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The Independent Journal's editorial board meets weekly to talk about the paper's editorial positions. The board has four members.

EDITORIAL

Prison murder raises questions about justice

THE STABBING death of Edward Schaefer, who was convicted of murder for killing a 9-year-old Novato girl while driving drunk, was a shocking turn in a tragic case.

Schaefer was stabbed numerous times at San Quentin State Prison by another inmate with a handmade weapon.

His death is a reminder that prison is a violent place where inmates sometimes mete out their own form of justice.

Our legal system had decided that Schaefer should spend at least 24 years behind bars for killing Melody Osheroff. In May 2009, the 44-year-old Schaefer was drunk and speeding through a San Marin Drive intersection when he hit Melody and her father, Aaron, who were in the crosswalk. Melody died. Her father survived but lost his leg.

Schaefer, who had eight previous convictions for driving under the influence, was convicted of second degree murder. Two weeks ago he received the maximum sentence — 24 years to life.

Schaefer was in the reception center at San Quentin when he was stabbed by an inmate serving 60 years to life for murder. It was the first inmate-on-inmate killing at the prison since 1996.

Schaefer's long sentence, imposed by Judge Terrence Boren, should have sent a strong message to other repeat drunken drivers.

The Schaefer case also sent a message to Sacramento, where Assemblyman Jared Huffman introduced legislation to keep

chronic drunken drivers off the road.

We are not sure what message was sent by Schaefer's death at the hands of another convicted murderer.

We hope his death reminds prison officials that they need to take all necessary precautions to protect notorious inmates.

Some say Schaefer got what he deserved.

But that's not the justice our legal system meted out. It decided he should spend the next 24 years behind bars, giving him plenty of time to think about the heinous crime he had committed and all the heartbreak he had created by continuing to drive drunk and recklessly.

He clearly thought the laws of a civilized society did not apply to him. A little girl paid with her life, leaving behind a grieving family and community.

Aaron, Melody's father, wanted Schaefer to spend his time behind bars reflecting on what he had done. He says Schaefer got off too easy.

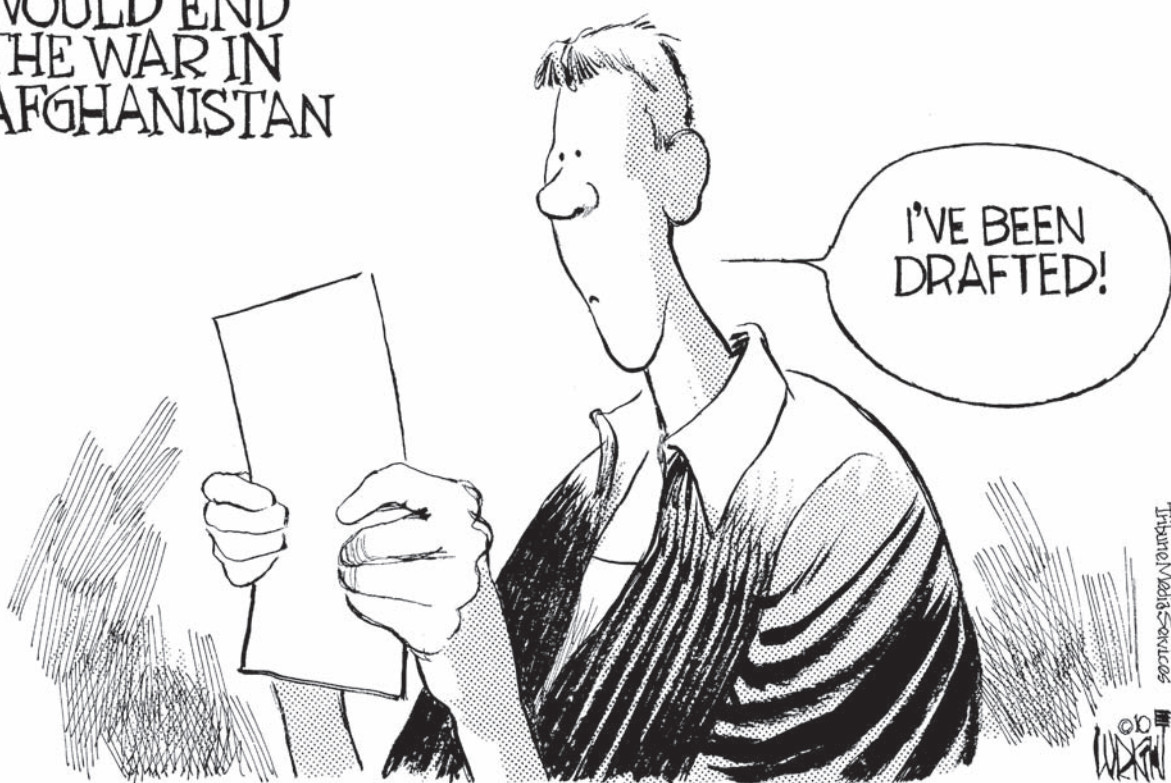
Would Schaefer have finally gotten the message during his decades behind bars? We will never know. We do know that he finally apologized in public for the first time at his sentencing.

Some inmates who commit horrific crimes do turn their lives around in prison. Our laws are written to give them that chance.

Another killer eliminated that chance for Schaefer.

The system that failed Melody Osheroff, failed again Monday at San Quentin.

THREE LITTLE WORDS THAT WOULD END THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN



MARIN VOICE

Let's make every woman count

IN 2008, at the age of 46, I was at "the top of my game" — young, healthy and, like most others my age, I felt invincible. Then I discovered a lump in my breast.

A mammogram confirmed I had breast cancer.

Until the mammogram, there was no way for me to know that this insidious disease was already assaulting my body. I underwent a lumpectomy, four rounds of chemotherapy and six weeks of radiation. I continue taking medication. I am now, thankfully, "cancer free."

So earlier this year, I was particularly alarmed to read of the severe cuts that the California Department of Health made to its California Detection Program, ironically titled "Every Woman Counts."

The program has been providing funds for screening mammograms and diagnostic testing, including surgical biopsies, for uninsured and underinsured individuals 40 and older. The reductions included a ban on all new enrollments and the exclusion of women ages 40 to 49 from accessing California Detection Program funds, essentially eliminating all breast cancer screenings for women under the age of 50.

According to its own records, the state estimates that 350,000 women will seek services through the Every Woman Counts program during the 2009-10 budget year, and that these two policy

LISA STRANKO-SEILER



Lisa Stranko-Seiler of Novato volunteers with To Celebrate Life Breast Cancer Foundation, a nonprofit that raises money to support women and men living with breast health issues. The organization is focusing this year on providing funding for services that bridge the gaps in state funding for screening programs.

changes will result in about 100,000 fewer women being served by the program.

By disqualifying nearly one-third of the program's potential recipients and disproportionately increasing the risk to women from low-income communities, both under and over the age of 50, these cutbacks serve as a potential death sentence to those they exclude.

Research has shown that the early detection of breast cancer is a crucial key to eventually surviving the disease. When her breast cancer is detected early, before it has spread beyond the breast, a woman has more than a 95

percent chance of surviving five years. When the cancer has already spread to other parts of her body, her chance of survival for this period drops precipitously, as low as 25 percent.

In California alone, more than 20,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year and more than 4,000 will lose their battle.

When I was first diagnosed, I discovered that there is a sisterhood among breast cancer survivors — like a sorority you didn't ask to join. It is an experience we share that someone who hasn't been through it can't quite understand. It forces you to take a moment to consider what's important and what's not.

For me, surviving breast cancer has been a positive, life-changing experience. I take more time to smell the roses, and try to enjoy every day and not sweat the small stuff. But I have also lost some dear friends to this disease, some of whom could have been saved through earlier detection and treatment. I hope we can limit the number who join this "sorority" and support those who do with every resource possible.

A state Assembly bill to reinstate these groups into the California Detection Program program is stalled in committee. Meanwhile, every day women go about their lives, some are unaware of their vulnerability, others are frightened by a lump but are unable to afford treatment.

READERS' FORUM

Our legal system is guilty too

Edward Schaefer had eight prior DUI convictions? The legal system clearly bears partial guilt for the death of Melody Osheroff.

It is the responsibility of public servants to ensure the public welfare. The Edward Schaefer's of the world can be imprisoned after the fact, but unless the legal system takes decisive preventive action to remove recidivist drunk drivers from the streets, we all remain in danger.

Robert Brennan, FAIRFAX

Health should come first

The IJ's June 28 editorial, "Ice cream ban may not be best lesson for students," addressed the Novato Unified School District's proposal to create a barrier for mobile vendors of in front of Novato's schools.

While this editorial acknowledged and supported the concept of encouraging healthy eating habits among youth, it also condemned the admirable efforts of the district.

As noted in the editorial, "helping kids see the value in making healthy choices is an appropriate educational approach." It is also an approach that is implemented in the curriculum of Novato's schools.

In saying that, using this educational approach and then condoning the consumption of sweets is rather contradictory. Certainly, it would be an ambiguous message for students for Novato's educators to allow these mobile vendors to continue selling their unhealthy commodities so close to campuses.

Studies have proven that youth will consume food that is in the

closest proximity to them and therefore the most convenient; which is why banning an ice cream truck from stopping on a public street is not prohibiting them from making a choice. It is allowing them a fair opportunity to make a choice.

The district should be applauded for being the only district in Marin to aggressively support their messages about healthy eating habits and to act as a model district for the rest of the other districts in the county.

Joelle Appenrodt, JUNIOR,
 SAN RAFAEL HIGH SCHOOL, MEMBER,
 MARIN COUNTY YOUTH COMMISSION

Tiburon may have right idea

Regarding the July 28 story, "Tiburon license plate cameras," when an already low-crime community, of very successful, highly

educated, historically liberal-minded registered voters, opts to install license plate cameras at strategic locations, within their city, perhaps the naysayers and slippery slope theorists should dummy up and pay attention.

George Alboff, SAN ANSELMO

Mobilehome owners' victory

June 29 marked the culmination of an 18-month property rights battle at the state capitol that resulted in victory and relief for the roughly 700,000 captive homeowners in mobile/manufactured home communities in California.

On that day, Assemblyman Charles Calderon's dangerous anti-rent control bill, AB 7651, was killed in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Thank you to all who joined

the Golden State Manufactured-home Owners League in making calls and writing letters to urge the committee and other legislators to reject the dreadful bill.

In its original form, AB 761 would have allowed a doubling of lot rents when manufactured homes were sold in land-lease communities. That could have meant for every \$100 increase in lot rent, the value of the immobile home would drop by \$10,000, destroying most of its worth.

I want to commend Marin's Senator, Mark Leno, for voting against the bill. We are very fortunate and grateful to have his support. He has consistently supported us and deserves support.

Dick Heine, PRESIDENT,
 CONTEMPO MARIN
 HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION,
 SAN RAFAEL

Letters

Confine them to 250 words. We don't have room for all of the letters we receive; we give preference to shorter letters and to letters from people who live in Marin or Southern Sonoma counties. Letters are edited for length, grammar, spelling, clarity, style, libel and civility. We do

not publish form letters, "open" letters, petitions, individual consumer complaints or letters published elsewhere. Letters must include the writer's name, address and daytime phone number so we can verify authorship (we publish only the writer's name and hometown).

Marin Voices

Columns are limited to 600 words and are edited like letters (see left). We give preference to writers who have personal or professional expertise on a topic. Submissions must include the writer's name, address and daytime phone number for verification of authorship.

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