

Concerted Attack By Lovingood's Forces On Valles Cuts Two Ways

By Mark Gutglueck

An involved contretemps has manifested at the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Agency amid labor agitation/union formation efforts as well as a yet-unresolved claim by a staffing company that the agency underpaid its workers, against a backdrop of political intrigue relating to the principals

involved.

Featured as main players in the drama are former Victorville Councilwoman Angela Valles, incumbent First District Supervisor Robert Lovingood and former Hesperia councilwoman Diana Carloni-Nourse.

Highlighted prominently in the controversy is what is described by a multiplicity of former



Angela Valles

Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority

(VWVRA) employees as Valles' unsuitability for the position she holds at VWVRA. In that capacity, according to at least six employees who have left the agency over the last several years, Valles has been callous, dictatorial, and heavy handed in her management of the employees, capricious and vindictive in meting out disci-



Robert Lovingood

pline, and unprofessional in the way she See P 3

Multiple Efforts To Rescind County Court System Realignment Yet Ongoing

Efforts to rescind the court realignment put in place in San Bernardino County's judicial system by Presiding Judge Marsha Slough last May are continuing, including a move to have the legislature add new code sections to the Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002 to ensure the public's ready access to the courts is ensured.



Marsha Slough

Last May amid widespread protest by elected

officials, lawyers and members of the public, the realignment of San Bernardino County courts as was formulated by San Bernardino County Presiding Judge Marsha Slough was effectuated.

The realignment entailed transferring all civil cases countywide to the new San Bernardino Justice Center,



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which is located at 247 West Third Street and

contains 35 courtrooms within its 11 floors. San Bernardino district criminal cases, which were previously heard in the San Bernardino Central Courthouse built in 1927, are also being tried in the new San Bernardino Justice Center.

West Valley Superior Courthouse in Rancho Cucamonga, which was formerly a See P 4

Embattled Hart Now Out As City Manager In Adelanto



Jim Hart

ADELANTO—Adelanto City Manager Jim Hart, whose grip on the well-remunerated top administrator's post in

this High Desert city of 31,765 began to slip as a consequence of the November election, was given his walking papers Wednesday night, February 25.

Hart's looming departure had been hinted at for weeks. Last month, whatever honeymoon he may have had with the newly formulated post-election city council that was installed in December expired, as some members See P 2

Ontario Suffers Setback In Airport Lawsuit

The city of Ontario on Thursday February 26 suffered third and fourth setbacks in its litigative quest to reassume control of Ontario Airport.

Riverside Superior Court Judge Gloria Connor Trask, who in January issued two tentative rulings that the 1967 joint-powers agreement between Ontario and Los Angeles that gave Los Angeles managerial and administrative control of the airport and the 1985 vote by the Ontario City

Council that deeded the airport to Los Angeles were valid, confirmed those rulings yesterday.

Ontario, through its law firm, Washington, D.C.-based I Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton, maintains those agreements are not binding. Trask said Ontario's opportunity to rescind the transfer of the airport once existed but elapsed in 1989 because of the statute of limitations.

Ontario has three other claims remaining

intact in its suit, which was filed in June of 2013.

In 1967, the airport had fewer than 200,000 passengers pass through its gates. Under Los Angeles' management and ownership, ridership at the airport climbed to 7.2 million in 2007. But passenger traffic dropped off steadily after that, dwindling to 4.03 million in the year ending in July 2014. Ontario now wants to take back ownership and control of the airport.

CVUSD Puts Its Faith In Law Firm Dedicated To Keeping Religion In Schools

Members of the Chino Valley school board are praying that a law firm devoted to doing pro bono work to uphold Christian values and vindicate religious activity in public forums as an exercise of free speech will successfully fend off a lawsuit charging the school district with allowing school board meetings to become a forum for Christian prayer



Brad Dacus

recitals, Bible readings and proselytizing.

In November, the

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Madison, Wisconsin filed suit against the district on behalf of two named and 21 unnamed plaintiffs who asserted they were alienated or intimidated at school board meetings because of overt and constant references to Christianity, including "prayers, Bible readings and proselytizing." The plaintiffs want the intru-

sion of religiosity into the conduct of district business to cease.

The board last month voted 3-2 against hiring the law firm which normally represents the district to respond to the suit. Instead, the district has engaged the Sacramento-based Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) for \$1 to defend the district in the civil lawsuit.

The Pacific Justice

Institute touts itself as a public interest law firm that "handles cases addressing religious freedom, including church and private school rights issues, curtailments to evangelism by the government, harassment because of their religious faith, employers attacked for their religious-based policies, [and] students and teachers rights to share their See P 6

Judge Tells Fontana Water To Cease Its Overdrafting

In a tentative ruling that could go into effect as early as next week, the Fontana Water Company has been enjoined from any further pumping of water from the Rialto-Colton groundwater basin beyond its established water rights there.

According to allegations in a 2013 lawsuit filed by the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, the West Valley Water District, and the cities of Colton and Rialto, the Fontana Water Company, at the direction of its parent company, the San Gabriel Valley Water Company, has since 2005 extracted nearly three times its base water pumping allotment established as part of a water rights adjudication regime put into place 54 years ago. That lawsuit was followed with another in 2014, filed by the cities of Colton and Rialto and the West Valley Water District, essentially reiterating the charge that the Fontana Water Company is utilizing more water from the basin than it is entitled to.

Three weeks ago, San Bernardino Superior Court Judge Bryan Foster granted the cities of Colton and Rialto a preliminary injunction against Fontana Water/San Gabriel Valley Water Co., instructing them to stay within their legal pumping limits in the basin.

As of this week, the ruling was not being enforced. It will go into effect as soon as Foster's ruling is put into a formal order. At that point, Fontana Water will need to end its pumping imme-

See P 2

Adelanto Pulls Plug On Hart *from front page*

of the council became openly vocal about his inability to steer the financially challenged city off a path leading toward bankruptcy.

As February dawned, finance director Onyx Jones, who had been a key member of Hart's administrative team, announced her upcoming resignation. After delivering the state of the city address earlier this month, Hart, who was being paid an annual salary and add-ons of \$280,000, together with a retirement and health care package valued at \$50,105 for a total compensation package of \$330,105 per year, did not attend the city council meeting later that day, instead going out on a two-week administrative leave. The city's mid-year budget report showed Hart's resignation was projected for the end of the month.

Hart, who had been Adelanto city manager

since 2004 and was city manager in Twentynine Palms and Rancho Margarita and administrative services director in Rancho Cucamonga before that, appeared to be in a perpetual state of paralysis the last several years as the city was overwhelmed by financial challenges.

In 2013, the city council, as it was then composed, at Hart's urging declared the 31,765 population city was in a state of fiscal emergency. The city's residents, however, refused to consent to impose on themselves a tax that city officials insisted was needed to stave off bankruptcy. Hart's only other alternative was to seek out development projects that offer the prospect of fee or tax generation, but his performance in that regard was lackluster at best. Last year, he advocated the city approve the development of two privately-run prisons within its city limits.

Adelanto is already host to three detention facilities and has an-

other one on its border with Victorville. One of the two more recent proposals has been approved and the other was withdrawn. Hart was attacked for a lack of imagination in wrestling with the fiscal dilemma and for advocating bringing in more detention facilities, which some say will further erode the city's reputation and lessen its ability to attract other types of development.

On November 4, incumbent councilmen Charles Valvo and Steve Baisden, along with mayor Cari Thomas, were unsuccessful in their reelection bids. Thus, a majority of the five-member council was freshly installed, although councilman Charley Glasper was formerly on the council. Glasper and John Woodward were sworn in to replace Valvo and Baisden, while Rich Kerr replaced Thomas.

Emerging as a strong and early advocate for Hart's removal was councilman Jermaine Wright. Wright was on

the losing side of several votes taken over the last two years by the Thomas-led council that included Valvo, Baisden and councilman Ed Camargo.

Glasper was of a like mind to Wright, feeling that the city had stagnated during the four years he was not on the council. Hart's strongest supporter was Camargo. But Camargo's political stock has been in eclipse, as he is fighting off charges of being involved in a conflict of interest that grew out of his November vote in support of the prison project that was subsequently withdrawn. Camargo's girlfriend is employed by the company seeking to develop that prison.

On February 25, Hart was not in attendance at the city council meeting. Finance director Jones, in her last official act, presented a report informing the city council the city is in dire financial straits and will be out of money and will have eaten up all of its remaining reserves by

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the beginning of the upcoming 2015-16 fiscal year on July 1. Jones said without new revenue sources the city's only option will be to make "drastic cuts."

Mayor Rich Kerr said the city's circumstance has deteriorated to the point where it will need to disincorporate. "We will shut down City Hall, people will get pink slips and there will be no more Adelanto," he intoned.

Hart's axing took place in closed session, in which, despite the

city's untenable financial situation, a \$225,352.93 severance package was conferred upon him. That package includes a severance payment, benefits and employer taxes, along with the continued provision of Hart's medical insurance. The city will also provide Hart with a used city vehicle.

During the same closed session, the council elevated city engineer/public works director Thomas Thornton to serve as interim city manager.

End Overdrafting, Judge Says *from front page*

diately, as it has already exceeded its water allotment for the operational year running through September 30.

The court's ruling will allow all parties to the 1961 decree to continue to pump groundwater under that judgment until the current litigation about the Rialto-Colton Basin is completed.

Fontana Water will have the option of purchasing water from the state water project, which conveys water from Northern California to Southern California by means of the California Aqueduct, subject to availability and a price that has fluctuated in recent years from \$500 to \$1,200 per acre foot. An acre-foot is the amount of water that will cover an acre to a depth of one foot, that is 43,560 cubic feet or 325,853.4 gallons, which is typically the

Continued on Page 3

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Former VVWRA Employees Berate Valles from front page

has interacted with employees. Moreover, she has engaged in nepotism and cronyism in the hiring process, and pursued managerial policies that are contrary to the efficiency of the agency and the best interest of taxpayers, according to those who have publicly filed complaints in which their identities are disclosed.

Also brought in for severe criticism in these signed complaints are Logan Olds, the general manager of the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority, and Gilbert Perez, VVWRA's director of operations, who are alleged to have ignored longstanding complaints about the fashion in which Valles has acted or engaged in similar treatment of employees themselves. Valles is the VVWRA's director of administration, overseeing day-to-day finance operations and human resource functions. The Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority is an agency of the state of California which provides wastewater treat-

ment service along the Mojave River in the Victor Valley. It is a joint powers authority, which by its charter has as its board members one member from each of the Hesperia, Victorville and Apple Valley councils as well as the San Bernardino County First District Supervisor.

The charges against Valles, Olds, Perez and the VVWRA, however, come at a time and under circumstances in which there are procedural, legal and political efforts ongoing to wrest money from the agency, unionize its workers and undercut Valles' potential future political ambition. Moreover, the concerted volley of charges vectored at Valles come in the aftermath of complaints she filed with the district attorney's office, the California Fair Political Practices Commission and the FBI regarding a financial conflict of interest on the part of Lovinggood, whose staffing company formerly had a contract with the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority. That company's lawyer is now maintaining that the company is owed some \$3.6 million by the authority. In her complaints to the San Ber-

nardino County District Attorney's Office in July 2014, the FPPC, and the FBI in December 2014, Valles stated that she believed Lovinggood ran afoul of the law, specifically Government Code Section 1090, because of his influence over the VVWRA's contract with his firm Industrial Clerical Recruiters, Inc, which is also known as ICR or ICR Staffing.

In this way, there are factors that both support and weaken the case being made against Valles, Olds, Perez and the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority. And the wider circumstance opens up an even more disturbing set of questions regarding Lovinggood and the degree to which his company's dealings have become intertwined with the county.

The most convincing aspect of the recently lodged charges targeting Valles and the VVWRA are the number of complainants, the relative consistency of their versions of events, the verifiability of the basic elements of their narratives and their willingness to be identified. At the same time, the nature of this concerted and obviously coordinated attack gives rise to doubts as to whether it was a spontaneous outpouring of

complaints by aggrieved former employees or whether it was formulated specifically for the purposes of discrediting Valles.

Former VVWRA employees Katherine Beyers, James Bryant, Gina Cloutier, R.C. Elliot, Elaine Gutierrez, Natalie Mirmontes and Haik Seropian have all provided signed statements in which they relate circumstances pertaining to their employment at the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority and their departures. All cite poor or deteriorating personal interaction with Valles, which included, they say, bullying, intimidation and unfair treatment.

Seropian, an accounting technician, said Valles had insulted him when he sought her guidance on the contents of a financial statement he was putting together and that she had made deprecating comments about his grooming habits.

Miramontes, who had been a secretary to a now-retired general manager, said she had been pressured by Valles to give up the name of an employee who had anonymously reported a safety violation at the VVWRA plant.

According to Miramontes, Valles was

Continued on Page 7

Forum... Or Against 'em

Observations from a Decidedly Continental Perspective

By Count Friedrich von Olsen



I have received some information on the down-low which indicates that the goings-on, or at least past goings-on, at Upland City Hall are being given a very close examination...

The information I have is sketchy, having originated with a partially heard conversation between two people obviously in the know. I've tried to fill in the gaps as best I could, but obviously there are some details that yet elude me...

It seems that late last summer, Upland's then-executive assistant to the city manager, Annette Guthrie, fell under suspicion of having done work on the political campaigns of two of the city's incumbent city council members who were then vying for reelection, Gino Filippi and Debbi Stone. Miss Guthrie was put under watch, and when some actions that might have otherwise seemed benign occurred, those moves were interpreted as vindicating the initial suspicions. This then formed the basis for placing her on administrative leave on August 26 and ratcheting up the investigation, which included examining in some depth her internal city emails and her phone calls logs...

I have no inkling of what the phone logs turned up, but apparently the email exchanges she had with a whole host of individuals were very telling, essentially indicating that she was carrying out various tasks related to political campaigns, including gathering information valuable thereto. Additionally, it has been hinted at, there were other exchanges relating to matters that alarmed those reading the emails...

With this information in hand, higher city officials moved to get her out of her executive assistant position. At that point, Ms. Guthrie threatened to lodge a sexual harassment suit against the city. There ensued a negotiation process in which then-city attorney Kimberly Hall Barlow, who is with the law firm of Jones Mayer, became involved. A separation agreement was worked out in which she officially left the city's employ as of September 22 and was given a \$50,000 severance...

Ms. Barlow had discouraged any further action with regard to the matter and considered it closed. However, less than two months later she found herself excused from the city attorney's position because of some too-strong language she put in a letter to the Colonies Partners over the ten-year expiration of a timetable to develop some property. With Barlow gone, members of the council again took up the issue of the political activity on the part of the former city staff member during the election and the other issues discovered in Miss Guthrie's emails. They began to pressure Ms. Barlow's successor, Richard Adams, also of the Jones Mayer firm, to look into it. Adams begged off, and instead had Los Angeles-based Liebert Cassidy Whitmore, a public sector employment and labor law firm representing management in labor and employment matters, scrutinize the known facts...

The Liebert Cassidy Whitmore report, I am told, while somewhat equivocal, found that the evidence, i.e., the emails, shows that political activity on Guthrie's part did take place and that Stone and Filippi receiving the benefits of her action could be construed as a misappropriation of public funds. While a referral to the FPPC to determine if Stone and Filippi had

Continued on Page 5

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Cease Overdrafting, Fontana Water Told from page 2

amount of water consumed by a household of four people in one year.

In the West Valley Water District, which has declared a Stage II Drought Alert and requested that its customers voluntarily reduce their water usage by 10 percent, district general manager Anthony "Butch" Araiza hailed the court's decision.

"Judge Foster's ruling confirms that everybody, even Fontana Water Company, must play by the same rules, especially during a historic drought," said Araiza. "Nobody is exempt from the drought and Fontana Water Company can no

longer take everyone else's water in violation of established water rights agreements."

San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District General Manager Doug Headrick said, "As supplemental water supplies from the State Water Project are becoming more limited, it is essential that we preserve our local water supplies. The water rights judgments and agreements established in the 1960s were designed to maintain balance in our groundwater basins, even during times of shortage like we are facing today. We applaud the court and the cities of Colton, Rialto and West Valley for calling Fontana Water Company to task to do their part."

Police Dog Involved In Handler's Son's Mauling Removed From Duty

HESPERIA—Jango, the Rialto police dog who attacked its handler's four-year-old son on February 8, has been retired from its police department duties.

The dog, a 7-year-old Belgium Malinois, will not be euthanized as was earlier feared. Instead, the dog which had worked the department's patrol, SWAT and narcotics details will be readopted by the training facility in Riverside, where Jango had originally been groomed to work for the department.

Jango's handler, detective Michael Mastaler, kept the dog at his Hesperia home when they were not on duty. The dog, which was trained to bite suspects and felons during police pursuits, was normally kept in a kennel in the back yard and had inter-

action with the rest of the Mastaler family only in Michael Mastaler's presence.

a boot camp for at-risk youth in Big Bear. Upon returning home late in

of his kennel.

He closed the sliding glass door and went up to the house's master bedroom to take a shower, leaving his son, Hunter, playing video games while his wife took the couple's younger child to the store.

Hunter, apparently, let himself out into the backyard through the sliding glass door, at which point Jango attacked him.

The dog bit Hunter, whose screams prompted neighbor Jeff Houlemard to crash through a fence gate to rescue the boy. For an unknown reason Jango remained in "bite mode," having clamped onto the boy as he was trained to do in criminal situations when his handler is encountering a resistant or fleeing suspect. Houlemard had to pry the dog's jaw open

so his son, Logan, 13, and his friend, 14-year-old Anthony Montalvo,

on February 12. He will be fitted with a prosthesis within the next two months.

Jango underwent a ten-day quarantine, during which time discussions about options for its future were ongoing, including being put down. Because of the attack on Hunter, Jango was ruled ineligible for further police work. Returning him to live with the Mastaler family was deemed unacceptable.

Euthanizing Jango will no longer be necessary, as Riverside-based Adlerhorst International, Inc. which serves as the police dog training academy for the Rialto Police Department and other departments and where Jango was given his orientation to American police dog function, agreed to take him in.



Michael Mastaler and Jango

On February 6, a Friday, Michael Mastaler had left to take part in

the afternoon on Sunday, he went out in the backyard to allow Jango out



Hunter Mastaler

could lift Hunter's leg from Jango's mouth.

The attack on Hunter lasted at least two minutes, according to estimates. Jango was born in the Netherlands and responds primarily to commands in Dutch.

Hunter was airlifted to Loma Linda University Medical Center, where part of his left leg below his knee was amputated

Effort To Undo Court Realignment

from front page

venue for both civil and criminal cases originating on the west end of the county, is now devoted almost entirely to criminal cases and hearings on both civil and domestic violence restraining order matters, including those arising on the county's west end and other felony and misdemeanor cases from the county's central district which were previously routed to the Fontana Courthouse. A small portion of the criminal cases once heard in Fontana are now being adjudicated in San Bernardino. The historic San Bernardino Courthouse remains as the forum for family law cases. The Fontana Courthouse has become the stage for all small claims, landlord tenant disputes and traffic/non-traffic infractions from the San Bernardino, Fontana and Rancho Cucamonga districts. The Victorville Courthouse remains a venue for High Desert family law cases. The Joshua Tree Courthouse remains in opera-

tion. The Barstow Courthouse, where previously all order of criminal and civil cases were heard, is now open two days a week exclusively for traffic cases.

From the time she first proposed the realignment as a way to deal with dwindling revenue provisions from the state for court operations in October 2013, the wisdom of Slough's transformation of the county court system and the centralization of all civil courts in downtown San Bernardino has been sharply questioned.

Far flung San Bernardino County, which spans 20,105 square miles, is the largest county in the lower 48 states, with a land mass greater than the states of Delaware, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Connecticut combined. Slough's change is imposing a tremendous logistical burden on many of the county's citizens who need to access the courts. Driving distance from Needles to San Bernardino is 212 miles, with an average one-way traveling time of three hours and nine minutes.

In the months prior to and after the initiation of

the realignment, a group of legal professionals, including lawyers and former judges, importuned Slough to reconsider what she was contemplating and then what she had done. They also sought, and obtained, support from county elected officials in their efforts to have Slough rethink the change she had

imposed on the county's residents.

The Rancho Cucamonga City Council, which on April 2, 2014 adopted a resolution calling upon the managers of the court system in San Bernardino County to preserve its branch courts unless it could be demonstrated the closures have cre-

ated a savings of at least ten percent of the court system's budget, went further, asking Mayor Dennis Michael to take up the court realignment issue with the San Bernardino Association of Governments, the county's transportation agency and regional planning board which has as its voting directors may-

ors or council members from each of the county's 24 cities as well as all five members of the board of supervisors.

Michael did so and on May 7, 2014 all 29 members of the SANBAG board considered the resolution. A staff report by SANBAG Director of

Continued on Page 6

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Glimpse Of SBC's Past

The Lost Dutch Oven Mine

By Mark Gutglueck

By Mark Gutglueck

The Lost Dutch Oven Mine is one of the most famous lost mines in California and likely the most famous of those in San Bernardino County. The tale is a rich one, with several variations, as is often the case with lost mine legends. Some of the particulars are verifiable, and indeed it seems very likely the mine actually existed and may yet be out there, waiting to be found.

In 1894, Tom Schofield was working for the Santa Fe Railroad at the Danby watering station. In those days, trains pulled by locomotives carried enough coal to go more than half way across the country, but needed to constantly replenish their water stores as the steam used to power the locomotives was lost at a rapid rate. At the extreme end of San Bernardino County were six watering stations along the Santa Fe line, named in reverse alphabetical order after the track came west across the Arizona

Railroad in 1893. The railroad company had constructed a four-inch pipe running from the spring to the Danby Station. That pipe continued to provide water to Dan-



Tom Schofield

by until it was replaced by a well near the station in the 1930s.

Trains travelled on strict schedules and Schofield was free to roam about the area around Danby during the hours when no trains were due. On occasions,

gap between trains into Danby, he resolved to follow the faint path to see where it would lead him.

Here the story begins its deviation.



Bonanza Spring

border: Goffs, Fenner, Essex, Danby, Cadiz, Bolo and Amboy. Schofield manned the Danby station. His job was to maintain the apparatus from which the water for the steam engines that rolled down the track were supplied.

The Danby station's water came from what is known as Bonanza Spring located in the Clipper Mountains, which was claimed by the Southern Pacific

at that time, as long as a day-and-a-half or two days might pass without a train passing through the six watering stations.

Schofield, who was then 42, one day had noticed during his sojourn to the spring in the Clipper Mountains that there was what appeared to be a long neglected, indistinct trail leading off to the side of the mountain where the spring was located. On one of the days when there was a long

According to one version, he hiked some distance, coming upon a recently abandoned miner's camp. He then continued up a steep bank and scaled the edge of a narrow shale wall, before arriving at a mine shaft of some depth with sides well boarded up by old railroad ties. In this version, he sensed, based upon its appearance, that the ore on the tailing pile next to the shaft was exceedingly rich. However, it was getting on in the afternoon and so he decided to stay the night at the small miner's camp below. In the morning, he happened to kick the lid off of an old Dutch oven located near the fire pit and from that old pot gold ore "rich-to-the-eye" spilled onto the ground. According to this version, he gathered up as much of the ore as he could carry and headed down the mountain and back to Danby.

Another version is that on his trek that day he was about three miles up the side of the mountain when he came upon a long abandoned stone house. He continued on, hiking what he later reckoned was about nine more miles when he

came upon a spring. He followed a trail from the spring leading over a hill at the peak of which was a rock or boulder he described as being the size of a house. The boulder was split in two and the trail continued straight through it. Beyond this passageway he encountered what appeared to be an old Spanish camp.

Shortly beyond this he found himself upon a high shelf, surrounded by high walls. Through other openings in the rock walls, he could see that the "shelf" was sitting high above the ground at about 500 feet. The only way in or out of the little flat was through the split rock. Scattered about the long deserted camp, Schofield found rusty mining tools, pots, pans, fragments of a bedroll, and an old iron Dutch oven.

Also on the shelf was a mine shaft, in which he found the skeletons of seven burros. Next to the shaft was a mine dump that contained numerous stones still containing rich gold quartz. Night was approaching, and he bedded down on the shelf planning to leave at daybreak. In the morning, as he was leaving, he tripped over the Dutch oven and out tumbled a mound of pure gold nuggets. He gathered up the gold nuggets, and fashioning a makeshift pack from one of the side packs found next to the burro carcasses, carried out as much of the ore as he could manage.

A third version is that he hiked for some distance, passing through a huge split boulder and came upon a wooden cabin with a hitching post, in front of which were the carcasses of several dead burros. In the cabin were the skeletons of three or four humans. Also in the cabin was a Dutch oven. When he kicked the top off the oven, he saw it was filled with rich gold ore. Outside the cabin and not too distant from it, a mine had been dug

between ten and fifteen feet into the side of a hill. He retrieved several gold quartz samples from this mine, and was able to easily pull them from the wall of the mine using just his hands. He used the canvas burro side packs to take as much of the ore and nuggets he could carry back with him to Danby.

Schofield caught the



The Clipper Mountains

first train into Los Angeles.

How do we know that one of these three versions or some order of a combination thereof is true? Because records show that Tom Schofield had testing done on the ore he had with him. Those tests showed that the ore in the Dutch oven had indeed a very high gold content and that the ore he had personally removed from the mine was also quite rich. For just the nuggets and ore he had been able to carry with him, Schofield netted over \$200,000. In just two years, he spent all of his newfound wealth gambling, on liquor and fast women.

Two years later, he headed back to the Clipper Mountains, searching, searching, searching, for what he had stumbled upon. He was never able to find it. Schofield spent the rest of his life, essentially, as a prospector. He worked claims in the Old Woman and Turtle Mountains. He mined salt in Danby Dry Lake for a time. He even mined for iron ore in the Marble Mountains and prospected in other locations between Essex and Amboy. Beginning around 1920 and

for a few years he held an interest in the Iron Hat Mine located about twelve miles east of Amboy in the Marble Mountains.

In the 1930s and into the 1940s, when he was in his 80s and early 90s, he was still wandering around Danby and the Clipper Mountains, seeking the Lost Dutch Oven Mine.

In 1936, while he was living in an abandoned store outside Danby, Schofield was interviewed by Walter H. Miller and George Haight. The gist of that interview formed the basis for much of what we know today as the Legend of the Lost Dutch Oven Mine.

There is no record of the Dutch Oven Mine ever having been found again. The Clipper Mountains are located just south of Interstate 40 and the Clipper Valley, between the freeway and National Old Trails Highway, northwest of the small community of Essex. The range is home to at least three springs, as well as the Tom Reed Mine. The Danby Station is located about 1.6 miles southeast of Highway 66 on Danby Road.

The Count...

from page 3

erred in not reporting Guthrie's assistance as an in-kind contribution on their campaign donation reporting forms might be deemed appropriate, Liebert Cassidy Whitmore recommend-

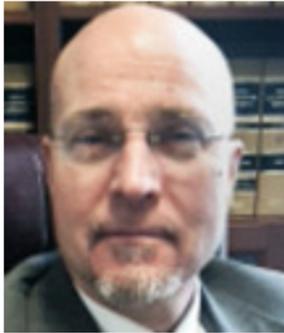
Continued on Page 12

Chino School District Getting Hand From Firm Dedicated To Christian Zealotry *from front page*

faith at public schools.” According to the Pacific Justice Institute’s website, it stands “at the forefront of attorneys who recognize the need to preserve religious liberty in America.” The institute has sought to make a name for itself by taking on cutting edge religious activity-as-free speech cases which ultimately end up before the U.S. Supreme Court. Nevertheless, according to the institute’s website, “The Pacific Justice Institute does not focus on just those cases that are likely to go to the Supreme Court. While PJI is willing to take cases to the Supreme Court, PJI has a unique commitment to provide legal counsel and representa-

tion to everyone they feel falls within their mission.” According to the Pacific Justice Institute it “receives almost all of its funding through donations by individuals who believe in the Pacific Justice Institute’s work.” Pacific Justice Institute attorney Michael Peffer, who works out of the firm’s Santa Ana office, has been assigned to handle the Chino Valley Unified School District case through much of its pre-trial stage. But if the matter goes to trial, the Pacific Justice Institute will roll out its big guns. These include, Brad Dacus, who founded the Pacific Justice Institute in 1997. He was a legislative assistant to U.S. Senator Phil Gramm before he got his law degree from the University of Texas School of Law. Dacus spent the early stage of his law career pursuing and coordinating religious freedom

and parental rights cases throughout the Western states. He is seen on television expounding on his theories regarding the constitutional protections afforded to Christians as much as



Kevin Snider

he appears in a courtroom. He has been a guest speaker on numerous radio and television programs, participates weekly in several radio talk show interviews, and has appeared on America Live, CBS Evening News, CNN, Dateline NBC, Good Morning America, MSNBC, NBC News, News Talk TV, The Today Show,

and many times on the O’Reilly Factor. Kevin Snider, the chief counsel for the Pacific Justice Institute since 2004, has been an attorney since 1994, practicing primarily in the area of constitutional law and civil rights during that time. The Pacific Justice Institute legal department that he heads has approximately 1,000 volunteer attorney affiliates who represent people of faith and religious organizations.

Snider has litigated a number of cases which have garnered national attention, including the defense of the national motto – In God We Trust – in front of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and representing Pastors Rick Warren and Joseph Lowery in opposition to a case which sought to enjoin them from giving the invocation and benediction at the inauguration of President Obama.

Snider successfully argued against the request for an injunction in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia just days prior to the inauguration.



Matt McReynolds

stitute Staff Attorney Matt McReynolds has been with the institute since early 2005, having defended religious liberties by clerking for the American Center for Law and Justice. Among the cases McReynolds has litigated while with the Pacific Justice Institute are the cases International Church of the Foursquare Gospel

v. City of San Leandro, establishing one of the leading precedents on the West Coast favoring religious land use; Snatchko v. Westfield LLC, the first case to extend free speech protections in the California Constitution to shopping mall evangelism; Welch v. Brown, defending the rights of Christian counselors to present Biblically-based viewpoints to their minor clients; and Newdow v. Lefever, defeating a challenge to the national motto, “In God We Trust.”

The firm has agreed to represent the school district through trial and all appeals. The Freedom From Religion Foundation suit seeks attorney fees and “nominal” damages for the foundation and the plaintiffs, who include Larry Maldonado and Mike Anderson and parents, students and employees with the district.

Some Seeking Re-scission Of Court Realignment *from page 4*

Legislative and Public Affairs Wendy Strack stated, “For a county spanning 20,000 square miles, the proximity of courthouses to those

with matters pending before the court carries significant cost and time pressures for impacted parties. San Bernardino County is already facing the largest shortage of judges in the state of California. According to the statewide judicial needs study released in October 2012, the San Bernardino Superior Court

system should have 156 judges and more than 1,500 staff members, yet it operates with only 43 percent of that suggested staffing. The state has already closed the Chino, Needles, Twin Peaks, Redlands and Big Bear courthouses and shuttered courtrooms in Joshua Tree. The reduction in service and pend-

ing closure of courtrooms in Barstow will mean that crime victims, jurors, law enforcement officers, court personnel, and others are forced to drive many more miles to make court appearances. Our cash-strapped local governments are already struggling to provide basic services to residents. The overtime and fuel

costs associated with longer court trips will create even more budget pain for our 24 cities and the county of San Bernardino.” The resolutions were provided to local members of the state legislature, who were requested to use their authority to explore legislation that would either return funding to the courts and

render the economies contained in Slough’s realignment unnecessary or mandate that the court’s must maintain reasonable local access to their facilities. Among those contacted was California State Senator Mike Morrell. He has carried no legislation relating to redressing the conflation of the court system. However, in November, Marc Steinorth, who was a member of the Rancho City Council that passed the resolution in April, was elected to the California Assembly. This week, Steinorth told the *Sentinel*, “The court closures throughout San Bernardino County has resulted in unacceptable conditions for citizens seeking access to justice. I am seeking every possible solution to help our county court to remain open. The solutions that I am advocating are commonsense approaches that will give our courts a better opportunity to service our county residents.” Specifically, Steinorth said, he intends to author a bill this year that will

Continued on Page 7

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Some Seeking Re- scission Of Court Realignment from page 6

“raise the 1% reserve cap to 12%. Currently state law limits local trial court reserves to just 1 percent of prior-year expenditures. At the end of the year, any court that has funds above 1% is swept back up into the state’s general fund. This 1 percent cap has resulted in cash-flow problems that hurt the courts’ operational ability, especially when there are unexpected costs.”

Furthermore, Steinorth said, “I am advocating legislation that would authorize ten new San Bernardino County Superior Court judges and two appellate court judges. If judges are placed in our county court, it comes with additional funding and staff. The need for additional judges is critical in order to reduce backlogs and accelerate access to the courts. In the entire state, the Fourth Appellate District in Riverside, which serves San Bernardino County, is identified as one of the highest-need courts for an appellate judge.”

Steinorth said that San Bernardino County was among the hardest hit jurisdictions by the parsimony imposed on the courts. Nevertheless, he said, courts up and down the state were being crunched, and for that reason he believes there is an impetus for the legislature to act to reduce the burden on the courts generally.

“The unprecedented

budget cuts since 2008 have closed 52 court-houses statewide,” Steinorth said. “The governor has proposed funding increases for trial courts by about 5% compared to last year. However, this falls well short of what trial courts need to tread water and stop further courthouse closures and staff reductions.”

He continued, “The San Bernardino Superior Court is the second most underresourced and underfunded court in the state. The court’s judicial positions meet just 60% of the court’s 2014 assessed judicial need. Since 2006/07, the Twin Peaks, Redlands, Chino, Needles, and Big Bear courthouses have closed. The court’s current number of staff just meets 63% of the 2013 resource allocation assessment. Each court’s clerk’s office is now closed to the public at 3 pm. The workload-based allocation need in San Bernardino is \$137.8 million but the court received just \$75.1 million.”

Meanwhile, a group of attorneys based in San Bernardino County have formulated proposed new code sections relating the Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002, which they claim would go a good part of the distance in preventing further erosion of the court system, particularly in San Bernardino County.

That proposal calls for the addition of Section 70395 which states “The responsibility and authority granted to the Judicial Council under Section 70391 and Administrative Office of

the Courts under Section 70392 and delegable by the Judicial Council or the Administrative Office of the Courts to the local courts shall be subject to the standards and procedures set forth in this Section.

(a) In exercising any responsibility, authority or power to locate, relocate, deploy or redeploy trial court facilities, the Judicial Council shall consider the following criteria, among others, in its deliberations and decision:

(1) The impact of any change on the public’s access to the justice system.

(2) The financial benefit of the change to the local trial court as compared to the financial detriment of the change to users of the court facility.

(3) The environmental impact of the change.

(4) The impact on disadvantaged users of the court facility.

(5) Travel burdens imposed upon users of the court.

(6) The effect upon the safety of users of the court.

(7) The financial impact on the community acquiring or losing the trial court facility.

(8) The history of the use of branch courts in the local communities.

(9) Geographic features of the County.

(10) Delays in resolving disputes and other court business.

(b) Branch courts shall not be closed or their use be curtailed or limited unless, as a direct result of such change, the local court achieves net savings of

ten percent or more of its annual budget.

(c) The decision to close trial court facilities or to move them shall not be taken by the Judicial Council or by the Administrative Office of the Courts or by the local judiciary without consultation with and advice from local public officials as follows:

(1) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall call, notice and convene a meeting of local public officials and such meeting shall be open to the community. Citizens of the community shall be allowed to comment at the meeting. The meeting shall be called at an appropriate time and place, and sufficiently noticed in advance so that members of the public are aware of it.

(2) The local public officials shall include the mayors or council persons of at least three cities affected by the proposed changes, as appointed by those cities, at least two members of the County Board of Supervisors as appointed by the Board of Supervisors, two members of the local judiciary and one representative of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

(A) The Judicial Council shall determine the cities affected by the movement of court facilities.

(B) In the absence of special circumstances, the committee should not exceed nine persons.

(3) The local community meeting or meetings shall be presided over by a chair person who shall be the representative of the Administrative Office of the Courts, if available, and if not then by the person designated by the Board of Supervisors.

(4) The representative of the Administrative Office of the Courts or substitute chair shall prepare a written summary of the proceedings, submit it to the local officials who served on the committee and who may add their comments and then the representative shall submit the report with comments to the Ju-

dicial Council. The revised summary shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the community where the local court facilities proposed to be closed are located and posted on the court’s website at least 30 days before the public meetings required by this statute.

(d) Any delegation of responsibility, authority or power to the Administrative Office of the Courts or by the Administrative Office of the Courts shall be subject to the same rules,

standards, policies, procedures, guidelines and limitations as apply to the Judicial Council.

(e) Any delegation of the responsibility, authority or power to locate, relocate, deploy or redeploy court facilities may be delegated to the local trial court that may exercise such responsibility, authority or power in conjunction with the Judicial Council and the Administrative Office of the Courts and only acting in compliance with this section.



Lovingood Vs. Valles from page 3

guilty of “putting VVWRA staff to work for her own illegitimate political gain” and said Valles “uses her paid time ‘working’ at VVWRA tweeting about elections, or other meaningless things all while wasting taxpayers’ hard earned money.”

Gutierrez, a former environmental compliance administrative aide of five years standing with the agency, said she was “forced out of my position ... and was not presented with the evidence acquired against me and was not afforded an adequate opportunity to present my side of the story before a disciplinary decision was made.”

R.C. Elliott, who held the position of day operator for six years, stated that “During my time there I endured a hostile work environment under the management of Angela Valles, Logan Olds, and Gilbert Perez. I was forced out of my position and endured a lot of unneeded stress. Management trained me to hold specific duties but would purposely change my job functions without enough training in order to catch a mistake and then make the write ups they needed to pressure me out; and then to finally terminate me with the paper trail they had created.”

Cloutier, who was formerly the laboratory/environmental compliance supervisor at the

Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority said that because of “intimidation, bullying retaliatory disciplinary actions and other employment actions” by Valles and Gilbert Perez “employees are afraid to come forward with concerns, including safety issues. This has been reported to Logan Olds, who seemed to do nothing to stop it and in many cases the behaviors would worsen after discussions with Mr. Olds.”

Cloutier charged that “Angela Valles released confidential personnel and medical information to unauthorized persons. In at least one case, such information was used to intimidate and threaten another employee.”

Cloutier maintained that Perez had altered the operation of the plant during the time lab sampling of discharge was taking place to prevent the collection of data that would show the plant

Continued on Page 8



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Lovingood Vs. Valles

from page 7

was functioning in violation of its environmental permit.

James Bryant, an 18-year employee who rose to the position of operations manager, said that "Intimidation of employees is common practice" by Valles, and he said the agency was marred by unfair hiring practices "When jobs are posted, the posting is closed, interviews are conducted [and] then they decide to ignore experienced people that have donated thousands of hours in the intern program with the agency for friends and neighbors of management staff with zero knowledge of or experience in the industry. My hands were tied as a supervisor having any say in who was hired for my department. I was forced to work with the cards I was dealt, which made my job even more difficult. VVWRA has an excellent intern program that has produced very qualified people, yet the director of human resources chose who she wanted during the inter-

view process based on personal feelings about someone rather than the qualifications or how well the candidate performed during the interview process."

Kate Beyer, a public information officer with the agency, said Valles had concerned herself with criticisms of "irrelevant details about [employees'] appearance, demeanor, life-style choice, sexuality, race, office décor" and ruled by intimidation tactics that included interrogations of employees. Beyer said that "Often, a frightened text would go around the office when Angela Valles arrived at the plant."

Beyer said that Valles had engaged in "illegal hiring practices" and had falsified her own time sheet and had worked "from home a lot due to a 'medical condition,' even though it is against her own rules and regulations policy."

Beyer's statement carries with it the added weight of having been made "under the penalty of perjury."

Surfacing at this point is a more than seven year old letter dated October

15, 2007 purported to be from "concerned employees" at VVWRA. It stated that upon acceding to the position of human resources director, Valles had installed her sister as her assistant and that "she worked on her [political] campaign, taking people to lunch while using the agency's funds."

Despite the purported substance of the letters, their timing and focus raise questions as to the motive behind the sudden outpouring of information. An accompanying collective statement of former and current employees notes that in the past nine years, of those leaving the employment of the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority, four, or seven percent, took normal retirements while 28, or 47 percent, were terminated. Eleven, or 19 percent, the collective statement notes, left willingly to get out of a hostile environment or avoid harassment, and the reason for the leaving of the other eight, or 14 percent, is unknown. An effort to unionize the agency's workforce appears to be under way.

That effort is coupled with an unresolved \$3.62 million claim against the Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority by ICR Staffing Services, Inc., which is owned by San Bernardino County 1st District Supervisor Robert Lovingood. In that claim, dated August 22, 2014 and served September 11, 2014, ICR Staffing Services alleged that VVWRA failed to pay prevailing wage to ICR's contract workers between 2011 and 2013 and solicited ICR's temporary employees to jump ship to a competing staffing agency.

The federal prevailing wage law and the California Davis-Bacon Act requires that workers on governmental projects be paid prevailing union scale wages. There is a question, however, of whether it is the responsibility of the government agency or the company employing the workers to meet the prevailing wage requirements. In the case of the ICR contract with VVWRA, ICR participated in a bidding process for the work, and obtained the contract

on the basis of having submitted the lowest responsive bid.

Lovingood's company filed the claim sometime after the two-year contract, which ran between 2011 and 2013, for ICR recruits to work on the Upper Narrows Pipeline project, came to a close. Subsequently, VVWRA utilized workers provided by Hesperia-based iLink Business Management, which underbid ICR.

While ICR had competed in a bid process to gain the two-year arrangement with the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Agency in 2011 and was paid approximately \$260,000 per year for the services its recruits provided, ICR attorney Diana Carloni Nourse maintains that the ICR workers should have been paid prevailing union scale wages and that ICR should have been paid in excess of \$1.5 million per year for the work. ICR further maintains that after the agency contracted with iLink, it attempted to lure ICR's recruits to work for iLink.

Such claims are considered a precursor to a

lawsuit. Upon a public agency's rejection of a claim or after failing to respond to the claim for 45 days, the claimant is eligible to initiate a lawsuit based on the issues raised in the claim. As of this week, ICR had not yet filed such a lawsuit. Such a lawsuit would have complications, among which is that Lovingood in December 2012, while his company yet had the contract with VVWRA, automatically became a Victor Valley Water Reclamation Agency board member. A joint powers authority arrangement between the county and VVWRA installs the county's First District supervisor as a VVWRA board member. Lovingood remained as a board member until August 2013, at which point arrangements were made to substitute Lovingood's colleague on the board of supervisors, James Ramos, in as the VVWRA board member to replace him.

Despite that change, Lovingood was technically a member of the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Board while

Continued on Page 9

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Valles Vs. Lovingood*from page 8*

the arrangement his company now maintains was illegal was in place. Additionally, he was the owner, president and chief executive officer of ICR when it entered into what the company now claims was an illegal arrangement with the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority.

Given Valles' position as the authority's human resources director, there appears to be a confluence between the claim, which alleges the VVWRA mishandled personnel issues with regard to the proper remuneration of its contracted workers, and the charges against Valles raised by the agency's current and former employees.

In addition to this legal angle, there is a political one. Valles served four years on the Victorville City Council before leaving last year. In 2012, she made an unsuccessful run for Congress in the 8th Congressional District. In 2014, she married former Apple Valley mayor and

councilman Rick Roelle. Roelle in 2012 ran for First District supervisor, forcing the race into a November runoff against Lovingood. Lovingood prevailed. Recently, however, there has been much speculation about whether Valles, who garnered something of a reputation as a reformer while in office in Victorville as she challenged the staid and established political establishment that had grown up under former mayor Terry Caldwell who left office in 2010 just as Valles was taking office, is again considering a political run.

Valles on February 26 addressed in detail the charges that have been hurled at her.

"I have never been unprofessional with employees," she said. "As a manager, it is my primary duty to hold staff accountable. It is unfortunate that you will always have staff that cannot differentiate between accountability and harassment. These disgruntled employees had their opportunity to make complaints during their employment and upon

exit. Any complaint of harassment has to be investigated and acted upon. All personnel actions and investigations are thoroughly vetted and approved through the VVWRA Board's legal counsel, the law firm Best Best & Krieger. Any termination of employment is signed off by the general manager. What is interesting is all but one former employee that complained was under my direction. The rest were in the operations department. Only one requested to be transferred under me and resigned on their own accord. The supervisor of the department makes the case against the employee. Human resources ensures both parties are dealt with fairly and according to law with the guidance of legal counsel."

Valles continued, "I have never been vindictive in my dealing with employees nor have these accusations ever been brought up until now."

She dismissed accusations that she thwarted the promotion of qualified employees

and promoted unqualified employees, saying "VVWRA has a very strict hiring process that includes a diverse panel (2 to 4) made up of the department's supervisor, a human resources representative, if available an outside-the-agency individual with expertise in the area, and maybe a director if available. I am not on all panels. I may send the human resources technician or director of operations in my stead. Education, experience, profile assessment, and interview are all scored and the general manager makes the final hiring decisions after careful review of scores and files. He takes the recommendation of the panel into consideration. As the director of administration, I do sign all offer letters to employees at the direction of the general manager."

Valles addressed the nepotism charge lodged against her. "VVWRA has never hired a relative of mine despite baseless accusations," she said. "Nepotism is prohibited. If an applicant knows someone employed at VVWRA, that employee

is completely removed from the hiring process and the general manager is alerted."

Accusations that she violated agency policy "are purely subjective and baseless," she said. Nor had she violated employees' rights, she said. "All personal actions and investigations are thoroughly vetted and approved through the VVWRA Board's legal counsel, Best Best & Krieger. Any termination of employment is signed off by the General Manager after approval from legal counsel. Contractual employees, probationary employees or resignations are not entitled by law to the Skelly process."

California public employees are entitled to a so-called Skelly hearing, which allows an employee who is to be disciplined or fired to respond to the allegations prior to the imposition of any actual disciplinary action or termination.

Prior to going to work for the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority, Valles was the warden of the privately operated 550-bed,

adult male, Victor Valley Medium Community Correctional Facility in Adelanto. One former VVWRA said she "runs the VVWRA the operations plant like a prison."

She responded, saying, "I do not run VVWRA. I am the director of administration. I work under the direction of the general manager. The general manager runs VVWRA and if the general manager is absent the director of operations has general manager powers. Again this statement is subjective and baseless."

Valles said she did not see any connection between the bevy of charges levied at her and any ongoing effort to unionize VVWRA employees. Rather, she gave indication she was sympathetic to employees' efforts to up their remuneration.

"I did not see that [union formation efforts] as related," she said. "I have always heard complaints of low wages and benefits from staff. The VVWRA has not approved any salary surveys for adjustments to

Continued on Page 10

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San Bernardino County Coroner Reports

Coroner case #701501714 On 2-26-15 at 2:07 AM, John F. Sandusky, a 29 year old resident of Ontario, was riding a 2008 Kawasaki motorcycle eastbound on Riverside Drive east of Haven Avenue in Ontario when he apparently lost control and was ejected. Paramedics responded and pronounced him dead at the scene at 2:18 AM. The Ontario Police Department is investigating the collision. [022615 1220 EM]

Coroner Case #701501681 and 701501684 On 02/24/2015 at approximately 6:48 p.m., San Bernardino County Sheriff's deputies responded to a report of a traffic collision involving two pedestrians on Bear Valley Road west of Kiowa Road in Apple Valley. After paramedics arrived, Loretta Ann Delatorre, age: 59, was pronounced dead at the scene. Cary Gene Hughes, age: 56, was transported to Loma Linda University Medical Center where he was pronounced dead at 8:07 PM. The San Bernardino County Sheriff Department's Major Accident Investigation Team is investigating the collision. [02252015 1423 EM]

Coroner case # 701501619 On 02/22/15, at 12:46 AM, a 72 year-old female resident of Montebello, was a passenger in a 2001 Toyota sedan traveling westbound I-10 at Mountain View in the city area of Colton and collided with two other vehicles. She was transported to a nearby hospital where she was pronounced dead at 1:44 AM. CHP is investigating the collision. Her name will be released when next-of-kin is notified. [022215 0550 TC]

Coroner Case #701501629 On December 23, 2014, a four vehicle traffic collision occurred in the carpool lane of Interstate 210 in the area of Glendora or West Covina. During the collision, Diane Ruth Irvin, an 83 year old resident of Redlands, suffered upper body trauma. Irvin was initially treated for her injuries at the Los Angeles County University of Southern California Medical Center. Irvin later suffered complications related to her injuries and was admitted to the Loma Linda University Medical Center where she succumbed to her injuries and was declared dead on February 22, 2015, at 11:10 AM. The California Highway Patrol is investigating the incident. The time and exact location of the incident are part of the ongoing investigation.[02222015 1855 SC]

Updated: The traffic collision occurred in the carpool lane of the Interstate 210, north of Lone Hill Avenue, Glendora, at 1507 hours. The incident was investigated by the California Highway Patrol, Baldwin Park.[02242015 1100 SC]

Coroner case #701501590 On Friday, 02/20/2015, at approximately 6:40 pm, a 2010 Piaggio motor scooter was traveling southbound in the 15800 block Hellman Avenue in Chino. The driver of the scooter lost control and was ejected. Ahmad Pakzat, a 65 year-old resident of Eastvale was transported to a local hospital where he died from his injuries sustained in the collision. The Chino Police Department is investigating the collision. [022115 0030 TC]

The Coroner Reports are reproduced in their original format as authored by department personnel.

Punch, Counter-punch & Counter-counterpunch Between Lovingood & Valles

from page 9

salary and benefits in approximately 10 years. We have documented surveys from the majority of employees asking

for higher wages and benefits. These subjective comments are only coming from former disgruntled employees."

She did, however, say that the charges against her, Olds and Perez may have been inflated to galvanize employees and the public to support the formation of a union. "That could be a possi-

bility," she said. "There are always those employees that don't want to be held accountable. It is our job as management to hold staff accountable to the ratepayers."

Valles acknowledged that the authority had hired former ICR staff. "Yes, we have," she said. She reversed the question, suggesting that ICR

may have hired former VVWRA employees, thus giving them an incentive to make what she said are spurious charges against her and the authority. "The better question is: 'How many of these disgruntled employees are seeking or sought employment through ICR?'" she said.

Valles said she "most

definitely" saw the attacks now being leveled against her, which coincide with a claim against the agency by a company owned by Lovingood, as an effort to reduce her political viability.

"It is strange that I am being singled out," she said, and when asked if she believed her outspokenness in the past

with regard to public issues and her reformist stance as a member of the Victorville City Council had attracted the concerted and obviously coordinated attack she is experiencing, she answered in the affirmative. When asked if she harbored any future political aspirations, Valles said, "Right now I don't have any specific office in mind, but I am not ruling anything out in the future."

Valles said the positive achievements of the authority were being buried beneath the current contretemps and that a disinformation campaign was ongoing, which intended first and foremost to advance Lovingood financially, by benefitting his company, and secondarily politically by casting her, since there has been speculation about her running against him, in an unfavorable light. She said at least some former Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority employees were in league with him.

"Unfortunately, I cannot comment specifically on personnel matters," she said. "However, I can say that VVWRA would not be where it is today if we didn't

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Back & Forth Between Valles & Lovingood from page 10

ensure that our staff is competent, accurate and efficient. VVWRA has been recognized over and over for its technological innovation and its renewable energy programs, while receiving the highest awards available for governmental accounting and budgeting. These awards and recognitions are the result of the hard work of management and our employees. Sometimes we have to make tough decisions to protect the best interests of our member agencies and local ratepayers. We have a cohesive management team at VVWRA that is united in providing the best service at the lowest cost possible for the Victor Valley. I believe our years of outstanding performance and cost savings along with a long list of recognitions and accomplishments speak for themselves.

“With that said,” she continued, “I do find the timing of these frivolous allegations suspicious. In 2013 First Dis-

trict Supervisor Robert Lovingood was awarded a \$250,000 contract from the VVWRA Board for temporary staffing services for the upper narrows emergency. As the director of finance I spoke during public comments at the May 2013 meeting warning the current VVWRA Board members that this award could be a possible 1090/conflict of interest violation. The contract was awarded to ICR Staffing which First District Supervisor Robert Lovingood owns and operates. Since Supervisor Lovingood has been in office, VVWRA has paid his ICR Staffing agency \$560,000.”

Valles continued, “Lovingood recently lost the bid in 2014 for another temporary staffing contract award. Supervisor Lovingood sent his attorney to make defamatory remarks in open session attacking myself and VVWRA to include iLINK who was the lowest bidder. The VVWRA Board decided to rebid the contract, giving ICR a second chance at winning the contract. Again, ICR lost to iLINK. Lovingood’s at-

The Whitestem Blazingstar, which flourishes on dry, sandy soils in the desert valleys, foothills,



gravel fans, washes, and scrub to pinyon/juniper woodlands, goes by a number of names, such as the White-stemmed Mentzelia, Mentzelia albicaulis, the Acrolasia albicaulis, Acrolasia gracilis, Mentzelia albicaulis var. albicaulis, Mentzelia albicaulis var. ctenophora, Mentzelia albicaulis var. gracilis, Mentzelia albicaulis var. tenerrima, Mentzelia gracilis, Mentzelia mojavnensis, Trachyphytum gracile. It is of the family Loasaceae.

The whitestem blazingstar is an annual



wildflower with simple to freely branched stems

County Wildlife Corner Whitestem Blazingstar

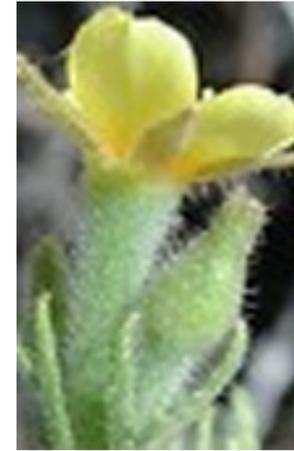
from two-and-a-half to 16.5 inches long. The stem is often glabrous below but becomes white and shining above. The hairs are often minutely barbed. The leaves measure from less than an inch to four inches long with the basal leaves typically linear to lanceolate in shape with variously fully-lobed, shallowly few-lobed to deeply pinatifid margins narrowing gradually to the petioles. The stem leaves are linear to lanceolate with subentire to irregularly lobed margins.

The inflorescence consists of open, few-flowered cymes at the ends of the branches.



The calyx is one-third inch to four-fifths of an inch long with short, triangular lobes from four-fifths of an inch to an inch-and-three-fifths inch long. The yellow petals are four-fifths of an inch to two-and-two-fifths of an inch long and often copper-colored at their base. The 15-35

stamens are shorter than the petals. The capsules are one-twelfth-of an inch to one-eighth of an inch long, covered with firm, stiff hairs and are narrowed toward the base.



Most often the whitestem blazing Star grows erect. An annual herb, the yellow flower has five shiny yellow petals. The fruit is a narrow, straight or curving utricle two-fifths of an inch to one-inch-and-a-fifth in length. It contains many angular seeds covered in tiny bumps.

In San Bernardino County, they are plentiful in the area around Barstow, Daggett, north of Barstow on the Fort Irwin Military Reservation, and in the San Bernardino Mountains.

Their flowering time runs from March to July.

The Whitestem Blazingstar is edible and has



medicinal uses.

The orange seed is put in a hot frying pan and when the seed turns a darker color warm water is added and stirred until it forms a gravy. The oily seed is parched and ground into a meal and then mixed with water to make a mush. The seed meal can be knead-



ed into a seed butter and used as a spread on bread. The minute seeds are much used for food by several native North American Indian tribes.

A poultice of the crushed, soaked seeds has been applied to burns and also to relieve toothache pain.

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torney then filed a claim against VVWRA for \$3.6 million.

“Since then I have filed 1090 inquiries with several investigative bodies such as the San Bernardino County District Attorney’s Office in July 2014, the FPPC, the Attorney General through Congressman Paul Cook’s office, and the FBI,” Valles said. “Now the same VVWRA Board members that awarded First District Supervisor Robert Lovingood’s possibly illegal contract is calling for an investigation focusing on me, who filed inquiries of possible 1090 violations. It has come to my attention that these same disgruntled employees have been meeting with two members

of the VVWRA Board and Lovingood. I expect this investigation to disclose those facts as well as who on the VVWRA Board has received campaign contributions from Supervisor Lovingood, his wife, and ICR Staffing. I cannot help but believe this is in direct retaliation for whistleblowing and an attempt to tarnish my reputation in the community.”

Overall, Valles said, “The former employees’ claims are false. All personnel actions are thoroughly vetted through the Best Best & Krieger Law firm, who are retained by and work directly for the VVWRA Board members. The allegations of falsifying timecards are false. I am an exempt employee that can account for all my

time. My accomplishments at VVWRA speak for themselves. The allegation of campaigning on agency time is false. I am not in office nor did I seek reelection. I directly oversee the public information department and may attend occasional community functions as part of my job duties. Unfortunately, there are always those employees that cannot differentiate between accountability and harassment. As a director over the human resources department it is my primary duty to hold staff accountable to the ratepayers. It is unfortunate that the ratepayers have to pay tens of thousands of dollars on investigations for frivolous claims from disgruntled employees who have exhausted their ad-

ministrative remedies at separation. Since First District Supervisor Robert Lovingood lost his contract with VVWRA, he has vowed to destroy me and VVWRA. It is too bad the taxpayers will have to pick up the tab for his political agenda and profit.”

The attorney for ICR Staffing, Diana Carloni Nourse, is a former Hesperia mayor and councilwoman, who served in the 1990s. Like Valles was in Victorville over a decade later, Carloni-Nourse was estranged from her male council colleagues for most of her tenure, and perceived as something of a reformer and political dissident. Her emergence as the legal mouthpiece for

Continued on Page 12

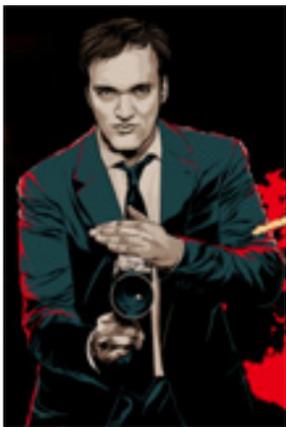
California Style Costuming Hollywood

By Grace Bernal



Chaplin's costume, the Golden Age with Marlene Dietrich's costumes, the retro phase of superheroes like Superman, to modern day films like American Hustle's Christian Bale. The costume designers featured are San Bernardino's very own Edith Head to designer Deborah Na-

With all the excitement of the Academy Awards going on in Hollywood this week the focus is on The Hollywood Costume Exhibit. Since October 2nd, 2014, the old Wilshire May Company building has been hosting the exhibit, where it will continue to be on display until March 2nd, 2015. You better hurry! The tour of this exhibit is amazing! There are many sections dedicated to old Hollywood and the silent movie era like Charlie



doolman Landis. If you are a lover of art, design, makeup, and film this is



a must see exhibit. The exhibit is full of information with regard to costume, design, and creating the character. There are interviews with filmmakers chat-



ting with their costume designers, including directors such as Quentin Tarantino, Tim Burton, Alfred Hitchcock, Martin Scorsese, along with costume designers they worked with on their films. The insider knowledge given about the costumes created riveted me. The exhibit is well organized and thought out in detail. The sense of showmanship is felt in every section. The voice over interviews, costumes, and many images of collections, not to mention the beautifully curated costumes themselves make it worth the expense of a ticket and the bother of venturing into Los Angeles. The

experience for me was emotional because it allowed me to get insight into why I love clothes and eras so much. As Deborah Noodleman said "This is an exhibition about the movies, storytelling, about caring, about how you can see a movie over and over and over again because you want to be in



it." If you want to come learn how costumes are brought to life, get to the exhibit by March 2nd. Costumes are what makes a star and in a way we all wear a costumes every day because



"What a costume designer does is a cross between magic and camouflage. We create the illusion of changing the actors into what they are not. We ask the public to believe that every time they see a performer on the screen, he's become a different person."
~Edith Head

every day we play a role in our lives. The exhibit is at Wilshire May Company building at 6067 Wilshire Boulevard, 310-247-3049. Tickets for adults are \$20. Whatever you have going on this week I hope it's a great one.



As always, if there's anything you need, I'd love to hear from you: Greygris@aol.com or visit my page I Love Your Style on Facebook Copyright Grace Bernal all rights reserved

Back & Forth Between Valles & Lovingood from page 11

Lovingood, and by virtue of that station at odds with Valles, is viewed by some of those with historical perspective, as ironic. According to

Carloni Nourse, Valles, while "acting within the scope and course of her employment" with the Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority created "a sham bidding process" that favored iLink over ICR "in an attempt to deter and eliminate ICR from com-

peting for the contract." As a result, according to Carloni Nourse, claimant [i.e., ICR] and its employees have been damaged in an aggregate sum of \$3.6 million for wages and profits unpaid taken from claimant."

The *Sentinel* has confirmed that Valles did

file similar complaints touching on the ICR contract with the VVWRA with the district attorney's office, the FPPC,

The Count... from page 5

ed that the issue also be referred to the district attorney to see if misappropriation of public funds charges are also warranted...

The cover page of the Liebert Cassidy Whitmore report indicates that no attorney client confidentiality issues would hamper the disclosure of the information, but Adams, who is highly conscious of how what transpired reflects poorly upon his law firm colleague Barlow, has advised that the council keep the entire matter

Congressman Cook's office and the FBI. A copy of the complaint filed with the FBI obtained by the *Sentinel* ran to

under wraps while hoping the district attorney's office will decline to prosecute so this chapter in the history of the City of Gracious Living,

315 pages and contained a full range of back-up materials relating to the contract and ICR's claim against VVWRA.

which has the further potential of complicating his relations with two of the members of the city council, can remained buried...



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