

MEDIATE THIS !

LOOKING BACK ON 2018: FOUR REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

Dear Reader:
Professional mediators risk burnout when prolonged exposure to strife deadens our spirits. After you've seen all the ways people drive one another to distraction — and this column has provided just a sampling — it's tempting to agree with the British philosopher Thomas Hobbes that the natural state of *Homo sapiens* is "nasty, brutish, and short."

To counteract that downward pull, we often replenish our capacity for hope by studying humanity at its finest. As conflict resolution practitioners, we analyze extraordinary acts by ordinary people for lessons about the power of empathy.

This year has had no shortage of bad actors and lamentable actions. But these 12 months also encompassed an array of surprising accords and valiant deeds that augur well for civilization in 2019.

In our last column of the old year, here are four reasons from the worlds of

politics, business, law and order, and international affairs to think humankind can achieve greater cohesion in the new year.

In politics, Hands Across the Hills, a grassroots alliance of progressives and conservatives, is teaching the nation how to get along.

The group was launched after the 2016 election when a group of Massachusetts voters invited a group of Kentucky voters to reach across the partisan divide. The two delegations started an exchange program and hosted each other for week-end visits full of dialogue and healing.

It took courage for these people to open their hearts to strangers. The resulting friendships prove that ideological differences don't have to get personal. "Although we don't agree politically," founder Paula Green told National Public Radio last month, "we've come to love and care about each other a great deal."

In business, eons-long patterns of harassment and bullying have been disrupted by the #MeToo



THAM LUANG RESCUE OPERATION CENTER VIA AP

It took international cooperation to rescue the boys from the flooded cave in Thailand over the summer.

movement. Going forward, powerless people will no longer assume that powerful people can victimize them at will.

The first step in conflict resolution is opening up communication. #MeToo has achieved this by empowering two groups to speak out: victims of predatory behavior and bystanders who don't know how to intervene.

The resulting public dialogue won't eliminate misconduct anytime soon. But it will begin the process of setting clear boundaries for co-existing respectfully.

In law and order, the First Step Act criminal justice reform bill is poised to give nonviolent offenders a chance to rejoin their families, return to their communities and contribute to society.

The measure was spearheaded by two legislators who haven't been the best of friends. The surprising partnership between Sens. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, and Richard Durbin, D-Ill., is especially encouraging because it didn't happen overnight.

These two congressional leaders and their factions must have been working on this for quite some time. If they can come together here, they can explore other opportunities for consensus.

The international front offers our fourth reason for hope in what may be the most uplifting story of this or any calendar year.

Thailand's newest tourist attraction is a cave in the Tham Luang Forest Park where the 18-day entrapment of 12 boys and their soccer coach united our human family in an unprecedented display of selfless valor.

It literally took a global village to save these children.

The nations of the world sent their best rescue personnel and equipment, and

the ad hoc coalition succeeded by collaborating seamlessly.

The real miracle of the Thai cave rescue may be how the coach, a former Buddhist monk, helped his players stave off the panic that might have ended their lives.

He did this by tutoring them in the basics of emotional buoyancy — relax, clear the mind and stay positive.

Perhaps the best New Year's resolution anyone can make is that, whatever conflicts come our way in 2019, we will try to manage them by emulating the young Thai heroes and fortifying our own personal resilience.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as president of the San-Diego based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003.

Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution? Share your story with The Mediator via email at mediatethis@ncrconline.com or as an online submission by visiting www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

WINE

FROM B1

wine-tasting adventure has not yet been set, but Rupp thinks that for \$399 per person, the three-hour tour will soon be offered to anyone willing to pay.

The ranch recently did a test run with a reporter and photographer tagging along.

After a 45-minute aerial tour of the land, which sits about 400 feet above sea level at its southern boundaries in the San Pasqual Valley and rises to over 4,000 feet in the north bordered by the La Jolla Indian Reservation, the first stop was at the ruins of the Anderson Homestead, circa the 1870s. A rose wine-tasting table was set up with crackers and cheese and fruit.

Cellist Daniel Plane

played some Bach and other pieces as various red wines were sipped.

A Massachusetts native who moved to the San Diego area just five months ago, Plane, 35, said it was a bit odd to be playing his music in the middle of a vast area.

"They want to expand everything they're offering and I think they've got something good going on here," he said.

All that's left of the Anderson Homestead ruins are the brick fireplaces because in 2007 — "thanks to SDG&E," Rupp says — the Witch Creek/Guejito fire destroyed the ruins and thousands of oak trees on the property. The ranch settled a lawsuit against the utility for an undisclosed sum. Some of that money has been used to plant new oaks, by the thousands, all over the property.

From there, the wine-tasting group traveled by SUV to the Maxcy Winery ruins. In the 1850s, Asher Maxcy, whose California gold rush dreams didn't materialize, got into cattle and wine. He grew 1,500 acres of grapes and built a winery in 1852 that existed for about four decades.

There, where white wines were being offered for tasting, an electric violin was being played in front of the winery ruins by 29-year-old Amy Serrano Burcombe, who was wearing a black, sequined cocktail dress and knee-high boots. She said the boots were both practical and fashionable.

"I heard there were rattlesnakes out here so I'm being cautious walking around," she said. "These boots are style and protection."

The final stop was at the

hacienda built in 1974 by the late Benjamin Coates, the billionaire owner of the property who purchased it that year after efforts by the state to acquire it for a park failed. The ranch is now owned by a corporation headed by Theodate Coates of New York City, Benjamin's daughter, who comes to visit a couple times a year.

The red wine station featured a singing guitarist and 360-degree views of the southern part of the property from atop a hill. The man pouring the wine, who has been a ranch hand and security officer at the park, is Rupp's nephew, Dominic, who said the whole wine thing has opened his eyes to a new experience.

For years, the ranch has been off-limits to the public. Hunting is not allowed because of the fire danger. Rupp said deer and mountain lions use the ranch as a refuge, a free zone where they feel safe and reproduce in vast numbers.

"It's like Switzerland to them," Rupp said. Guejito is also a cattle

ranch, home to 1,000 to 2,000 head, depending on the time of year.

"Every way we can figure out how to make money on this ranch means we can take better care of the property," Rupp said. "The most important thing to the survival of this ranch is a diversified income string. We have cows, we have produce, we have wine. That is what will ensure the survival of the ranch and the maintenance of our agricultural enterprises. It costs a lot of money to maintain this property and to keep it as pristine as it is."

For the past year and a half, the ranch has also been offering wine tasting on Sundays near its headquarters off state Route 78, about three miles east of the Safari Park on what is known as Rockwood Ranch, which Rancho Guejito purchased in 2007.

Currently, about 40 acres of grapes, 17 varieties, are being grown on the property at different elevations and more vineyards will be planted each year, Rupp


said. The grapes are then shipped to a wine-making operation in Escondido where they are crushed, fermented, bottled and labeled. The finished product is sold at the ranch and select stores in the Escondido area.

There are a lot of wine-tasting rooms in San Diego County.

"What do we have that's different from the other wineries? We just happen to back up into a 36-square-mile ranch," Rupp said. "We try to capitalize on what we have that's different from the other wineries in addition to having great wine. We want to promote the agritourism that can go with the wine. What's more enjoyable than having a nice glass of wine and looking at what San Diego County looked like 5,000 years ago?"

For more information about Rancho Guejito, visit ranchoguejitovineyard.com.

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Daily difference

Charitable giving opportunities during the holidays:

Holiday canned food drive: The Tippy Crow has partnered with the S.D. fire dept. and the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank and will accept canned goods from noon to 2 a.m. today and Monday at 770 Fifth Ave., San Diego. Donors will receive one no-line, no-cover ticket and one buy one, get one food or beverage item per \$10 worth of donations at the Tippy Crow. All donations will be collected on Tuesday and distributed to the Food Bank. For information and other drop-off locations, visit facebook.com/pg/thetipsycrow/ events.

Pet Food Drive: Veterinary Specialty Hospital is collecting dog and cat food for donation to the S.D. Food Bank for distribution to benefit local families and their pets. Donations can be dropped off through Jan. 4 in the lobby at 10435 Sorrento Valley Road. Information: (858) 875-7500 or vshsd.com

Warm Coats and Warm Hearts Coat Drive: Burlington Coat Factory has teamed with Delivering Good to provide warm clothes to kids and families. Donate a gently worn coat at a Burlington store and receive 10 percent off your entire purchase (in-store only), through Jan. 21. Information and store locations: bit.ly/2Kalfmo

CASES

FROM B1

A decade has passed since the last such case in the county. Trial is set for Jan. 28.

• Luis Alberto Virgen — accused of driving 10 unauthorized immigrants from Mexico in an East County pursuit that ended in a rollover crash that killed three of the passengers on Nov. 29. The Border Patrol tossed a spike strip across the west-bound lanes of Interstate 8 in the community of Boulevard, causing the pickup's tires to blow out. The driver lost control of the truck and crashed. Virgen is charged with three felony counts of murder; three counts of gross vehicular manslaughter and seven misdemeanor counts of reckless driving causing injury. His preliminary hearing in El Cajon Superior Court is set for Feb. 7.

Those who died were Erika Jiusten Gonzalez-Cardoso, 38; Jorge Luis Garcia-Isordia, 22; and a 34-year-old man whose name had not been released by the Medical Examiner's Office as of last week.

• Matthew Sullivan — accused of fatally stabbing his wife, Elizabeth Sullivan, 31, after she had met with a divorce lawyer on Oct. 13, 2014, to end their stormy marriage. Almost exactly two years later, Sullivan, then in the Navy, was packing up his Liberty Station home when his wife's decomposed body surfaced in San Diego Bay. He is charged with murder. A preliminary hearing in San Diego Superior Court is set for Feb. 14.

• Timothy Cook and Derrick Spurgeon — accused in the death of Oscar Medina, 28, a music producer, after his body was found crammed into a metal drum discovered

in San Diego Bay on Oct. 12, 2017. Cook is charged with murder, suspected of stabbing his roommate more than 60 times. Spurgeon is charged as an accessory after the fact, accused of driving the boat used to dump the body. Their trial in Chula Vista Superior Court is set for Feb. 19.

• Kellen Winslow II — accused of raping two homeless women in their 50s in the spring of 2018, and exposing himself to another woman in her 50s gardening in front of her home. The former NFL player, who is the namesake son of a Chargers legend, is also accused of raping a teen girl in 2003, when he was 19. His trial in Vista Superior Court is set for March 19.

• Sheriff's Deputy Richard Fischer — accused of on-the-job sexual misconduct involving 16 accusers. The allegations against 32-year-old Fischer range from groping women during arrests to forcing one woman to perform a sex act. Fischer faces upward of 25 years in prison if convicted. His trial in Vista Superior Court is set for April 15.

• Jesse Michael Gomez — accused of fatally shooting San Diego police Officer Jonathan "J.D." De Guzman, 43, and wounding Officer Wade Irwin on July 28, 2016. Gomez is charged with murder and attempted murder, with a special-circumstance allegation of murder of a police officer. He faces the death penalty if convicted. His preliminary hearing in San Diego Superior Court is set for June 17.

• Jon David Guerrero — accused of killing and injuring homeless people by driving railroad spikes into some victims, setting two on fire and battering others over a six-month span in 2016. He is charged with four counts of murder, two arson counts, three counts of attempted murder and five counts of assault likely to cause great bodily injury.

Regular criminal proceedings against him are on hold pending a May 20 mental competency trial in San Diego Superior Court to determine whether he can assist in his own defense and understand the charges in what could be a death penalty case. He remains at Patton State Hospital.

paoline.repard@suniontribune.com
teri.figueroa@suniontribune.com

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