

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ University of Florida professor Thomas DeMarse revealed in December that he has constructed a primitive "brain" ("live computation device") out of 25,000 rat neurons and has taught it to maneuver an F-22 fighter jet simulation in a straight trajectory. The brain had to be "taught," he said, because at first, the plane kept crashing. DeMarse said an organic brain is potentially much more flexible than even the highest-tech computer. The National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health are funding his work, as models for controlling otherwise-risky unmanned aircraft and for developing epilepsy-fighting drugs.

■ In September, District of Columbia Superior Court Judge Judith Retchin ordered Jonathan Magbie, 27, to jail for 10 days for first-offense marijuana possession (a virtually unheard-of sentence in D.C.), despite the fact that Magbie was a quadriplegic with permanent tracheal, urinary and stomach tubes and was often ventilator-dependent, in addition to having various other infirmities. (Magbie died four days later, after what the D.C. Health Department concluded in December was severely inadequate care in jail and in an emergency room.)

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1919, the 26th president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, died in Oyster Bay, N.Y., at age 60.

In 1942, the Pan American Airways "Pacific Clipper" arrived in New York after making the first round-the-world trip by a commercial airplane.

In 1967, U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese troops launched Operation "Deckhouse 5," an offensive in the Mekong River delta.

In 1945, George Herbert Walker Bush married Barbara Pierce in Rye, N.Y.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"What this generation was bred to at television's knees was not wisdom, but cynicism."

PAULINE KAEI
AMERICAN MOVIE CRITIC (1919-2001)

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Canyon Service gets landmark nod

Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission declares the 1924 service station a historic landmark; pending \$2.1M sale expected to be called off



File Photo

The three vintage pumps at Canyon Service are sitting in storage while the future of the service station is decided.

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN LA — The fate of an 80-year-old service station in Santa Monica Canyon now rests with the Los Angeles City Council.

The Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission on Wednesday recommended landmark status be conferred on Canyon Service, meaning the small, three-pump specialty station can not be demolished or moved.

Preservationists applauded the decision, which is expected to stop the pending sale of the 17,000-square-foot property to neighbor Christopher Hoffman for \$2.1 million. Hoffman reportedly planned to

raze the station, along with a 100-year-old bungalow that sits behind it, in order to expand his yard.

Built in 1924, the station represents the second-to-last parcel of land owned by the descendants of Francisco Marquez, who along with Ysidro Reyes was granted the 10-square-mile Rancho Boca de Santa Monica in 1838.

Monica Queen, a Marquez family descendant who has lived on the station property for more than a quarter century, criticized the Wednesday decision, saying interest in the old station came too late, after her family struggled for years to make it profitable. Queen put the station up for sale to settle the estate of her mother, Angelina Marquez Olivera, who died two years ago at the age of 85.

"My dreams of owning my own home are being dashed," said Queen, adding she and her four siblings were depending on the sale proceeds to pay off loans taken out for station improvements. "Our plan was thwarted, and we were not notified at all of our property being considered a historic monument. Now we can't pay our bills or our government loan."

Preservationists, led by the Santa Monica Canyon Civic Association, hope to buy the old station. Former station operator Brian Clark said he would pay full price for the property, an offer he had made before.

"If we're able to get the property, I envision either a remodeled bungalow

See **SERVICE**, page 5



Nicky Five Aces/Five Aces Photo

A new voice-activated system at the intersections of Ocean and Colorado avenues, and at Broadway and Ocean Avenue, tells people when to cross the street, which direction they are traveling and how long they have to cross before the light changes.



'Walk this way'

New traffic signals speak to pedestrians downtown

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

OCEAN AVE. — Before you cross the street here, you're going to have to do more than look both ways. Now you'll have to start listening, too.

New crosswalk signals at

Colorado and Ocean avenues, as well as at Broadway and Ocean Avenue, were installed late last month that speak to pedestrians, telling them which direction they are walking and how many seconds they have to cross the street.

The locations were selected by City Hall's traffic engineer and disability coordinator because the intersections are heavily used. On a busy day, the

See **WALKY TALKY**, page 5

Property tax limits cut quality of California schools

(Editor's note: This is the second article in an ongoing series about the public school system throughout the state and in Santa Monica.)

BY JENNIFER COLEMAN

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — A recent study conducted by the Rand Corp. that details why California's students rank among the lowest in

the nation for academic achievement across all racial groups doesn't surprise researchers.

The Rand Corp. study also finds that California's per-pupil spending is among the lowest, and its student-to-teacher ratio is

among the highest. The state also lags in building schools, though it is catching up thanks to billions of dollars of bonds that voters have approved in recent years.

While he said he wasn't surprised by any single finding from the 18-month study, lead researcher Steve Carroll said he was struck by "the overall cascade

of unhappy observations."

The study examined California's results on national standardized tests, facility construction, teacher preparedness and education funding.

Thirty years ago, Californians invested heavily in its public education system, resulting in schools that

See **RAND STUDY**, page 6



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Mellow out tonight, Gemini

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)

★★★ Working with others proves to be successful. Get to the root of a story or an issue. You might feel that others are making heavy demands on you. Remember, you accepted the responsibilities. Establish stronger boundaries in the future. Tonight: Chill your overactive mind

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Others tell it like it is. Defer to co-workers and associates, as there could be difficulty otherwise. Let someone believe that he or she is right, because you cannot change this person's perspective anyway. Know when to walk past aggravation. Tonight: Go along for the ride

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Conversations could be heavy. You cannot avoid an in-depth discussion in which you need to reveal more. You could be uncomfortable, but you will be much better as a result of this clearing. Do as much work as you can. Tonight: Mellow out

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Your strong sense of direction pays off. Add your special brand of creativity and ingenuity, and you'll discover that anything can happen. Be more socially aware. Someone might not be sharing what is going on. Tonight: Out, but make it an early night

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★ Avoid getting locked into rigid thinking. If you must deal with someone who could be stuck, be as gracious as possible. Focus on your home life and the basics. You do make a difference. Don't worry about dragging. Tonight: Nap and then decide

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ What you say makes a big difference. A meeting or key person could be somber. You might want to open up discussions, adding a touch of your unique personality. Make that extra effort toward others. Tonight: Chat over dinner

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ Realize that finances might be stopping you from really doing what you like. Others might be plain difficult. Deal with the present situation. Willingly put in overtime. Others appreciate your efforts, even if you don't think so. Tonight: Treat yourself. You have worked hard

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ You are the cat's meow or top dog — whatever you would like to be. Though you might not agree with news or information, you bypass the issue. Express your opinions, but carefully. Take responsibility. Tonight: Plans revolve around you

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★ Coming to terms with a difficult situation involving funds and/or an association could be the last thing you want to do. Accept it right now without being a force or empowered. Tonight: Clear out paperwork

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Use your innovative thinking to achieve better interpersonal relationships. Take responsibility for your side of a problem. You will find answers when brainstorming. Think of a special person in your life. Plan a surprise for him or her. Tonight: Pretend it is Friday night

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ All work and no play could make you dull. You need to deal with domestic and work-related responsibilities. Understand that you might be tired, but you can only do the specific work. Get into an exercise program. Tonight: Make your home your castle

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ You could feel cut off from someone you care about. What role did you play in putting up this wall? Talks could clear the air and give you a new beginning. Keep in mind the type of relationship you would like to create. Tonight: At a favorite haunt.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Education leader to lead MLK celebration

By Daily Press staff

Paul F. Cummins, long-time Santa Monica educator and currently executive director of the New Visions Foundation, will be the keynote speaker at the birthday celebration of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on Jan. 17 at the First United Methodist Church, 1008 11th St., Santa Monica.

The free event, which has become one of the largest celebrations of its kind in Southern California, is scheduled for 9 a.m. The event is coordinated by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Westside Coalition, a nonprofit coalition whose missions are consistent with King's legacy. It is co-sponsored by Santa Monica College, the city of Santa Monica, and the SMC Associates.

The multi-ethnic, interfaith program also will include inspirational readings, music, and presentations of scholarships. Immediately following the program will be a community involvement fair with refreshments and informational booths of various community organizations. The theme is "State of the Union: A Time for Love, Not Hate; for Understanding, Not Anger; for Peace, Not War."

Cummins, who is best known as founder and headmaster of the prestigious Crossroads School in Santa Monica, as well as the New Visions Foundation and PS Arts, received his bachelor's degree from Stanford, his master's from Harvard and his doctorate from USC.

He founded Crossroads in 1970 and, under the aegis of New Visions, was the primary founder of New Roads School, as well as a co-founder of Camino Nuevo Charter Academy; creator of CEO (Center for Educational Opportunity), which places foster children in independent schools; and founder of Families Helping Families, which redirects low-income families into life-changing new directions.

In addition, New Visions has instituted an after-school program at Camp Gonzales, a probationary incarceration school, to redirect and relocate juvenile students.

His publications include several articles on education and numerous poems that have appeared in journals such as The New Republic, Poetry LA, Whole Notes, Wild Bamboo Press, Bad Haircut Quarterly, Wordwrights, Slant and more. He also is the author of several books.

Cummins and his wife Mary Ann live in Santa Monica. They have four daughters.

For more information about the event, call (310) 434-4003.



PAUL F. CUMMINS,

Easter musical talent sought

By Daily Press staff

As part of its 85th anniversary celebration, Calvary Baptist Church of Santa Monica will present an Easter musical, Miracle of Miracles, on March 25 and March 26. Open auditions will be held on Saturday, Jan. 22, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Welford P. Carter Center, 1502-20th St. All ages from 7 and up are welcome to participate. There are roles for singers and non-singers. If auditioning for a singing part, bring your own tape, CD, or accompanist. For more information, call (323) 567-0787

Correction - There was an error in the Jan. 3 story about the upcoming Third Street Historic District tour scheduled for Jan. 30. Tickets are being held at the Ocean Park Branch Library and can be purchased there that day. The library is not selling the tickets in advance or on that day but the Santa Monica Conservancy will have a table outside the library on the day of the event.

Kristine Johnson Fountain of Joy

The Kristine Johnson Fountain of Joy is seeking donations. Situated in a courtyard garden visible to the community, the fountain will be a respite for those seeking faith, peace and hope amongst the challenges of the world.

Donations to the Kristine Johnson Fountain of Joy may be sent to:

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SURF REPORT

On Thursday, we'll see the long period NW ground swell fade as WNW wind swell weakens further. For most in Northern LA sets are mainly knee- to waist-high, with some bigger sets at top NW breaks. Average South Bay spots are knee- to waist-high, and top deep water spots that can really focus the leftover long period swell through the north half of the bay will be near chest-high on occasion. The morning high tide is a killer smothering the life out of many spots, however. Look for an increase in storm surf Friday. Relatively light wind early Thursday then 8-15kt S/SE winds late afternoon. Conditions are stormy and poor Friday.

Today the water is:

59°

Write us at wood@smdp.com and tell us what the surf is doing today at your local break.

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	7:53	2.6	7:45	1.0	2:22	4.0	12:54	3.6
SUNDAY	9:35	2.2	8:29	1.5	3:02	4.3	2:30	3.1
MONDAY	9:35	2.2	8:29	1.5	3:02	4.3	2:30	3.1
TUESDAY	10:56	1.5	9:20	1.9	3:43	4.7	4:28	2.9
WEDNESDAY	11:55	0.6	10:19	2.1	4:26	5.2	6:06	3.0
THURSDAY	12:45	-0.2	11:18	2.3	5:11	5.7	7:14	5.2
FRIDAY	12:45	-0.2	11:18	2.3	5:11	5.7	7:14	5.2

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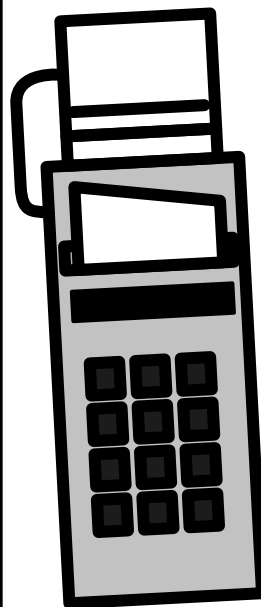
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The  Line

It's a new year. Let's start it off right. Every week we hear about what's going wrong in our city. This week, we want to hear about what is going right.

So this week's Q-Line wants to know, "What do you like about living in Santa Monica?"

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your response in our weekend edition. Please try to limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.



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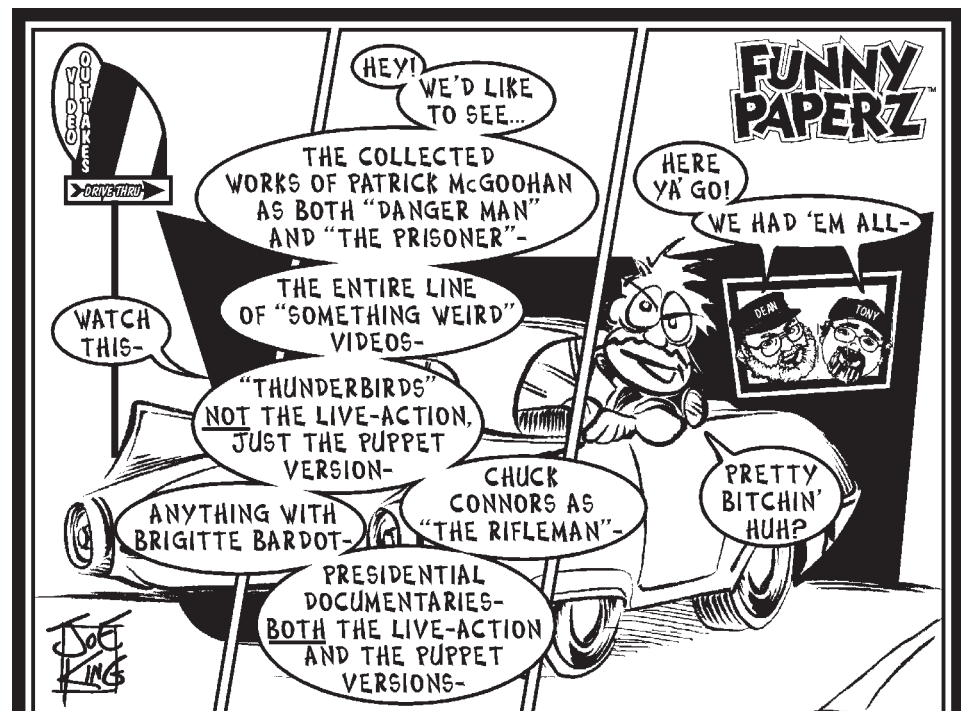
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OPINION



The personal choice of Yours Truly - 3X Winner of the Jim Carrey Marital Achievement "I-Drive-My-Wife-Nuts" Award!

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When Earth Day met the Promenade head on

NEWS ON THE EDGE

BY RON SCOTT SMITH



(Editor's note: This column originally appeared in the Daily Press in April of 2003.)

The varied stores, restaurants and theaters of the Third Street Promenade provided the backdrop for a gathering of environmentalists and Mother Earth loyalists, whose booths formed a line from one end of the shopping center to the other, on "Earth Day at The Promenade." It was a prelim to the main event being celebrated internationally to draw attention to the excesses of consumerism, along with its other stated objectives.

As activists and celebrants mingled with weekend shoppers and diners, stark contrasts could be drawn between the exhibitors in their temporary spaces along the center, and the merchants in their permanent ones on both sides of the walkway.

If you entered the Promenade at its north end, you passed the main stage and nerve center of the event, powered by a portable solar generator about the size of your front door, while the two sprawling structures flanking it, Banana Republic on one side, and Barnes and Noble on the other, were fueled more conventionally, through massive high-voltage power lines from Southern Cal Edison.

Next to the stage, Westside Green Party members handed out flyers on living wage and other local battles while sitting on folding wooden chairs, directly in front of the Restoration Hardware Fine Furniture Store, which offered a nutmeg leather couch from the Morgan Collection at the sale price of \$3,695.

A little further down, the Black Mesa Coalition, a partnership of the Hopi and Navajo Nations, was raising funds to help preserve the water tables in their northern Arizona reservations by selling inexpensive, hand-made moccasins. They could almost reach out and touch the Reebok Store on their western flank, with its "A.I.3" sneakers showcased in the window at the weekend-bargain rate of \$169 per pair.

Next to them, Agape International Center offered spiritual guidance at their space while a large empty venue across

from them had a sign on its dusty window that said this: "Opening Soon... World-Renowned Barney's Beanery/Santa Monica — serving beer from around the globe."

Jerry Rubin's Alliance For Survival group was present, handing out all things peace. Across the way, one of the Mann 6 Theaters was showing "House of 1,000 Corpses," and a blood-curdling poster that hailed it as "the Most Shocking Tale of Human Carnage Ever Seen" was hanging on their wall some 50 feet from the Alliance For Survival's peace table.

Whole Foods Markets had a booth labeled "Organically Yours." It was sandwiched between McDonalds on one side, Johnny Rockets on the other. A few stalls down, Organic Express, an organization that delivers certified organic produce to homes and offices, was set up next to the Krispy Kreme kiosk, where soft, hot-glazed doughnuts were not available for delivery.

A coffee house, anti-war teach-in group flew a banner which said "Stop U.S. Wars," in a space next to the Promenade newsstand, where a special-edition, high-gloss magazine was on sale as a collectors' item for ten bucks, titled simply, "War On Iraq." The blurbs on its cover identified these articles that could be found within: "America Strikes," "Flexing US Military Might," and "Is North Korea Next?"

Lightweight, all-natural pullovers went for ten dollars at the stall of an alternative clothier called Minawear Hemp, situated just outside Wilson's House of Leather, where a Pelle Crafts lambskin jacket hung on the clearance rack for \$550.

If you were leaving the Promenade that afternoon as the sun began its descent, you might have caught environmental singer and lyre player, Jaia, speaking between songs through that solar-powered sound system on the main stage. She asked the crowd to ask themselves — "What can I simplify in my lovely consumption?" And then she sang.

(Ron Scott Smith can be reached at edgeofthewest@aol.com. To read past columns, go to archives at www.smdp.com.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let them sing, and let them write

Editor:

Regarding the City's expenditure of \$25,000 to send the choir from Samohi to Hawaii for a competition (SMDP, Jan. 4, page 1).

First, the Daily Press reported that the city gave this funding as a "matching grant." Who is giving the "matching" \$25,000?

Second, I agree with the choir director and Councilman Kevin McKeown that this trip could prove to be an important cultural and educational experience for choir members. Will the school be requiring the choir singers to write individual reports about the educational and cultural opportunities that being a choir member has provided them? Will the school suggest that choir singers interview singers from other states and write about what they have learned at the Hawaii competition?

Will the City Council dedicate one of their spring meetings to hearing summaries of these term papers from the choir singers?

It seems the least we can get for our city's contribution of \$25,000 to send these kids to Hawaii.

Evelyn Jerome
Santa Monica

'Every Day in LA'

Editor:

I was mildly shocked at Heidi Manteuffel's assertion in the "Any Day in LA" column (SMDP, Jan. 4, page 5) that LA is anything but comforting when that is precisely what it is to me. After years spent in East Coast cities (New York, NY, Washington, D.C., Arlington, VA, Silver Spring, MD) here are just a few of the contrasting factors I find comforting about LA: The wonderful climate, the accessibility of beaches and the attendant serenity of the ocean and warmth of the sun, a horizon which always provides a view of nature's mountains rather than merely more concrete buildings, being surrounded by greenery and flowers year round rather than just for brief seasons. As for the segment of the population that worships youth and variety to excess, it is just that — only one segment of this vast population. The upside of this condition is that many Californians take better care of their health than residents of other states and many embrace a youthful attitude in a constructive manner. Lastly, I'm twice Heidi's age, and I and my friends do not dress like college girls nor date (despite offers) men young enough to be our sons. So, Heidi, I hope you will come to enjoy LA's many blessings. Meanwhile, get out and catch some rays and watch those carbs.

Sunny Kreis
Santa Monica



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LOCAL



Marquez heir upset over gas station landmark

SERVICE, from page 1

in the back that could be leased — maybe used for office space, maybe used for a Santa Monica Canyon museum, a community center, something,” said Clark, who would continue to sell high-octane gas on the front of the property.

Clark had this message for Queen: “We will make you whole. We’re not in this to hurt you in any way ... The idea is to make it work for you. To make it work for us.”

Queen was not convinced. She said she had been willing to sell to Clark earlier, but he asked for extra time to gather money and to study whether permits to operate the station in its residential neighborhood would transfer to him. The way the situation has been handled has left her sour and upset, Queen added.

“They didn’t have the money to buy it,” she said. “We’re ready to go.”

Queen pointed to the numerous land gifts her family already has given to the canyon community.

“We gave the street that’s out here. We gave the land for the school. More than one of us have, in this family. We’ve given plenty. You name it, beachfront. We need

to be left alone.”

While Queen continues in her efforts to sell the property, the matter is expected to be taken up by the Los Angeles City Council either this month or next, said Jay Oren, the city’s historic preservation director, who added the commission has recommended, and the council approved, some 777 sites as “historic cultural monuments.”

In his 17 years at City Hall, Oren said

“We’ve given plenty. You name it, beachfront. We need to be left alone.”

MONICA QUEEN
Marquez family descendant

the council has disagreed with a commission recommendation only about 10 times.

“It’s very seldom,” he added. “Usually the council takes the word of the commission. The commissioners are the ones who are charged with this.”

Downtown’s new talking crosswalks cost \$5K apiece

WALKY TALKY, from page 1

crosswalks heading toward the beach are used by hundreds of people at a time. Last year, there were six pedestrian versus car accidents at the intersection of Colorado and Ocean avenues, according to the Santa Monica Police Department.

The audible pedestrian signals replaced standard ones that emanated a chirping or “cuckoo” sound, which indicated how many seconds people had to cross. They also were designed to indicate which direction people traveled.

“There was a question of whether the chirp told people what direction they were going in,” said Lucy Dyke, City Hall’s transportation manager. “They might not necessarily know which way to go and people also didn’t have the benefit of the hand which displays when to stop going.”

Not only were the sounds confusing, they also were annoying. Many people who live and work in the area complained about the constant noise.

“The cuckoo sound indicated you were going east and west and the chirping was for north and south but they were a little annoying,” said Gerald Tom, the city’s traffic engineer. “This new audible signal is a

little less confusing. It gives clear direction to people and it’s designed more to tell you that it’s OK to step off into the street.

“They are not too loud because we want to be cognizant of the residents and people around there,” Tom added.

Designed for the visually impaired, the new pedestrian signals give people the option to push the button to hear the voice instructions.

City officials said the new signals are being used on a trial basis and more will be installed if the public likes them. City Hall had an excess amount of regular crosswalk signals and traded them in for the audible ones, which on average cost about \$5,000 a piece, or \$100 more than the traditional ones, said Barry Matas, a sales representative for Polara Engineering, the Fullerton-based company that manufactures the signals.

Matas said cities across the country are using the new signals, particularly in busy traffic corridors. Cities also request the signals for people with special needs or disabilities. The signals are ADA compliant.

“It helps keep people safer,” Matas said. “No one is really safe out there, but we hope we can at least guide people and make it easier.”

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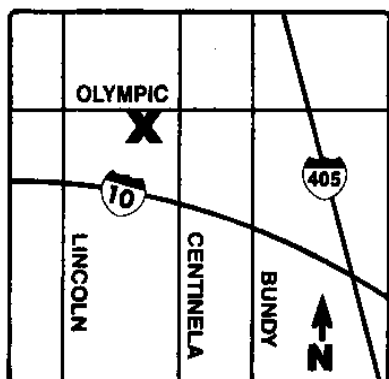
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Schools researcher struck by unhappy observations

RAND REPORT, from page 1

were consistently ranked among the nation's best, Carroll said.

But a voter-approved property tax limit and a change in how the state pays for schools, both passed in the 1970s, cut public education spending and led to a drop in quality, Carroll said.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell said Monday the study echoes complaints that he and other education advocates have long held.

"We have world-class academic standards, we have an accountability system and the table is set, but we're underfunded," O'Connell said. "To close the achievement gap, we need to have the financial wherewithal to meet the needs of these students."

California officials have launched aggressive education reforms, such as a class-size reduction program that gave schools extra money for having classes with no more than 20 students per teacher. The program was so popular, though, that it created a statewide shortage of qualified

teachers. And Rand researchers found that the state's average ratio of nearly 21 students per teacher still remains higher than the nationwide average of 16-to-1.

Voters approved Proposition 98 in 1988, setting a minimum level of state funding for K-12 and community colleges, but the report's authors said that formula "has come to function more as a funding ceiling than a floor."

"Yes, we spend \$45 billion on kids, but there's a lot of kids," Carroll said. "If you look at what share of income we're putting into that, it's a smaller share than other states."

The state also falls short in comparisons with other states regarding the share of personal income that goes toward public education. In the mid-1970s, Californians spent about 4.5 percent of their income on public education. That dropped by 1.2 percentage points in the 1980s and still remains far below the national average, he said.

"Unfortunately, it's very difficult to think of anything that could help schools that doesn't require more money," Carroll said.

STATE BRIEFS

Navy SEAL faces abuse hearing

By The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A Navy SEAL accused of punching an Iraqi prisoner on Tuesday faced an Article 32 hearing, the military equivalent of a civilian grand jury.

The SEAL officer is one of two Navy lieutenants facing Article 32 hearings this week. The second hearing is scheduled Thursday. Both were delayed for weeks, in part because of concerns about classified information available to defense attorneys involved in the case.

The Navy has not released the names of the officers, who are both members of the Coronado-based Sea, Air, Land unit known as SEAL Team-7.

Two witnesses were called to the stand Tuesday morning, but the public was cleared from the courtroom when the first person took the stand as the identities of the two lieutenants were revealed.

The case involves an officer accused of punching Manadel al-Jamadi and allowing other Navy personnel to abuse the prisoner, according to a charge sheet released by the Navy. Al-Jamadi, a suspect in the bombing of a Red Cross facility, was captured by SEALs in November 2003 during a joint special forces-CIA mission, and died a short time later at Abu Ghraib prison.

Yell for help wasn't genuine, witness says

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A witness testified Tuesday in Robert Blake's murder trial that the actor's behavior didn't seem genuine as he yelled for help for his bleeding wife.

Taking the stand as the trial resumed after a holiday recess, Mary Beth Rennie, a hospital administrator, recounted how she and her boyfriend, a doctor, hid by a tree and didn't intervene when they heard Blake yelling.

Rennie said she and Dr. James Michael McCoy, who were walking by, held back because Blake's behavior seemed "odd" and "forced."

"It didn't seem genuine or real," she said of the actor's cries.

Rennie gave essentially the same description that McCoy gave when he testified about how they saw Blake pounding on the door of a home, crying out that his wife was injured and asking for someone to call 911.

The home was near the car in which Blake's wife, Bonny Lee Bakley, was sitting when she was fatally shot after the couple left Vitello's restaurant in Studio City on May 4, 2001.

Perata cautions Schwarzenegger

By The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger should focus on getting more federal aid for deficit-plagued California and working out the state's problems with lawmakers instead of threatening to call a special election, the Senate's leader said Tuesday.

If the Republican governor decides to take issues such as legislative redistricting and a state spending cap to voters this fall, Democrats will respond with ballot measures they favor, Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata said.

"If there's going to be a gunfight at the OK Corral, we're not going to go in unarmed," the Oakland Democrat told reporters.

BUSINESS



The truth about 'Fed': Breaking down the bank

BY MO BARAKAT

Special to the Daily Press

The Federal Reserve System, commonly known as the "Fed," is simply an independent central bank established by Congress in 1913 which steers the economy by periodically raising and lowering federal fund rates.

Perhaps no institution has more power to affect the nation's economy than the Fed. The Federal Reserve System has a structure designed by Congress to give it a broad perspective on the economy. It is a federal system, composed basically of a central, governmental agency — the Board of Governors — in Washington, D.C., and 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks located in major cities throughout the nation.

While the Fed is under the leadership of its influential chairman, Alan Greenspan, decisions are actually made by the 12-member Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) which has eight scheduled meetings per year. The Board of Governors is comprised of seven Fed governors, including Alan Greenspan, who are appointed by the president of the United States for 14-year terms. All are permanent members of the FOMC.

Most developed countries have a central bank whose functions are broadly similar to those of the Federal Reserve. The U.S. Federal Reserve states that they have four main objectives. First, they conduct the nation's monetary policy by influencing the money and credit conditions in the economy in pursuit of full employment

and stable prices. Secondly, they supervise and regulate banking institutions to ensure the safety and soundness of the nation's banking and financial system and protect the credit rights of consumers. Third, they maintain the stability of the financial system and contain systemic risk that may arise in financial markets. Finally, The Federal Reserve provides financial services to the U.S. government, the public, financial institutions and to foreign official institutions, including playing a major role in operating the nation's payments system.

The central bank generally raises rates to prevent the economy from overheating and to keep inflation in check. In June 2004, the Fed raised rates for the first time in four years, ending a long cycle of rate cuts.

Higher interest rates on credit cards and mortgages can cool consumer spending, which accounts for about two-thirds of economic activity. Higher interest rates tend to attract investment into bond and other fixed-income investments, pushing down stock prices. Furthermore, higher interest rates also can make it more difficult for businesses to get loans to expand. Unemployment tends to rise which eases wage inflation.

On the flip side, the Fed generally cuts rates when inflation is subdued and the economy needs a boost. Lower interest rates can create economic activity by inducing consumer spending. For example, lower mortgage rates can spark home sales and mortgage financing. Lower interest rates also can tend to boost stock prices because bond and other fixed income investments are no

longer so attractive. Furthermore, lower interest rates cut costs for companies, boosting profit and encouraging expansion.

Of course, monetary policy does not always work exactly as described above. For example, the Fed has raised short-term interest rates three times since June 30 for a cumulative increase of 75 basis points or three quarters of a percentage point, yet longer-term interest rates have fallen over the same period. On June 29, the yield on the 10-year Treasury note was 4.7 percent. Now it is hovering around 4 percent.

This is contrary to what typically happens. It also questions just how much of a drag a less accommodative monetary policy stance by the Fed will have on the economy. After all, longer-term interest rates, including mortgage and corporate bond rates, tend to have more influence on the pace of economic activity than short-term interest rates.

Remember to seek the help of a qualified personal financial advisor to further understand rates and rate fluctuation and how they may affect your goals and financial plans.

(Mo Barakat is a senior financial advisor in Santa Monica specializing in retirement planning, asset management and risk management. Barakat is a registered representative of American Express Financial Advisors, Inc., member NASD/SIPC. For more information call (310) 582-3500, ext. 242).

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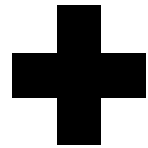
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STATE

Covert groups are behind bulk of illegal bootlegs

BY ALEX VEIGA

AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES — In not-too-secret online forums, Wesley Snipes' latest movie, "Blade: Trinity," is the subject of intense discussion and evaluation.

But unlike typical movie fan sites, the chatter from visitors to Web sites like VCDQuality.com doesn't key on the vampire film's plot, acting or bloody visual effects.

Instead, computer users dish out praise or criticism on the caliber of video and sound achieved by online groups whose sole mission is to make available unauthorized copies of Hollywood films within a day or two of a movie's debut, if not before.

For these online bootleggers, who authorities say represent the top of a distribution pyramid for pirated movies, software and music, it's all about the bragging

rights for being first to copy a hot title or releasing the best-quality replica.

"On the top sites, on those really private sites, the sport is about the next film and the next game," said Marc Morgenstern, vice president and general manager of Overpeer, a unit of Seattle-based Loudeye that combs the Internet for pirated content on behalf of entertainment companies. "That's where those gangs put feathers in their cap. They score even more points if they do it before the release date."

Members of these so-called ripping groups, also known as warez groups, have created a community referred to as "the scene." It exists primarily on the Internet's back alleys — private Internet Relay Chat, or IRC, which is a precursor to the modern instant messaging software, or Usenet news groups that function like bulletin boards.

Unlike popular file-swapping networks where mil-

lions of files — mostly for music — are shared relatively easily, it takes more than a casual effort to even begin to find the right place to download a movie.

"The scene is a very close network. Everybody knows everybody else but they haven't met them," said Bruce Forest, a Norwalk, Conn., digital media consultant who says he belonged to the scene for years and now advises entertainment companies. "It can take years until you can get access."

Typically, large movie files are broken down into text that appears to the naked eye as gibberish. Files are distributed through news groups or made available through so-called top sites or private computer servers accessed by File Transfer Protocol, or FTP, an early conduit for exchanging data on the Internet.

Only trusted members of the scene, or those who help get early copies of movies, software and music, are granted access to private FTP links where the newest and

See PYRAMID, page 9



Notice of Public Hearing Tuesday, January 11, 2005 City Council meeting starts at 6:45 p.m.

Annual Review of the City's Coordinated Plan for Homeless Services

As required by Municipal Code Section 2.69.030, the City Council will hold a Public Hearing on the Annual Review of the City's Coordinated Plan for Homeless Services to gain public input on:

- the impact of the City's homeless population on other residents of the City;
- the effectiveness of the delivery of services to the homeless by the City and various social service agencies;
- the cost of those services; and
- the changes which should be made in the plan in order to carry out its primary goals and objectives

HUD Consolidated Plan

As part of the community priorities budget hearing, the City Council will receive public input on the use of the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Act (HOME) funds. Public input will assist in preparation of the City's FY 2005-10 Consolidated Plan, a HUD-required planning document that assesses how the City is assisting its low and moderate income population in meeting the HUD requirements of decent housing, a suitable living environment and economic opportunities, and provides housing and community development strategies for the next five years. A draft Consolidated Plan will be released in May 2005 for a 30-day community review period. A public hearing and Council adoption of the Plan, prior to its submittal to HUD, is scheduled for June 2005.

For more information, call (310) 458-8701, TTY (310) 458-8696; Fax (310) 458-3380; Email: human-services@santa-monica.org. City Hall and the Council Chambers are wheelchair accessible. If you have disability-related accommodation requests or language interpretation, please contact the City Clerk's Office at (310) 458-8211; TTY (310) 458-8696 at least 3 days prior to the scheduled meeting. This flier is available in alternate format upon request. Santa Monica Blue Bus Lines #2, #3, and #8 serve City Hall. Limited parking.

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21 AND OVER

STATE



Authorities track the 'pirate pyramid'

PYRAMID, from page 8

highest-quality bootlegs are available. The use of online nicknames and anonymous e-mail accounts is common.

These files eventually trickle down to file-sharing services such as BitTorrent, and from there titles can be copied further given their higher number of users.

Trading of large movie files isn't as much a problem as the swapping of far smaller music files, but Hollywood film studios want to focus attention on it now before the problem gets worse as broadband usage grows.

They prefer to stem it at the source. Once movies migrate from the scene to P2P, the entertainment companies are left few options: Sue computer users and follow the music industry's tactic of flooding the P2P networks with spoofed, or bogus, files to make bootlegs tougher to find and download.

On VCDQuality and other Web sites, ripping groups with names like "Pirates of The Theater," "The Empire Group," and "VideoCD" advertise the movies they have available.

Individual groups even sport their own logos or tags, images often reminiscent of the low-quality gray and black graphics used on old online bulletin boards more than a decade ago.

The groups are typically very hierarchical, with tiers of leadership, said John Malcolm, head of the Motion Picture Association of America's antipiracy unit.

"There are many of them out there, highly organized, very clandestine," Malcolm said. "They're tough nuts to crack."

The groups are often dedicated to converting video shot inside movie theaters or copied from studio screener DVDs into a certain format, such as video CDs. Others focus on acquiring and copying prerelease DVDs.

To get the latest film or software, the groups seek out and maintain contact with Hollywood studio insiders, employees at CD and DVD pressing plants, marketing staff with access to early copies and anyone else who can get them prerelease movies, openly advertising for them on bulletin boards, Forest said.

While entertainment companies have targeted popular file-sharing services and their users with litigation in recent years, they have not been able to discourage insiders who supply the ripping groups with their crop of advance film screeners, DVDs and other content.

In one highly publicized case in April, an Illinois man pleaded guilty to copyright infringement for distributing online the screener copies provided by a Hollywood insider.

Many of the Web sites, news groups and associated IRC discussion boards openly discourage any overt mention of bootlegging, banning people who do. Discussions are typically framed as advice for making legal backups of DVDs or software.

Web sites like VCDQuality advertise themselves as information clearinghouses and don't host any files.

Nonetheless, a recent scan of the movies listed by groups at VCDQuality turned up several films released within the past four weeks, including "Meet The Fockers," "Ocean's Twelve," "Fat Albert" and "Finding Neverland."

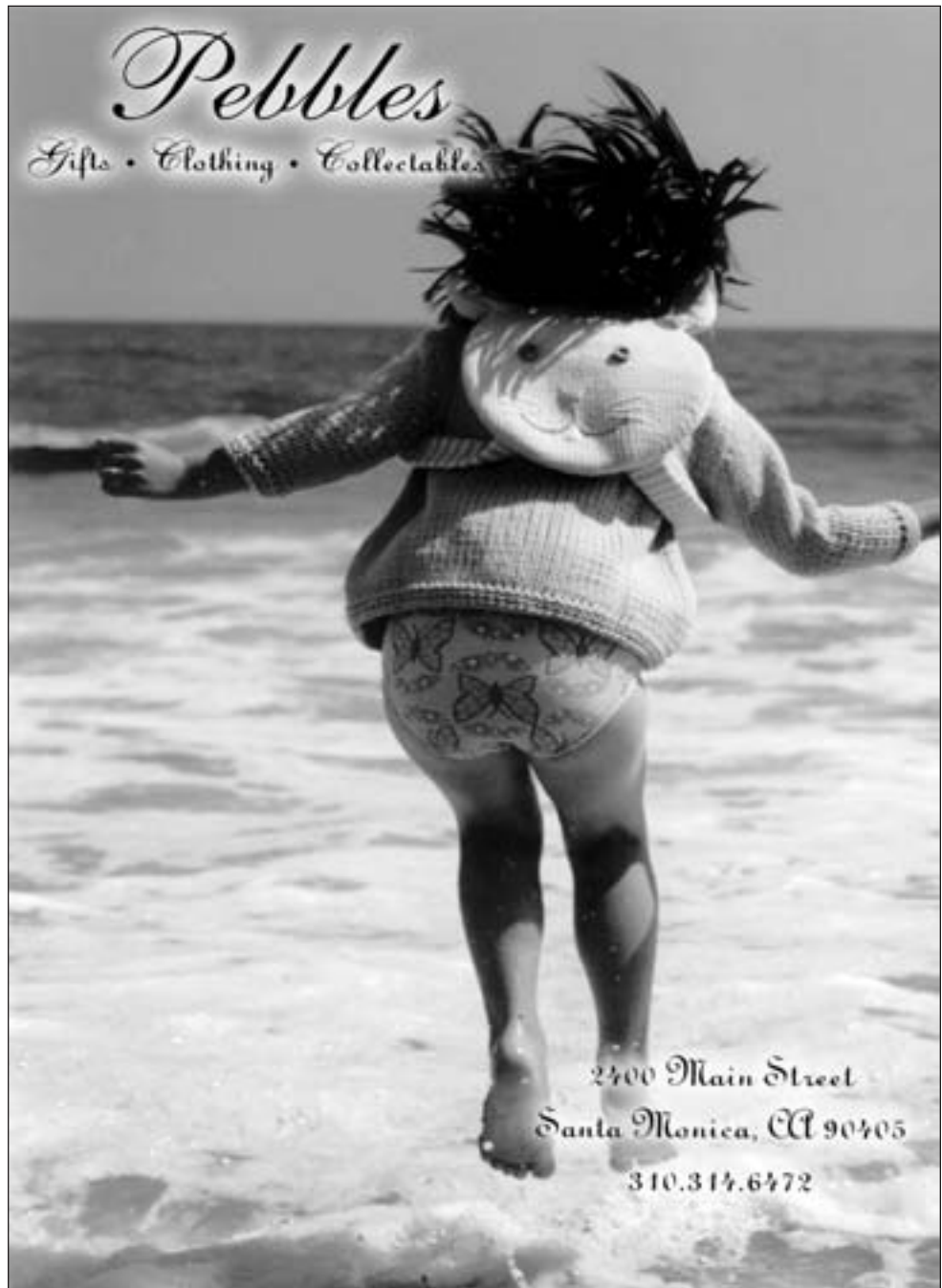
The site's administrator did not return repeated e-mail queries for comment.

While users of file-sharing programs like Kazaa, eDonkey and LimeWire are relatively easy to track and identify, the covert nature of the scene has made going after warez groups more of a challenge. To gather evidence, investigators must peel away the layers of technology the groups hide behind.

In 2002, the U.S. Justice Department shut down a group dubbed "DrinkOrDie," which gained its fame by releasing a pirated copy of the Windows 95 operating system two weeks before Microsoft Corp released it. More than 20 people in the United States were convicted.

Authorities don't have a fix on how many groups exist.

"There are a lot of similarities with the drug war," said David Israelite, chairman of the U.S. Justice Department's Intellectual Property Task Force. "You never really are going to eliminate the problem, but what you hope to do is stop its growth."



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NATIONAL

Seattle is the fittest city

BY REBECCA COOK
Associated Press Writer

SEATTLE — Must be something in the coffee.

Seattle has been named the fittest city in the United States in the February issue of Men's Fitness magazine, leaping past the buff competition from Honolulu, Colorado Springs, San Francisco and Denver.

Exercising faithfully and shunning fast food boosted Seattle to the top from No. 6 last year, Men's Fitness Editor in Chief Neal Boulton said.

"Eighty-five percent of Seattle residents get some exercise every month, and that's a really significant thing," Boulton said. The city's jittery love affair with espresso might fuel some of that activity, he noted: "There's not only a lot of it, it's pretty darn strong."

In its nonscientific Seventh Annual Fattest and Fittest Cities Report, the magazine compares 50 cities by weighing 14 factors, including fast food restaurants per capita, TV watching, air quality, and parks. In Seattle, for example, sporting

goods stores and gyms outnumber fast food joints — a key statistic.

All of the 10 fittest cities are in the West. Following Seattle were Honolulu; Colorado Springs, Colo.; San Francisco; Denver; Portland, Ore.; Sacramento, Calif.; Tucson, Ariz.; San Diego, Calif.; and Albuquerque, N.M.

Houston was named the fattest city for the fourth time in five years, followed by Philadelphia, Detroit, Memphis and Chicago.

Seattle's claim to the fitness crown makes sense to Doug Sherry and his Wheaten Terrier, Bing, who walk the three-mile path around Seattle's Green Lake every day, rain or shine.

"Everyone I know does something," explained Sherry, 35, who also hits the gym several times a week. "There's lots of good terrain to walk and bike and hike. You're close to the water, you're close to the mountains."

His advice for those seeking to emulate Seattle's healthy ways?

"Enjoy the outdoors," Sherry said. "And get a dog."

The fittest, the fattest

By The Associated Press

The fittest and fattest cities in the United States, according to a survey in the February issue of "Men's Fitness" magazine:

FITTEST CITIES

1. Seattle
2. Honolulu
3. Colorado Springs, Colo.
4. San Francisco
5. Denver
6. Portland, Ore.
7. Sacramento, Calif.
8. Tucson, Ariz.
9. San Diego, Calif.
10. Albuquerque, N.M.
11. Boston
12. Virginia Beach, Va.
13. Minneapolis, Minn.
14. Fresno, Calif.
15. Milwaukee, Wis.
16. Omaha, Neb.
17. San Jose, Calif.
18. Jacksonville, Fla.
19. Austin, Texas
20. Oakland, Calif.
21. Los Angeles
22. Arlington, Texas

23. Washington, D.C.
24. Cleveland, Ohio
25. Nashville-Davidson, Tenn.

FATTEST CITIES

1. Houston
2. Philadelphia
3. Detroit
4. Memphis
5. Chicago
6. Dallas, Texas
7. New Orleans
8. New York
9. Las Vegas
10. San Antonio, Texas
11. El Paso, Texas
12. Phoenix, Ariz.
13. Indianapolis, Ind.
14. Fort Worth, Texas
15. Mesa, Ariz.
16. Columbus, Ohio
17. Wichita, Kan.
18. Kansas City, Mo.
19. Miami
20. Long Beach, Calif.
21. Oklahoma City, Okla.
22. Tulsa, Okla.
23. Atlanta
24. Charlotte
25. Baltimore

Joke went too far for eastern Idaho lawmaker

By The Associated Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — A one-time candidate for the state House of Representatives has resigned his local Republican party position, but won't face charges for mailing a primary opponent a fake gift certificate for a visit to Dr. Jack Kevorkian.

Mike Adams resigned Tuesday as a precinct committeeman in Bonneville County and will no longer be the county's voting representative on the state GOP central committee.

"It's the right thing to do," said

Bonneville County Republican Party Chairman Damond Watkins. "The party is bigger than one person."

Watkins' brother, Bonneville County prosecuting attorney Dane Watkins Jr., said Adams won't face misdemeanor charges of making a threat against a state official, because his fake certificate sent to state Rep. Ann Rydalch didn't make a specific threat.

Adams has admitted sending Rydalch the certificate. He had challenged Rydalch in the GOP primary, but dropped out of the race a month before the election, cit-

ing health problems. Rydalch went on to win the seat.

Two months later, she reported receiving a death threat.

An Idaho State Police investigation found Adams' fingerprints on the certificate.

In a personal column published last week in the Post Register, Adams apologized and said the certificate was meant only as a joke.

Rydalch said she was "scared to death," when the certificate arrived in the mail, and suspected it came from Adams.

"What perplexed me was that someone I thought was my friend would do that," she said.

Watkins said the certificate, while clear in its meaning, contained no specific threat against Rydalch. The Idaho attorney general's office reached the same conclusion, he said.

Kevorkian was convicted in Michigan of second-degree murder in the 1998 poisoning of Thomas Youk, 52. Kevorkian called it a mercy killing. He is serving a 10- to 25-year sentence, and is eligible for parole in 2007. Kevorkian has said he assisted in at least 130 deaths.

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INTERNATIONAL



Mexico's migration guide sparks controversy in U.S.

BY OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ

Associated Press Writer

MONTERREY, Mexico — The Mexican government is distributing a comic-book guide that warns would-be migrants about the perils of crossing illegally into the United States and offers tips to stay safe — enraging some advocates of stricter immigration policies in the United States who argue the booklet encourages illegal migration.

About 1.5 million copies of the pocket-size book titled "Guide for the Mexican Immigrant" were published by Mexico's Foreign Relations Department and distributed as a free supplement in comic books popular with adults that are sold throughout the country. The booklets are also available online and at Mexican consulates in the United States.

The comic book's introduction shows an illustration of three men huddling by riverbank bushes accompanied by the statement, "This guide is intended to give you some practical advice that could be of use if you already have made the difficult decision to seek new job opportunities outside your country."

Each year, as would-be migrants start considering a trip north, the Mexican government launches radio or television campaigns to inform them about the risks they'll face along the U.S.-Mexico border.

This year, the Foreign Relations Department decided to add the guide as a way of "trying to provide the information directly" in the would-be migrants' home communities, said Geronimo Gutierrez, the department's deputy secretary for North American affairs. "Once they reach the border, it's very difficult for them to change their minds."

The booklet, which officials began distributing last month, explains the safest way to enter the United States is with a U.S.-issued visa and a Mexican passport. But it also offers tips on avoiding serious injury or death to those who have decided to cross illegally.

On one page appears a colorful drawing of people walking in the desert near power lines, with the hint that, "If you get lost, guide yourself with light poles, train tracks or dirt roads."

"Crossing a river can be very risky, especially if you cross alone and at night," the booklet warns. "Heavy clothing becomes heavier when wet, and this makes swimming or floating difficult."

The book also recommends adding salt to water to avoid dehydration when making desert crossings and notes it is best to

walk during times of low heat intensity.

Critics argue the tips serve more as instructions on how to cross illegally than as a deterrent to would-be migrants.

"With this document the Mexican government not only has not instructed its citizens to obey immigration law but, in rich detail, it has supplied a manual on how to circumvent U.S. immigration law," said John Keeley, director of communication for the U.S.-based Center for Immigration Studies, a group that favors stricter immigration policies. "It's very, very troubling."

Editorials in several U.S. papers sharply criticized the comic book. The Arizona Republic called it "an illustrated guide to Mexico's domestic failures" and The Washington Times asked that the U.S. government file an official complaint.

The Mexican government has been criticized often for not doing more to stop the flow of illegal migrants to the United States. But officials say they can do little because while aiding illegal crossings for a fee is a crime, there's no Mexican law stopping migrants from gathering near the northern border.

Every year, hundreds of migrants die in the desert, where temperatures soar above 100 degrees Fahrenheit in summer, and many drown while attempting to cross the Rio Grande. In the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, there were 325 migrant deaths along the entire U.S.-Mexico border, according to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Bureau.

Gutierrez defends the guide as an attempt to save lives and notes the book comes with a disclaimer saying it does not promote undocumented migration. The guide also explains the consequences of entering the United States without the proper documents, he says.

"The Mexican government has an obligation to take all actions possible in order to avoid the loss of lives and that is what we are trying to do in this case," Gutierrez said. Criticism of the book "seems to be the natural reaction of people who are skeptical about the whole immigration debate," he said.

Braulio Munoz, an artisan from western Jalisco state, has tried twice in the past 13 days to cross the U.S. border illegally with his 18-year-old son. He said he hadn't seen the guide but doubted anything would discourage them from attempting a third swim across the Rio Grande.

"In Jalisco there isn't any work," said Munoz, 42. "God willing, we'll make it to the United States — even if they kick us out 15 times."



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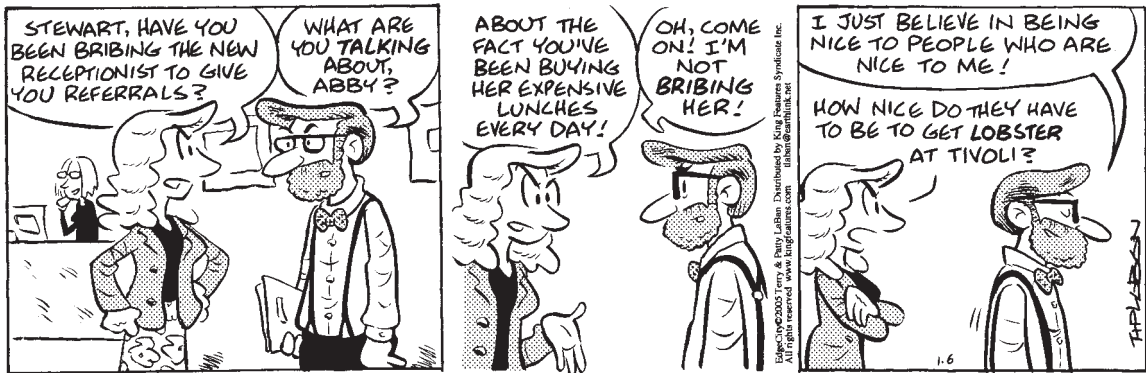


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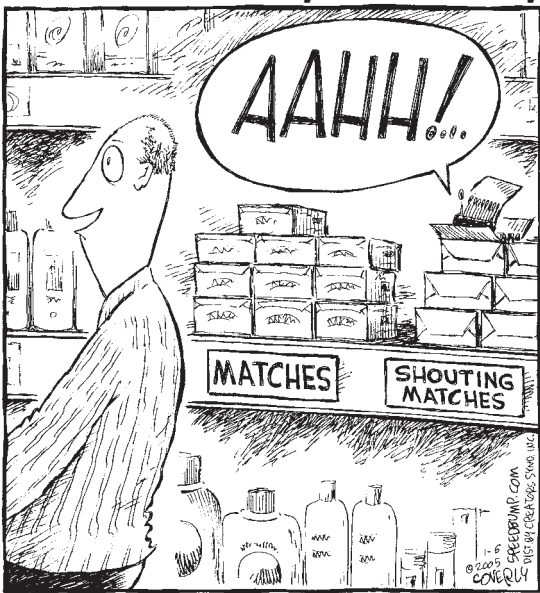
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- 1 Blinds part
- 5 Throw away
- 10 Hawaiian port
- 11 Speed skater Young
- 12 Sesame Street youngster
- 13 Arnie with an army
- 14 Calling sound
- 16 Fortitude
- 20 Recoiled
- 23 Grenade part
- 24 Still life subjects
- 25 Mutt's place
- 27 Chair part
- 28 Prepares for a blow
- 29 Rocket part
- 32 Countri-fied
- 36 Chaos
- 39 Alpine goat
- 40 Soar
- 41 Words of denial
- 42 Polite chaps
- 43 Lab event

DOWN

- 1 Storage spot

- 2 Caron film
- 3 — mater
- 4 Line of icons
- 5 Leg part
- 6 Star
- 7 Border
- 8 Pub order
- 9 Golf goal
- 11 Noted baby expert
- 15 Does leather work
- 17 Master-work
- 18 Muses count
- 19 Finishes
- 20 Cross
- 21 Leander's love
- 22 2000 Super Bowl champs
- 25 Ivy League school
- 26 Milk carton words
- 28 "The Velvet Fog"
- 30 Brilliance

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Yesterday's answer

- 22 2000 Super Bowl champs
- 25 Ivy League school
- 26 Milk carton words
- 28 "The Velvet Fog"
- 30 Brilliance
- 31 They may be checked
- 33 Conical instrument
- 34 Takes home
- 35 Stage direction
- 36 Chips buy
- 37 Cain raiser
- 38 Jumble of noise

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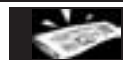
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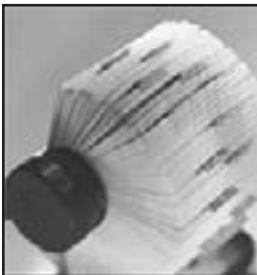
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NYC entices film and TV crews with tax credit

By The Associated Press

SANTA MONICA — Rocker Jerry Lee Lewis, country star Eddy Arnold and jazz pioneer Jelly Roll Morton are among this year's recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Recording Academy, which also presents the Grammy Awards.

Janis Joplin, blues pianist Pinetop Perkins, Led Zeppelin, the Staple Singers, jazz drummer Art Blakey, pianist, conductor and composer Morton Gould, and Alvin P. "A.P." Carter, Sara Carter and Maybelle Carter of the original Carter family also will be honored during a Feb. 12 ceremony, it was announced Tuesday.

Trustees Awards will go to composer Hoagy Carmichael, who wrote the music for "Georgia on My Mind"; Don Cornelius, creator of TV's "Soul Train"; Alfred Lion, who co-founded the jazz label Blue Note Records; and Billy Taylor, a jazz recording artist, composer and educator.

Technical Grammy Awards will go to producer Phil Ramone, an early advocate of the CD who also has been an audio supervisor for Grammy telecasts, and to speaker company JBL Professional.

The awards "recognize music people who have made a lasting contribution to culture around the world," Recording Academy President Neil Portnow said in a statement. "These profoundly inspiring figures are being honored as legendary performers and archetypal musicians, cultural ambassadors and technical visionaries."

The 47th annual Grammy Awards will be presented Feb. 13 in Los Angeles.

NEW YORK — Film and television production companies that work in Manhattan will get a 5 percent tax credit of up to \$12.5 million a year under a new law signed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

"This film tax credit will make New York City more

competitive and provide more jobs to professionals in this key economic sector," said Bloomberg, who signed the legislation Monday.

A law signed by Gov. George Pataki on Aug. 20 provided a 10 percent tax credit for film production companies that work in the state and included a provision for New York City to offer additional tax breaks.

Film production companies working in the city will now be able to claim both the city and state tax credit.

"I am pleased that Albany has acted and we now are in a position to follow suit," Bloomberg said.

Bloomberg said film production is a \$5 billion-a-year industry in the city and employs more than 100,000 New Yorkers.

"New York City is the greatest film set in the world, and this law will help return New York City to prominence as a location for film and television production, ensuring that films that are set in New York City are actually shot here," he said.

BOMBAY, India — India's leading musicians will play through the night to raise money for the tsunami victims, said percussionist Zakir Hussain.

Sixteen classical musicians have already confirmed their participation for Friday's concert, "Yogdaan (Contribution)," to be held in Bombay, India's financial and entertainment capital, Hussain, an Indian drums virtuoso, said Tuesday.

"We're getting calls from so many artists who want to help," he said.

NEW YORK — The South by Southwest Film Festival, in the heart of Texas, will celebrate some of the state's native sons with its opening-night premiere of "The Wendell Baker Story," a comedy from brothers Luke, Andrew and Owen Wilson.

The film is scheduled for March 11, the first night of the festival, which runs through March 19 in the capital city of Austin and will feature nearly 200 features and shorts.

Luke Wilson ("Old School") wrote and stars in the movie, which he co-directed with Andrew, the oldest of the three. He plays an ex-con working at a retirement hotel, where Owen Wilson ("Shanghai Noon") plays the head nurse.

The Wilsons grew up in Dallas, the setting for their first film, the low-budget "Bottle Rocket."

"As film fans and fellow Texans, we have nothing but admiration for the Wilson brothers," festival producer Matt Dentler said Tuesday. "I can't think of a better idea than having their directorial debut launch this year's festival. You want to give audiences a great time, and this is a fantastic way to do it."

LONDON — Jude Law has become engaged to his actress-girlfriend, Sienna Miller, proposing to her on Christmas Day.

Law, whose films include "The Talented Mr. Ripley" and "I (Heart) Huckabees," proposed to Miller on Christmas morning in England, presenting her with a gold ring featuring nine diamonds set in platinum, the couple's spokeswoman, Ciara Parkes, said Wednesday.

"Both their families and friends are thrilled and of course Jude's children are, too," Parkes said.

A date for the wedding has not been set.

Law, 32, divorced fashion designer-actress Sadie Frost in October 2003 after a six-year marriage and three children.

Miller, 23, was Law's co-star in the remake of "Alfie."

Law earned Oscar nominations for his roles in "The Talented Mr. Ripley" and "Cold Mountain." His screen credits also include "Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow," "Closer" and "The Aviator," all released this year.

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