

Jury dream team never sees action

By Leigh Weimers
Mercury News

When retired Mercury News human resources chief **John Hammett** reported for jury duty this week, he wondered if he'd know any of the other prospective jurors. Yes, and how. In the same jury pool with Hammett, a lawyer, were Santa Clara University law professors **Nancy** and **Eric Wright**. And former state Supreme Court Justice **Ed Panelli**. As things turned out, the civil case for which they'd been called was settled before going to trial in Santa Clara County Superior Court, and the would-be jurors were excused with thanks. That denied the county a shot at what would have been one of the most legally potent juries in history. But, in the interest of speedy justice, that probably was a good thing. Jurors might still have been there today, listening to the nominating speeches for jury foreman.

ARTBEATS: A clever seasonal downtown mural will be unveiled Saturday. Twenty-six students from Hester Elementary School, working with artist **Francisco Graciano** of the Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americano, created the winter-theme mural for installation outside the city's office of cultural affairs. But not on the wall of the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, where the cultural affairs office is located. The fourth- and fifth-graders painted the mural on wood panels, designed to fit over the office's Market Street windows. The panels can be reinstalled yearly about this time.

Time for another San Jose artist to get exposure in the Big Apple. Painter **Sonya Paz** has been invited to exhibit her work at the 2004 International Artexpo at New York's Javits Convention Center from Feb. 26 through March 1. There are more details on the show at www.artexpos.com. Or you can check out Paz's work at www.sonyapaz.com.

Incidentally, a citizens' panel has chosen some basic themes -- the environment, diversity, etc. -- for artist **Andrew Leicester** to work with in creating sculptures resembling parade floats outside San Jose's new City Hall. Sounds boring, but count on Leicester -- creator of Cincinnati's flying pig sculptures -- to liven things up.

WORDS WORTH: Expect to see the Bay Area's part in early California described in a new novel by Spanish author **Ramon Vilaro**. Vilaro was here this week for a meeting, set up by the Spanish consulate, with East San Jose neighborhood activist **Edward Allegritti**. They chatted about the Portola expedition of 1769, with which Allegritti has ties. His ancestor, **Jose Joaquin Cayetano Espinosa**, was one of the expedition members.

They're not quite as historic -- or as old -- as that, but former Merc columnists **Ron Miller** and **Murry Frymer** are marking the fifth anniversary of their Internet home, www.thecolumnists.com. And the site is in an expansion mode. Added to the stable of writers there are former New York sportswriting icons **Maury Allen** and **Stan Isaacs**, plus actress **Ann Jillian**. As I've said before, old columnists never lose their views -- they just change their site.

FINALLEIGH: Factoid from a new exhibit at the Intel Museum in Santa Clara: ``It is estimated that about 10 pentillion transistors are shipped each year, or about 100 times the number of ants estimated to be on Earth." And the transistors don't march into your kitchen every time it rains.

Contact Leigh Weimers at lweimers@mercurynews.com or (408) 920-5547. Fax (408) 288-8060. Previous columns can be read online at www.bayarea.com/mld/mercurynews/news/columnists/leigh_weimers/

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