maybe I'll make a coaching comeback."

The Huntington Beach International Surfing Museum is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday through Sunday.

matthewszabo@latimes.com  
Twitter: @mjszabo

### MAILBAG

Continued from page A7

includes all of Congress and a Senate seat here in California, but even larger things will be at stake in this next election. Abortion and contraception rights, voting rights, LGBTQ+ rights, healthcare, Social Security, Medicare and all of our other rights are under assault by theocrats and would-be fascists seeking to change forever our American way of life.

Please don't sit idle and allow it to happen. Conservatives have a playbook for this cycle, ready to enforce if they win, and they're calling it Project 2025. If what they are planning

doesn't terrify you, or you think they'll never be able to pull it off, think again. Germans thought the system could restrain Nazism and looked what happened. I'm not saying the worst horrors of Nazi Germany await us. I view it more to how Viktor Orban has slowly transformed democratic, formerly communist Hungary into once again having its democracy reduced to an autocracy, democratic rights abolished and the media and justice system fully stacked with sycophants, and Orban ensconced in power. It can happen here as well if we don't exercise our greatest power, our right to vote.

This is "Not A Drill" friends, this is deadly seri-

ous, and I don't say that as a cliché. People will die under the policies MAGA wants to bring to this nation, and our way of life will drastically change.

Mike Aguilar  
Costa Mesa

#### Let's talk about bad driving

A typical letter in the Daily Pilot responds to an article in the paper. Once in a while a letter is based on another letter. B. Friedland from Costa Mesa had a letter published in Sunday's issue (Time for some trash talk, Mailbag, March 17) having to do with trash at his local gym's parking garage and people's disre-

gard for just about everything.

That got me to thinking about the same subject (people's behavior) in relation to how people have been driving in the last few years. Statistics show that pedestrian deaths due to being hit by cars are at the highest level in 41 years, up 77% since 2010. People for whatever reasons are driving faster and more distracted than ever before, presenting dangers to people walking, joggers, skateboarders and those on bikes. Aside from people breaking speed limits on neighborhood streets and those same people texting while driving, I've observed people who make right turns on red lights without

even slowing down, let alone stopping, people who tailgate for no apparent reason and who make turns sans using their turn signals.

Up until about two weeks ago I was going to physical therapy sessions due to having knee surgery six months ago with the sessions ending due to the knee doing well. I had to drive north on the 55 freeway for about 3 miles before turning off. In those short 3 miles I observed at least three cars also heading north in the fast lane going at an estimated speed of close to 90 mph with apparently not a care in the world as they sped by me. Last Saturday I went to a family outing in Fuller-

ton and drove the 55, 22 and 57 freeways and witnessed at least eight of those warp-speed drivers passing me like I was standing still, and I drive a Corvette.

The last line in B. Friedland's letter went like this: "Why do they feel it is OK? How selfish and narcissistic do you have to be to do that?" Friedland's letter had to do with trash, whereas my observations and remarks deal with people's driving habits that end up with someone possibly dying. So again, why do they do that, and is there a way to curtail their deadly behavior on the road?

Bill Spitalnick  
Newport Beach

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