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# Ramblings

GARDEN GROVE KIWANIS RAMBLINGS, PUBLISHED WEEKLY

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*Jerry Margolin is off on vacation, so Gerry Newkirk is taking care of the bulletin for the next couple of weeks.*

## **Joke Night is a Hit (But Keep Your day Jobs.....)**

While a great many of our club members were attending City Manager George Tindall's retirement party, a few members (whose invitations must have gotten lost in the mail) managed to make it to the meeting. There was lots of camaraderie and lots of joke telling. Some were even funny. But we avoided having to stitch up anyone's sides and I don't think anyone got fined. However, none of the jokes were suitable for re-printing in this publication.

Gerry Newkirk also showed the new Garden Grove Kiwanis Club website ([www.kiwanisland.com](http://www.kiwanisland.com)).

### **Announcements**

**Mother's Day** salute to will be on **May 13th**, so bring your favorite female acquaintance to the Ladies Night Event.

Congratulations to our own **Tom Elliott**, who has made the cut for the top 29 of the O.C. Grand Jury pool. The final cut will be on 5/11/04, where they will select the actual 19 Grand Jurors and 3 alternates. Good Luck Tom! Linda Rodgers, friend of many in the club, also made the top 29 cut.

On May 27<sup>th</sup>, our speaker will be **Tom Wilson**, Chairman of the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

## **President's Corner has expanded this week . . . . .**

We have been asked to believe some big ones this past week: The Lakers will pull it together, rising interest rates won't slow down the recovery, and the Santa Clara school district did not realize that this year's seniors had to pass Algebra I in order to graduate. Yeah, right.

That school district filed for a waiver with the state so that those seniors affected could graduate anyway. "After all," they argued, "why should the kids be punished for our mistake?" Of course, once Santa Clara got the ball rolling two hundred other districts applied for the same thing. And once again we are back to the dilemma of lowering standards in the name of, in the name of., well, I can't really tell you why we are lowering the standards.

First off, there is no way the district did not realize that Algebra I was required. Every teacher, counselor, student, principal, resource aide, janitor and plumber's assistant's brother-in-law on campus knew that this year's seniors are the first class to be held to these tougher standards. Santa Clara, like every other district in California, has this small group of kids who have passed all the other requirements but have not passed Algebra. So they are trying to get these kids diplomas by hook or crook-even if it means implying their own gross incompetence.

Secondly, the "one size fits all" high school diploma is a problem. Whether you attend public high school or sit in a jail cell mailing off assignments, if you manage to get the right mixture of credits, then you get a diploma with the seal of the state of California. I suppose the real problem is the dual goals in social policy for the diploma: we want it to indicate the mastery of a set of basic life skills, and we want everyone to get one. This is the philosophy underpinning our national education policy, "No child left behind." A beginner's understanding of the laws of distribution will tell you that these two goals are mutually exclusive. It does not matter how basic you make the skills, some students will be unable to master them: Algebra, reading at a third grade level, sewing a button on, writing a coherent paragraph-it does not matter.

Currently, we give diplomas to everyone, and for one hour in June it feels great. At Pacifica, we have five autistic students. Autism prevents the development of communication centers in the brain and so their IQ usually tops out at seventy-five or so. Yet I have seen two of these students walk down the aisle at graduation, and it takes a hard-hearted cynic not to get misty-eyed at the joy these students feel. Their parents and teachers, too, swell with pride fit to bursting. For this one kid, it is the most wonderful thing ever, but what does it mean for the value of the diplomas received by everyone else? The best solution would be to give this kid a different diploma. Then there are special education kids with 2nd-3rd grade level skills, resource kids with higher but still sub-standard skills. If we don't give them a diploma, what do we do with them?

Funding for vocational education (electives) is what is hurt the most in the current mania for standardized testing. Every extra math or English class the low-performing students have to take deprives them of a chance to learn skills they can market.

Standards are great, but we have to have a vocational plan for those students who won't meet them. That would be a truthful plan we could all get behind.

*Have a great week.—John*

### **Thought for the week**

**"Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday!"**