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Downey singer named semi-finalist in VH1 contest

DOWNEY -- Award-winning singer-songwriter Lady Laraine, also known as Laraine Turner, was named a semi-finalist in VH1's Song of the Year Songwriting Contest.

Turner, of Downey, was a finalist for her latest single, "The Song of the Bayou (Remix)."

Turner is a three-time finalist in the Song of the Year contest. All of her award-winning singles can be found online at cdbaby.com/ladylaraine.

In addition to being a musician, Turner is also author of the fantasy-thriller, "The Rise and Fall of the Witch on the Bayou" (Publish America, Inc.). She completed a Bayou book tour, including TV shows and book signings in Louisiana, where her debut book was set.

She also appeared on WFAD-TV in Kansas City, Missouri on "The Fox Morning News Show," where she did a book signing at Barnes & Nobles Booksellers. Her author website is located at witchonthebayou.blogspot.com.

Turner is currently working on her latest book, "Spanky," a mystery-romance, for which she wrote her award-winning song, "Never the Same Again."



Photo by Alex Dominguez

► **RENT: Increased property taxes made rent unbearable for the popular Firestone location.**

By Alex Dominguez
Staff Writer

DOWNEY -- One of Downey's long-standing El Taco locations closed abruptly over the weekend, much to the dismay of the restaurant's loyal customer base.

It came seemingly out of nowhere when the El Taco located at 7665 Firestone Blvd. permanently closed; even more shocking were the for-sale signs that quickly materialized in front of the popular dining spot.

However, according to Alberto Vazquez, General Manager of the El Taco located on Florence Avenue, it all came down to the amount of rent.

"Last year they sold the property for a crazy amount of money," said Vasquez.

"The property taxes went up...from \$8,000, \$9,000 a year that we were paying it went up to \$24,000 a year just in property taxes alone."

The property actually sold in October of 2016 for over \$1.8 million.

Vazquez said that the owner of the existing four El Taco restaurants couldn't afford to stay on Firestone.

"They're trying to charge \$11,000 a month just in rent," said Vazquez. "It's crazy...it's a lot of money to pay on rent; you'd have to sell at least over \$100,000 a month just to get even."

Three locations remain, including in San Pedro, Anaheim, and the aforementioned Downey restaurant.

El Taco was originally established by Glen Bell of Taco Bell fame. Bell founded El Taco in the 1950's before

selling the restaurants in 1962 and going on to open the first Taco Bell in Downey. Bell franchised Taco Bell in 1964.

While the Firestone El Taco's demise has been a bitter pill to swallow for many of the restaurant's regulars, they can take comfort in the fact that the food they have grown to love has not totally disappeared from the city, as Downey's sole remaining El Taco does not seem to be going anywhere soon.

"We're not leaving, everything is fine," said Vazquez. "A lot of customers, they're coming here now. That's why we have a lot of jobs right now; we didn't expect that amount of people to come in here."

El Taco can still be found at 7870 Florence Avenue.

Risher Mortuary participates in fallen WWII soldier's return home

By Alex Dominguez
Staff Writer

DOWNEY -- Risher Mortuary and cremation services recently participated in the repatriation of a World War II serviceman who had been killed in the line of duty over 73 years ago.

Army Staff Sgt. David Rosenkrantz was a member of Company H, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, participating in the initial invasion of Sicily on July 9, 1943.

Rosenkrantz participated in several battles in Sicily, earning a Bronze Star. He was later wounded, however was able to recover and rejoin his unit to fight in Italy at Salerno, Anzio, and Chunzi Pass.

The 504 was also involved with the liberation of the Netherlands in Operation Market Garden. Rosenkrantz was a part of Waalcrossing, where Third Battalion paratroopers crossed the Waal River in daylight to capture the railroad and road bridges in Nijmegen.

A week later Rosenkrantz was killed at Heuvelhof, a

farm, by German machine gun fire when his squad was swarmed by a large German counter attack. He was 27 years old and a platoon sergeant at the time of his death.

For his service, he earned a Bronze Star with two Stars, a Purple Heart with two Stars, a Good Conduct Medal, a WWII Victory Medal, a European African - Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, a Combat Infantry Badge, Jump Wings with two Stars, American Campaign Medal, and a Presidential Unit Citation- Franklin D Roosevelt.

At the time of his demise, Rosenkrantz's squad was forced to leave his remains behind due to enemy fire. Though his dog tags would later be found, Rosenkrantz's remains would stay missing for 73 years.

In actuality, Rosenkrantz's remains had been recovered by the 2nd Canadian Graves Restoration Unit and had been interred at the Canadian Military Cemetery on June 22, 1955, listed as an American Soldier.

After extensive research, the remains were eventually disinterred and identified in

June of last year.

With it now time to bring the soldier home, it was Risher Mortuary and Cremation Services that were tapped to aid in the hero's return.

Mortuary owner and operator Greg Welch says that his business "prides itself on serving our veterans."

"We take honoring our vets most serious," said Welch. "We believe we have a reputation as such."

So, when it came time for Rosenkrantz to return home, the Risher Mortuary's reputation preceded it.

"The family contacted us directly, and they said that they had been at one of our military funerals and were so impressed that they felt we were the ones best suited to take care of them."

Welch says that they have served in the homecoming of several veterans from varying conflicts, however Rosenkrantz was the first from World War II.

The work and care that Risher Mortuary does with repatriated soldiers is not different from any other individual, save for the pomp and circumstance surrounding it.

Downey restaurant grades

Marketplace Grill Cafe
7877 Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/14/18
Grade: **A**

El 7 Mares
12215 Paramount Blvd.
Date Inspected: 8/14/18
Grade: **A**

Trading Post
9956 Lakewood Blvd.
Date Inspected: 8/14/18
Grade: **A**

Coco's Restaurant
7900 Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/14/18
Grade: **A**

Pop's Cafe
7840 Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/14/18
Grade: **A**

El 7 Mares Express
12216 Paramount Blvd.
Date Inspected: 8/14/18
Grade: **A**

Maria's Grill
13232 1/2 Woodruff Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/14/18
Grade: **A**

Chipotle Mexican Grill
8500 Firestone Blvd.
Date Inspected: 8/10/18
Grade: **A**

Tacos El Gavilan
7947 Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/10/18
Grade: **A**

Tom Jr. Burgers
7852 Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/10/18
Grade: **A**

Masa Sushi Bon Appetit
8500 Firestone Blvd.
Date Inspected: 8/9/18
Grade: **A**

Oaisis Water & Bionicos
9061 Imperial Hwy.
Date Inspected: 8/9/18
Grade: **A**

Gloria's Cocina Mexicana
7401 E Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/9/18
Grade: **A**

Myra's Salvadorean Cuisine
7324 Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/9/18
Grade: **A**

Denny's
8350 Firestone Blvd.
Date Inspected: 8/9/18
Grade: **A**

Amapola Super Deli and Market
7240 Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/8/18
Grade: **A**

Amapola Meat Dept.
7240 Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/8/18
Grade: **A**

Amapolla Bakery / Tortilleria
7240 Florence Ave.
Date Inspected: 8/8/18
Grade: **A**

Yogurtland
8250 Firestone Blvd.
Date Inspected: 8/8/18
Grade: **A**

Noodle World
8236 Firestone Blvd.
Date Inspected: 8/8/18
Grade: **A**

20/20 Draft House
8228 Firestone Blvd.
Date Inspected: 8/8/18
Grade: **A**

Weekend at a Glance

Friday 90°

Saturday 86°

Sunday 87°

THINGS TO DO



Hot Havana Nights

Saturday - Downey Elks Lodge 2020, 7 pm-Midnight

Enjoy Cuban cuisine, DJ, Live Salsa Band, drinks, and hand-rolled cigars.



Power Morphonicon

All Weekend - Anaheim Convention Center

Meet your favorite heroes in color-coordinated spandex during this weekend convention celebrating 90's TV favorites including Power Rangers, Beetle Borgs, and Kamen Rider.



Rocket Fever

Saturday - Columbia Memorial Space Center, 10 am - 5 pm

LA's only urban rocket festival. Enjoy rocket activities and food trucks!



Los Angeles Rams vs. Oakland Raiders

Saturday - Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, 1 pm

The Rams and Raiders meet in preseason football action.

TWEET OF THE WEEK

@CarpenterElem
We are so excited for the first day of school!

@ItsEmely
Happy first day of school, @DowneyUnified! This is my favorite time of the year.

@DowneyTeacher
1st Day of School joy!! #DowneyElemEd #ourkidsdeservethebest

@DowneyTLC
Wishing all Downey Unified students and staff a great 2018-19 school year!

Follow us!
@DowneyPatriot