

House burns as coals escape from rusted chimney cleanout door

By MARY BROWNFIELD

HOT COALS leaked onto an umbrella that caught fire and set the wall of a house at Dolores and Fourth ablaze last Friday night, according to Carmel Fire Capt. Ian Watts. The flames climbed the outside of the old two-story home and

then crept to an attic, causing an estimated \$75,000 to \$100,000 in damage, but had it started inside, as most house fires do, the outcome could have been much worse.

The fire started around 7:45 p.m. Nov. 13 in the home owned by Michael Bhajan, who lives on the second floor above an apartment. He had the television on and a fire going when he glanced out the window and saw flames, according

to Watts.

"He went to get the extinguisher and then realized he should call 911," he said.

See **COALS** page 11A

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CARMEL, CA
Permit No. 149

The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 95 No. 47

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

November 20-26, 2009

YOUR SOURCE FOR LOCAL NEWS, ARTS AND OPINION SINCE 1915

Thodos' style will live on in the town he touched

By MARY BROWNFIELD

AWARD-WINNING modern architect, consummate Greek and devoted Oregon Ducks fan John Thodos died Monday morning following a brief battle with cancer. He was 75.

Born in Chicago, Ill., on Aug. 28, 1934, to Greek immigrants, Thodos moved with his family to Portland, Ore., before he was 2.

He would go on to leave a lasting impression on that city and then in Carmel, the town he called home for the past quarter-century, according to his friends and family.

"John was one of those Renaissance people," comment-

ed Carmel Mayor Sue McCloud. In a note she wrote to Thodos while he was in hospice care just before he died the morning of Nov. 16, she told him the old adage he always quoted — "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts" — did not apply to him.

"He was so multifaceted and gave so much," she said. "He not only left an imprint on our landscape with the homes that were built here, but he also contributed to shaping the design of our history."

"I just can't believe he's gone. I had a lot of respect for him and loved him," said former building official Tim Meroney. "I'm blessed to have known him."

"I don't want to sound cliché about John, because he was the least cliché person in the world," said his wife, Judy. "I fell in love with him when I was 16, and it never went away. He just gave me an extraordinary life, and I'll always love him."

She also gave him life. When he was diagnosed with kidney disease, testing revealed she was a perfect match, and she gave him a kidney in 2006.



John Thodos



A memorial service will be held Friday, Nov. 20, for architect John Thodos, who turned a 1940s cottage into this modern masterpiece in which he lived with his wife, Judy.

See **THODOS** page 12A

Flood of water news, and not all of it's bad

By KELLY NIX and PAUL MILLER

Official foresees desal plant groundbreaking 'in a few months'

THE FORMER university professor who chaired a committee to come up with a regional solution to the Monterey Peninsula's water problems told a public meeting of the Del Monte Forest Property Owners association in Pebble Beach Sunday that groundbreaking for the first phase of the regional water project will be in "just a few months."

Steve Kasower, who now heads a consulting firm, Strategic Economic Applications Co., and who was hired by

See **WATER** page 14A

Robbery suspect caught in Kings County

By MARY BROWNFIELD

THE MAN suspected of robbing a woman in her home on Carmel Valley Road last week — as well as breaking into houses throughout the Monterey Peninsula and stealing cars during the past several months — was captured in Kings County last weekend. Investigators from the Monterey County Sheriff's Office and the City of Carmel interviewed 24-year-old Hector Gonzales in jail Tuesday and are building their cases against the suspect they had been seeking since the Nov. 11 robbery.

According to Carmel Police officer Jesse Juarez, who accompanied MCSO detective Mark Stevens to meet with Gonzales Nov. 17, a Kings County deputy had noticed unusual registration tags on a white Toyota Avalon and pulled the driver over. During their conversation,



Hector Gonzales

See **SUSPECT** page 11A

U.S. Open to bring worldly fans, global press and long stays

By MARY BROWNFIELD

WHEN THE U.S. Open is held at the Pebble Beach Golf Links next June, it will be televised in more than 120 countries, draw tens of thousands of spectators from all over the globe and do more for the Monterey Peninsula than any half-billion-dollar advertising campaign could, Pebble Beach Co. Vice President of Golf and 2010 U.S. Open Chairman RJ Harper told Carmel Chamber of Commerce members Tuesday morning.

"The U.S. Open trophy is the most coveted trophy in the

See **OPEN** page 13A

'THEY HAVE IT ALL' — INCLUDING SOME AMAZING LUCK

From South Africa to Mission Ranch, courtesy of 'Invictus'

By PAUL MILLER

WHEN CLINT Eastwood's new movie, "Invictus," opens Dec. 11, audiences will undoubtedly be inspired by the film's dramatic and timely tale of racial reconciliation.

And with Eastwood bringing his deft directorial touch to a superstar cast that includes Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon, they'll also be seeing a movie that's bound to be an Oscar contender.

But as the story of South African President Nelson Mandela and his country's all-white rugby team — filmed last spring by Eastwood in the country where it happened — unfolds, audiences will also be hearing the movie's uplifting score, featuring a heretofore unknown *a capella* singing group from Johannesburg. The group, Overtone, owes its role in the movie, and the possibility of pop stardom, to a bit of incredible luck, and the generosity of Clint Eastwood's wife, Dina.

"Back in March, we were in Capetown on a two-week engagement, performing our Queen cover show," said Emile Welman, one of Overtone's tenors. But the 75-seat-supper-club gig wasn't exactly the big time, and for all their ambi-



PHOTO/PAUL MILLER

At Mission Ranch Monday, the young men from the South African singing group Overtone posed with their generous mentors, Dina Eastwood (center) and Mark Mancina (far left). The singers (from left) are Valentino Ponsonby, Ruan Van Zyl, Shane Smit, Riaan Weyers (kneeling), Ernie Bates, Emile Welman and Eduard Van Rensburg,

tion and talent, the singers had no inkling their careers were about to make a tremendous leap.

"Of course, we'd seen in the newspapers that Clint Eastwood, Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon were in town shooting a film, and on the way to Capetown, we were joking around that maybe we'd meet them," said Ruan Van Zyl, Overtone's baritone.

"One day, we saw a film crew on the street outside the theater, and the guys told me, 'There's Matt Damon!'" Welman

See **OVERTONE** page 10A