Diane Bell

Art Linkletter kin proves show biz is in the blood

Art Linkletter was center stage on his old "House Party" TV show, best known for its segment "Kids Say the Darndest Things." Now it's his great-granddaughter's turn to be in the spotlight.

Art Linkletter is among 16 local students who successfully auditioned for San Diego Opera's production of "Tosca," debuting today. The Solana Beach seventh-grader appears in the opera's children's chorus.

An aspiring actress, she sings, dances and performs in local theater and has two agents — one here and another in New York.

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Ex-Rep. Schenk has good seat at inauguration

In Los Angeles, Sophia just finished filming a "Webisode" with Paramount Pictures and will Ferrell. She'll start work on a movie in L.A. next month.

Her great-grandfather, now 96, is expected to return to his San Diego hometown with his wife, Lois, to watch her perform. Although slowed by a mild stroke last year, Linkletter, who lives in Bel Air, still gives speeches.

A positive thinker, he told Life Extension magazine he even booked a paid speaking engagement on his 100th birthday, July 17, 2010: "If I figure I'm not going to die if I have a contract."

Show business

NBA hoop star turned commentator Charles Barkley dropped in at Pancaque's Del Mar last Friday. After a Dec. 31 arrest for suspected drunken driving in Arizona, Barkley was taking no chances. He drank at the trendy nightclub, but this time, he arrived with a driver.

Jason Menzick, this season's single dad on "The Bachelor" ABC reality show, took his date and her daughter to Legoland on Monday's episode. To keep the bachelorette's identity a secret, however, their visit actually had been taped on a Tuesday when the park was closed. Ride operators and maintenance staff were summoned to work for the private rendezvous.

"Jason was extremely charming in person," reports an employee. "I can see why all those girls are falling for him...."

Actress Hillary Swank stopped in at the park's new Sea Lion Aquarium Sunday. She visited with her boyfriend and her 5-year-old son....

Imagine downtown San Diego resident Cheryl Jessop's surprise, while watching NBC's "30 Rock" episode Thursday, to see her residence building on TV. The setting was supposed to be New York, she says, but there was an unmistakable shot down State Street toward City Front Terrace, with her City Walk building on one side.

Inauguration notes

Sunny Brook's, the Scripps Memorial Hospital operating room custodians sent to the inauguration by colleagues, jubilantly reports that he was "close enough to see Obama's smile and the panic of his hand when he took the oath." Brooks also honored in on other celebrities in the crowd — boxing promoter Don King, seated behind him; singer Alicia Keys, and rapper Sean "P. Diddy" Combs. Brooks and friend, Renee Johnson, a UCSD Moores Cancer Center employee, will show their photos at a "welcome home" party at Scripps Hospital on Monday afternoon.

Incidentally, it was the show "Inside Edition," not "Entertainment Tonight," that bought Brooks clothing and filmed the shopping excursion before his trip. "He looked like a king," Johnson reports....

Former S.D. Congresswoman Lynn Schenk also had a good seat at the inauguration. Joining her and her husband, Hugh Friedman, was her nephew, Ben Schenk, a Dartmouth College freshman who was interviewed about the event on Boston TV.

A matter of protocol

Lynn Hijar, Mayor Jerry Sanders' protocol chief, is leaving Jan. 30 to run a corporate and diplomatic event planning service. Exclusive Events. Lisa Gordon, the mayor's director of boards and communications, will step in as protocol director in February.

Diane Bell's column appears Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.