



The skin of our teeth

I really had no idea of what I was seeing, maybe even being a part of Thornton Wilder's futuristic play. It looked "cute" until I realized that the play is actually about history and war and catastrophe and love, domestic and otherwise, in all its glittering raiments. - SEE PAGE 8



Home Depot's Plug on Plans to Open Store

After a four-year battle with the community activists, Home Depot plans for a store in Sunland-Tujunga.



THE FOOTHILLS PAPER

THE VOICE OF THE FOOTHILLS

FRIDAY OCTOBER 4, 2024

PLEASE HAVE A HAPPY AND FIRE FREE WEEK!
Sunland-Tujunga's only weekly newspaper

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Strange Weather Brings Out Strange Animals

By David "Doc" DeMulle'

Coyotes, bears and even small frogs have been showing up in our neighborhood. Remember the Egyptian Pharo's 2nd plague? That was frogs dropping out of the skies. No one knows where these "Froglets" came from, but people have been finding them in their ponds, swimming pools and even climbing up their window screens.

Up until now, they were only found in the Big-T wash and they were fun to watch grow. And no, they are not edible. ■



Citizen of The Year Sonny Cabrales!



Sonny Cabrales receiving the Am. Legion Award for his service to the community.

Last month, the American Legion honored Sonny and Wayne Cabrales for their service to the community and especially, the American Legion Post 266 and VFW 1614. Sonny is the owner of Harmony Farms and has been providing meats to these organizations for a decade.

His Son, Wayne Cabrales is a Sergeant First Class (SFC) (E-7), US Army. He is a Senior Aircrew member and a helicopter maintenance instructor at the Army Transportation School at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Sonny was presented

with the post Challenge Coin and a fun time was had by all.

The Veterans Breakfast is a monthly event which is held on the second Saturday of each month downstairs at the Verdugo Hills Memorial Hall from 8:00 until 10:00 am. The menu is normally eggs, potatoes (in some form), pancakes or waffles (sometimes Belgin), sausages, (sometimes Spam), and a number of other entrees depending on what's available and the imagination of the members who's in the kitchen. ■



California's legal weed industry faces a wave of turmoil

California had high hopes when voters legalized recreational cannabis in 2016. But my colleagues have been uncovering a host of problems that have plagued the industry, from contaminated cannabis to the

booming underground market.

Stepping back and looking at the forest and not the trees — the joint and not the smoke, if you will — their findings have raised three big issues about the state of the industry: the state's ability to ensure

legal weed is safe, a resilient black market and increased competition from other states.

Please see California's legal weed industry faces a wave of turmoil on Page 8

Check out The Foothills Paper interactive website: thefoothillspaper.com



COMMUNITY NEWS

The story of "Freeway" Rick Ross

Reviewed by David "Doc" DeMulle'

"Cocaine was extremely profitable for anyone who could get his or her hands on enough to sell. The barrier for entry was about \$150, the wholesale price for an 'eight ball.' That eight ball could then be divided into smaller amounts and sold at a small

profit, especially if 'cut' with another, cheaper stimulant like caffeine powder. Once cut, the product was less pure but the difference was undetectable to the average user.

"Richard Donnell Ross didn't know there was that much money to be made from cocaine when he made his first sale. All Ross knew was that the small bundle of powder given to him by an old friend was supposed to be worth fifty dollars. He would learn in no time, however, just how lucrative the drug business was, as he earned millions of dollars within just a few years, changing the American sociopolitical landscape in the process.

"Ross was part of the Second Great Migration, a mass exodus of five million Blacks from the South to the North, Midwest, and West between 1940 and 1970. He and his mother moved to South Central Los Angeles from Troup, Texas, in 1963, when he was three. Ross's mother supported them on what she earned cleaning offices and landscaping. The two struggled despite her hard work and spent much of Ross's childhood receiving government assistance.

"He grew up ashamed of his family's poverty. He was embarrassed, for example, that they were so poor they had scavenged canned goods from busted-up stores after the Watts Riots, so he started hustling as a child. He cut lawns, pumped gas for tips, ran errands for neighbors to earn extra money. Making money was his main objective, so he didn't hesitate when, while playing roller derby with friends in a neighborhood park, a man offered him an opportunity to win a quarter for every tennis ball he could hit into a box.

"The man was Richard Williams. Not to be confused

with the father of Venus and Serena, this Williams was also a prominent tennis coach in Compton with a reputation for finding and developing athletic talent in South Central through his California Tennis Association for Underprivileged Youth. Williams saw potential in Ross and took the boy under his wing. By ninth grade, Ross was so good that Williams recruited him to join the tennis team at Susan Miller Dorsey High School, where Williams helped run the tennis program.

"Ross advanced as a player at Dorsey, making it to the semifinals in a few tournaments and even earning the attention of a recruiter at Cal State Long Beach his senior year. A scholarship to Cal State was a clear path out of poverty. The one holdup, however, was his academic performance.

"Ross had been skating in school, it turned out, passed from grade to grade even though he could barely read or write. The Cal State recruiter backed off when he learned that Ross might not graduate, let alone score high enough on the SATs to qualify for admission. Discouraged, Ross dropped out of high school in 1979, at the age of nineteen.

"Not ready to give up tennis or school, he enrolled at Los Angeles Trade Technical College, where he learned to bind books and reupholster car seats and continued to play tennis as part of the L.A. Trade-Tech tennis team. Ross quickly came to the realization that trade school wasn't going to launch him into professional sports or out of South Central. He was devastated. It didn't take long for him to turn to crime.

"Led by his love of low-riders, Ross fell in with a small group of car thieves. He was arrested for the first time in 1982 and charged with possession of stolen

auto parts. While awaiting trial, he received a call from Michael McLaurin, a childhood friend who had left South Central on a football scholarship to San Jose State University. McLaurin had something to show him and wanted to meet up. Ross ventured north to the West Adams section of L.A., where McLaurin was staying in a guesthouse. Inside, McLaurin showed him a plastic bag filled with small paper bundles. Each package contained about half a gram of cocaine, or fifty dollars' worth.

"Ross had never seen the white powder in real life and knew very little about it outside of what he'd seen in movies like Super Fly. Nevertheless, he agreed to sell it, for a small cut.

"Along with a friend named Ollie 'Big Loe' Newell, Ross went to the Algin Sutton Recreation Center at Eighty-eighth and Hoover, just blocks away from their old middle school. There, they ran into a customer, a pimp named Martin who was known around the neighborhood. Martin produced a small kit and demonstrated for Ross and Newell how to cook the powder into a rock, which he proceeded to smoke. Without their product or payment for it, Newell and Ross returned home wondering what to do and what they would tell McLaurin. While they were still searching for an answer, Martin pulled up in front of Ross's home. He had one hundred dollars and wanted to buy more.

"It was the beginning of Ross's career as a drug dealer. He worked as a low-level cocaine dealer for McLaurin for a short period but struck out on his own once he met an auto upholstery instructor at the Venice Skills Center who could connect him to a wholesale cocaine supplier. The instructor introduced him to Henry Corrales, a Nicaraguan trafficker

who began selling to Ross and Newell. Through Corrales, Ross met Danilo Blandon, another Nicaraguan who could

secure even more weight. Little by little, they assembled a small crew of dealers to help sell the product and graduated from ounces to kilos.

"By 1982, just three years after dropping out of high school, Ross was a major dealer selling cocaine primarily to wealthy customers across L.A. Business was booming but customers were starting to ask for what he'd seen Martin the pimp make: freebase. To keep business going, Ross paid Martin the pimp to cook his cocaine until he finally mastered the process himself. In a move of marketing genius, he called the product 'ready rock' and sold it in twenty-dollar hits. He taught the recipe to every new recruit on his growing team of dealers.

"Freebase was identical to the powder from which it was derived on a molecular level. It was the rapid onset of the substance's high and its low cost that made it popular, especially in poor communities that did not previously have access to cocaine. News of an easier, cheaper method for consuming the nation's most in-vogue drug spread rapidly by word of mouth. It started first with a small group of dealers and wealthy individuals and expanded out to their associates, and eventually reached the streets. In L.A., that meant the street gangs.

"A gang culture had always existed in Los Angeles and some gangs sold drugs—PCP, marijuana, amphetamines. A gang's primary purpose, however, was to protect the young men who joined it from other gangs of young men across the city.

Please see **The Story of "Freeway" Rick Ross** on Page 8

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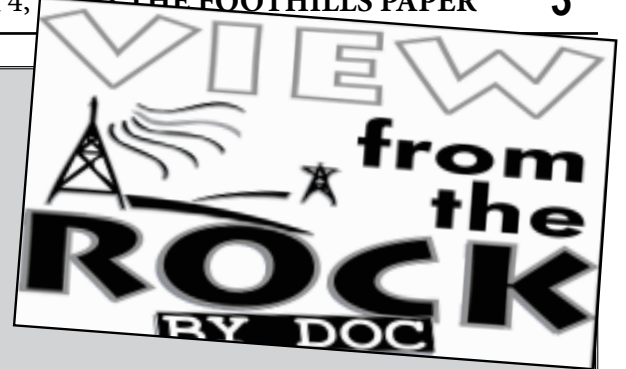
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I'm sure glad you haven't gotten tired of me. But, I do want you to know, that after 14 years in the bush from Chile to Afghanistan, and Editor of The Foothills Paper, I still get paranoid when people I don't know, run up behind me, or grab my hand, and say "You're my hero, you write what we think, and everyone else is afraid to say."

All of you who can read this paper, survived 2006. A lot of our neighbors didn't. This issue has a lot of the photos that we didn't have room enough in the regular issues. These last years were the most tumultuous years I can remember in ST.

So many things happened that affected everyone. The Home Depot situation, the traffic fatalities, the local scofflaws and of course, those developers/builders that basically said "screw you S-T, with the blessings of the City, we're going to do what we damn well want. Remember the Andersons and the Whether Wald Castle? Well, it isn't over yet. We got a rebuilt park in Sunland and the kids are having a great time. Our Mayor Garcetti, has backed off his promise to help us in our fight against the Home Depot if they decide to come back, after all, they have a 20-year lease option coming up. How many times can one community be screwed by a mega-buck organization, that openly gives money to the City and tells the community that "they really don't care what the people want?" WOW! Maybe we can

create the "Vaseline Award!"

This was the year that we watched our City officers talk out of both sides of their mouths. This was the year that the Oro Vista dump had its 10th year anniversary of making our Council Member look like a fool. You know, there has to come a time, when people in power, listen to those who put them there. Now don't get me wrong, I like Monica, but when someone tells her that she is non-existent, ineffectual and doesn't have the power to help her community, I get upset. I can't say that we should do something drastic to the property, like maybe have an exorcism, but Monica, someone pissed in your cheerios you haven't noticed it yet.

And that brings up another point, past years started with the death of a woman crossing the street at Oro Vista and ended with a woman getting killed on La Tuna Canyon Road. Somewhere in between these two incidents were 14 other deaths. There were 8 reported houseless homicides and 5-6 unreported. We just found the bodies and went along our way.

Did anyone notice them? Did anyone understand that these people are killing off, maiming or injuring our neighbors? A couple of years ago, I wrote about this one stupid young driver. Wow, I discovered the "A" word. And they discovered me. So now we can't use the "N" word, The "L" word or the "A" word. Pretty

soon, there won't be a letter in the alphabet that we can use.

For those of you that read this far, I take these wanton deaths personally. Sometimes I get there before the police, sometimes I call the EMTs, every time it affects me more. Remember that stupid driver I wrote about that got everybody worked up? Instead of talking to their kids, friends and neighbors, certain people followed the lead of the RATpack and re-directed, mis-directed and flat out lied about what I was trying to do. Well, it came back on you people. It was after covering the woman's body on La Tuna Canyon, that I realized, that the young driver I wrote about, was the same one who killed this lady. Think about it people-you were a part of this, she won't ever have another Happy New Year.

And while we're posturing on what we've lost, how about the demoting of LAPD Captain Johnny Smith and his being sent to Fort Apache - LA (San Pedro) maybe for blowing the whistle on Monicas interference in a drug investigation against her chief licky Arnie? Not Good.

It's time we got together and talked about what is happening, before it happens to you or us. The last decade also held wonderments, I was made an Honorary Lion, (which then got disbanded for prejudice against a handicapped winner of the

W a - termelon Festival King & Queen.) What was really funny is that I was kicked out of the Scientology run S-T Rotary that participated in the attack on celebrity "El Machete." Dany Trejo. I helped my own staff members set up their own publications, started putting out 4,000 papers and went weekly. Surprise, I began to run out of quality time for my family and dogs. I discovered a couple wonderful writers and covered some really interesting stories. And, the best part, is that the stories are about you, my fellow citizens and neighbors. In between the tragedies, there were stories about Walden Pond, scofflaws and burglars and our fire and police department. And there were the wonderful memories of Joe Carnes, our own historian.

Never forget the past - look to the future, what The Paper covers today is your story. I love this community, and I hope you see the beauty that I see in it. I hope to share with you, the secrets that are there to be discovered. Have a Happy and Safe holiday season.

And if anything offends you, you can say "It's The Water."


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Home Depot Pulls Plug on Planned Store

After a four-year battle with the city of Los Angeles and community activists, Home Depot Inc. has decided to pull its plans for a store in Sunland-Tujunga.

Home Depot announced Wednesday morning that the big-box retailer has dropped its lawsuit against the city and no longer plans to pursue its application to open a store in an empty Kmart building on Foothill Boulevard.

“Throughout this process, we complied with all laws and regulations in relation to the site and believe that lawsuit was just. However, given the steps the city is requiring for us to move forward, coupled with the current economic landscape, it simply no longer makes business sense for us to pursue this project,” Kathryn Gallagher, a Home Depot spokeswoman, said in a prepared statement.

Home Depot had filed suit against Los Angeles in November 2007 alleging that the City Council ignored established procedures in revoking its permit to convert the old Kmart store.

Home Depot had acquired the lease from Kmart in 2004 and had already spent \$2 million in renovations when the permit to convert was revoked by the City Council, which did so in re-

sponse to a campaign by Sunland-Tujunga residents to keep Home Depot out of their neighborhood.

At the time, residents voiced concerns over increased traffic, possible problems with parking and the store becoming a haven for day laborers.

HOME DEPOT PULLS PLUG ON PLANNED STORE. LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL

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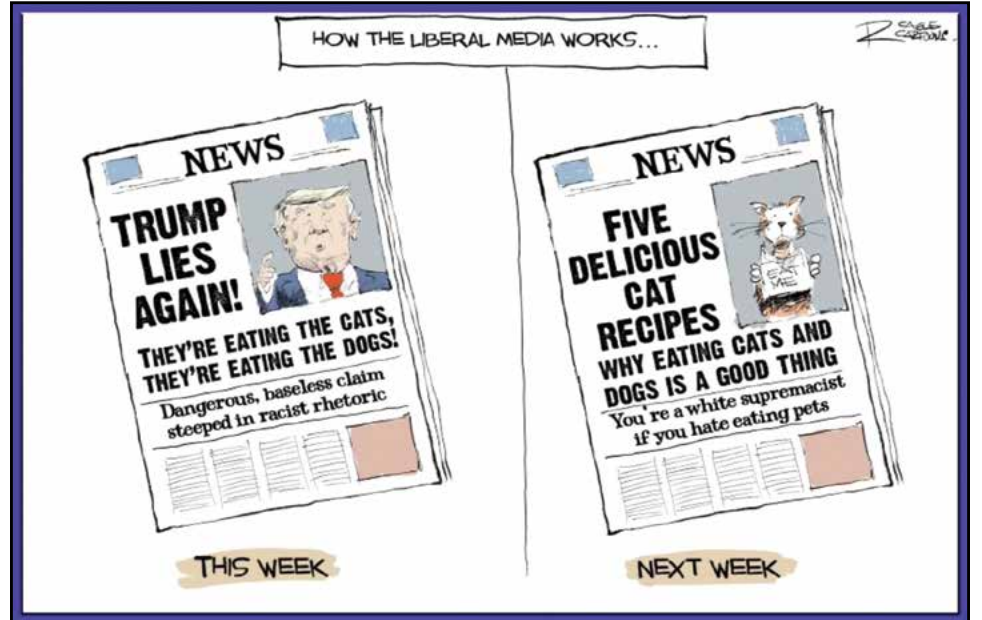
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ANOTHER DAY IN THE HOOD



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VEHICLE, STOLEN 241610109
8600 BLOCK FENWICK ST
9/2/2024 @ 3:40 PM

10300 BLOCK ODELL AV
9/4/2024 @ 3:30 AM

BURGLARY FROM VEHICLE 241610114
7700 BLOCK FOOTHILL BL
9/1/2024 @ 11:00 PM

THEFT - PETTY 241610245
10100 BLOCK HILLHAVEN AV
9/7/2024 @ 1:14 PM

VEHICLE, STOLEN 241610157
11000 BLOCK WESCOTT AV
9/3/2024 @ 5:00 PM

THEFT FROM VEHICLE - PETTY 241610240
8700 BLOCK WYNGATE ST

BURGLARY FROM VEHICLE 241610139
8200 BLOCK FOOTHILL BL
9/3/2024 @ 3:00 PM

VEHICLE, STOLEN 241610312
10400 BLOCK MCVINE AV
9/11/2024 @ 11:00 AM

VEHICLE, STOLEN 241610126
8200 BLOCK GROVE ST
9/3/2024 @ 6:00 AM

VEHICLE, STOLEN 241610306
7800 BLOCK FENWICK ST
9/10/2024 @ 7:00 PM

BURGLARY FROM VEHICLE 241610130
VALMONT ST & MARCUS AV
9/2/2024 @ 9:40 PM

VEHICLE, STOLEN 241610308
7800 BLOCK FENWICK ST
9/10/2024 @ 7:00 PM

THEFT-GRAND (plain theft-grand) 241610168
7600 BLOCK MEMORY DR
9/3/2024 @ 10:00 PM

ROBBERY - ATTEMPTED 241610310
KYLE & MOUNTAIR
9/10/2024 @ 5:00 AM

GRAND THEFT: 924-13851-1199
11000 BLK PLAINVIEW AVE,
TUJUNGA, CA
8/15/2024 @ 8:00 AM

THEFT FROM VEHICLE - GRAND 241610399
7900 BLOCK FORSYTHE ST
9/13/2024 @ 8:00 AM

THEFT FROM VEHICLE - GRAND 241610220

VEHICLE, STOLEN 241610443
7800 BLOCK HILLROSE ST
9/20/2024 @ 7:30 AM

VEHICLE, STOLEN 241610439
7900 BLOCK FOOTHILL BL
9/19/2024 @ 5:00 PM



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ASK RUSTY



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

Should my Husband File and then Suspend His Benefits?

Dear Rusty: My financial advisor used a computer program which told my husband to take his SS at age 68, then suspend it after a few months. What I understood was if my husband started and then stopped taking distributions, he would earn delayed retirement credits and thus get more at age 70. I know waiting increases SS amounts, by 8% a year, but does purposely starting and then stopping SS increase distributions even more? **Signed: Confused**

Dear Confused: Suspending receipt of one's SS benefits after their FRA (as in your husband's case) does result in him earning Delayed

Retirement Credits (DRCs), but the DRCs earned accumulate at the same rate as if he simply waited longer to claim his SS benefit in the first place. DRCs are earned up to 70 years of age, at which point your husband's maximum SS benefit is attained (FYI, DRCs earn .667% of additional benefit for each month benefits are delayed or suspended, or 8% per year). But I see no advantage to your husband starting his benefits now (at 68) and then suspending them several months later to earn DRCs – the number of DRCs earned are the same in either case, so he could simply wait to apply for his Social Security benefits until he is 70 to get his maximum

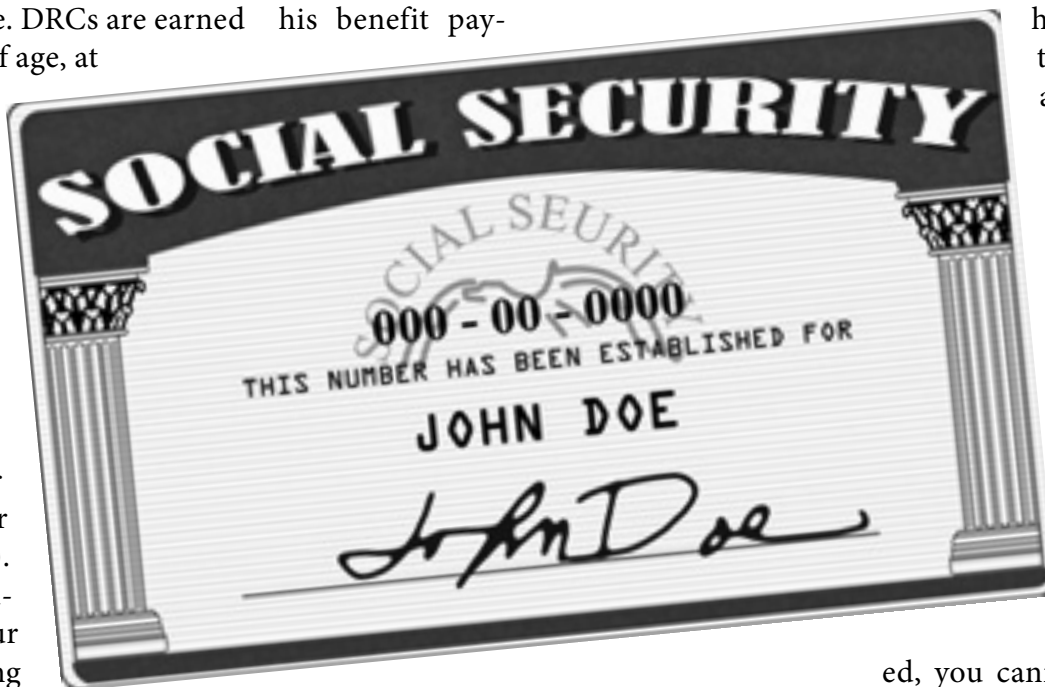
amount.

The only rationale I can think of to claim and then suspend after doing so is to get a few months of his benefit pay-

to claim SS. And, just for information, he can't "file and suspend" his benefits so that you can receive a spousal benefit from him. That option (to file and suspend, enabling a spouse to receive benefits) was eliminated by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 - while your husband's benefits are suspended,

you cannot receive a spousal benefit from him.

So, frankly, I see no advantage to your husband claiming his benefit now and then suspending them a few months later. If his goal is to maximize his SS benefit, then the best way to do that is simply wait longer to claim. ■



Bianca Gonzalez Named to SNHU Dean's List

MANCHESTER, NH (09/25/2024)-- Bianca Gonzalez of Tujunga (91042) has been named to Southern New Hampshire University's Summer 2024 Dean's List. The summer terms run from May to August.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.500 to 3.699 for the reporting term are named to the Dean's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer. ■

Daniel Wood Corella Named to SNHU President's List

MANCHESTER, NH (09/25/2024)-- Daniel Wood Corella of Tujunga (91042) has been named to Southern New Hampshire University's (SNHU) Summer 2024 President's List. The summer terms run from May to August.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above for the reporting term are named to the President's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer. ■

THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH

Playing at the Noise Within, Pasadena BOFFO!

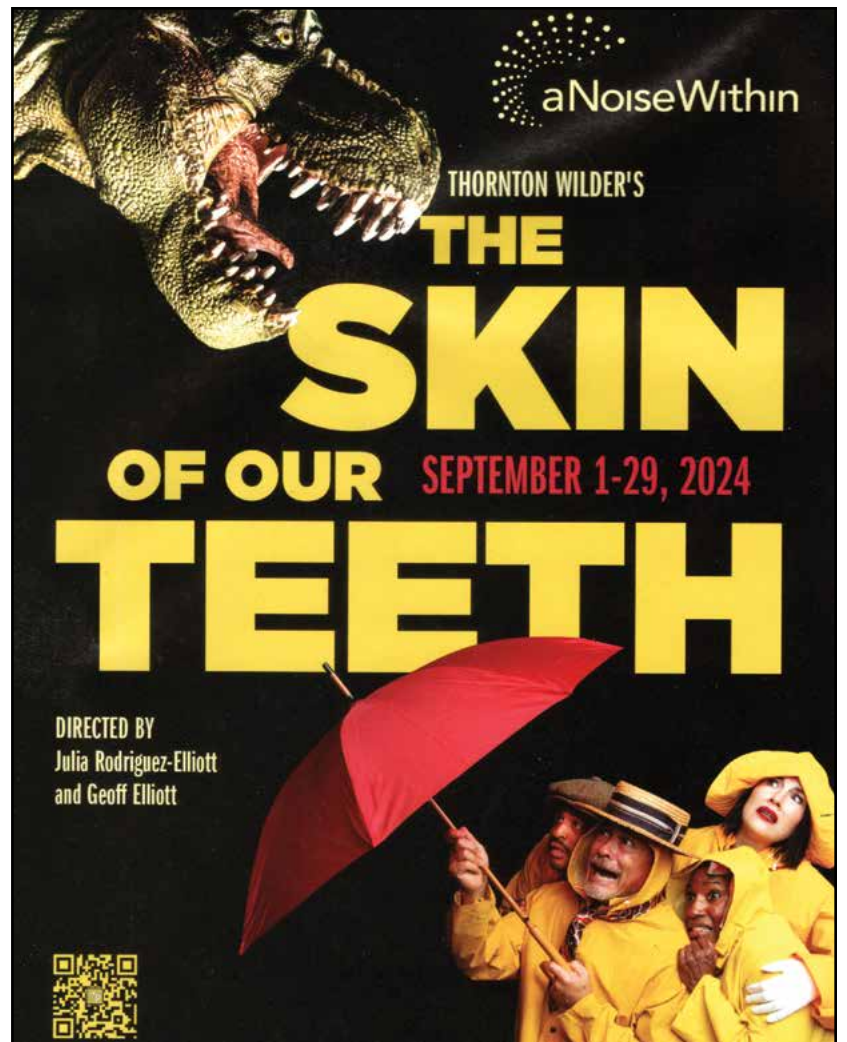
I really had no idea of what I was seeing, maybe even being a part of Thornton Wilder's futuristic play. It looked "cute" until I realized that the play is actually about history and war and catastrophe and love, domestic and otherwise, in all its glittering raiments. The cast includes dinosaurs, a fortune teller, Moses, Plato, and a mammoth. Just like life, the play interrupts itself, loses track, and makes ludicrous remarks. When the curtain rises on the protagonists' suburban house in Excelsior, New Jersey, a feeling of deep weirdness settles over the audience.

Part of this is due to the plot. "The Skin

of Our Teeth" chronicles the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Antrobus, their children Henry and Gladys, and their household help and factotum, Sabina. But, as we quickly learn, the Antrobuses have been married for five thousand years.

What is so funny to me, is that as the play unfolds, I realized that the setting was in the middle of an ice age. And as the play goes forward, then backwards, and it almost accurately described the situation that we are IN NOW. And it was written 90 years ago.

This is a must-see production at the NOISE WITHIN. For more information, go to www.anoisewithin.org. ■



The story of "Freeway" Rick Ross *continued from page 2*

But the culture shifted in the late sixties as the gangs started to consolidate. Members of gangs associated with two South Central high schools came together in 1969 to form the Crips. According to legend, the name was a reference to the walking sticks members used to style themselves. Just four years later, in 1972, a handful of other gangs from nearby Compton combined to combat the Crips. They called themselves the Bloods, as in "blood brothers."

"Growing up in South Central in the sixties and seventies, Rick Ross had a front-row seat to the birth of the Bloods and Crips, gangs whose memberships swelled into the thousands by the time he started dealing. Ross leveraged his childhood

friendships with Crip and Blood leaders to become a major supplier to the gangs. Through the Crips and Bloods, he established a distribution network so powerful that it brought down the wholesale price of cocaine even further, a savings he passed on to dealers and ultimately to users.

"For his central role in the rise of crack, 'Freeway' Rick Ross is often miscredited as its inventor. That dubious distinction probably belongs to the mysterious Bay Area college students and hippies who experimented with cocaine throughout the sixties and seventies. Ross, however, is the man who popularized the substance by helping make cocaine, freebase in particular, ubiquitous in Los Angeles. Where cocaine had been a substance reserved for the elite, Ross used his unique connections to both Nicaraguan traffickers and L.A.'s street gangs in-

cluding the Altadena chapter of the Black Panthers to create a drug enterprise that made cocaine cheap, widely available, and easy to consume. With ready rock, Ricky Ross did for cocaine what McDonald's did for beef." Recently Ross became interested in the "legal" drug marijuana business and with a Tujunga associate, started looking for a retail shop as well as a large grow site. Ross now has a dispensary and 15,000 sq ft. grow site in Sun Valley. Located at 9074 De Garmo Ave Sun Valley, their quality is incredible and their prices are the best in the valley.

This is a story of a good kid gone bad, found himself, and went good. He is articulate, a published author and above all, has something that no other valley pot grower has – Diedra G. his partner with an MBA and an eye for quality and great customer relations. ■

California's legal weed industry faces a wave of turmoil *continued from page 1*

A GROWING SCANDAL OVER PESTICIDES IN POT

The legal weed industry is reeling over the state's failure to keep pesticides out of products found on dispensary shelves throughout California, my colleague Paige St. John reported this week.

A Times investigation in June found alarming levels of pesticides in popular vapes and other items, throwing into question the state's ability to protect consumers from unsafe products. These dangerous chemicals can have severe health consequences, such as heart failure, neurological damage and birth defects.

Since that investigation, a whistleblower has sued the state, a top cannabis official resigned and the state hired a private investigator, Paige reports. And in the background, industry leaders have raced to create a shadow regulato-

ry system to help restore consumer confidence.

"There's an understanding if we don't clean this up, people are not going to buy in the regulated market," Tiffany Devitt, a lobbyist for the March and Ash dispensary chain, told Paige.

The underground market shows no sign of slowing down, as highlighted by 'Romeo and Juliet'

Los Angeles County prosecutors say a young couple — Gabriella Tovar and Jesus Mendoza — targeted four cannabis dispensaries during a six-week-long spree. Detectives dubbed the case file "Romeo and Juliet," with authorities characterizing the two as partners in romance and in crime.

Yes, I am aware this story sounds like something ripped out of a pulp novel, but there's a deeper issue at play here.

The couple are accused of specifically robbing unlicensed dispensaries, which sell pot at cheaper prices than legal businesses by dodging taxes and state testing requirements. Illegal dispensaries

are also less likely to call the police, making them targets for extortion and robbery.

"Testimony and video of the takeover-style heists offered a startling example of the violence that shadows California's booming cannabis black market," my colleague Matthew Ormseth reported.

The state's underground market remains a formidable competitor to the legal weed industry. A series of Times investigations in 2022 found the black market saw an explosion of growth after the legalization of recreational cannabis, resulting in the exploitation of farmworkers who labor in squalid, deadly conditions.

In July, authorities raided illegal cannabis grow sites near a pair of state parks, seizing more than 5,200 plants and 14 firearms, including two assault weapons.

California begins to lose ground to ... Michigan?

Facing a booming black market, steep taxes and strict regulations, California's legal weed industry is

under-performing.

These compounding problems have allowed Michigan, which legalized recreational sales in 2018, to surpass California last year as the largest cannabis market in the country by sales volume, my colleague Connor Sheets reports.

Michigan has a couple of advantages. It's located near states like Indiana and Wisconsin, where even medical marijuana remains illegal. California, on the other hand, is surrounded by states that have legalized cannabis.

But taxes are also more lenient in Michigan, allowing dispensaries to charge much less and drive up demand from consumers.

It's gotten to the point where regular candy from a corner store is more expensive than dispensary products that contain THC, said Randy Buchman, founder of Pleasantrees, a cannabis company headquartered in a Detroit suburb.

"You can get a 200-milligram pack of gummies in any store here for \$2," he said. "You can't buy Haribo gummies for that price." ■