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FREE EVERY THURSDAY

Cordata: "Patios" qualify as open space



A sample of what is considered open space, according to Trillium representative Mauri Ingram: the fountain at Whatcom Community College, retention ponds, and landscaped areas in front of buildings.

photos by Helen Solem

■ Park and trail system fragmented, mostly unusable, and private

by HELEN SOLEM

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BELLINGHAM – With all the residential space in the Cordata development sold, and only a limited number of light industrial / office spaces available, the profile of this development is coming into sharp focus. Unfortunately, while the promised

100 acres of open space adheres to the letter of the Planned Unit Development (PUD), those areas remain underdeveloped, fragmented and mostly unusable.

Originally, the PUD designated 100 acres, or one-sixth of the 626.7-acre site, to be left as open space/recreational systems. In 1986 when the Whatcom County Council approved the Cordata Business Park PUD, it suggested, "the proposed open space be surveyed, mapped and set aside prior to further construction. Since the open space design is... necessary to the overall philosophy of the plan, it is essential that the

CORDATA • 6

Why was Western Air approved by Port?

■ Choat says port had no choice but to OK

by TAYLOR PHIFER

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BELLINGHAM – It was the sign of a robust community. Another low-fair

airline offering non-stop service around the western states and Canada started operating out of Bellingham International Airport - joining Allegiant and Horizon Air. But Western Airlines, after only a few short weeks in operation, suspended all flights due to financial problems.

Western is a charter flight operation contracting with Nevada-based Xtra

Airlines. Western has fallen behind in payments to Xtra due to a problem with credit card payments. Apparently Western has been unable to get any money from credit card bookings.

The financial troubles reached a breaking point last week with the resignation of the company's chairman Curt Tronsdal. He has been mired in his own money troubles surrounding other businesses he started in Skagit County.

WESTERN AIR • 4

NEWS AT A GLANCE



logo courtesy of Laurie Potter

Then how about this city logo?

BELLINGHAM - After the city paid \$25,000 to a Seattle design firm last year to get a logo the citizens overwhelmingly panned, local artists rose to the occasion and submitted alternatives. The latest were a group displayed at the Blue Horse Gallery. Patrons were asked to pick a favorite and chose the one created by Laurie Potter pictured above. What do you think? ■WI

photo courtesy of Peter Frye

30th St. residents still seek safety

BELLINGHAM - Friends and family of George Tsimouris and neighbors on 30th Street gathered last Sunday to commemorate the one-year anniversary of a car accident that took his life. Residents, who are still seeking ways to make the road safer and less prone to speeding by thrill-seekers, met with Councilor Barbara Ryan. According to resident Peter Frye, the only improvement to the street since the accident has been the placement of electronic warning signs; the neighbors are continuing to ask the city for other safety measures. ■WI

Fleetwood fourth mayoral hopeful

BELLINGHAM - County Councilor Seth Fleetwood announced his candidacy for mayor this week, making him the fourth person to officially add his name to the growing list of folks seeking Bellingham's highest elected office. Other hopefuls include fellow County Councilor Dan McShane, Bellingham City Councilor Gene Knutson and citizen Dan Pike. ■WI

PANAMA COMMUNIQUE



by **LAWRENCE KLEPINGER**
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CARNIVAL!

Instead of Fat Tuesday, in Panama everyone celebrates Carnival – four days of mass hysteria, rhythmic dancing in the streets, unabashed drinking and eating. But first let's be sure we know what all the fuss is about.

Carnival is basically a Roman Catholic and, to a lesser extent, Eastern Orthodox celebration. The actual festivities end on Mardi Gras, meaning Fat Tuesday in French, the day before Ash Wednesday, when Lent officially begins.

Traditionally, people are supposed to refrain from various "sinful" activities to show their devotion to God by making some sort of personal sacrifice from Ash Wednesday on. Some give up drinking for 40 days before Easter Sunday; others make similar "promises" of repentance as a sign of religious devotion.

But before all this pious activity takes place, everybody goes nuts during Carnival. And go nuts, we did.

Heavily armed National Police were everywhere, yet never seemed to push their weight around. Instead, they mingled among the thousands of participants, talked with people, smiled at the multitude of brightly dressed children and basically kept a subdued, but very visible profile during the festivities. We saw no fights or any physical altercations whatsoever.

There was a whole kaleidoscope of people having a good time, indigenous Indians from the outlying jungles, black and brown people laughing with each other, white tourists looking a little uneasy at the whole spectacle unfolding before their very eyes.

Hot dogs for 50 cents, cold beer for the same price, mixed drinks easily accessible, braised pig, chicken on open grills, cotton candy, tacos and beans, and other food I have never seen before.

Little kids, armed with squirt guns, were blasting unsuspecting participants as they walked from stall to stall, shopping and people gazing. As my wife and I strolled down the middle of one of the cordoned-off streets, a small girl walked toward me with a mischievous glint in her eyes, smiled coyly,

then blasted me with handfuls of confetti, giggled and ran off with her friends. I could only laugh at being sucked in so completely.

My wife and I got soaked time and again, were greeted by scores of people with friendly smiles, and questioned by curious Panamanians as to where we were from.

The floats were extremely fun to watch, the "float queens," waving at spectators, blowing kisses to the adoring masses. It is no fluke that Panamanian women have won Miss World titles on numerous occasions.

As the day wore on, I found myself continuously smiling. People of all races, religions, creeds and colors having a good time just enjoying life together. It was a real eye opener to actually see them not taking life so seriously, celebrating the moment without hesitation or reservation.

Suddenly it dawned on me how free these people really are. I harkened back to the days when I was a kid, still able to go to a park, celebrate Easter Sunday, family members drinking beer and enjoying an outdoor barbecue.

But nowadays in America, people are automatically arrested for drinking in public places, have a difficult time mingling with people of different ethnic backgrounds and religious preferences, are basically uptight about myriad problems both real and imagined.

It would be nice to see people in the U.S.A. start a movement for a national Carnival celebration. But, then again, with everybody so "sensitive," it would probably be viewed as a "religious" celebration and consequently outlawed. And that is a real shame.

Americans don't seem to realize how much freedom they have really lost. It was never more apparent to me than during Carnival in Panama.

We have never had such a good time in our lives, are still talking about it – and making plans to go again next year.

PANAMA NEWS ALERT

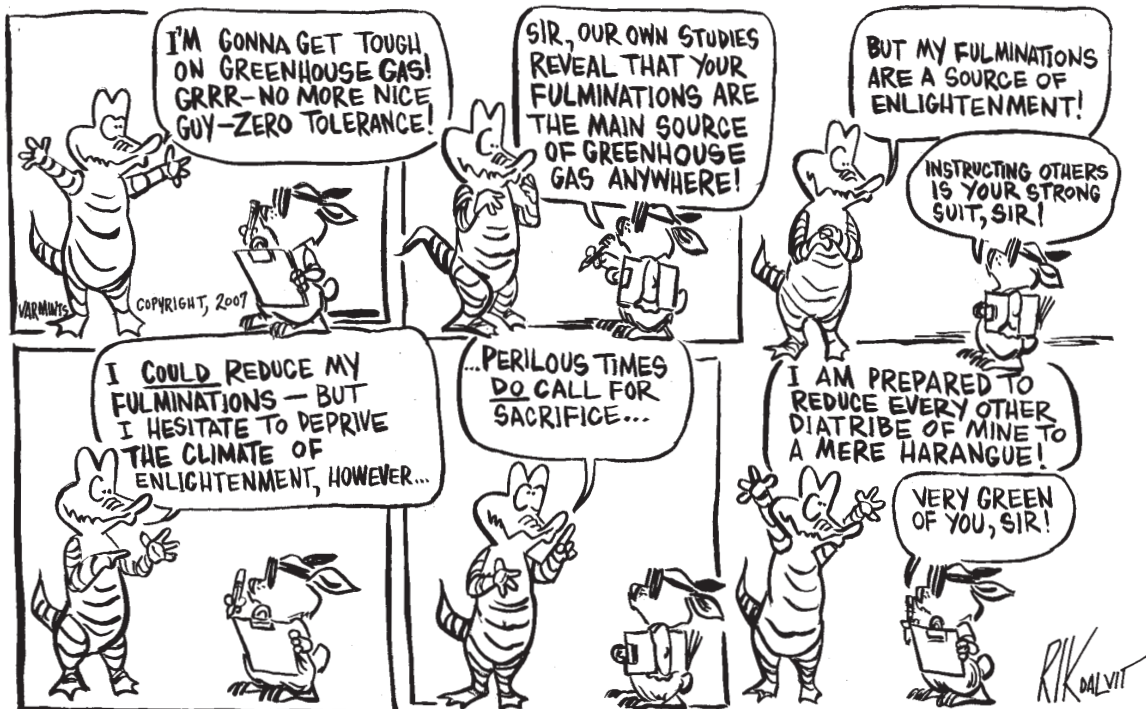
On September 9, 2007, Manual Noriega will be extradited back to the Republic of Panama. Rumors are rampant as to what is going to happen. But one thing is for sure – he will never regain power. This country is just too vibrant under democratic rule - and the capitalistic environment it has fostered - for him to screw everything up again. It simply isn't going to happen.

What will probably transpire is that he will be placed under house arrest – or re-extradited to France – where he is wanted for crimes he committed against French citizens while military dictator of Panama. Here's hoping the French keep him forever.

Until next time, hasta luego! ■WI

Varmints™ By Rik Dalvit

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DAN McSHANE is running for Mayor and we're having a community party! Saturday, March 3rd, at 6:00 p.m. at the Depot Market on Railroad & Chestnut. It's free! Music by the Atlantics! Mallard's Ice Cream! Thai House & India Grill dinners for sale! All are welcome! Paid for by McShane for Mayor, 1451 Grant Street in Bellingham. 303-3252. www.danmcshane.com.