

Increases in prescription drug costs exceeds rate of inflation

By SHELLY WEATHERBY
THE VALLEY CHRONICLE

For many San Jacinto Valley seniors and older Americans throughout the United States, there seems to be a rising trend in the amount they are spending for their brand-name medications, along with other health care costs.

"When does it stop? Prices of everything keep going up," said Hemet resident, Ed Paranick.

According to a recent study released by the American Associations of Retired Persons (AARP), the manufacturers' wholesale prices for 197 of the top brand-name prescription drugs most frequently used by older Americans has increased at a pace that exceeds the rate of general inflation ("Trends in Manufacturer Prices of Brand Name Prescription Drugs Used by Older Americans, 2000 through 2003;" www.aarp.org/Articles/a2004-06-30-drugpriceincrease).

On average, the annual increase in drug manufacturers' prices for the most widely used brand-name prescriptions rose from 4.1 percent in 2000 to 6.9 percent in 2003, while the annual rate of general inflation fell from 3.3 percent in 2000 to 2.2 percent in 2003. Over the four-year period, this translates into an average cumulative price increase of over 25 percent, reports AARP in the study published by the AARP Public Policy Institute.

"Since at least 2000, drug prices have risen steadily. The first three months of 2004 looks like more of the same," said AARP Board Member Doug Holbrook. "This is an outrage."

For older Americans, specifically those on Social Security income that is tied to the general inflation rate, this could create a substantial burden. In dollar terms, according to AARP, the average price of a prescription to the consumer went from \$33.76 to \$60.38. For a typical senior who takes three medications, this would likely translate to an average spending increase of \$101 in 2000 to \$181 in 2003 if the prices were passed on to the consumer.

"The system isn't working to balance things out," said Ed and Connie Paranick of Hemet. "We've had to cut out some of our prescriptions because of the costs."

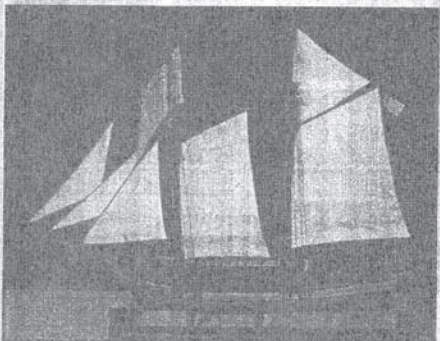
The Paranicks are like most seniors — they have daily maintenance prescriptions they need to take in order to help maintain their health. They are fortunate enough to have health coverage that covers a large portion of their prescription costs, however, even with insurance, their estimated cost for their medications average approximately \$400 per month.

"We've talked to our pharmacists to see what we can do to cut our (prescription) costs, but there is not a generic alternative for

many of our brand-name prescriptions we have to take," said Paranick. "We don't know how we would do it if we didn't have our pension plan and health insurance," she continued.

AARP, a nonprofit organization that is "dedicated to making life better for people over 50," said that one of their top priorities for 2004 is to help make medications more affordable for seniors

(www.aarp.org). Currently, the organization is engaged in a campaign that includes support of the safe importation of prescription medications, starting with Canada.



BOB OTTO/The Valley Chronicle

INTRICATE: Bob Graham's Eagle, designed and built in replica of an 1847 Schooner, is a fine example of the artist's attention to detail.

MASTER

Continued from PAGE 15

has taken over, can cost between \$30 and \$35 a yard.

Graham's ships are housed in glass cases, some of which he's made. These cases keep dust and other elements from harming these nautical works of art.

His prized possessions can run anywhere from \$30,000 to the \$100,000 for the Flying Cloud when it's completed. "Everybody asks me questions about the Flying Cloud and when it's going to be finished. When I feel like it," said Graham. "I'm not satisfied. The thing should be copper-plated. Once I get it copper-plated, then it will be finished."


And Graham said he doesn't

plan to sell these valuable ships, instead he wants each of his six children to have them.

The hard part for Graham will be who will get the Seadler — one of the first wooden ships he built from a kit. "My kids are crazy about the Seadler, which is one of my worst models."

When Graham is not working on a project, he's busy attending meetings once a month in Placentia at the Ship Modelers Association, in San Diego at the San Diego Ship Modelers Guild, and in San Jacinto at the Ramona Country Carvers. He also enjoys helping people with hands-on seminars.

"I get every bit of fun out of helping people," said Graham. "I think everybody has the ability (to do this). They just need to bring it out."



ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT IMPROVING STATE ROUTE 79?

Attend a Public Meeting

The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) is holding public meetings to find out what you think about solutions to current and future congestion on this important transportation corridor. After preliminary study, three major areas have been identified as possible routes for a re-aligned State Route 79 (see map). Share your concerns and ideas.

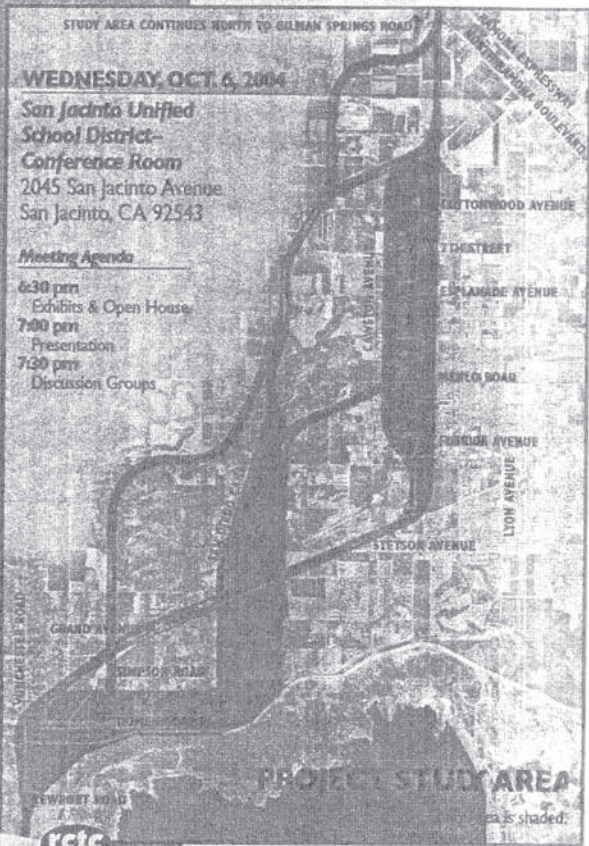
STUDY AREA CONTINUES NORTH TO GILMAN SPRINGS ROAD

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 6, 2004

San Jacinto Unified School District - Conference Room
2045 San Jacinto Avenue
San Jacinto, CA 92543

Meeting Agenda

- 6:30 pm Exhibits & Open House
- 7:00 pm Presentation
- 7:30 pm Discussion Groups



PROJECT STUDY AREA

rctc

If you need more information, call RCTC at (951) 787-7141.

Valley Chronicle Newspaper Notice
Friday, October 1, 2004
State Route 79 Realignment Project