

## MEDIATE THIS !

## AN (UN)CIVIL WAR BETWEEN TWO TENURED FACULTY

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

The National Conflict Resolution Center handles many workplace disputes involving tensions between co-workers. We explore this category today by using an example of a feud between two tenured faculty members who have been asked to apply together for a seven-figure research grant. The proposal is stalled because the two colleagues, who have never gotten along, disagree on whether the proposed budget should include funding for a data coordinator or an administrative assistant.

An academic department is a peculiar hybrid, part professional enterprise that delivers services (teaching and research) to end users (students and society) and part family whose members may be closely linked for years or even decades.

When scholars team up productively, their shared achievements can have lasting value. When they don't - and especially when colleagues with life-long tenure become mired in hostility - the resulting malice can swamp everyone around them.

In this dispute, a mediator has two goals: guide the adversaries in reaching a compromise to move the proposal forward, and help

them hit the reset button on their collaborative relationship.

The sovereignty of money offers ample leverage to bring these campus gladiators to the table. Tenure provides employment security, but it doesn't guarantee sustained funding and scholarly prestige. For those coin-of-the-realm benefits, professors need to keep external support coming in.

The threat of losing face by failing to compete for a big grant is what mediators call "Worst Alternative to a Negotiated Solution" or WATNA. It should give the opponents a strong incentive (along with some genial departmental prodding) for shelving rancor long enough to finish the proposal.

The mediator begins by scheduling separate one-on-one meetings, each with the same agenda: Ask open-ended questions. Listen attentively to the individual's concerns. And demonstrate empathy for her or his positions.

Along with the therapeutic venting, these conversations will yield insights into underlying issues. As often happens in workplace conflicts, the two adversaries may both be grappling with the same operational strains.

To the lay public, academic research may seem like a cushy



GETTY IMAGES

**This week's subject deals with a dispute among college faculty members who are applying for a research grant.**

gig. But this field is rife with intense pressure and high risk. The stalemate over a support position suggests that these colleagues are already worried about getting adequate administrative help.

In the next stage of conflict resolution, we bring the two parties together for a cordial exchange of ideas that begins with an "icebreaker" topic.

Ask them to share personal stories of the pathways that led them into the world of intellectual

discovery. Open up the discussion to explore their proudest achievements and their long-term goals.

Once interpersonal tensions have eased, give these professors a homework assignment. Ask them to identify two priorities for essential help in data coordination and in administrative support. Taken together, the four priorities could be a framework for a full-time position (or two part-time positions) that will fill most of their combined needs.

Once the proposal dilemma has been addressed, this exchange can turn to the relationship dilemma.

Married couples can divorce. Family members can sever ties. Tenured faculty colleagues are stuck with one another. The fact that they have been sent into mediation should signal to them that they must learn to co-exist in something that resembles civility.

To disrupt old patterns of contention, these two should spend quality time in a new setting where they can connect on a human level. There must be some leisure activity they both would enjoy, like an outdoor hike, a museum visit, or lunch at a quiet restaurant.

If all goes well, they might find they agree wholeheartedly about the need for organizational changes, and their new solidarity could make life interesting for senior academic leaders.

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

## Wildlife gathering at water cooler

The bird bath might be nature's equivalent to the office water cooler.

I reached this conclusion after spending a quiet afternoon at a remote mountain spring located in a tall pine and fir forest where summer temperatures were a comfortable 78 degrees.

Critters gather just like office minions at the company water cooler.

I was there at this mountain spring to photograph birds since this was the only water source for miles, and I got more than I had hoped for.

This isolated spring bubbles from a pipe and spills to the ground then runs into a steep ravine where it is absorbed. A small lake, actually just a puddle, provides a dependable source of summer water and the natural water cooler that the creatures of the forest seek.

By the end of my visit, I witnessed dozens of different bird species coming to the puddle. Swallows swooped in to snatch small insects from the surface, squirrels and chipmunks chattered while drinking, and mountain chickadees, yellow-rumped warblers, bluebirds and doves created chaos while splashing and bathing. Some seemed to congregate to chat, and the chipmunks seemed amused as they watched from a distance while chomping on pine nuts.

It was a good lesson of just how important water is to life.

Readers of this column know I often do what I call sit and see articles. I record the sights and sounds observed while simply watching an interesting place in the natural world.

My waterhole adventure made me wonder if I could duplicate this at home here on Mt. Whoville, north of Escondido.

We have a large, three-tiered fountain in our front garden, but I wanted something smaller in the back patio.

At a local garden shop, I purchased a decorative, round clay planting pot along with a flat plate that typically goes under the pot. The plate fit nicely on top of the pot and would serve as the shallow "puddle" for my bird bath.

I drilled a hole in the plate and using aquarium glue installed a short piece of 1-inch PVC plastic pipe. I used the same glue to seal the hole in the bottom of the pot.

I bought a small fountain pump and glued thin tubing to the inside of the PVC.



ERNIE COWAN

**Anna's hummingbird bathing in the garden fountain at Mt. Whoville.**

This allows water to be pumped into the plate, which returns to the pot by flowing into the PVC.

I added some rocks to cover the plumbing and for just a few dollars had a nice little patio fountain.

It has become a local waterhole for all kinds of neighborhood critters and a great place to just sit and see.

On summer mornings I often sit quietly with a cup of coffee and wait for the show.

Birds are the biggest users. I frequently see morning visits from hummingbirds, towhees and lesser goldfinch, but just about any time during the day you can find scrub jays, doves, hooded orioles, or house finches drinking or furiously splashing about as they drink or bathe in the shallow water.

Many of the bird visitors are alone, but for some, like the lesser goldfinch, it's kind of a gathering as they bathe.

A roadrunner frequently stops by, even while I sit less than 10 feet away.

From the house I've watched a rabbit stand up on hind legs to get a drink and ground squirrels slink out of plant cover to get water. Lizards don't drink from the fountain, but they sit on rocks as close as they can because of the insects attracted to the water.

But a sit and see adventure would only be half done without night viewing. I let my night-vision camera handle the late shift.

There was more activity than one might suspect, including a coyote, small mice and wood rats, along with a local cat that has wandered by a few times for a drink.

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## THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

## U-T radio presents variety of subjects

I wonder how many readers know this: The Union-Tribune produces multiple live Internet radio shows each week, and has for more than 10 years.

They can be found at <http://wsradio.com/ut-san-diego>.

They're hosted by longtime U-T representative Drew Schlosberg.

The shows are:

- "U-T Community Spotlight Show," which began in 2007. It can be heard from 9 to 11 a.m. every Friday. The show focuses on "organizations and individuals whose mission is to improve how we work, live and play in our county," Schlosberg said. He might interview such guests as high-level executives from companies and nonprofits, or the U.S. poet laureate. He estimates he has conducted more than 2,000 interviews since the show started.

- "Supporting Our San Diego Military With SDMAC," which began in 2008. It can be heard from noon to 12:27 p.m. every Tuesday. SDMAC stands for the San Diego Military Advisory Council. Schlosberg is joined by the council's executive director, Randy Bogle. Guests include military and civilian leaders.

- "U-T Prep Sports" Report, which also began in 2008. It can be heard from 12:30 to 12:54 p.m. every Tuesday. Schlosberg is joined by U-T prep sports editor Jess Kearney and former U-T staffer and now contributor Steve Brand. Listeners might hear from high school coaches, the CIF San Diego Section commissioner, high school officials and referees.

Also, for three years, Schlosberg has hosted a cybersecurity show called "eCity CyberTalk." The show has been on hiatus since June, but is expected to return. Guests have included cybersecurity experts, such as representatives from the FBI and a retired major general who was in charge of the Air Force's Cyber Command.

The U-T's partner in the broadcasts is wsRadio. Schlosberg said data from downloads and streaming show listener numbers have varied from 5,000 monthly to 20,000.

## More from Brooke Binkowski

Last week, I said I would publish more thoughts from Brooke Binkowski on the subject of fake news. Binkowski is a journalist and former managing editor at

Snopes.com, a myth-debunking website. She spoke during the Festival of Books last month at a U-T-sponsored panel discussion, "Fake News, Real Problems."

I asked her if she could offer advice to readers on how they can prevent being fooled by phony news stories.

"I think readers should be aware and skeptical of sources, and if they can, they should make an effort to read at least three versions of the same story from established outlets so they can get a fuller sense of the context around it.

"However, that's sometimes not doable. ... So what I really like to tell people is this: If you are reading a headline or a story and feel a strong emotion - especially if it's just a meme or a picture with a paragraph or two - then check your sources, because you're being emotionally manipulated, and when you are emotional it bypasses the rational parts of your brain and then you end up saying things to yourself like, 'This might not be true, but I want to share it just in case.'

"That's how disinformation spreads, like a virus, which is also why I've never liked 'viral marketing' either as a term or a practice.

"So! If you read a story and you are really scared or really angry or are feeling a lot of schadenfreude, especially if it's someone public or famous 'DESTROYING' someone with politics others might find noxious or something like that, check your sources and go with a more established news organization."

## An example of terrible fake news

"One story that has stuck out over the past year or two was a really high-profile one just after four soldiers were killed in an attack in Niger and Donald Trump picked a public fight with his widow," Binkowski recalled. "A particularly nasty story, which billed itself in extremely tiny letters at the bottom as 'satire,' was going around saying that 'the black soldier' was 'a deserter.'

"We were horrified by this at Snopes and ended up getting them to take that story down, but not before it was getting passed around all over the place as fact. That one was pretty easy, because we just pointed out the 'satire' disclaimer, and then spent a lot of time discussing how that is a perfect example of how corrosive disinformation can actively harm lives."

## FROM THE ARCHIVES | LOOKING BACK OVER 150 YEARS

## NAVY SHIPS RUN AGROUND

The San Diego Union-Tribune will mark its 150th anniversary in 2018 by presenting a significant front page from the archives each day throughout the year.

## Sunday, September 9, 1923

In 1923 seven ships of Destroyer Squadron Eleven were wrecked on the rocks at Point Honda, north of Santa Barbara. The revised death toll showed 23 sailors died. The ships were on their way from San Francisco to their home port in San Diego.

It was the worst peacetime loss of U.S. Navy ships.

Here are the first few paragraphs of the story:

## 25 SAILORS DROWN

## Seven Destroyers Enroute To San Diego Are Wrecked

## BULLETIN

(Associated Press)

SANTA BARBARA, Sept. 9 —Seven United States navy destroyers were wrecked late last night, off Arguella Light, 75 miles north of Santa Barbara.

Twenty-five sailors lost their lives in the disaster and all destroyers involved were reported total losses.

Dense fog was the cause of the disaster.

The destroyers Chauncey, Woodbury, S.P. Lee, Nicholas, Young and Delphi were all beached within a few minutes of one another, according to naval officers.

The flotilla of which the wrecked craft formed a part was in command of Capt. Ed-

ward Watson, commanding officer of the Delphi.

The dead were all trapped in their bunks on the Young when that vessel struck and were drowned when the craft capsized within two minutes after she had struck.

More than 500 men were rescued from the wrecked destroyers, which tonight were reported to be pounding to pieces on the rocks, all total losses.

Of the survivors, 15 of the seriously injured were brought to the Santa Barbara county hospital here.

One hundred others were cut and bruised in their swim to safety over the jag-



ged rocks.

## HIT ROCKS WHILE STEAMING AT 20 KNOTS

The destroyers were traveling in formation at 20 knots an hour in a heavy sea and dense fog when the leading vessel crashed.

Carried ahead by a strong tide, the others piled on the beach in succession. Lying in line along the shore at intervals of 250 feet the boats tonight were slowly breaking up. One of them, the Chauncey, was resting high on the rocks.

A partial list of the dead, as officially announced, follows: U.S. Skipper Joseph Sli-mak, Henry T. Kirk, Enrique Torres, Buch-an, Harrison, Reddock, Salzer, Martin, Kirby, Gradey, Ben Shank, Taylor, Over-shiner, Duncan, Ray H. Morris, John Young, C.F. Rogers and Conroy.

The body of Conroy was the only one recovered up to 3 o'clock this afternoon, when all efforts to obtain the others had been fruitless.

The seas were running so heavy that it was only a few minutes after the crash that all of the destroyers were taking water. Although ordered by their commanding officers to remain aboard, many sailors jumped overboard in an attempt to get ashore.

The rescue of most of the crew of the Young was effected when Boatswain's Mate Peterson took a line overboard and swam with it to the Chauncey, fighting against the rough sea and strong tides. Peterson reached the Chauncey exhausted.

## THREE SURVIVORS REACH SAN DIEGO

Graphic details of the greatest naval wreck in history, a wreck which cost the lives of between 20 and 30 men and in which seven of the navy's finest destroyers piled on the rocks at Point Arguella were brought to San Diego tonight by three officers of the U.S.S. Delphi, the first ship to strike the rocks.

Lieuts. L.F. Blodget, A.P. Mullinex and Ensign Robert C. Greenwald stepped off the 6:30 train in clothes they had to borrow to make the trip.

**ONLINE:** View this and other anniversary front pages online at [sandiegouniontribune.com/150-years](http://sandiegouniontribune.com/150-years).