

ESTA

Panorama

November, 2006

*"It's only free
speech when
you use it."*

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Hello? Is there any-
body out there?*

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The President's View

By Don McKell

When most ESTA members receive this month's *Panorama*, we will be less than a week away from Thanksgiving, that last great unspoiled holiday our society has to offer. In this age of tasteless commercialism it remains a pleasant mystery to me how Thanksgiving has successfully resisted being polluted in any meaningful way by those who might seek to turn it into just another crass spectacle of guilt and profits.

But, gee, how do I *really* feel?

Socrates stated that "The unexamined life is not worth living," but I don't know if I agree completely with that philosophy. A lot of joy and fulfillment has entered my life because of the existence of living beings that probably never give a thought to their place in the universe. I am thankful for each of them. Not everyone is a profound thinker, or needs to be, in order to make meaningful contributions to the well being of other people.

On the other hand, a person who lacks the capacity to be thankful for the good things in his life might just be a person to avoid at all costs. I'm not writing about fall-on-your-knees-and-shout-hallelujah thankful, just the quiet recognition that things-could-be-much-worse thankful.

With one more Veteran's Day fading into the mists of time, I am still thankful for the sacrifices of all those men and women who have served in the various branches of the military of this great country. As the bumper sticker says: "If you can read this, thank a teacher. If you can read it in English, thank a soldier." My father-in-law passed away last spring. He was a soldier in the largest army ever fielded by this nation and fought in Africa and Europe in the second World War. He came home to be a fifth grade teacher for thirty years. Thanks, Ken. I miss you.

McKell, continued

I remain thankful for all the other soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines who in my lifetime have served their country under arms and in harm's way. Certainly some of the conflicts into which our nation has thrust our warriors were and are ill-advised and poorly led, but that takes nothing away from the grunts in the trenches. "Thanks, guys and gals" seems so superficial a thing to say, but aside from paying taxes and voting, that's about all I have right now.

And vote I did on November 7. I am thankful I still have the privilege and ability to do that. I am mighty thankful that most of what happened in that election were things I wanted to happen. And I am *exceedingly* thankful that I'm not getting a dozen robo-calls on the phone every day any more, and that mind numbing deluge of political ads on the radio and TV has mercifully stopped. At least for now.

In a survey we did earlier this year, ESTA members once again confirmed what we already knew – many of us fork over a lot of our own money every year to buy things we need to do our jobs. In fact, the average respondent to that survey will spend just about \$420 this year for a wide variety of instructional supplies. We can all be thankful that our school board has now agreed to provide up to \$200 in reimbursement of those costs for classroom teachers, and seems agreeable to expanding the notion to cover all non-management certificated employees at their next meeting. Teachers aren't the only ESTA members who spend their own money to be able to do their jobs.

While I'm on the subject of our School Board, I can't let this opportunity pass by without acknowledging that long-time Board member Patricia Martinez-Roach finished in fourth place in the election on November 7, and will thus be leaving our school board at the conclusion of her term this month. Pat's twelve year tenure on our Board and her relationships with both her colleagues and a succession of district leaders have often been contentious. I have no wish to do deep analysis of that matter here, but even those who

will celebrate her departure owe her the thanks that any private citizen and teacher who seeks public office for noble purposes deserves.

Most of us can also be thankful for the love of our families, a few really good friends, the state of our health, a job that comes complete with challenges and rewards, a car that works, and a good book. I am thankful that sufficient voters in ESTA trusted me enough to return me to the Association presidency this year.

Could things be better? Oh, yes. But could they be worse? Without a doubt. So remember: even if you have an equal number of things that make you happy as you have things that make you sad, you still have things to be happy about. Take the time to dwell on them.

Have a safe, happy, and relaxing Thanksgiving vacation.

PANORAMA MARTIN BRANDT, IHS EDITOR

Panorama is a monthly publication of the East Side Teachers' Association, 888 S. Capitol Ave. San Jose, CA.

Panorama is a forum for ESTA members, and welcomes all member contributions. Submissions must include author's name, position, and school site. Those with fewer than 250 words will be printed in the "Letters" section. All submissions may be edited for length or clarity.

Letters, articles, columns, queries, or classified ads (for ESTA members only) should be emailed as **Microsoft Word Attachments** to brandtm@esuhsd.org. Deadline for December submissions is Friday, December 8, 2006.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in *Panorama* are those of individual members and may not represent the official views of the East Side Teachers Association. *Panorama* will not print ad hominem attacks, personal insults, or racially provocative imagery.

HHH 1910-1993

YOUR CONTRACT

“I’ve got this angry parent meeting with the principal. Should I take in an ESTA representative?”

This is probably one of the most frequently queried of all ESTA representatives. When an ESTA member asks me this question I am usually listening for one emotion: anger. The member will tell me the story: a parent emailed about a grade or called because of something the member said in class. I like to know the facts, but the facts are rarely relevant to the question. Sometimes the member wants my evaluation of the performance of the administrator who will be in the meeting—also not particularly relevant information—but sometimes the member feels better knowing the administrator can handle angry people well. What I really need to know is simple: is someone angry? If the answer is “yes”, then CTA has a very specific response in their Teachers’ Legal Rights And Duties In The 21st Century, (Department of Legal Services).

CTA’s condensation of the ed code, a nice slender volume written by CTA’s brightest and finest lawyers that spells things out in that “down and dirty” sort of way, on page 5 under #4 Dealing with Parents and Third Parties, states “if you believe there is potential for confrontation, ask that your union representative be present, especially if the purpose of the meeting concerns a complaint about you.”

The implications of this CTA statement are simply that the potential for an unexpected confrontation between a teacher and a parent to develop exists even with an administrator in the room. Essentially, therefore, professional conduct indicates that another party be present as an objective observer any time the potential for an angry encounter occurs. I’d never thought

of it that way before. The daughters of cynics usually have other reasons for what they do. But it makes good common sense. Most people are less likely to explode in front of someone to whom they have no connection. We are generally on our best behavior with people we know less well than with people with whom we are familiar, right? So while the parent may question the presence of a third party, not only is that third party your right, that third party will help maintain calm. And, unfortunately, a principal is not an objective witness. Regardless of what happens, he has had to give up time for this, and if the teacher is in the wrong, that principal is going to have some hoops to jump through to ameliorate the situation as well as a PR job to do with that parent.

ESTA fought long and hard for your right to have an ESTA representative present at meetings with administrators. I don’t remember the days when we did not have that right, but I know that time did once exist. Personally, I have noticed that having an objective witness keeps a situation under control, as well as ensuring your rights as an individual. So in my not so esteemed opinion -- if you are asking the question, “should I take in an ESTA representative?” your instinct is telling you the answer is “yes!!!!!!”.

*Love and kisses until next time,
your Grievance Co-chair
Janet Goldhamer*

PS. If you have a question you’d like us to answer, email it to Paul Landshof, Jason Gatensby, or myself. We’ll do some research and try to answer it for you.

**Janet Goldhamer
Oak Grove
Grievance Co-chair**

YOUR CONTRACT

Organizing Committee Report

Marisa Vera

ESTA Vice-president

The first site visits are done, so now I begin again. It was nice getting to meet so many of you during the first round of visits. I hope to meet more of you when I return

For the second visit I will be coming to sites after school for 15 minutes to discuss CTA benefits and district benefits. Open enrollment for disability insurance will begin in January, and I will be talking about it in detail.

I will stay to answer questions and visit with staff afterwards. Please contact your site Presidents for my scheduled visit if it is not listed below. I hope to see you there!

Here is a list of upcoming visit that are already scheduled:

November 14

Independence, @ 2:05 and 3:05 in B-Villa Commons

November 15

Evergreen Valley, @ 2:00 in Room B-224

November 16

Overfelt @ 3:15 in Teacher Lounge

November 20

Oak Grove @ 2:45 in X1

November 28

James Lick, @3:10 in Faculty Lunch Room

December 4

Santa Teresa, @ 3:00. location TBA

December 6

Foothill @ 2:00, location TBA

December 7

Yerba Buena @ 2:55 in Faculty Lunch Room

December 12

Piedmont Hills @2:05 and 3:05, location TBA

THIS SPACE OPEN

FOR YOUR...

OPINIONS

GRIPES

REVELATIONS

WHIMSICAL MUSINGS

POLEMICS

EPIPHANIES

FEARS

LETTERS

HOPES

SUGGESTIONS

LIMERICKS

DOGMAS

CORRECTIONS

THEORIES

DOCTRINES

ARTICLES

JUDGMENT'S

ESSAYS

CREEDS

EROTICA

(GOT'CHA!)

SCREEDS

ELEGIES

REVIEWS

EULOGIES

**DEADLINE FOR ALL OF THE ABOVE--
AND ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN THINK
OF MORE--IS FRIDAY,
DECEMBER 8, 2006.**

The return of the Herrera money!!! Up to \$200 can be reimbursed to or expended by classroom teachers. **Manuel Herrera** brought this forward last month for a decision last night. Stay tuned for details. McKell reported that, based on the little green papers everyone did, the average ESUHSD teacher appears to be spending \$419 out of pocket per year. The board agreed that basic materials and supplies (printer cartridges, etc.) should really be district responsibilities and that is to be looked at and reported back on next month. Also, the amounts of department budgets per kid needs to be re-evaluated for restoration by adjusting for inflation and restoring amounts taken during the **Dark Days** when budgets were cut in half.

(**Lan Nguyen** was not present for that discussion as he left to join his wife who was in labor after the first intermission! Guess he can be forgiven for leaving early if she can forgive him for being there at all! Hope he made it in time! Congratulations, Nguyen Family!)

George Shirakawa suggested a one-time payment again to all staff. McKell suggested including *all* staff who put out money—not just classroom teachers. **Martinez-Roach** suggested raising it to \$350 due to inflation and increasing needs and offering little mini-grants for classrooms that need more supplemental materials to ensure student success. (NOTE: *Luis Zaragoza followed up on this with an article published in the Mercury on 11/8/06, section A.*)

Students from OG, ST and MP who were awarded scholarships by the **100 Black Men of Silicon Valley** received recognition for their achievements at the board meeting. It is nice to see hopeful faces looking only toward their futures! Remarkable kids!!!

An AH dad complained about his freshman daughter's classes after an administrator in Small Learning Communities made demands—without talking to the department—that the school's challenge test rules be broken for his child. The district office needs to consider what messages they give our children and staff before jumping in with both feet This gentleman also complained that not all teachers were on school loop and said he had been told that it is *the union's fault* that everyone isn't forced to do it right now. That was news to me, but I'm only on E-board and Assembly...

CFJ kids expressed concern that there were four textbook complaints still in the district and some other varied ones. They did not mention whether or not the books might be on order—as some still are at AH. Each complaint, except those in CFJ's hands only, had been dealt with in a timely fashion according to the lawyer from the Settlement who came to the meeting to say thanks.

In the **Consent Calendar** portion, **Martinez-Panorama**

Wendy Stegeman
Andrew Hill

Roach had several items pulled. As **Craig Mann** rolled his eyes and the boys exchanged glances, she asked why the district was paying for change orders listed as “design omission.” I had the same question and asked construction friends and family. Each told me that whoever made the design omission should be paying for it, not the district. ESUHSD has apparently earned a reputation in the industry (according to construction sources) for accepting lowball bids that contractors and subs are able to puff up with change orders. The training ground was EVHS. Blach, the district department with a cabinet level position, and Seville Group are supposed to prevent that, so what gives? Who on the new board will ask questions that bring problems out from under the carpet into the light of day?

Supt Nunez' contract was extended to 6/09 at **Joe Coto's** leaving pay, according to **Manuel Herrera**. Manuel pointed out that with the potential of three new board members, they wanted to leave some stability for the district as three new folks might not understand the history and try to spend another \$80,000 on a supt search. This should allow the supt to work even harder on implementing positive programs and supporting those that work already!!! Linda Gubman is still listed as interim at last check. She is a good right hand.

Ric Abeyta's final resignation was accepted.

Unaudited Actuals were accepted. Actual population for last year will not be certified until next February - at which time money could be deducted or adjusted. It behooves the CBO to have very strong rabbit ears on his crystal ball and plenty of fingers and toes available for accounting. In spite of the board's inclination to hurry up and spend every cent that comes in, most folks with financial acumen are worried that the happy budgetary days **may be blip more than a trend**. It is sound to keep some reserves for rainy days.

The process for **replacing Mann** was discussed. Anyone interested in applying needs to get the 6 questions to answer and submit the appropriate cover sheet. There will be about 22 slots of people who will be advisory to the board. **Frank Biehl** suggested waiting until January for the appointment. **Craig Mann** did *not* like that at all as it would take him out of the decision process.

The window for applications for the **Mann's** seat is open. I have heard from three sources that the board has already chosen someone- but each source gave a different name. We need a woman and a non-Evergreen resident to give area and gender equity - in small measure - to the board. I have my own choice...

Guns and Roses

I like to say that I've only taken a gun away from a student once. That way everyone can think my life as a teacher in East San Jose has been daring, but that I was brave and a little bit funny. At San Jose's teacher college, I told my fellow teacher trainees that I would be teaching at Overfelt at the end of the credential program. They warned me that the girls on the volleyball team I was about to coach carried blades in their gym bags when they went to play at other schools. I wondered if it were true – ooh – girls packin' blades. It sounded exciting and kind of sexy. I didn't have enough sense to be scared. Turns out only two Puerto Rican girls had 'em, and that was because they were about to be jumped by the little *cholas* that ran their corner of the school. They got caught with them in paper bags in their lockers, and never took them on the road...

The student who had the gun was an abused child. His mom was in prison somewhere in New York and his dad brought him and his brother out here to California apparently to use as punching bags and thugs in training. This Keith was truly the funniest person I have ever met personally. He never stopped with the quips, and sometimes you'd just wish he'd get a job in standup and live ever after. He took good care of his little brother and always tried to get in the way of his dad's fist. One day on a Thursday he came up to my desk, handed me a loaf of white bread in a plastic bread bag, and said, "Here, Mrs. Demerson, take care of this for me." For some reason, I guess I didn't have enough sense to question it, I took the bag and hid it in my desk drawer.

A few minutes in to the period, he excused me.

himself with a pass to the restroom. As soon as he was out of range, a very outgoing girl named Samantha rushed to my desk and whispered loudly, "Miss Demerson, Keith has a GUN!"

**Hannah Lynn
Demerson
Foothill**

"A gun?????" I whispered back.

"Yeah, and he's headed for the quad!"

I get on the phone with the principal's secretary and say, "Keith's got a gun and he's headed for the quad!"

"He's got a what?" she asked incredulously.

"A GUN!" I whisper urgently. "And he's headed for the quad."

"I'll get Mr. Davis," she offered confidently...

Sam Davis, vice principal, was All-American in track. The kids all knew not to RUN from Sam Davis. So then I start to muse... hmm... Why did he tell Samantha he had the gun? She's now saying that he said, "Look what I have in my pocket," and she did, and she saw the gun. Samantha, without a doubt, has the biggest mouth in the school. He must have wanted me to know...

Keith gets back to class. I meet him outside and say, "Give me what you have in your pocket RIGHT NOW. Mr. Davis is on his way." He pulls it out and hands it to me, and I lock it in my car parked a few yards away. We go back to class. Turns out he had been thrown on his ass in the common room by a bunch of huge Samoan boys the day before. This was no small feat, because Keith was a big ol' black kid. He said he just wanted the word to go out that he had BROUGHT a gun to school.

Hence, Samantha.

Here, Mrs. Demerson, take care of this for

ESTA Classifieds

MindsInSight Online Classroom Tools - MindsInSite is a hosted Moodle solution for teachers and trainers of any kind. Allowing us to host your remote learning solution allows you to spend your time developing content rather than managing software and hardware. Cut your time spent on paperwork in half. 10% discount for all ESUHSD teachers. Take a look at our services at: <http://www.mindsinsight.com> and/or contact Bruce Selzler @ 347-4936

VACATION RENTAL: Cozumel houses available by the week. One and a half blocks from ocean. Easy walking distance to shopping & ferry to mainland. Three rental units: 3 bedroom, 2 bath \$950; 2 bedroom, 1 bath \$650; & 2 bedroom, 2 bath \$680. All 3 units combined for \$2,052. Ten percent discount for teachers. Summer rates are lower. All have kitchen, A/C, DSL internet, cable, safes, and phone and access to pool, rinse tank for scuba, courtyard, and sundeck on roof. Contact Mike at 251-1584 or cloughmf@msn.com.

CGT Travel, Contact Marian Dotson, at 831-338-1959 cgtravelpals@yahoo.com CGC Travel cst 2027232-40

Wedding/Event DJ. \$120.00 per hour. We are a husband/wife team that will work very hard to make your special day perfect. Contact Anthony Kudsi (IHS) at (408) 858-4555 for more info or to make an appointment.

Materials for Spanish For Spanish Speakers classes : Books, posters, etc. Sistilio Testa (WCO, OG, ret.) 295-6327.

Joe Sousa, handy service: Remodeling, repair, plumbing, electrical, flooring and tile, drywall. Free estimates. Excellent references. License number 316835. Tel. (408) 234-7428. (Marie Anderson, AH).

LOS GATOS LATTICE: fences, decks, gates, pergolas, arbors, patio covers, retaining walls, automated gates, outdoor projects. Also, general construction/remodelling as well: crown molding, baseboards, doors, windows, drywall, finish work, etc. Call DAVE FREDERICKS @ 347-3966 or contact at big57wave@yahoo.com. References from colleagues at all ESUHSD schools.

Mission Style. CUSTOM MADE CHERRY Entertainment center/cabinet & chest of drawers/cabinet.

ENTERTAINMENT CENTER is 7 ft. tall, 64 inches long, 22 inches deep. It has 5 doors, 2 drawers, & an opening with shelves 28 inches wide by 43 inches tall. CHEST OF DRAWERS is 9 ft. long, 67 inches tall, 24 inches deep, has 16 drawers and 2 doors. They are a matching set and were made for a large bedroom. Contact Dave Fredericks: email big57wave@yahoo.com or PHHS woodshop#73966.

Wedding Officiant: Special offer for ESTA members. Local weddings performed for \$200. Contact griffinje@esuhd.org for info and details.

Intero Real Estate Services Selling or buying a house is very personal....but you can get three great realtors by calling Sam Alvarado (772-7661), Sheryl Ruth (348-5449) or Ron Smith. They are Intero people (a great firm) and through their WREATHS Program are donating \$1000 to your school program, department or team for ANY name that results in a sale. It is a no-brainer and seamless!

For Sale: Wurlitzer Organ. Full pedals, 2 keyboards, beautiful walnut finish. Sounds great. \$250.00 or best offer. Contact Nick Shehadi (408) 265-0351.

10'x15' Tent. Excellent condition; \$40 or best offer Rachel Stanek (Pegasus/IHS) 928-9946.

Clean comfortable quiet home for rent in Blossom Valley: 3 Bedrooms & 2 Baths \$2100.00. New carpet, Jacuzzi tub in newly remodeled master bath, large master suite, wood burning fire place, updated appliances, central heat and air, new windows, newly insulated attic, two car garage with storage, washer/drier hook up (gas or electric), 1450 square feet of living space, 2000 square feet of yard newly seeded, lawn mower & trimmer provided, covered patio, privacy fence in back, security system (though not needed), community pool, great open floor plan access to Hwy 85, 87 and 101. Available immediately. Sorry no section 8 please. \$2100.00 deposit required, cats are welcome. Call Caryl Selk at 408-973-9325 for more information. Virginia Yenter Yanowsky, (EVHS).

1 bedroom granny unit. \$800.00 a month includes all utilities except propane and phone. It is located in the East Foothills—no dogs please! If interested call Kathy and Rich Harris 408-274-8271.

The Backside

Not to be mistaken for Truth

Reverend Dimmsdale to Haggard: ‘I feel your pain’

Taking a break from his perennial role as a sin-stained, sexually repressed Puritan minister in the pages of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter*, the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale spoke to the press yesterday in an effort to reach out to the disgraced Reverend Ted Haggarty, whose gay affair and drug use commanded the attention of political observers in the week before the recent midterm elections.

“For generations, the students of the New World have beseeched their teachers for what wrong must they endure and witness my own passion and suffering,” said Dimmesdale. “They did mock me as stupid, and ascribe to me

the position of a hypocritical relic of a bygone age. But now, behold: they can see that my spirit lives and breathes among them, even in their day and age.”

Dimmesdale offered to join the team of ministers assisting in Reverend Haggarty’s spiritual restoration. “Though he were to step down from a high place and stand there beside me on my pedestal of shame, yet better were it so, than to hide a guilty heart through life. What can silence do for him, except it tempt him—yea, compel him, as it were—to add hypocrisy to sin?”

Dimmesdale did stress however that he would not participate in any “laying of hands.” “I can’t go for that!” he said. “Anyway,

isn’t that how this whole mess got started?”

Ultimately though, Rev. Dimmesdale’s gesture remains sympathetic. “Reverend Haggard’s vision of self-hatred and repression would fain discover a happy home in the 17th century setting of the pages of the novel in which I reside. Should he find it in his heart to join me there, he would be most welcome to engage with me in acts of self-mutilation and flagellation.”

Onetime rebel wistful at homecoming

Once again prowling the grounds of the campus where he at once ruled his fellow rebels, intimidated classmates, and proudly defied authority, recent graduate Colin Mahomies found himself in an unexpected funk.

“Man, graduation was the worst thing that ever could have happened to me. For four years, all I talked about was how great it was gonna be to get out of this place. But graduation has removed my stage.”

Just to feel some of the magic again, Mahomies lit up a cigarette just as a school administrator walked by. When the man told him to put it out, Mahomies responded with a curse about the administrator’s mother, eliciting a nervous titter from nearby students. Grinding his cigarette into the asphalt, Mahomies sighed, “I really needed that. Man, oh man, do I miss this place.”

Football team tears through paper sign

Fans, coaches, and members of the nearby Columbus High School Rapacious Marauders varsity football team found themselves thoroughly impressed on Friday night after watching the team tear through a homemade paper sign at the end of halftime.

“This is our house!” exhorted star linebacker Winton Knight. “That sign ain’t gonna live to see the light of day!”

“That’s what I’m talking about, baby!” added third string punter Hugh Gigault. “We’re gonna tear through that mutha!”

The sign, which read “COLUMBUS WILL NOT BUM US,” had been painstakingly prepared by students in the school’s advanced graphic art classes. It featured a grotesquely muscular Christopher Columbus spiking a football as he claimed for Spain the island of Hispaniola, shaped by the words of Central High School, that evening’s opponent.

The crowd roared as the team, led by Knight, broke through the paper with surprising ease. Said one parent in the crowd: “This was a superb demonstration of hyper-inflated macho theatrics. I bow my head to their superior manliness.”

“We’re just trying to send a message,” said head coach Mike Rappiteem. “You just can’t mess with a team of guys who can tear through paper like that!”

Columbus lost the game 38-3