

The Carmel Pine Cone

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Pilot, passenger walk away from C.V. crash

By MARY SCHLEY

A VETERAN pilot was forced to crash-land his plane on an oak tree in the Cachagua area Sunday morning after the aircraft started losing altitude for unknown reasons. While Erik Fleming’s 26-year-old single-prop aircraft was destroyed, he and his passenger managed to



PHOTO/MONTEREY COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE

After the pilot who owns this plane was forced to crash-land it, he and his passenger were airlifted from the remote area by Calfire.

free themselves from the wreckage with minor bumps and bruises, he said Monday.

Fleming, a longtime pilot and instructor who is also well versed in aerobatics and works as an air traffic controller at Monterey Regional Airport, was out for a scenic flight with a passenger in his yellow and blue American Champion 8KCAB Super Decathlon. At around 9:40 a.m., they were flying over Upper Carmel Valley near Miller Canyon and Laurel Springs Road and had just finished a maneuver when the plane “started diving a little bit,” he recounted.

Not responding

When he told the passenger, who is also a pilot, to pull up, the plane didn’t respond. She continued flying “Blondie” while he worked the throttle, but even though the engine was running and the prop was spinning, it wasn’t getting the thrust they needed to rise, Fleming said.

At that point, he started looking for places they could land. He spotted a field but realized it was too far away.

“We’re getting slower and lower,” he said. “There was nothing we could do.”

He warned his copilot they were going to have to force a landing and told her to stay calm.

“Normally when you’re in this situation in a canyon,” he said, a pilot would try to land the aircraft uphill, but he worried the rocks and dirt were too loose and that the plane would either slide back or overturn.

See **CRASH** page 23A

COUNTY FAIR BRAWL LEADS TO SEASIDE SHOOTING

By MARY SCHLEY and KELLY NIX

THE MONTEREY County Fair was forced to shut down two hours early Saturday after several brawls broke out and rumors of a man with a gun spread via social media, prompting panic, according to some attendees and law enforcement. As a result, fair officials have promised to beef up security at the longtime family-friendly event next year.

“On Saturday evening, there were several large fights that broke out in the carnival area,” Monterey County Fair CEO Kelly Violini-Rodoni confirmed.

Monterey Police officers who were patrolling the event that night reported the violence escalated as more conflicts began.

“We think there were about 13 individuals versus one or two on the other side, so it was very clearly

disproportionate,” MPD Lt. Ethan Andrews said Thursday. “It was a very violent, very lopsided, very brutal beating of these two individuals. It was very egregious.”

Andrews, who was working at the fair that night, said the first fight was reported around 8 p.m., with another reported 15 minutes later and a third not long after that.

A shooting?

“Then we got a report that someone told a security guard there’d been a shooting in the carnival area,” he said. Officers were already in that section of the fair, since that’s where the first fight had occurred, but they didn’t see or hear anything.

“And there was a lot of secondhand and thirdhand information about someone with a gun moving through

See **BRAWL** page 22A

Political landscape shifts as people leave California

SUMMER IS not officially over, but moving season is, and for the fifth year in a row, U-Haul reported more people renting trucks to move out of California than to move in.

Data from January through July show a tighter margin

Capitol Access

By CAITLIN CONRAD

than in years past, U-Haul said, with arrivals to California at 49 percent, and departures at 51 percent.

But moving company PODS says people are continuing to leave the Golden State in “droves,” with three California markets ranking in the top 10 on the company’s move-out list.

The California exodus has been happening for several years, with the state saying goodbye to more people than

See **ACCESS** page 16A

Pastor bracing for another council rebuff

By MARY SCHLEY

ANTICIPATING MORE bad news when the Carmel City Council again contemplates the objections to their JB Pastor project on Dolores south of Seventh next Monday, Patrice Pastor and his Esperanza Carmel managing director, Chris Mitchell, reiterated their disappointment with the city’s planning process and the residents who are fighting their efforts to build a mixed-use complex on three lots south of the steakhouse on the corner.

“My position remains the same. Esperanza Carmel is not treated fairly. If the same rhetoric and stalling under the guise of bureaucracy continue at the meeting on Monday, I will have no choice but to reconsider my business position in Carmel,” Pastor said. “I know the vast majority of the community are in favor of what we are trying to do. It is very sad that our elected representatives are listening to these 11 calculated people, instead of the other 3,113 residents of Carmel and their very own planning commission.”

The journey to approval by the commission took six years, Mitchell noted.

‘Vocal minority’

“We designed and re-designed it five times. It is in downtown Carmel, not a residential area,” he said. “Objections based on parking, building size, CEQA and landscaping are not valid — which is why the planning commission unanimously approved this project in April.”

Mitchell allowed that “a small and vocal minority” — in this case, 11 residents, including former public officials and a woman who lives next to the proposed building

See **PASTOR** page 9A

MIIS to close by 2027, its parent school announced. See page 12A.

Salinas Valley town OKs 3,500 new homes

■ After no growth for decades

By CHRIS COUNTS

REJECTING THE idea that the housing needs to be denser and more affordable, the Gonzales City Council unanimously voted Tuesday to approve a new subdivision of 3,498 residential units — a move that will significantly add to its existing population of about 8,600 people.

Known as the Vista Lucia project, the development will be located on 770 acres of annexed land that’s bordered by Fanoe Road to the west, Associated Lane to the north, Iverson Road to the east and Fremont Peak Parkway to the south. Just east of the city, it will include a mix of single-family and multi-family residential units at a variety of price points, from single-family homes on larger lots, to high-density apartments.

‘We need housing’

There will also be “two commercial/residential mixed-use centers, sites for elementary and middle schools, and recreational facilities, including parks, athletic fields, trails, plazas, community gardens and neighborhood squares,” plans show.

The development has been in the works for 15 years, and the buildout is anticipated to take three decades.

For more than a century, the Fanoe family has owned and farmed the land, and one member, Tom Fanoe, who also became president of Levi Strauss, was instrumental

in making the decision to develop it, according to Taven Kinison Brown, the community development director for Gonzales. Fanoe died in June.

Before the vote, several residents voiced support for the project, including Monica Rico.

“We need housing, period,” Rico told the city council.

See **HOMES** page 17A



RENDERING/PEMBROOK DEVELOPMENT

Despite concerns about affordability, the Gonzales City Council voted unanimously this week to OK a new development project, Vista Lucia, which will include 3,500 mostly market-rate homes.