

The Modesto Bee

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2002 B-7

# Opinions

## LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

### Musicians don't strike lightly

I do not know the reasons the Modesto Symphony musicians went on strike. But I do know that it takes a great deal of what is at least perceived as abuse for any orchestra, especially a part-time orchestra, to go to such an extreme.

A musician, who by his very nature loves to make music, will not easily lay down his instrument unless he perceives his position to be intolerable.

Before condemning Modesto Symphony musicians, we should take a good look at what we know of their demands. These demands do not appear to be for money. They all appear to relate to how the musicians are treated.

Historically, other orchestral musicians across the country, from time to time, have found themselves at the mercy of an unyielding board or a mercurial and temperamental conductor. I repeat: I do not know that any of this exists in Modesto, but I have seen it come to pass with the orchestras in other communities.

Let's hope that someone in this community, an expert in negotiations, will come forward to offer fair and impartial arbitration between the sides.

ELIZABETH LEEDOM  
Modesto

### Walkout burns benefactors

I let me see — your organization exists solely to help support. The biggest fund-raiser of the year, Picnic at the Pops, is coming up. Hundreds of your supporters work very hard to make this a wonderful occasion, and what do you do? You strike. Ever hear the expression "Bite the hand that feeds you"? Well, you certainly did that.

JANE PARKER  
Sonoma

### More winning, less whining

I'm fed up with this whining and sniveling over 9-11. All the usual stuff is piling up: the paid interviews, the phony BS from politicians and the rich and famous. And, of course, the abuses of the groovy and grasping. Replaying it all this year should afford the sponsors a great opportunity to recoup their losses from last year, when no commercials ran during the crisis.

I hope and pray the images you're seeing again do for you what they've been doing for me all year: make you mad as hell and ready for revenge? They have declared jihad, vowed our destruction and fired the first shots. Our response has not been comprehensive, and we continue to ignore all kinds of other terrorists and their organizations, including those playing our only real friend in the Middle East, and the only democracy there, Israel.

We should be helping Israel wipe out those miserable terrorist hoodlum extremists that we saw with our own eyes dancing in the streets when the twin towers fell. And they weren't the only ones dancing. There was dancing in every Muslim corner there, and it's about time we reminded ourselves of that.

We should remind ourselves of this, too: Their hate-filled religion and their hateful, misogynistic, 10th-century culture are not worth preserving. If we really want to fight and win a war there, we need to prosecute it with these things in mind.

CHARLES MORRISON  
Modesto

### Ford pulls plug on electric car

Another blow has been dealt to the environmentalists as the Ford Motor Co. has halted production of its electric vehicle "Think" due to virtually no sales of the car. Nationwide, Ford has sold barely more than 1,000 of these cars and has determined that the market is just not there for alternative energy vehicles. Ford has lost more than \$100 million on this project and is going to write it off as a lesson learned.

I'd like to ask Ford leaders why they would manufacture a car that nobody would want. Is it not clear that the public just doesn't want these types of vehicles? How nice it was to learn that stock prices in the Ford Motor Co. rose substantially upon learning of this development.

SCOTT ROSENQUIST  
Hughson

### Is it grade inflation?

Holly Nicole Lawrence may have an impressive college application and I wish her the best "SAT" may be losing its clout." Sept. 3 front page but with her low SAT score, could it be (gasp) that the problem is grade inflation? The Bee staff writer is too quick to blame the Scholastic Aptitude Test as the root of the problem. I submit she rethink her thesis and begin with the school grades. It used to be a 4.0 was an "A." What gives with a 4.7? If all students are required to have a certain GPA to graduate, guess what, we have — grade inflation! Heaven forbid some should fail because of the school spending too much time on helping students feel good about themselves and not enough on the three Rs.

STEVE WRIGHT  
Modesto

### Best, worst of human behavior

Over the course of a lifetime I have noted people with some amusement (and some alarm) the broad diversity of human behavior, from the most generous to the worst sinners. Yesterday, as the result of a traffic accident, I encountered the best and worst that Modesto has to offer.

I was driving on Six Road near Pendalade Avenue when a red Mustang convertible zoomed (quite blindly, it seems) out of a parking lot and broadsided my car. Neither I nor the other driver was injured, but I was badly shaken up and my car was left disabled in the middle of the road.

The other driver quickly backed her car back into the parking lot, but made no effort to come over and if I was injured. Thank heavens for the three young men who came to my aid. Terry Lewis, Luis Caldera, Jr., and a co-worker



Exhausted Arlington, Va., firefighters had to be reminded that there would be 'enough fire for everyone' at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

## Waiting for the tone on Sept. 11

By MICHAEL DOYLE

ARLINGTON, Va. — I'm sitting in the station, waiting for a tone. We all know it's coming: the next Sept. 11 summons. Which will have nothing to do with memory, though we are awash in it.

The television screen carries inescapable ceremony and remembrance. They're showing, at the moment, scenes from the Pentagon. Not that far, as it happens, from the Arlington County fire station where emergency engine and music crews await.

Today, I am with them. There's talk in the station of what happened, one year ago, but the past is diversion. We're waiting for a tone, the signal to shut up and listen. It precedes the dispatch, the call to a calamity of uncertain moment.

There are three firefighters and an officer on Engine 102. There are two paramedics on Medic 102. There's a good humored emergency medical services supervisor, accompanied by another volunteer firefighter, on EMS 112.

In a reporter's most days, an observer and recorder of events. Except this day, Sept. 11, 2001. I am riding as an emergency medical technician: third man on Medic 102. I wear my new EMT-Basic patch on one shoulder. On the other, a tall and patch identifies me as a volunteer with the Arlington County Fire Department.

Observing, today, comes second to service with the guys of "C" shift. These firefighters and paramedics of Arlington County Fire Department Station Two earned their memories of Sept. 11, 2001, but do not make a fetish of them. The present moment must be attended. Still. The media's eye-beeps snubshots not always of our choosing. A severed foot, a face, the wedding ring on the hand of a murdered man.

There are images from the Pentagon," paramedic Bo Bennett says, "that I'll never forget."

We get a tone, and we're off. Possible stroke, the dispatcher says. The televised ceremonies continue without us. Bo is up front, his partner Lloyd Coleman is driving. I'm in the jump seat, facing backward.

We arrive, joining an engine company on the scene. I've loaded the cot with a Life Pak monitor, an airway bag, a drug box. Things move fast inside the house. Lloyd starts setting up an IV. Bo's getting the history. A firefighter



Modesto firefighters and EMTs extract a victim from a wrecked vehicle on Sept. 20, 1999.

retrieves a flexible stretcher. I follow directions and anticipate where I can. I get a blood pressure, I'd carry the stretcher, and lay out the IV goods. We're soon at the hospital.

I'm psyched, like that sounds. The run went well, the medics were marvelous, and I pitched in as part of the team. Reporters and rescue guys share this adrenaline habit.

Through I assist at the station last Sept. 11 where recalled firefighters were itching for deployment, their reported feelings sound familiar.

"The growing crowd of (Arlington) firefighters watching the Pentagon fire on television... was anxious to engage in the firefight," Arlington County's after-action report on the Pentagon attack noted.

"Periodically, (a battalion chief) would address them and point out this was a long-term operation and there was plenty of fire for everyone." We're back at Station Two. The big kitchen counter is getting crowded

with chocolate chip cookies, fudge brownies, a poppy seed cake. The fire food arrives all day, neighborhood offerings to stave off men.

Reporters get free food, too, but not like this. The televised ceremonies carry on. Thankfully, one commentator says, there have been no incidents. I think of the woman we just brought to the hospital. The career guys sample cookies and speak of the Pentagon last September: the fires to fight and the sounds to bind after 270,000 pounds of metal and jet fuel hit the building.

"I don't know what we feel like," says Capt. Alan Dorn, the EMS supervisor who helped triage the Pentagon victims, "but it felt like we got a tone."

The dispatcher has incomplete information, but it sounds like a man has severed four fingers. Did she say chain saw? As we scream down the street, I stock up the cot.

We arrive. Within minutes, the medics and firefighters leave the man abundantly bandaged, on the cot and rolling to a distant trauma center. I take blood pressure and clean blood. There's a good news, the fingers weren't severed after all.

The man was raising one of the day's many flags. His fingers became entangled, the wind whipped the flag upward and the chain choked his fingers like a garrote.

We deliver him to care and go back to the station. The day's ceremonies have mostly passed and the Pentagon crowds have dispersed, safely. Normale slowly returns.

Though it's funny, Washington's new normal. It's fraught. It feels, sometimes, like the region is waiting for the unexpected to befall us. From nowhere, sudden as a clot, big as an airplane rocking from blue sky.

What's next is always the mystery, for reporters and rescue workers alike. Maybe it's a phone call, telling of an intern gone missing or a political guest. Maybe it's a fire or a stroke. We prepare as we can, and are stimulated, often, by the surprise. But some sound, someday, car ring in the unobtainable.

We get a tone. It's a fire, the dispatcher says, and lots of units are rolling.

But we're barely arrived when whatever tiny bite existed has been snuffed out. We return to the station.

I take my turnout gear off the medic unit and go home to my family. The career guys stay. They're waiting for a tone. Doyle is a reporter in the Washington bureau of McClatchy Newspapers.

our conflicts, but also for all citizens who have passed on.

PHILLIP MARTINEZ  
Modesto

### 90 days for soda, none for politicians

Re: Front page Sept. 6. The Mid-Valley Engineering prob is not finished; the owners must be politically connected if the commission believes that they did not know that the contributions, all of which are under \$99 to skirt the reporting laws and were returned in secret, also against the law, were illegal.

If these people don't face jail time, then our district attorney needs to resign. One hundred and fifteen counts equal at least two years in jail for each owner. They only cooperated because they were caught red-handed.

I've seen people do 90 days for stealing a candy bar or a six-pack of soda. Justice cannot be blind or lazy, nor brought off.

WILLIAM MCCARTHY  
Modesto

### Republican hypocrisy

Why is it that the conservative columnists and cartoonists are always saying that people need to take responsibility for their own actions, but when their big business donors are caught "rookie" in the books, they're not responsible? No, as usual, the conservatives blame "liberal" educators at public schools for teaching bad ethics.

Here's a thought! Maybe many members of the Bush League did the same kinds of misdeeds that their donors at Enron, WorldCom and the others have done. "Oh, no. It's not their fault. It's the liberals in public education. They're to blame." Yeah, right.

GORDON BARBOSA  
Patterson

of his (whose name, sadly, I did not get) all came over, checked on me, directed traffic around my smashed car, called the police and stayed around to give official statements.

The woman who hit me (you know who you are) never even made eye contact with me through the entire ordeal, much less apologized for the damage or the problems her poor driving and lack of attention caused.

So, to the three young gentlemen, I give my most heartfelt thanks. To the other driver I say, "Shame on you."

PAULA MCNETT  
Modesto

### PG&E wanted rates lowered

I feel compelled to clarify the Aug. 28 letter from a customer in Newman about electric surcharges on PG&E bills ("PG&E overinflates bills"). First, your readers should know that the 4 cents per kilowatt-hour in surcharges the California Public Utilities Commission put in place last year were for all three of California's regulated utilities.

Just as importantly, your readers should be aware that PG&E asked the CPUC to lower rates for its customers, but the CPUC has so far failed to do so. On April 15, we submitted an official request to the CPUC for permission to lower our customers' rates by a half-cent per kWh, effective June 1. However, the CPUC put this request on hold. In the meantime, our customers are continuing to pay the full CPUC surcharges.

Finally, I would urge all your readers who are having difficulty affording their energy costs to call us at 1-800-PGE-3600 and ask for help, or log on to www.pge.com. We offer a variety of programs for both residential and small-business customers to help them save

money. There are programs for low-income families, people with serious medical conditions, and even for customers who just want to set their bill so it's the same amount every month (our balanced payment plan).

MARK HENDRICKSON  
Government relations consultant,  
Pacific Gas and Electric Co.  
Oakdale

### Another request for Janice Keating

After many letters and phone calls complaining about the neglect of Orangeburg Avenue between Lakewood and Sonoma, I wrote to Councilwoman Janice Keating, the newscaster on the Modesto council, and voila; we have a repaired Orangeburg.

Thank you Good job, Janice. Now maybe you can get the street sweepers not to leave our streets so muddy when they get through. They are not cleaning them even though they go through a hose and it wastes so much water for us to clean up after them.

ROSE KELLY  
Modesto

### Sept. 11 as a Day of Remembrance

After reading Lee R. Miller's opinion letter published on Sept. 6, in which he suggests changing Memorial Day along with Labor Day dates, I know he or she meant well in honoring all the victims of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, but why change these traditional holidays dates?

My opinion is to let it remain as an added holiday as a "Day of Remembrance" of Sept. 11. I must add that we already observe the traditional Memorial Day of May 30 which date month to give most working Americans a three-day weekend.

Americans not only observe Memorial Day for our servicemen in battle during all