

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Bridge finally bites dust, Caltrans says replacement will take six months

By CHRIS COUNTS

MORE THAN a month after cracks were found in the Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge, the bridge was finally demolished this week, with the first section crashing to earth March 16 and the final piece coming down Wednesday as onlookers cheered the spectacle — and a Caltrans worker celebrated the successful tear down with a fist pump.

Bringing down the bridge was no easy task due to the instability and steepness of the terrain, and the proximity of power lines and redwood trees. Susana Cruz of Caltrans told The Pine Cone a tremendous amount of planning and precision went into the effort. “It was like a chess game,” Cruz told The Pine Cone.

With the bridge successfully transformed into a pile of rubble, the task of cleaning up the site is moving forward. A crew is work-

After much encouragement from Caltrans workers, the middle section of Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge in Big Sur comes crashing down March 18.

ing to break up the concrete and rebar, and eventually, all of it will be hauled to a recycling center.

“We’re breaking it up in manageable pieces so we can get it on trucks,” explained Jim Shivers of Caltrans. “We’re creating a path that would allow work vehicles to get down into the canyon to assist in gathering the debris.”

And even as the old bridge is cleaned up, Caltrans said a bridge to replace it is already being built.

“A new single span steel bridge will be constructed with public access anticipated to occur within six months, weather permitting,” the state road agency announced Wednesday. The work will be done by Golden State Bridge of Benicia.

Not only will work crews construct the new bridge, but they will replant any trees that came down in the effort to take the old bridge down.

“We don’t like to take out trees, but sometimes it’s necessary,” Shivers said.

See **BIG SUR** page 12A



PHOTO/MICHAEL TROUTMAN, DMT IMAGING

## Yard worker thought murdered woman’s skull was coconut, police say

■ Bullet casings and brick with body

By KELLY NIX

WHEN A landscaper digging up the backyard of a Monterey house struck something with his shovel, at first he thought it was a coconut shell.

But when he picked it up, he realized it was a human skull, according to revealing new court documents regarding the 2015 discovery of the remains of a Seaside woman who went missing 33 years ago.

On Sept. 2, 2015, the worker unearthed the skeletal remains of Sandra McGee, 32, a mother of three, in a shallow grave in the backyard of a house on Third Street in Monterey. An examination of dental records determined the remains were that of McGee, who disappeared in 1982.

Now, law enforcement reports filed in Monterey County Superior Court March 17 offer new details about items found within the grave and how landscape worker Alec Speed —

See **CRIME** page 13A

## Belle owners, city remain at loggerheads

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER THE city council’s decision last week that Carmel Belle would have to start complying with the city’s restaurant codes, owners Jay and Chloe Dolata started asking their customers to try to convince the council to change its mind — and the campaign seemed to be having some effect. But at least one councilmember is responding by asking the Dolatas to start following a law they have known about for almost four years and that was made part of their permit when they were allowed to expand.

After receiving more than a dozen emails, and being stopped multiple times and asked about it, city councilman Bobby Richards said he started delving more deeply into the conundrum that faces Carmel Belle, including talking to the planning director, the city administrator and the city attorney — as well as to the Dolatas. Their customers order at the counter and pay for their food before eating it, but that format is not allowed under the city’s codes, which the planning commission and city council recently decided not to change.

“It’s daily that I’m talking to someone about this,” Richards said Wednesday. And he has concluded that the

Dolatas have no choice but to bring their restaurant into compliance with the law. “I don’t have any magic — there’s no wiggle room here,” he said, adding that their operating permit clearly states the rules. “I don’t know what else to tell you.”

But the Dolatas, who have encouraged supporters to email city officials, believe there must be another solution that will allow them to continue running Carmel Belle as they have been since they expanded into a larger space a few years ago.

“We’ve had overwhelming request for support and how people can help, and right now, all we’ve been directing them to do is speak out about how they feel and write the mayor and city council,” Jay Dolata said.

Although the original footprint of the restaurant long predates the ban on counter service, and is therefore grandfathered in, without a change to the law or another creative solution, customers who order that way can’t use the area included in the expansion, where

numerous tables are gathered around a fire pit. According to city law, an “existing nonconformity,” such as counter service, can’t be expanded or intensified when a building is enlarged or remodeled.

See **BELLE** page 15A

‘We’ve had an overwhelming request for support’

— Jay Dolata

## Monterey just got a whole lot bigger — and other little lies HBO told me

By ELAINE HESSER

MONTEREY IS a sin-filled city of beautiful, ambitious and very rich Generation X-ers who inhabit megamansions, wear fabulous clothes, and will generally mow down anyone who gets in their way.

At least, that’s the Monterey of the new HBO series, “Big Little Lies” — a show that was filmed here to great fanfare early last year, making local cash registers happy and drawing crowds of gawkers hoping for a glimpse of stars like Laura Dern, Nicole Kidman and Reese Witherspoon.

But who knew Reese could be such a bitch?

It’s based on the book of the same title, penned by Australian author Liane Moriarty, and originally set in her native land. This version takes place in Monterey, and was written by TV powerhouse David E. Kelley, who has brought often-quirky and smart series like “Ally McBeal,” “Boston Legal” and “Picket Fences” to the small screen.

“Big Little Lies” is part soap opera and part murder mystery, predicated on the age-old notion that rich people must secretly be miserable. It’s rather graphic, and, in

addition to murder, there’s domestic violence, bullying, infidelity and escalating threats.

In the show’s alternate reality, Monterey sprawls at least as far north as Fort Ord Dunes and as far south as Yankee Point, subsuming everything from Pacific Grove through the Highlands in its path. Several of the characters take their first graders to school every morning from somewhere south of Bixby Bridge, leaving viewers here to wonder exactly how big the Monterey school district is.

Where’s the mansion?

If you decide to watch, don’t strain your brain trying to figure out where all the fabulous homes in the series are. HBO told Vulture, an online pop culture magazine, only one of them is here.

The rest are in Malibu, Calabasas and Pasadena. The school is in Brentwood. They also built a reproduction of a café on Fisherman’s Wharf on a sound stage, because they were having trouble getting the weather to cooperate during some of their visits. Go figure.

See **LIES** page 14A



PHOTO/COURTESY HBO

Shailene Woodley, Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman get to know each other at Fisherman’s Wharf in a scene from the new HBO series, “Big Little Lies.”