



# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Sculptor embroiled in lurid legal row with wife, former workers

By KELLY NIX

**WORLD-RENOWNED SCULPTOR** Richard MacDonald has filed a wide-ranging and shocking lawsuit against his wife alleging she physically abused him, secretly videotaped him and, with the help of others, bilked him out of \$18 million by selling his artwork at deeply discounted prices, running up his credit cards and other means.

In an 18-page complaint filed Jan. 29, MacDonald, 69, alleges that his wife, Julia Cominos — who became vice president of Richard MacDonald Studios in 2009 and married the sculptor in 2010 — was not only violent during their relationship, but, along with two employees, took a large amount of money that left his commercial art empire in debt and in “financial jeopardy.”

The artist, whose Carmel gallery is on Sixth Avenue at the corner of Lincoln Street, “has uncovered millions of dollars in misappropriated and/or stolen funds,” according to the lawsuit, which was also filed in the names of his businesses, including Richard MacDonald Studios.

### ‘Pattern of abuse’

According to the lawsuit, MacDonald and Cominos started dating in 2006, and she began abusing him that very year.

“Often fueled by alcohol,” the abuse ranged from “insults, name calling and screaming (at home, in public and at the Richard MacDonald Studios office), to breaking and throwing objects, to physical assaults such as pinching, shoving, grabbing Richard’s face and kicking him,” according to the complaint, filed for MacDonald by San Francisco attorney Terry A. Szuscko.

The sculptor’s suit cites an instance in which he alleges his wife drove “extremely close behind” his vehicle at a high rate of speed, “nearly forcing Richard off the road, and blocking the driveway or trying to pull Richard out of the car when he tried to escape her abuse.”

Cominos, he said, also meddled in his personal affairs by reading his diary and “using it against him,” “secretly videotaping” him using hidden cameras; and alienating him from his family, whom he “previously maintained close relationships with.”

And, on one “particularly violent” occasion, the artist said he called police, and officers arrested Cominos because of her “belligerent and destructive behavior.” She later pleaded guilty to vandalism and disorderly conduct, he contends. Court records show a criminal case involving Cominos in

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PHOTO/WWW.RICHARDMACDONALD.COM

As shown in this photo from his gallery’s website, the good times for sculptor Richard MacDonald and his wife, Julia, were very good, including a meeting with Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace in December 2012. But the relationship has turned sour, resulting in a lurid \$18 million lawsuit.

## Council approves \$190K contract for Rerig

By MARY SCHLEY

**FORMER PLANNER** Chip Rerig will begin work as the new city administrator March 1, the Carmel City Council unanimously decided Tuesday. The vote — and subsequent signing of the \$190,000-per-year, five-year agreement — at the Feb. 2 meeting made his much-discussed return to city hall official.

Rerig, who worked in the planning department here before going on to become Monterey’s chief of planning and engineering, is replacing Doug Schmitz, who abruptly retired on Halloween. Schmitz had been in touch with Rerig about his interest in the position, and Mayor Jason Burnett took up the conversation with him after Schmitz left.



Chip Rerig

After several weeks of closed-door meetings and discussions, as well as extensive vetting of Rerig and his references by a headhunting firm, the council announced his name in mid-January, and he subsequently met with city employees, the public, the Carmel

Residents Association and other groups to introduce himself and reconnect with those he’d known during his prior tenure here.

“We know Chip, and that is the reason why we are here today to consider approval of a contract,” Burnett said at the meeting.

In addition to his base salary, Rerig will receive \$18,000 per year in deferred compensation, annual retirement contributions, vacation and sick pay, executive leave, medical benefits, and reimbursement for use of his car for city business and other expenses. The calculations of his sick and vacation accrual include credit for the period he worked for the city

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## Homes damaged, power cut by fierce winds



PHOTO/COURTESY DANA LINKLETTER

Patio Drive resident Dana Linkletter said it felt like a freight train hit her house when this tree crashed through the roof Sunday night.

## P.B. house gets tree through roof

By MARY SCHLEY

**HUNDREDS OF** trees fell throughout the Monterey Peninsula — especially in Pebble Beach, where several houses were hit, including one that suffered major damage — during the windstorm that swept through the area Sunday night.

While the fire department reported only a few incidents, broken branches and trees blocked streets and took out power and phone lines throughout Carmel, and one large pine fell across the municipal tennis court at Forest Hill Park.

Cal Fire, which covers the outskirts of Carmel and Pebble Beach, responded to more than 30 calls between 5:30 p.m. Sunday and Monday morning, and many residents were without power for days. In Del Monte Forest, numerous streets

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## CAMPAIGNS HEAT UP AS CONTRIBUTIONS ROLL IN

### ■ Panetta, Adams raise most \$\$\$

By KELLY NIX

**CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE** Jimmy Panetta raised a formidable \$251,000 in just six weeks following his November 2015 campaign announcement, while his Republican challenger, Casey Lucius, received nearly \$84,000 in contributions last year, according to campaign finance records turned in this week.

More than 200 donors gave to Panetta, and many of them could be listed in a who’s who of Monterey Peninsula movers and shakers.

“I’m humbled and honored by the support that I have received in such a short period of time,” Panetta, a Democrat and Monterey County deputy district attorney who is running for the 20th District seat, told The Pine Cone. “This is a good foundation from which to propel our campaign forward. I am thankful to every single person who has stepped up to be a part of our growing team.”

### A long list

According to the Federal Elections Commission, Panetta’s contributors include Pebble Beach Company CEO Bill Perocchi (\$2,700); Monterey Plaza Hotel general manager John Narigi (\$500); Mike, Rick, Sue and Tonya Antle, from ag company Tanimura and Antle (\$11,800); Cannery Row Company CEO Ted Balestreri Sr. (\$2,700) and his son Teddy (\$1,000); car dealership owner Peter Blackstock (\$1,000); and Panetta’s parents, Leon and Sylvia, who gave a total of \$10,800.

Panetta also received support from three political action committees. VoteVets, which supports Democratic candidates, gave him \$5,000, while United Fresh Produce donated \$2,500, and New Energy PAC contributed \$2,000. His out-of-state donations include \$5,400 from Dallas resident Nancy Albertini; \$5,400 from Linda and Robert Barron of Pennsylvania; \$2,700 from Florida resident Thomas

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