



ROSSMOOR NEWS

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WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA

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Peek inside the Rossmoor owl boxes

How are the owls doing – especially on the job?

By Sam Richards
Staff writer

Even if the barn owls themselves are rarely seen during the day, Eddy Ibarra said the raptors' handiwork can be detected, subtle though it is.

"There are fewer mice and rats around ... it's hard to say if there's been a big difference, but the owls are helping," said Ibarra, Rossmoor's landscape field supervisor.

The owls inhabit Rossmoor with the help of nine "owl boxes" mounted on large poles about 10-12 feet above the ground at some of the community's uppermost reaches, where development and nature meet, and where mice, moles, voles and gophers tend to cause the biggest problems with landscaping and gardens, Ibarra said. The owls are an environmentally friendly form of pest control, and have allowed Rossmoor groundskeepers to cut back substantially on the use of poisons to kill vermin.

Most, but not all, of the boxes host owl families, Ibarra said, based on the droppings, feathers, owl pellets (regurgitated bits of things the birds ate) and the remains of their prey workers have found inside.

There also are a handful of privately installed owl boxes around Rossmoor,



News photo by Dan Rosenstrauch

An owl box sits on a ridge inside Rossmoor.

Ibarra said. The boxes can be built from scratch.

Barn owls are commonly found in most of the United States, with the exception of the northern plains and the higher mountain ranges. The white owls with heart-shaped faces and no protruding "ears," are categorized as a "species of least concern" with a stable population. Still, their numbers have been declining in recent years, mostly because of habitat loss.

Farmers, ranchers and

gardeners have been building "owl box" nesting sites for decades, as barn owls are proven eradicators of gophers, moles and other small critters that can cause problems for other animals, gardens or crops. During a typical three-month nesting period, a family of barn owls can eat more than 1,000 small animals.

Curtis Kaul, a landscaper who works in five different Rossmoor Mutuals, said

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Stumpf and Harrington elected to the GRF Board

Kathleen Stumpf in District F and Dale Harrington in District G won the election for GRF Board of Directors.

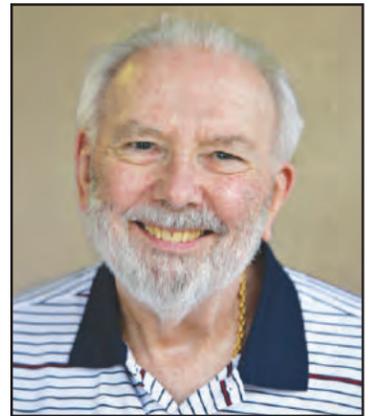
Stumpf defeated Milan Moravec by a vote of 382 to 126 to replace Steve Roath, while Harrington narrowly defeated Alan Swanson by a vote of 218 to 214 to take over for Geri Pyle, who has termed out. District B's Carl Brown ran unopposed and was re-elected by acclamation.

The votes were counted by the independent audit firm Burr Pilger Mayer, Inc. and announced on Friday.

The new members, who will serve three-year terms, were seated on the Board following Monday's Annual Meeting of Members. At that meeting, President Bob Kelso detailed the Board's many 2018 accomplishments, including the pilot on-demand bus system, solar farm, technology committee report, LED lighting project and more. A complete report of the annual and organizational meetings will be in next week's News.



Kathleen Stumpf



News photos by Dan Rosenstrauch
Dale Harrington

GRF Committee to fill 10 openings next month

The following 10 openings are available on GRF committees in June:

- Aquatics Advisory Committee – two non-GRF Board member openings;
- Audit Committee – three non-GRF Board member openings;
- Finance Committee – two non-GRF Board member openings;
- Fitness Center Advisory Committee – two non-GRF Board member openings;
- Golf Advisory Committee – one non-GRF Board member opening.

Residents interested in serv-

ing on any of these committees are invited to apply by submitting their names and qualifications, along with a brief statement on why they want to serve, to Assistant Secretary Paulette Jones in the Board Office at Gateway Complex by Friday, June 7. If you have any questions, call her at 925-988-7710.

For more information, view the committees' charters on the Rossmoor website at www.rossmoor.com. Hit the Resident Info tab, scroll down to Rossmoor Governance, and the committees' information is listed under GRF Committees.

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Asphalt repaving underway throughout May. See page 2A.

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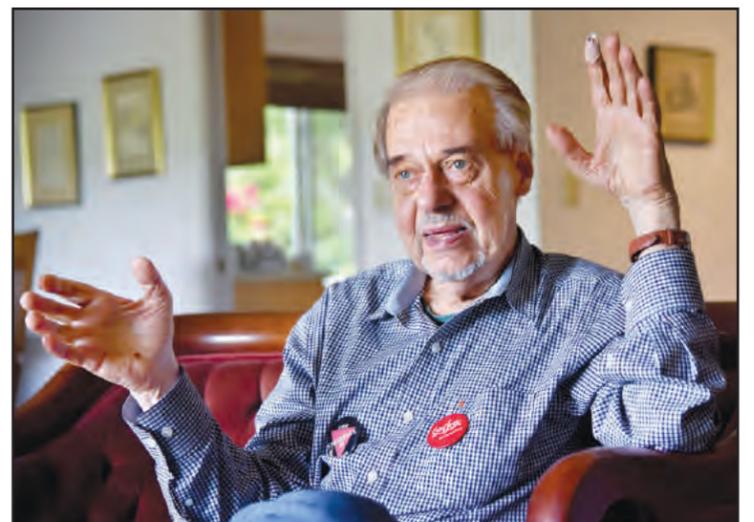
Jerry Gerash named 'Colorful Coloradan'

By Maggie Sharpe
Staff writer

Next month marks the 50th anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall Uprising outside a gay bar in New York City. Following a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, people congregated outside and began to fight back against the police, marking the beginning of a nationwide movement against anti-gay laws and police abuse.

Rossmoor resident and lawyer Gerald "Jerry" Gerash was one of the pioneers who fought for gay rights, both in

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News photo by Dan Rosenstrauch

Jerry Gerash talks about his fight for civil rights for gays and lesbians in the 1970s and beyond.

COLORADAN: Gerash honored for advocacy of gay rights

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the courts and in grassroots movements. A 1969 graduate of Denver Law School, Gerash was recently honored by Denver Public Library as a “Colorful Coloradan” – a series designed to teach young people about Colorado history.

“My story teaches about gay people, gay liberation and the relationship to other struggles for social justice,” said Gerash, who has lived at Rossmoor for four years and is a member of the LGBT Alliance and JEICOR.

Early life

Gerash was born in the Bronx, the son of immigrant Russian Jews who fled persecution in their homeland.

His “Colorful Coloradan” story recounts: “Jerry and his brother Walter understood the struggles of many communities in the Bronx at the time including Irish, Puerto Ricans, African Americans and Jews.

“This ingrained in both boys a strong sense of right and wrong and a need to fight against injustice.”

When Gerash was 10, the family moved to Los Angeles.

Gerash said he knew when he was 14 that he was gay. He also knew that it wasn’t something he dared to share openly.

“At that time the gay community was hidden and underground,” said Gerash. “We

wanted it that way – we didn’t want our families, friends, bosses or landlords to know. We could get kicked out of our homes, lose our jobs or get beaten up. We were the pariahs of society.”

In fact, Gerash didn’t “come out” to his parents until his 40th birthday.

“That’s an example of the shame and oppression I felt and showed my own self-loathing,” said Gerash, adding that his mother was “fine” with his homosexuality, but that his father cried.

“I’d never seen my dad cry before,” said Gerash, adding that his father became much more accepting as time went on. “I remember he said to me, ‘If you were a hunchback, I’d still love you.’”

Gerash went on to earn a degree from U.C. Berkeley in optometry, which he practiced in Oakland until his brother encouraged him to pursue a law degree in Denver, where Walter already had a successful law practice.

Gay activism

Inspired by the Stonewall Uprising a couple of years earlier, in 1972 Gerash and some friends formed the Gay Coalition of Denver (GCD) to fight for civil rights.

“At that time there were only two gay organizations in Denver – a motorcycle club and a community church,” said Gerash.

Although Colorado law had



News photo by Dan Rosenstrauch

Jerry Gerash looks over all of his buttons collected from various protests he has attended during his lifetime. Gerash was also named “Colorful Coloradan” from his time living in Colorado.

changed that year to decriminalize sodomy, Denver police continued to use another law against “lewdness” to harass and arrest gay men. In fact, in the first few months of 1973, local records show that 100 percent of the people arrested for “lewdness” were gay.

Gerash and the GCD filed a lawsuit – which they ultimately won – to establish that these laws were discriminatory and illegal. The outcome was that police could no longer harass or arrest gay people for such public shows of affection as holding hands that were considered the norm for heterosexuals.

“This meant gay people no longer had to hide who they were,” said Gerash.

Later that year, the GCD organized the community to show up at the Oct. 23 Denver City Council meeting to push for repeal of anti-gay laws on the city’s statutes.

Even Gerash was surprised by the turnout.

“About 350 gays and lesbians showed up – I didn’t even know most of them,” he said. “We were pretty outspoken. I think we found strength in numbers. We didn’t beseech any favors; speakers demanded that certain laws be repealed. We nearly got arrested, but by some miracle we didn’t.”

Although most city council members were downright hostile to the group at first – and made them wait three hours to speak – the stories of harassment, entrapment and arrest stats seemed to sway the council. Since Gerash and the GCD had recently filed the lawsuit over the “lewdness” statute, they had all the criminal arrest records at their fingertips.

“I presented a slide on ‘Discriminatory Enforcement of Ordinance 823 (lewdness)’

that showed 99.1 percent of the ‘complaining witnesses’ were police officers and 100 percent of those arrested were gay,” said Gerash. “I think that visual turned the tide.”

Within one month, Denver City Council voted to repeal the four anti-gay laws that GCD had sought to remove.

Gerash made a movie about that city council meeting called “Gay Revolt at Denver City Council” with speaker after speaker revealing everything from what it was like to be gay or lesbian in Denver in the 1970s, to blatant discrimination at the hands of police.

The now-historic recordings and photos of speakers and councilmembers that Gerash compiled were taken not by city staff, but by members of GCD.

“I didn’t make the movie until 30 years after that meeting,” said Gerash. “When I read a quote by a friend of mine in a local newspaper that, ‘the Gay Coalition of Denver wanted to save the world, but they just faded away,’ I had to set the record straight about GCD and how they organized the gay community and helped launch the gay civil rights movement nationwide.”

Community center

As a teen in L.A., Gerash remembers getting a fake ID so that he could get into gay bars.

“Gay bars were not so much about drinking alcohol; they provided a social outlet and a place where gay people could go to just be themselves,” said Gerash.

In the mid-1970s, Gerash spearheaded the effort to open a community center in Denver to serve as both a gathering place and resource for gay people. In 1976, the GLBT Community Center opened and today still provides a hub for information, resources, social activities, support and advocacy.

“It’s the third oldest community center of its kind in the country,” said Gerash. “It’s a

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