

The Carmel Pine Cone

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Anchorwoman awarded \$87k for killing of Lulu

■ Defense attorney to appeal award of punitive damages

By KELLY NIX

A MONTEREY County jury Tuesday awarded KCBA and KION anchorwoman Olga Ospina \$87,000 for a Labrador attack in front of the Pacific Grove post office nearly three years ago that fatally injured her Maltese.

In October 2008, Ospina filed a lawsuit against the owner of the Lab, Donna Bazan, for allowing the Lab and another dog, a German shepherd, to escape through a window of Bazan's Ford Explorer and attack Ospina and her dog, Lulu, on July 25, 2007.

The jury, after a four-and-a-half day trial, decided Bazan's father, Donald Armstrong, 82, who was in the Ford Explorer on a cell phone at the time, was negligent because he did little to stop the attack.

Ospina, 38, was awarded \$15,000 for past pain and suffering, \$7,500 for future mental suffering and about \$29,000 for Ospina's expenses, which include vet bills, medical expenses, wage loss and the \$2,000 Ospina spent on another Maltese to replace Lulu. The jury also awarded \$36,000 in punitive damages — which state law allows in egregious cases.

Ospina testified that the attack left her with frequent flashbacks and nightmares for which she sought therapy and anti-anxiety and antidepressant medication. She also said she lost weight and didn't feel like socializing after the event.

Though Bazan and Armstrong's attorney, William Gavin, declined to comment after the verdict Tuesday, Ospina's attorney, J. Kenneth Gorman, said Gavin told

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Peninsulans step up to help wayward kids find their way

By PAUL MILLER

IF YOU own a restaurant, hotel or catering business in the Monterey Peninsula, you'll probably get a letter or phone call in the near future from Bert Cutino asking for spare ladles, sauce pans and serving trays — all for a unique program on the outskirts of Salinas that aims to give teens on probation a chance for careers in the hospitality industry.

Cutino, chef extraordinaire and co-owner of the

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Chef Bert Cutino (left) and former Superior Court Judge John Phillips in the brand-new kitchen at Rancho Cielo outside Salinas, where teens who have been in trouble with the law have a chance to start their lives over.

From retirement funds to beach fires, candidates weigh in

■ Fireworks when newcomers asked about their commitment to town

By MARY BROWNFIELD

DURING A forum that included heckling and booing from the audience after Pine Cone publisher Paul Miller asked newcomers Jason Burnett and Adam Moniz about their level of commitment to the city and to the offices they are seeking, the challengers outlined why they should be elected over the incumbents, Mayor Sue McCloud and council members Gerard Rose and Paula Hazdovac.

The outcry arose during the run-up to a line of questions in which Miller asked the men if they owned property outside town and pointed out they might not know the history of Flanders Mansion, the failed Hatton Canyon freeway project or who Perry Newberry was, due to having only recently moved to Carmel and started participating in civic affairs.

Miller also touched on Burnett's substantial contributions to national political candidates — heretofore unseen in a local election — and his support from heavy hitters like U.S. Rep. Sam Farr and California Coastal Commission executive director Peter Douglas. The observations, and the question that summed them up, drew shouts from Burnett's supporters in the audience.

The next day, Linda Anderson, a vocal backer of Burnett and Moniz, called Miller's line of questioning "a tirade" and abruptly withdrew an ad supporting the candidates from this week's Pine Cone.

"We don't want to give any money to The Pine Cone or Paul Miller," she said.

"All I did was ask a question which is on a lot of voters' minds," said Miller, who has been publisher 13 years. "But

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Pharmacy robber pleads guilty to three felonies

By MARY BROWNFIELD

THE MAN arrested for robbing a Pacific Grove pharmacy with a gun last summer pleaded guilty March 3 to three felony counts of robbery. Five other felony charges and two misdemeanors were dismissed.

Brennan Tiffany agreed to the plea, according to court records, and is set to be sentenced May 7, when he could be sent to prison for as long as seven years.

Tiffany, who lives in Monterey and whose wife, Nicole, is a teacher at Carmel River School, was caught after a string of robberies last August and September to obtain narcotic painkillers, mostly Oxycontin, from two Walgreens stores on Aug. 20 and Aug. 22, and from Central Avenue Pharmacy in Pacific Grove on Sept. 14. Police arrested the 32-year-old man at gunpoint in the Safeway parking lot on Forest Hill in Pacific Grove two days later, when officers in an unmarked car spotted him in his black SUV.

During the Pacific Grove crime, Tiffany walked into the pharmacy wearing sunglasses and a hat, approached the clerk and handed her a note reading, "Give me all your Oxycontin. I'm desperate. I have a gun and I'm not afraid to use it,"

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NOT JUST ANOTHER BIG SUR MOUNTAIN, PICO BLANCO HAS QUITE A STORY TO TELL

By CHRIS COUNTS

EVEN THOUGH it is dwarfed by several nearby mountains, Pico Blanco is one of the most recognizable geological features in the Santa Lucia range.

Despite its relatively modest height, the distinctive 3,700-foot mountain casts an immense shadow over 920 acres of Andrew Molera State Park that Assembly member Bill Monning and the nonprofit Ventana Wilderness Alliance would like to see become a State Wilderness Area.

If you're driving south along Highway 1, take a quick glance east when you cross the Little Sur River. From this view, it's easy to see why Carmel poet Robinson Jeffers

called Pico Blanco a "steep sea-wave of marble" and Big Sur poet Eric Barker likened it to a lion. Rising sharply above the two the forks of the Little Sur, the mountain possesses an almost regal bearing.

Big Sur's first humans were equally impressed with Pico Blanco. Ignoring its taller neighbors, the Stone Age people who migrated here more than 5,000 years ago determined life would not have been possible without the mountain. One version of their creation myth tells the story of how a coyote and a hummingbird took refuge on the peak during the great flood that often appears in creation stories. Since the rest of the world was submerged,

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PHOTO/CHRIS COUNTS (ABOVE), COURTESY NORMA GRAHAM

Pico Blanco is a magnificent presence on the Big Sur skyline, especially as viewed from the East Molera Trail (above). Al Clark was the mountain's pioneer.

