

Amador Community News

Carol Harper

ACN Editor

www.amadorcommunitynews.com

All I Want for Christmas...is to thank you!

As I look back exactly a year ago this month, I am always amazed at how much gets packed in a year's time. A year ago, Christmas wasn't such a joyful time...my daughter was still in boot camp; my son was in some undisclosed area in Iraq. My grandmother had passed away, and my husband David and I had to make the trek across the mid-West to Wyoming for the funeral. It didn't really "feel" like Christmas, and I found myself missing and reminiscing about our "Amador County" Christmases—the magic of the first snowfall in Pioneer, watching David push the snow blower as he trudged through the driveway in knee-deep snow, watching my kids walk to Amador Station to catch the school bus to Amador High.

I remember taking frequent trips up to Kirkwood Ski Resort to take the boys snowboarding. They would snowboard all day, and I'd sit in the lodge sipping hot apple cider and...writing, of course! I remember singing in the Interfaith Choir for their "Festival of Carols" and volunteering at the Interfaith Food Bank. I remember standing around, freezing while we waited for the tree lighting in downtown Jackson. I remember getting together with friends for parties and little get-togethers at Mel's, Denny's or whatever was open late enough to accommodate us! I remember being snowed in quite often (as would happen when you live at 4000 ft!), filling the wood stove with crackling pine and long-burning oak, cuddle up on the couch with a good book or just being there to chat with my kids and whomever they had brought over to visit that day.

I loved my church family at Calvary Chapel in Pine Grove—the worship team was awesome! Women's Ministry had a lovely, elaborate Christmas dinner/program every year, with tables beautifully adorned in holiday décor. I loved shopping in Jackson and Sutter Creek downtowns, browsing the festively decorated stores, hearing the creak of the wood floors underneath my feet, smelling the scent of the latest holiday candles, or trying on testers of lotions and body sprays.

Here in Nashville, Gaylord's Opryland is an amazing sight. Downtown Nashville is filled with lights and neon, music events are booked everywhere. As a soprano in The Nashville Choir, Christmas is our busiest time of year—whether it's singing around a Salvation Army kettle outside of Wal-Mart, or in formal attire in some amazing, plantation-style mansions and country clubs for private Christmas parties. But there is just something about a small, hometown Christmas that can't be beat. I drive about 15 miles to the church where I am the music minister, and I'm so happy that it lies on the border between city and country.

The South is funny like that...you don't have to drive too far before you find yourself in a small-town country setting. However, "country" is defined a bit differently here than in CA. Recently David and I took a spontaneous day drive on Nolensville Pike, which spans from downtown Nashville all the way out to a charming little area that reminded me a lot of Ione. We just drove on through, but there was one time where we took a way down towards

Chattanooga in Coffee County...where you do NOT want to get lost on the back roads! Okay, it wasn't quite like "Deliverance", but...I suppose there are some places upcountry towards Pioneer and West Point where you could probably say the same, so I really wasn't that worried! Switching gears now...I remember working for some great places there in Amador County. I loved working at Sutter Amador Hospital, and truly miss the people in the Environmental Services/Engineering departments. I saw the *Calaveras Times* become the *Gold Country Times*, and have formed a lasting bond with Eva Dunn, who has a heart of gold. And (contrary to popular belief), I did enjoy working for a short time as a reporter for the *Ledger Dispatch*, where I learned a great deal about Amador County, and met some wonderful people along the way. Yes, I put up with Jack Mitchell's humor, could smell Marcia Oxford when she stepped into a room (without even having to turn around, the rose perfume was unmistakable)...and greatly appreciated Sean Rabe's guidance while I was there. I would say that the City of Sutter Creek is very fortunate to have someone like Sean with such genuine insight, patience and knowledge on the issues that face Amador County as a whole.

Though I don't have a thorough understanding from afar here in TN, I know what I know in my heart of hearts for Amador County. I receive so many e-mails from you, and I am so appreciative of your continued support and all of the information you send. It seems that there are more and more people who are speaking up and people being placed in positions of significance that can do a lot of good there. As long as it is about serving the people, and that there are those who are ready and willing to serve, that's the way it should be (and always should have been).

I'm excited for you, Amador County! Don't worry...the issues here in Nashville are the same as there and anywhere...the economy, unemployment, etc. Our local government and councilmen/aldermen also home town councils and meetings, and really desire to hear the voices of the people. I get regular emails from my city councilman. Informing the citizens is important to them; it is paramount. From what I understand, there is a big history of that going on here—listening to the voice of the people seems to be an integral part of a Southern legacy. Lately, the big issue here (among many) is whether or not a huge new convention center should be built in downtown Nashville. We also have homeless and crime issues. The comfort I can take is that I know that these are issues that affect many towns and cities across the nation. But we are America, we're strong, and we'll get through.

What I want the most for Christmas this year, is to simply say "thank you". From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you all for being a part of my life and STILL being a part of my life. Though I have many commitments here in Nashville, I do have plans to visit in the spring of 2010, and would love nothing more than to meet those of you who have made Amador Community News what it is today.

Please support your local community businesses and media. We try so hard to bring you what you want to read and hear. Let us know how we can better serve you. A very Merry Christmas to you all, and a happy, joyful, prosperous New Year!

Carol Harper, Editor, Amador Community News

SAVE THE DATE! 2nd ANNUAL BOWL-A-THON - Sat Mar 27, 2010 at Gold Country Lanes. Fundraiser to raise funds to support the work of the Child Abuse Prevention Council Form a five-person team, have each bowler collect a minimum of \$50 in pledges, and come enjoy a fun day of bowling while enjoying free pizza, soda and a chance to win some great prizes. Sponsorship Opportunities: Sponsor one lane, two lanes, five lanes, 10 lanes, even 20 lanes and receive prominent recognition and our gratitude for your support. Lane sponsorships start at only \$50. Donate a Prize: Fun prizes valued up to \$25, or more valuable silent auction items are greatly appreciated! Please contact Robin for more information at 223-5921 or email, info@amadorcapc.org.

AMADOR TEEN DRIVER COUNCIL MEETING - Tues Jan 5 at 3:30PM, ACUSD Conference Rm., 217 Rex Avenue, Jackson. We had a successful meeting at Amador High School on the evening of November 18th our thanks to the Drivers Ed Teacher Millie Butler attendance was nearly 140 people (parents & teens standing room only!). It included speakers from Department of Health, Highway Patrol, Amador Teen Driver & Tina Wurzbarger (Amador Teen Driver & parent)... we want to talk about scheduling 3 community meetings per year on a regular basis (Amador, Argonaut & Independence/Mountain Oaks/Home School)... currently working on scheduling a meeting for Argonaut hopefully in February. We've sent another several thousand mailings so far this year and we need to start doing some fundraising again as we are just about tapped out. Generally just get everyone up to date on the website, mailings and other projects of Amador Teen Driver. Bring any Teens who would like to participate in this organization we need 'em! Hopefully everyone can make it! For more information contact Anne Lintz (209) 223-1631



The Second annual "For Kids By Kids" Guitar Hero Tournament was held Sat, Dec 12th at the Jackson Civic Center. After a practice round, twelve finalists battled it out to find the top three kids, **Elijah Wilson, Matt Molles, and Noble Arnold**. All three played **B.Y.O.B.** on the expert level to determine the finals. **First Place** went to Wilson with over 120,000 points; **Second place** went to Molles and **third place** went to Arnold. Merzlake and Estrada would like to thank Mike Daly for his continued support. Organizers were Michael Merzlake and Anthony Estrada. The tournament was the sixth event put on by the young promoters.

LMNO SPOTLIGHT: Why Am I Stuck?

By Vinny Ribas

www.lmnogoldcountry.ning.com

Hello, CA music cronies! My friend, Vinny, is back with some great advice about life for the indie artist in Nashville, TN. You can check out more of his articles at www.indieconnect.net. Thanks, Vinny...you rock! - Carol Harper

Let's be honest. "I haven't been discovered yet," "I'm just not one of the lucky ones" and "I've just haven't had that big break yet" are NOT reasons for stagnation or failure in the music business. They are excuses, and nothing else. There are only a handful of plausible reasons why you haven't reached a level of success that you are happy with. Any one or combination of these can keep you from moving up the proverbial ladder of success.

- You're being unrealistic. I often see wide-eyed dreamers who expect that their talent and charisma will take the music world by storm. Unfortunately, there are less and less artists getting signed to record deals every day. And even a record deal is no guarantee that your music will ever be heard or that you'll ever make a penny. Today, record labels look for artists who have already built up an amazing following. They want someone they can just put their money and marketing muscle behind to propel them forward.

- In most cases, a more realistic vision is that of being an active artist, working your way up to playing larger and more prestigious (higher-paying) gigs and attracting and keeping a large fan base that buys your music any time you release something new. The gigs can be traditional (nightclubs, small concert venues etc.) or specialized (schools or colleges, Nascar events, weddings etc.)

- Your 'package' - your look, voice, song choice and persona - is not strong enough. I know this sounds harsh, but it only takes one of these components to be 'off' to stifle a career. For example, it is amazing how many times I see good looking men and women with great voices record less-than-stellar songs that won't enable them to stand out. This is often because they insisted on writing them themselves, and that is simply not their strong suit. Or, the attractive artist is talented as a singer and a songwriter, but has a less-than-pleasing personality. Have professionals assess what you're presenting to the marketplace to ensure that you are putting your best foot forward in every way.

- You're not unique enough. This means that your combination of talent, persona, sound and look isn't different enough from what's already out there to differentiate you from the crowd. Or, it might mean that these features are inconsistent with each other (wearing a

cowboy hat and singing about life in New Your City). Maybe you sound too much like an already popular artist. Maybe you just don't have a 'hook' - something that grabs people's attention. You may need a makeover by some branding and image consultants and possibly a new producer.

- You're not marketing yourself, or your marketing yourself ineffectively. For most artists, in order to make serious money you need to do one or both of these things: 1) perform for a lot of people, and; 2) sell a lot of music. It's plain and simple. Both of these require extensive marketing on your end. That includes booking yourself everywhere and often, being active on Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and other social networks, playing benefits, being on the road, producing and disseminating great marketing materials, possibly promoting your songs to radio and then doing radio interviews and much more. Some people can do this by themselves, but most people hire friends or professionals to take on some of these tasks. When you've got your 'machine' consistently working on all of these, your income will increase dramatically.

Next Month: More from Vinny Ribas on Why Am I Stuck? Part 2.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!