



FIVE DIE IN PLANE CRASH

# No survivors

Teams search for clues in  
Nevada-bound aircraft's  
fatal flight over Kern County

LOCAL | 2

A National  
Transportation  
Safety Board  
investigator takes  
notes as he  
interviews a man  
near the site of an  
airplane crash in an  
almond orchard  
near Panama Lane.

HENRY A. BARRIOS /  
THE CALIFORNIAN

NFL WEEK 15

## Raiders eliminated from playoff contention

Rodgers leads Packers past  
Raiders for seventh straight time

SPORTS | 28



KIRBY LEE / USA TODAY SPORTS

COLD WEATHER

Chilly air good news  
for many of Kern's  
ag commodities

LOCAL | 10

GOVERNMENT

What happens  
when a legislator  
quits his job?

LOCAL | 3

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## Viewpoints

# Concert to bring friends and community together

## Steve Flores

I have always told Rick Kreiser he should be a minister. His tranquil and soothing voice can almost be hypnotic. I would believe almost anything he would say.

I first met him almost 30 years ago at Carney's Office Equipment, where he was a salesman.

He approached me and I was struck by his calm mannerisms and genuine approach with people.

I don't remember what we purchased, but I am sure it was way more than I intended to buy. Somehow after talking to Rick, it was equipment or software I couldn't live without.

He and I have remained friends over the years. I would see him at social events with his wife, Kris. My wife, Susie, knew Rick from East Bakersfield High School, where they both attended.

Over the years, Rick and I have stayed in touch. His love of music turned him into a guitar aficionado.

We have had him sit in with my band, The Majestics, where his offbeat timing would musically take over the stage. So we didn't ask him that often to play with us ... smile ... wink.

Little did we know the irony of life would bond Rick and me together forever in a very personal and tragic way. Several years ago, we both lost our wives to cancer. His journey with Kris ended as mine began with Susie.

So when Rick approached

me several weeks ago about his Guitar Masters Series, Christmas with the Cranktones, and the Kern County Cancer Fund, it was almost like God had always had a plan for the two of us.

Thanks to Rick, the Cranktones will perform here in Bakersfield on Dec. 29 at the 250-seat Studio A in the newly renovated Bakersfield Music Hall of Fame.

The show is part of Rick's Guitar Master Series.

Through Rick's generosity, proceeds from the Christmas with the Cranktones will benefit the Kern County Cancer Fund. Full disclosure: I am a board member of the KCCF. The group assists local residents who need financial assistance obtaining screening, diagnosis and treatment for cancer and associated diseases.

All money raised for the KCCF stays in our community.

Rick's day gig is running Carney's Technology Center here in Bakersfield. But he admittedly lives vicariously through his Guitar Masters Series.

As he freely admits, "Since my skill level at playing guitar is not as great as I would like, I help bring those to our community for us to enjoy who are."

And who are the Cranktones?

Because of their busy recording or touring schedule, they rarely play together.

But when they do, it's strictly for fun. Usually only three times a year.

They have already played twice at L.A.'s famous Baked Potato. Rick's soothing and hypnotic voice convinced them to

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come to Bakersfield for their last performance this year.

The Cranktones are members of Los Angeles' elite first-call studio musicians who have played on hundreds of records, movie soundtracks and television shows. When not in studio sessions, these in-demand musicians are usually on a world tour with artists such as Boz Scaggs or George Benson.

Here are a few other music legends members of the Cranktones have either played, performed or recorded with: Ringo Starr, Neil Diamond, Barbra Streisand, Elton John, Roy Orbison, Smokey Robinson, The Beach Boys, The Monkees, Willie Nelson, Supertramp, Burt Bacharach and more A-list music legends you would probably recognize.

Carl Verheyen, Jim Cox, Craig Copeland, Tom Child, John Ferraro and Chad Wackerman form the Cranktones pick-up band. The Cranktones give a new upscale definition to the term "pickup band." Look up their musical credits on the Internet. Amazing.

This is sort of a full circle for me and

### HOW TO ATTEND

**What:** Guitar Masters Series, Christmas with the Cranktones

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Dec. 29

**Where:** Bakersfield Music Hall of Fame — Studio A, 23rd and Q streets

**More info:** [www.guitarmasters.org](http://www.guitarmasters.org)

Rick — the perfect tying of the commitment knot of our emotional journey with cancer, to help in a way we know best. As most people know, timing is essential in music. Rick and I share a common characteristic of so-so timing.

But in this case, Christmas with the Cranktones, the Kern County Cancer Fund and the Bakersfield Music Hall of Fame at this time of year is perfect timing.

Hope to see you there.

Email contributing columnist **Steve Flores** at [floressteve32@yahoo.com](mailto:floressteve32@yahoo.com). His work appears here every third Monday; the views expressed are his own.



## BAKERSFIELD OBSERVED

A BLOG ABOUT LIFE, MEDIA, POLITICS & PEOPLE

### Richard Beene

#### LIVES CUT SHORT

**We've lost a lot of good people this year, and their contributions to our community should not go unnoticed.** In the past week, we noted the death of Steve Starbuck, the 48-year-old partner in the tax/audit firm of Brown Armstrong, and Ray Bishop, the former head of the Kern County Airports Department who helped build the William M. Thomas Terminal. Bishop was a Vietnam veteran who left Bakersfield to run the airport in Jackson Hole, Wyo. He was 69. In October, we said goodbye to Steve Ruggenberg, former head of Golden Empire Transit, who left us to pursue his love of baking and cooking. Also a Vietnam veteran, Ruggenberg was 70. Three good men, now gone. As my friend Brad Barnes says, "every heartbeat counts."

#### LAWYER

**Here's a reason to applaud those children who go away**



**to college but return to put down roots in our community.** One of them is Neil Gehlawat, who has been named a partner in the plaintiffs law firm of Chain Cohn Stiles. Gehlawat is a Stockdale High School graduate who attended UC Berkeley and the University of Texas School of Law. Not a bad accomplishment for this 27-year-old wunderkind.

#### SPOTTED ON TWITTER

**"They don't make pizza or beer out of celery.** And that is all you need to know about celery."

#### HOLIDAYS

**One of the great joys of this time of year are the holiday parties that showcase our community's signature restaurants.** On a rainy weekend like the one we just experienced, you could barely find a seat in the iconic food joints like Luigi's Delicatessen, Noriega Hotel, Uricchio's Trattoria or Pyrenee's Cafe and Saloon. Good to see

these locally owned eateries doing so well.

#### FOOD

**And did you catch the mouth-watering, special Pete Tittl section of food and restaurants in the Saturday Californian?** I did, and I immediately hurried over to Coconut Joe's for their signature fish and chips. Located off California Avenue, Coconut Joe's has always offered some of the most consistent food and service in town.

#### SCAM

**We have yet another scam to worry about, and this one could destroy your credit and put you at risk in other ways.** Here's how it works: You receive a check in the mail from ATT for \$3,650, part of a larger gift you have "won." The letter says the check helps cover a \$1,450 tax fee. This happened to reader Carla Rivas, and when she checked with her bank, she was told if she cashed the check the scammers would have access to her checking account number, routing numbers, Social Security and other information. "I am so angry because I know that some elderly people

will fall for this, and they will be out the \$1,450 'tax fee,' and their vital info will be stolen," she said, "After the check bounces, I have to pay the bank back and now I have sent a Western Union payment and I am out that." The lesson: If it looks too good to be true, it normally is.

Email **Richard Beene**, *Californian* president and CEO, at [rsbeene@yahoo.com](mailto:rsbeene@yahoo.com). His column appears here on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; the views expressed are his own. Read more on his blog at [BakersfieldObserved.com](http://BakersfieldObserved.com).

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