WEEKEND EDITION

Santa Monica Daily Press

January 7-8, 2006 | A newspaper with issues | Volume 5, Issue 48

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO
5 15 19 20 35
Meganumber: 20
Jackpot: $60 Million

FANTASY 5
12 13 15 28 36

DAILY 3
Daytime: 1 3 4
Evening: 5 6 4

DAILY DERBY
1st: 11 Money Bags
2nd: Eureka !
3rd: 12 Lucky Charms

RACE TIME: 1:42.04

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site: http://www.calottery.com



NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ A 23-year-old man was found dead of smoke inhalation in a burning house in Billings, Mont., in November, and police said, to the best of their knowledge, it was the man who started the fire in two rooms to cover up the burglary he had just committed but that he wasn't able to get out of the house in time.

■ And in Reseda, Calif., in September, one man was killed and his pal wounded in a shootout as they attempted a random carjacking but didn't realize that men in the targeted car were FBI agents on surveillance.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the seventh day of 2006. There are 358 days left in the year.

On Jan. 7, 1789, the first U.S. presidential election was held. Americans voted for electors who, a month later, chose George Washington to be the nation's first president.

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Small class advocate stands alone

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

MALIBU CITY HALL — Financial strains may be preventing Santa Monica public schools from reaching optimum class sizes, but that hasn't stopped one elected official from insisting more teachers are needed.

"I'm not going to advocate a blanket class size across the district," said Shane McLoud, a school board member speaking to his colleagues on Thursday. "But I think we need to set goals that reallocate resources to schools and students that need them most."

Upon McLoud's request, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District provided a report to the board of education regarding class sizes on Thursday.

McLoud's colleagues, however, weren't about to jump on his policy bandwagon.

See **SMALLER CLASSES**, page 13

Not so fast: Grads need to pass exam

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff writer

MALIBU CITY HALL — Students who have met all other graduation requirements, but have failed the state-mandated high school exit exam, will likely be able to walk with their classmates in June.

The board of education for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District decided on Thursday the high school students — which could number as many as 72 — will be able to walk with their classmates during the 2006 graduation ceremony.

"I firmly believe it doesn't

See **EXIT EXAM**, page 14

Vikings storm the beach



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

HIGH, BUT NOT DRY: Santa Monica High School's varsity and junior varsity football teams break a sweat during conditioning drills at the Santa Monica Beach on Friday under the command of Samohi head football coach Mike Burnett.

Sends a clear message



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Brian Stephens, 39, a bill poster for Clear Channel Outdoor, covers up a Best Buy panel with a new one advertising the upcoming film 'The Pink Panther' near Pico Boulevard and Main Street. The 12 x 24-foot panel takes Stephens about 30 minutes to install.

STATE

Leaving no stone unturned on this tour

BY GARY A. WARNER
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — I was looking for Marilyn Monroe, when I nearly walked over Rodney Dangerfield. Literally. I didn't mean it to be an "I don't get no respect" moment, but the path to the most famous crypt in California leads right past the comedian's grave.

"There goes the neighborhood," reads the epitaph on Dangerfield's headstone at the Pierce Brothers Westwood Village Memorial Park. With Natalie Wood, Jack Lemmon and Billy Wilder nearby, it really is a neighborhood. Even in death, the Hollywood crowd tends to form cliques.

See **CELEBRITY GRAVES**, page 15

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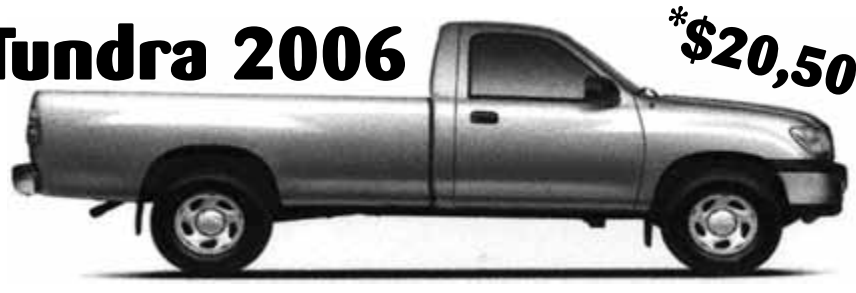
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HOROSCOPE

Out and about, Libra

Santa Monica Daily Press



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)
★★★★ Use the morning to complete what is important. By the afternoon, you could be more in the mood to enjoy yourself. Let go and don't worry so much about every penny. Yes, it is OK to spend a little. Tonight: Your treat.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★★ Sleep in or be as lazy as you want to be this morning. By the afternoon, the Moon slides into your sign. Being subdued and laid-back no longer works. Enjoy being the personality kid on the block. You might be impossible to hold back. Tonight: As you wish.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ You shift from fifth gear to first midday. As a result, you might want to curl up and take a nap this afternoon. Make it OK to take some time off from the hectic pace. Think positively. You don't always need an entourage. Tonight: Do your thing.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★★ Responsibilities call this morning. You might want to think through your plans. Feel free to reverse directions or completely change your plans. You need to do what pleases you for a change, rather than what pleases others. Tonight: Where the crowds are.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Make calls or schedule a day trip. Wherever you are this afternoon, you are the lead player. Others give you an unusual amount of respect and direction. Others cannot give you enough attention, at least right now. Tonight: Know that others are eyeing you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★★ A talk with a loved one or dear pal draws terrific results. You might want to think carefully before you take a leap of faith, or before you follow through on a far-out idea or suggestion. Tonight: OK, be a bit different.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ If possible, investigate new possibilities with others. Brainstorm away. You might not have much say in the final answer. Don't let a case of sour grapes ruin your day or interfere with a special relationship. Tonight: Out and about.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★ You might need to clear out a key project or run errands this morning. What happens later will demand all your time. You will like being in demand. Sort through your many different options. Tonight: Say yes.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Plan activities with children as early as you can. You could discover there are many different ways of proceeding with plans later in the day. Key into your own energy levels before you make a decision. Tonight: Go for calm.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ You might be slow to get started. But by the afternoon, you become frolicsome and wild. Others simply adore being close to you or involved with your plans. Key into an important bond or potential one. Tonight: Paint the town red.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★ Clear out an important letter or call first thing this morning. By the afternoon, you might be sluggish and need a timeout. Understand that others might not be agreeable with your lazy attitude. Be lazy responding to this criticism. Tonight: At home.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Pay bills and handle your to-do list before you socialize. Going to a movie and/or joining a friend for dinner fits the bill. You will want to be a bit more passive than unusual. Let others talk and share as well. Tonight: Hang out.

CIRCULATION VERIFICATION COUNCIL AUDIT PENDING

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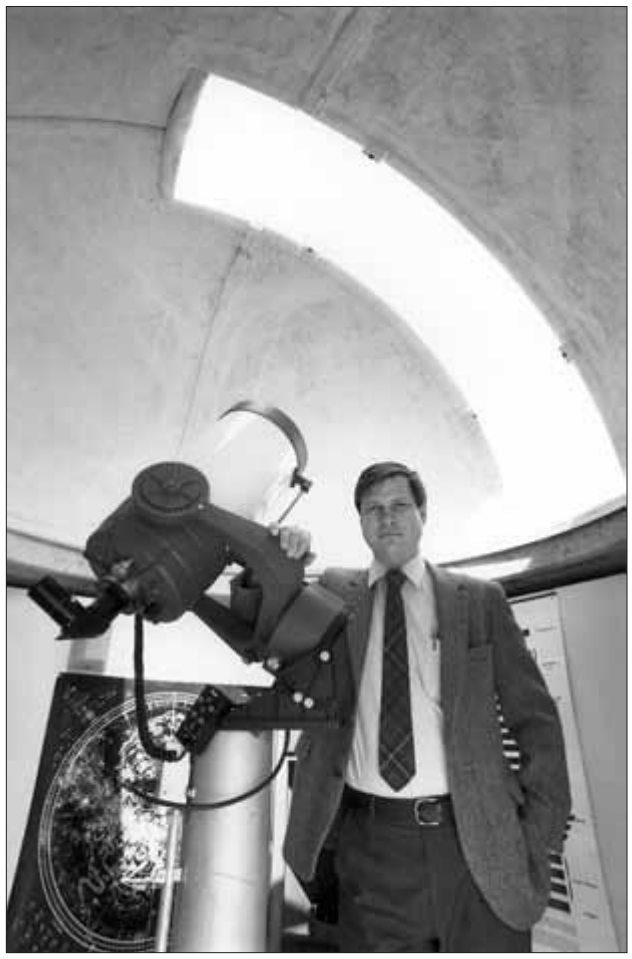
OBITUARIES

SMC'S shining star, Hodge, dead at 57

By Daily Press staff

Jon Hodge, SMC's planetarium director who helped open up the wonders of the universe to tens of thousands of people over the past 26 years, died Jan. 4. He was 57.

Hodge is remembered as a charming and — even when battling cancer — ever-cheerful man who had a highly developed ability to turn complex subjects into understandable lectures and lively presentations for people of all ages.



Jon Hodge strikes a familiar pose during his tenure at SMC.

In a fitting tribute to Hodge, who was on medical leave since last fall with an eye on retirement, his colleagues in the earth science department arranged to have an asteroid named after him late last year. Asteroid 18117 is now called "Jonhodge." The honor recognized him for his "enormous contribution to the dissemination of astronomical and scientific knowledge to the general public, college students and schoolchildren," not only for his work at SMC, but also for his lectures at UCLA and Griffith Observatory.

His planetarium shows were conducted not only for the benefit of SMC stu-

See **HODGE**, page 11

SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS

DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM

BEAR MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	12"-12"	8:00am - 4:00pm	8	9/12

CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Groomed

JUNE MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	40" - 72"	8:30am - 4:00pm	35	6/6

CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	120" - 144"	8:30 am - 4 pm	100	16/28

CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed

MOUNTAIN HIGH

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	10"-12"	8:00 am - 10:00 pm	12	19/16

CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
6"	8"-12"	8:00 am - 4:30 pm	4	3/4

CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Made

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	12"-12"	8:00 am - 4:30 pm	8	8/13

CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Groomed

SNOW VALLEY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	12"-12"	8:30 am - 4:30 pm	2	4/11

CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Groomed

CONDITIONS WATER TEMP: 58°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (9-17 FT)

Today, early in the morning, the swell will peak with a noticeable increase in size. Numbers this morning are pointing to surf running 10-12 feet on the faces on the better set waves at direct west facing breaks, with some set waves possibly reaching near 15 feet on the face, although these will be rare. Still, heavy surf is expected, and riptides as well as alongshore currents will be inevitable. Caution is advised.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

WNW hits coast Saturday...

Tracking smaller NW for midweek...

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA

SATURDAY				
Low Tide:	10:41AM	1.1FT	9:25PM	1.7FT
High Tide:	3.29AM	5.2FT	4:29PM	3.0FT
SUNDAY				
Low Tide:	11:55AM	0.4FT	10:27PM	2.2FT
High Tide:	4:22AM	5.4FT	6:16PM	3.0FT
MONDAY				
Low Tide:	12:52PM	-0.2FT	11:28PM	2.4FT
High Tide:	5:13AM	5.7FT	7:32PM	3.2FT

TUESDAY N/A

WEDNESDAY N/A

THURSDAY N/A

FRIDAY N/A

SURF AND SNOW QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? EMAIL ALEX@SMDP.COM

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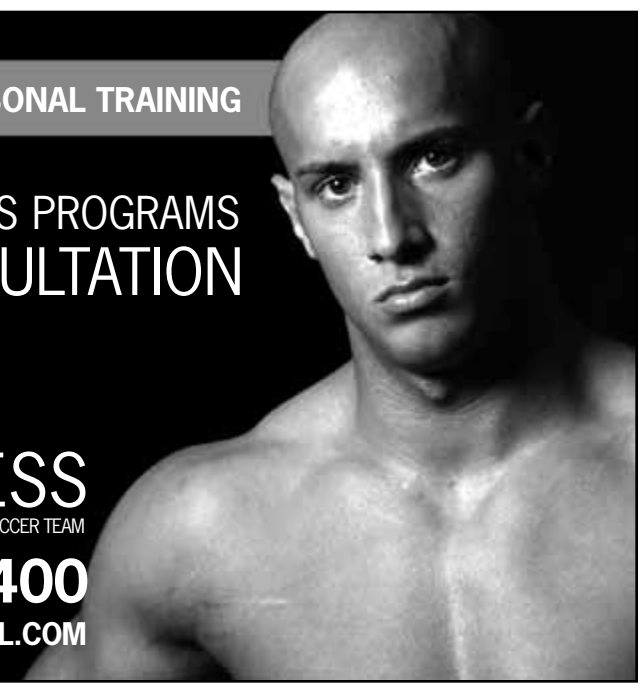
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The Q Line
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THE Q-LINE RESPONSES ARE IN!

WE HAVE THE QUESTIONS.
YOU HAVE THE ANSWERS.
CHECK OUT THIS WEEK'S Q-LINE RESPONSES ON PAGE 4.

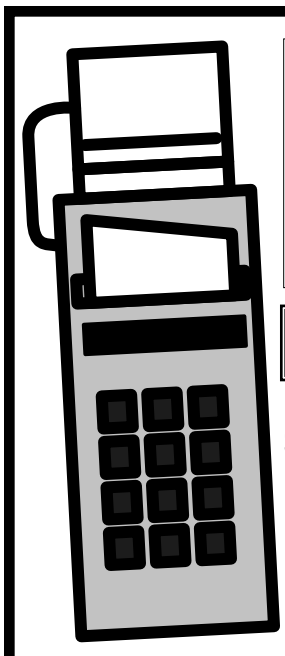
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OPINION

The Q Line

HEY, WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

This past week, Q-line asked:

"What is the biggest issue facing Santa Monica and how should we deal with it?"

Here are your responses:

✆ "As a tenant at the now-at-risk Territon Apartments on San Vicente, there are two urgent resolutions that I want the City Council to pursue at the first of the year. Number one: The City Council's fixation with finding and building affordable apartments in the downtown and Pico areas must be revisited. There are people who are very much in jeopardy of losing their apartments north of Wilshire. While the Territon apartments may or may not be preserved, they might not be preserved as rentals. We understand that if the building is landmarked, the new owner who is now in escrow will ultimately convert the apartments to condos. Which means that whether we are tenants who have been here short time or in the case of a very elderly woman who participates in the City Council — who is, I estimate, well into her 80s — we will all be out on the street. The fate of the elderly woman is going to be very bleak because she will probably end up in a more expensive hotel situation. We would also urge the City Council to revisit their ordinance where city employees are able to destroy records after three years. In trying to research things about the Territon apartments, we have discovered that vital documents are missing and/or are being concealed by city employees taking advantage of three-year document destruction ordinance."

✆ "Mainly the council members should resolve to spend less time focusing on their navels and hedges, and more on taking IQ enhancement courses. Much good can come from that. Two quick examples: their dim-witted imperial decision forcing toxic arsenic-containing fluoride chemicals on this entire community could be reversed. Secondly, hundreds of harmless ground squirrels on the Palisades slopes could be rescued from extermination resulting from another pending dumb decision by the council majority. We need a resolution for more squirrels in the park and fewer on the council."

✆ "We want the citizens to change. We demand to stop building shelters for the transients. The freeloaders are using us as their servants to clean up after them. They are crashing our homes and using our city streets as a dumpster. Get them off the streets."

✆ "Whenever a conflict arises that concerns pedestrians. They council should lean toward making the pedestrians happy, not the other party."

✆ "The biggest challenge Santa Monica faces is the escalating indigent population. The city administration needs to realize that we as a community cannot absorb and care for all these sick, mental-defectives, alcoholics and drug-addicts. There needs to be a halt of funding to these profiteering, useless, homeless programs and the money better spent reopening and building facilities for them away from this center of our lives, which is now a horror."

✆ "Get the bums, professional beggars, freeloaders, drunks, and drug addicts out of the city and clean up the filth they leave behind."

✆ "The position of our new city manager and homeless czar reminds me of a statement the late Tom Bradley made when he was first elected to the seat of city mayor. Mayor Bradley stated that he 'got the job of mayor because no one else wanted the job.' Our new city manager will simply plot along and cower to the power structure of Santa Monica, which is awash in avarice. Our new homeless czar will simply fail unless he can find a solution to the main cause of homelessness, that cause being acute, stumbled-down alcoholism."

✆ "(The transients) are not called residentially-challenged. That is the politically correct term. They are bums. Vagrants, transients, drunkards. That is the main problem of the city. You could probably get more businesses and increase the tax base if it weren't for all the bums. They defecate in the alleys and make everything a mess. They go ranting around, yelling and screaming at who knows what. Some of these people are insane and should be put in mental hospitals and cured. The rest of them should be thrown in jails where they belong. In about 30 days the optimism of the new year will wear off and the city will go back to the way it always is, filled with bums."

✆ "We have a problem in this country. This country is getting fatter, dumber and lazier. People want to go to places like Target and Costco and buy big fat boxes of potato chips and large cartons of chicken wings. When I heard that the mayor thinks that we want to put a Target in Santa Monica, and that it is a priority, I think he has got his priorities backwards. He'd contributing to the fattening and dumbing down of America right here in Santa Monica. He is obviously not listening to the wants and needs of Santa Monicans. When I heard that, I stood up in a popular restaurant and asked everyone the question. They all laughed and thought it was the most ludicrous thing they'd heard, putting a Target in Santa Monica."

✆ "With even councilman Ken Genser admitting that the very place he lives on San Vicente Boulevard is in serious risk of demolition, the City Council must immediately address the progressing, speculative frenzy of flipping apartment building properties north of Wilshire Boulevard. The City Council fixates over apartment building construction in the downtown area, yet they are turning a blind eye to the prospective wipe out of middle class apartment buildings north of Wilshire as real estate vultures narrow in on the kill. We want to remind Ken Genser and his colleagues that this building could have been acquired by the Community Corporation for $6 to $7 million as recently as last year. Now that building is in escrow for $12 million."

Supreme Court Justice walks into a bar ...



MODERN TIMES

BY LLOYD GARVER

The results regarding the individual members of the Supreme Court are in. Antonin Scalia got a 77, and Clarence Thomas got a woeful 0. This was not a ranking about how competent the Washington Nine was. It was a ranking of how funny they are in court. The statistics were computed by Boston University Law Professor Jay D. Wexler. According to transcripts, Scalia got 77 official laughs during the court proceedings in the 2004-2005 sessions. He was followed by Breyer with 45; Kennedy with 21; Souter with 19; the late William Rehnquist with 12; Stevens with 8; O'Connor with 7; Ginsburg with 4; and Thomas with 0. This was obviously an informal study filled with possible flaws, and there are very few conclusions we can draw about the Justices based on their sense of humor. Personally, I've always found that people who make other people laugh are of extremely high intelligence. But there might even be flaws in that conclusion.

What is obvious is that having a sense of humor and making colleagues laugh is a part of being a Supreme Court Justice. Only laughs that were heard while court was in session were counted. So, don't bother going back to 2000 to see how many times the conservative Justices laughed after one of them suggested, "You mean we get to decide the election?"

What we're talking about here is the ability to take one's self a little less seriously. We're talking about loosening up the other eight so everyone can relax and get on with the serious business of deciding things that may determine the course of history.

The good news about this study is that it comes out right before Samuel Alito faces his confirmation hearings. Until now, Alito has been having practice rehearsal hearings called "murder boards" where those who want him to pass muster ask him hard questions. I have a feeling there's not a lot of humor in something called, "murder boards." Well, that's obviously a mistake, and those Republican lawyers pretending to be senators should throw in some opportunities for Alito to get a few laughs. Give him some joke tutoring.

When asked, "Why did you take such a conservative approach to the Constitution during the Reagan administration?" Alito could reply, "Conservative? Are you kidding? During the Reagan Administration, anybody who didn't believe in the Monarchy was considered a liberal."

When asked, "Do you think a woman should be in charge of her own body?" he might deflect the topic by saying, "They always are when I'm with them."

The most interesting thing about the study is that humor cuts across ideological lines. You can't say conservatives as a rule crack more jokes than moderates or liberals. It's obviously an individual thing. And I salute Justice Scalia for getting the most laughs. These men and women can do their very serious business and still laugh now and then. It makes them human.

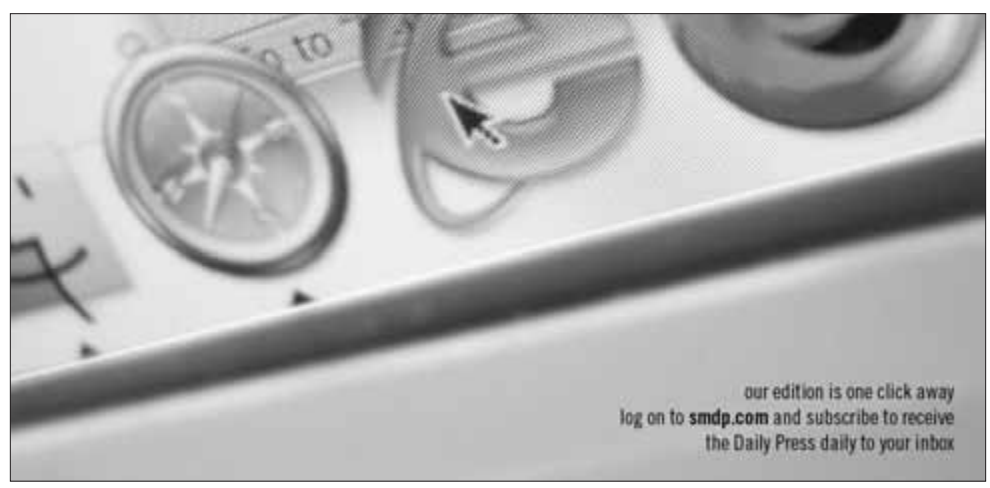
The problem is now that the Justices know that people are counting the laughs, they're probably going to become competitive. They're going to feel pressure to get the most laughs. They'll be tempted to bring comic props into the court. I'm all for freedom of expression, but I really don't want to have Supreme Court Justices sneaking silly string and whoopee cushions under their robes. So, Justices, please limit the jokes to verbal ones.

That should be challenge enough. Obviously, Thomas has the biggest motivation to increase his laugh quotient. How would you like to be known as the guy who's not as funny as Ruth Bader Ginsburg?

But they'll all try to top each other. If Souter gets off a quip about eminent domain, Stevens will probably jump in with some rabbi, minister, priest joke about oil rights. Soon, there won't just be dissenting opinions, there will be comedy opinions. Instead of just hiring law clerks, they'll probably hire comedy writers. And to that I say to the ladies and gentlemen of the court, you know where you can find me.

(Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier." He also has read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSnews.com's opinion page and a weekly column for SportsLine.com. He can be reached at smdp@lloydgarvermoderntimes.com.)

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STATE

Oil consumption law actually increases it

BY TIM MOLLOY
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — A federal push for cars that run on an alternative fuel straight from the heartland isn't winning many converts among American drivers — but is a hit with automakers who use it to skirt mileage standards.

Five million cars across the country are equipped to run on the fuel, but almost no one uses it outside the corn belt.

Fortunately for carmakers, a 1988 law designed to decrease oil use gives them credits for building vehicles that run on the alternative fuel whether anyone uses it or not. Those credits allow automakers to relax gasoline efficiency standards on other vehicles — which drives oil consumption up instead of down.

The situation would be different if many more people replaced the gasoline in their tanks with the fuel known as E85 — a combination of 15 percent gasoline and 85 percent ethanol, a corn-based additive. Flex-fuel cars can run on gas, E85, or combinations of the two.

Ethanol supporters say the extra oil consumption is part of the growing pains of the flex-fuels program, which they say will decrease oil use when more E85 fueling stations are available to drivers.

"You've got to get the cars out before you can get the fueling structure," said Tom Koehler, a spokesman for Fresno-based Pacific Ethanol.

A 2002 Department of Transportation study estimated that E85 accounted for only about 1 percent of the fuel consumed by flex-fuel vehicles between 1996 and 2000 — the equivalent of 26 million gallons.

Relaxed fuel economy standards resulting from flex-fuel credits, meanwhile, were responsible for increased petroleum consumption totaling 772 million gallons — enough gas for a Jeep Grand Cherokee to drive from San Diego to Boston and back more than 8,000 times.

Often cheaper than gasoline, E85 is known for getting fewer miles to the gallon but higher octane, resulting in more horsepower.

The fuel works in more than 30 models, including General Motor's Yukon, Chevrolet's Silverado, and Ford's Taurus, but many people don't know it. Ford and GM have only recently begun national ad campaigns to promote their vehicles' flex-fuel capabilities, trying to lure consumers skittish over gas prices.

Drivers can see if their vehicle will run on E85 by checking the owner's manual or a Web site, e85fuel.com, that lists compatible models. Ethanol promoters say motorists are often stunned to learn their cars will run on the fuel, but even those well-schooled in E85 may need to drive hundreds of miles to buy it.

At the Los Angeles Auto Show this week, General Motors announced a partnership with Chevron, California officials and Pacific Ethanol to gauge the public's interest in E85. Those involved said high interest could lead to more pumps nationwide.

The GM initiative is only a small step toward the kind of widespread E85 use that the flex-fuel credit program requires, said Roland Hwang, a senior policy analyst for the National Resources Defense Council.

"If this is the beginning and the end, this is less than a drop of the bucket," said Hwang. He said the incentive program should end if it continues to promote rather than discourage oil use.

Therese Langer, transportation program director for the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, said the program should allow automakers to reduce fuel efficiency standards only if drivers actually use E85 in their vehicles. That use could be monitored by tracking E85 sales.

With strong support from automakers, the incentives program was renewed in the sweeping energy bill President Bush signed in August.

Ethanol's promoters call it a clean-burning fuel that helps farmers in the nation's corn belt while reducing greenhouse emissions and shifting the nation's dependence on foreign oil.

"It's 100 percent domestic," said Phillip Lampert, executive director of the National Ethanol Vehicle Coalition. "We don't have to fight wars to bring it in."

Critics see the ethanol program as a waste of $3 billion a year in state and federal subsidies, pointing to a study last year by professors at Cornell University and the University of California, Berkeley that said ethanol takes more energy to make than it produces. Ethanol producers dispute the finding.

GM said in Thursday's announcement it would try to promote the fuel by offering 50 to 100 of its flex-fuel vehicles to California in the state's annual competitive bidding process. Chevron will work with the state to provide E85 fueling pumps, with Pacific Ethanol providing the E85.

The 2002 federal study offered several scenarios for the flex-fuel program's future effect on petroleum consumption. If the percentage of E85 used in flex-fuel vehicles remains at 1 percent from 2001 to 2008, the amount of petroleum consumed could increase by more than 17 billion gallons.

The study projected that if every E85-compatible vehicle ran solely on the fuel in 2006, more than 2.1 billion gallons of oil would be saved this year.

That scenario, however, is impossible.

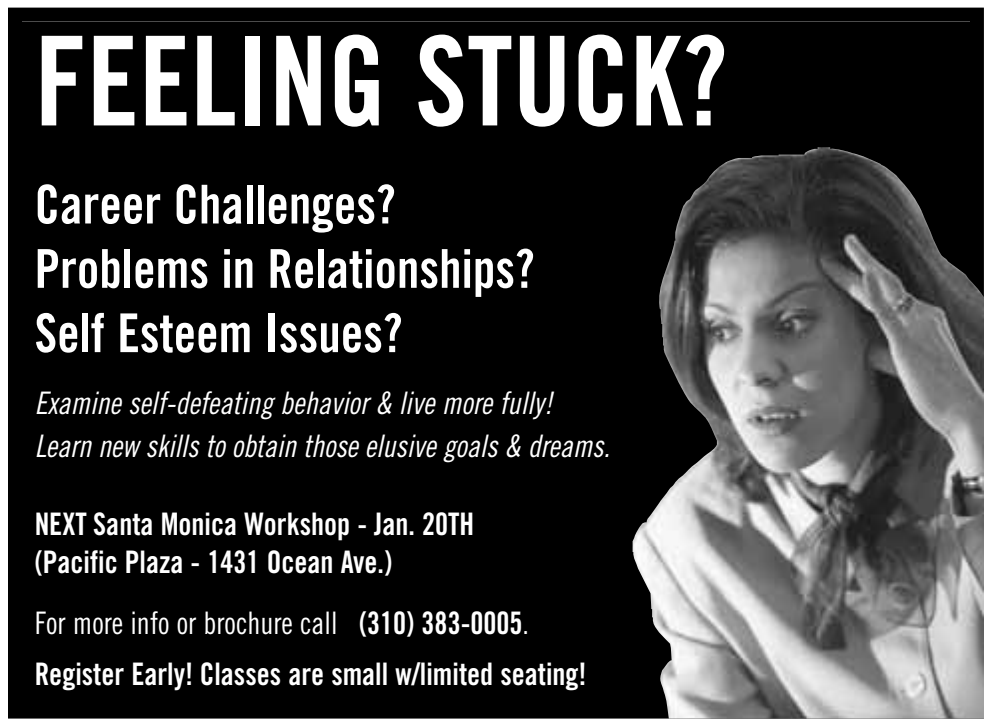
Though flex-fuel vehicles are sold nationwide, only 30 states have public E85 fueling stations. Most are in the corn belt, and some states have only a handful. California, the nation's largest auto market, has only one in San Diego.

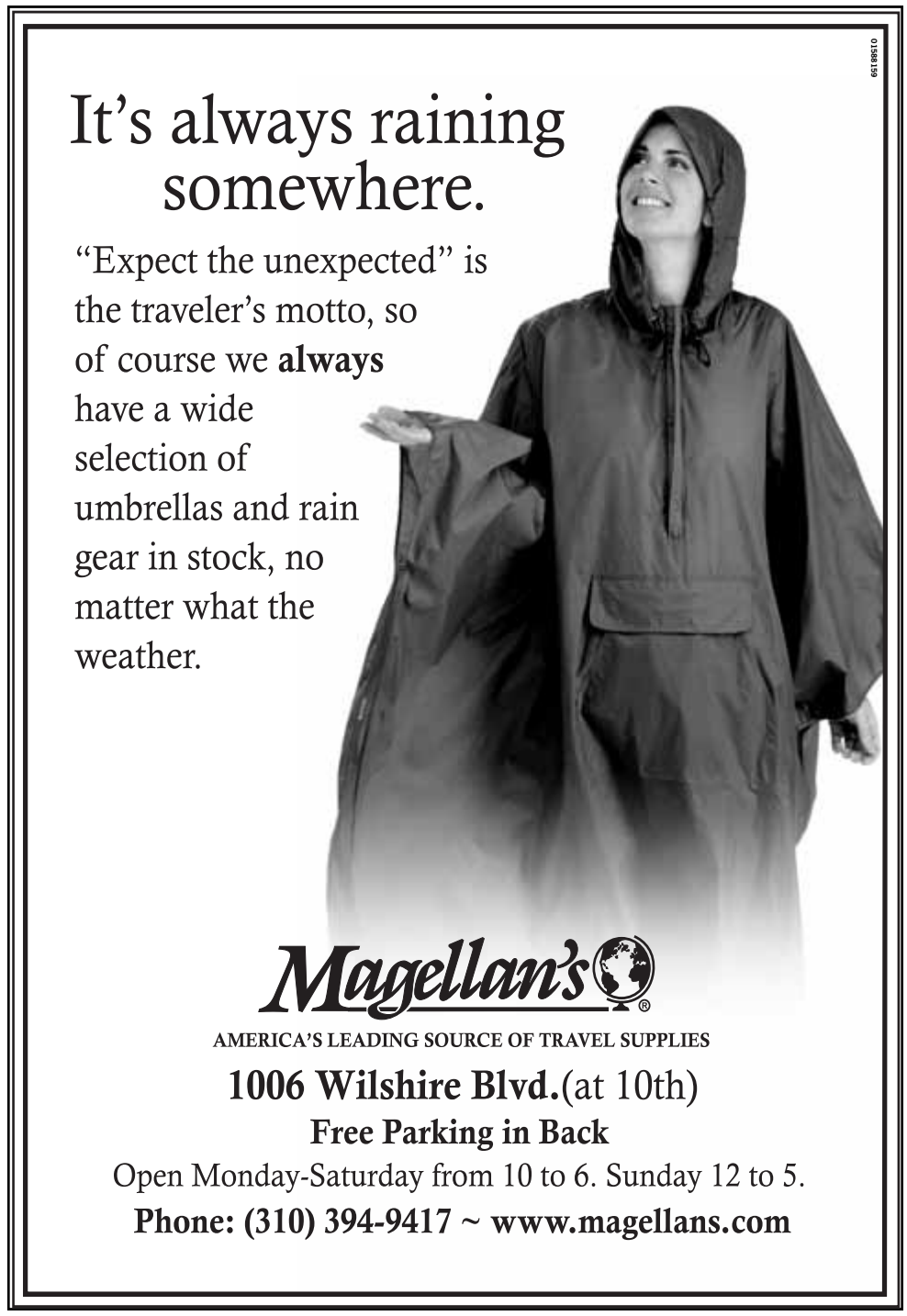
Tim Gerlach, a spokesman for the American Lung Association of the Upper Midwest, where E85 is most popular, said the program's success will depend on the public demanding more cars and fueling stations as they wait for longer-term fixes to the nation's oil dependency.

"You need more vehicles, better availability of the fuel, and more awareness," said Gerlach, who owns a flex-fuel Ford Taurus. "Here is something we can do very easily now."

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STATE

Coastal town residents fear replay of mudslide

BY GREG RISLING
Associated Press Writer

LA CONCHITA — Mike Bell doesn't want to see any more crosses go up in this tiny seaside hamlet beneath a towering bluff of unstable dirt.

Four now stand atop the giant mound of earth that came crashing down a year ago, killing 10 people, destroying 13 homes and damaging 23 others.

The makeshift memorials are a painful reminder of the tragedy that struck the free-spirited community — and could strike again as stubborn residents butt heads with cautious bureaucrats over what should be done to make La Conchita a safer place.

Defiant and resolute, Bell and other residents said they intend to stay put as they prepare to file lawsuits claiming Ventura County should be held accountable. The litigation could help clarify the hazy line between public responsibility and government accountability that has left La Conchita with an uncertain future.

"The county feels as long as they don't burden the rest of the taxpayers, they figure they are clean," said Bell, 58, chairman of the La Conchita Community Organization. "The county should protect all of its citizens."

County officials counter that they aren't sure anything can be done to prevent the landslides that have long plagued the Central Coast town 70 miles northwest of Los Angeles. They have warned residents that it's dangerous to live there.

"No one yet has identified anything that could be effective," said county Supervisor Steve Bennett. "If the county tried to stabilize the hill, it has to accept full liability. Right now, we are not willing to do that."

Experts are split on who is responsible for the safety of La Conchita residents.

"I think the government should bring in engineers to determine if it's a livable area," said Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, chairwoman of the urban planning department at the University of California, Los Angeles. "It shouldn't be left up to people whether they should live there."

George Lefcoe, a professor of real estate law at the University of Southern California, said government officials "aren't the absolute guarantors of public safety."

"The people who live in La Conchita have to decide what risk level they are comfortable with," he said.

La Conchita is an eclectic town — bohemia by the beach — where Spanish-style stucco homes sit next to wood cottages. Its 300 residents include surfers, musicians and lawyers who love the laid-back lifestyle but can't afford the surfside mansions of Santa Barbara about 15 miles to the north along Highway 101.

Like other areas of the West threatened by floods, fires and earthquakes, La Conchita is a constant reminder that Mother Nature is in charge. Its name means "the little shell," but the unincorporated area has long been considered a disaster waiting to happen.

A decade ago, after a heavy rainy season, 600,000 tons of mud and silt plunged down on the town. No one was hurt, but nine homes were buried and residents were evacuated for weeks.

The county posted a warning sign, saying La Conchita was a geologically hazardous area. Before people were allowed to return, they had to sign waivers prohibiting lawsuits against the hillside's owner, the La Conchita Ranch Co., if another landslide occurred.

The latest disaster occurred on Jan. 10, 2005, after the hillside became saturated from a series of winter storms and a torrent of mud cascaded into structures and streets. Residents were evacuated again, but the county lacked the authority to keep people from returning to homes that had not been red-tagged.

Geologists who later examined the hillside believe it will collapse again. One report by scientists at the University of California, Santa Barbara warned the entire town and nearby highway could be buried under 50 feet of dirt if an earthquake triggers another major mudslide.

Like the county, state officials are reluctant to try to shore up the hillside. The county and state have talked about conducting a comprehensive study of the bluff, but no cost figures or timelines have been set.

"Whenever people's homes and lives are threatened, emotions naturally run high and decisions are understandably difficult," said Katherine McLane, a spokeswoman for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"The responsibility for making local decisions lies with local officials, but the governor believes that state officials must remain ready to assist when asked," she said.

Meanwhile, frustrated residents are moving to protect themselves as the rainy season arrives. With donations and community grants, they have purchased a bulldozer, portable generator and several air horns to sound warnings if the hill begins to slide.

Still, they know government assistance will be needed if La Conchita is to survive.

"It's the responsibility of the government to help when there is an emergency," said Rodleen Gestic, 30, who lives at the base of the hill. "I'm willing to risk my life and stay here because I'm not going to leave until everyone is safe."

A giant toe of dirt left from the last landslide still juts into Gestic's neighborhood — left there as a buttress against another possible slide.

One cross atop the mound holds a stone with a glass etching — a tribute to the family of Jimmie Wallet, whose wife and three daughters were buried beneath the rubble after he went to get ice cream. Dolls are scattered on a bench, and a dolphin weather vane is attached to a drum cymbal.

Plastic chairs circle another cross near a wooden plank adorned with two mirrors that reflect a pristine stretch of the Pacific Ocean. Nearby, there's still a hole in the back of a house hit by the first wave of mud and debris.

No one is sure why, but water, possibly from natural springs, still trickles down the hillside — even on days without rain. It's a frightening sight for people like Bell, who lived in the San Fernando Valley during the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

He dismissed assertions that common sense should compel residents to leave La Conchita.

"Where can you live in the United States where you are safe from natural disasters?" he asked. "If a tsunami hit would they fix homes on the beaches?

"You are damn right they would. Why are we any different?" he asked.

STATE

Chertoff declares war on migrant smugglers

BY ELLIOT SPAGAT
Associated Press Writer

SAN DIEGO — Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff on Thursday declared a crackdown on migrant smugglers at two California border crossings, even as the federal government increasingly focuses border enforcement in Arizona.

Chertoff said he didn't have a precise dollar figure on how much would be spent on the crackdown at the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa crossings in San Diego, across the border from Tijuana, Mexico. He said the effort will result in more prosecutions of smugglers and more jail space to accommodate them. It also involves deploying canines trained to detect illegal crossers.

Agents detected 60,000 illegal crossings attempts last year at San Ysidro and in the Otay Mesa passenger lanes, Chertoff said. He said smugglers once stuffed a bottle-sucking baby inside a gasoline tank and crammed 200-pound woman into the dashboard of a small car.

"It is remarkable the lengths to which smugglers will go to try to get people into this country," Chertoff said at a news conference. "They simply want to make money at the expense of human misery."

In a potentially controversial twist, Chertoff said state and local officials would participate in the crackdown. Proponents of tougher enforcement have long advocated a larger role for local law enforcement, but critics say local agencies should stick to fighting crime, not enforcing immigration laws.

Matt Bettenhausen, director of California's Office of Homeland Security, said state agencies including the California Highway Patrol would share information with federal authorities.

"We're not going to be specifically enforcing immigration laws," Bettenhausen said, appearing alongside Chertoff.

Arizona surpassed California as the nation's busiest corridor for illegal immigrants after a crackdown in the California that was launched in the 1990s. Border Patrol arrests in the San Diego sector plummeted to about 110,000 last year from 528,000 in 1995. Arizona, meanwhile, accounted for more than half the Border Patrol's 1.1 million arrests last year.

Chertoff declined to comment on last week's death of a Mexican man shot while sneaking across the border in San Diego by a Border Patrol agent. A Border Patrol spokesman has said Guillermo Martinez Rodriguez, 18, was a longtime migrant smuggler and that the agent fired in self-defense after someone threw a large rock.

The shooting has sparked outrage in Mexico. President Vicente Fox has demanded that the United States provide "a rapid and complete explanation."

While declining to discuss specifics of the shooting, Chertoff noted there has been a sharp increase in attacks on Border Patrol agents.

"Anybody who assaults a Border Patrol or law enforcement agent is asking for trouble," he said.



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STATE

STATE BRIEFS

Feeling the burn in Bernardino

By The Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO — Nighttime controlled burns in dangerously overgrown portions of the San Bernardino National Forest could be approved soon by air quality officials who have previously rejected the plan because of pollution concerns.

The U.S. Forest Service has been pushing for South Coast Air Quality Management District permission to conduct nighttime burns, forest fuels officer Bob Sommer said.

"Burns at night are currently not something allowed in AQMD regulations," district spokesman Sam Atwood said. "We understand the risks of wildfires, and we're taking a close look at what we can do to offer some flexibility to the Forest Service."

A decision was expected sometime this month. A variance could be sought to get around regulations or the agency's executive officer could make an emergency declaration, Atwood said.

Two years ago, the Old and Grand Prix fires destroyed about 1,000 homes in communities within and adjacent to the forest. A massive tree-removal campaign was undertaken to avoid a repeat of the devastation but there are still millions of dead trees.

Controlled fires allow removal of dead trees and brush when moisture levels are high and temperatures are low. Burning is less expensive than thinning the forest mechanically with crews and chain saws.

Burning at night is preferred because larger, hotter fires can be kept under control better than hotter, drier daytime hours, Sommer said.

Family attorney charged with child exploitation

By The Associated Press

SAN FERNANDO — A Santa Clarita family law attorney was ordered to trial on charges he persuaded a 15-year-old girl to masturbate during an Internet chat and attempted to lure online police officers posing as children into meeting him for sexual encounters.

Arthur G. Crabtree, who is also a former Glendale police officer, was arrested during a sting operation a year ago at a bus station where he had allegedly arranged to meet what he thought was a 13-year-old girl.

Crabtree, 44, was charged with nine child-exploitation-related counts, including four felonies. He was ordered to stand trial after a preliminary hearing Wednesday. He will be arraigned Feb. 8.

"He was trying to meet various officers and federal agents that were working with child exploitation units," Deputy District Attorney Tannaz Mokayef said. "He thought he was talking to 13-year-olds and engaging them in sexual chats."

Defense attorney Patrick E. Clancy said the charges are a mistake. Crabtree was bitter after he was forced to resign from the Glendale Police Department over trumped up sexual harassment allegations in 2001, Clancy said.

Crabtree knew how to identify officers posing as children on the Internet and he began contacting them and arranging meetings without showing up, Clancy said.

"He engaged in a four-year campaign of harassing them on the Internet," the defense lawyer said. But the attorney wouldn't say why Crabtree showed up at the Greyhound station.

Clancy said the alleged 15-year-old victim, who is now 17, never mentioned her age during the online chat.

"She was talking like a 30-year-old with a lot of experience," he said. "He thought that she was an adult woman, and he was doing cybersex with her for fun."

Hi, knee: Girl's stolen prosthetic leg found

By The Associated Press

TEMPLE CITY — A teenager's stolen prosthetic leg has been found.

A resident who lives on the same street as amputee Melissa Huff, 16, found the prothesis in the backyard on Thursday. The special artificial limb has a shock absorber because Huff is an Arcadia High School athlete. It is worth up to $10,000.

"When the desk person came in and said the leg was found, I knew exactly what he was talking about. That's because we were all pretty disturbed by it," Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Sgt. Debra Herman said.

Investigators were trying to determine who stole the leg from the Huff home last November and how it got into the backyard, the sergeant said. The leg looks like it's in good condition and it will be returned to Huff soon, Herman said.

A week after Huff's leg was stolen, her prosthetist and two real estate companies donated about $16,000 to pay for a new leg.

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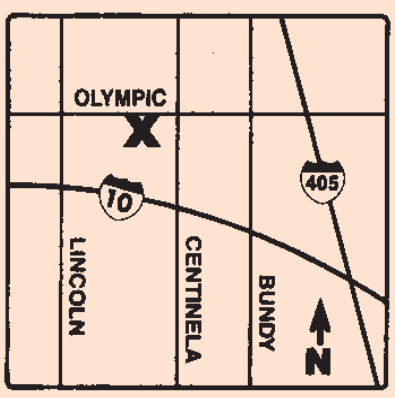
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STATE ❑ NATIONAL

Visa woes stand in way of Chinese garden plot

BY DAISY NGUYEN
Associated Press Writer

SAN MARINO, Calif. — An ambitious plan to build a sprawling, classical Chinese garden at the renowned Huntington Library is in jeopardy because U.S. immigration officials have denied visas to 13 Chinese stonemasons needed to assemble ornate bridges and pavilions.

The artisans were expected to arrive this month to help create the first phase of the 12-acre garden. But the U.S. government refused to grant the Q-1 visas in September because they didn't consider the project an important cultural exchange program, prompting the Huntington to scramble to rearrange the construction schedule due to the artisans' absence.

"We'll have to close the project if we can't get them here," said Steven Koblik, president of the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens east of Los Angeles.

A spokeswoman with the Citizenship and Immigration Services bureau declined to comment specifically on the stonemasons' applications, citing privacy concerns.

"If a visa application is rejected, then it usually is because people don't qualify for the visa for which they applied," said bureau spokeswoman Marie Sebrechts.

The Huntington's case is an example of an ongoing problem U.S. cultural institutions face in trying to obtain travel visas for foreign artists since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Applications for cultural, arts or sports visas have had to pass through more screening due to security concerns.

Last year, 1,972 cultural exchange visas were approved, said Laura Tischler, a spokeswoman for the Bureau of Consular Affairs, a division of the State Department. Tischler said she did not know how many applications for the Q-1 visas were rejected, because in many instances the refusals are overturned.

"Globally speaking, we issue well over 80 percent of the visa applications received," she said.

When the Portland Classical Chinese Garden underwent construction in 1999, up to 90 Chinese artisans came to Oregon to help build arching bridges and gateways, said the garden's executive director, Gloria Lee.

"That was pre-Sept. 11; that was another era," Lee said, noting that visa applications to bring six Chinese musicians to perform at the Portland garden last year were denied.

The government's refusal, Lee said, begs the question: What kind of project would meet the government's definition of an international cultural exchange program?

"It seems like the rules are not well-defined," she said.

The Huntington submitted applications last summer in hopes of bringing artisans from Suzhou, a city along China's central coast known for its beautiful gardens, to work on three acres of what they hope will be a sprawling garden to complement its famous Japanese garden. The artisans have already chiseled stone bridges and pavilions in China, and were to spend several weeks assembling the pieces around a recently excavated lake at the Huntington.

During that time, the Huntington planned to hold workshops and seminars to introduce the public to the centuries-old art of Chinese landscaping, Koblik said.

"If we don't have the people who cut the stones here, we'll lose the quality of the work and lose the ability to see how things are done from a Chinese perspective," he explained.

The government "didn't think we made a convincing case that this is an important cultural exchange program," he said. "We think it's extraordinarily important."

The building of the garden comes at a time when China is emerging as a global economic and political power, he said, and a venue is needed to explain Chinese history and culture to the American public.

He said he's optimistic the government will eventually approve the visas, adding that an additional 50 artisans will be needed as the project advances.

"We'll continue to convince them to change their mind," he said. "We can't compromise."

Ski group drops environment day

By The Associated Press

BRECKENRIDGE, Colo. — The National Ski Areas Association has dropped its participation in an annual event devoted to raising awareness about the environment after five years.

The NSAA's environmental committee recently opted out of Sustainable Slopes Day in order to allow individual resorts room to highlight environmental issues at their discretion, said NSAA director of public policy Geraldine Link.

"I think the Sustainable Slopes Day had run its course after five years," Link said.

The event historically has been scheduled for late February. It has focused on raising awareness among skiers and snowboarders about greenhouse gas emissions and the benefits of using renewable energy resources.

The NSAA plans to continue its "Keep Winter Cool" campaign, which it created in 2003 with the National Resource Defense Council. The campaign urges people to save energy through such actions as carpooling and supporting wind energy.

The NSAA will also send materials to ski areas for circulation and produce and air public service announcements about global warming, Link said. Guests can also buy $2 tags to signify the purchase of enough green energy credits to offset the emissions they used for a day's worth of travel to and from the resort.

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CHECK OUT THE HOROSCOPES ON PAGE 2!

LOCAL

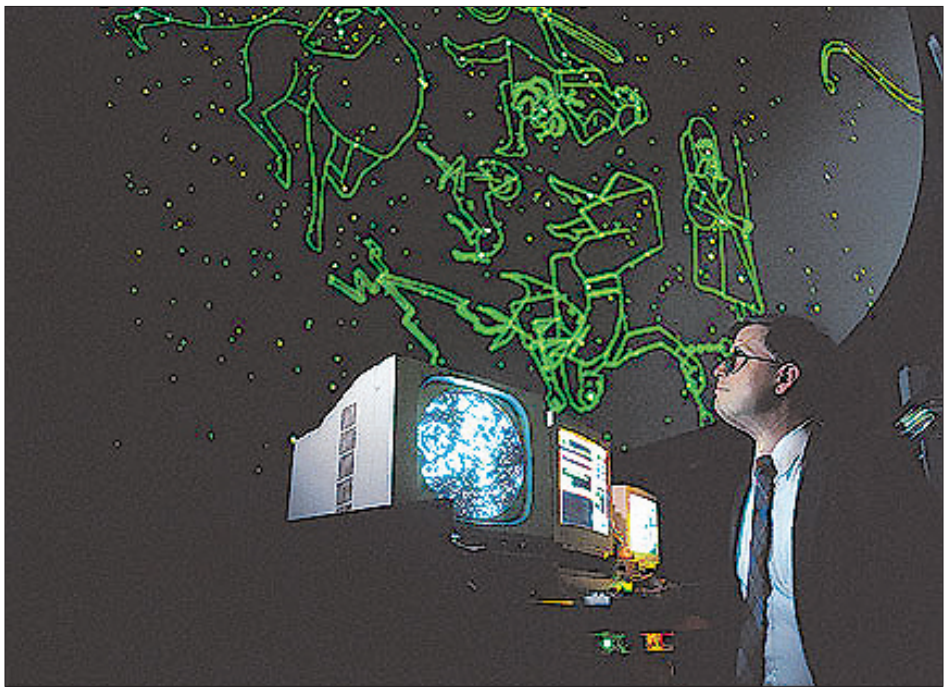
Through rose-colored glasses



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Bob Walters, 70, aka 'The Sheik of Santa Monica' stands out in front of the Santa Monica Car Sound store on Lincoln Boulevard, greeting potential customers. Walters dresses up in different costumes, recently donning get-ups such as Santa Claus and Elvis Presley. Walters said he smokes 20 cigars while he works his 8-hour shift, and another six at home. Walters only started smoking cigars five years ago after a near death experience, he said.

OBITUARIES



HODGE, from page 3

dents, but also for the general public and for schoolchildren of all ages. Over the years, he has talked about every subject imaginable in the universe, many with catchy titles such as "Apocalypse Now: The Asteroid Risk," "How Big is Space?" and "This Alien Earth."

His planetarium shows survived earthquakes and soared to new heights with the construction a few years ago of a new 50-seat facility, complete with the state-of-the-art Digistar projection system.

Hodge's college degree is not even in astronomy. He started out as an astronomy major at USC, but switched to the history of medieval science.

After graduating, he started work at the Griffith Observatory in 1971, first as a guide and then as a lecturer. He took over as SMC's planetarium director in 1979, but continued to lecture at Griffith until it closed three years ago for major renovations. He also has worked with UCLA, organizing popular public seminars on astronomy.

Hodge established himself in Southern California's active astronomical scene, bringing in guest lecturers to SMC from such organizations as Griffith, Cal Tech, UCLA and the Jet Propulsion Lab. He also was a member of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific and the International Planetarium Society.

Hodge is survived by his wife Mary; two sons, Brendan and Timothy; a daughter, Rosamund; and two grandchildren.

A vigil Service will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11 at Lorenzen Mortuary, 19300 Sherman Way, Reseda. A funeral mass will be held at 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 12 at St. Mel Church, 20870 Ventura Blvd., Woodland Hills. Burial will be immediately after the funeral at San Fernando Mission Cemetery, 11160 Stanwood Ave., Mission Hills.

The family has asked that no flowers be sent to the funeral. Flowers are permitted only at the vigil. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that Masses be said for the repose of the soul of Jon Hodge or donations made to Catholic Medical Mission Board, PO Box 4715, New York, NY 10164.





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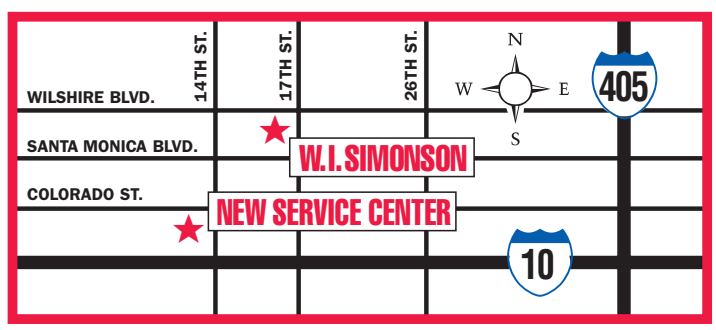
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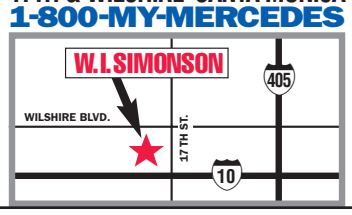
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The sands of time



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Carmen Vargas (right) celebrates her 17th birthday on the beach, building a sand castle with Thomas Jackson and Emily Burns. All are from Fontana.

School budget talks looming

SMALLER CLASSES, from page 1

According to the report, it would cost the district $400,000 to reduce six to 12 core classes by just one student. For a district that's already committed to improving student math and science test scores, bolstering its arts curriculum and adding counselors, additional efforts to reduce class size would likely require a budget shift, officials said. It's a move they fear would detract from other educational goals.

"I think balanced (goals) are a better and more effective way of having an enriched program for all students," said Jose Escarce, a fellow board member.

Thursday's report referred to research done on the effects of class sizes, conducted in Tennessee for grades K-3 between 1985 to 1989. According to that study, optimal gains in student achievement occur in classes that have between 13 and 17 students. To reach those class sizes — which are on par with private schools — the district would have to drop an average of 10 students per class, officials said.

It's an effort that would cost millions of dollars.

Caught between a rock and a hard place, John Deasy, superintendent, indicated it might be more prudent for the district to invest in programs that will allow teachers to provide better instruction to students, rather than attempting to shrink class sizes, which are already competitive among public schools statewide.

"I believe it would be better to improve instruction and having teachers work more collaboratively than decreasing class sizes significantly," Deasy said.

"It's not in our economics?" asked school board members Oscar de la Torre.

"Exactly," Deasy said.

Still, the report indicated some classes offered within the district could stand to be made smaller. Santa Monica High School, for example, has an average class size of 28 students within the core subject areas of English, history, science and math. Of these subjects, 94 classes — or 22 percent — have fewer than 25 students, the report said. Meanwhile, 45 classes — or 11 percent — have more than 35 students.

It's the large classes McLoud wants to see addressed, suggesting that classes with more than 35 students be brought down to a more reasonable number.

As a teacher in Los Angeles, McLoud said reducing large classes by a handful of students would do much to improve the level of instruction.

"I'm teaching 27 students now, and a few years ago I was teaching 34," McLoud said. "Believe me, it makes a big difference."

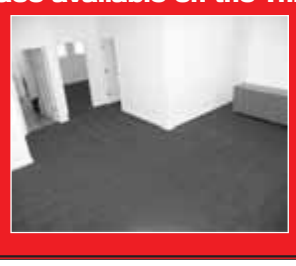
The district will be preparing next year's budget in coming weeks, during which time McLoud and other board members will be able to discuss what goals they believe should take priority.

"It's good to see where we are and check in," said Julia Brownley, school board president. "I see we made need to work on tweaking our class sizes, but I think we'd be getting ahead of ourselves with anything else until we have our budget discussions."

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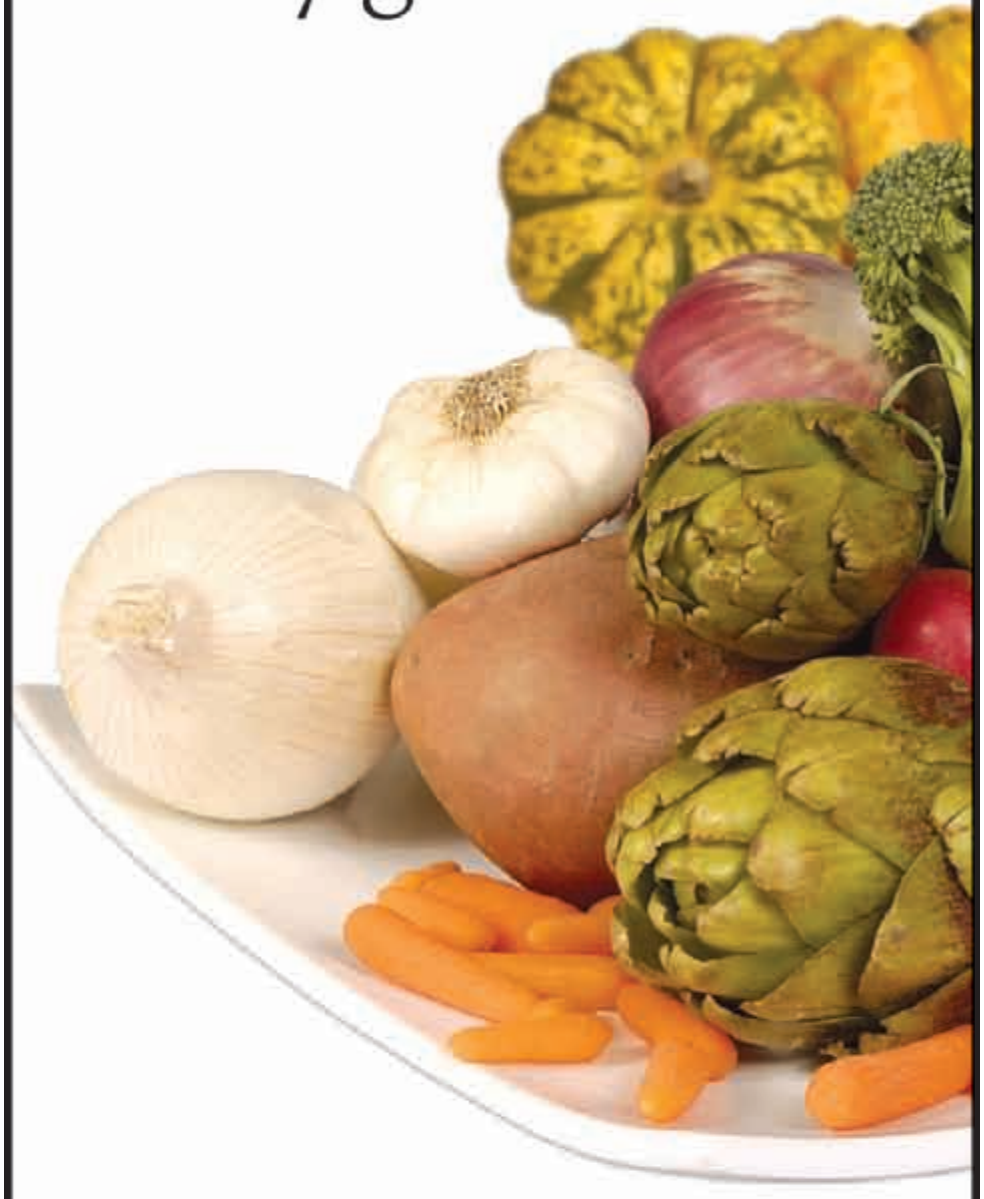
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LOCAL

Students likely to take exit exam multiple times

EXIT EXAM, from page 1

serve these students well to deny them the opportunity to participate in the ceremony," said John Deasy, superintendent.

Instead of being listed as 'graduates' in the class program, however, the students will likely have some other designation, such as 'diploma candidates.'

They will receive a certificate of attendance which recognizes them for meeting all local requirements.

The move is seen as a positive one by officials concerned about a state requirement which forbids this year's seniors who fail the California High School Exit Examination from receiving their high school diploma.

While details need to be finalized, consensus among board members was that the students in question should be able to participate in the graduation ceremony. If they have met all other graduation requirements, but for one reason or another haven't passed the exam, not recognizing them for their years of effort would seem unfair, officials determined.

Some of the students have learning disabilities and will likely never pass the exam, according to Donna Muncey, the district's director of educational services. As a result, the state will allow these special education students to receive test waivers.

However, other students are within a few points of passing the exam, but regardless of how many times they take it, may never succeed, Muncey said.

Officials agreed that prohibiting the students from walking with their classmates may be harmful to their self-esteem.

In addition, the students may qualify for a high school equivalency certificate, but until they receive it they are technically dropouts, Muncey said, because they failed to graduate by the state's standards.

Providing the students with the certificate of attendance may keep opportunities for jobs and higher education open to them, said school board member Oscar de la Torre.

Once the board agreed the students should be able to walk, questions were raised about what "minimum" effort was needed to show they tried passing the exam.

Current seniors first took the exit exam in March or May of 2004. Those who did not pass both sections then had two additional opportunities to take the test last year and will have three opportunities this year, a staff report said. There also have been several intervention programs put into place to help students pass the test. The state has provided each 10th grade student with a test study guide. Students also take a pre-test in ninth and 10th grades which targets them for intervention if needed, the staff report said.

"I wouldn't try to rate effort," Deasy said. "Obviously, most students are trying to pass more than once."

School board officials, however, want documented proof that efforts to pass the exam are being made.

"I support the intention, but I believe it's important to have a policy that encourages multiple attempts," said Shane McLoud, board member. "I am more comfortable with a minimum number of attempts."

Board members argued that it may dilute the value of attaining a high school diploma if students could take the exam once, then give up. The board agreed three attempts might be appropriate — once a year from the time a student is a sophomore.

Staff said it would consider the options and return to the board for final approval in coming weeks.

Lone Star, lone celibrator



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Celebrating at the beach: Texas Longhorn fan Jack Nash, 53 (aka 'Mac Brown'), from Austin, Texas, runs through some plays on Santa Monica Beach. Nash was basking in the afterglow of the Longhorns' win over Southern California in Tuesday's Rose Bowl.

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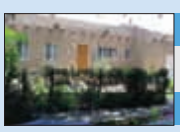
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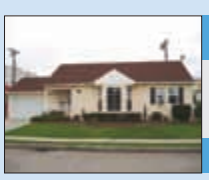
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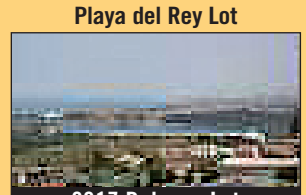
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Grave matters: Celebrities old and new still make scene

CELEBRITY GRAVES, from page 1

Los Angeles, Spanish for "The City of Angels," has one of the world's greatest collections of cemeteries and memorial parks in the world. A who's who of what was.

Over the course of two days, I paid my respects to Monroe, Humphrey Bogart, Spencer Tracy, Clark Gable, Jimmy Stewart, Jean Harlow, Rudolph Valentino, Jayne Mansfield, Burt Lancaster, Dean Martin, Walter Matthau and George C. Scott.

This was different than following the famous maps of celebrity homes sold on Hollywood Boulevard. I knew that once I found the right address, the star would be at home.

While Los Angeles County has more than 50 major burial places, just a half dozen or so attract a steady stream of visitors from around the globe. It can be a tricky trip for the dedicated grave spotter.

Rules and decorum vary wildly. At Hollywood Forever Cemetery, they sell maps to the stars' graves and even show classic films in the cemetery on summer nights. But across town at the sprawling Forest Lawn in Glendale, final home to more stars than anywhere in the world, the staff keeps its lips zipped about the permanent locales of silver-screen legends.

Cemetery operators have to walk a fine line, said Donna Steward, family-service counselor at Pierce Brothers Westwood Village Memorial Park.

"We understand the curiosity of the public, but our families come first," said Steward. "We don't allow tour groups to come in, no guide yelling 'so and so is buried here; so and so is buried there.' We ask people to show respect."

Pierce Brothers Westwood Village Memorial Park is a good place to start a trip to the three most significant graveyards in the Los Angeles area. It's a tiny plot down a side alley hemmed in by the skyscrapers of Westwood.

Despite its small size, the memorial park is packed with famous celebrities, from crooner Dean Martin to rock guitarist Frank Zappa, movie mogul Darryl F. Zanuck to "Green Acres" star Eva Gabor and "In Cold Blood" author Truman Capote.

But all pale in comparison with the most famous grave of all the memorial parks, the crypt of 1950s film bombshell Marilyn Monroe. The pilgrims still come bearing tributes.

"We get a very big crowd," Steward said. "Sometimes it used to be a weird crowd, but it has been better in recent years."

If there is one Southern California graveyard that has "gone Hollywood," it is Hollywood Forever. Rescued from bankruptcy, the former Hollywood Memorial Park reopened in 1998 with a new name and a new mission that included embracing its position as a tourist attraction.

The location is right out of central casting — the Hollywood sign on the nearby hills can be seen between the crypts. There is no southern wall of the Memorial Park — the graves back up right to the workshops and sound stages of Paramount Studios.

Hollywood Forever has a split personality. It's still an operating cemetery — on the day of my visit the lanes were filled with cars parked for a funeral. But Hollywood Forever celebrates its permanent residents. In the flower shop, an attendant sells maps of the cemetery's main attractions, with top celebrity grave spots marked with stars.

It's a new role for Hollywood's oldest cemetery, which dates back to 1899. Along with Hollywood alumni, Hollywood Forever is the final resting place of early city power brokers like the Los Angeles Times' Otis and Chandler families.

Prior to Marilyn, the most famous celebrity grave was undoubtedly the crypt of silent-screen heartthrob Rudolph Valentino, star of "The Sheik" and other sword-and-sandal epics. Thousands have filed past the silver-screen shrine, including the mysterious "lady in black," who made annual visits on the anniversary of the star's death.

Johnny Ramone, "legendary guitarist for the Ramones" as the tombstone is inscribed, arrived in 2004. The New York punk pioneer (whose real name was John Cummings) is shown playing guitar, the black rock block inscribed with salutations from famous friends.

"Forever here today, never gone tomorrow, my eternal friend, I love you," wrote Lisa Marie Presley.

Nearby is a more abstract black rock monument for bandmate Douglas Colvin (aka Dee Dee Ramone), who died in 2002. His epitaph: "OK ... I gotta go now."

The Los Angeles area's most famous cemetery is as fan-frosty as Hollywood Forever Cemetery is fan-friendly. The sprawling 300-acre Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale hosts the remains or memorials of dozens of classic Hollywood names: Bogart, Stewart, Harlow, Gable, Flynn.

But celebrity grave spotters aren't embraced. No map. No directions.

I was looking for the garden with Walt Disney's grave, marked by a little mermaid, when a security guard pulled up and politely said the park was closing.

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NATIONAL

Ventilation holes made for mine probe

BY ALLEN G. BREED
Associated Press Writer

BUCKHANNON, W.Va. — Federal investigators swarmed the coal mine where an explosion left 12 workers dead, supervising the drilling of ventilation holes Friday to allow safe inspections of the tunnel where the miners huddled in their final hours.

The work to rid Sago Mine of enough potential explosives and noxious gases may take several days, said Ben Hatfield, chief executive of the International Coal Group.

"The foremost concern throughout this process has been that there are so many things we don't know about what went wrong," Hatfield said. "We don't want to put any more people at risk until we know answers."

The Mine Safety and Health Administration has appointed an eight-person team to investigate Monday's blast that killed one miner immediately and left a dozen more trapped more than two miles inside the mine. Only one was alive when they were found 41 hours later behind a plastic curtain erected to block deadly carbon monoxide.

In addition to investigating possible causes, including lightning that may have ignited naturally occurring methane or coal dust, MSHA said the probe will also look into the mistaken communication from rescue teams that had anxious relatives believing for three hours that 12 of the trapped miners had survived.

The lone survivor, 26-year-old Randal McCloy Jr., was blinking his eyes and showing other hopeful signs Friday at the Pittsburgh hospital where he was moved a day earlier to receive intense hyperbaric oxygen treatments. But doctors cautioned he was still critically ill from extensive carbon monoxide poisoning and remained in a medically induced coma.

His family said they have sensed a reaction from him.

"I know he knows when I'm there because when I'm there, he gets excited," his wife, Anna McCloy, said Friday on ABC's "Good Morning America."

McCloy's father, Randal McCloy Sr., told The Associated Press that he believes that his son survived because his older colleagues dragged him to their makeshift hiding place and shared the last of their oxygen with him because he was the youngest, and had two small children at home.

"Those men were like brothers. They took care of each other," he said.

Of the 12 miners who died, at least a handful managed to scrawl a last testament to their families, according to loved ones. The exact number of messages was not known.

In wobbly printing, written in ink on the back of an insurance application, 51-year-old miner Martin Toler Jr. said goodbye. For now.

"See them on the other side," the note said. "It wasn't bad. I just went to sleep. I love you."

His brother, Tom, a miner himself for 30 years, was so shocked by the simple, eloquent farewell that he didn't think to ask just where his brother had stashed the piece of paper. In his pocket? In his lunch box?

"It just shook me up when they gave it to me," he said.

And as he read the boxed letters fashioned with a shaky pen, he said, "I took it to mean that it was written in the final stages. I'd call it more or less scribbling."

Peggy Cohen went to a makeshift morgue in an elementary school to identify the body of her 59-year-old father, Fred Ware Jr. There was no note for her, but the medical examiner assured her that some men had written farewells with the same assurances:

"The notes said they weren't suffering, they were just going to sleep," she was told.

Autopsies were to be completed Friday, and the first funerals were to be held Sunday.

ICG's Hatfield said the Sago Mine would remain closed during the investigation, and the company was trying to find temporary jobs elsewhere for the site's 145 employees.

"In the interim, certainly this week, they are being paid and we're meeting with the employees over the weekend to draw up longer-term plans," Hatfield told The Associated Press in an interview a few miles from the mine. "We're going to do our very level best to take care of our people."

As for when the mine would reopen, he couldn't say. "That's a function of how quickly we can complete the investigation, and we can't rush it because the answers are too important."

The federal mine agency said cited the Sago mine for 208 violations in 2005, a number an agency official said was higher than normal for a mine of its size. The violations included 18 orders shutting parts of the mine until alleged violations were corrected. None was deemed serious enough to close the entire operation.

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Audit says Hawaii doing poor job of protecting its natural resources

By The Associated Press

HONOLULU — Hawaii's environmental protection officers are spread too thin, are not adequately trained and lack the equipment they need to do their jobs, a state audit concludes.

The shortcomings make the state's natural resources vulnerable to abuse and prevent officers from effectively protecting the environment, said state auditor Marion Higa.

"If resources continue to be depleted at their current rate and conservation enforcement remains ineffective and inefficient, Hawaii's future generations will lose the enrichment of abundant wildlife, a fertile environment and a rich cultural heritage," the report said.

The 60-page report, compiled between May and December, said enforcement officers are often pulled from conservation patrols to work on crime prevention and marijuana eradication.

The report added officers have also been taken away from protecting the environment by assignments to oversee security at cruise ship ports and to crack down on teenage drug and alcohol abuse at state parks and harbors.

Peter Young, chairman of the board of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, said he told the auditors his department knows there are some challenges and they're trying to make some improvements.

The department has asked the Legislature for about $800,000 to hire uniformed security people at 22 parks and harbors.

It is also using grant money for an experimental ranger program at popular recreation areas.

Young said he hopes such steps will free enforcement officers to concentrate on safeguarding natural and cultural resources.

"We are working on a variety of ways to make improvements to situations that have existed for potentially decades," he said.

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Silence in the Fort Greely silos

BY RACHEL D'ORO
Associated Press Writer

FORT GREELY, Alaska — Many of the silos are in place, obscured by snow behind barbed wire fences, void of the ballistic missile interceptors that are slow in coming.

It's an abrupt departure from the fanfare that accompanied the July 2004 debut of the interceptors designed to shoot down enemy missiles.

As many as 10 missile interceptors were set to be installed at Fort Greely in Alaska's interior in 2005, joining the first six interceptors installed the previous year. But the final count was only two, raising questions about the Bush administration's commitment to an ambitious — and highly criticized — missile defense program plagued by a series of test failures.

Officials with the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, however, say MDA director, Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, decided to temporarily step back on the advice of two independent panels brought in to scrutinize the test program after the latest failures in December 2004 and last February. The program is very much alive, they said, with much of the action in 2005 staged behind the scenes.

"The review groups recommended that more interceptors be made available for both ground and flight testing, and this is the reason why only two interceptors were deployed at Fort Greely," said MDA spokesman Rick Lehner.

The 10-interceptor schedule was the maximum that could go in during 2005, not a fixed number, said Army Maj. Eric Maxon, an Alaska-based spokesman.

"There's no rigid timeline for those remaining interceptors. There never has been," Maxon said during a recent tour of the 800-acre complex, built on barren terrain at the edge of an old burned spruce forest.

Currently there are eight interceptors at Fort Greely and two at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Officials initially said two additional interceptors would be put in at Vandenberg, but have since decided to keep two existing silos there available for tests expected to begin this spring, Lehner said. At least two of those tests will involve mock targets fired from Alaska's rocket range on Kodiak Island, he added.

Fort Greely, about 100 miles southeast of Fairbanks, remains the primary interceptor site for the national missile defense system, with 40 silos planned here. Silo construction is half-completed, and officials are mum on when interceptors will fill them.

"More will be deployed in 2006 and 2007," Lehner said. "But for operational security reasons the Defense Department will no longer divulge how many interceptors are deployed, only that it is in excess of 10."

The interceptors could now be activated on a limited basis in case of an emergency, Lehner said.

Under the program being developed, interceptors would eventually be linked to other system components, including satellites, ground-and sea-based radars, computers and command centers. As envisioned by the military, the network would detect and track ballistic missiles, propelling interceptors fitted with optical sensors called "kill vehicles" to destroy enemy warheads.

Congress has authorized $7.8 billion for program in the upcoming year.

In reality, however, the multibillion dollar system has been inconsistent. Interceptor tests have failed five times in 11 tests. Military officials say failures have led to better equipment and a successful interceptor test in December at Kwajalein Atoll in the central Pacific.

Retired Army Gen. Bill Nance, a member of one of the review panels, said test failures were due more to hardware problems and flight test readiness than any design flaws in the interceptors themselves.

Nance said the Missile Defense Agency has taken the panels' recommendations for more rigorous testing standards seriously. That means more ground testing of individual components to prepare for future flight tests, which have involved mock targets successfully fired from Kodiak. The panels also recommended taking some interceptors out of the production flow and devoting them to tests.

"I think this system is going to work," Nance said. "I think will be able to help defend America from ballistic missile attacks."

But skepticism remains.

The Missile Defense Agency is far behind in its testing program, and at the pace it's going, wouldn't be fully operational for decades — if it's not abandoned first by a future administration, said Philip Coyle, a former chief of testing for the Pentagon and an outspoken critic of the missile defense system being developed.

If highly scripted tests fail, it's hard to see how they could succeed in a surprise attack, said Coyle, who is now an adviser to the Center for Defense Information in Washington. Critics also question the validity of a hugely expensive, highly complex system that would have no effect on low-tech attacks employed by terrorists, such as suicide missions.

"The basic challenges haven't changed. Basically, hitting an enemy missile out in space, at 15,000 miles an hour, is like trying to hit a hole-in-one in golf when the hole is going 15,000 miles an hour," Coyle said. "If an enemy used counter measures and decoys, then it would be like trying to hit a hole-in-one when the green is going 15,000 miles an hour and the green is covered with a bunch of black dots that look just like the hole."

Chipping away: Intel seeks permission to build $605 million plant in Vietnam

BY TRAN VAN MINH
Associated Press Writer

HANOI, Vietnam — Intel Corp., the world's largest chip maker, is seeking the Vietnamese government's permission to build a plant worth $605 million, an official said Thursday. The company, however, said no final decision has been made.

"We received the application Wednesday and are considering it," said the official at the Ministry of Planning and Investment's Foreign Investment Department who identified herself only as Vinh.

But Chuck Mulloy, an Intel spokesman at Intel headquarters in Santa Clara, Calif., said the company constantly evaluates plans for new facilities around the world but doesn't discuss those activities until a decision has been reached.

"We've said we're looking a number of facilities around the world for potential future assembly-test and other activities," he said. "Over a year ago, we indicated Vietnam was on the list. Then again, so was India and locations elsewhere in emerging markets."

Mulloy added that it's not unusual to see "some activity" in potential host countries.

"There's been no final decision," he said. "There's been no announcement."

Vietnam encourages foreign firms to invest in high-tech industries and Intel's project, if approved by the government and finalized by Intel, would become the largest high-tech investment in the country.

The ministry official said the project of this size needs consideration of several government ministries, and the prime minister will have the final decision. A license could be issued within 45 days, she added.

Thursday's Youth newspaper reported that the plant, which would likely assemble and test chips, will be built on a 115-acre lot of land on a high-tech park in southern commercial center of Ho Chi Minh City.

The ministry official said the U.S. chipmaker's project will give a big boost for Vietnam's foreign investment, which received $5.8 billion in commitment in 2005, an increase of 38 percent from the previous year.

The government hopes to get more than $6 billion in pledged foreign investment this year.

In 2005, Vietnam's total domestic sales of computers and PC equipment were estimated to reach $700 million, a 30 percent rise from 2004. The country's information technology exports for the year were also valued at $700 million, up 35 percent on year, according to figures from Ho Chi Minh City Association of Information Technology.

Computer users want instant gratification; industry is responding

BY MAY WONG
AP Technology Writer

LAS VEGAS — Tick. Tick. Tick. The dreaded waiting period for a computer to boot up is all too familiar.

Even the pilot on my flight to Las Vegas this week told passengers they would have to wait for a few minutes — "like how your computer has to boot up at home" — as he restarted the engine before takeoff.

But airplanes aside, time-weary consumers who increasingly rely on laptops, PCs and other electronic devices to watch movies or listen to music are demanding immediate gratification.

The tech industry is responding.

Evidence of an instant-on movement peppered the International Consumer Electronics Show here.

Toshiba Corp. showed off new notebooks with its "Express Media Player," which lets users instantly play audio or video DVDs and CDs with a simple push of a button and without the need to first boot the Microsoft Corp. Windows operating system.

The Japanese electronics giant was among the first to feature a no-waiting TV mode in 2004 with its Qosmio multimedia laptop.

It then began to put the boot-less mode on its high-end models. This year, Toshiba plans to integrate the feature in about 80 percent of its models.

Hewlett-Packard Co. also introduced similar "QuickPlay" technology in one laptop over a year ago. It has since expanded it across four model lines, including its newest HP Pavilion dv1000 debuting at CES.

"Eventually every notebook will have this capability in the next couple of years," said Carl Pinto, a Toshiba product development director. "As digital convergence has made notebooks more of an entertainment device, the whole concept is to make it operate more like a DVD player or other consumer electronics."

Put it this way: How long do you wait after you push the power button to get your radio, digital camera or cell phone to start working? Maybe 10 or 15 seconds if your handset is a smartphone. By contrast, it still typically takes anywhere from two to four minutes for a computer to boot up its operating system and be ready for duty.

Microsoft, whose nearly ubiquitous Windows platform is expanding into ever more mobile and entertainment-oriented gadgets, knows improvements are needed. It promises to address that issue in its upcoming Windows upgrade, called Vista, due for release by the end of the year.

In one such feature, called Sideshow, laptops would be able to retrieve phone contacts, to-do lists or other organizer-type files — all without the need to turn on the machine or boot up the main operating system. Instead, users could instantly access that data, which would be displayed on a small screen embedded in the notebook's lid.

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates showed a prototype of the SideShow technology during his keynote Wednesday night.

PortalPlayer Inc., which is providing Microsoft with the semiconductors and software components for Sideshow, says its technology would even allow for PowerPoint presentations to be displayed or controlled from the small touch screen.

Some laptop prototypes were on display at CES but notebook makers are not expected to incorporate "Preface" technology until after Windows Vista is released, said Arman Toorians, senior director of technical marketing at PortalPlayer.

Companies could also apply the technology to multimedia computers, Toorians said.

In the meantime, Intel Corp.'s new Viiv platform of technologies for home entertainment PCs will also allow users to instantly turn their machines on or off after an initial boot.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. military reports 11 U.S. troops killed on same day in Iraq

BY JASON STRAZIUSO
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The U.S. military said Friday that six more American troops died in the recent surge of violence in Iraq, bringing to 11 the number of U.S. troops slain on the same day.

Thousands of Shiites, meanwhile, rallied in Baghdad to protest the bloodshed and denounce what they said was American coddling of some Sunnis who support the insurgency in order to mollify them and bring them into a broad-based government.

In new violence Friday, a suicide car bomber struck a police patrol in Baghdad, killing one officer, Col. Noori Ashur said.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw held talks in southern Iraq with local officials on forming a broad-based coalition government.

A U.S. Marine and soldier died in Thursday's attack by a suicide bomber who infiltrated a line of police recruits in Ramadi, killing at least 58 and wounding dozens. Two soldiers were also killed in the Baghdad area when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb, the military said Friday.

Two U.S. Marines were killed by separate small arms attacks while conducting combat operations in Fallujah, the military said.

The military had previously announced the deaths of five soldiers hit by a roadside bomb south of Karbala. The attack came minutes before a second suicide bomber struck Shiite pilgrims in that city, killing 63.

The 11 U.S. deaths were the most in a single day since 11 Americans were killed on Dec. 1. On that day, 10 Marines were killed by buried bombs as they gathered for a promotion ceremony in an abandoned flour mill in Fallujah, and one soldier was killed in Ramadi.

At least 2,194 members of the U.S. military have died since the war began, according to an Associated Press count. Ball bearings from the suicide attacker's vest lay scattered on the earth next to Shiite Islam's holiest shrine in Iraq after the Karbala attack.

In the Sunni insurgent stronghold of Ramadi, 70 miles west of the capital, Marine Capt. Jeffrey S. Pool said police recruits got back in line to continue the screening process after a suicide bomber attacked. They were apparently desperate for a relatively well-paying job in the impoverished area.

Marine Maj. Gen. Stephen Johnson, commander of U.S. forces in western Iraq, said he suspects al-Qaida in Iraq carried out the Ramadi attack, although he has no proof.

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shiite, denounced the violence as a bid to derail the political process at a time when progress was being made toward a government that would include Sunni Arabs and thus possibly weaken the insurgency.

A spokesman for the U.S. military said insurgents are becoming more desperate as the democratic process increasingly takes hold.

"The common people of Iraq are losing their tolerance for the insurgents and terrorists among them, turning in the enemy among them at an increasing rate," said Lt. Col. Barry Johnson. "We aren't past the dangers that threaten progress and there will be more tragedies ahead of us."

At the protest rally, thousands of angry Shiites demonstrated in Baghdad's Sadr City slum against a spree of attacks and U.S. policy, chanting slogans against U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and moderate Sunni Arab leaders such as Adnan al-Dulaimi.

Most of their ire was directed at hard-liners such as Saleh al-Mutlaq, head of the Sunni Arab National Dialogue Front, who complained of widespread fraud in the Dec. 15 elections.

Khalilzad has urged Iraq's political and religious groups to form a coalition. They include the three top vote-getters and the main Shiite United Iraqi Alliance — leading in results following the elections — al-Dulaimi's main Sunni Arab Iraqi Accordance Front, and a Kurdish coalition.

Israel's Sharon fights for life

BY RAVI NESSMAN
Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Ariel Sharon showed "significant improvement" after five hours of emergency brain surgery Friday, with doctors stopping the bleeding and relieving the pressure inside his skull, a hospital official said.

Sharon, 77, remains in serious condition, said Hadassah Hospital director Dr. Shlomo Mor-Yosef. Sharon was returned to intensive care after the surgery and a subsequent brain scan. He will remain in a medically induced coma until Sunday.

Sharon was rushed to the operating room Friday morning after a brain scan detected further bleeding and increasing pressure.

"During surgery, the increased intracranial pressure was released, part of the blood clots that remained after the first operation were drained," he said. "At the end of the operation, there is no active bleeding and the intracranial pressure has returned to normal."

"I can say that in comparison to previous CT scans ... there is a significant improvement in the way the brain exam looks to Hadassah's experts," Mor-Yosef said.

He said the prime minister was in "stable, but serious" condition.

Sharon suffered a massive stroke with widespread bleeding in his brain Wednesday, and Friday's surgery was his second in two days. He was rushed into the operating room after doctors detected bleeding in the brain, increased cranial pressure and rising blood pressure.

Wednesday's stroke was Sharon's second since a mild one Dec. 18 and occurred the night before he was scheduled to undergo a procedure to repair a hole in his heart. That tiny hole contributed to the earlier stroke.

Shimon Peres, Israel's elder statesman and a Sharon ally, said he was "very worried."

Friday's surgery followed a seven-hour operation Thursday morning after Sharon suffered a massive brain hemorrhage. Doctors had put him in a medically induced coma to give his body time to heal, but most outside experts said his chances for recovery were slim.

Sharon's sons, Omri and Gilad, were camped out in a room next door to their father's at the neurological intensive care unit.

Dr. Yonathan Halevy, a senior doctor at Jerusalem's Shaarei Zedek Hospital who is not treating Sharon, said he was also worried about the Israeli leader's condition.

"The fact that the bleeding has resumed is a sign of a significant deterioration," he told Israel TV.

Outside medical experts said bleeding from the stroke may have led to interference of the drainage of the cerebral spinal fluid that bathes the brain, or he may have developed inflammation and fluid leakage within the substance of the brain.

Sharon's sudden, grave illness left his ambitious peace agenda in doubt and stunned Israelis, who were grappling with the likelihood that the man who dominated politics in the regions for decades would never return to power.

"Between hope and despair," read the banner headline in the Maariv daily newspaper.

Aides to Sharon said they were working on the assumption he would not return to work.

Sharon's supporters prayed for his recovery. Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar advised Israelis which Psalms to read as part of their prayers for Sharon.

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinovitch of the Western Wall said he received dozens of e-mails praying for Sharon's health that he printed out and stuck in the cracks of the holy site. Callers from as far away as Venezuela and the United States asked for advice in praying for Sharon, he said.

Svetlana Kremitsky, a hospital worker who brings food to the patients in Sharon's ward, said the hospital was filled with worry.

"You can feel it in the air. We're all concerned," she said.

Sharon's deputy, Ehud Olmert, has taken the reins as acting prime minister and is trying to convey a sense of stability. Leaders of Sharon's new Kadima Party said they would rally around Olmert, and a new poll released Friday showed Kadima would still sweep March elections, even without Sharon.

Doctors said it would take time to determine how much damage was caused by the widespread stroke Sharon suffered Wednesday night, adding that media reports of permanent, significant damage were irresponsible.

Sharon's collapse less than three months before national elections also left his Kadima party, which he formed in November, in limbo.

In the short term, Israelis appeared to still be supporting Kadima. A poll published in the Yediot Ahronot daily Friday found that an Olmert-headed Kadima would win 39 of 120 parliament seats, the most of any party and slightly less than the party polled under Sharon.

The dovish Labor Party would get 20 seats, and the hard-line Likud, which Sharon left to form Kadima, would capture 16 seats, according to the poll of 500 people taken Thursday. It had an error margin of 4.4 percentage points.

Peres would net 42 seats as head of Kadima, but some analysts said it was unlikely he would be chosen to lead the new party. He met with Olmert on Friday, but did not give details.

"We will know how to continue Israel's policy ... to continue Ariel Sharon's policies," Peres told reporters.

Palestinians reacted to the fall of their longtime enemy with a mix of glee and apprehension. Some Palestinian leaders worried that Sharon's illness could derail their Jan. 25 parliamentary elections.

"We are watching with great worry at what might happen if he is harmed," said Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who called Olmert to express wishes for Sharon's recovery.

Some Palestinian children gave out sweets in the Gaza Strip at news of Sharon's illness.

Foreign leaders, who embraced Sharon following his unilateral pullout from the Gaza Strip last year, also expressed concern.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice praised Sharon as "a man of enormous courage," and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said he was praying for a miraculous recovery.

Two prominent rabbis visited Sharon's bedside Thursday on the heavily guarded seventh floor of the hospital and prayed with his family, one of the rabbis, Yitzhak Batzri, told Israel Radio. Batzri's father, leading Jewish mystic David Batzri, held Sharon's hand to direct a prayer toward him, Yitzhak Batzri said.

"He is unconscious as everyone knows and the small happiness that we have is that we saw the family is strong, the family believes, the family is praying and hoping," Yitzhak Batzri said.

Israelis were shocked by the illness of a man who was in public life for decades, first as a hero in Israel's earliest wars and later as the country's best known political hawk. Sharon led Israel's fight against the Palestinians during nearly five years of violence, and his security credentials gave him the credibility with the Israeli public to make concessions to the Palestinians.

"He was one of a kind. I don't know any other man like him," said Joseph Lapid, head of the opposition Shinui Party.

Sharon first rose to prominence as an army officer, setting up a unit that fought Palestinian infiltrators in the 1950s. He served as a commander of the Gaza region after Israel captured the territory in 1967, before entering politics and forging the hardline Likud Party.

Sharon briefly returned to the army to lead the fight against Egypt during the 1973 Mideast war.

As defense minister, Sharon directed Israel's ill-fated invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and was forced to step down by an Israeli commission of inquiry that found him indirectly responsible for a massacre of Palestinians in two refugee camps by Christian Phalangist soldiers.

Sharon re-emerged as prime minister in 2001 soon after the outbreak of new Israeli-Palestinian violence, and two years later he reversed his decades-long support for Jewish settlement and pushed through his Gaza pullout plan.

Despite the pullout, Sharon remains widely reviled in the Arab world for his tough actions against Palestinians.

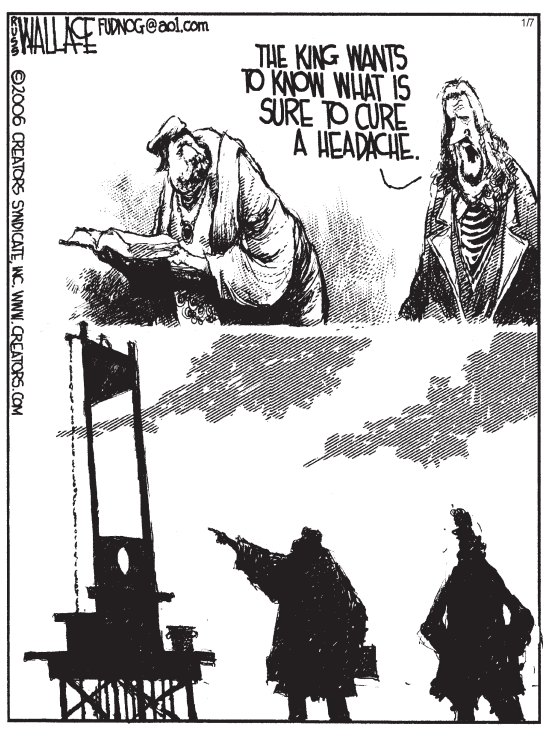
Sharon fell ill Wednesday evening while he rested at his ranch in southern Israel ahead of a medical procedure scheduled for Thursday to close a small hole in his heart. Doctors rushed him to Hadassah Hospital, instead of a hospital in nearby Beersheba, because his condition did not appear dire, Sharon aides said. He suffered the bleeding stroke during the hourlong drive to Jerusalem.

COMICS

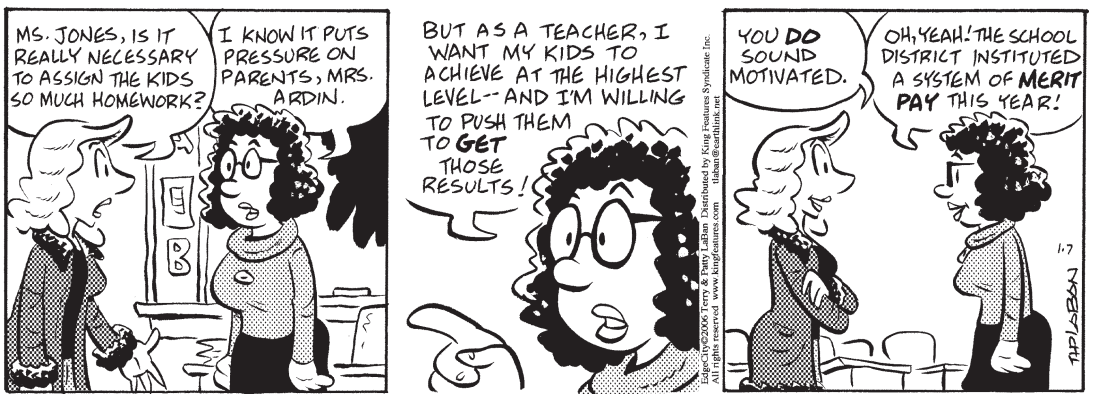
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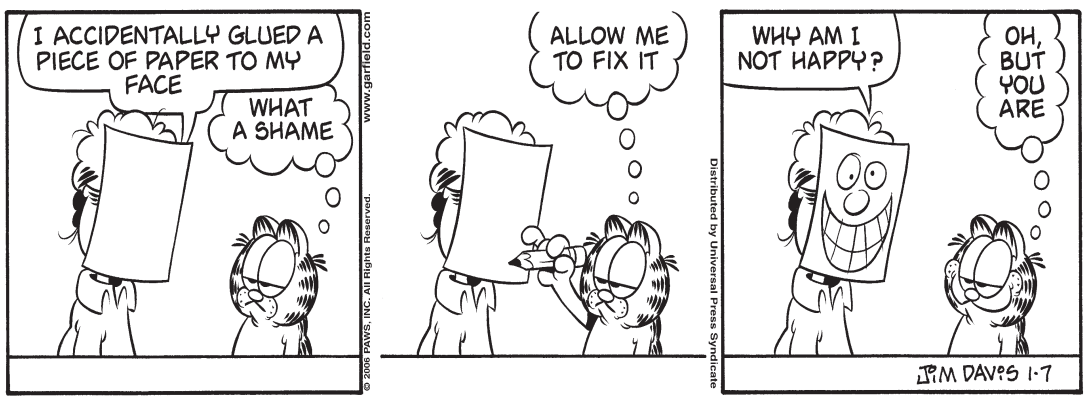
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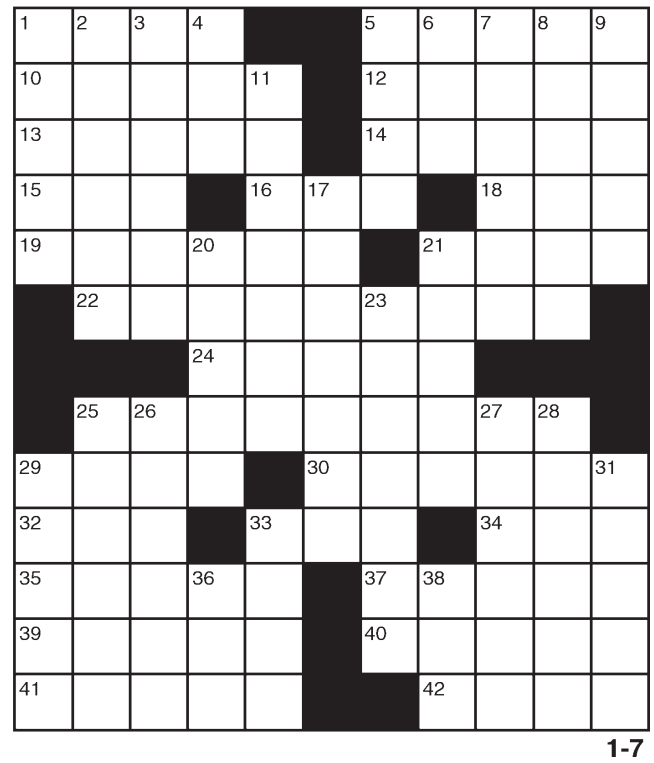
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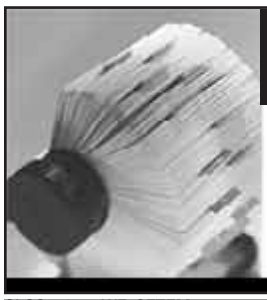
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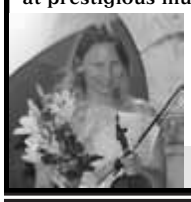
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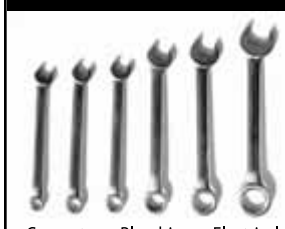
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