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Bates' get-well card signed by hundreds of fans

By KELLY NIX

MORE THAN 200 well-wishers have signed an illustrated get-well card for Carmel artist Bill Bates, who was transferred to a Los Angeles hospital after suffering a chest infection nearly six months ago.

The 11-by-17-inch card, illustrated by retired Sacramento Bee cartoonist and Bates' friend Dennis Renault, was given to Bates this week by his teenage daughter, Chelsea.

Standing at his bedside, Bates' wife Lei Lei said Tuesday her husband was thrilled with Renault's card and the other cards he's received from fans and friends.

"His eyes were brighter," she said. "He appreciates them."

The card features a likeness of Bates holding an old-fashioned ink pen under one arm with a bird in front of him with the words, "AWK! Get Well, Bill Bates!" In his other arm, the cartoon Bates is carrying a shield with the words "Satiric Order of The Pine Cone."

Bates' friend and publisher, David Loye, came up with the idea to send Bates the illustrated card. Mike Brown, owner of Perspectives in Carmel, posted the card for Bates' supporters to sign.

There were so many signatures on the card that extra paper was offered for more.

"My wife signed the card Saturday and she said a whole bunch of people had already signed," Renault said.

Bates, Carmel's unofficial artist in residence, has been illustrating cartoons depicting Carmel life for The Pine Cone since 1972.

During his illness, The Pine Cone has been reprinting classic Bates cartoons. "There are so many that are priceless, we could keep it up for years, if we had to," said pub-



Bill Bates' friend Dennis Renault, a retired cartoonist, created this card, which was signed by fans and delivered to Bates in his Los Angeles hospital room.

lisher Paul Miller. "But we are looking forward to having new cartoons from Bill in the near future."

After experiencing a heart attack in July, Bates was in intensive care at Community Hospital of the Monterey

See **BATES** page 11A

County lagoon strategy still being fine-tuned

By CHRIS COUNTS

NOW THAT the rains have returned and the Carmel River is flowing again, the Monterey County Public Works Department is gearing up again for one of its annual winter obligations: the breaching of the Carmel River Lagoon sandbar.

By cutting a channel in the sandbar, public works is able to reduce the rising water level in the lagoon, which would otherwise flood homes in a low-lying neighborhood on the north side of the river.

According to interim maintenance manager Shawn Atkins, with a series of storms coming on shore, his agency is keeping a watchful eye on the water level in the lagoon.

See **LAGOON** page 12A

Judge OKs manslaughter charges in DUI death

By PAUL MILLER

PROSECUTORS SAY two Big Sur men are criminally responsible for the death of a 17-year-old girl after a late-night drinking binge in August. A third man helped one of them hide his car and flee the scene of the Highway 1 accident that killed Rachel Wiesjahn, according to a deputy district attorney.

See **CHARGES** page 6A

Lucky Peninsulans are Inauguration-bound

By KELLY NIX

HOTEL ROOMS are expensive and nearly impossible to come by, and the crowds will probably be crushing, but none of that is putting a damper on the enthusiasm shared by those attending President-elect Barack Obama's January

Inauguration.

Monterey County residents attending the Inaugural are hoping to catch a glimpse of Obama — just like the rest of the nearly 250,000 people who have tickets to the event.

Obama will take the oath of office Jan. 20 at noon on the steps of the capitol before the inaugural parade at 2:30 p.m.

Tickets to the Inauguration were distributed through Congressman Sam Farr's office.

Among the local attendees will be a group of nine Carmel High School students and five chaperones, including two teachers.

Jake Odello, a Carmel senior who says he hopes to become president one day, spearheaded the effort to get tickets, making numerous phone calls. After the student group's story appeared on KSBW, Farr's office gave them tickets.

"I'm extremely excited," Odello said. "This is a really big piece of history and I can't wait to be part of it."

Odello, who plans to major in political science when he goes to college, said the group is also planning to visit the various national memorials, Mount Vernon, Arlington Cemetery and the National Archives.

Virginia Eastwood, 14, a student at Notre Dame High School in Salinas, is attending the event as part of the Congressional Youth Leadership Council.

"I'm real excited to be going," the freshman told The Pine Cone. "It's a great privilege to see the president, for one, and to see people who are changing the world."

See **INAUGURATION** page 24A

P.G. arm wrestling champ comes back with bronze

By KELLY NIX

IT PAYS little money and offers virtually no fame, but a Peninsula man can now boast he's a bronze medalist in the fiercely competitive sport of arm wrestling.

Pacific Grove resident Robert Coppla, 50, wrestled half a dozen challengers to take the bronze in the mas-

See **WRESTLING** page 8A



PHOTO/COURTESY ROBERT COPPLA

Arm wrestling champ Robert Coppla (right) takes on a tattooed challenger during a competition in 2005.

CHS cheerleaders will compete in nationals



PHOTO/COURTESY LEIGH CAMBRA

They gathered on Carmel Beach for this group photo, but Carmel High's cheerleaders will soon be in Florida. See story on page 9A.