FREE

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Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

Santa Monica has a new mayor in Bloom

The 49-year-old local attorney looks forward to new challenges

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Richard Bloom plans to approach his new job as mayor in a city known for its bickering much like he approaches his clients in divorce court: Try to reach a compromise each side can live with.

Bloom, a 49-year-old attorney who has been practicing family law for 25 years, was appointed as mayor in December by the City Council. He will remain in the city's top post for two years when it'll be time for someone else to do the honors.

"I wouldn't be near the public servant I am if I hadn't developed my skills as a family law attorney," he said one recent morning over a bowl of oatmeal. "It's the ability to learn how to problem solve from the most critical of issues to the most petty, but at least the two sides were listened to and it was a mediation approach."

While he's at the helm, Bloom plans to accomplish several goals with the most significant being helping to guide the local school district and the city out of a serious financial crunch. Both are facing multi-million dollar deficits. (See related story).

Bloom sees his position as mayor important not only to the community, but also personally. It's a position he doesn't take lightly and he feels there is a certain syncronisity to him being mayor now.

Not only has he owned a law practice in Santa Monica for the past 10 years, but he's the only one on the council with any children still in the public school system. With tumultuous times ahead for both the local business climate and the school district, Bloom feels he can relate to the needs of the community better now than ever before.

"The council has been everything it can be to sustain the business community and school district," he said. "The tendency in an economic downturn is for people to get upset. My main job is to going to be to address the needs of the community that's fair minded and brings unity, which is the hallmark of Santa Monica politics."

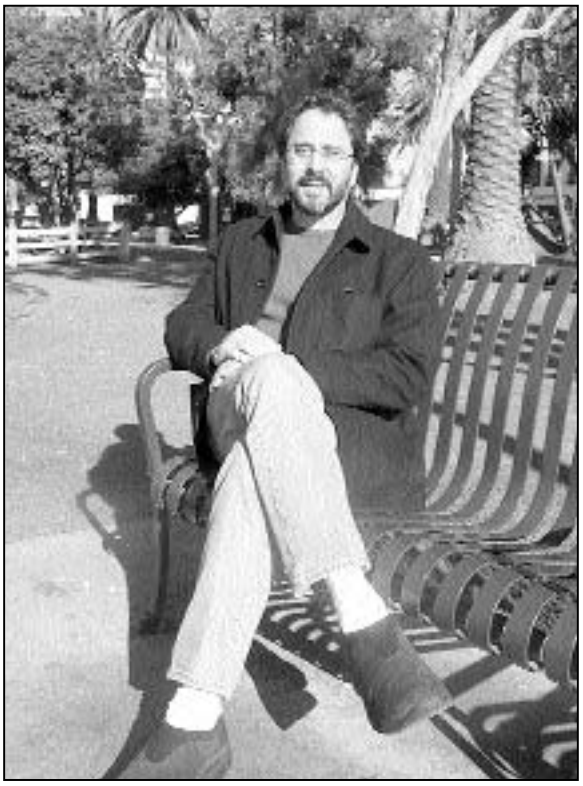
"Politics are alive and well here. I would like to think that I have integrity and that I am a good person but I'll leave it up to other people to assess my abilities in what I do."

— RICHARD BLOOM
Santa Monica Mayor

Bloom, a member of Santa Monicans For Renters Rights, which has been the ruling party in the city for decades, has along with the council, been blamed by critics — mainly business interests — for much of what is wrong here. Frequently, business interests like developers have a lot to gain and a lot to lose based on the council's policies. As a result, the two sides routinely butt heads.

"There is a faction of the community that tends to be critical

See MAYOR, page 4



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press
Richard Bloom was appointed mayor by the city council in December.

Mayor's first priority: Bail out local schools

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

The upcoming year will be nothing short of challenging, but Santa Monica's new mayor said he's ready for it.

With close to an $18 million budget shortfall expected for the city next year and a growing multi-million dollar deficit in the local school district, Mayor Richard Bloom plans to help steer the ship into smoother waters.

His first goal in 2003 is to help the school district find its way to economic health. In light of recent cuts by the state in education, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District could be short $18 million in state funding next year. As it stands, after already making several multi-million dollars cuts, the school district is still $3.4 million short this year.

Superintendent of Schools John Deasy suggested last month that schools be shut down for 10 days to save an estimated $3.1 million, which would avoid laying off employees and eliminating programs like art and music. Deasy criticized the state for not making education a priority and said unorthodox solutions must be found.

Mayor Bloom said while the city may not be able to help the school district financially, it can provide support in the political arena.

"We can provide the leadership for the school district that will be noticed."

— RICHARD BLOOM
Santa Monica Mayor

"(John) Deasy has started a bold trend of being critical of the state's policies," he said. "It's fundamentally a political issue and the city and the school district can join hands to find money from where it makes sense, which is the state and federal government.

"We can provide the leadership for the school district that will be noticed," Bloom added.

With the failure of Measure EE this past November which asked voters to increase their

See PRIORITIES, page 4

New law means pets in California will come with instructions

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Pet shop owners in California will have to do more than sell their customers the food, leashes and other supplies a cute ball of fur needs when a new state law takes effect next year.

Beginning Jan. 1, pet stores will be required to provide customers printed instructions that explain how to care for their cats, birds, rodents and reptiles, a rule that some Southern California shop owners said barks up the wrong tree.

Violators could be fined up to $1,000

"To me, I think the whole thing is a joke. It's just going to take up extra space and extra money," said Mike Herr, owner of San Bar pet shop in Costa Mesa.

The law was sponsored by state Sen. Edward Vincent, D-Los Angeles, at the request of the Doris Day Animal League. According to the bill, the literature must include information on the proper cleaning, handling and feeding of each type of pet.

See PET LAWS, page 6

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You're a must show tonight, Aries



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

The stars show the kind of day you'll have:

★★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average
★★-So-so ★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★ Though you're right there, ready to enjoy a parent or older relative, you discover that someone close has a case of the grumps. Keep indulging this person, even if you feel as if you've had enough. A new beginning becomes possible with understanding. Tonight: A must show.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★★ You might hit rocky times with someone at a distance. Plans could change if traveling. Your ability to flow and adjust remains primary. Someone might be having a very difficult time despite the facade he or she projects. Tonight: Take an overview.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★ Understand more of what heads your way. Realize that you could be out of sorts, especially with a partner or friend. Your ruler retrograding could impact your relationships across the board. Use care financially. Tonight: Togetherness helps.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★ Where your expectations remain rigid, you could receive a jolt in the next few weeks. Others seek you out, but what you might hear could be less than delightful to your ears. Think through an opportunity. Tonight: Accept an invitation out.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★ Plunge into work with the realization that you might not be changing anyone right now. Your sense of humor takes you in a new direction if you flex with the moment. The most effective way of demonstrating your caring will be through action. Tonight: Get a good night's sleep.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★ Your ruler steps backward today, for several weeks. You might want to rethink a creative project, relationship or tie with a child. Seek more feedback, looking for answers where others might make dramatic changes. Allow ingenuity to flow. Tonight: Find your favorite person.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★ Sometimes you take others for granted. Later, you wonder why you get such an odd reaction. Make a resolution to be less self-involved and more sensitive to those you truly care for. Recognize what makes you happy, too. Tonight: You don't have to go far.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ Use extreme caution with funds, as you might not be able to predict the hows and whys of a situation. You discover that a misunderstanding that develops in the next few weeks could be quite costly, ultimately. Tonight: Use greater sensitivity in your communication.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★ Deal with finances with kid gloves. You might want to rethink an earlier decision involving a commitment that could cost you. If you step back, how you handle a matter could considerably change the final results. Tonight: Take your time.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★★ The New Moon in your sign heralds a period of new beginnings and change. Sometimes you are pushed by others to just let go and do what you want. Try that type of spontaneity right now and see what happens. Tonight: As you like it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★ Slow down. If you feel as if a lot is going on behind the scenes, you're right. The New Moon encourages you to take more time for yourself and open up to new possibilities. Pick and choose your words carefully, as misunderstandings can happen in the next few weeks. Tonight: Add some mystery to your repertoire.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★★ You make strong decisions about a friendship right now. You might want to take the next few weeks to re-evaluate before you take action. New information could be forthcoming that will impact how you look at others. Tonight: Where the party is. (Do you ever stop?)

QUOTE of the DAY

"The nice thing about egotists is that they don't talk about other people."

— Lucille S. Harper

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CALIFORNIA BRIEFS

Fire hazard real in winter

By The Associated Press

HEMET — Drought and dead trees led the California Department of Forestry to station firefighting airplanes in Southern California for the first time during winter months.

The planes normally spend the winter in Sacramento with the rest of the fire-fighting fleet. Concern about drought conditions, tens of thousands of dead trees and the memory of past wind-whipped winter fires prompted the move.

"Usually, it takes 24 hours to get a plane staffed and up in the air," Riverside CDF Capt. Robert Toups said. "This will help us to react in a more timely manner."

Two Grumman S-2T air tankers and an OV-10A air-attack plane are being stationed at airfields in Hemet and Ramona in San Diego County. They will be flown by contract pilots who live in the area and can be summoned on short notice, CDF spokesman Louis Blumberg said.

"We'll look at the fire weather, and if it looks like it's going to be hot and dry, we'll call these pilots up," Blumberg said.

Drought conditions this year have kept state fire officials from declaring an end to the wildfire season, an announcement typically made in late fall.

"We're not using that term anymore because it doesn't convey reality," Blumberg said. "We thought the terminology was misleading."

A grand boulevard in Whittier

By The Associated Press

WHITTIER — The city wants to transform a seven-mile stretch of Whittier Boulevard, currently a jumbled array of businesses, into a "grand boulevard" with five zoned segments: a gateway, business park, shopping district, auto mall and residential areas.

It would be the city's most ambitious commercial redevelopment project since the 1987 earthquake that caused more than $90 million in damage and devastated local businesses and neighborhoods.

The Whittier Boulevard Master Plan was presented to residents during a Dec. 17 City Council meeting. The Whittier portion of the boulevard stretches from the San Gabriel River Freeway to the Orange County border.

"This is very big. A lot of people have their hopes for Whittier pinned on the success of this plan," resident Charles Claver, 27, said.

To make the sweeping changes the plan calls for, the city would have to negotiate transfer of ownership for its section of the boulevard, which is a state highway controlled by the Department of Transportation.

The beautification process, including street repairs and landscaping, could cost $8 million to $10 million. City officials said they have not identified funding sources to pay for any of the planned improvements.

surf report

Information compiled by Jesse Haley

West-northwest wind swell generates decent size at exposed breaks. Expect waist- to chest-high sets with good consistency.

Unfortunately, conditions have been windy in the Santa Monica Bay. San Diego is seeing cleaner surf, with better shape and more size, consistently overhead at good breaks.

We're expecting less size Tuesday, with remnant wind swell fading fast.

New northwest swell is on the horizon, but we probably won't see results until the weekend.

Rumor of the day: I heard a kid from Manhattan Beach say Pratte's reef is going to be all-time today.

Today's Tides:

High-	6:04 a.m.	6.09'
Low-	1:24 p.m.	-0.63'
High-	7:37 p.m.	3.64'

Location	Wednesday	Thursday	Water Quality
County Line	2-3'/Poor	2-3'/Poor	Not available
Zuma	2-3'/Poor	2-3'/Poor	Not available
Surfrider	1-2'/Poor	1-2'/Poor	D
Topanga	1-3'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	A
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The Q Line

The New Year is a time for renewal, change and introspection. A few weeks ago, Q-line asked what you thought Santa Monica's political leaders should focus on in 2003, but now we want to hear what the citizens have in mind for themselves

So this week, Q-line asks:

"What resolutions or changes will you make in your life for 2003?"

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LOCAL

Bloom hopes to lead by example for next generation

MAYOR, from page 1

and we can address the criticisms," Bloom added. "But for the most part it's unwarranted."

When the chamber of commerce announced last month that it will endorse and finance council candidates in an effort to get business-minded people elected, Bloom said the move would be divisive and would likely not happen.

"I don't think the current chamber board reflects the chamber membership," he said. "I think they are going in a direction that will catch up with them ... controlling electoral politics with big money is not something the Santa Monica community I know will tolerate.

"The goal should be to bring some level of influence to bear to see if we can't have the chamber regain its traditional, proactive role," Bloom added. "We can't allow narrow political agendas to derail us. We have to try to find the best and appropriate ways to work the best we can together."

Bloom felt his time had come to serve in the mostly ceremonial post of mayor after he got comfortable on the dais as a council member for the past 3 1/2 years. After constituents — residents and business owners — asked him to consider vying for the position this year, he had to get the support of his family.

And although his new year's resolution is to spend more time with his wife, Robbie, an occupational therapist; and two sons, Zac, 15, and Emmett, 13, Bloom's new role as mayor will likely take him outside of their Sunset Park home and into the public spotlight more than they would prefer.

But Bloom thinks he's up to the challenge. He has for many years successfully juggled a law practice and a family while staying involved in the community.

"I just remember what (Councilman Ken Genser) once said, 'Sleep is really not everything that it's cracked up to be,'" Bloom said.

When he finds free time, Bloom is an avid reader of magazines and catalogues, though his reading time is short. Bloom also reveals that he's domestic around the house — he spends time in his garden planting flowers and vegetables, and baking in the kitchen.

"I like gardening and being outside ... Robbie and I fight over what should be done. I dig the holes and she plants," he said. "I like baking. People who know me well know that my true talents are cookies, brownies and cakes. I'm just getting pie crust down."

Bloom said there is a public and private side to why he decided to become mayor.

"The public part of it is that people from the community asked me to do it and I felt I possess the leadership skills that are appropriate to the responsibilities of the mayor. Privately, I see it as a personal challenge. My kids are really proud of me and I want them to have that pride. As I get older, I think about my place in my children's lives and I want to be part of their inspiration ... This is an honorable thing to do and if I'm not willing to stand up and be that person, I can't send that message so I have to suck it up and practice what I preach."

Bloom's philosophy on leading by example stems from his upbringing, he said. His grandparents were Jewish immigrants from Poland and his parents moved from Philadelphia to Altadena, a suburb outside of Pasadena when he was 3. Bloom's father worked at Sierra Aeronautical Engineering and was the inventor of the emergency oxygen masks that drop down from the ceiling on commercial airplanes.

"We have a lot of inspirational stories in my family," he said. "Some people contribute in small ways which lead to quality of life. My dad always enjoyed developing new things and helping people."

Bloom and Robbie moved from Hollywood and bought a "fixer upper" in the Sunset Park neighborhood in 1981.

What drew him to Santa Monica? The reasons are the same as they are for many others — the weather, the quality of life, the beach, its small town qualities and the political climate. Now Bloom vows to keep those qualities intact in an effort to uphold Santa Monicans' values.

"Politics are alive and well here," he said. "I would like to think that I have integrity and that I am a good person but I'll leave it up to other people to assess my abilities in what I do."

New mayor wants city council meetings to be more concise

PRIORITIES, from page 1

parcel taxes to fund the school district, Bloom hopes the community this year will realize how desperately local schools need money.

"We rested on our laurels in the last election and thought everyone was intuitive on why we needed it," he said. "We need to do a better job of explaining to voters why a parcel tax is necessary."

Bloom, who has two teen-age sons, doesn't like Deasy's proposal to close school for two weeks, but he agrees that the state hasn't given local school districts much choice.

"I don't like that our children will miss out on educational time," he said. "But I think it's focusing in the right place of sending a very strong message."

The other priority for Bloom is to get Santa Monica back on its feet financially and keep its strong bond rating intact.

"We have to maintain our fiscal integrity and all of the good planning that our staff has laid out in past years, and the city council, has allowed us to be in a lot stronger of a position than other cities," Bloom said. "There is no question that (the local economy) will get better. The question is when.

"We always will be a place where people want to live, work and recreate," he added. "It's the trifecta of successful cities."

Bloom wants not only the city to run more efficiently, but also the council meetings, which are known for running into the early morning hours.

A primary function of the mayor is to run council meetings and set the agenda. Bloom, known for his soft spoken demeanor, is the opposite of some of his colleagues because he seems to do more listening than talking while on the dais.

"That's one of my messages — if we want our meetings to run efficiently then we all need to work together," he said. "Be concise and try to speak sparingly."

Bloom said another goal for the upcoming year is to ensure that an arts endowment fund for local schools, which was partially funded by the city, moves forward.

The goal is to raise $10 million through community fundraising for music and arts programs in the schools. The city has provided a $500,000 conditional grant to begin the project, Bloom said.

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STATE

Historic Lighthouse in Point Reyes getting repairs

BY ANNA OBERTHUR
Associated Press Writer

POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE — At the very tip of the Point Reyes Headlands, rolling green hills turn to sheer cliffs and tumble to meet the Pacific Ocean.

An automated electric light and fog horn warn ships of the rocky shore below, but the original Point Reyes Lighthouse on the tip of this peninsula north of San Francisco still stands as a testament to California's maritime past.

Now that past is catching up with the 132-year-old lighthouse.

Years of wind, fog and harsh sea air have left the structure in need of repairs — and the National Park Service hopes a $1.2 million renovation project is the answer.

"Everything takes a beating out here," said Steve Anastasia, a ranger at Point Reyes National Seashore. "The moisture, the wind, the salt air is highly corrosive and it just rips everything apart."

Workers are struggling to fix 300 cement steps — the only way down to the lighthouse — paint the structure and complete other repairs before next month when tourists will flock to the peninsula to view hundreds of migrating gray whales.

The lighthouse was built in 1870 to keep sailors from crashing into the cliffs as they navigated into and out of the San Francisco Bay. It was decommissioned by the Coast Guard in 1975, and is now maintained as a historic site by the National Park Service.

Built along the side of a cliff, the steps that lead down from the observation deck to the lighthouse are treacherous even in good weather. A sign at the top warns that the stairway's height is equivalent to a 30-story building.

Railings on both sides of the steps help visitors make the trek down and back, but the rails are slowly moving away from each other as the old stairs split apart. To fix the problem, workers must replace the curbs that hold the stairs in place.

The job isn't easy. As they remove pieces of the 1950s curb, workers use a motorized wheelbarrow to haul the old concrete up the steep, narrow walkway. The new concrete is pumped down in tubes.

Point Reyes is the windiest place on the Pacific Coast, and one of the foggiest spots in North America, according a National Seashore brochure. Rangers say the wind has reached 133 miles per hour at the lighthouse.

The renovation fell behind schedule when a series of winter storms battered the lighthouse. Rain makes work impossible and when the wind is too strong, even visitors are barred from braving the steps.

"When it's more than 40, it's too dangerous," Sue Cipolla, a ranger with the National Seashore, said of the wind speed.

On calm days, visitors can get a peek inside the lighthouse, which still has its original 19th century Fresnel lens and clockwork mechanism intact. Spring through fall, rangers operate the lighthouse for show twice a month.

"People come from all over the nation just to see the lighthouse. ... They're amazed," said ranger Craig Morgan. "It's an experience."



Marcio Jose Sanchez/Associated Press

Visitors walk around the lighthouse at the Point Reyes National Seashore in Point Reyes, Calif. Today, an automated electric light and foghorn warns mariners of the rocky shore, but the original Point Reyes Lighthouse remains as a testament to California's maritime past. Years of wind, fog and harsh sea air have left the structure in need of repairs, so the National Park Service is restoring the 132-year-old lighthouse as part of a $1.2 million project.

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STATE

Court rules state Coastal Commission's procedures are breaking the law of the land

BY JENNIFER COLEMAN
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — The California Coastal Commission's appointment structure violates the state Constitution because the Legislature appoints a majority of its voting members, a state appeals court ruled Monday.

The Third District Court of Appeal ruling also allowed a Sacramento County Superior Court ruling to take effect — barring the Coastal Commission from issuing building permits, said Ron Zumbrun, an attorney for the Marine Forests Society.

"It doesn't shut the commission down. It limits it to its proper role," Zumbrun said.

The state had appealed an April 2001 ruling by a Sacramento Superior Court judge on a lawsuit filed by Marine Forests Society, a nonprofit group that wanted to use old tires to create an artificial reef off Newport Beach to develop fish habitat.

The society argued the commission violates the state Constitution's separation of powers clause because legislative leaders appoint eight of the 12 commissioners and can remove them at will.

That system makes the commission, in effect, "a legislative committee," not the executive branch agency the state contends it is, the society's lawyers said.

The Third District Court of Appeal agreed, saying the appointment power gave the Legislature the authority to declare the law and also to control the execution of that law.

"The flaw is that the unfettered power to remove the majority of the Commission's voting members, and to replace them with others, if they act in a manner disfavored by the Senate Committee on Rules and the speaker of the Assembly makes those commission members subservient to the Legislature," the court said.

Because the commission performs executive-branch duties, that breaches the separation of powers clause, the court said.

The commission can issue rules and regulations as well as building permits and cease-and-desist orders and accept grants, appropriations and contributions, which Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Charles Kobayashi said meant a legislatively controlled body was exercising legislative, judicial and executive powers.

In the original order, Kobayashi stopped the commission from granting or denying permits, and from issuing cease and desist orders. That order was stayed pending the appeal, but the appeal court's ruling lifted the stay.

Coastal Commission spokeswoman Sarah Christie said the order would remove the core of the commission's role. In areas without coastal land-use plan, the state commission issues building permits.

The decision doesn't do away with the Coastal Act, just hampers the body created to enforce the act, Christie said.

"The fact is, you need a coastal development permit to build in the coastal zone," Christie said. "If you need a building permit, but you can't get a permit because the commission can't grant you one, then what?"

If the state appeals to the state Supreme Court, the order would probably again be stayed, she said. If the order wasn't put on hold, there would "be chaos, but it would be temporary chaos," while the state weighed its options. The state could alter the appointment structure so the Legislature appointed fewer members, or make the appointments for a fixed term.

The commission, which helps regulate development along California's 1,100-mile coastline, was created by voters in 1972 and made permanent by the Legislature in 1976.

The Assembly speaker and Senate Rules Committee each appoint four members of the commission. The other four voting members are appointed by the governor. Commissioners serve two-year terms but can removed before their terms expire by the person or persons who appoint them.

In 1999, the commission issued a cease-and-desist order against Marine Forests Society's man-made coastal reef. The society sued, saying the commission didn't have the authority to issue such orders because its voting members were appointed in an unconstitutional manner.

"We don't need to violate the Constitution to make the environment better," said Rodolphe Streichenberger, the French researcher who founded the society, based in Balboa Island.

The decisions on building permits should be left to the local governments, Streichenberger said. "Who can judge the local affairs but the local people."

Petco concerned about law

PET LAWS, from page 1

Before the law passed in September, the Washington, D.C.-based Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, a trade group, opposed the measure as too broad. Executive Vice President Marshall Meyers said his group's main concern is how it will be enforced.

Meyers said his organization is advising its members to protect themselves from potential complaints or violations by working to ensure that their customers receive the sheets. He said his staff has been working hard to get sample care sheets posted by Thursday on the group's Web site.

Petco, the San Diego-based pet store chain, already makes information sheets available to its customers. A company spokeswoman said the chain is nevertheless concerned about the new law.

"We supported the legislation when it first came out, but we're a little concerned about the language," said Petco spokeswoman Shawn Underwood, adding that the chain is updating its care sheets to provide information more specific to different types of pets.

Some pet shop owners are worried that the law will make them liable if something happens to pets long after they have been living with their new owners.

STATE

Paradoxical sea holding up West's water future

BY SETH HETTENA
Associated Press Writer

SALTON CITY — The Salton Sea is California's biggest lake, yet sits in the middle of a desert. It teems with fish but is slowly dying. It was formed by accident but is now the most critical stop for migratory birds in the Pacific.

"It's a paradoxical place," said Tom Kirk, executive director of the Salton Sea Authority, which was created to help fix the sea's many problems.

The sea's latest irony may be its biggest. Long neglected and often derided, the Salton Sea has become the deal-breaker in the West's war over the Colorado River. Politicians and officials who ignored its plight are now forced to look for ways to save it — or decide who's responsible if it dies.

The sea was thrust into the spotlight earlier this month when a water board in California's Imperial Valley pulled out of a deal aimed at reducing the state's overdependence on the river.

The deal called for Imperial Valley, the nation's largest irrigation project, to transfer some of its massive share of Colorado River water to San Diego for 75 years ago.

But a water board in the Imperial Valley said the deal's main flaw was that it failed to address its concerns over the Salton Sea, a huge sump that would quickly become too salty for fish and birds if it weren't for water running off farm fields.

When the deal collapsed, Interior Secretary Gale Norton said she would cut the amount of water California draws from the river next year unless an agreement is signed by Dec. 31. Imperial water officials are holding firm, saying something first must be done about the sea.

"We can no longer ignore it," said Andy Horne, a member of the Imperial Irrigation District.

The Salton Sea is slowly turning it into a 380-square-mile salt bath, threatening the survival of the fish and the many species of migratory birds that depend on it. It already is 25 percent saltier than the Pacific Ocean.

Efforts to save it have bogged down with water politics and bureaucratic infighting. Estimates on what it would cost to keep the sea from getting any saltier range as high as $1.8 billion.

This month, members of Congress and the Bush administration took turns blaming each other for a lack of action.

"I truly believe there's such a strong force saying 'Let it die. Let it die,'" said Ted Deckers, a 62-year-old from Minnesota who retired in a home in Salton City on the western shore of the sea. "When it comes to Washington people, they really want it to go away."

The Colorado River created the sea when it burst through a farm dike in 1905 and poured into California's southeastern desert for more than a year, reviving an ancient seabed. Runoff from farms in the Imperial Valley, which use a trillion gallons of Colorado water annually, have kept the sea from drying up ever since.

"If you don't have farmers," Kirk said, "you don't have a Salton Sea."

With freshwater reserves running low in the West, the sea is trapped between the conflicting needs of a fragile ecosystem, a farming region that produces much of the nation's wintertime vegetables and the West's thirsty, fast-growing cities. All depend on the Colorado River.

The idea of precious Colorado water sitting in an agricultural sump 227 feet below sea level does not sit well in the thirsty West. Arizona, Nevada and other states that depend on the river don't support using the Colorado to keep the sea alive. Many see the runoff that feeds the sea as wasted water.

Earlier this month, the Bush administration's point man on western water issues warned that the Interior Department could use its authority to take water wasted by Imperial farmers if their water board rejected the transfer.

"The department is going to scrutinize all water use in California very closely," said Assistant Interior Secretary Bennett Raley. "No water user has a right to waste water."

Cutting water to the sea, however, would soon make it uninhabitable for the corvina, croaker and tilapia that, for now, thrive in it and make the sea one of the most productive fisheries in the nation. That would force the diverse species of birds that visit each year by the millions to look elsewhere for food.

It also would cause the level of the sea to drop, which residents fear would unleash a storm of dust, much like the one residents of the Owens Valley complained of after Los Angeles made its infamous water grab there 90 years ago.

"It's the same thing that happened in 1912, devastating the Owens Valley," said Dave Erskine, a 72-year-old Salton City resident.

In the water deal, Imperial Valley farmers were asked to fallow land to free up water for the sea. In return, they wanted protection from lawsuits from angry residents and environmentalists.

"We are worried we'll be sued," said Mike Cox, president of the Imperial County Farm Bureau. "Any future penalties or court settlement or damages would be added on to the water bill."

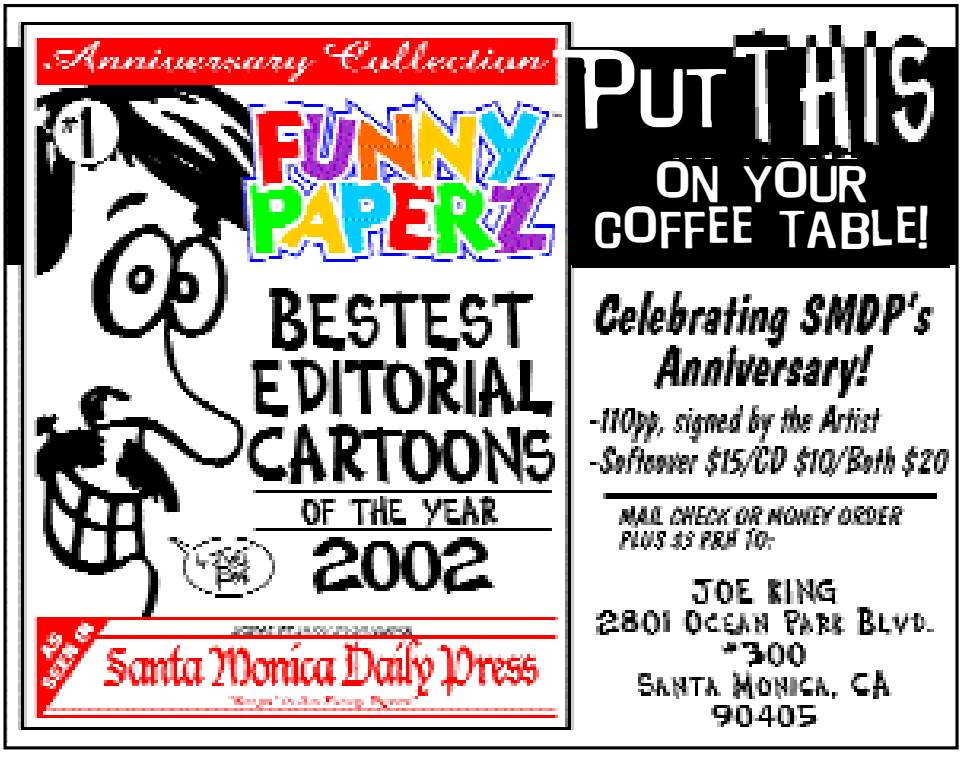
Even with current water flows, the sea's future is grim. For those lacking a sense of how big a job it is to fix its problems, Herb Hein has filled an acre on the ruins of a secret World War II Navy base with a foot or more of salt.

"It's a much tougher job than the people of authority above could ever dream of," said Hein, a 52-year-old Texan who has spent two years in a trailer a short walk from the sea. "There's a witch's brew of materials you've got to deal with."

Farm fertilizer that makes its way into the sea kills fish by the millions with warm-weather algal blooms. Mack Brinegar, a local resident, recently piloted a 48-foot pontoon boat around the sea, scooping them up.

"We've got to do something or it's going to go away," Brinegar said. "In 15 years, it will be dead."

Still, on a cool winter's day, it's not hard to see the surprising beauty that drew many of the few thousand residents who make their home on the shores of the Salton Sea. Surrounded by mountain ridges and home to a dizzying array of birds, the sea sits like a mirage in California's stark southeastern desert.



briefs

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NATIONAL

Virus tested



Ed Andrieski/Associated Press

Hunsperger studies the West Nile virus at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's laboratory in Fort Collins, Colo., in November. Lab officials say their workload increased dramatically since West Nile virus first appeared in a few dozen U.S. cases in 1999. Already this year, more than 3,500 human cases of the mosquito-borne illness have been confirmed.

Research group reports: Consumer confidence declined in December

BY BRAD FOSS
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — A research group's survey of consumer confidence declined sharply in December, largely because of the discouraging employment outlook.

The New York-based Conference Board said Tuesday that its Consumer Confidence Index dropped to 80.3 from a revised 84.9 in November, when the index reversed a previous five-month downward trend. Analysts had been expecting a reading of 88.0 in December.

Rising oil prices, the heightened threat of war in Iraq and recent tensions between the United States and North Korea over that country's nuclear weapons program also soured consumers' sentiment, said David Watt, a Toronto-based economist for BMO Nesbitt Burns.

Consumer confidence perked up in November because the stock market was rising, Watt said, but the optimism dissipated as the stock gains evaporated in December.

The weaker-than-expected reading helped send stocks lower on light trading ahead of New Year's Day. In late morning trading, the Dow Jones industrials declined 76 points to 8,257, while the Nasdaq composite fell 11 points to 1,328.

Lynn Franco, director of the Conference Board's consumer research center, said the discouraging job outlook was the major factor dampening consumers' spirits.

"Weak retail sales over the holidays clearly reflect the current mood of consumers," Franco said. "Until there is an improvement in labor market conditions, there is not likely to be a significant upturn in consumer confidence."

The Conference Board's index, based on a monthly survey of some 5,000 U.S. households, is closely watched because confidence drives consumer spending, which accounts for about two-thirds of the nation's economic activity.

The index compares results with its base year, 1985, when it stood at 100.

> **"Weak retail sales over the holidays clearly reflect the current mood of consumers."**
>
> **— LYNN FRANCO**
> Conference Board's consumer research center

The outlook for jobs was particularly grim, with 20.2 percent of consumers saying they expect fewer jobs to open up in the next six months, up from 18.8 percent in November. Those expecting more jobs fell to 15.1 percent from 15.4 percent.

Income expectations were dour, with just 18.7 percent of consumers anticipating a rise in their pay, down from 19.4 percent a month ago.

The Conference Board report showed waning optimism about current economic conditions, too.

The number of consumers rating current conditions as "good" fell to 14.6 percent from 16.1 percent in November, while the number sizing up the conditions as "bad" remained steady at an even 26 percent, the Conference Board said.

On the positive side, the number of consumers expecting an improvement in business conditions in coming months grew to 20.8 percent from 20.3 percent a month earlier. Respondents who held the opposite view declined to 11.0 percent, down from 11.3 percent in November.

NATIONAL

Rewiring America: Superconductors are coming

BY RICHARD BENKE
Associated Press Writer

LOS ALAMOS, N.M. — Electricity is about to make a 100-meter, billion-dollar leap that will help superconductor technology ring out the old — conventional trains, ships, transmission line — and plug in the new.

Scientists and industry analysts envision a not-too-distant future of cities rewired with superchilled cable that can deliver many times the power of common wire. Longer strands of the new kind of wire are expected to be produced in the coming year or so to replace inadequate power-line capacity.

"This will be a multibillion-dollar industry by the end of the decade," said David Kurzman, an analyst in New York with H.C. Wainwright Inc., a Boston-based securities firm.

Where demand is high and supply low, power companies can remove copper wire from underground rights-of-way and install superconductive wire, Kurzman said.

Researchers and manufacturers say the new wire carries about 100 times the power of copper. Kurzman said it's more like three to five times, but Dean Peterson, leader of Los Alamos National Laboratory's Superconductivity Technology Center, said researchers believe they have resolved the logistical problems that might have limited the increased capacity.

Either way, Kurzman said, a superconductive system beats spending an estimated $80 million per mile to dig up New York City streets. Power companies could replace wire with less than $10 million worth of superconductive cable, he said.

"That changes the whole dynamic of the equation," Kurzman said.

"You're going to see that in every major city," said Peterson.

"It isn't a question of whether; it's a question of when," said Jeff Nestel-Patt, a vice president of Massachusetts-based American Superconductor Inc., one of the wire manufacturers.

The new nickel wire is cheaper than the coated silver wire researchers had been using. The nickel version, similarly coated, is expected to come on the market in three to five years and become price-competitive with conventional wire within the decade, Peterson and Nestel-Patt said.

The crucial test for the coated nickel comes in 12 to 18 months when American Superconductor shows whether it can make a 100-meter strand as consistent as its 10-meter wire, said Paul Grant, science analyst for the Electric Power Research Institute in Palo Alto, Calif.

Sayed Ahmed, an engineer with Southern California Edison Co., said existing transmission towers and overhead wire won't vanish anytime soon; that would involve huge investment.

Nestel-Patt does not underestimate industry's reluctance to retool but said that in some areas, superconductors are the only way to deliver the power that is there waiting to be supplied.

For example, "Boston has summer brownouts while there's plenty of power in Maine," Nestel-Patt said.

There's more to superconductivity than power line, though. There's levitated trains.

Wrapping electromagnets with superconductive wire makes the magnets powerful enough to levitate commuter trains. They raise the train a couple of inches, hold it above the track and propel it with magnetic pulses from the track ahead.

Japanese researchers have used superconductors on magnetic-levitation trains for about a decade. While the three-car 300 mph trains aren't online for paying passengers yet, they've carried researchers, politicians and other observers, said Grant.

Materials that have no resistance to electrical current are called superconductors. Certain alloys — such as yttrium-barium-copper oxide — are superconductive when super-chilled.

For years, that required refrigeration to minus 450 degrees Fahrenheit. Scientists used costly liquid helium to chill the wire. But coated silver or nickel wire becomes superconductive at minus-320.

Cheap liquid nitrogen cools the wire in insulated conduit.

"Liquid nitrogen is easier to insulate and costs pennies per gallon," Peterson said.

Scientists wryly call minus-320 "high-temperature" superconductivity. Such an underground system would stay chilled even across hot deserts, Peterson said.

Other applications:

—American Superconductor is working on 6,500-horsepower Navy ship engines, wrapped with superconducting wire that allow more power and less bulk than copper-wrapped motors, Nestel-Patt said. Smaller engines allow more room on board for passengers, cargo or high-tech hardware. The rotor assembly has been lab-tested, he said. Sea trials aren't set.

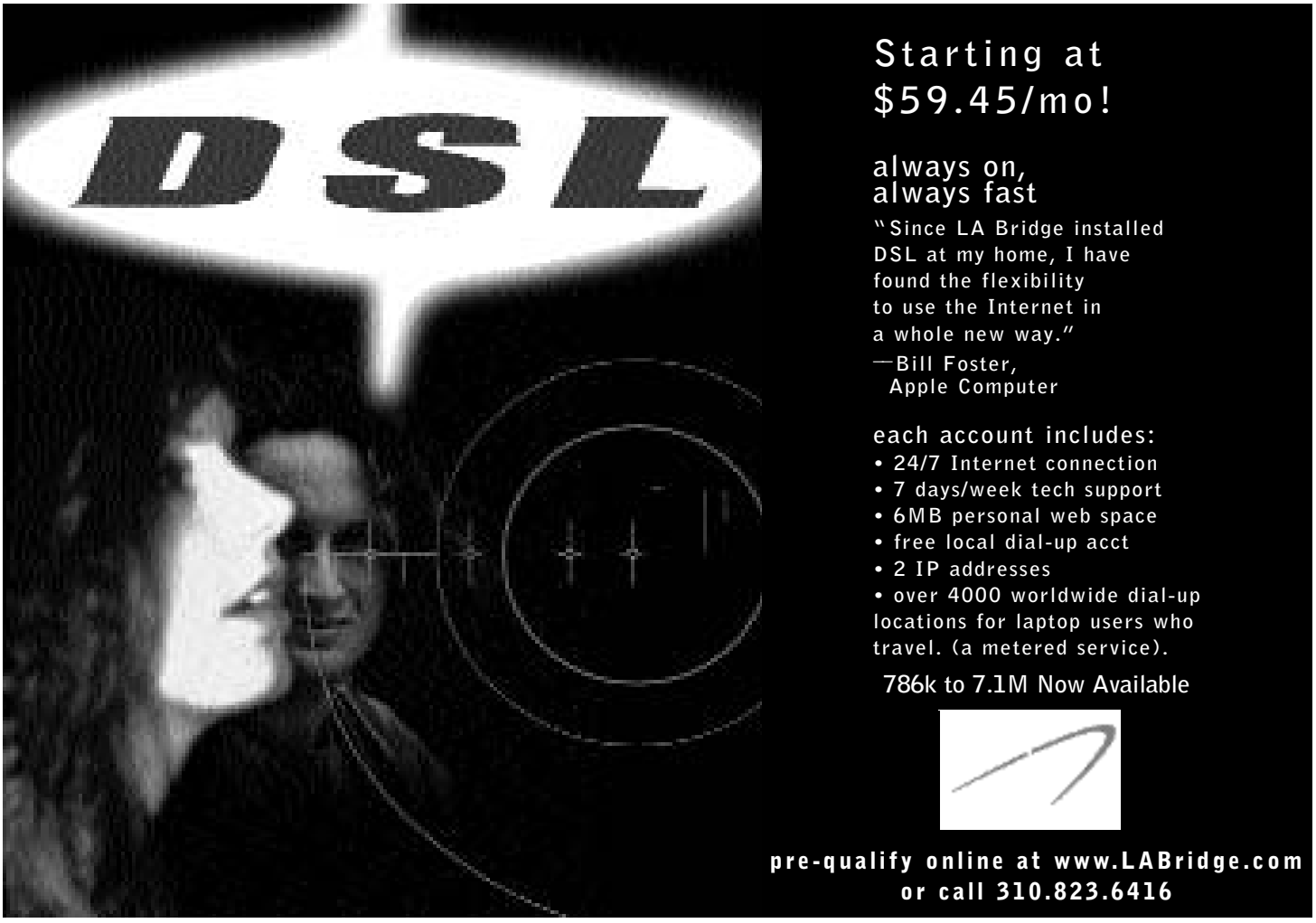
—Superconductive magnets can hold electricity indefinitely, like a battery but without loss of stored power. American Superconductor already sells or leases storage magnets. Kurzman, however, said they won't replace cheap little batteries.

—Superconducting magnets already are used in Magnetic Resonance Imaging, the diagnostic MRIs that scan people's bodies.

—Supercomputers could calculate 1,000 times faster with superconductivity.

—Superconductive wire is being used to build 100-megawatt generators to upgrade existing power plants. The new generators are perhaps one-third the size of a traditional generator and much more efficient, Nestel-Patt said.

Superconductor wire is already at work in Carrollton, Ga., supplying power to a wire factory. The test most like a real power plant has run more than a year in Denmark, supplying the Danish power grid, Grant said.



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NATIONAL

Poll: Americans enter new year wary about spending, more tax cuts and war

BY WILL LESTER
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Americans believe by a 2-to-1 margin that it's prudent to hold off on more tax cuts, a centerpiece of President Bush's domestic policy agenda, an Associated Press poll found.

They greet the new year more cautious about their personal spending yet somewhat optimistic their financial situation will improve.

On the international front, the poll found people wary of a war with Iraq and much more likely to view Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida network as threats than Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Those anxieties were voiced by Joanne Arriola, a 62-year-old retiree from a utility company in Butte, Mont. She's seen her retirement fund reduced sharply by the troubled economy, worries about the effects of a war in Iraq and is convinced that war will return to America.

"It's a scary new year," she said. "My children are too old to go, but a lot of young people aren't.

"When the war starts, it will start here, too. I think that once we're in the war, we're going to see something on our soil."

Two-thirds said they were worried that war with Iraq would increase chances of a terror attack in the United States, according to the poll conducted by ICR/International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

On economics, even most Republicans said it would be better to hold off on tax cuts to avoid deeper deficits. The White House is putting together tax cuts that could total $300 billion. It would feature lower taxes on shareholders' dividends, accelerate the 2001 tax cuts for all but the wealthiest Americans and provide new depreciation breaks for businesses.

"My husband and I decided to pay off all our debts," said Julia Kerner, 37, a pharmacy technician from Frederick, Md., "and I think it's better for the government to wait on more tax cuts. They are a quick fix, but they start undermining the income coming in to support this or that program."

Almost half, 44 percent, said they expect their family's financial situation will be better a year from now. That's a more optimistic view of the future than a year ago, when a third felt that way. The poll of 1,008 adults was taken Dec. 13-17 and has an error margin of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Republicans were more optimistic than Democrats and young adults significantly more optimistic than older people.

But if many people are expecting the economy to improve, they're also watching their spending more carefully. In the poll, 44 percent said they were now more cautious about what they spend than they had been, while half have not changed spending habits. That's up from 30 percent who said they were cautious about spending in the spring of 2000, before the nation's economic bubble began to deflate.

Women had a more cautious outlook than men, blacks more cautious than whites.

The economic uneasiness was evident even though public support for President Bush remains strong in polls generally, especially his performance on fighting terrorists. Bush already has given the go-ahead to double the 50,000 U.S. troop deployment in the Persian Gulf region in early January for possible war with Iraq, according to administration officials.

Women were more likely than men, by a margin of 40 percent to 26 percent, to say they worry a great deal about the increased threat of attacks in case of war.

By a 2-to-1 margin, people said they saw bin Laden as more of a threat than Iraq and Saddam. People were more inclined to see al-Qaida as a threat by about the same 2-1 margin, no matter their age, sex, income level or race.

Results of AP poll on the economy and terrorism

By The Associated Press

The Associated Press poll on the public's feelings about the economy and terrorism at the start of the new year is based on telephone interviews with 1,008 randomly selected adults from all states except Alaska and Hawaii. The interviews were conducted Dec. 13-17 by ICR/International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

The results were weighted to represent the population by key demographic factors such as age, sex, region and education.

In the poll, no more than one time in 20 should chance variations in the sample cause the results to vary by more than 3 percentage points from the answers that would be obtained if all Americans were polled.

This margin of error is larger for responses of subgroups, such as income categories. There are other sources of potential error in polls, including the wording and order of questions.

The AP poll questions:

1. Looking ahead to a year from now, do you expect your family's financial situation to be ...
- Better than it is now, 44 percent
- Worse than it is now, 10 percent
- About the same as it is now, 44 percent
- Don't know-refused, 2 percent

2. Has recent financial news made you more cautious about spending money, less cautious about spending money or has it not changed your spending habits?
- More cautious, 44 percent
- Less cautious, 4 percent
- Have not changed spending habits, 51 percent
- Don't know-refused, 1 percent

3. Do you think it is more important to pass additional tax cuts to stimulate the economy now or do you think it is better to hold off on tax cuts to make sure that the budget does not go into a deeper deficit?
- Better to wait on tax cuts, 64 percent
- Pass tax cuts to stimulate the economy, 28 percent
- Don't know-refused, 8 percent

4. Thinking about a possible war with Iraq, how worried are you that this might increase the chances of a terrorist attack within the United States?
- A great deal, 33 percent
- A fair amount, 32 percent
- Not much, 32 percent
- Don't know-refused, 3 percent

5. If you had to choose, which do you think poses the greater threat to the United States — Iraq and Saddam Hussein or the al-Qaida terrorist network and Osama bin Laden?
- al-Qaida/Osama bin Laden, 59 percent
- Iraq/Saddam Hussein, 29 percent
- Don't know-refused, 12 percent

INTERNATIONAL

Thailand taps moonshiners to revive local economy

BY DANIEL LOVERING
Associated Press Writer

BANGKOK, Thailand — Makers of homemade Thai rice whiskey once plied their craft in jungle hideouts and farmyard shacks, concealed from the gaze of police officers threatening arrest and the seizure of their makeshift stills.

But what was once a furtive — and criminal — enterprise has been legalized and even touted by the government as a source of revenue that could help lift Thailand from its economic doldrums and enrich poor villagers.

Appealing to the entrepreneurial instincts of rural moonshine peddlers, the government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra legitimized the trade a year ago, urging fermented fruit and rice wine producers to apply for licenses.

Among them was Sawai Nuengsamphan, a 42-year-old former welder and gas station attendant whose family had produced the sweet alcoholic tipple illegally for decades. For community weddings, funerals and ordinations, the family supplied the spirits.

Over the years, Sawai's grandfather was arrested several times for distilling "sato," the sweetish and pungent brew that is hugely popular in rural Thailand.

But when the laws were relaxed last November, Sawai envisioned his family's cottage industry transforming into a runaway large-scale business with a clientele spanning the globe.

"I have a dream that foreigners will drink this," he said. "The first place is Japan because the taste is like sake. Also in Singapore and Taiwan because there are Thai workers there."

"I have a dream that foreigners will drink this. The first place is Japan because the taste is like sake. Also in Singapore and Taiwan because there are Thai workers there."

— SAWAI NUENGSAMPHAN
Brewer

With a $45,700 loan, he founded Mahamit (Great Friend) Thai Wine, which produced just 120 bottles a day when it opened in April and now turns out about 6,000 bottles in the tin-roof distillery in Rayong province, 90 miles south of Bangkok.

"We are pioneers, the first to sell legally in Rayong province," he said, removing the lid from a plastic tub of fermented rice and herb mash, sniffing its alcoholic aroma.

Nearby, workers balanced aluminum vats on a dozen gas burners to boil rice, the key ingredient in sato. Mixed with water and sugar and flavored with ginger and other herbs, the rice ferments for 20 days to become alcoholic.

"This liquor has been around for hundreds of years," Sawai said. "But it bothered me to see sato sold in plastic bags. I wanted to see it on the dining table."

Filled in sterilized beer bottles with hand-affixed labels, Sawai's hooch sells briskly across Thailand at 60 cents a bottle, particularly in the northeast, where drinking such firewater is an honored pastime.

"The first people who tried my sato said I was crazy because villagers can make this and why would they buy it from me?" he said. "I told them everybody can make soup, so why do people buy it from the market?"

While legalizing the industry, the government is also imposing a 25 percent to 30 percent tax on each bottle. Still, Sawai's profits have been rich enough to pay for a new Toyota pick-up truck and construction work on a second factory.

The government hopes that while some people continue to make hooch illegally to avoid taxes, many like Sawai will see the benefit of running a licensed business that will allow them to market their product more widely.

The earlier ban on local liquor production was meant to protect a monopoly on the whiskey market in Thailand held by Sura Maharas, for years the sole holder of a government concession to produce cheap rice whiskey.

Officials say the newly licensed producers are aiming for a different market — the poorer rural residents and, eventually, overseas consumers.

"So far we've made about 68 million baht ($1.6 million), from January until now" in taxes and license fees, said Sujarit Patchimnun, the head of the Interior Ministry's community development department.

"The main thing is to help the economy, to make money. We don't want to lose resources we already have," he said.

Locally produced rice whiskey must contain less than 15 percent alcohol, according to the Ministry of Finance. Licensed whiskey makers are required to have their products examined regularly by the excise department.

Licenses have been given to about 450 producers, whom the government describes as "farm cooperatives," meaning they are certified village residents who have created a cottage industry and generated employment.

About 500 more individual hooch makers remain unlicensed and will continue to be targeted by authorities unless they form cooperatives. Until then, if convicted they face a fine of up to $110 for each infraction and six months in jail.

Wary of West, Mideast Muslim tourists try Malaysia

BY SEAN YOONG
Associated Press Writer

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — When Saudi housing developer Ghassan Nasry began thinking about a family vacation, he ruled out Western countries because of reports about Arab travelers being harassed. Then he remembered TV advertisements touting the allures of Malaysia.

This predominantly Muslim nation in Southeast Asia has long attracted visitors from nearby countries to its pristine beaches and colorful culture. Now it's also becoming a destination for Middle Easterners seeking luxury vacations with a peaceful, familiar Islamic backdrop.

"There is so much to see and enjoy," the 32-year-old Nasry said as he strolled with his wife and five children outside the Petronas Twin Towers, the world's tallest buildings. "When I go back to Jeddah, I can tell my friends: 'Why must you go to places where you do not feel welcome? Just come to Malaysia!'"

The number of Middle Easterners visiting this country already had been rising steadily since the late 1990s. Following the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States, even more have been coming to what they consider a friendly, moderate nation.

Malaysia had 66,010 tourists from the Middle East in June-August, immigration figures say. That was an increase of 18 percent over the same period of 2001, making the Middle East one of Malaysia's fastest-growing tourist markets.

Tourism is Malaysia's second-largest earner of foreign currency, bringing in $6.8 billion last year from 12.8 million visitors.

Most of the tourists are from neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, but those from the Middle East are much sought after because many are wealthier, take longer vacations and visit several Malaysian destinations.

Tourism Minister Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, who has led numerous promotional missions to the Middle East, said recently that Malaysia hoped to draw up to 250,000 visitors from that region in 2002, doubling the previous year's total.

Travelers from the Middle East usually stop first in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's largest city, which mixes mosques and Islamic museums with cosmopolitan facilities like shopping malls and five-star hotels.

"When I go back to Jeddah, I can tell my friends: 'Why must you go to places where you do not feel welcome? Just come to Malaysia!"'

— GHASSAN NASRY
Tourist

From there, many head for scenic islands such as Langkawi and Penang, which Malaysians call the "Pearl of the Orient." Others opt for cooler hilltop resort areas like Cameron Highlands, filled with strawberry farms and garden playgrounds.

No one in Malaysia wants to be left out of this business boom. Hotels and travel agents have been scrambling to increase their promotional campaigns in the Middle East and cater to the needs of tourists from that region.

Suleiman Tunku Abdul Rahman, director of communications for Malaysia's Shangri-La hotel group, said the company's two beach resorts in Penang had set up rooms for Muslim prayers and hired Arab staffers to operate a special front desk to welcome Middle Eastern guests.

The group sent representatives to tourism fairs in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, and its efforts seem to be paying off. The two Penang resorts had 21,478 Middle Eastern guests in first eight months of this year, a 44 percent increase over the same period in 2001.

Awareness of Malaysia in Muslim countries also has been bolstered by its hosting of several key meetings of the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference in recent years and by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's high international profile.

Mahathir is expected next year to become chairman of the Islamic conference, the only pan-Islamic organization, which aims to represent the world's 1.2 billion Muslims.

"We are all hearing about Malaysia," said Nawaf Al-Matouq, a 28-year-old tourist from Kuwait. "We hear it's a beautiful place and safe for Muslims. We hear about your leader, Mr. Mahathir. So of course, we would like to visit this country."

Malaysia became a focus for part of the investigation into the Sept. 11 attacks after officials revealed that two of the hijackers who crashed an American Airlines jetliner into the Pentagon met with other al-Qaida figures here in January 2000.

Mahathir's government has arrested more than 70 suspected members of an Islamic militant network with alleged al-Qaida ties. But Malaysia is overwhelmingly peaceful, and militant sentiments are held by a tiny minority.

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Clemens back with Yankees for one more season

BY RONALD BLUM
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — The Rocket wants to go out draped in pinstripes.

Roger Clemens and the New York Yankees capped two months of talks by agreeing Monday to a $10.1 million, one-year contract. The six-time Cy Young Award winner also said he'll probably retire after next season, his 20th in the major leagues.

"My feeling is right now that I don't anticipate playing past this year," Clemens said. "I plan on going out the right way — like I always have, full throttle."

An eight-time All-Star who turns 41 in August, Clemens has gone 60-27 during four seasons with the Yankees, winning World Series titles in his first two years. He doesn't want to make a formal announcement about retirement and get feted with honors in each city, the way Cal Ripken did.

"I don't want to say something now and have the distractions that go along with it," Clemens said. "I don't want to be the show."

Clemens, who joined the Yankees after 13 seasons in Boston and two in Toronto, has 3,909 strikeouts, third on the career list behind Nolan Ryan (5,714) and Steve Carlton (4,136). With a 293-151 record, Clemens has a chance to overtake Tom Seaver (311) and Gaylord Perry (314) next season, which would put him in 15th place on the career wins list.

After going 20-3 in 2001, Clemens was 13-6 with a 4.35 ERA in 29 starts last season, battling leg problems.

"To win 300 in the Stadium or in the uniform would mean everything," Clemens said. "It would go hand in hand with the championships."

For now, New York has eight starting pitchers, a group that also includes Andy Pettitte, Mike Mussina, David Wells, Cuban defector Jose Contreras, Orlando Hernandez, Jeff Weaver and Sterling Hitchcock.

Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said the surplus of starters allows him flexibility to make moves before opening day. Hernandez and Hitchcock are the most likely to be traded.

"Either we'll have superb depth or we'll be able to trade from a strength," Cashman said.

"When the dust settles and the season gets underway, usually injuries hit. It's like thoroughbreds — one thing leads to another. Or we'll be able to utilize that depth in a trade."

While the Yankees and Boston are still talking to Montreal about possible trades involving Colon, no deal with the Expos is imminent and New York would insist that at least one of its current starters be included in the deal, a Yankees official said.

New York wants Clemens to set an example for younger pitchers, such as Weaver. Cashman remembered the day in July 2001 that Clemens volunteered to pitch in Detroit on three days' rest when a teammate got sick.

"I'm going to be 41 this year, and I plan on leading this staff in a number of ways, on the field and off the field," Clemens said. "I'm going to continue to push those guys."

Under the new deal, Clemens will not start receiving his salary until 2004 and will not get the entire amount until 2014, making the present-day value of the contract about $8.1 million, according to calculations by the commissioner's office.

"Once we knew something was going to happen in New York, there was no other choice for me," Clemens said.

Clemens was coming off a $30.9 million, two-year agreement with the Yankees. The pitcher would not accept less than $10 million for next year, and the Yankees would not agree to a deal that counted for more than about $8.15 million against the luxury tax.

Clemens' agents, Randy and Alan Hendricks, have said their client was offered $12 million to sign with another team but said Clemens' preference was to stay in New York.

Clemens will get $10.3 million in 2003, all deferred from his previous deal. Under the new contract, New York pays him $600,000 in 2004, $700,000 in 2005, $900,000 in 2006, $950,000 in each of the following six years, and $1.1 million in both 2013 and 2014.

In the last two weeks, New York agreed to a $21 million deal with outfielder Hideki Matsui and a $32 million contract with Contreras. The team estimates its payroll for luxury tax purposes at about $155 million; the tax begins at $117 million.

Yankees president Randy Levine, who structured Clemens' contract with Randy Hendricks, defended the team against criticism that it spends too much. Boston Red Sox president Larry Lucchino has taken to calling the Yankees "the Evil Empire."

New York estimates its revenue sharing payments will increase from $32 million in 2002 to $46 million next year and is planning on a luxury tax bill of about $9 million. Levine said other teams should stop "whining."

Call from University of Kentucky ends Brooks' wait

BY CHRIS DUNCAN
AP Sports Writer

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Rich Brooks knew was only getting older, and wondered if another coaching opportunity would ever come up.

"Age is always a factor," Brooks said. "I was very concerned. There were periods in the last six months to a year that I thought I wasn't going to get a shot at it."

Then the University of Kentucky called, and the 61-year-old Brooks was hired Monday as the Wildcats' new coach. He signed a five-year contract worth $725,000 a year.

Brooks, who previously coached Oregon and the St. Louis Rams, has been out of football since January 2001, when he resigned as the Atlanta Falcons' defensive coordinator.

When Guy Morriss left Kentucky for Baylor on Dec. 9, Kentucky athletic director Mitch Barnhart immediately called Brooks at his Springfield, Ore., home. The two worked together at Oregon in the early 1980s.

Barnhart didn't offer Brooks a job, he was only seeking advice.

"I didn't think I was at the top of his list. What I did was comment on the people he had," Brooks said. "Basically, I expressed an interest and we proceeded from there."

Two days later, Barnhart visited former NFL head coach Bill Parcells in New York. He eventually offered Parcells the job, but Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones also began talks with Parcells, derailing Barnhart's efforts.

"People can say what they want, like, 'Oh, was it real?' or 'Was he really genuinely interested?"' Barnhart said. "The bottom line is we had some very nice conversations. We had an offer in front of him. I thought it was going to happen."

But it didn't, and Barnhart said he talked to at least nine other candidates before going back to Brooks.

"The more I went through the process, it became more apparent that he wanted it, and I became more comfortable with him," Barnhart said.

Brooks coached Oregon from 1977-94, capping his tenure by leading the Ducks to their first Rose Bowl berth since 1958. He coached the NFL's Rams from 1995-96, but was fired after going 13-19. He was hired by the Falcons the following year and was an assistant in the 1999 Super Bowl.

"I'm a lot better football coach than I was in '94," Brooks said. "All I did for six straight years was grind out on football. That NFL season is very long. I know a lot more about defense, offense and kicking game than I did in '94."

Brooks, who had a 91-109-4 record at Oregon, becomes Kentucky's third coach in 22 months.

Morriss succeeded Hal Mumme, who resigned in February 2001 amid an NCAA investigation. The NCAA uncovered recruiting violations and punished Kentucky with a one-year bowl ban, a reduction of five scholarships over three seasons, and three years of probation.

"It certainly isn't the most ideal situation," Brooks said of the restrictions. "You don't necessarily need numbers, you need quality. Certainly, you've got a better chance of having more quality when you've got the numbers, but those are the guidelines we'll deal with."

Early in his career, Brooks' program had problem of its own with the NCAA.

Brooks, who attended the Tennessee State-Kentucky game Monday night, confirmed that Oregon was banned from a bowl game and faced other sanctions in 1981 after an assistant coach arranged for players to travel with unused plane tickets.

The assistant coach, whom Brooks would not name, resigned. Brooks also offered his resignation to the school's administration, but it was rejected, he said.

Both the school and the NCAA conducted investigations and Brooks said he was exonerated.

Barnhart worked for Oregon's athletic fund in 1983. He knew about the violation then, but said that didn't affect his decision to hire Brooks now.

"That was more than 20 years ago," Barnhart said Monday night. "We checked with the NCAA. Since that violation, his record of compliance has been exemplary. He has been an outstanding person for college football."

Barnhart said he wasn't concerned about the perception of Kentucky hiring a coach linked to past NCAA violations.

Kentucky started this season 4-0, and Morriss was rewarded with a contract extension through 2007. The Wildcats finished 7-5, only their third winning record since 1984.

Morriss made $400,000 per year, but Barnhart admitted Kentucky wasn't ready to match Baylor's more lucrative offer.

Hall of Fame meeting to discuss Pete Rose postponed

BY RONALD BLUM
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — Baseball is in no rush to call a meeting of Hall of Famers to talk about Charlie Hustle.

A meeting between Hall of Famers and commissioner Bud Selig to discuss Pete Rose had been postponed at the request of baseball officials.

The Hall had been contacting its 58 living members about a possible gathering in Los Angeles on Jan. 17. But Bob DuPuy, baseball's chief operating office, asked the Hall on Friday to delay the session.

Hall spokesman Jeff Idelson said Monday that the meeting would not take place, but would not go into the reasons, and DuPuy declined comment.

The meeting is likely to be scheduled for the first two weeks of February, a baseball official said on the condition of anonymity, and no action on Rose is likely to take place before the meeting with Hall members.

Rose, the career hits leader, agreed to a lifetime ban from baseball in August 1989 following an investigation of his gambling. Because of the ban, he cannot appear on the Hall of Fame ballot.

Rose applied for reinstatement in September 1997 but Selig hasn't ruled on it. After years of saying he saw no reason to change the ban Rose agreed to with commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti, Selig allowed DuPuy to negotiate with Rose's agent, Warren Morris, during the past year.

Selig and Rose met in Milwaukee on Nov. 25, and Rose issued a statement earlier this month confirming the talks, saying "we have been provided the forum to discuss all of the issues with major league baseball."

DuPuy met with Hall chairwoman Jane Forbes Clark, Hall president Dale Petroskey and Hall vice chairman Joe Morgan on Dec. 18, and an update on the Rose talks was part of the briefing.

Baseball officials want Rose to admit that he bet on baseball — which he has repeatedly denied, as part of any reinstatement agreement. Morgan, who was involved in setting up the Selig-Rose meeting, has said his former teammate has "got to come clean" if there was to be an agreement.

John Dowd, who headed the Rose inquiry for baseball, wrote a report that detailed 412 baseball wagers between April 8 and July 5, 1987, including 52 on Cincinnati to win. Dowd cited evidence that included betting slips alleged to be in Rose's handwriting, and telephone and bank records.

The Cincinnati Reds, the team Rose spent most of his career with and later managed, would like him to be reinstated by the start of the season, which would allow him to participate in the opening ceremonies of the Great American Ball Park.

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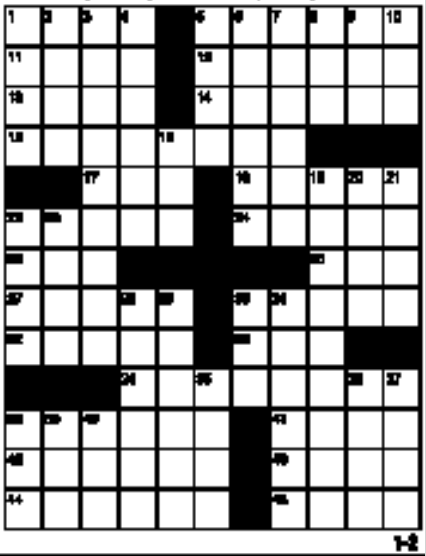
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Child steals car so he can learn to drive

His Own "Head Start" Program: A 7-year-old Minneapolis boy stole an SUV on Dec. 6 and crashed into several things, and then, after attempts by the police and his guardian to explain to him why stealing cars was wrong, he stole another one on Dec. 17 and hit another vehicle, injuring a boy riding with his mother. His two reported explanations were, respectively: "I want to be a good driver when I grow up," and "I just had to get to school and I don't know where it is." (According to a hopeful Minneapolis Star Tribune report, experts believe that kids that young who commit crimes are no more than two to three times more likely to turn into violent criminals.)

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Unurban Coffee House presents Poetry and Spoken Word every Wednesday evening. Hosted by Tony Perez. 8pm, 3301 Pico Blvd. (310)315-0056.

FRIDAY

Santa Monica High School Theater Arts Department presents Romeo & Juliet. Friday and Saturday nights at 8:00pm. November 22nd through December 21st. $10.00 for students, children, and seniors, $15.00 for adults. Humanities Center Theater at Santa Monica High School, 601 Pico Blvd. For more information please call (310)458-5939.

MAGICOPOLIS presents HOCUS POCUS! (Fish Bones Choke Us). The stage explodes with a colorful mix of Magic, Special Effects, Sleight of Hand, Comedy and Music that's sure to delight audiences of all ages. At MAGICOPOLIS, 1418 Fourth Street, Santa Monica. Fridays & Saturdays at 8pm, $20. Saturday & Sundays at 2pm, $15. For tickets call 310-451-2241.

Santa Monica Strutters, a FREE program sponsored by UCLA Healthcare's 50-Plus Program! Walking programs for adults 50 or older looking for safe, low-impact exercise in a comfortable environment. The Santa Monica Strutters meet Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from 8 a.m. To 10 a.m., at Santa Monica Place, Fourth St. and Broadway Ave. in Santa Monica.

Senior Suppers - Discounted meals for people AGE 55 or older are served daily, from 3:30 p.m. To 7 p.m., in the cafeteria at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center, 1250 16th Street in Santa Monica. $3.69 Info only: (310)319-4837.

MOVIE °GUIDE

LOEWS CINIPLEX BROADWAY CINEMA
1441 Third St. at Broadway
About Schmidt (R) 12:40, 3:40, 6:40, 9:40. **Two Weeks Notice** (PG-13) 12:00, 2:30, 5;00, 7:30, 10:10. **Antwone Fisher** (PG-13) 1:20. 4:20, 7:20, 10:20. **The Hours** (PG-13) 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00.

MANN CRITERION
1313 Third St.
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (PG) 11:30, 3:15, 7:05, 10:30. **Treasure Planet** (PG) 12:00. **The Hot Chick** (PG-13) 2:30, 5:00, 7:45, 10:10. **Gangs of New York** (R) 11:15, 12:15, 3:00, 4:15, 7:10, 8:15, 10:40. **Narc** (R) 11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00.

AMC THEATRE SM 7
1310 3rd Street
Die Another Day (PG-13) 11:35, 9:50. **Drumline** (PG-13) 10:30, 4:40. **Maid in Manhattan** (PG-13) 11:45, 2:20, 4:55, 7:35, 10:05. **Star Trek: Nemesis: with Captions** (PG-13) 12:05, 2:45, 5:15, 8:00, 10:40. **The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers** (PG-13) 11:15, 2:20, 3:05, 6:15, 7:00, 10:00, 10:40. **Catch Me If You Can** (PG-13) 10:15, 12:00, 1:20. 3:20, 4:30, 6:35, 7:35, 9:55, 10:35. **Analyze That** (R) 2:30, 7:25.

LANDMARK NU-WILSHIRE
1314 Wilshire Blvd.
Love Liza (R) 12:15, 2:30, 4:45, 7:00. **Far From Heaven** (PG-13) 2:00, 4:30, 7:00.

LAEMMLE MONICA
1332 2nd St.
Pinocchio (NR) 1:45, 4:20, 7:00, 9:40. **Frida** (R) 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:05. **Sonny (R)** 1:20, 4:10, 7:00, 9:50. **Max** (R) 1:30, 4:35, 7:25, 10:05.

AERO THEATRE
1328 Montana Ave.
Bloody Sunday (R) 5:00 **Secretary** (R) 7:30, 10:00

Calendar items are printed free of charge as a service to our readers. Please submit your items to todayspaper@smdp.com for consideration. Calendar events are limited by space, and will be run at the discretion of the Calendar Editor.

BACK PAGE

TCA taint, the mold that makes good wines go bad

BY MICHELLE LOCKE
Associated Press Writer

DAVIS — Holding up a glass of wine, enology student Jim Duane swirls the golden liquid around a few times and gives it a judicious sniff.

Sample No. 6 has a whiff of something not quite right. Corked? Could be. He scribbles a few notes in his lab journal.

Duane and his fellow students at the University of California, Davis, are hot on the trail of TCA taint, the musty, wet rag smell that can make good wines go bad.

Trouble is, while most consumers agree they don't like tainted wine; deciding what's tainted, what's not and what's acceptable can be a subjective process.

Of the samples smell-tested by professor Linda Bisson's class at UC Davis on a recent afternoon, several students correctly identified the handful of glasses contaminated with TCA.

Still, quite a few were equally sure that a couple of apparently untainted samples were bad as well. It's possible those samples came from a corked bottle and were inadvertently tainted, or that students were experiencing "nose fatigue."

The TCA issue flared up recently when the widely read Wine Spectator magazine reported finding TCA in red wines from Beaulieu Vineyard, one of the Napa Valley's cornerstone wineries.

Wine Spectator reported it conducted a number of tests, including commissioning an independent laboratory analysis of 15 bottles of BV red wines that found TCA in all the bottles, ranging from 1.3 to 4.6 parts per trillion.

Some research indicates tasters can detect it as low as 2 parts per trillion, although it's unlikely many people would fit that category.

Ray Chadwick, president of Diageo Chateau & Estates Wines, which owns BV, said winery workers found a problem with a humidified cellar, which they are now ventilating.

> **"That's eight too many, but it's a phenomenal record. The wine speaks for itself."**
>
> **— RAY CHADWICK**
> President of Diageo Chateau & Estates Wines

However, he said there is no widespread problem with BV wine quality, and while laboratory analysis is a useful tool, a good wine is judged on taste. In the last six months, the winery has shipped more than 7 million bottles of BV wines, and received only eight complaints of corkiness.

"That's eight too many, but it's a phenomenal record," said Chadwick. "The wine speaks for itself."

Wine affected by TCA — 2,4,6-trichloroanisole — is often referred to as "corked," or "corky." However, the culprit may not necessarily be the cork — the problem occurs when chlorine becomes attached to phenolic compounds from cork, wine or wood, producing chlorophenols, which is the smelly stuff. This conversion is conducted by common molds that can be found just about anywhere.

No one knows exactly how much TCA-tainted wine is out there; Peter Weber of the Sebastopol-based National Cork Quality Council said recent studies put the number at less than 2 percent, although other estimates go much higher. Still, even at 2 percent, that is quite a high failure rate, especially at premium wine prices.

TCA is not a health hazard, and not everyone can detect it at low levels. But to those who can, it's a definite turn-off.

"There's no way you can tell them its an OK smell that's supposed to be there," said Bisson. "It's very few people that can sit there and still drink something that reeks of a moldy rag."

Of particular concern to producers is the fact that it's quite possible consumers won't realize they're tasting TCA and will instead assume they don't like that particular brand.

Most wineries will accept wine returned as unsatisfactory by a consumer, but not everyone is willing to go to those lengths.

There is no legal standard for TCA levels in wine and opinions vary on how many people can detect it at low levels.

Parts per trillion is an extremely small amount — one part per trillion is like a grain of sand in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

At the UC Davis lab, students were testing wines at 10 parts per trillion, which, for this not particularly expert nose, was detectable as a very faint chemical-type aroma. At 100 parts per trillion, the smell is much more noticeable. At 100 parts per billion, TCA produces a pronounced odor, like a stack of damp newspapers left in a basement.

Making his way down a long line of wine samples, student Duane was relatively unmoved by the to-do over TCA. Wine, he pointed out, remains a popular beverage, "so the corkiness cannot be too off-putting."

DID YOU KNOW?: 92% of Chinese belong to the Han nationality, which has been China's largest nationality for centuries. The rest of the nation consists of about 55 minority groups.

