

## MEDIATE THIS !

## THE PAPERLESS OFFICE: SAVE TREES, LOSE PRODUCTIVITY

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

## Dear Mediator:

My employer, a nonprofit organization, has instituted a computer program called "Papersave." The goal is to reduce office paper consumption. It's a noble endeavor, except for this: Papersave requires over a dozen steps to submit a document. It now takes 10 minutes to complete a task that used to take 2 minutes. Everyone in the office hates Papersave (except the accounting department!), but the leadership team has been touting how "green" we are, so no one wants to speak against it.

*Feeling Blue not Green in San Carlos*

## Dear Feeling Blue:

Like the open floor plan, the paperless office was a brilliant workplace innovation until real workers actually started using it.

In their 2003 book, "The Myth of the Paperless Office," Abigail J. Sellen and Richard H.R. Harper, researchers at Hewlett Packard and Microsoft respectively, examined the sinuous 30-year campaign to digitize all business documents.

"We have seen varying success in reducing paper use, ranging from dismal failure to mild reduc-

tion," the authors wrote. "We have heard stories of paperless offices, but we have never seen one."

Sellen and Harper discovered that efforts to break the paper habit can backfire: "In one organization, managers banned the use of personal filing cabinets, only to find that people resorted to using their cars or home offices to store their paper files."

History is clearly on your side in this workplace stalemate. But the historical record is rarely helpful when management hands down a decision that subordinates have trouble implementing.

Your executives have literally bought into this concept. They are undoubtedly aware that rank-and-file staff are resisting the change. That will put them on the defensive, which is a short road to a full-blown conflict.

So your best first step is counterintuitive. Take a deep breath, and try to envision how the learning curve for this new program might start to flatten out.

Early on in conflict resolution scenarios, mediators ask both parties to give each other the benefit of the doubt. This isn't just a courtesy. It's a tool for sweeping away the emotional debris of distrust so everyone can



GETTY IMAGES

**This week's query comes from an office worker who questions the efficiency of a newly implemented "paperless office" policy.**

start afresh.

At the next opportunity, a senior employee should reassure an influential manager that your team supports environmental sustainability and you all are committed to making this venture work.

Give her or him a moment to absorb this news. Then suggest that tracking the real-time rollout of the new system could identify ways to improve it and help

everyone embrace it.

You've seen how the paperless program eats up time that could be spent more productively. Now you have to document that by keeping a desk log. If you can also show that other important tasks are getting short shrift under the new system, make sure to note that.

The evidence you gather may prove you wrong; it's possible you think you're spending more time

on electronic documentation than you really are. If it proves you right, your next step is also counterintuitive.

Present the time-usage data with a constructive request: Is there any way to retool the new system so the disruptions it causes don't outweigh natural resource conservation?

In our daily lives, environmentalism often asks us to make difficult resource choices. Is it better to wipe off a dirty plate with a paper towel and waste wood pulp, or rinse it off in the sink and use up water?

In the world of business (for-profit and nonprofit), time and productivity are premium resources. Your organization is trying to balance those needs with a larger social responsibility. Working together, leadership and staff can come up with creative solutions that will achieve both goals.

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](mailto:mediatethis@ncrconline.com) or as an online submission by visiting [www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis](http://www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis). All submissions will be kept anonymous.

## NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

## OUTDOORS: ERNIE COWAN

## Much to learn from county's lagoons

It was naturalist Henry David Thoreau who wrote, "In wildness is the preservation of the world."

As urbanization creeps over the natural landscape, wildness is harder and harder to find. Fortunately, there are dedicated people who have worked hard to preserve a few unique wild places where we can escape to renew our souls.

I ran into a couple of those folks this week while exploring the wildness at Carlsbad's Batiquitos Lagoon.

Kathy Dickey and Deb Mossa are two women who've had successful careers in research and the corporate world, but now devote much of their time as volunteers promoting the lagoon and its many wonders.

Both are active in education programs that bring the natural world to life for kids or curious adults. Their cup of knowledge is full, and I enjoyed learning from them about the unique natural landscape that lagoons offer.

There are six lagoons dotted along San Diego County's coastline. Some might count seven, but there are subtle differences between a lagoon and an estuary. Some might consider Tijuana River basin a lagoon, but it's actually an estuary.

Lagoons are shallow with very slow flows of water, while estuaries are deeper with faster moving currents.

The county's lagoons are Los Peñasquitos, south of Del Mar; San Diego between Del Mar and Solana Beach; San Elijo at the south end of Encinitas; Batiquitos in Carlsbad; Agua Hedionda in Carlsbad; and Buena Vista separating Carlsbad and Oceanside.

All are worth visiting.

Batiquitos Lagoon might be one of the most interesting because of the effects of urbanization.

With construction of the railroad crossing the lagoon in 1881 and Interstate 5 in 1965, Batiquitos was separated into three distinct basins, connected only by narrow passages. Each basin has its own personality.

The western basin has active tidal flushing and more marine species. Nesting terns find refuge here on protected sand bars, and spawning halibut use the warm, protected and shallow waters as a nursery.

The middle basin between the railroad tracks along the coast and I-5 freeway begins to transition from salt to freshwater. Water here is brackish, but birds like black



ERNIE COWAN

**Hikers walk past an abundance of wildflowers at the Batiquitos Lagoon.**

skimmers still feed here on fish and snail species that can thrive in the mixture of salt and freshwater.

The east basin is the largest and while still filled with saltwater, it has more freshwater. This is also the most visited part of the lagoon and the most diverse because of the blending of plant and animal species from the saltwater, marine environment to freshwater and coastal sage. Seals, rays and even sea turtles have made their way into the eastern basin.

The Batiquitos Nature Center is also here at the end of Gabbiano Lane in Carlsbad. Open daily from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., it is a great source of information and organized events.

From the nature center, an excellent trail heads east, allowing the visitor to casually explore the beauty of the lagoon.

The lagoon is alive now with spring wildflowers. Egrets, willets and grebes fed in the shallow water, while I marveled at the variety of color from fields of wild mustard to delicate clusters of ground pink tucked into the mat of green grass.

Large thickets of black-eyed Susan flowers lined sections of the trail, and tadpoles darted about as you approached a small pool of incoming fresh water.

As I hiked east, I found the freeway noise subsiding. Soon the sounds of whooshing cars were replaced by squawking coots, chirping birds, and the soft wind in the trees.

San Diego County's lagoons are a natural gem — sanctuaries of nature tucked between urban jungles.

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## THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

## U-T cartoonist chronicles migrants

Union-Tribune editorial cartoonist Steve Breen has been traveling to Tijuana since December for his "Drawn to America" series. The series chronicles some of the Central American migrants who have come to the border seeking asylum to enter the U.S.

He draws one of the migrants and tells the person's story of where they came from and why they undertook the trek, usually from Central America.

The series began Dec. 2. A story and illustration has run every two to three weeks on the editorial pages and on the U-T's website. He has done eight so far. The most recent appears today on a woman from Haiti who arrived in Tijuana via a caravan from Brazil. Breen also teams with U-T videographer John Kelley for video presentations that appear on [sandiegouniontribune.com](http://sandiegouniontribune.com).

I see the series as offering readers unique insight into who these migrants are. But judging by comments left on the U-T website, some readers don't see it that way. They basically say the series shows that Breen and the U-T are biased, that they are pro-migrant. One reader, Michael Lang from Boulevard, called the readers' rep last month to say he thought the series is "over the top." It's "propaganda."

"Enough," he said. "We need to concentrate on America's problems."

I wanted to get Breen's reaction to some readers' perspectives that the series shows bias:

"I understand that sentiment," Breen said. "Frankly, I don't think we should be admitting most of these migrants. Some, yes. I'm glad I'm not the person who has to decide whom to admit. They're coming here because they are able to come here. In other words, they can walk and find bus rides north."

"If people from South Sudan or India could find free transportation to our borders, they'd come, too. The reality is we can't admit everyone who wants to come to our country."

I asked Breen if he has a political agenda: "No. I have a human agenda," Breen replied. "I'd like people on the far-right who might happen to read one or two of these profiles soften their stance, even a little. Again, I'm not an 'open borders' proponent, but we all should feel for people who were born into an impoverished, crime-ridden and corrupt country."

"They're not coming here because



STEVE BREEN

**One of the migrants, Carlos Flores, as drawn by Steve Breen.**

George Soros is driving them to Tijuana. Many migrants are coming because they have nothing better to do, but a lot are coming because they are truly desperate. Let's have compassion for them."

The readers' rep also receives calls and emails saying the continued coverage of the migrants in Tijuana illustrates bias.

"Politics and legal issues aside," Breen said, "this is a big news story, and we have a duty as the newspaper of record in the region to cover it and tell these stories. If thousands of people walked south from British Columbia and were living in shelters in San Ysidro, we'd cover that story, too."

Breen said he plans to make another trip to a Tijuana shelter. He said he's unsure how many more he'll do, but "I feel like there's plenty more stories to tell."

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES

## INTREPID GLIDER PILOT LEAVES SAN DIEGO

On March 30, 1930, Frank Hawks, took off from Lindbergh Field in a glider called the "Eaglet," in tow of an airplane, on the first leg of a transcontinental flight to New York City. The Eaglet landed in New York on April 6.

Hawks' flight was sponsored by the Texas Co., better known as Texaco, to fuel interest in aviation. Texaco later donated the Eaglet to the Smithsonian Institution.

*From The San Diego Union, Monday, March 31, 1930:*

## CAPTAIN HAWKS REACHES TUCSON IN 'GLIDER TRAIN'

**MAKES 400 MILES IN 10 HOURS' HOP Intrepid Pilot Due in New York Sunday in Tow of Plane on First Flight of Kind From S.D. Take-off**

While a small crowd of early rising enthusiasts looked on, Capt. Frank Hawks took off from Lindbergh field at 7:47 o'clock yesterday morning bound for New York City in a glider towed by a single motored plane.

He landed in Tucson at 7:27 p.m. for the night, having made 400 miles in 10 hours, including all stops, on the first leg of the first transcontinental glider flight ever attempted.

## DISPORTS OVER PHOENIX

By 11:30 a.m. mountain time, Captain Hawks was over the mountains, had refueled his tow plane at Yuma, Ariz., and was bounce-

ing and bumping on a stiff breeze towards Phoenix, Ariz., according to Associated Press reports of his progress.

At the Arizona capital Hawks slipped free from the lead rope at 3500 feet and disported himself over the Phoenix airport for half an hour before setting the gracefully veering glider gently to earth at 2:05 p.m.

Borne up by a 35-mile wind, he demonstrated to massed spectators some of the fine points of gliding.

The breeze, which was stronger than he anticipated, did not occasion him difficulty in landing. He could have settled to earth in five minutes, he explained.

At 5:20 p.m. the air train proceeded toward Tucson, with the glider whipping behind like the tail of a kite. The wind velocity had increased but no difficulty was experienced. Hawks landed safe in Tucson at 7:27. It was dark then and auto headlights illuminated the airport for him.

He expects to reach El Paso, Tex., by tomorrow night, refueling en route at Lordsburg, N.M., and is due in New York City next Sunday.



J.D. Jernigan, jr., local pilot, was at the controls of the towing plane on the first leg of their proposed transcontinental flight. With him was Wallace Franklin, builder of the glider. As Jernigan's plane gathered speed, Hawks' glider, at the end of the 500-foot towline, trailed along and gracefully took the air. A moment later the tow ship left the ground, and the first "transcontinental air train" was on its way.

Two hours and 19 minutes after take-off, the two aircraft landed at Yuma, Ariz., for fuel. A short stop was made at Yuma.

*From The San Diego Union, Monday, April 7, 1930:*

## SAN DIEGO GLIDER ENDS TRANS-U.S. FLIGHT

**CAPT. HAWKS LANDS SAFE IN NEW YORK Battle Head Winds on Last Lap of**

**2855-Mile Hop; Flier Presents Palm Tree Sprout From Mayor Clark**



NEW YORK, April 6 (A.P.) -- The frail glider "Eaglet" cut loose from its towing plane and coasted gracefully to earth in Van Cortlandt Park late today to end the first transcontinental flight in a motorless ship.

In its tiny glass-enclosed cockpit sat Capt. Frank M. Hawks, who holds both the eastward and westward records for non-stop transcontinental airplane flights. He was welcomed to New York by his wife and an official committee headed by Police Commissioner Grover A. Whalen, while a crowd of several thousand, which circled the huge parade ground and pressed eagerly against the restraining police lines, cheered.

## BRINGS TREE SPROUT

Captain Hawks, who left San Diego, Calif., last Sunday morning, brought with him a palm tree sprout, the gift of Mayor Harry C. Clark of San Diego, to the city of New York. Bronx Park Commissioner Thomas Dolan planted it as a memorial on the spot at the southwest corner of the parade ground where the "Eaglet," came to a stop. Commissioner Whalen turned over the first sod.