



Logan Jenkins



Trustees fail to see troubled waters

By [Logan Jenkins](#)

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A brick – the Gang That Can't Think Straight award – to the four board members of Tri-City Medical Center who rejected a face-saving lifeboat from their six-month reign of terror.

The Titanic is listing – and these trustees sink deeper into their chairs.

In voting against a doctor-supported task force to study different governance models for the deeply troubled public hospital district, the board majority has guaranteed that their political life spans will be Hobbesian – solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.

What a pity.

This Gang of Four – RoseMarie Reno, Kathleen Sterling, George Coulter and Charlene Anderson – already has done incalculable damage to the public institution by firing the hospital's top administrators, including the CEO, without any meaningful explanation.

And now they won't even at least consider the real possibility, posed by the doctors and many others, that Tri-City's financial survival may hinge upon a strategic affiliation with the larger and stronger Palomar Pomerado Health or a private health provider.

As it stands, the only positive thing you can say about this board is that it stars in a memorable theater of the absurd.

In fact, KOCT, the Tri-City area's cable TV station, is responding to a wave of public requests and rebroadcasting the raucous, recall-shouting May 28 meeting at 6 p.m. today and 4 p.m. tomorrow. The meeting also can be seen online at those times at

But a warning: You might want to make sure small children don't see this bloody exercise in democracy, this headstrong chorus line of resistance to reality.

Not only will children be afraid to go to the local hospital, they'll be terrified of growing up.

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A bouquet – the Knight in Shining Jacket award – to Jack Port, the 87-year-old World War II veteran who, along with Escondido's Thomas Tucker, has received the National Order of the Legion of Honor, France's service award that dates back to Napoleon.

To be precise, Port, unlike Tucker, has yet to formally achieve the rank of chevalier, or knight. He is scheduled to receive the storied medal tomorrow night in Paris on the eve of the 65th anniversary of the June 6, 1944, Normandy invasion, the baptism of fire for a buck private fresh out of high school in Escondido.

This honor is pretty heady stuff for a kid whose father started out in the junk business and later sold work shirts, Port told me several years ago.

Over time, the shirt sideline evolved into a prosperous men's store on Grand Avenue, which Port sold in 1975. For almost 30 years, Port served on the county Board of Education, retiring in 1993.

Now an Oceanside resident, Port loves going back in early June to stay at the same French farmhouse, wear his commemorative jacket, and participate in D-Day ceremonies. As Jack Raymond, Port's old Escondido buddy, likes to say, Port is a “rock star” in Normandy.

This year, a gleaming medal will adorn his jacket, which he only wears in France, as he listens to President Barack Obama honor the sacrifice of the Greatest Generation.

Jack Port.

He's a regular guy (and, defying the genetic odds, a regular tennis player) – and we're lucky to still have him in our midst.

Clearly, the French see him the same way.

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A brick – the Torching the Messenger award – to several online posters who criticized this newspaper for reporting that the landmarks of Poway – the twin peaks that haven't burned since 1967 – pose an unusually high risk as North County enters fire season.

“Reckless journalism,” one reader wrote, going on to suggest that the newspaper is hoping for an inferno: “I know that must sell papers, but it is unethical to do!”

“I hate to say it,” wrote another, “but now that this has been public, expect every pyromaniac in the

county to be the one to burn these mountains.”

What overgrown rubbish.

While the possibility of arson always exists anywhere, anytime, the most immediate threat to rural and suburban homeowners is the complacency that leads to the failure to clear brush or take simple measures to protect houses from flying embers.

One way a newspaper can help combat complacency is to provide hard, accurate information about the terrain's real vulnerability to fire, no matter if the cause is a demented firebug or a downed power line.

A news blackout on potential hot spots in North County would amount to journalistic malpractice, not social responsibility.

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