



## Welcome Back to School!

It's that time of year again! The sights and sounds of bells ringing, school buses running, the scent of freshly sharpened pencils, and students lining up in the morning with their new gear means one thing - the beginning of a new school year. - SEE PAGE 7



## Tujungang... Smith Pass...

Perhaps you've seen Tom Smith... Foothill Boulevard; for sure you've seen him... 5-8

**FREE!**

# THE PAPER

THE VOICE OF THE FOOTHILLS

FRIDAY AUG 26, 2022

**SUNLAND STRONG - TUJUNGA TOUGHER!**

*A tribute to our local businesses that are re-opening.*

VOLUME 18 • NUMBER 17



## Hansen Dam Altercation Turns into Shooting!

**S**unday August 14, an altercation erupted into a shooting with people running in all directions. The Park Rangers, LAFD and the LAPD cordoned off the crime scene and began asking questions of the people in the area. The Hansen Dam hosts hundreds of Mexican families on Sundays with pony rides and horseback riding.

LAFD paramedics tended to the victim's wounds. ■



## What Do These Two Community Leaders Have in Common?

By Jackie Houchien

**S**olar energy has come of age in Sunland-Tujunga. Prices have been slashed and the installation has gotten so simple, that it now only takes 2-3 days for a complete home installation to be mounted on your roof or adjacent property.

"I'd been looking at solar panels as a means to reduce my overall electricity costs" said Michele Saffron of Tujunga. "It was more because of the green aspect than the economic aspect. The six-kilowatt system that I leased provides 85% of my home's electricity and cuts their monthly electric bill, which used to be \$310 to \$150, as an average".

Up until NOW, most people balked at the initial installation cost of \$10,000 - \$14,000. But now you can lease a system, completely installed, with a 20-year contract for power, that will yield savings of \$36,000 to \$48,000 over the life of the contract.

Leasing has spurred a rapid increase in home solar installations in Southern California and nation-wide.

Though the total number remains small, according to estimates from the Intersate Renewable Energy



Both, "Doc" and Sonia have solar panels on their houses.

Council, 186,000 U.S. homes had solar electric systems at the end of the last year. Most of those systems were installed in the past couple of years.

SolarCity and other solar leasing firms also offer no-money-down options. With these, your monthly savings is less, and so is your net savings. Lyndon Rive, CEO of SolarCity, says that homeowners who enter into such arrangements less per kilowatt-hour than the utility charges. Depending on the price of electricity where you live, that will cut your electric bills by 20% to 45%.

So, how do these solar companies make any money? Under the leasing model, solar firms buy equipment at wholesale prices and finance it with big, relatively cheap loans.

They also collect all the federal,

state and local subsidies. The Home owners get cheaper power, and don't have to worry about maintenance, which the solar firms handle.

And the lease arrangements transfer to the new owner of a house, which may be a selling point, he says. At the end of a lease, depending on the lease agreement, customers can upgrade to a new system, extend the agreement or simply have the panels removed for free.

Here in the mountainous ares of Tujunga where natural gas is not available, solar power makes it a natural to install. Another advantage that no one seems to want to mention, is that in the event of a natural disaster, where the main electric lines are down, if you have the proper transfer switch, you will still have a solar power at your house. ■

## Water Conservation Measures Enacted

**T**his summer, Los Angeles City Councilmembers Paul Krekorian, Mitch O'Farrell and Paul Koretz led the City Council in calling for a comprehensive series of reports and actions related to ratepayer funds, conservation, and the drought emergency currently affecting California and the Western United States.

"Los Angeles is already a national

leader in water conservation. Angelenos have saved enough water over the last 20 years to serve a million people," said Councilmember Krekorian. "Yet water shortages continue to endanger public safety, our economy, our clean energy goals, and our quality of life. This motion is a vital first step to addressing what is now an existential threat to the City of Los Angeles, and all of us need to embrace the commit-

ment to conservation with urgency.

The actions unanimously approved by the City Council will require the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and the Metropolitan Water District to report on several key issues, including:

- Current and projected water drought conditions statewide from all sources, and the corresponding impact to LADWP consumers. ■



City of Los Angeles is going brown!

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Guest Editorial - Tom H. Hastings

## Student debt and assault vehicles

My friend Gary left Michigan, went to Sweden years ago, and earned his PhD. He's a research professor. He was not charged any tuition as long as he continued to qualify and thus held no student debt. That's how it's done in

much of Europe, at least for public universities.

Gary was able to marry, have a child, buy a modest family home, and simply support his family even though there were years back in Michigan when he and his wife earned relatively little as they each began their careers.

My former student Adam works as hard as anyone I've ever met. His Vietnam war veteran father left him just enough to finally pay off his student debt for his degrees at a public university in Oregon. His mother worked so hard and was underpaid, never managing to save much though she did an excellent job as a college office staffer, serving both students and (far higher paid) professors.

Now, almost 50 years old, Adam and his wife can finally start saving for a down

payment on their own home.

Back in the day I was able to do that in the 1970s, when I was in my 20s, and have owned my own homes ever since. Student debt then was quite small, paid off by most people quite quickly, and my (boomer) generation stepped into home ownership that way. Once you own, your equity can usually be leveraged to get you into your next home, but if you rent while you drain your paycheck every month to a student loan payment, that down payment usually remains just an elusive goal.

Meanwhile, Republicans and a couple Democrats in the Senate blocked all tries for a significant student debt forgiveness portion of various bills. Where, they ask, is the money coming from? The student debt held now is on the order of \$1.75 trillion,

an enormous amount.

### I HAVE A COUPLE OF SUGGESTIONS

- Get rid of the useless and grotesquely expensive US Marine/Navy amphibious assault vehicles, proven more lethal to US servicemembers than to anyone else. Last week the Department of Defense added some \$87,999,656 to the bloated \$1,910,796,347 contract, which is, naturally, "cost-plus," that is, whenever the DoD feels like adding to it, they do, often convinced by war profiteering corporations to do so.

- Dial back on the eye-rolling number of brand-new military aircraft that cost us US taxpayers (including many student debt-holders) such unfathomable amounts each year. Earlier this month the DoD awarded yet another massive contract to

Lockheed for more of them, some \$7,630,940,571 in new money added to existing contracts.

These are just single contracts. Each day many more contracts send \$billions to war profiteers while US students are treated substantially worse than any and all students in Europe, Canada, Australian, New Zealand, and elsewhere. There is plenty of money for student debt relief in the US--or there could be, if our priorities shifted a bit away from enriching weaponeers and instead doing a better job of caring for our own young people.

It is only a matter of electing representatives and senators who will do this. We should be in dialog with them, and they should know our feelings, whatever those feelings may be. ■

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## Guest Editorial - Dr. Glenn Mollette

### Losing everything, what or who is important?

What or who is important to you? The recent devastating flood in eastern Kentucky reminds us all that life can be swept away in a moment. Hundreds of families lost everything. One family lost their house and everything in it but lost their family – four children ages less than two up through eight were swept away by the raging flood. One woman who had also lost her house and everything in the house stated she and her family were alive and that's all that mattered.

None of us want to lose our houses and everything we've worked for most of our lives. However, it's all junk in comparison to our children and loved ones.

From the fires of California to the floods of eastern Kentucky to the devastation of Ukraine by Russia, Loss and devastation can come to us all. We don't want loss. We recoil from natural disasters, invaders or diminishing health.

It takes a lifetime to pay for a house. Today, cars are often financed five years and more. People work hard to

accumulate a few things. Little children, spouses and aging parents are not easy to come by. Most of the time we take everything we have for granted. When the floods of life literally wash away all that we have and love, the loss is horrific.

We really don't know the full extent of how painful loss is until we have lost it all. Recent flood victims in eastern Kentucky essentially lost it all. Many literally escaped with only the shirts on their backs.

Cancer can eat away at our lives. Other forms of diminishing health can take us down to nothing. Financial losses can make us miserable. A fire can destroy everything. Life can change and in a moment.

Sometimes we have warnings that life is on the way to changing. When it rains, we don't automatically think the water will become so deep that we will all drown. Some people in eastern Kentucky will never be able to enjoy a long night of rain because of what it may bring.

Overall, people would like to live out their lives quietly and safely. Avoiding

floods, fires and other life-threatening crises. Food to eat, something to wear and the enjoyment of people we love are most meaningful to us.

In the middle of life's devastations, we often look to God and ask why? If he is really so great, so good, and so loving then why would he send or allow eight or nine inches of rain to fall on the hollers of eastern Kentucky and sweep away little children? Did he go to sleep? Does he not care? Is he detached from what happens in the world? Is he really out there? Yet, as many grieve, they will fall upon God as he is all they have left to get them through. An old saint of God who suffered through the storms of life once said, "I didn't realize God was all I needed until God was all I had."

Whatever or whoever you have today, don't take it or them for granted. Be grateful, give thanks. Love on your loved ones and be kind to all. Consider taking some of your stuff and giving it to someone who may have nothing. It will be good for you both. ■

WOW! It's that time again, newspaper deadlines and running around talking to people. These last two weeks have been more interesting than most, but mostly subtle. Take for example the homicide in front of out local potshop. The cops reported it as being in front of the K-Mart building. Hummmm, does someone have their hand in Arnie's pocket? Asking for a friend.

It really appears to be a given about the S-T Chamber of Commerce getting back in business. It doesn't really matter if the good ol' boys or the cartel run it, if you keep your mouth shut, go to the mixers and enjoy yourself, it works.

For the past 8 years we've had a polarization of the community as to who yells the loudest about their particular interests. One year it was illegal housing, another year it was the parking on Samoa, and never forget the Tujunga Detention Camp or the Home Depot property's.

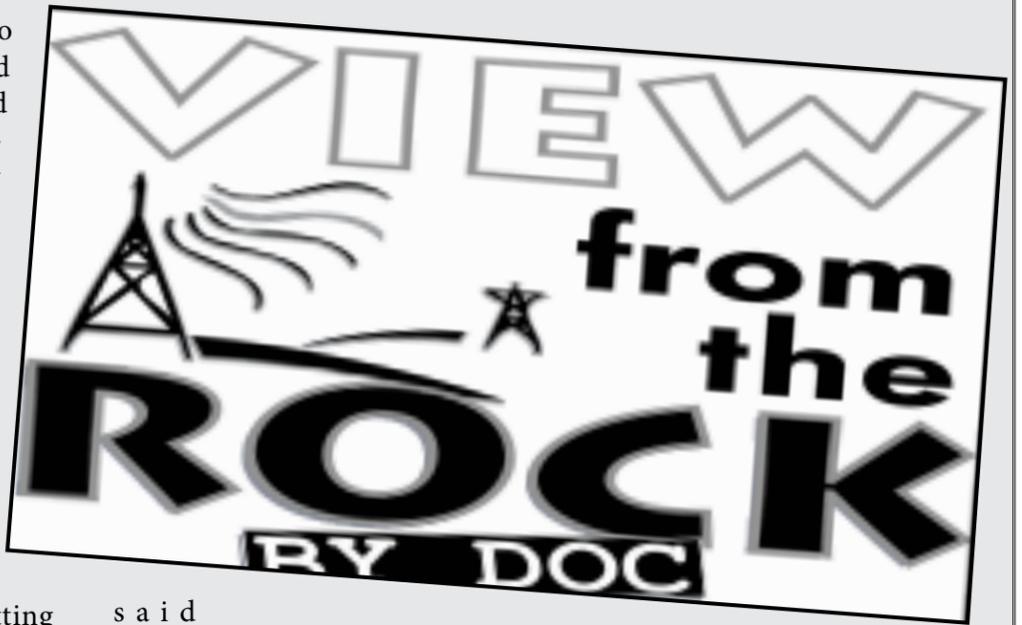
Yup, Shakespeare had a name for it, he called it "Much Ado About Nothing." And boy does it fit here. Groucho Marks once stated "I would never join a club that would let me in." And he

had a point there. Who in their right mind would join our Neighborhood council? They can't manage their money, they can't get meaningful items like the National Night Out program authorized by the city, and they sure don't have an active Land Use Committee that isn't encumbered by fear of upsetting our councilwoman.

I've got to tell you, running scared is not the way to be. And letting friends create fictitious board positions to get political recognition, really doesn't help the community.

*It really appears to be a given about the S-T Chamber of Commerce getting back in business*

AND THEY LIE ABOUT IT! That's the most incredible part of this whole community. Without a blink of an eye, they will tell you to your face that they really hadn't



said something just 5 minutes before. But then again, look at the role models that we and our children have to look down to. A POTUS and his appointed cronies that have been documented as telling a lie every 45 seconds (my time might be a bit off). And like \$hit, it really does run down the capitol hill.

I've had some time to sort out 18 years of archives and a funny thing happened. I got an announcement from a Facebook partner, that for a measly \$64., I could get a 170 photo book with photos that I had posted on my FB site. What captured my attention, is that the proposed cover

photo showed this guy (we all know) waving a revolver while standing on the "Trump Friendship Bridge" during the demonstration. WHAT CAUGHT my eye was the wet \$hit stain between his legs. Now there was someone that got excited. I just couldn't use that as a photo representative of my news coverage. LOL. When sorting photos, I found things that everyone had forgotten, or at least hoped that people had forgotten. But, as I tell people "You may have memories, but I have ARCHIVES." And yes, I think they may have been drinking The Water!■



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### What can you do? Join our Tree Watering Event!

**We need many Volunteers!**

This event is being organized by the Sierra Club's Crescenta Valley Group and the STNC's Safe Traffic & Transportation Committee (STAT) in conjunction with the Sunland-Tujunga Chamber of Commerce.

The Foothills Paper  
Please show your support and join us!



**When:** Saturday, August 27, 2022 at 7:30 a.m.

**Where:** Sunland-Tujunga Chamber of Commerce, 8250 Foothill Blvd. #A, Sunland, CA

**What to Bring:** 10, one-gallon jugs or 2, 5-gallon buckets to carry water.

We will provide the water.

**For More Info:** Email: [patkramerstnc@gmail.com](mailto:patkramerstnc@gmail.com)



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# ANOTHER DAY IN THE HOOD



## CRIME MAPPING

<b>THEFT FROM VEHICLE</b> 221611623 10800 BLOCK ODELL AV 8/15/2022 @ 10:00 AM	<b>WEAPON</b> 221611551 10100 BLOCK HILLHAVEN AV 8/18/2022 @ 12:45 PM
<b>ASSAULT WITH DEADLY WEAPON</b> 221611607 10800 BLOCK SHERMAN GROVE AV 8/19/2022 @ 8:45 PM	<b>VEHICLE, STOLEN</b> 221611238 7000 BLOCK FOOTHILL BL 8/8/2022 @ 11:00 AM
<b>SHOPLIFTING - PETTY THEFT</b> 221611606 7400 BLOCK FOOTHILL BL 8/19/2022 @ 8:25 PM	<b>VEHICLE, STOLEN</b> 221611208 7400 BLOCK FOOTHILL BL 8/5/2022 @ 6:00 PM
<b>THEFT FROM VEHICLE</b> 221611608 10300 BLOCK LEOLANG AV 8/18/2022 @ 10:00 PM	<b>ROBBERY</b> 221611171 ORO VISTA AV & BIG TUJUNGA CANYON 8/6/2022 @ 5:00 PM
<b>ASSAULT WITH DEADLY WEAPON</b> 221611607 10800 BLOCK SHERMAN GROVE AV 8/19/2022 @ 8:45 PM	<b>THEFT FROM VEHICLE</b> 221611163 10100 BLOCK SCOVILLE AV 8/4/2022 @ 6:00 PM

## Neighborhood Watch Meeting, 16 August 2022

STATS, UPDATES, and a talk by Foothill Capt. Johnny Smith!

By Jon Von Gunton – A private Citizen.

Senior Lead Officer (SLO) for Tujunga Gloria Caloca opened the 9:00AM meeting with news that there has been a 9% decrease in Tujunga's overall crime, with property crimes down 13%. However, robberies rose from 6 to 9.

- "Estes robberies"—store robberies that escalate when an employee tries to stop a suspect who then resists or runs—have risen statewide. We suffered one, but have info on the suspect.

- SLO Caloca continued with Sunland's stats: 60% increase in overall crime, of which burglaries are up 47%. Others are down.

- A geographical pattern shows up all along the Foothill Bl. corridor where two robberies gained access through roofs, one near Lowell.

- Too often thieves hit the same retail victims because "mom & pop" stores leave money overnight in their store. Owners might have to replace a \$1000 window that thieves break get \$100 from the cash box.

- An RV off Tujunga Canyon Bl. has generated calls; it was previously on Sherman Grove. Per Mayor Garcetti's mandate, LAPD still can't tow/impound a vehicle used for dwelling, but they still cite for expired registration, hygiene issues, being too close to schools, parks, etc. (LAMC 41.18), and of course any other crimes.

- SLO Caloca hosted a ride-along with CD7 staff to update them with old and new issues and increase mutual understanding.

- The Cochair of Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council's Safe Traffic and Transportation (STAT) Committee told of drug dealing at Sunland's 7-11.

- A resident near Stonehurst Park reported her neighborhood has installed Ring cams and organized neighbors to mutually report on park issues via text and email. Local cams help at park in case of injury, etc. She advocates reaching out to get to know neighbors—so you know wandering strangers.

- Officer Caloca applauded that work and reminded us that getting a DA's attention is nearly impossible without video or other solid proof.

- CALOCA EMPHASIZED THAT, If a crime or dangerous situation is unclear whether it's better to call 911 or Dispatch (877-ASK-LAPD), ALWAYS call 911.

- Street Lighting  
An attendee asked how many residents it took to sign a petition to get better street lighting installed. She was referred to CD7.

- A discussion arose when a resident complained they bought cams but local streetlighting is inadequate to get video. Officer Caloca added that Shadow Hills and LVT residents have often told her they prefer low levels of street lights because that adds to our un-citified atmosphere. Another resident likes to see the stars, mentioning that light pollution is widely recognized as reducing quality of life.

- Individual motion-sensor lights are a great solution, but there's no excuse for bad street lighting encouraging crime. If your neighbors agree, push for it!

- A Sunland resident asked to convey her thanks to Sunland SLO Diana Figueroa because Sunland Park looks much improved.

- Will LAMC 41.18\*(see below)—which forbids sleeping within 500' of parks, schools, etc.—be enforced on homeless around Ralph's near Sunland Park? The city posted required signage months ago. LAPD, LAHSA and CD7 continually offer transients services for substance abuse and housing, but success is infrequent. For years, LAPD received constant complaints about "Pig & Patty," longtime S-T transients. Officers always offered housing rather than force them from place to place. After several years, the couple accepted. Elderly transients are especially vulnerable in every sense.

NOTE: This is a shortened version. For the complete report, please go to the Facebook.

DAVID DE MULLE

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## ASK RUSTY



By AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor Russell Gloor, Association of Mature American Citizens.

## What Are My Wife's Benefits While I'm Living and as My Widow?

retirement benefit plus a spousal boost to bring her payment to her spousal entitlement. Spouse benefits are computed using full retirement age (FRA) benefit amounts, so if



your age 70 benefit is "around \$2900" then your FRA (age 66) benefit amount (known as your "primary insurance amount") should be around \$2,225. Your wife's base spousal boost would be the difference between her FRA amount and 50% of your FRA amount, so her total benefit, if taken at her full retirement age, would be about \$1,112 (her \$990 plus a \$122 spousal boost). But taken at age 65, both her own benefit and her spousal boost would be reduced. At age 65 your wife's total benefit would be around \$963 (her own \$870 plus a reduced spousal boost of about \$93).

Regarding your wife's survivor benefit as your widow, if she has reached her full retirement age (66 years and 8 months), at your death she would get the same amount you were getting when you died - the \$2,900 you will get by claiming at age 70. Your wife's survivor benefit as your widow will replace the smaller spousal amount she was receiving while you were both living. Since your wife will be already collecting a spousal benefit from you, if she has reached her FRA when you pass your

wife will be automatically awarded her survivor benefit at that time. If she hasn't yet reached her FRA when you pass, the spousal portion of her benefit will stop but she can request a reduced survivor benefit early. In that case her early survivor benefit will be actuarially reduced by .396% for each month before her FRA it is claimed. If you were to die in the month your wife turns 65, her early survivor benefit would be about \$2668.

One final thought about Medicare: if you continue to work and have "creditable" healthcare coverage from your employer, you can defer enrolling in Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient services), thus avoiding the Part B premium until you stop working. If your wife is covered under your "creditable" employer healthcare plan, she can also defer enrolling in Medicare Part B until that coverage ends ("creditable" is a group plan with at least 20 participants). However, enrolling in Medicare Part A (coverage for inpatient hospitalization services), for which there is no premium, is mandatory to collect Social Security after age 65.■

**Dear Rusty:** I will be 70 in January and my wife will be 65 in February, at which time we will both go on Medicare. I am currently working, and my approximate Social Security benefit will be around \$2,900. My wife was a stay-at-home mom and, therefore, has minimal Social Security benefits on her own. At 65 she is eligible for \$870 and at full retirement age will qualify for \$990. A few questions: if she starts to draw benefits at 65, what would be her total spousal benefit? If she waited until her full retirement age, what would the amount be? Of greater concern, what would be her survivor benefit given the same criteria as mentioned above. **Signed: Planning Ahead**

**Dear Planning Ahead:** Based on the Social Security amounts in your email, your wife is eligible for a spousal benefit while you are both living. Her spouse benefit when she claims will consist of her own Social Security



## Welcome Back to School!

It's that time of year again! The sights and sounds of bells ringing, school buses running, the scent of freshly sharpened pencils, and students lining up in the morning with their new gear means one thing - the beginning of a new school year.

Please remember that students throughout the city will be commuting to class whether they are riding, biking, or walking, and drivers should take precautions and look out for children during their commute. Here are some tips for everyone to help make it a safe school year:

- If you are driving be aware of school buses and pay attention to the signals being used
- Drivers, stay alert when commuting through neighborhoods, school zones, and bus stops
- Reduce your speed
- Avoid blocking crosswalks

Take part in supporting your local transit agencies and take advantage of riding the bus for free. Both LADOT and Metro offer reduced or free rides for students at qualifying schools.■



# Tujunga Artist Tom Smith Passes Away

By Jackie Houchien

Perhaps you've seen Tom Smith in your travels along Foothill Boulevard; for sure you've seen his artwork. He's a slight man with a curling gray ponytail and paint spots on his jeans. He'll probably have a brush in his hand and an open car trunk full of paint cans. If you listen closely, you may even hear a whisper of jazz music.

For more than 25 years Tom Smith has painted cartoon decorations or advertising on windows and walls of scores of businesses in Sunland-Tujunga.

His main gig in winter is painting Christmas decorations – Santas, Snowmen, kids on sleds – but he's up for any holiday seasonal decoration. It may be ghosts and ghouls on Halloween, hearts and Rafael-like cupids on Valentine's Day, a cornucopia, or a cheerful batch of spring flowers.

He'll even paint caricatures of real people, such a Kathy Anthony's grandkids on her "Kathy's Kreation's" store window.

Tom says he doesn't like to drive far these days and only paint windows "from Sunland Park to Ocean View".

Sounds like a pretty big art gallery to me, Tom!

But before you dismiss Tom as "merely" a cartoon illustrator, you should know that he is also a talented portrait painter. On easels and stacked against his wall are beautiful, framed portraits in acrylics or pastels. Others are safely stored in large chests or as Polaroid photos in albums.

A stunning likeness of jazz trumpeter, Miles Davis, and another John Lennon (autographed by the musician himself) caught my attention.

There is a self portrait of a much younger Tom, another of his mother.

"I like painting people", the artist admits. "Real light hitting real flesh... you can't beat it!" But Tom also paints from photos. "I've painted almost every president from Truman on up". When asked if a portrait of Obama was a possibility, he said, "Yes, if I can get the right photo. Lighting is important".

Born and raised in Iowa and encouraged and influenced by his musician father, Tom's love of cartoon drawing surfaced early. A retired professor neighbor who saw some of the 10-year-olds cartoons put in a word for him to Dick Spencer III (at one time the owner and editor of *Western Horseman* magazine) who was teaching Editorial Cartooning at the University of Iowa. He agreed to tutor Tom.

"We met every day that summer in

his studio inside an old Quonset hut. He'd give me an assignment – say, a baseball player at bat – and I'd draw it".

By the time Tom was 13, he was drawing the editorial cartoons for the Daily Iowan. "I was pint sized illustrator in a big office. The editor would say what the editorial was about, and we'd discuss ideas for the cartoon. I was a really into Eisenhower and Korea in those days".

Tom graduated high school in 1957, writing his senior thesis on Animated Cartooning. After two years at Iowa U. (at his Dad's insistence) he came to Los Angeles to study at the Chouinard Art Institute (now, Disney's Cal-Arts in Valencia). He loved the Animated Drawing class using live models, but when he was showed to first step in actual animation - tracing drawings - he was turned off and headed back to Iowa.

For seven years Tom was totally away from drawing. He got a job going door to door selling cookware, did a stint in the Marine Corps Reserve, and got married. When he returned to LA, he remained in sales for a couple years before starting classes again at the Art Center.

In 1970 he moved his family to Fort Lauderdale where we thought of selling caricatures. He drew a couple samples, showed them to hotel guests and before long was painting two a day. He'd draw life-like heads in a full color then ask the person what they wanted the "little bodies" to be like.

His son, Leonardo (a painter too) was born there.

A couple years later he was doing the same thing on Hollywood Blvd, using caricatures he'd painted of Johnny Carson and Diana Ross as samples. "Here's where my door to door sales experience helped".

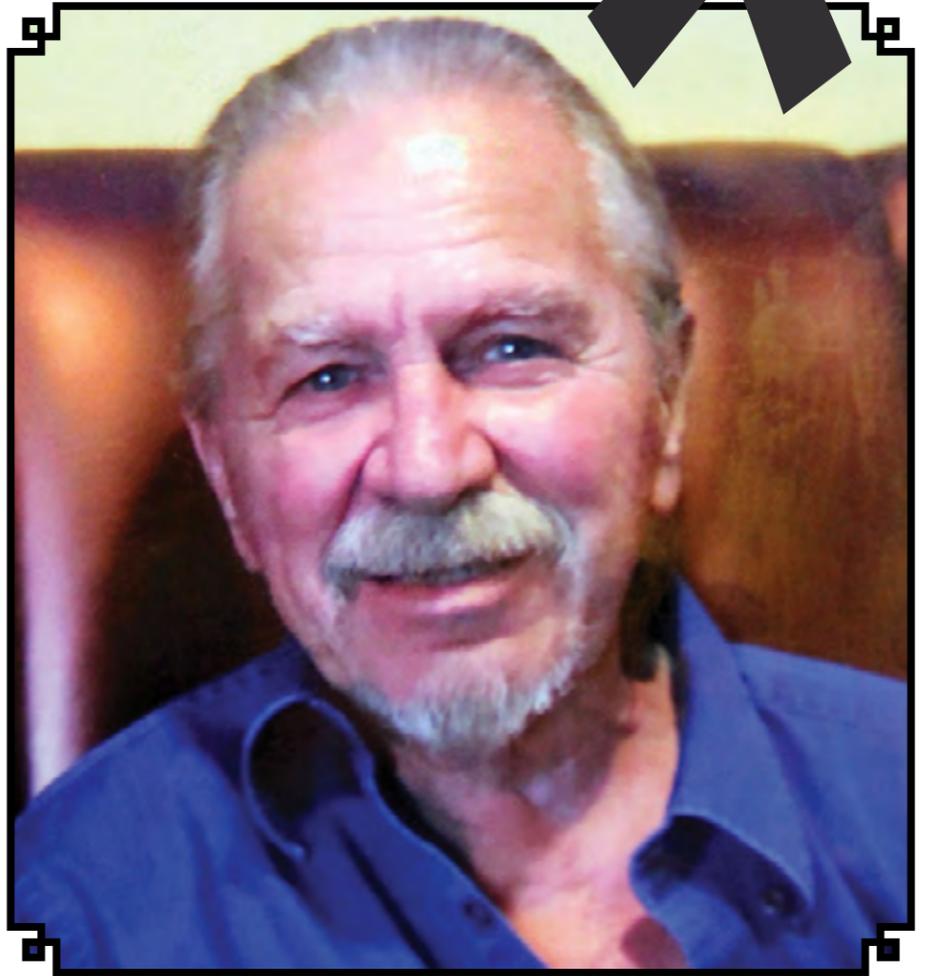
He found many customers in Hollywood hair styling salons and gay bars.

And he painted willing nudes at Pirate's Cove beach "every chance I got".

For a while Tom painted with Hector Ponce, the premier Latino muralist, whose paintings stretch 20 stories high on some L.A. buildings.

"One day I saw some Christmas decorations on a store window and thought, *That might be fun*". And so it was.

Tom passed away after a brief illness on July 22, 2022. An announcement of his Celebration of Life will be posted as soon as plans are finalized. You can see Tom's work all over Sunland-Tujunga, his last piece is on the windows of Verdugo Hills Liquor.■



Tom Smith.



AMERICAN LEGION POST 288



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