

Aunt Helena

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Dec 9, 2025

Between nasty tap water and a frigid, miasmic fog associated with a stubborn inversion layer, the elements seem to be conspiring to erode our holiday cheer. I'm merely stocking up on store-bought water, gritting my teeth, and taking arms against this sea of troubles, which are perfectly manageable in the broad scheme of things. Is joy still joy when it takes this much effort? A question for the philosophers ...

Don't blame **Laura Prichard** for any of this, as she's going out of her way to spread positivity. As I mentioned last week, she's talking about the historical context of Handel's "Messiah" at 11 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 14, at Rianda House. Then at the same time on Saturday, Dec. 20, she and her husband, **Michael**, are leading Christmas caroling at Rianda House. It's hard to feel distraught when one is singing "O Holy Night."

I'm told the **St. Helena Striders** chose Galleron Road for their monthly constitutional on Saturday and came away with a bit of news: the group is part of a newly formed 501(c)(3) nonprofit called **Walk St. Helena**. The organization

“sponsors walks and works to open and maintain walking trails and routes in Upper Napa Valley,” and plans to solicit foundation support and grants to make the Upvalley “a center for walking.” I think that deserves a huzzah, don’t you? Learn more at **walksthehena.org**.

I can’t remember the last time I mentioned James Bond outside the context of **Craig Bond**, but here goes: The Saint (1351 Main St.) is hosting a Casino Royale 007-themed New Year’s Eve party from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. with bubbles, cocktails, dancing, and music queued up by DJ Rotten Robbie. Tickets (\$75) must be purchased in advance on **Eventbrite**. This is a rare opportunity to order a martini “shaken, not stirred” without it sounding the least bit cheesy.

A milestone event is coming to the St. Helena Public Library: the town’s first “Music Time in the Library” sponsored by Festival Napa Valley at 12:15 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13. Expect Hanukkah and klezmer tunes by clarinetist **Morgan Nilsen**. Fun fact: Morgan has performed in 49 states. Which state is missing from the list? You’ll have to ask her.

In other library news, **Santa Claus** will appear at the weekly storytime at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 16. I wonder if he finds the Grinch’s dastardly antics in Dr. Seuss’ “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” personally offensive — extra credit to the tyke who asks him to read it.

That’s it for me this week. A fresh batch of eggnog (with nary a drop of tap water in the recipe) is summoning me to the kitchen. Happy holidays, Beloved Readers.



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