

# When a hometown is timeless, any day can be a good old day

REALTOR JOE Smith is a product of Pacific Grove, through and through. Now living in the family home he shares with his wife and mother, he has happy recollections of being in the annual Butterfly Parade and going to the Feast of Lanterns.

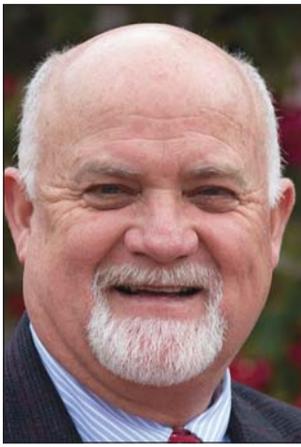
He said his mother moved to P.G. with her family when she was 10. When she arrived at the Greyhound station that was then on Lighthouse Avenue, she got off the bus and looked down 17th Street and saw the ocean for the first time. At 15, she fell in love with a G.I. They married soon after she graduated from high school and were together for nearly 60 years until he died in 2014.

Smith saw his father work hard, consistently. He was a sixth-grade teacher who commuted to Chualar for 39 years. "When he started, the farmworkers were Japanese," noted Smith. As demographics changed and Hispanics began doing that work, Smith said, "They'd just drop their kids off at school, and the kids didn't speak a word of English, but my dad said they learned really quickly."

### Early cocktails

Smith's roots are deep enough that he still volunteers with the Kiwanis at the yearly Good Old Days pancake breakfast. He makes it sound so wonderful that you can almost smell the maple syrup and steaming mugs of coffee.

But he wasn't all that interested in the



Joe Smith

from Oregon to Southern California and Arizona. However, he and his wife wanted to start a family, and he was spending a lot of time on the road, so he came back with the idea of running a business. He bought Carmel Candy and Confection in Carmel Plaza.

From there, an ice cream parlor seemed like the next logical step, so he and a partner opened Carmel Creamery on Alvarado Street in Monterey in 1997. Smith went to New York City and spent a week with a guy known for frozen goodies, learning to make ice cream in 20-gallon batches. Then he came back here and started churning.

"I wasn't making a living for my family at it," he said. "You always have 20/20 hindsight. When we closed, I was selling wholesale to a few restaurants, but we should have gotten a smaller place and focused on wholesale first to get the name out there, you know?"

In any event, he got out of the confection business and went into what can be the sweetest work around — real estate. "I love real estate," he said, and explained how, for him, it was about "getting people ready for their next adventure," by helping them sell, or find a new home.

In 2008, he also revisited the Crosby, which had long since become the AT&T. He doesn't remember exactly why or how, but he heard they needed volunteer drivers and joined the group that provided transportation to players. He drove George Lopez, Don Cheadle and Jordan Spieth, who he described as "the nicest young man."

"When he got out of the car, he said 'Thank you sir,' with so much respect. It was probably his first year. He looked so young." Smith also remembered that if a player sat in the front seat, next to him, that usually meant they wanted to talk. If they put the caddy up front, it was going to be a quiet ride.

After some years of that, he got moved to media transportation. "People come from all over the world to report on the tournament," he said. He has befriended a father and his two adult sons from Germany who come back every year to write for golf magazines. "I'm told Germans love American golf," he said.

### Celebrated volunteer

He said that for him, doing transportation is a throwback to the days when his father drove a bus for their church in Monterey, picking up kids and bringing them to Sunday School each week.

"Volunteering is important to me," Smith said. He and his wife worked at the P.G. Triathlon and Wildflower Triathlon for several years in the hospitality tents, helping to feed sponsors, V.I.P.s and elite athletes. And last year, he received the Monterey Peninsula Chamber's "Volunteer of the Year" award, in part for his 15 years of

See SMITH page 27A

# Photographer inspired by scenery and motivated to preserve it

NOSTALGIA, TYPICALLY a pleasant feeling, can be a melancholy lament for Debra Achen. She's a fine art photographer who sometimes feels a profound ache in her heart when she hikes to a breathtaking setting — a spot that might have been similarly appreciated long ago by photographers, artists and nature lovers.

be inspired by this, like I am today ... like Ansel Adams, and Edward Weston and Minor White were before me?" she said.

For Achen, those emotional moments have evolved into a desire to use her artistic gifts to help the environment by creating a series of nature photographs — specifically trees — to raise funds for "50 Million for Our Forests," a campaign by the National Forest Foundation asking Americans to help replant 50 million trees in our national forests.

"I've been making donations this cause on my own,

but it occurred to me that if I can encourage people to give to that program, and, at the same time, have them collect my art, it would be a great project. I'm calling it 'Print & Plant,'" said the artist, who sends the National Forest Foundation 15 percent of the proceeds from every photograph purchased from the "Print & Plant" page on her website, [debraachen.com](http://debraachen.com).

The limited-edition tree photographs are unframed, archival, digital prints, signed and numbered. Buyers also receive a donation certificate with the print.

Achen said her photographic style was partially inspired by her love of impressionist and abstract expressionist art.

"Some of my images border on the abstract," she said. "By focusing on a certain element of a subject, it becomes distilled to its basic shapes and forms, revealing patterns and textures inherent in nature."

"Other work falls into the category of photo impressionism. Here, I use long exposures to blur the borders between objects and the space that surrounds them. Movement of the subject or the camera adds the element of time, transforming points of light into 'brushstrokes' and creating a fluid, impressionistic interpretation of the scene."

She traces her love for nature to her childhood, growing up on the banks of a river in Monessen, Pa., a small steel town southeast of Pittsburgh, where she spent much of her time enjoying the outdoors, building forts, carving igloos in deep snowdrifts, and creating backyard carnivals with friends.

See ACHEN page 37A

## Carmel's Artists

By DENNIS TAYLOR

"Over the past year or two I've become increasingly dismayed about climate change," she said. "It's really happening a lot faster than anyone predicted, we're seeing a lot of serious impacts, and I think, subconsciously, I'm really starting to be affected by that."

### Print & Plant

Achen, a full-time artist and part-time docent for Carmel's Center for Photographic Art at Sunset Center, said those feelings have inspired introspection.

"When I'm out there, I find myself wondering, 'Is this tree, this scene, all of this beauty, going to be here 25 years from now? Will people still be able to enjoy this,



PHOTO/COURTESY DONN ACHEN

Fine art photographer Debra Achen is shown reveling in the natural beauty of Yosemite National Park.

Don't miss "Scenic Views" by Jerry Gervase — every week in the Real Estate Section.

## Great Lives

By ELAINE HESSER

Crosby Pro-Am. As he moved from Robert Down Elementary to P.G.'s middle and high schools, he heard about the tournament from his friends and noticed that some even took a week off from school to volunteer. "They got these oval patches that said 'Crosby' to wear on their jackets," he remembered.

But the first time Smith went to the tournament, sometime around 1970, he and his buddies brought along a transistor radio so that they could listen to the Super Bowl. He wasn't that into the football game, either, but he clearly recalled seeing Bing Crosby and Phil Harris.

"They were walking towards us — this was in the morning — and Phil had a cigarette in one hand and what looked like a drink with alcohol in the other," he said. Smith thought it was kind of early for a cocktail.

After earning his associate's degree at Monterey Peninsula College, Smith took a job with Roger Post, who owned several bed and breakfast inns including the Gosby House and Green Gables. Post also had a mortgage company, where Smith worked in the servicing department.

He moved from there to a job as property supervisor for a hospitality management company that had hotels dotting the West



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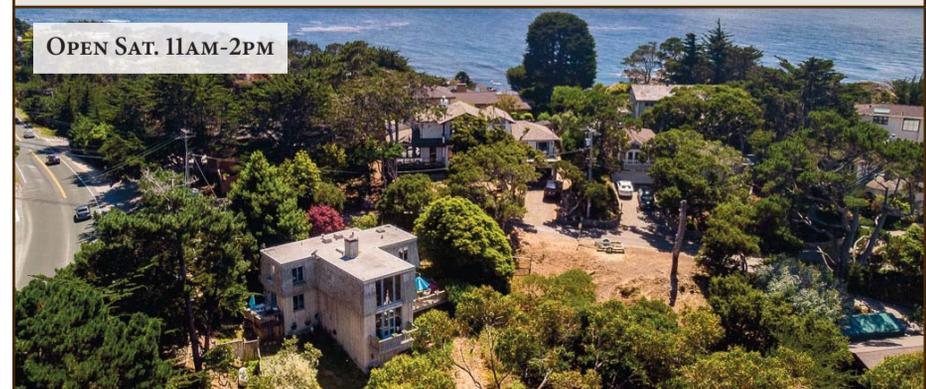
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# ACHEN

From page 25A

She gravitated toward art — all kinds — throughout her school years, took extracurricular classes in drawing and painting, and graduated from Edinboro State University (in the northwest corner of Pennsylvania) with a plan to teach art at the college level.

“As a senior, I student taught in a classroom and realized that teaching really wasn’t the profession I wanted,” she said. “So, I went to San Diego and moved in with a cousin temporarily, looking for a different path.”

Achen earned a bachelor’s degree from UC San Diego in visual arts and communication, took a job painting animation cells for TV commercials and creating graphic animation for educational films, and pursued photography and painting on the side.

## Film and TV

When she lost access to a darkroom — this was well before the days of smartphones and digital cameras — she focused exclusively on her painting, joined an artist salon and a gallery, sold her work to private collectors, and did commissions for a law firm.

“I worked for a short time in the film industry in Hollywood, and did some post-production and editing on a movie called ‘Brain Waves,’ starring Tony Curtis, Keir Dullea and Vera Miles,” she said. “I got to go to the wrap party, and met Tony Curtis, but never felt comfortable in Hollywood. You have to do a lot of networking and go to a lot of parties to make a living in that industry. There were a lot of drugs going on in that culture, and that just wasn’t me.”

She worked eight years producing magazine-style shows and a daily talk show at a San Diego TV station, which is where she met producer/director Donn Achen, whom she married in 1990.

A subsequent job with the McGraw-Hill Company in San Diego eventually led to a transfer to CTB/McGraw-Hill in Monterey in 2004.

“I got a digital camera for Christmas the year before we moved here. That’s what inspired me to return to fine art photography, along with the fact that we live in a nature photographer’s paradise,” Achen said. “Creatively, it was the perfect environment for me.”

The move also worked out for Donn, an avid golfer. He is now a PGA golf pro with the Pebble Beach Co.

Wandering through the scenery here or in Yosemite is a form of meditation for Achen, who said she typically spends 20-30 minutes just walking, seeing, feeling, listening and observing before she shoots her first photograph.

Her work has been part of notable local

exhibitions at Weston Gallery, including a 2018 show called “Fire and Water,” and Carmel Visual Arts.

Achen also has been part of multiple juried exhibitions around the United States, and in 2019 was showcased at exhibitions in Budapest, Hungary, and Barcelona, Spain.

She also is involved with ImageMakers, an organization founded in 1996 that includes among its members more than 60 prominent fine art photographers on the Monterey Peninsula.

Dennis Taylor is a freelance writer in Monterey County. Contact him at scribelaureate@gmail.com.

# ART

From page 35A

came to the Monterey Peninsula as a young man in 1898, and established a studio in Monterey three years later. Although he traveled extensively, he spent much of his later life at his home in Pebble Beach, where he died in 1938.

The talk starts at 6:30 p.m. The cost is \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. The gallery is located at 720 Via Mirada. montereyart.org

# CALENDAR

**Feb 2 – American Legion Post 512 hosts Big Game Day and Chili Cook-Off,** Dolores between Eighth and Ninth, Carmel-by-the-Sea. Open to the public. \$10 entry, includes Chili Cook-Off 1 to 3 p.m. and food during the game. Contact the legion for more information: (831) 624-9941

**Feb. 3 – “Simply phenomenal” are the words most used by music critics when describing the voice of internationally acclaimed opera diva Leberta Loral.** Accompanied by pianist Pauline Troia, Ms. Loral will perform at the Carmel Woman’s Club at 2 p.m. Monday. In a nod to St. Valentine, the two artists’ repertoire will fill the air with favorite songs of love and romance. In keeping with the spirit of the day, Cupid himself will have a special gift for all. A coffee/tea reception follows the program. Members, free; guests \$10. (831-624-2866 or 915-8184

**Feb. 5 – Community Night with the Library program, “Big Data/Big Brother”,** 7 p.m. in Carpenter Hall, Sunset

Center. Speaker: Vinnie Monaco, assistant professor of computer science at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey. Hosted by the Carmel Public Library Foundation. Cost: Free; seating first-come first-serve. \$10 suggested contribution. Questions? afallon@carmelpubliclibraryfoundation.org or (831) 624-2811

**Feb. 6 – Oncologist Dr. John Hausdorff will be discussing “What If the Cancer Comes Back?”** at 5 p.m. in the Peninsula Room, Shoreline Church, 2500 Garden Road, in Monterey. For information contact the Prostate Cancer Self-Help Group of the Central Coast at (831) 915-6466.

**Feb. 7-April 10: Tai Chi and Qigong with Master Jim Scott-Behrends,** 1 to 2:30 p.m. at American Legion Post 512, Dolores and Eighth, Carmel. Cost is \$80 per 10-week session. Free for veterans (donations accepted). For details, contact jsbehrends@aol.com; call (831) 728-9138, or visit www.bloominglotustaichi.com

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"Police Log" Carmel-by-the-Sea, Aug. 1

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