

Political Penguin

By Duane Plank

"The future is so bright, I gotta wear shades," were some of the lyrics to a pop song released in 1986 by the obscure group, Timbuk 3. How do you think those sentiments are playing out some 23 years later, what with all of the trials and tribulations that we are now going through as we battle through the current recession? Thought so.

As I was working on the column, the good word from the mucky-mucks in Washington was that "we the people" would soon become part owners of a once fine American business icon, General Motors. Seems that the once proud and profitable auto-making giant was forced to file for something called Chapter 11, bankruptcy protection, because their business had failed miserably. Or miserably failed.

We taxpayers are going to be given a 60 percent ownership stake in the company, which has already been lent about \$20 billion by the Treasury. Plans are to lend the car guys another \$30 billion as GM wends its way through the bankruptcy process.

Don't know how to feel about this latest Fed bailout. Now that I am technically part-owner of GM, maybe I can get a deal on a

Cadillac? You know, one of those "better than employee" discounts that the auto guys tout on their TV commercials.

Wonder how Governor Arnold feels about the GM situation? The Guv and his cronies have been busy, on the one hand, trying to figure out feasible ways to cut and slash the Great Bankrupt State's budget, with the other hand extended to Washington, begging for some bailout dough.

Slashing or cancelling anything and everything that requires money seems to be on the table, as the politicians try to figure out a way to keep the state from floating out into the Pacific Ocean, riding the crest of red ink.

Which they created. By not addressing the problems years ago. You can't keep spending, spending, spending, then taxing, taxing, and taxing the legitimate taxpayers. Any reasonable person would have realized that, sooner rather than later, a fiscal catastrophe was unavoidable.

But it seems to me that most of the folks wielding the power are so consumed with either holding on to their current position, or caught up in re-election politics, that all they try to do is to push whatever problems arise

farther down the path. Make their problems the next fella's problems, by delaying, delaying, and delaying.

And you can't continue to kow-tow to the special interest groups, protecting their interests, shielding them from the harsh realities of today's economy. But facing up to the powerful special interest groups is problematic for many of the politicians, who seem to be beholden to the power brokers. And to their cash cows.

Why should any group be spared the cuts that have befallen most segments of society? Sorry, government employees, teachers, and unionized workers. I don't want to see anyone lose his or her job, trust me. But when the proverbial ax falls, it falls with an all-encompassing, sickening thud. And no segment of the workforce should be spared.

Good news! It now it looks like we will once again get to waste more money and re-vote for the umpteenth time on the status of gay marriage in Cali. Last week the California Supreme Court, by a 6-1 vote, upheld the tenets of Proposition 8, which restored a ban on same-sex marriage.

Of course the side that received the "1" vote, immediately began mobilizing, plan-

ning fund-raising and commercial strategy for another probable costly ballot initiative in the too-near future.

Not to be outdone, the winning side also hit the money-grabbing ground running. In a local paper, Ron Prentice, chairman of ProtectMarriage.com, said: "We must turn our attention to protecting this victory... and must raise several million dollars to get the message out."

Great. In a time when most of us are challenged with our personal financial situation, when the state is hemorrhaging nothing but red ink, we again will be asked to finance another ballot initiative on gay marriage.

Seems to me that whether you are for or against gay marriage, and all the peripheral agendas swirling about the very complex and emotional issue, there must come a time when both sides accept the fact that "we the people" voted on the issue, and move on.

And maybe that time is right now, what with Cali facing a \$25 billion-dollar deficit.

More good news, courtesy of one Doug McIntyre, who hosts a 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. gabfest on el radio. McIntyre, who voted for

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Gardening

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slow process that takes all summer. By late summer the seeds begin to turn red, which means they are just about mature. Don't pick them too early or the embryo will not be fully developed and they will not be viable. When the seeds are fully developed they will begin to fall from the tree, and at that time you can begin to pick them.

Ripe seeds can be removed easily. If they don't pop right off when you grab them, they are not quite ready, give them another week or two. Don't let them fall to the ground, the chipmunks, birds and other critters love them, and usually eat them as fast as they fall.

Once picked, let them sit for a week or so, until the pulp begins to soften. At that time soak them in a pail of water to further soften the pulp. While still in the pail of water squeeze the seeds between your fingers to separate the seeds from the pulp. Once they are separated slowly add water to the pail until it over flows, allowing the water to flow over the edge of the pail slowly. The viable seeds should sink to the bottom of the pail, while the pulp should float to the top. Allow the pulp to

float out of the pail until you have nothing but clean seeds laying on the bottom of the pail.

Drain the water and spread the seeds out on a table to dry. Once dry the seeds can be stored in a cool dry place. They will keep this way for some time.

Because Dogwood seeds have a very hard outer coating on the seed, they need to be pretreated or stratified before they will germinate. This process softens the outer coating so that water and oxygen can enter, initiating the germination process. There are several ways to stratify Dogwood seeds, from treating them with acid to storing them in the refrigerator. I will share a couple of techniques that I think will work the best for someone with little experience.

One technique requires that you decide what day next spring you would like to plant the seeds and then counting backwards on your calendar for 210 days to start the stratification process. Here in the north May 15 is a good target date for planting because by then we should be safe from frost. You don't want Mother Nature to do them in

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Leaders

from front page

cost less than \$5,000. "We could tell early on where the energy was going, and what was interesting about this particular class was 90 percent of the students were self employed," Wertz said.

The fundraising team put together a silent and live auction to raise money for the project. Using personal and professional contacts, the group managed to raise \$24,000, auctioning off everything from high end sports memorabilia to a weekend in Catalina complete with helicopter transportation. The Manhattan Beach Fire Department even donated a spaghetti dinner at the firehouse. "It was a shock to us--we were very excited," Wertz said. "That's the thing about Leadership Manhattan Beach; people take care of each other. A lot of the auction attendees were former members."

Because it raised more money than they expected, the class was able to go back to the City Council to get approval to donate a second and third solar compactor. "I think overall its going to keep Pollywog Park very clean... the little league fields get slammed," Wertz said.

Cohen said the project will benefit residents and further the City's mission to lessen its

environmental impact. She explained that the class decided to go forward with the project only after conducting research and interviews with residents and City leaders. "It was a neat project," Cohen said. "This one isn't glamorous, but we're definitely appreciative."

Cohen added that the program was great not just because of the projects donated to the community, but the human capital it creates. She said Leadership helped her become comfortable within the community. Shortly after graduation, Cohen was appointed to the Planning Commission and later the Parks and Recreation Commission before being elected to the City Council. "It also gave me an understanding how municipal government makes decisions, and it introduced me to a wide variety of local orgs that make things happen in our city," Cohen said.

Wertz felt the program allows community leaders to emerge and develop their strengths, possibly even moving on to the City Council like Cohen. "At the end of the day, Portia's exactly right," Wertz said. "From City Council to local business, most of them are Leadership Manhattan Beach alumni. [It's] really kind of the foundation for the future." •




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