

## VIEWPOINTS

# Remembering fit and friendly Milt; ready for fall, fair time

I got a kick out of Milt and some of it had to do with fitness, a subject about which he was serious. Milt was Milt Younger, the attorney who died recently. He, however, had graduated to one-name status a long time ago.

Milt spent a healthy chunk of time in hot pursuit of fitness, and it seemed as if every time I saw him he was in running shorts, having knocked out four or five or six miles. He was proud of his workouts and wanted you to know that no matter how much you were doing and how much younger you were, he could call your bluff and raise you one.

Milt was competitive and intensely alive, those bright eyes boring a hole in you. "How are your mother and dad doing?" Milt would ask, having known them for a long time.

Milt was a personal injury attorney so he was in the suing business, but he had



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COURTESY OF MAUREEN BUSCHER-DANG

**Milt Younger at age 18.**

a streak of loyalty too. Dad would tell the story of receiving a call from Chain Younger and Milt himself. There had been an accident on Dad's farm and whether it had been preventable or not Milt had been called to take the case.

"I'm not going ahead with it," Milt said. "Please be more careful."

They were friends and in this case, friendship mattered.

The last time I saw Milt was at Uricchio's. His eyes were as bright as ever. "How's your mom doing?" he asked.

She is good and thank you for always asking.

## **Tell me you don't feel better right now.**

Tell me 67-degree mornings and 86-degree afternoons don't make a difference. Tell me that the coming of fall doesn't put a giant spring in your step.

There may be one more heat wave. Maybe two, but we're getting ready to cross the bar and doing so with a heart of gratitude. It's been a hot summer.

**My pomegranates have come in and the branches are drooping because of the weight of the fruit.** No red skin yet, green, but red is on its way and the cool nights will help ripen them.

When I think of pomegranates and fall, I think of Dolly Hei, one of Shafter's finest

citizens. Dolly has had a slight bump in the road healthwise but expects to make a full recovery. Talk about a woman who has a bounce in her step. With her stride, she barely needs a car or any other motorized conveyance.

## **It's cool so the fair must be near and I'll be darned if the gates don't fly open — think Willy Wonka's chocolate factory — tomorrow.**

When you have grandchildren, the word fair makes you think animals as in "I have to take a grandchild or several to see the animals." That's about as good as it gets, even if you are a hard-hearted, grizzled veteran of too many fairs.

I can already see Nora straining to get out of her stroller. That's another good thing about grandchildren. They can knock the rust off your heart. All you have to do is watch a kid discover butter for the first time and your heart will melt accordingly.

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# Sacramento's war on the Central Valley is hurting families

President Theodore Roosevelt referred to California as "West of the West," a land that has captured the imaginations of generations and cradled the growth, innovation and progress that shaped modern civilization.

California has been held up as a model of the American Dream, as former generations laid the foundation for this state's success and prosperity.

They paved a world-class system of roads and highways and, in a feat of engineering brilliance, built one of the world's largest water conveyance systems.

It was their foresight that established the world's greatest system of higher education, and their ingenuity that revolutionized travel and took us to places of which humanity had only dreamed.

The results speak for themselves. Since its founding, California has swelled in size as people from across the United States and around the globe have migrated to the Golden State for a piece of California prosperity.

Mark Twain perhaps said it best when he wrote of California's "name for getting up astounding enterprises and rushing them through with a magnificent dash and daring and a recklessness of cost or consequences."

Although originally described nearly 150 years ago, the dash, daring and recklessness Twain observed persist today, especially in the Capitol. Our legislators returned from their summer recess with dash and daring, working feverishly through



**JUSTIN SALTERS**

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thousands of bills to address some of California's most pressing issues.

While many of us spent last Friday evening rooting for our favorite high school football teams, our representatives in the State Senate and Assembly wrapped up a legislative season that lasted into Saturday's early morning hours.

Senate President Pro Tem Kevin De León referred to the past session as an "historic year for all of our accomplishments," where "we put our values into action."

I wonder which values he had in mind.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one in five Californians lives in poverty. Despite the fact that Californians are more likely to live in poverty than residents of any other state, we saw another year filled with legislation that hurts the middle class and working poor while doing little to substantively address the causes of poverty or provide opportunities for economic advancement.

Whichever values were put in action, they clearly weren't values that help move all Californians forward.

Many of this year's signature pieces of legislation will harm growth and develop-

ment in inland regions of the state, another showdown in Sacramento's War on the Central Valley.

While the Bay Area and portions of Southern California have seen economic expansion fueled by a booming high-tech industry, the Central Valley's economy has languished.

We grow the food that feeds the world, but we have yet to see major progress to build more water storage or improve the delivery of already-purchased water to our farms.

We produce the reliable and affordable energy that keeps our homes and offices comfortable, our factories running and our cars and trucks traveling, but our oil and gas industry fights an uphill battle against forces that would otherwise shut them down, eliminating thousands of jobs and decimating our entire region.

None of us are looking to Sacramento for a handout, but we are seeking support to help our economies diversify, improve our health and educational achievements and expand the middle class.

Three of this year's major legislative "accomplishments," i.e., transportation fund-

ing, Cap and Trade and housing, offer little relief for the Central Valley.

The year's first major event was SB 1 (Beall), a \$52 billion transportation infrastructure plan passed in April. "Transportation funding plan" is a misnomer for the largest gas tax increase in California history. The plan includes a 12-cent increase in the gasoline excise tax, a 20-cent increase in the diesel excise tax, a 4 percent diesel sales tax increase, a "transportation improvement fee" ranging from \$25 to \$175 per year tacked onto your vehicle registration, and a \$100 per year zero emission vehicle fee. The taxes go into effect this November.

California families already spend more money on transportation than any other expense except housing, but elected officials in Sacramento — Democrats and Republicans — had no problem voting on a regressive tax increase that hurts families. This tax increase especially hurts families in the Central Valley, where workers often travel large distances to jobs that pay average wages of just \$43,316.

Further, the gas tax increase impacts our businesses severely. There aren't many Bay Area tech companies that depend on a fleet of trucks daily traveling thousands of miles to conduct their core business. It's our farms, oil producers and manufacturers who are going to see hits to their bottom line, making it more difficult to invest in expansion and job creation.

California might be able to fix some of its roads, but it won't be the Valley's families who are able to enjoy them.

More on this subject next week.

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