

## Salyer pleads guilty

By PAUL MILLER

AFTER VEHEMENTLY protesting the charges against him for more than two years, former agribusiness executive Scott Salyer pled guilty to racketeering and price-fixing charges last week in exchange for a sentence of four to seven years in federal prison.

The Pebble Beach resident has been on home confinement at his residence on Ronda Road since being released on \$6 million bail in Sept. 2010. He was arrested at New York's Kennedy Airport in Feb. 2010 after arriving from Paris. For months, prosecutors tried to keep him locked up because of fears he would flee the country.

But instead, Salyer stayed at home and used some of the state's best attorneys to challenge the evidence against him and prepare for trial.

U.S. Attorneys in Sacramento said they had wiretaps and testimony from former employees to prove that Salyer directed employees at his tomato-processing company, SK Foods, to "pay bribes and kickbacks to purchasing officers" from his company's customers, driving up the price of those products for consumers, falsify lab test results to conceal contamination in SK Foods' tomato paste, and to misrepresent conventional produce as organic.

Friday morning in the Sacramento courtroom of U.S. District Judge Lawrence Karlton, Salyer admitted all those things, U.S. Attorney Benjamin Wagner said.

"Corruption in any form is despicable, but when such occurs within the food industry, it erodes public trust in products and threatens the industry as a whole," said Herbert M. Brown, Special Agent in Charge of the Sacramento Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. "The FBI continues to tirelessly combat white collar crime that is motivated by unscrupulous greed."

The FBI began its investigation of Salyer in August 2006, federal law enforcement officials said, when agents executed a search warrant at the home of Anthony Manuel, an SK Foods employee who had embezzled approximately \$1 million from his former employer, a competitor of SK Foods.

"Manuel promptly confessed to the embezzlement and later told agents about the crimes to which Salyer and others have now pleaded guilty," Wagner said. Ten other former employees and bribe recipients have also pled guilty in the case. SK Foods was forced into bankruptcy and most of its employees, including many in the Monterey Peninsula, lost their jobs.

Salyer was accused of moving \$3 million to Andorra in an attempt to hide the money from authorities. He also owned a large tomato processing company in Australia and New Zealand. That company has been sold and the money placed in a trust.

## Campaign ending on a cordial note

■ Nearly half of expected vote may already be in

By PAUL MILLER

A PHONE call Tuesday morning from Rich Pepe to Jason Burnett added a friendly note to the hard-fought competition to be the city's next mayor.

Pepe called Burnett to make sure he knew he was invited to Pepe's tasting room, Vino Napoli, which was the final stop on a Carmel Chamber of Commerce tasting room tour Wednesday evening.



PHOTO/PAUL MILLER

Mayor candidates Jason Burnett (left) and Rich Pepe greet each other at a Carmel Chamber of Commerce event Wednesday evening.

And when the two men encountered each other the next evening, they greeted each other warmly.

"I wanted to make sure Mr. Burnett was included and not make that final stop about me, nor about the mayor race even," Pepe said.

After election day, he said if he wins he will "begin work and cooperate with all involved." And if he loses, Pepe said he will "continue to support the village as I've done in the past."

Burnett expressed appreciation for Pepe's gesture, and said that "maintaining a good working relationship with Rich has been a priority for me and I really respect that he feels the same way."

And Burnett said that "regardless of how the election turns out, I think Rich and I will be able to celebrate together on election night and work together the next day."

Ken Talmage, who is running for re-election to the city council, sounded a similar note.

"I've heard from dozens of residents and businesses how grateful they are that this has been a positive, issue-oriented campaign without negative personal attacks," Talmage said. "What we saw from Rich Pepe yesterday was that kind of action."

Talmage also noted the importance of the current election.

"We've had just two mayors over the last 20 years," Talmage noted, referring to Ken White's eight years in office and Sue McCloud's 12. "Now we're about to pick another one."

Bob Profeta, Tom Leverone and Victoria Beach are also running for the two open seats on the city council. If Burnett becomes mayor, a third seat will open up, which could go to the third-place finisher in the April 10 election.

### How the ballots are handled

Next Tuesday may officially be election day, but according to numbers provided by city clerk Heidi Burch, the results of the races for mayor and city council are well on their way to being determined. She said 768 "vote by mail ballots" have already been received. Two years ago, when McCloud was challenged by Adam Moniz in a race that drew a lot of interest, a total

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## Carmel Walks founder dies at 65

By MARY SCHLEY

IF ANYONE knew this town's secrets, past and present, it was Gale Wrausmann. The founder of Carmel Walks, Wrausmann led visitors on walking tours through the city almost daily for the past 15 years — for many years accompanied by her dog, Squirt — and she had plenty of stories to match the scenery, architecture, culture and beauty of the village that was her home. Wrausmann died Sunday, March 18, of cancer. She was 65.

"She was a gentle, gentle soul; she was so nice; she was part of the landscape," said Carmen Ajan of Pat Areias jewelry on Ocean Avenue. "She was very proud of living in this city, and she loved to tell people about all the little secrets, like who lived where. She knew where everything happened here 50 and 100 years ago."

Ajan recalled meeting Wrausmann years ago, when she approached Ajan to discuss her plans for leading tours through town on foot.

"She came and introduced herself to me," she recalled. "One time we went for coffee and to talk about the town, and she would always stop by here with the groups."

John Lloyd, general manager of The Pine

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## Did the Beatles eat here? Yes, they did

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE MONTEREY Pop Festival was famous for its lineup, which included Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and The Who. But few people realize an equally impressive assembly of musical talent gathered one day in Carmel Valley during the same era.

Legend has it that the Beatles and Joan Baez — with Bob Dylan possibly in tow — had lunch at Plaza Linda restaurant.

"The legend is true," said Sam Getz, who described himself as a fourth generation Carmel Valley resident. "The Beatles did go to Plaza Linda for lunch."

And they reportedly had company as well. "I believe they were there with Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, but I'm not positive about that."

According to Getz, Plaza Linda's future owner, Dean Diaz, waited on the party of music icons.

We tracked down Diaz, who offered The Pine Cone a wealth of information about the early days of Plaza Linda, which was founded by his mother, Jennie, and father — also named Dean — in 1963. But the younger Diaz, who sold the restaurant to its current owners five years ago, said he missed the Beatles' visit. Thankfully, though, Diaz' cousin, Connie Ortiz, was there.

"I was working as a waitress that day,"

Ortiz recalled. "Joan Baez, her family and her guests used to come into the restaurant and I would wait on them. One weekend, she came in with three of the Beatles. The only one who wasn't there was Paul McCartney."

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Joan Baez and Bob Dylan in what may be Devendorf Park in 1963 — an era that also brought the Beatles briefly to Carmel Valley.



Gale Wrausmann, who was a ubiquitous presence in downtown Carmel for the past 15 years, with her dog, Squirt, who helped lead many of her walking tours.