

FREE

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Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Henna artist Luke Chanthadara gives actress Michelle Phillips a non-permanent tattoo on the Third Street Promenade Tuesday. The artist is banned from doing such an act, but continues to do it anyway.

Michelle Phillips gets Henna tattoo

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Henna artists enlisted Hollywood personalities in their effort to convince city officials that it's their right to express themselves.

"It's ridiculous to call this a crime."

— MICHELLE PHILLIPS
Actress

Michelle Phillips of the classic 60s rock band the Mamas and the Papas, showed up on the Third Street Promenade Tuesday to receive a Henna

tattoo, even though the practice is against the law in Santa Monica.

"It's ridiculous to call this a crime," she said while getting an "S" decorated on her right shoulder by Henna artist Luke Chanthadara. The artist has received two misdemeanor tickets since Jan. 1, when officials enacted a city-wide ban of Henna.

"I've always considered Santa Monica a very progressive city ... a live and let live place but it's rather frightening that the city council decides what is art and what isn't art," Phillips said, adding the "S" tattoo is for Steven Zax, her fiancé and a Beverly Hills doctor.

The Santa Monica City Council voted in October to ban Henna artists throughout the city. Some councilmembers think the non-permanent "tattooing" opens the city up to liability because some artists use

See HENNA, page 3

Lack of school security a danger to children

Parents ask district to install security personnel in elementary schools

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Special to the Daily Press

Parents of Roosevelt Elementary School students were shocked to hear that a man broke into the facility last May, held a little boy in a bathroom stall for 10 minutes before authorities could intervene.

In response, the school's seven entrances were locked and parents, intent on preventing future breaches of security, formed a volunteer network to guard the main entrance.

But the system failed last month when another intruder entered the school on Dec. 17, looking for a boy he had "befriended" during recess, parents revealed last week.

"We removed him from campus, but I would hate to wonder what bathroom this creep would have broken into had one of our volunteers not been there," said Mary Beth De Lucia, a parent activist who coordinates the volunteer security force at Roosevelt.

The group, which has had no professional security training and can barely keep regular hours, says it cannot fulfill the security needs of the elementary school. Members of the group appeared before the school board last week pleading for a professional security force to patrol elementary school hallways, as is done in the middle schools and high schools.

"While the parent volunteer system is an excellent system — it's better than what was happening before with all the gates being left

open — it's simply not enough," said Steven Wolvek, a parent of two Roosevelt students and a volunteer in the security program. "The costs of installing security guards are minimal compared to the safety of those children."

"Let's face it, our kids are attending urban schools, and we as a city and a school district need to start acting accordingly."

—MARY BETH DE LUCIA
Parent

De Lucia listed three armed robberies and two sexual assaults that occurred recently in the neighborhoods of Roosevelt and Franklin elementary schools as evidence of the need for increased security.

"Personally, I'm mystified. Last year in our neighborhood — where people spend millions of dollars on fixer-uppers" there were serious crimes committed, she said. "Let's face it, our kids are attending urban schools, and we as a city and a school district need to start acting accordingly."

One parent, George Rosenthal, was so concerned with safety at Roosevelt, he paid to

See SECURITY, page 3

Nevada-California high-speed train idea resurfaces

By The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Nevada may be in the running again for nearly \$1 billion in federal funding for a high-speed rail system between Las Vegas and Southern California.

At a Nevada transportation summit meeting Monday in Las Vegas, U.S. Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, said the proposed magnetic-levitation train could be built faster and

cheaper than other proposals vying for federal money.

"I'm confident this can get back in the running," he said.

Young's support could resurrect a decades-long effort to build the super-speed train to whisk passengers 273 miles between Anaheim, Calif., and Las Vegas in 90 minutes. In years past, the train was dubbed the "gamblers' special."

See TRAIN, page 3

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Though a friend could still pull the rug out from under you, you discover there are many ways to achieve your objectives. Stay secure and talk about your dreams. Others respond and help you make a dream into a reality. Your high energy appeals to many. Tonight: Go to a favorite spot.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ You mean well and have a way of helping others settle down. However, someone just might need to be shook up. Consider different financial alternatives. If something isn't clear, think carefully before committing. Tonight: Treat someone to dinner.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Take your time. You don't have to agree to something that makes you uncomfortable. Think in terms of success and new directions. Your sense of humor comes out with a contrary person at a distance. Take your time; the day gets better as it gets older. Tonight: Go wild!



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ Don't lose your focus. Stay on top of your work but make time for meetings and key get-togethers. News from a boss, though dramatically stated, could be excellent news. Be sensitive to your opportunities. Slow down in the afternoon. Tonight: Take some private time.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Take charge at work. Information from a distance weighs in on a key decision. Understand that what a very serious friend shares is important to him or her. Pause and take time to listen. A meeting late in the day shines with success. Tonight: Where your friends are.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ News from a distance sheds light on work-related matters. Still, a partner or associate examines what it might take to finish a project. Unexpected news could toss plans out. Your work demands attention in the later day. Talk to a boss or superior. Tonight: A must show.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Deal with someone on a one-on-one level. Your most effective means of communicating is directly, not through someone else. You make an impact, though it could shake up a child or loved one. Listen to information from someone at a distance. Tonight: Veg out to a movie.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ Continue deferring to others, with the possible exception of a family member. Make an additional effort to handle a work-related problem directly. Your fast action could make all the difference between success or failure. Schedule a talk for later in the day. Tonight: Make nice.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ Consider what is going on with an associate before you decide to make a decision that could impact this person. You find that communication could be a bit toastier than you anticipated. Stay open to the creative process. Others become receptive to discussions in the evening. Tonight: Join friends for dinner.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Your playful nature comes forward. Think in terms of success and new possibilities. Find answers rather than close doors. You might have had enough of recent instability. Understand that you cannot control everything all the time. Tonight: Bring extra work home.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ Your family becomes your highest priority. Listen to someone, but don't do the unexpected when dealing with this person. Your impetuous behavior inadvertently causes a problem. In the later afternoon, your creativity and humor delight those around you. Tonight: Play the night away.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ Speak your mind and carefully think through a decision. An unexpected realization takes you in a new direction. What you felt was a good idea could easily change. Discussions illuminate your knowledge, especially over finances. Tonight: Head on home.



WEATHER

Today ...	Sunny	High—58°F	Low—40°F
Tomorrow ...	Sunny	High—62°F	Low—40°F
Friday ...	Partly cloudy	High—60°F	Low—44°F



QUOTE of the DAY

**"Old people shouldn't eat health foods.
They need all the preservatives they can get."**
— Robert Orben

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LOCAL

Parents worry about sex offenders near city schools

SECURITY, from page 1

have a camera system installed to monitor the school's main entrance. However, there is nobody available to watch the camera all the time.

"Children should not have to worry about their own safety when they are at school," said Rosenthal. "They'll have plenty of time to worry when they reach adulthood. Let's allow them to just be children now."

In Beverly Hills, police officers are assigned to each school where they not only patrol hallways but teach drug programs and work with children in a classroom setting. In many cases, the officers have desks, computers and offices.

Culver City hired a retired Los Angeles Police Department detective to set up a mini-police station in the school district's high school. Security guards are dispatched from the central office and have the ability to write traffic tickets and regularly patrol each campus.

Currently, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District posts security guards at the middle schools and high schools. The city's police department provides two resource police officers from the Youth Service Division to work in schools, according to Santa Monica Police Lt. Frank Fabrega.

He said Santa Monica police officers patrol schools in their beat as part of their assignments.

School district superintendent John Deasy will address security concerns, specifically at the elementary schools, at

this Thursday's school board meeting. After parents complained, the district's board of education directed Deasy to investigate the matter and brief them on what needs to be done.

"We can never rest on our laurels when it comes to safety," said Julia Brownley, school board president. "There is access to (Roosevelt) school and that raises an issue if the school district needs to be more vigilant when it comes to the safety of the children there."

Roosevelt parents said they routinely tell their children not to go to the restrooms without four or five friends with them.

"I have to have talks with my children about safety issues and going to the bathroom in teams because I don't think the area is completely safe," said Wolvek. "But as a concerned parent I want to stop the crime before it can happen. I want to protect my children before somebody can get to them."

Deputy Los Angeles County District Attorney Suzanne Tragert, who sends her children to Roosevelt, worries about the high number of sex offenders that live in the neighborhood.

"In the vicinity of Franklin and Roosevelt elementary schools, there are 50 registered sex offenders living nearby," she said. "And the majority of those individuals prey on children under the age of 14 years old."

Franklin Elementary is located on Montana Avenue near 24th Street and Roosevelt Elementary is located on

Montana Avenue and Lincoln Boulevard. The area is considered one of the safer and high-end areas of the city.

Rosenthal thinks the area's homeless population poses a threat, as well.

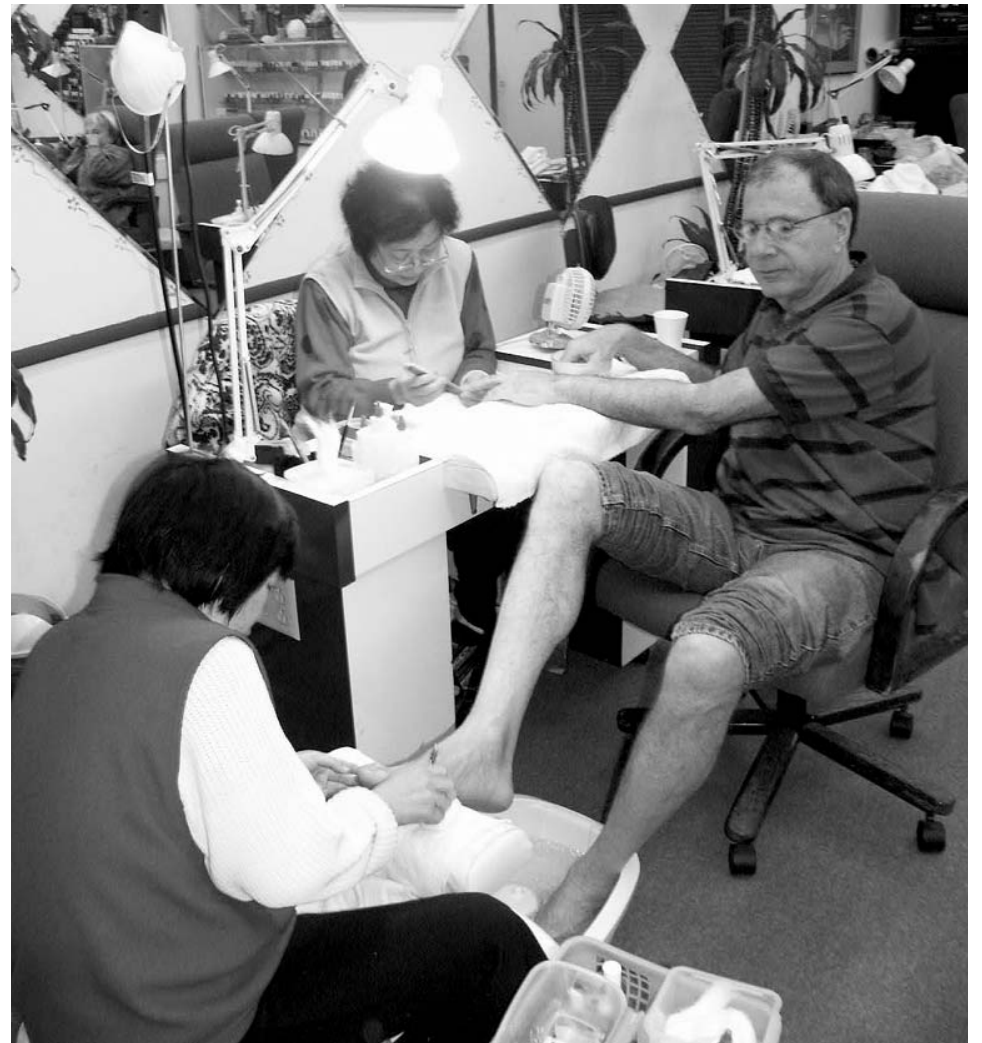
"There are significant issues with some of the homeless who are not just homeless but also have mental illnesses," he said. "These are mental issues we do not want to expose our children to, and we need to find a way to bring a security presence to

campus to protect them from them."

Tragert pleaded for the school board to enact serious security changes before another child could be harmed.

"Please do your job and help make our schools safe for our children. I know you want to do the right thing and I want you to realize we are all on notice," she said. "It's not a matter of if something could happen to our children — it's only a matter of when."

Showing his feminine side



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Valencia resident Alex Urbach gets a manicure and pedicure at Elegant Nails on Wilshire Boulevard before he spends the evening with his son.

Henna artist faces jail, fines

HENNA, from page 1

unsafe, toxic dye. Others think Henna is not a performance and shouldn't fall under the city's code for street performing.

But some artists like Chanthadara ignore the ban because they believe it's their Constitutional right to express themselves with the 5,000-year-old art form.

"I was hoping I would get arrested."

— MICHELLE PHILLIPS

Since the ban went into effect, police have issued two misdemeanor tickets to Chanthadara for performing without a business license, which is no longer issued under the city's new regulations.

The artist, who sets up shop on the Third Street Promenade, faces up to six months in jail and up to \$1,000 in fines. He is scheduled to appear in court in Santa Monica at 8:30 a.m. on Feb. 4.

Henna supporters plan to hold a vigil at 8 a.m. that day outside the Santa Monica Courthouse, located at 1725 Main Street just prior to Chanthadara's arraignment.

Chanthadara said he will continue to perform the art on the Promenade and expects to receive more tickets. However, he didn't expect to be ticketed on Tuesday with Phillips present because there was too much fanfare. Once the publicity is over, he expects the cops to focus on him again.

Phillips, 56, was disappointed officers weren't on hand to witness the criminal act.

"I was hoping I would get arrested," she said.

Santa Monica Police Lt. Frank Fabrega said the department will continue to enforce city laws with the staff and

resources available.

Henna supporters have collected hundreds of signatures, urging the city council to conduct a re-vote on the Henna ban and attempt to work out a meditative solution involving the inappropriate use of black Henna toxic hair dye. They are scheduled to go before the city's arts commission on Jan. 28 to convince its members that Henna is safe, is an art and is a form of expression.

"I have all the confidence in Santa

Monica that they should and will lift this ban," said community activist Jerry Rubin, who worked with Phillips in fighting the city over the banning of realistic-looking toy guns in the late 1980s. He called Phillips last week to help in the artists' effort.

"There's absolutely no reason to ban it," Phillips told a crowd of journalists Tuesday. "What is the point of banning something harmless, safe and fun?"

Magnetically-propelled train reaches speeds up to 300 mph

TRAIN, from page 1

A year ago, the U.S. Department of Transportation picked Pittsburgh and Baltimore and eliminated the Nevada-California route from a seven-state competition for \$950 million to build a federal magnetic-levitation demonstration system.

The train, with no wheels to create friction, is propelled by magnetic force and can cruise at speeds up to 300 mph. It has been certified for commercial service in Germany.

Young said Monday in Las Vegas that he thinks a \$3.6-billion Baltimore proposal to build a maglev line from Camden Yards in Baltimore to Union Station in Washington, D.C., is too costly.

"I can stop the Baltimore-Washington project," Young

said. "No way that's going to happen."

The Pittsburgh plan would connect the city with its international airport.

U.S. Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev., who serves with Young on the Transportation Committee, said Young was "very favorably disposed to ... putting the Las Vegas maglev train back on track."

Young, elected to Congress in 1973, was in Las Vegas for a \$1,000-a-plate campaign fund-raiser at the Bellagio hotel casino.

He was briefed by state and local officials on Nevada transportation projects and showed interest in efforts to accelerate construction of a Colorado River bridge to remove truck traffic from Hoover Dam.

Terrorism fears after Sept. 11 led federal officials to prohibit most trucks from the dam. U.S. Highway 93, crossing the dam, is a key route between Phoenix and Las Vegas.

Tom Stephens, director of the Nevada Department of Transportation, said an accelerated design and construction schedule could open the Hoover Dam bypass bridge to traffic in 2005, two years ahead of the Federal Highway Administration's completion date.

Stephens told Young the accelerated schedule would cost an extra \$108 million, bringing the total cost to \$234 million.

Young didn't promise the money, but called the bridge one of his most important projects.

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NATIONAL

Police say evidence backs rape claim against Tyson

BY KEN RITTER
Associated Press Writer

LAS VEGAS — Police said Tuesday they found evidence supporting a woman's claim that she was raped by Mike Tyson, but no formal charges have been filed against the former heavyweight champion.

"We think there's probable cause to believe a crime occurred," Lt. Jeff Carlson, commander of the Las Vegas police sex crimes unit, told The Associated Press.

"Obviously we're not the attorneys," he said. "It's their decision whether to prosecute."

Carlson said the results of a four-month investigation were turned over Tuesday to the office of Clark County District Attorney Stewart Bell.

Bell said through a spokeswoman that prosecutors need more time to decide whether to charge Tyson, 35.

The decision could affect plans for an April 6 fight at the MGM Grand hotel-casino in Las Vegas between Tyson and WBC and IBF heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis.

Tyson and Lewis exchanged punches at a Tuesday news conference at the Hudson Theater in New York to announce the fight.

Marc Ratner, executive director of the Nevada Athletic Commission, said the three-member panel will decide next Tuesday whether to grant Tyson a new boxing license.

Tyson's Nevada boxing license was suspended for one year after he bit opponent Evander Holyfield's ears in 1997. Ratner said Tuesday that Tyson's license routinely expired on Dec. 30.

Ratner called the rape allegation a separate matter now in the hands of the district attorney. He said he could not speculate about the impact a sex assault prosecution

might have on Tyson's career.

Tyson spokesman Scott Miranda, reached after the brawl in New York, said Tyson cooperated with Las Vegas authorities throughout their investigation.

"We did everything we were asked to," Miranda said. "Now it's up to the district attorney's office."

No additional details about the rape allegation or the woman have been made public.

"We think there's probable cause to believe a crime occurred ... It's their decision whether to prosecute."

— LT. JEFF CARLSON
Las Vegas Police Department

The case came to light in September, when police searched Tyson's \$1.3 million home in southeast Las Vegas.

Items confiscated have remained unidentified under a court order issued after a prosecutor told a judge he wanted to protect the privacy of the woman who made the allegation and of Tyson.

The search came a month after prosecutors in San Bernardino County, Calif., determined there wasn't enough evidence to charge Tyson after another woman alleged the boxer sexually assaulted her in July at a home he was renting near Big Bear Lake.

Prosecutors in that case said it got close scrutiny because of Tyson's reputation for violence and a 1992 rape conviction in Indiana.

Woman goes on 10,000-mile cross-country trip in taxi cab

At \$1 a mile, it's an expensive road trip

By The Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Patricia Agness wanted to see the nation. So she hopped into a cab.

Agness dialed up her neighborhood taxi company, negotiated a fare and embarked on a 10,000-mile cross-continent cab ride.

That was last week, and the meter is still running.

"The land is fascinating," Agness said Friday, speaking to the Florida Times-Union in Jacksonville from a cell phone

as her white-and-orange Gator City Taxi cab cruised through San Antonio, Texas.

Agness, 55, said she doesn't like to fly, doesn't like buses and doesn't have a driver's license. "I needed to get away, and this is the best way to see the open road," she said.

The ride will take Agness and taxi drivers Joe Gattuso and Safdar Hussein on a round-trip journey that reaches as far as Juneau, Alaska.

Gattuso and Agness negotiated a rate of \$1 a mile, a discount over the cab company's usual \$1.65 a mile rate.

The drivers planned to take eight-hour turns behind the wheel and allow for minimum stops and no overnight stays. They hope to make it to Alaska by midweek.

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NATIONAL



Economy appears to be bouncing back

BY EILEEN ALT POWELL
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — A key gauge of the U.S. economy registered its third straight monthly gain, signaling that the recession may soon be over.

The New York-based Conference Board said Tuesday that its Index of Leading Economic Indicators rose a strong 1.2 percent in December following a revised rise of 0.8 percent in November and an increase of 0.1 percent in October. It was the largest monthly gain since February 1996.

Analysts had been expecting a December increase of about 0.7 percent.

Three upward movements in the index generally indicate that the economy will expand in the next three to six months. The

economy has been contracting since March.

The Conference Board, a business-funded research group, said the November-December gains were the largest for two consecutive months since November-December 1992 following the 1990-91 recession.

"The strong signal from the indicators means that the recession could be over soon," the board's economist, Ken Goldstein, said in a statement accompanying the report. "Three successive monthly increases, each larger than the one before, bring the level of the leading series above the pre-recession peak."

He attributed the latest rises to Federal Reserve cuts in short-term interest rates and strong growth in the nation's money supply.

But the report failed to impress investors.

The Dow Jones industrial average closed down 58.05, or 0.6 percent, at 9,713.80, falling back from an earlier advance of 70.

The technology-focused Nasdaq lost 47.81, or 2.5 percent, to 1,882.53 — its lowest close since Nov. 21. The Standard & Poor's 500 index dropped 8.27, or 0.7 percent, to 1,119.31.

Gary Thayer, chief economist at A.G. Edwards & Sons Inc. in St. Louis, called the December report "a very positive sign for the economy."

He believes the recession will end in the first quarter this year, but that the recovery will be lackluster.

"There's still a lot of caution out there on the part of businesses and consumers because of the terrorist threat," Thayer said.

Kmart calls it quits; files for bankruptcy

BY ALEXANDRA R. MOSES
Associated Press Writer

DETROIT — Kmart Corp., the discount chain that gave America the BlueLight Special and introduced Martha Stewart home fashions at cut-rate prices, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy Tuesday.

Kmart becomes the biggest retailer in history to seek court protection from creditors.

The nation's No. 3 discounter had long struggled to compete with the low prices of Wal-Mart and the up-to-the-minute products at Target. It went into an alarmingly steep slide after a disappointing holiday season, and failed to pay its top food supplier \$78 million over the weekend.

Analysts said they expect Kmart to close as many as 700 of its 2,114 U.S. stores. Kmart said only that it will close weak stores and that it expects to emerge from Chapter 11 next year.

"We are determined to complete our reorganization as quickly and smoothly as possible," chief executive Chuck Conaway said.

Kmart, which has 275,000 employees, said it has secured \$2 billion in financing to keep going.

On the New York Stock Exchange, Kmart stock dropped 60 percent Tuesday, or \$1.04, to close at 70 cents. Its stock had traded as high as \$13.55 last summer.

By the time Kmart figures out its business strategy, customers may have found somewhere else to shop. Analysts said filing for bankruptcy means the shelves are not going to be fully stocked, something Kmart is already struggling with.

"You're going to frustrate customers and they're going to go and it's going to

be hard to get them back," said Emme Kozloff with Bernstein Sanford.

The first Kmart discount store was founded in 1962 and the chain got its official corporate badge in 1977, when the S.S. Kresge Co. changed its name to Kmart Corp.

Kmart introduced the BlueLight Special in 1965, flashing blue police lights in the aisles to lure customers to discounted items.

The Martha Stewart Everyday brand, which includes sheets, towels, paints and kitchenware, is Kmart's largest volume-producing label, generating about \$1.5 billion in sales last year.

Stewart has a provision in her contract that allows her to exit Kmart in case of bankruptcy, but such a move has to be approved by a bankruptcy judge. Martha Stewart officials did not return calls for comment.

Kmart has nearly \$16.3 billion in assets, making it the largest retailer ever to declare bankruptcy. Federated Department Stores, with \$9.1 billion in assets, was the biggest when it filed for bankruptcy in 1990.

Last week, Kmart ousted its president and named a new chairman, James Adamson, to replace Conaway, who remains as chief executive. On Tuesday, it named Ronald Hutchison as the head of its restructuring.

Hutchison, 51, was most recently chief financial officer of Advantica Restaurant Group Inc., where he and Adamson were instrumental in the company's reorganization.

Faced with the successes of Wal-Mart and Target, Kmart has tried to go after the mother through partnerships with



Pat Sullivan/Associated Press

William Lerach, an attorney representing shareholders suing 29 current and former Enron Corp. executives and directors, carries a box of shredded documents into federal court in Houston on Tuesday. He claims employees of the fallen energy trading giant were destroying records through at least mid-January. He was prepared to ask the judge to ban any shredding by Enron or its former auditor, Arthur Andersen.

Stewart, Walt Disney and Sesame Street. Analysts said the strategy still lacks clarity.

"I think it will be extremely difficult to pull out of this," said Kevin Murphy, a research director of retail operations at Gartner G2, a research firm. "Just cutting back on unprofitable stores isn't going to

save the company ... they need to find some point of focus."

The bankruptcy filing in federal court in Chicago was good news for Kmart's suppliers, including food wholesaler Fleming Cos. The company cut off shipments Monday, saying it was owed \$78 million.

Hundreds at march against shooting of black suspect

BY ADRIAN SAINZ
Associated Press Writer

MIAMI — More than 100 people marched through the streets of Miami on Tuesday, protesting the fatal police shooting of an auto theft suspect one night earlier.

The protesters chanted "no justice, no peace" as they marched. Some said the white officer who pulled the trigger should be charged with murdering the black suspect.

Eddie Lee Macklin, 20, was killed Monday as he sat behind the wheel of a stolen car as hundreds of people nearby celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day. A small crowd gathered and started throwing rocks and bottles after the

shooting, but the violence ended after dozens of officers arrived.

Witnesses said Macklin was shot after plainclothes officers swarmed the stolen 1999 Lincoln Continental he was driving. They said an officer jumped onto the hood of the vehicle and fired through the windshield, killing Macklin.

Police officials disputed those accounts, saying Detective James Johns was "struck by the vehicle" and injured before he opened fire. Spokesman Juan DelCastillo said Johns did not purposely jump onto the car.

"That wouldn't be something one of our officers would do, but perhaps it was a mispercep-

tion when he was struck," DelCastillo said.

Johns, 30, was treated for minor back and leg injuries.

Macklin had been arrested 12 times in Palm Beach County since 1996 for charges including aggravated battery on a police officer, grand theft of a vehicle and narcotics charges, police said.

Four times in the last 22 years Miami has erupted in riots after police killed a black man or the officers involved were cleared.

Dennis Knowles, spokesman for a black activist group, said the recent shootings of blacks by police officers has the community "sitting on a powder keg."



COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



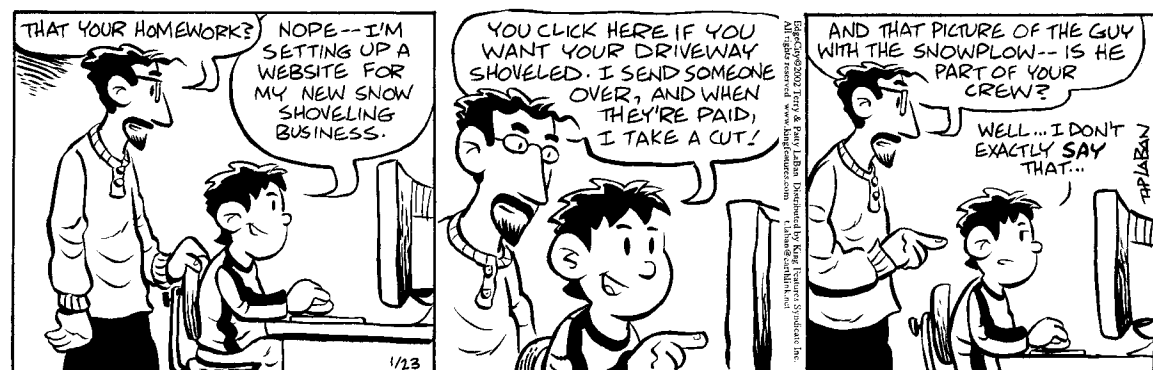
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Speed Bump® By Dave Coverly



CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Frothy foam
 - 6 Spanish hors d'oeuvre
 - 10 Words from the conductor
 - 11 Skin spots
 - 12 Game setting
 - 13 Anguish
 - 14 Damp
 - 15 Spell
 - 16 Switch settings
 - 17 Cereal buy
 - 18 Understand
 - 19 Formal
 - 22 Tons
 - 23 Trade
 - 26 Harmless fib
 - 29 Cam-captured
 - 32 Golfer Ernie
 - 33 Put on
 - 34 Ultimatum words
 - 36 Confined
 - 37 Greeted the audience
 - 38 Zellweger of film
 - 39 Last letter
 - 40 Say
 - 41 Sea dogs
 - 42 Heady brews
- DOWN**
- 1 Sundial feature
 - 2 Voracious swimmer
 - 3 Household tool
 - 4 Stole stuff?
 - 5 Timetable abbr.
 - 6 Forum garb
 - 7 By the way
 - 8 British coins
 - 9 To date
 - 11 Chile's Allende and others
 - 15 Young one

T	A	R	O	T		B	A	S	E	S
A	B	I	D	E		A	D	O	R	E
M	O	D	E	R	N	W	O	M	A	N
E	V	E		M	I	D		A	S	A
D	E	S	T	I	N	Y		L	I	T
			E	T	A		D	I	N	E
S	T	O	N	E		B	R	A	G	S
K	E	N	T		B	A	A			
I	R	A		B	A	R	W	A	R	E
M	E	N		O	L	E		P	E	A
A	N	D	S	O	I	T	G	O	E	S
S	C	O	U	T		T	E	R	S	E
K	E	N	N	Y		A	N	T	E	S

Yesterday's answer

- 17 D.C. suburb
- 20 Pull
- 21 Lamb's mom
- 24 Way to cook pasta
- 25 Lead the way
- 27 — de France
- 28 Comes onstage
- 29 Sci-fi staple
- 30 Kitchen come-on
- 31 More recent
- 35 Staying power
- 36 Tennis star
- 38 Massage

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9
10						11			
12						13			
14					15				
16				17			18		
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	22					23	24	25	
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29	30	31		32			33		
34			35			36			
37						38			
39						40			
41						42			

1-23

STUMPED?

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Defense lawyer claims murder victim 'asked for it'

New York City defense lawyer Valerie Van Leer-Greenberg zealously claimed on behalf of her client in a December murder-rape-robbery trial that the 81-year-old victim begged, and paid \$20 for, kinky sex from her client, a 37-year-old crackhead with a long rap sheet. The jury convicted Elbert Marcel Mitchell on DNA evidence but not before Van Leer-Greenberg had insinuated in argument and questioning that the victim, a kindly Harlem socialite, had consented to the swollen cheek, the split lip, and the black eye, and that the dog leash Mitchell strangled her with was around her neck as part of an erotic game.

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BACK PAGE

AT&T bails out of 900 number business

BY JERRY SCHWARTZ

AP National Writer

NEW YORK — AT&T is bailing out of a major part of the pay-for-service telephone business, dealing a serious blow to psychics, sex lines and other companies that use 900 numbers.

"This could be the final death knell for the 900 business," said Ed Lavergne, a Washington lawyer who has worked with the telecommunications industry.

AT&T stopped providing billing services for new 900 customers as of Jan. 1, and will discontinue billing for all such numbers on Dec. 31. The decision was primarily a financial one, said AT&T spokeswoman Jean Hurt. "The market has kind of changed," she said.

But she acknowledged that the tawdry reputation of some 900 services and concerns about AT&T's image may have played a part. "I think that entered into it, probably. As with so many things, you just look at what you're getting out of it and what you're putting into it."

MCI also offers 900 numbers. "We don't have any plans to make any immediate changes," said spokeswoman Audrey Waters.

The 900 business was created in the 1980s. While 800 numbers are free to the caller and paid by the person or company at the other end, callers pay the freight for 900 numbers. A popular psychic, for example, charges \$4.99 a minute.

Up to now, AT&T and MCI have billed callers through local telephone companies.

AT&T's cut? According to Peter Brennan, director of development for the People2People Group, the biggest purveyor of personal ads in the United States, AT&T's basic rates were 35 cents a minute for transporting the

calls, and 12 percent of gross charges for billing.

But Albert Angel, whose company, ICN, runs 900 services for the Weather Channel and state lotteries, among others, says customers can refuse to pay 900 bills, insisting they didn't make the calls. Often, he said, denial sets in when spouses see bills from psychic or sex lines.

Under the law, their telephone service cannot be taken away if they refuse to pay; the worst that can happen is that their phones would be blocked from making 900 calls in the future.

**"They were fly-by-night businesses
— take the money and run."**

— LISA PIERCE

Giga Information Group, telecom analyst

Angel said AT&T did not do a good job of administering its 900 services, failing to properly screen companies with which it contracted. As a result, he said, "chargebacks" — calls that were billed and never collected — "got out of control."

Lisa Pierce, telecom analyst with Giga Information Group, said AT&T also wound up getting hurt when the companies declared bankruptcy or otherwise disappeared.

"They were fly-by-night businesses — take the money and run," Pierce said.

Ultimately, losses mounted, and "they just threw out the baby with the bathwater," jettisoning the entire business, Angel said. Pierce doubted the move would cost AT&T much in terms of revenue, or give it an opportunity to cut more than a few jobs.

The result casts a pall on an entire industry.

"It may not be the final nail in the coffin, but the patient is on a respirator and the family's discussing when to pull the plug," Peter Brennan said.

His company, People2People, contracted with AT&T for all of its 900 lines, and is in the process of switching over to MCI, he said.

Brennan said the only other alternative was to keep the company's AT&T numbers and use smaller, third-party billers. But he said that's more expensive, and customers who received bills from "Joe's Phone Company" would be confused or suspicious and less willing to pay.

In addition, he said, third-party billers do not have the ability to cover the entire country the way AT&T could, Brennan said.

At the beginning of the 1990s, there were forecasts that the 900 business would explode, reaching \$3 billion by 1993 and \$6 billion by 1995.

It didn't. Though some of the industry's promise has been realized — software companies use 900 numbers to provide technical support, and other users have included state motor vehicle departments and charities — Brennan estimates the industry's income at \$700 million a year.

For that, he blames the federal government, which insisted that different companies handle the billing and collection functions and that customers should be able to refuse to pay their 900 bills without serious consequences. The result has been a blizzard of chargebacks.

"I think that it may be the end of the party," Brennan said.

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