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Published January 30th, 2013

## Letters to the Editor

Editor:

As a patron of the Rheem Theater and a volunteer driver for the Spirit Van, I understand both the needs of the aging and disabled, and the theater operator. Here are some thoughts on the current debate about the Rheem theater stair lift.

The ADA is not a black and white regulation and this situation is certainly a grey one. The disabled do have access to the theater, just not to the second floor. And for the wheel chair bound, a stair lift will not provide second floor access. In the ADA case Clint Eastwood took to court and won, it was demonstrated that the disabled did have limited access to the business.

The Rheem Theater stair lift makes no sense from either a safety or business perspective.

From a safety perspective, the second floor of the Rheem Theater is not a place for the disabled. In the case of an emergency (fire, earthquake or something else) on the second floor they are not only at greater risk for themselves, but also for everybody else. For example on airplanes, limited ability passengers are prohibited from sitting in emergency exit rows.

From a business perspective we know that neither the operator nor the building owner can afford a lift. If the business is not economically viable, an investment in a stair lift is like giving a heart transplant to the terminally ill. And, consider the liability. What happens if there is an emergency immediately following the installation of the lift and disabled folks are killed or injured - because they are on the second floor? Is the owner or operator immune from lawsuits because they are complying with the ADA? That will certainly be no defense when they know they are ignoring well understood risks.

There is a safer alternative to the lift that could provide more disabled access to other movies. The operator could rotate movies between the upstairs and downstairs screens say on one or more days of the week/month. Since the operator is currently being bullied by a State agency I suggest he call our local congressman. The ADA was not passed to increase the risk of harm to our aging and disabled population or to drive small businesses out of business and cost people jobs.

Dave Cummins  
Moraga

Editor:

It was sad to read this week about the east bay teenager who received serious brain damage when he fell from his skateboard and wasn't wearing a helmet. I decided to check and see if compliance with the rules at the Moraga skate board facility had improved. Unfortunately it hasn't. The rules say helmets are required and less than half the participants were wearing helmets. I hope participants, parents, and Town officials won't wait until we have a local accident to begin enforcing the rules. The police assure me they do give tickets but apparently not often enough or the fines aren't high enough to encourage compliance and the participants often run when police arrive. Any ideas anyone?

Pete Williams  
Moraga

Editor:

I just bought a house and moved to Orinda, to find out there is no physical way to drop my daughter off at school which starts at 8am and get a parking spot at Bart to go into San Francisco where I work 5 days a week. I am number 944 on the waiting list for monthly parking and there is no non-monthly parking available after 7:15am on weekdays, and no parking available within a mile walking to the station. How is a working mom supposed to live if she can't get to work every weekday?

This is ridiculous and there should be resident only parking made available at Bart stations for working folks that live in the town where they pay taxes which support public transit. Or there should be a shuttle from a parking garage provided. I am not saying any of this has to be free.

If there are a 1,000 people on the Orinda Bart station monthly pass waiting list and the pass is \$60 per month, that is \$60,000 per month or over \$720,000 per year of potential Bart parking revenue that could pay for a parking garage or a shuttle. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure this out but apparently Bart management and Orinda politicians can't seem to figure this out and solve the parking issue at Orinda Bart station.

Maybe I should quit my job and buy some land that is zoned parking and shuttle folks to Bart because the politicians can't seem to figure out what makes fiscal sense as well as solve real issues for those living in their community.

Signed a shocked Orinda new resident,  
Sheri Scott

Editor:

I very much enjoyed your cover story regarding horses in Lamorinda. I, too, was part of the "horsy set" as a young girl. I grew up in Orinda in the 1950s and I had a passion for horses beginning at the age of 3 when my father took me to ride the ponies in Tilden Park. Later, I rode rental horses at Buckeye Ranch, located at the end of Springhill Road in Lafayette, for many years. Finally, my father surprised me one Sunday afternoon by suggesting we go look at a horse to buy. I was so elated!

By this time I was an accomplished rider so we picked a 5 year old Blue Roan quarter horse gelding named Blue Boy. He was a former cattle horse which had been brought from New Mexico to the Preston Dyer Stables in San Ramon. My father bought him and asked Bob Keeney, owner of Buckeye Ranch, to trailer him to Buckeye for boarding. I kept him there, alternately, in the pasture, paddock, and barn and have so many happy memories of my time there. I was a member of a group of young people called the Buckeye Wranglers. We met in a small little building which was the former home of Bob Keeney and his first wife, Nancy. It was a home he built himself when he first came there. The Buckeye Wranglers rode in the Walnut Festival parade every year and that was a big event back then. One of the other members of our group was George Bruns for whom the Shakespeare Theater is named. I remember riding down Pleasant Hill Road and the various side roads all the way to Alamo and to the top of Lavorna Road to meet a friend at Johnston Stables where she kept her horse. On one of my visits, a group from Johnston and I rode to the top of Mt. Diablo and camped out overnight with our horses. What fun! Routinely, I rode back to Buckeye at the end of the day, galloping bareback through the vast pear orchards along the way. The freeway had not been built yet.

The last place I boarded my horse was in Rheem, where Campolindo High School and the adjacent housing development, Carol Ranch, is now. I rode my horse over that vacant land and the adjoining vacant land, some of which is now 24 Hour Fitness, Round Table Pizza and Chef Chao.

Over time, there were fewer and fewer places to ride. I was growing up and getting ready to go to college and the demands on my time precluded my ability to devote to riding. One of the saddest days for me was saying good-bye to Blue Boy as his new owner was loading him into a horse trailer in Rheem which would take him to his new home in Castro Valley. He and I had shared so many wonderful rides...

Betty Kendall  
Moraga

Editor:

I read with interest the letter from a young citizen named Alex on the subject of gun violence, rights, and control. As a psychiatrist I believe that relying upon mental health practitioners to keep our communities safe from the gun violence is destined to fail. No one can argue with restricting access to weapons to those who have histories of major mental illness and aggression. However, the vast majority of people who utilize the mental health system are not violent. Furthermore, of the approximate 100,000 shootings each year in our country, few are the act of someone in psychiatric care considered dangerous.

For those who cry out regarding their Second Amendment rights, there must also be a balance with the rights of all Americans to live in a safe society. The rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights have limits. The right to free speech doesn't allow one to incite hate crimes. The pursuit of happiness is balanced by one's actions as they impact upon others. The right to assembly doesn't allow rioting. With our rights come obligations as well. As a physician who has worked in emergency rooms, treated gunshot wound victims, and dealt with the stress and horror for victims and their families, I support measures that can be expected to reduce gun violence. This includes background checks and waiting periods for gun purchases. It also includes gun registration, as we do with cars. Limiting magazines to 10 rounds as proposed by Senator Feinstein makes sense. I remain unconvinced that private citizens need assault rifles for self-defense. There is no need for armor piercing ammunition accessible to the public. Kevlar protection is for police and the military. Gas masks and tear gas should not be available through the Internet. If there is a War on Terror we should not be assisting domestic terrorists.

In my practice I see the police and firefighters who risk their lives for us. We should be on their side. Our public safety officers are often in undue jeopardy as our society has made it easy for weapons of war to be obtained by those who don't need and shouldn't have them. I have no interest in preventing lawful use of guns for hunting, protection and competition. Yet our nation needs to address this major public health issue.

As a suggestion to Alex who mentions an interest in amendments to our Constitution, let me suggest that that younger generation work to secure ratification by three more states of the Equal Rights Amendment in their lifetime. It is long overdue and will make us secure in a different though important way.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Dr. Bob Larsen  
Orinda

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[back](#)

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