

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

FANTASY 5

20, 25, 15, 18, 32

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 9, 8, 9

Evening picks: 9, 2, 9

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 3, Hot Shot

2nd Place: 1, Gold Rush

3rd Place: 7, Eureka

Race Time: 1:45.80



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

George Duncan was finally fired by the New York Department of Corrections in November, after having taken 744 "sick" days in 15 years (for spikes of high blood pressure), none of which were ever authenticated by doctors examining Duncan afterward. And a week before that, the city of Vicksburg, Miss., took a step to alleviate its own problem with employees' illnesses: Henceforth, city workers will be expected to give 48 hours' notice before taking sick days.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Literature is mostly about having sex and not much about having children. Life is the other way around."

— David Lodge



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School supporters give City Hall ultimatum

Proposed charter amendment seeks \$6 million annually for school district

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — A group of school supporters forced City Hall's hand Tuesday by pushing for a measure on the fall ballot that, if passed, would mandate \$6 million in public money be given to the school district every year.

Representatives from the "Community for Excellent Public Schools" filed a proposal to amend the Santa Monica charter with City Clerk Maria Stewart. The amendment would require a portion of City Hall's general fund be funneled directly into the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District indefinitely. The grassroots community organization, also known as CEPS, will have to get 15 percent of Santa Monica voters — about 8,250 people — to sign a petition by May to get the measure on the November ballot.

In California's Scotts Valley, the local school district faces the prospect of slashing \$900,000 from a \$15 million budget next year. So the district hired a marketing firm to find companies willing to sponsor a new swim center or theater at the local high school.

In return, according to school board member Allison Niday, companies will get plaques to advertise their

See SCHOOLS, page 7

district, or let voters decide how City Hall's money should be spent.

"We will swing into aggressive signature mode," said Rebecca Kennerly, a CEPS spokesperson. "We have until May ... [But] I don't think anyone is looking forward to an election or a campaign."

What school supporters call a nudge or warning, politicians consider a threat.

"I think it is divisive," said City Councilman Herb Katz. "I don't think you pass a charter amendment where it



David Hume Kennerly/Special to the Daily Press

(Left to right) 'Community for Excellent Public Schools' co-chairs, Shari Davis and Louise Jaffe, along with CEPS steering committee member, Ralph Mechur, file a charter-amendment proposal with City Clerk Maria Stewart on Tuesday at City Hall. The proposed amendment would mandate that a portion of city funds be given to local schools every year.

can't be changed. I don't like that they are holding it over our heads and are forcing our hand."

Mayor Richard Bloom agrees. "I'm very concerned about any measure that restricts the economic flexibility of the city," he said. "The city of Santa Monica is being mandated that city revenue be spent outside of our jurisdiction, and that's troublesome to me."

The measure would require the city

See AMENDMENT, page 7

Weller pleads "not guilty"

Lawyers say market crash was an accident, not a crime

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

LAX COURTHOUSE — The Santa Monica man who drove through a crowded Farmers' Market last summer leaving 10 people dead and hurting another 63 pleaded not guilty on Tuesday to felony charges of manslaughter.

Russell Weller, 87, will remain free without bail until he is tried. He faces 10 counts of vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence and could spend as long as 18 years behind bars if convicted.

Lawyers said there is no doubt Weller caused the carnage in downtown Santa

See WELLER, page 6



John Wood/Daily Press

Prosecutor Ann Rundle talks to the media outside of the LAX Courthouse on Tuesday.



John Wood/Daily Press

Attorneys for Russell Weller speak to reporters during a press conference outside of the courthouse on Tuesday.



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Get to bed early 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)

★★★★ Boundaries are tested — not just yours, but also those of others. You might want to say “enough,” but you won’t. You will keep plugging along, doing your best. Demands hit on all fronts. You have the energy to make it all work. Tonight: You’re exhausted. Early to bed.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ You have a lot to say, but is this the time? With the Full Moon, others might be reactive. Instead, be a good listener and explain how you feel and think later. The response will be better then. Toss in your creativity. Tonight: Vanish and be with someone you enjoy.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ This Full Moon hits you in the wallet. Think through decisions carefully. Tame your wild lifestyle for a while. Remember, you also enjoy yourself at home. Consider putting in more overtime, but do so from home. Tonight: Lesson No. 1: Fun doesn’t have to be extravagant.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ The Full Moon in your sign puts a big smile on your face, though others might be a bit uncomfortable with what is happening. You are in charge right now, though a Capricorn could try to let you know that this isn’t the case. Tonight: As you like it.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Play it low-key. Remember why you are at work and what you expect to accomplish. You might want to call out, work from home or chain your door at work. Your job is your highest priority, as well as your health. Tonight: Quiet works.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ What you want could happen in an unusual way. You need to flow with diverse energy. Make all meetings and stay on top of events, messages and problems. You have the energy to do just that! Tonight: Zoom in on what you want.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ You might feel like you are confronting a lot and are overwhelmed. Pressure comes from all sides. Find a trusted associate to chat with. Your instincts come into play in an unusual manner. Tonight: Early to bed.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ You might feel the Full Moon; learn how to make it work for you. Don’t do anything halfway right now. Return calls. A meeting or get-together could prove to be instrumental. Tonight: Where the action is.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Dealing with others truly could be a handful. Be reasonable about what is going on in your life and with others. Somehow, everyone wants to put in their 2 cents. Let them, but also know that you don’t need to follow their suggestions. Tonight: A must show.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Determine how much you can and cannot do. Also, you need to set boundaries. Do just that, even though you could be uncomfortable. Detach from the action. Tonight: Listen to the various suggestions.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ You might want to take off on this Full Moon, as you could be overwhelmed by what is going down. Health and work make tremendous demands of you. If you can work from home or behind closed doors, do so. This, too, will pass. Tonight: Easy does it right now. Let go of stress.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ Evaluate your priorities. You might not have a choice, as everyone seems to want something from you — be it friends, a loved one or a major partner. You could be overwhelmed. Let it go, but know that you could be in the midst of a whirlwind. Tonight: Be with someone you can relax with.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Main thoroughfare closed to traffic

By Daily Press staff

A water-main break that occurred on New Year's Day has resulted in the closure of a key access road from the freeway for most of the month.

The main break caused damage to the intersection of Lincoln Boulevard and Colorado Avenue and resulted in the temporary closure of Lincoln from Broadway to the freeway. Although Lincoln Boulevard was partially opened to vehicles on Friday, Colorado Avenue was closed from Seventh Street to Lincoln Boulevard.

Lincoln Boulevard will be restricted to one lane in each direction between Broadway and Interstate 10 for at least a week while crews do repair work. Due to water-main replacement and street repaving, Colorado will remain closed between Lincoln Boulevard and Seventh Street for up to three weeks. Motorists are advised to use the Fourth/Fifth Street exit from westbound I-10 to reach downtown Santa Monica.

Merchants to find out what's wrong with City Hall

By Daily Press staff

Want to know why it's so difficult and costly to set up a business in Santa Monica?

The final results of a study commissioned by the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce that delve into City Hall's planning department operation will be presented next week.

City Hall has a reputation for being time consuming and costly to business owners, primarily due to expenses and delays created by the planning department, chamber officials said. The study was conducted in order to test that theory and come up with recommendations for the planning department.

The study was conducted by a team of University of Southern California MBA students — Audney DePaulo, David DeVore, Shana Rosengart, Daniel Scott and Stephanie Wong.

Physically opening a business is one of the most difficult and costly phases of starting a new company, officials said. Locating space, converting it to a specific use and getting the approvals needed to open the doors and start serving customers is time consuming and often costs much more than projected, chamber officials said.

The study's purpose was to conduct a balanced analysis of the city planning processes of four Southern California municipalities. The study also identified opportunities for Santa Monica to encourage entrepreneurs to set up shop here.

The two-phase project involved researching the projected time, process and cost of opening a business in Santa Monica, Culver City, Pasadena and Burbank. The study also involved interviewing new businesses in each of the cities. The final report reveals whether the planning department's expectations are close to the reality of what happens in each city. The study also identifies areas where the planning process can be made less cumbersome and where entrepreneurs can take action to reduce the time frame and complexity of the review process.

The study's results will be discussed at the chamber's luncheon on Jan. 13 at the Four Points by Sheraton, 530 Pico Blvd., in the penthouse suite from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The cost is \$25 for prepaid members, \$30 non-prepaid members and \$35 non-members. For reservations, call (310) 393-9825, ext. 10.

Paying bills made easier

By Daily Press staff

Residents and businesses in Santa Monica are now able to pay city utility bills online or by phone using a credit card.

The city of Santa Monica utility bill includes fees for water, sewer, refuse and other city services. The online service is available to anyone with access to the Internet at <http://billpay.santa-monica.org>.

Payments by touch-tone telephone also may be made using "City Hall On Call," the city's 24-hour information source. Dial (310) 458-8999 and follow the recorded instructions.

CORRECTION — A story that ran in the Jan. 6 edition regarding Arthur Archuleta, a felon who stands trial for possession of a firearm, contained a factual error. His DNA, but not his fingerprints, was found on the weapon.



This morning will start with the same pathetic surf as Tuesday, but new WNW swell will start arriving through the second half of the day setting up a few new waves before dark.

OUTLOOK: The swell turns more westerly, builds overnight and throughout the day on Thursday, and eventually peaks on Friday.

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

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THURSDAY	2:40	2.42	4:2	-0.77	8:55	6.04	11:02	3.56
FRIDAY	3:15	2.41	4:54	-0.67	9:30	5.94	11:36	3.60

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The QLine

During an interview with the Daily Press, Santa Monica Mayor Richard Bloom outlined his top priorities in 2004 for Santa Monica. Among them are reducing gunfire in an eastside neighborhood, increasing arts in the city and helping the school district get financially stable.

Because politicians serve as constituents for the voters who live here, it might be beneficial for elected leaders to

know what residents think should be the priorities this year.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "What should officials focus on this year as their top priorities?"

Call (310) 285-8106 with your response before Thursday at 5 p.m. We'll print them in Friday's paper. Please limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.



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OPINION

LETTERS

Call the cops, she's been robbed

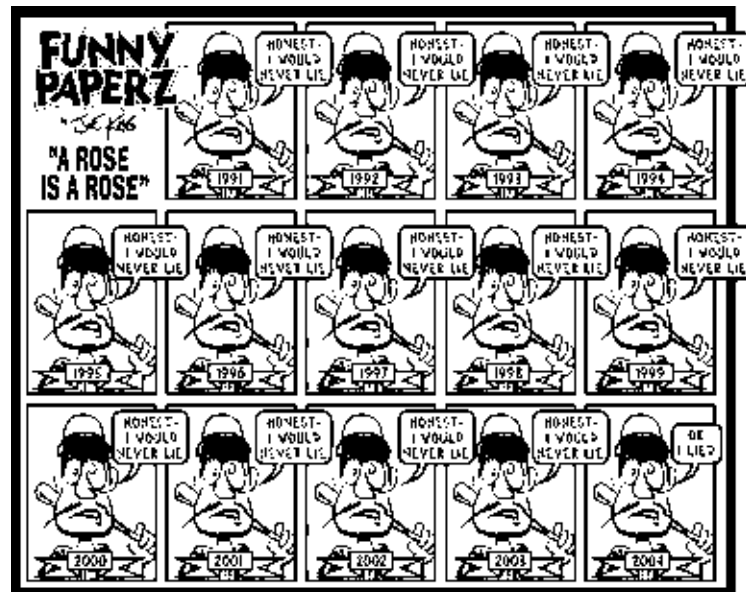
Editor:

Ms. Kreis's stated fact that the Santa Monica City Council is ineffectual is totally correct (SMDP, letters to the editor, page 6). What she may not know is that laws to stop panhandling, sleeping in doorways and parks, loitering and support of the homeless "causes" in this city do already exist.

There is a no panhandling sign at Polly's Pies with the municipal code listed. It is located just above where several regular homeless beg outside the door, directly underneath the posted sign. There is a "no sleeping in doorway" type sign posted on Fourth Street, just north of what will be the new Circuit City. Even though there's homeless sleeping in that doorway, you can still see the sign because it is posted above the "sleeping zone."

There was a law passed in 1994, city ordinance 2.69.010 (f) (SMDP, Bill Bauer Dec. 26, 2003), that (in effect) states that the City Council cannot do anything that will increase the numbers of homeless in Santa Monica. It is now 10 years later. How can a law passed 10 years ago forbidding the encouragement of the homeless lifestyle result in this city writing a check everyday for \$20,273 to the OPCC (\$7.4 million for the year)? Somebody needs to call the police, because I have been robbed, as a taxpayer, as a third-generation resident and as a voter.

Lori Emerson
Santa Monica



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Is Ralph's high-flying ego simply Nader's nadir?



INCITES

By Ed Silverstein

It rises from the deepest depths of the mercury-tainted oceans and up a mighty river past the decaying corpses of recent fish kills. It slips into a tributary and meanders against the current until, confronted by debris dumped from a coal strip mine, it is forced upon the land.

Onward it slogs through pristine wetlands/condo developments, then veers onto the scar of a new logging road that has been ripped through a thinned forest. All at once it ascends, climbing past oil wells piercing the Arctic wilderness, up over the tallest mountain peaks until it is soaring through the brown smudged atmosphere and into the depleted ozone layer.

And we wonder, is it a bird, a plane, a trial balloon? No, it is Ralph Nader's ego.

"Just Ralph," as I like to call him, has announced he is considering yet another tragic run for the Presidency. It is likely that he will be the candidate for the Green party who, according to their Web site, is committed to environmentalism, non-violence, social justice, universal health care, eliminating corporate globalization, alternative energy, election reform and decent wages for workers.

But it is obvious that the Green Party can't see the clear-cut forest through the trees. Their candidate's 2000 run did nothing but make the grass GREENER for the other side and browner for everyone else. By splitting the progressive vote, Nader handed the Presidency to George Bush whose only commitment is to his big-money corporate contributors.

The Bush Administration has created the absolute worst-case scenario for the environment. Bush has denied global warming, obliterated environmental protections, weakened regulatory bodies and stacked the courts with hundreds of anti-environmental judges. Alternative energy is a non-starter and universal health care will never see the light of day unless it becomes another corporate giveaway.

Further, his administration has pursued violent, preemptive confrontations justified with lies and shifting rationalizations. The rich have realized enormous benefits on the backs of the poor, minorities and those with physical and mental handicaps. His administration has trashed civil rights, embraced globalization and eroded decent wages and benefits through union-busting schemes and shifting well-paying civil-service positions into lesser private-sector jobs.

Of course, "Just Ralph" doesn't accept any responsibility for this mayhem. According to the Jolly Green Giant of the Green Party, there is no difference between Democrats and Republicans. Nader also claims his candidacy had nothing

to do with Gore losing the election—proving yet again that denial is not confined to users of miracle-diet supplements and the psychic-network hotline.

The fact is that Nader's candidacy garnered nearly 3 percent of the vote and cost the Democrats New Hampshire and Florida. Either one of those states would have been enough to have propelled Gore into the White House and given the rest of us a kinder, gentler nation.

To be fair, Nader's run in 2000 could be written off as naiveté. Bush had claimed he would be the type of president to pursue a non-partisan agenda. And there had been some hope that Nader's candidacy might garner the necessary 5 percent of the vote to qualify the Greens for matching election funds. But that veil of innocence has been lifted.

A second term for Bush, without the concerns of being reelected and with the potential to replace up to three Supreme Court Justices as well as hundreds of federal judges, could spell disaster for progressive values for decades. And what "Just Ralph" seems to be ignoring is that once you build on wetlands they are gone forever. Endangered animals that lose protections could very well disappear from the face of the earth. And with a horde of anti-regulatory/pro-business judges in place, workers and consumers will lose the very consumer protections championed by Nader himself.

Nader's candidacy will siphon off just

enough votes to condemn the already-slim prospects of the Democratic candidate. It is also likely that many of the Green party's votes from 2000 will defect to the Democrats. This will irreparably damage the Greens' credibility and prove they are not ready for prime time in the national arena. Even Ronnie Dugger, who presented Nader at the two previous Green Party conventions, felt compelled to write an article for "The Nation" magazine titled "Ralph Don't Run." But "Just Ralph" doesn't seem to be listening.

For Nader to run in 2004 can only be construed as an act of extraordinary hubris from a monumental ego or ideological dogma that is so unflinching that it has blinded the candidate to the devastation he has wreaked upon the party's core principles and the world.

What separates progressives is the willingness to put the needs of others ahead their own desires. And it's time for Nader to do just that.

■ *Author's Note:* Since this column was written, Nader has declared that it is unlikely he will run as a Green due to a dispute with the party. He is, however, still contemplating an equally disastrous run as an Independent and will make a final decision by the end of this month).

(Ed Silverstein is a free-lance writer who splits his time living in green though very unGreen Montana and the browner, though very Green, Santa Monica. Comments can be sent to edsincites@aol.com).

Opinions expressed are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned. Preference will be given to those that are e-mailed to sack@smdp.com. All letters must include the author's name and telephone number for purposes of verification. Letters also may be mailed to our offices located at 1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite 202, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

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COMMENTARY



Poor George is stuck in his own spider hole

I've been noticing a lot of anger toward George W. Bush lately. The phrase "Bush hater" is getting as common as say, "Clinton hater." Who thought that was possible? One of my relatives announced at Christmas that the Bush/Cheney administration is the worst ever in American history. He's a moderate.

I don't always agree with President Bush. I oppose the war in Iraq. I think his tax cuts are obscene. And I happen to enjoy living in the environment — with its air, water and other potential resources — which seem to be on Bush's enemies list. (Is there a deck of cards for that?)

But I think it's time for a little compassion for President Bush. I'm serious about this. And I'm not just borrowing that word from "compassionate conservatism," his excellent phrase that got him elected, oops, selected by a majority of the Supreme Court back in 2001.

Look at what he's up against. First, the man is not the brightest bulb around. Sure he went to Andover and Yale. But that was prison! He tried to fail — he did! Cs, Ds, incompletes, but they wouldn't let him. Do you think it's really fun to be stuck at the pinnacles of higher learning in this country, when reading the newspaper is a challenge, and all you're really interested in is partying, drinking and ... remind me, do we know of any other interests?

Let's just say it can't be amusing to hang out with a bunch of pointy heads at the finest academic institutions in the world when your own candle power is, let's say, modest on a good day, and you'd rather be riding an ATV on some dusty piece of scrub somewhere in Texas, or anywhere else.

And by the same token — in fact, it was the same token on a train called the Bush dynasty — the White House is no party either. Talk about gilded cage. All those officials, the secret service watching your every move, wall-to-wall carpet and expensive knick-knacks everywhere that you can't touch. The president is able to get out for a spin on Air Force One now and then ("Thanksgiving was gonna be Hell, man!") and land on an aircraft carrier once in a while. But let's face it, he's not exactly comfortable in other countries

like Canada or Massachusetts, and you can't just slip out for a couple Lone Stars and a round of pool.

To make matters worse, the president's knees are now officially shot — they went kaplooney after years of running — so now he's not even able to get out of the house for a jog.

Bush is spending even more time now with his wife Laura and Vice President Dick Cheney — both a lot of fun. You can see why the extremely but-toned-up Condoleezza Rice starts to look like a barrel of laughs at this point. Jeb is down in Florida, a constant reminder that there are real politicians in the family (who probably want your job), and

George and Bar are up in Kennebunkport — bracing for the worst — knowing that their son, and they do love him, is in way over his head. Thank God for Cheney. That's what

Papa is thinking.

There's an old saying that everyone knows the truth. And you can be sure that deep in his consciousness, underneath the bravado, the swagger, even underneath his faith in God, George W. Bush knows he is in way over his head. The vice president, his parents and his wife — along with half the country and most of the world — are well aware of this. And he has no choice but to show up every day and act the part of president. I don't care how good the toys are or how tasty the food, it just doesn't sound like fun.

So to the Bush haters — a growing population, now inflamed by a cottage industry of books cataloging what they call lies (which were more like, "Hey, I don't write this stuff! I just read it out loud!") — to the Bush haters, I say, step back and have a little compassion for this most ill-situated man. Think of the times you've felt inadequate, stupid, totally unprepared for the situation. Don't spend one more second hating George Bush.

Instead, pick up the phone and make sure your sister, your kids, your neighbors and your dogs are registered and ready to liberate poor George once and for all in 2004.

(Beth Solomon is a Santa Monica resident and a free-lance writer).

Guest Commentary

By Beth Solomon

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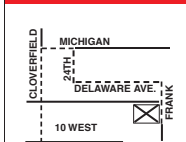
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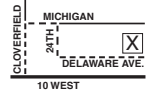


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LOCAL

Market crash: Civil suits moving forward

WELLER, from page 1

Monica on July 16, but said he is not guilty of any crime.

"The pain, suffering and heartache of the families and survivors must be unbearable at times," said Jim Bianco, Weller's defense attorney. "But no amount of pain, no amount of suffering and no amount of heartache can transform a terrible accident into a crime."

Bianco said a variety of factors contributed to the accident. Those included Weller's heart condition, called "second-degree heart block," which can hamper circulation and cause dizziness or loss of consciousness. Bianco added that Weller might have accidentally hit the gas pedal instead of the brake, causing him to careen uncontrollably through the crowded market.

Prosecutors, who asked the judge to hold Weller in lieu of \$50,000 bond, said they have more than 3,000 pages of evidence and 800 witnesses in their case against Weller. A date for a preliminary trial is scheduled for Feb. 9.

"The evidence will show that Mr. Weller was completely awake, alert and in control of that vehicle at the time of the accident," said LA Deputy District Attorney Ann Rundle, who later added, "Everyone is responsible for their criminal behavior, regardless of their age."

Weller, dressed in a dark blazer and tan pants, walked slowly with a cane into the courtroom and was escorted by Los Angeles County sheriffs. Because of the extensive media interest in his case, Weller was chaperoned into and out of the LAX Courthouse through a private entrance.

About 50 reporters, lawyers, law officers and others were witness to the courtroom proceedings. A white-haired Weller, wearing glasses and a mustache, sat with his hands crossed in his lap. He leaned forward when LA Superior Court Judge Paula Adele Mabrey asked if he understood his rights.

"Yes, your honor," Weller replied quietly.

Since the accident, Weller, apparently suffering from a battered spirit and deteriorated health, has remained secluded in his home north of Montana Avenue. Bianco said Weller, undergoing two heart-related surgeries and suffering from a "ravaging infection" that required he take antibiotics through an IV for a month, has been in and out of the hospital since the July incident.

Despite demands from some victims and family members that Weller publicly apologize, Bianco said there are no plans for Weller to personally address the public (see related story). However, attorneys are arranging for Weller to turn himself in to authorities to be formally booked. He will be immediately released, officials said.

Last month, SMPD and the California Highway Patrol completed an extensive investigation into the accident and turned it over to the LA District Attorney's Office. They recommended that manslaughter charges be filed against Weller. SMPD Chief James T. Butts Jr. noted that Weller did not try to stop and said Weller sped through the market for about 1,000 feet. He

stopped only after a victim's body was trapped underneath his car.

In arguing for bail to be set at \$50,000, Rundle told the judge Weller should be considered a danger to society because he might again decide to drive, despite having had his license revoked shortly after the crash. Defense attorneys compared that possibility to Weller robbing a bank and said Weller is an asset to the community who poses no threat and will not flee.

**"Everyone is responsible
for their criminal
behavior, regardless of
their age."**

— ANN RUNDLE
LA Deputy District Attorney

"If anything, he's changed his life since July 16, becoming a recluse in his own home," said attorney Mark Overland, who is working alongside Bianco. Overland also pointed to Weller's extensive volunteer work with local schools, the library and his church, and to Weller's military background.

In the end, Judge Mabrey ordered Weller freed without bail but said he must not drive any vehicle under any circumstance. Weller, with his hands resting on the table in front of him, nodded as the judge delivered her decision.

While the Farmers' Market crash works its way through the criminal courts, many of the victims and their families have retained attorneys to pursue Weller, along with the city of Santa Monica, which has held the market for years, and possibly General Motors, which manufactured Weller's 1992 Buick LeSabre, for monetary compensation in the civil arena.

So far, about 30 claims have been filed against City Hall. But lawyers there said the city is not liable and have rejected all of those claims. That has not stopped the influx of lawsuits attorneys say will be filed soon.

Brian Panish, who has been retained by nearly 10 clients involved in the crash, said City Hall bears the greatest portion of liability because it should have known the market setting was dangerous. He pointed to the barricades erected at the Third Street Promenade and said the same should have been done on Arizona Avenue, where the twice-weekly Farmers' Market is held.

"They drive the people in there for a profit, they've got to protect them," he said. "It clearly was a tragedy, but it was predictable and foreseeable that someone was going to drive by, and could lose control."

Dena Weiss, a lawyer based in West LA, agreed.

"On some streets, which are busy, there are little end pillars, and on other streets that are absolutely swamped, there is nothing — there are no pillars," said Weiss, whose office is handling more than six of the lawsuits.

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LOCAL

Council would lose control of financial discretion with charter amendment

AMENDMENT, from page 1

to provide a minimum of \$6 million in annual revenues to the school district, or about 4 percent of designated general funds, whichever is greater. Also, funding to the district would be modestly increased each year — but only when the city's revenues grow by at least 3.5 percent.

Last year's contribution to the district from City Hall was \$5.25 million — its regular \$3 million annual contribution, plus \$2.25 million in one-time funds. City Hall also doled out one-time funds above and beyond its annual contribution in previous years, despite its own budget problems.

The SMMUSD faced a \$13 million budget shortfall last year but was able to close the gap through personnel cuts and new revenue sources, such as the parcel tax, which will bring in \$6.5 million annually over the next six years.

But with federal and state funding uncertain, school supporters are afraid more cuts will need to be made in the future and, more importantly, new programs will never see the light of day. And as costs continue to increase, more funding will be necessary, school supporters say.

"We believe this is a very good addition to the city's charter," says CEPS co-chair Louise Jaffe. "Over time it will increase school funding,

but just as importantly, it will provide stability and predictability for both the schools and the city government, without raising taxes or jeopardizing current city and social services."

And with a more than \$350 million annual budget, school supporters believe City Hall can afford to continue its financial commitment to the district.

"We live in a very prosperous city, and it has the resources," CEPS co-chair Shari Davis said. "This measure would represent a small portion of city funds while greatly benefiting our schools."

In recent weeks, Santa Monica City Council members have been looking for ways to provide ongoing stable funding to education. And school supporters hope the charter amendment will expedite what could be a long, drawn-out decision-making process.

"We applaud the council's efforts to support education," says Ralph Mechur, CEPS steering committee member. "We look forward to working with them to find a long-term solution and hope our charter amendment will be seen as a blueprint for a solution that can work for everyone."

It was suggested last month that City Hall, weary of a developing pattern of school supporters marching in front of the Council and asking for more cash every year, could purchase

or rent nearly two dozen district properties. Under the proposed plan, schools would earn millions of dollars while local officials would have an opportunity to build more underground parking, create open space and make other improvements that could benefit greater Santa Monica.

It's a better solution than forcing local government to earmark a portion of its annual revenues for schools, officials said.

And although Councilman Katz, who proposed the idea, wants to continue discussing funding options, Mayor Bloom said the council already is doing what it can.

"I don't think anything needs to be worked out," he said, adding he'll read the amendment and consider it carefully. "The City Council has taken the lead on education funding. We've done it in a responsible way, and I have every confidence that the council and future councils will continue to do that."

"It is fiscally inappropriate to allocate millions of additional funding without providing a new revenue source," he added.

Councilman Kevin McKeown, who hasn't read the amendment, also believes a new revenue source is the responsible way to fund local schools.

"There aren't any more pockets to be taken from," he said.

Advertising rights given to companies

SCHOOLS, from page 1

help, or mentions in school newspapers.

Similar deals are being made across the country at all levels of education as money-strapped schools increasingly turn to companies for financial support.

"First and foremost, our schools are struggling," the National School Boards Association's Dan Fuller said. "Many districts are engaged in this (commercialism) because of the dire straits they're in. This presents a real opportunity and a trend that will continue and possibly grow."

As a result, corporate advertisements are cropping up on everything from high school scoreboards to the sides of school buses. A Dr Pepper billboard is atop a Texas school, earning that school district millions of dollars.

And soft drinks are being sold under contract in many schools.

In Seattle, the school district — its budget so tight that nearly 200 staffers had to be cut — has renewed an exclusive deal with Coca-Cola Co. for vending machines in middle and high schools. The five-year contract,

worth more than \$1.5 million for the district, helps fund field trips, yearbooks, school newspapers and extracurricular activities.

Colleges and universities — and even New York City itself — have also been signing on with corporations.

The University of Vermont is getting \$4.3 million over 10 years from Coca-Cola in exchange for giving the company the right to provide all the soft drinks, bottled water, packaged juices and sports drinks sold in vending

machines and campus dining rooms.

Just a few months ago, the makers of Snapple won exclusive rights to sell their bottled water and fruit juices in vending machines on all city property in New York, including schools. Snapple will pay the city \$106 million and spend \$60 million more to market and promote the city over the five-year contract. The city's public school system is the nation's largest, with 1,200 schools and 1.1 million students.

Critics say such deals erode the schools' long-held

ability to insulate children from marketing and promote a climate where children are being asked to pay for education one soda at a time. And the sale of soft drinks in school, they argue, may add to the roughly 15 percent of children and teens that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls overweight.

"It's really a bargain with the devil because what these districts essentially are doing is selling their students' health," said Alex

See SCHOOLS, page 10

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2003: Not enough property for sale in Santa Monica



DAYS ON THE MARKET

By Jodi Summers

To describe the real-estate market in 2003, it could be said that inventory did not meet the demand.

Most local homeowners who were interested in selling property and taking the value out of their home had already done so. 2003 saw close to a 20 percent decline over 2002 in single-family sales. It's not that properties have gone unsold, it's that there's no inventory. Income properties saw a trend toward larger unit buildings, but the gross rent multiplier — which can determine the price — remained the same.

Now for the details.

According to the Multiple Listing Service, Santa Monica in 2003 saw the sale of 379 single-family homes, down from 463 sold in 2002. We're now in our median range. In 2000, 360 homes sold, and 1998 saw 392 homes sell. We're there.

"The decline in sales is due more to a lack of inventory than anything else," noted one real-estate executive. "Prices

are up about 20 percent over last year, so it's not like the demand has declined."

Of 2003 single-family residence sales 183 were priced under \$1 million, 123 were priced between \$1 and \$2 million, and 73 were priced at more than \$2 million. For a point of perspective, 2002 single-family residence sales saw 258 under \$1 million, 149 between \$1 and \$2 million, and 57 at more than \$2 million.

The high-end property is described as a "sophisticated villa on a double lot" on Palisades Beach Road and had an asking price of \$8.2 million. The deal of the neighborhood was a 988-square-foot fixer upper on a 3,200-square-foot lot near Clover Park that closed at \$330,000.

According to the California Association of Realtors, Golden State home sellers earned a record median gain of \$150,000 in 2003.

"Sellers in 2003 realized an 8 percent annualized rate of return, far exceeding the returns on many other investment options," stated Leslie Appleton-Young, the association's vice president and chief economist.

In the condo market, the MLS boasted that Santa Monica sold a total of 710 condos in 2003, down from 784 in 2002. Sixty-seven transactions were priced at \$300,000 or under. That's compared with 162 in 2002, 234 in 2000, and 413 in 1998.

In the \$300,000 to \$600,000 range,

Santa Monica saw 439 units change hands, as compared with 473 in 2002, 376 in 2000, and 299 in 1998. This year, there were 167 units selling between \$600,000 and \$1 million — compared to 130 in 2002 and 72 in 2000. Thirty-seven units sold for more than \$1 million. In prior years, a grand total of 95 Santa Monica condos have sold for more than \$1 million.

2003's most expensive condo was a five-bedroom penthouse suite along Ocean Avenue. This \$8.1-million unit boasts "Luxury living at its finest. Sensational 360 degree views (elegance abounds)." The least-expensive condo was between Santa Monica College and the freeway. The two-bedroom, one-bathroom condo sold for \$130,000 and came with its own set of issues. As the ad explained, "Buyer must inherit tenants with all of tenant's rights governed under Santa Monica Rent Control."

The income property market in Santa Monica saw \$73 million in business and transacted more than 106 income properties, whereas in 2002 118 buildings were sold at a total cost of \$49 million, according to Carl Lambert, vice president of the Action Apartment Association, a full-service trade association representing Santa Monica and the entire Westside of Los Angeles.

The average building size in 2003 was

11 units, and the average unit price was \$174,000, as compared to 7.6 units at \$160,000 per unit in 2002. The gross rent multiplier — the building sale price divided by the contract rental rate — remained stable in the 12.4 to 12.5 range.

"(Gross rent multipliers) are not going up, but the value of buildings and the cost per unit is increasing," Lambert noted.

There's not a lot of land left in Santa Monica. In 2003 only eight pieces of land changed hands, down from 23 pieces in 2002. The low end was an 800-square-foot lot near Santa Monica College for \$425,000. On the high end, it was 3,118 square feet, a block from the beach in Ocean Park, for \$1.95 million.

"With many buyers wanting to live in Santa Monica, there are very few homes available, and we have seen home prices appreciating very quickly," said realtor Dan Urbach. "Last month we saw 29 homes sell with an average price of \$887,573 and an average days on market of 68. With condos we saw 57 condos sell for an average sales price of \$421,632 and an average days on market of 53.

(If you have local real estate questions or opinions you'd like to share, e-mail them to Jodi Summers at jodis@boardwalkrealty.com.)

SANTA MONICA RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS

SOLD	1453 PRINCETON ST	SANTA MONICA	90404	SOLD	2411 3RD ST #L	SANTA MONICA	90405	SOLD	1002 9TH ST #B	SANTA MONICA	90403
Date Sold	SqFt: 672	List Price: \$595,000	Bed: 2	Date Sold	SqFt: 0	List Price: \$456,789	Bed: 1	Date Sold	SqFt: 1,657	List Price: \$629,000	Bed: 2
12/31/2003	Lot Size: 2,470	Sold Price: \$583,500	Bath: 1	01/02/2004	HOD: \$100	Sold Price: \$440,000	Bath: 1	12/30/2003	HOD: \$150	Sold Price: \$682,000	Bath: 2.5
SOLD	1248 PEARL ST	SANTA MONICA	90405	SOLD	2411 3RD ST #K	SANTA MONICA	90405	SOLD	1040 4TH ST #302	SANTA MONICA	90403
Date Sold	SqFt: 1,708	List Price: \$749,000	Bed: 3	Date Sold	SqFt: N/A	List Price: \$499,000	Bed: 1	Date Sold	SqFt: 1,689	List Price: \$725,000	Bed: 2
12/31/2003	Lot Size: 6,000	Sold Price: \$823,000	Bath: 2	01/02/2004	HOD: \$100	Sold Price: \$496,000	Bath: 1	12/30/2003	HOD: \$406	Sold Price: \$700,000	Pool Bath: 2.5
SOLD	2470 HILL ST	SANTA MONICA	90405	SOLD	737 PIER AVE #3	SANTA MONICA	90405	SOLD	1028 HILL ST	SANTA MONICA	90405
Date Sold	SqFt: N/A	List Price: \$950,000	Bed: 3	Date Sold	SqFt: 1,229	List Price: \$529,000	Bed: 2	Date Sold	SqFt: 1,924	List Price: \$1,119,000	#Units: 4
01/02/2004	Lot Size: 7,000	Sold Price: \$929,000	Pool Bath: 2.5	12/30/2003	HOD: \$250	Sold Price: \$535,000	Bath: 2.5	12/31/2003	Lot Size: 8,306	Sold Price: \$1,035,000	GRM: 15.20
SOLD	1405 PACIFIC ST	SANTA MONICA	90405	SOLD	1128 17TH ST #E	SANTA MONICA	90403	Jodi Summers at Boardwalk Realty 310.309.4219 jodis@boardwalkrealty.com			
Date Sold	SqFt: 2,542	List Price: \$1,195,000	Bed: 3	Date Sold	SqFt: 1,498	List Price: \$589,000	Bed: 3				
12/31/2003	Lot Size: 6,756	Sold Price: \$1,150,000	Bath: 2	12/31/2003	HOD: \$300	Sold Price: \$575,000	Bath: 3.5				
SOLD	1319 11TH ST #1	SANTA MONICA	90401	SOLD	1513 N BERKELEY ST #7	SANTA MONICA	90404				
Date Sold	SqFt: 542	List Price: \$249,000	Bed: 1	Date Sold	SqFt: 1,588	List Price: \$625,000	Bed: 2				
12/29/2003	HOD: \$188	Sold Price: \$274,000	Bath: 1	12/29/2003	HOD: \$280	Sold Price: \$615,000	Bath: 2.5				



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Market heads into new year stronger than before



IN YOUR SPACE

By Christina S. Porter

Each quarter my company, NAI Capital Commercial, generates a market report. Below is our company's interpretation of the implications of the significant trends in commercial real estate for the Los Angeles Basin retail market.

"The Los Angeles Basin retail market is even stronger that it was at year-end 2002. Demand remains strong, coming from a wide variety of tenants, including restaurants, coffee houses and the service segment (dry cleaner, hair salons, etc.). There also is strong growth in demand from supermarkets (particularly Wal-Mart for their 50,000- to 60,000-square-foot grocery stores in in-fill locations), drug stores and large users (particularly Kohl's, Target and Costco). Supply remains restrained and vacancy rates are a moderate 5 to 7 percent in most markets and sub

5 percent in the most desirable areas.

Rental rates are up and are now generally growing at the pace of inflation. Demand to buy retail neighborhood, community centers and single-tenant properties has intensified, stimulated by the underlying health of the market and by exceptionally low interest rates. Cap rates on neighborhood centers fully occupied with quality tenants have dropped to the high 7 percent range.

Investors are increasingly competing with each other to buy properties, and prices are climbing sharply. Multiple bids are coming in, often at more than the asking price. Within the marketplace, supermarkets still prefer larger facilities (55,000 to 60,000 square feet), enabling them to offer a wide array of prepared foods, as well as expanded liquor and specialty products. Drugstores prefer smaller facilities (approximately 15,000 square feet) that are freestanding and offer drive-up windows. The most desired locations for retailers generally remain those with the high-income households — such as West Los Angeles and South Orange County — but there also is a growing appreciation of the value of consumer

density, as well as addressing the large unmet needs of various ethnic groups.

A significant amount of construction is taking place, but generally no more than growth in demand. The outlook is for continued healthy market conditions in late 2003 and in 2004. However, the high rents and prices that properties are commanding today have increased the risks — risks that a property may not command as high a rent in the future, especially if it has to be re-rented, which puts it at risk because prices may slip if interest rates should climb. And, as always, the retail industry is continuously redefining itself and its real-estate requirements. For example, the

supermarket industry is currently populated by four major players: Safeway, Albertsons, Kroger (Ralph's) and Wal-Mart. A number of observers expect that that within the next 10 years, that number will be down to three major players. If this consolidation should take place, it could have major implications for real-estate landlords."

To get a copy of the latest market report, give me a call at (310) 806-9104.

(Christina S. Porter is a senior associate at NAI Capital Commercial Real Estate, where she specializes in leasing and selling office and industrial buildings.)

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SOLD/LEASED

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12/30/03	626 Broadway	\$2.00 nnn	9,500
12/29/03	1351 4th Street	\$2.50 mg	4,000
12/29/03	2409 Main Street	\$3.25 nnn	2,500
12/22/03	725 Arizona	\$2.95 fs	2,368

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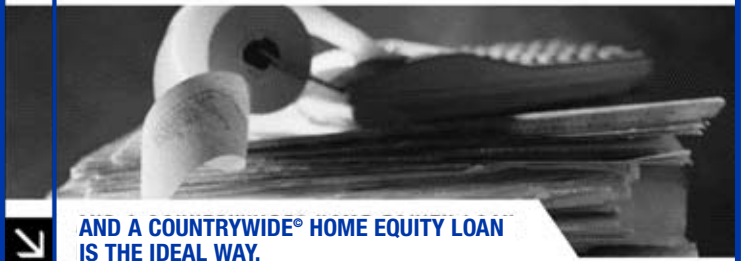
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STATE

SEC: Firm owner has fraction of \$813M he owes

BY DON THOMPSON

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — The owner of a Southern California investment firm has just a small fraction of the \$813 million he owes more than 5,200 investors nationwide, the federal Securities and Exchange Commission said Tuesday.

A preliminary review shows James Paul Lewis Jr. has assets of about \$2.3 million in cash, \$5.8 million in investments in two private companies, and interests in three residences, the SEC said in a court filing.

The filing asks a federal judge to appoint a receiver to search for more assets to repay his thousands of investors, many of whom entrusted his Orange County-based Financial Advisory Consultants with their life savings.

The initial review of Lewis' records, seized by the FBI in a pre-Christmas raid, shows he used investor funds for purposes including trading in foreign currency and buying luxury automobiles and expensive jewelry, the SEC said.

Lewis' attorney, Douglas J. Pettibone, said he had not seen the filing and could not immediately comment.

Lewis, 57, of Laguna Niguel, told clients his twin investment funds had annual returns of 20 percent and 40 percent, respectively, over 20 years, in good economic times and bad. By the time the FBI and SEC shut down the operation, records showed the funds were worth more than \$813 million on paper, had they in fact been generating the extraordinary returns Lewis reported.

But his administrative assistant, Mary Lopez, told federal investigators in sworn

statements that the only funds that flowed into the firm were from investors. She said Lewis showed up at the three-employee El Toro operation only rarely, and then spent his time trading Swiss francs on what he told her was his own time and account.

Lopez, who had worked with Lewis since 1997, told investigators that Lewis has a home in Laguna Niguel, a vacation home in Palm Desert and a membership in the nearby Indian Ridge Country Club, where the initiation fee goes for \$95,000. She said he owns at least one Mercedes Benz and was awaiting delivery of another.

The SEC said it was acting, in part, because Lewis refused last week to disclose his own assets as required by a federal judge, citing his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. He also failed to show up for a court-ordered deposition, where he would have been required to answer questions under oath.

No criminal charges have been filed in the case, but the SEC obtained a temporary restraining order freezing Lewis' assets on Dec. 22, the same day as the FBI raid. That was 12 days after The Associated Press disclosed that Lewis was unlicensed, had no apparent business activities other than collecting money from investors, and was falsely telling investors he couldn't refund their money because of a homeland security freeze.

Though Lewis has blocked most withdrawals from his funds since June, his records show he withdrew \$3 million from his own account on July 1.

The SEC says it wants the temporary receiver appointed to find and recover any remaining investor funds and propose a plan to distribute what's left to Lewis' investors.

Marketing deals criticized

SCHOOLS, from page 7

Molnar, head of the Arizona State University's Commercialism in Education Research Unit, which studies corporate involvement in schools.

Niday, mother of two children, in the fourth and eighth grades, said "going to corporate sponsorship is a little sad." But she insists her 2,700-student district in Scotts Valley has few other options after the community already rallied to raise \$400,000 to mitigate additional cuts this school year, sparing some library aides, program supervisors and counselors.

The district so far has partnered with a construction company that will provide \$14,000 and improvements at Scotts Valley's middle school, and a roofing firm that will give \$5,000 and gardening boxes to several schools.

"The state funding process is broken, and to sit back and wait for it to be fixed is to do nothing for our children," Niday said. "We have to look at different mechanisms for our funding."

During the 1990s, the number of exclusive corporation-school marketing deals jumped 13-fold while the number of sponsored educational materials supplied by big business or trade groups grew 18-fold, according to a 2000 study by Molnar's group.

Meanwhile, the General Accounting Office in 2000 reported that just 19 states then had laws and regulations governing commercial activities in public schools.

The NSBA, representing about 15,000 school boards nationwide, believes lawmakers shouldn't meddle in what should be a local issue, Fuller said. That feeling was echoed by the National Soft Drink Association's Sean McBride, who said "local schools and parents decide what kind of food policy they have for each school."

The deals can be lucrative for companies. Coca-Cola has contracts with at least 6,000 of the nation's more than 14,000 public school districts. Almost 99 percent of high schools, nearly 75 percent of middle schools and 43 percent of elementary schools have vending machines or snack shops, according to the CDC.

To Molnar, school districts chasing commercialism deals "have sort of lost themselves in a race to the bottom," Molnar said. "Until the state and a school district erects a clear barrier and draws a bright line, the bad practices are going to drive out the good."

But in Scotts Valley, florist Dennis Perry says savvy children already have been exposed to marketing "anyplace and everywhere."

"As long as the upper hand is given to schools to dictate where the money's going and what's being advertised, I don't think it's a problem," said Perry, the father of a third-grader. "You either embrace it and make it work in your favor or it passes you up."



Campaign-finance scandal catches engineers, architects

BY BRUCE DUNFORD

Associated Press Writer

HONOLULU — Behind his state-issue desk in a small fourth-floor office sits a slightly built, soft-spoken man who has managed to shake Hawaii's power structure to its core.

Over the past two years, Robert Watada and his staff at the state Campaign Spending Commission have exposed, bit by bit, a scandal in which respected architects and engineers illegally made political donations in the names of their employees, wives and children, allegedly to win government contracts.

The results of the investigation so far: nearly \$1 million in fines, jail time for a prominent lawyer, community service for business leaders, and the resignation of a Honolulu police commissioner.

"It's what I get paid for," said Watada, the commission's executive director. "I believe our system requires all of us in the democracy in which we live to follow the laws."

The civil and criminal reckoning has also been an embarrassment for some of the state's most influential Democrats and played a role in giving Hawaii its first elected Republican governor in 40 years.

Under state law, individuals can donate no more than \$6,000 to gubernatorial can-

didates and \$4,000 to mayoral candidates. Watada found that some businessmen were subverting the law by making donations in other people's names.

Watada's persistence has led to a slew of investigations by Honolulu Prosecuting Attorney Peter Carlisle, who says he hopes to end a "pay to play culture" that has plagued Hawaii's Democrat-dominated government for years.

The cases involve such things as \$10,500 in donations over a five-year period in the names of three modestly paid Chinese-restaurant workers, and a \$2,000 donation that supposedly came from a high school student.

The biggest fine was \$303,000 levied against engineering executive Michael Matsumoto for allegedly laundering more than \$400,000 in illegal contributions to Honolulu Mayor Jeremy Harris and other Democrats. Matsumoto, chief executive of SSFM International Inc., which won more than \$7 million worth of city contracts, pleaded no contest to funneling money to family members and employees to donate to Harris' campaign and was sentenced to 300 hours of community service.

Still, there has been no direct evidence that the illegal contributions influenced the awarding of state and local government contracts.

And so far, the scam's chief benefi-

cary, Honolulu's mayor, has not been publicly implicated. His attorney has said the mayor never solicited or knowingly accepted illegal contributions.

After a rapid rise in politics, Harris abruptly dropped out of the 2002 governor's race in the midst of the investigation. Republican Linda Lingle went on to win the election. The mayor's term ends in a year.

Lingle made political corruption a top campaign issue and won passage of a government-procurement reform law in her first year in office.

Since the probe began, the commission has levied fines against 75 companies for making illegal contributions to Democrats such as Harris, former Democratic Gov. Ben Cayetano, former Maui County Mayor James Apana and former Lt. Gov. Mazie Hirono. Up to 40 more companies are still being investigated.

Among those convicted was former Hawaii Bar Association President Edward Y.C. Chun, 71. Chun was the first to get jail time — 10 days. Nearly 20 others have been arrested and booked for investigation.

Also, Leonard Leong resigned as Honolulu police commissioner after being fined for illegal campaign contributions to the mayor.

The scandal has involved mostly design and engineering firms; while coun-

ty or state construction projects or product purchases require competitive bidding, design contracts have long been decided subjectively by public officials.

Under the new law, however, independent committees of professionals will determine contracts for such things as architectural or engineering work, using published criteria.

Stanley Kawaguchi, former national president of the American Council of Engineering Companies, said that before the scandal, political contributions had "effectively become mandatory."

"The widespread perception was that you had to pay to play," he said. "The old system really gave our industry a black eye."

Apparently it had been going on for decades. Watada said one retired engineering company president told him that when he started 30 years ago, contributions of \$25 or \$100 would help in getting city contracts.

Watada said the investigations and changes in the law have curbed the illegal practices for now.

"But I'm realistic. When there's money involved and politics involved and power involved, whether it's in Hawaii or New Jersey or anywhere else, it's something the public always has to be vigilant about," he said.



WORLD BRIEFLY

Leaving the bloodshed behind?

By The Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — India and Pakistan took a giant leap to put more than a half-century of bloodshed behind them on Tuesday, agreeing to begin a peace dialogue next month on the issues that have taken them into three wars, according to a joint statement read by both nations' foreign ministers.

All topics, including the flashpoint issue of Kashmir, will be discussed in the talks, said Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha at the end of a key regional summit. The Himalayan region is divided by both countries, and each claims it in its entirety.

"It is a victory for common sense. It is a victory for moderation. It is a victory for statesmanship," Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri declared later in an impassioned speech before a room packed with journalists.

Sinha said details, including the location of the talks, were still to be worked out, but that the negotiations would be ongoing. He expressed optimism they would lead to a lasting peace agreement, including on the issue of Kashmir.

Cats used for Chinese cuisine killed

By The Associated Press

GUANGZHOU, China — Racing against a self-imposed deadline, authorities in southern China drowned or electrocuted the first of thousands of civet cats Tuesday in an urgent effort to eliminate a possible source of the SARS virus.

The mass slaughter of animals seized from wildlife markets in Guangdong province was launched despite appeals for caution by the World Health Organization. The U.N. agency said killing civets might destroy clues about the source of SARS and even help to spread the disease.

Authorities have ordered the deaths of some 10,000 civet cats — a weasel-like animal that is a local delicacy — and related wildlife by Saturday. Hundreds were

killed on Tuesday and officials were checking highway traffic for smuggled animals.

Genetic tests have suggested a link between civets and the SARS virus diagnosed in a 32-year-old television producer in Guangdong — China's first case of the disease this season. Authorities are trying to determine how he was exposed.

"Guangdong is entering an extraordinary period and extraordinary measures are called for," said Feng Liuxiang, deputy director of the provincial Health Bureau, quoted on the Web site of the newspaper Guangzhou Daily.

Ohio schools on high security alert

By The Associated Press

GROVE CITY, Ohio — A school district that canceled classes after bullet marks found on two buses were linked to a series of highway shootings has reopened with extra security, which parents said helped calm their nerves.

The Franklin County Sheriff's Office increased patrols of cruisers and unmarked cars around South-Western School District buildings Monday. Administrators said they made changes to the schools' safety plans but would not elaborate.

The district canceled classes for its 20,000 students on Dec. 18 and 19, the last days before its two-week winter break, after the bullet marks were discovered. The district is next to Interstate 270, where many of the 18 related shootings have occurred, including one that killed a woman.

Cows killed for fear of spreading disease

By The Associated Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — Unable to determine which calf was born to the nation's first cow diagnosed with mad cow disease, federal officials plan to kill a herd of 450 calves out of "an abundance of caution."

The herd of bull calves from Sunnyside will be killed

this week at an undisclosed and unused facility, said Ron DeHaven, the U.S. Agriculture Department's chief veterinarian.

Both federal and state officials have declined to disclose how the dead calves will be disposed of, but have said the meat from the animals will be kept out of the food supply. The calves also won't be rendered for animal feed or other products.

"This should just continue to instill additional confidence among consumers," said Mary Beth Lang, spokeswoman for the state Department of Agriculture. "The likelihood of any transmission to this calf is very remote," she said. "This is an abundance of caution."

The herd is one of three under quarantine in Washington because of ties to the infected animal, a 6 1/2-year-old Holstein dairy cow that was shipped to the United States from Canada in 2001. The other herds include cows that may have come from the same Alberta farm.

Officials are awaiting DNA tests to confirm the sick cow's origins.

Have a job in U.S.? You may enter

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush is proposing to let foreign workers who have U.S. jobs waiting for them enter America — a move designed to help repair relations with Mexico and capture Latino voters in this year's election.

The president has been silent on the immigration issue for two years, but advocacy groups are being invited to the White House on Wednesday to hear details of a proposal to match willing foreign workers, mostly from Mexico, with receptive U.S. employers.

There are an estimated 10 million undocumented workers in the United States, as many as half of them from Mexico.

"The president has long talked about the importance of having an immigration policy that matches willing workers with willing employers," White House press secretary Scott McClellan said Monday. "It's important for America to be a welcoming society. We are a nation of immigrants, and we're better for it."

The announcement comes just before Bush's scheduled meeting with Mexico's President Vicente Fox next week at the Summit of the Americas in Monterey, Mexico.

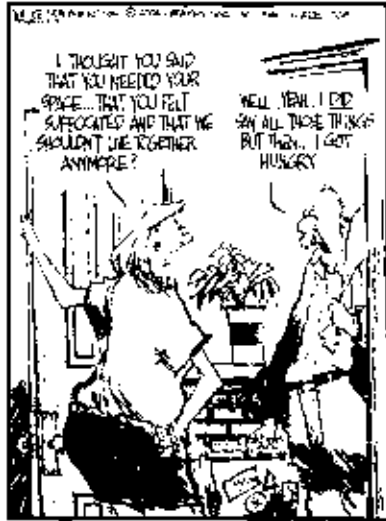
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Hef has eyes set on Britney, Zeta-Jones for playmates

By The Associated Press

■ **NEW YORK** — Now that Britney Spears is a single woman again, she already has at least one potential beau: Hugh Hefner.

The 77-year-old Playboy founder said he's interested in adding the pop singer to his bevy of beautiful blonde girlfriends.

"Britney would make a great girlfriend," Hefner told *Us Weekly* magazine for its Jan. 19 issue.

"Picasso had his pink period and his blue period. I am in my blonde period right now," he said. "I think it's related to those early movies that had such a great influence on me when I was a kid."

Hefner said he'd also like to see the 22-year-old Spears appear as a Playmate, as well as Catherine Zeta-Jones.

"They really epitomize the type of beauty that we like in the magazine," he said.

Spears got married in an impromptu Las Vegas ceremony early Saturday morning, then filed for an annulment 55 hours later. The groom, Jason Allen Alexander, is a childhood friend of hers from Kentwood, La.

■ **ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.** — For the fourth time in five years, the Miss America Organization has someone new in charge.

Art McMaster, 50, who had served as vice president for finance, has been named acting president and CEO, succeeding CEO George F. Bauer, pageant officials said Tuesday.

Bauer, who had held the job for nearly two years, left after the expiration of a one-year contract he'd been working under, pageant spokeswoman Cathleen Kiernan said.

"George completed his contract as of Dec. 31 and he decided to pursue other professional opportunities. The board (of directors) and George separated amicably."

Bauer, 59, didn't return two telephone messages left at his home.

McMaster's appointment comes at a time when Miss

America is struggling. The organization, a nonprofit dedicated to providing scholarship assistance for young women, has floundered in recent years, the TV ratings for the pageant falling to new lows each year and its finances suffering.

It posted a \$1.4 million loss in 2002, its net assets dropping to \$5.6 million, their lowest level in eight years.

McMaster is the fourth chief executive since the departure of longtime CEO Leonard C. Horn in 1998. Two of the other three are suing the Miss America Organization over their departures.

■ **NEW YORK** — Beyonce Knowles will sing the national anthem before the Super Bowl in her native Houston, the NFL announced Tuesday.

Super Bowl XXXVIII is scheduled for Feb. 1 at Reliant Stadium and will be televised on CBS.

A week later, on Feb. 8, Knowles is up for six Grammy Awards, including record of the year for "Crazy in Love" featuring her boyfriend, Jay-Z. Her album, "Dangerously in Love," has sold 5 million copies.

The 22-year-old Destiny's Child singer joins a wildly varied group of performers who've sung "The Star-Spangled Banner" before the Super Bowl, including Charlie Pride, Barry Manilow, Kathie Lee Gifford and the Backstreet Boys.

■ **COPENHAGEN, Denmark** — The wedding party for Crown Prince Frederik and Australian commoner Mary Donaldson will take place at the Fredensborg Palace where several marriages and state banquets have been celebrated, the royal court said.

Frederik and Donaldson, who met during the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, will exchange vows May 14 at Copenhagen's Lutheran cathedral. The 31-year-old brunette will become the first Australian woman to stand in line to become queen.

After the afternoon wedding ceremony, the party will take place at the Fredensborg Palace, 20 miles north of

Copenhagen. Completed in 1722 after three years of construction, the castle is one of the summer residences of Queen Margrethe, Frederik's mother.

The palace uses the 89-foot-high Domed Hall for state banquets and royal wedding parties. In 1967, Margrethe and Prince Henrik celebrated their marriage there along with 400 guests.

Donaldson will become Crown Princess Mary and Frederik, 35, eventually will become King Frederik X and the sixth Danish monarch of the Glücksburg house. But it may not happen for some time because his mother, 63-year-old Queen Margrethe, has said she has no plans to abdicate in favor of her son.

■ **MIAMI** — The reigning Miss Florida is suing the driver of an 18-wheeler that rolled over the car she was riding in, arguing that her extensive injuries threaten her entertainment career.

Shauna Pender, 24, was injured Nov. 7 when a tractor-trailer tipped over and crashed atop a vehicle carrying the St. Petersburg woman to a charity event in Miami. The lawsuit, which seeks \$10 million in damages, was filed in Miami-Dade Circuit Court last week.

The lawsuit says Pender's heart stopped briefly and she needed six surgeries during her hospital stay. Her attorney, William Sullivan, said Pender is undergoing rehabilitation in Miami in hopes of resuming her career but can barely walk and can't feed herself or sing.

"She had some acting jobs and appearances" in New York, Sullivan said. "She put that all on hold to become Miss Florida. So she set a timetable to go back to New York in a year and follow her dream."

A spokeswoman for the state beauty pageant said Monday that Pender is still Miss Florida, although there is no schedule for her return. The next Miss Florida will be crowned in June.

The lawsuit alleges that the driver of the tractor-trailer, 37-year-old Reinaldo Rios, wasn't trained properly.

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