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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Lawsuit looming over late council meetings

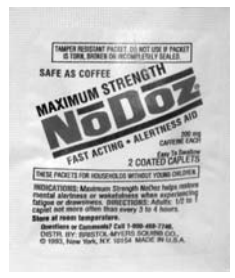
'Tired' city councilman may be a plaintiff

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

A group of citizens plan to sue the Santa Monica City Council, arguing the public doesn't have fair access to council meetings because they run into the wee hours of the morning.

Local attorney Rosario Perry confirmed Friday that he is enlisting a group of plaintiffs to force the council to wrap up the public's business before midnight.

"We are going to file a lawsuit against the city and ask a judge to prohibit them from going beyond 11 p.m.," he said. "Our theory is that the Brown Act requires that public meetings should be open and accessible. Right now, people can't participate because the meetings are so late ... People have to work."



No Doz may be the pill to swallow at city council meetings.

One of the plaintiffs in the suit may be none other than Santa Monica City Councilman Bob Holbrook, who is constantly frustrated at the length of time it takes to get through the city's aggressive agenda.

As a pharmacist at the University of Southern California, he has to get up early for work and needs more than four hours of sleep, which is all he'd get if he stayed until the end of most council meetings.

"We are deliberately scheduling meetings that the public can't be part of," he said. "The public has a fundamental right to be there."

More often than not, the council votes to go past the city's deadline of 11 p.m. And by majority vote, the council usually ends up discussing the public's business until as late as 3 a.m. As a result, citizens give up and go home, as well as some council members.

"I feel horrible about leaving," Holbrook said. "I didn't know that I was signing up for serving from midnight to dawn ... I think the court has to rule that we can't go past midnight.

"If nothing else, it certainly violates the spirit of the Brown Act," Holbrook continued. "I would like to stand in front of a judge and tell him that I am a city councilman and I have to work like most people and we can't participate at the meetings."

Last week's meeting may have been the straw that broke the camel's back. The agenda was packed with two large and controversial development proposals — the Virginia Avenue Park expansion and the civic center redevelopment plan. The civic center plan was presented at 1 a.m. but the public hearing was continued to Feb. 5.

At the Jan. 22 meeting, the council heard four hours of public testimony on the Virginia Park issue and there were nearly 150 people waiting to speak on the civic center plan.

Santa Monica resident Tom Larmore was one of them. He waited for about three hours before he realized he wasn't going to be heard. So like the others, he went home frustrated.

"People get discouraged from even going down there," he said. "They need to do something about this because it deprives the public from participating.

"They need some sort of restriction placed on them because they can't seem to discipline themselves," Larmore continued. "The perception is that they are hiding something, whether it's true or not."

See MEETINGS, page 3

More places to find Santa Monica daily

By Daily Press staff

The city of Santa Monica recently approved more newsstand racks for the Daily Press, making it easier to find a copy of the city's only daily newspaper.

The Daily Press now has a stronger presence on Main Street, Lincoln Boulevard and Montana Avenue, as well as in the downtown core. More permanent newsstands will be installed throughout Santa Monica once the city approves the newspaper's applications for locations near you.

Readers and customers can now find the Daily Press in permanent newsstands at the following locations:

- Arizona Avenue and Second Street
- Arizona Avenue and Fifth Street
- Three newsstands at the intersection of Arizona Avenue and Fourth Street
- Broadway and Lincoln Boulevard
- Broadway and 10th Street
- Colorado Avenue and Second Street
- Santa Monica Boulevard and Lincoln Boulevard
- Lincoln Boulevard and Broadway Avenue
- Lincoln Boulevard and Pico Boulevard

See STANDS, page 3

Burning the midnight oil from council chambers

Mammoth civic center proposal continued

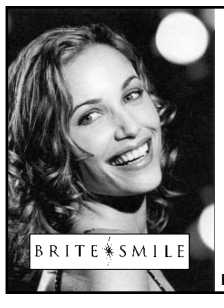
BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

City officials may have to start doling out No Doz to those who want to participate in the public process.

When the $120 million Civic Center redevelopment plan finally came up on the agenda at last week's city council meeting it was 1 a.m., but the only ones still standing were city officials and their staff.

Nearly everyone who had something to say about the colossal project couldn't keep their eyes open long enough to speak. They finally threw in the towel and went home. But it wasn't only residents who couldn't stay awake — council members Bob Holbrook, Herb Katz

See CIVIC CENTER, page 4



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HOROSCOPE

Aquarius, tonight anything goes!



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)
★★★★ You leap into action far too easily. Test an idea first before you jump on the bandwagon. Those who are impulsive could be unhappy with what occurs. You see a situation differently if you use good, sound sense. Stay away from disappointment. Be realistic. Tonight: Spring out the door. Enjoy.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★ What seems like a dream could very well stay a dream if it isn't founded in reality. Build on strong foundations. Don't hesitate to play devil's advocate. In the long run, you will solidify a plan, especially if it impacts your domestic life. Tonight: Put your feet up.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★★ Laugh and dream, but recognize that turning an idea into a workable idea might take unusual talent. Reach out for someone and allow him or her to test your plans. Strong feedback firms up your project. Keeping your schedule could be difficult. Tonight: Relax and chat with friends.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★ Speak your mind, understanding that others might become upset at your observation. Finances could develop into a stressed-out issue. Establish a better rapport with a financial source or another supporter. Don't let tension develop into a power struggle. Tonight: Take a hard look at your budget.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★★ Someone's proposition certainly is appealing. You might want to diplomatically question the details of this idea. Misunderstanding surrounds emotions, thoughts and words. Verify what you are hearing. Ultimately you get what you want. Tonight: Use that Lion magnetism.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★ Watch rather than participate. Support a friend or pal in what he or she wants to do. Carefully listen to someone who might lose his or her cool, but who does care a lot about how you feel. Though this person could stress you out with his or her temper, he or she means well. Tonight: Exercise tension away.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ Understand more of what is going on with others. Don't jump to conclusions when you see someone's reaction. Creativity flows, but you could be out of sorts when dealing with any challenges. Listen rather than judge. Think in terms of solidifying your ideas. Tonight: Join your friends.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ Your friends seek you out, wanting to make the best out of an opportunity. You're certainly pulled in two different directions. Recognize limits with a coworker. This person could feel as if you're challenging him or her. Maintain a high profile at work. Tonight: You're hard pressed to leave work.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Extravagance marks your actions. You might have a difficult time getting your spending under control. Others also don't seem to understand where you are coming from. Discussions could be circular, in that nothing seems to get done or agreed upon. Tonight: Listen to a favorite CD on the way home from work.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★ Step back from financial problems. You might discover that someone does much to distract you. You might ask yourself why this person might not want to deal with the present set of concerns. Allow this person to be light and easy — for now. Tonight: Dinner for two.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ Others challenge your ideas, though they don't mean it personally. Your pleasant personality helps others get over issues. Focus on work and getting the job done. Your playfulness later emerges with friends. Respond to a friend's invitation. Tonight: Anything goes (nearly).

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★ Listen more carefully to a loved one. This person can be unusually creative and dynamic. Review a matter involving your work. Don't put off what you can do today, even if you're not in the mood. You'll be happier in the long run. Tonight: Work as late as you need to.

WEATHER

Today ...	Showers	High—54°F	Low—40°F
Tomorrow ...	Partly cloudy	High—52°F	Low—38°F
Wednesday ...	Mostly Sunny	High—63°F	Low—38°F

QUOTE of the DAY

"A murderer is one who is presumed innocent until proven insane."
— Anonymous

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LOCAL



Ross Furukawa/Daily Press

More Daily Press newsstands were installed this past weekend.

More Daily Press locations

STANDS, from page 1

- Lincoln Boulevard and Strand
- Two newsstands at the intersection of Lincoln Boulevard and Raymond
- Main Street and Kinney
- Main Street and Strand
- Main Street and Ocean Park
- Main Street and Ashland
- Montana Avenue and Lincoln Boulevard
- Montana Avenue and Euclid Street
- Montana Avenue and 16th Street

The following list includes newsstands that are already in place:

- 17th Street and Montana Avenue, northwest corner in front the pharmacy
- 14th Street and Montana Avenue, northeast corner in front of Peets Coffee
- Montana Avenue, between 14th-15th Streets, in front of Jamba Juice
- 7th Street and Montana Avenue, northeast corner, in front of Starbucks Coffee
- 3rd Street and Wilshire Boulevard, northeast corner, in front of Surla Table
- Ocean Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard, in front of the Bank of California building
- Wilshire Boulevard, between 22nd-23rd Streets, in front of Manhattan Bagel
- 14th and Santa Monica Boulevard, in front of Chevron
- Wilshire Boulevard and Lincoln Boulevard, in front of Baja Fresh
- Colorado Boulevard and 3rd Street, in front of Santa Monica Place
- Santa Monica Courthouse

Council may be forced to hold weekly meetings

MEETINGS, from page 1

Perry has no doubt that's the reason the meetings run late.

"They do it on purpose," he said, adding the intention of the Brown Act is to make sure public business is reasonably accessible to citizens.

Santa Monica Mayor Pro Tem Kevin McKeown said the city's process is a victim of its own success because the council is so adamant that people express their opinions. He pointed out that other governing bodies, like the Los Angeles City Council, don't take public comment.

"Our strength is listening and that's the cost of the choice we make. It's not like we are saying, 'Hot damn, we get to stay here until 3 a.m.,'" McKeown said. "Of course it deters public participation but it's because we try so hard to let them speak that the meetings go so long."

That's why there should be more of them, argues Councilman Ken Genser. The long, drawn-out meetings have been an issue for years. Elected officials have recently debated how often they should meet.

"I have been saying we should have more meetings," Genser said. "Our agendas are too ambitious ... I've expressed my concern to the mayor."

It's up to the city manager, the mayor and the mayor pro tem to set the agenda. But putting less on the agenda would require more meetings, which takes more staff time and more commitment from elected officials, said McKeown.

"We tried going to once a week but we burned out our staff and us," he said. "The staff has to do reports every week and we wouldn't have time to think long term."

Councilman Richard Bloom agrees that more meetings would require more of staff's time. And he agrees it's the price to pay in giving people an opportunity to be heard. But in the interest of true public participation, it may be time to re-examine the issue, he added.

"If the amount of business continues, we may have to look at going to once a week," Bloom said. "It's definitely something we need to address ... The visibility of an open government is compromised when we do it at 1, 2 o'clock in the morning."

Perry, the attorney building the case against the city, said working city staff into the early morning hours may be another argument in the lawsuit.

"This is partly on behalf of the employees who are required to be there and it might be that (the city council) is violating labor practices," he said.

LETTERS

Santa Monica a victim of 'progress'

Editor:

As an Englishman who has commuted to and from Santa Monica since 1978, I feel I must write and ask: What on earth are they doing to our town? Santa Monica used to be a funky little beach community, full of character. There were bars with personality, second-hand bookshops by the score and momma and poppa businesses in abundance.

When the new Third Street Promenade opened, it carried on the tradition of the town, with bars, eating places and little stores with individuality.

Who remembers the old Santa Monica — with Rosie McHaugh playing at Sterling's Steak House, Nature's Power Station selling fresh fruit juices and a mysterious lady telling fortunes on the pier?

Now that great old family restaurant, Bob Burns, is being replaced by a chain restaurant. It looks as though the Boathouse on the pier will go the same way. Mr. B's and Soper's Wind and Sea are just rather disreputable memories. The little husband and wife cafe towards the end of Broadway is now just a lingering memory of delicious breakfasts.

In the Promenade, we have a plethora of bland and ritzy chain clothes stores. It could be Main Street, Anywhereville.

Poor old Morris, veteran of M & R, has been driven into a bolthole on Santa Monica Boulevard. Teasers has sold its last beer. No more fish and chips at George and the Dragon.

Rents, we hear, have soared and driven out the little traders who gave the place personality and charm.

Only Chez Jay's on Ocean battles on, a warrior of the old days. I expect that, one day, this great institution with the peanuts and sawdust on the floor will be swallowed up by "progress."

When every trace of the charming and slightly eccentric little beach town is erased, the residents will wake up one morning and find they are living in somewhere like Beverly Hills on the sea.

Can someone do something, before it is too late? Saving the Boathouse would be a good start.

Incidentally, the launching of the Santa Monica Daily Press is a great ray of hope. At least we now have an individual voice. R.I.P. The Outlook.

Frank Durham
Santa Monica

Pro-homeless stance endangers children

Editor:

While parents ask the school district to beef up security at local elementary schools (Santa Monica Daily Press, Wednesday, January 23, 2002), the city of Santa Monica and at least one elementary school PTA have been disseminating propaganda exhorting school children to "approach strangers on the street and start a conversation."

Within a week of the incident involving the 10-year-old boy at Roosevelt, Grant School PTA sent a flyer entitled "How to Talk to Your Children About the Homeless" home with every student in the school.

The flyer contained 10 talking points designed to elicit a sympathetic response to the city's "homeless" plight. One of the statements said, "Some homeless people are so used to people ignoring them that even a friendly, "Hello. How's your day going?" can cheer someone up ..." Amazingly, that very same text was reprinted in a fall, 2001 issue of the Seascape, the official city newsletter. Even though the PTA flyer generated some criticism of the PTA's social service committee and the school district for allowing it to be sent home (apparently without the district's OK), it still didn't stop the city of Santa Monica from further risking the safety of our children to promote political correctness.

Roosevelt parent, George Rosenthal, is 100 percent correct when he says in your article "there are significant issues with some of the homeless who are not just homeless but also have mental illnesses." They also have drug and alcohol problems, many of them have serious felony criminal records, are potentially violent and some carry diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis and are HIV positive. Some are parolees and fugitives and yes, a few are even child molesters.

It is absolutely irresponsible and outrageous for a school PTA and the official news organ of the city to suggest that it is perfectly OK for a child to approach strangers on the street or any of our street people and chat up a conversation.

Unfortunately, the pro-homeless zealots in our city government including the "How to Talk's..." author, the city's homeless services coordinator, Joel Schwartz and Seascape editor, Judy Rambeau, would apparently rather risk our children's well being to sell an agenda — an agenda, by the way, that is set by the majority power on city council.

Bill Bauer
Santa Monica

Looking for the Daily Press?

The Santa Monica Daily Press is a free newspaper that is circulated throughout all six commercial zones within the Santa Monica city limits.

Hundreds of copies can be found in news racks at these local businesses:

Santa Monica Boulevard Locations:

- Bodies in Motion
- Sunshines
- Coin Laundry
- IHOP
- Carl's Jr.
- Chevron
- DK's Donuts and Bakery
- Union 76
- King Liquors
- 7-11
- US Bank
- Buon Café
- Quiznos
- St. John's Hospital
- Coogies Café
- Comfort Inn
- Shakey's Liquor
- Stokes Fire
- Convenient Market

This is not a complete list.
You can find more copies in these areas:

- **Montana Avenue Commercial Zone**
- **Wilshire Boulevard**
- **the Downtown Commercial Core (including Third Street Promenade)**
- **Main Street Commercial District**
- **Lincoln Commercial District.**

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- **Retail businesses on the Boardwalk and Santa Monica Pier districts**
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LOCAL

Ball fields supported by some council members

CIVIC CENTER, from page 1

and Ken Genser — left early too.

"Right now, you have 147 requests to speak but I think a lot of them have left," city clerk Maria Stewart told the council.

When the remaining council members opened the public hearing, they knew they had put too much on their plate that night.

But Santa Monica Mayor Mike Feinstein, a self-proclaimed night owl, tried humor to mask people's frustrations.

"People, no staying power," he said of people leaving before speaking. He then joked with those who were still watching the meeting on City TV channel 16. "For all of you folks who are up watching at home, what are you doing?"

"For all of you folks who are up watching at home, what are you doing?"

— MIKE FEINSTEIN
Santa Monica mayor

But some citizens aren't laughing about the lengthy council meetings.

A group of residents are gearing up for a lawsuit against the Santa Monica City Council, arguing the long meetings are a violation of the Brown Act, which mandates that public meetings be accessible. (See related story).

The council heard the staff's presentation on the civic center project and continued the public hearing until Feb. 5. At that meeting, council members can look forward to at least five hours of public testimony on the civic center plan. And those who invested hours into waiting at the Jan. 22 meeting can look forward to spending another Tuesday night waiting to be heard.

Some council members said it was a mistake to put two large projects on the same agenda. But they didn't expect four hours of public testimony on the Virginia Avenue Park expansion, despite that the controversial plan was debated for a decade.

"Hindsight is 20/20," said Councilman Richard Bloom. "I don't blame them for being upset. It was an unfortunate decision in retrospect that Virginia Avenue Park and the civic center were scheduled on one night and I apologize to the community. But I don't think anyone predicted 120 (requests to speak) on the civic center. This was a particularly bad Tuesday."

Bloom said the other unfortunate circumstance about the civic center plan is that staff recommended that athletic fields not be included, which drew a lot of criticism.

"That was a very, very unfortunate choice of words," Bloom said. "It upset a lot of people and it sparked a lot of controversy and anger in the community."

The civic center, located on Fourth Street between Colorado Avenue and Pico Boulevard, is the city's symbolic geographical point. It serves as an integral part of the town because of its proximity to downtown, Santa Monica Place, Palisades Park, the Ocean Park neighborhood and Main Street.

The city purchased 11 acres from the RAND Corporation in 2000 for $53 million with the intention of completely overhauling the civic center area so it would connect to downtown Santa Monica better.

Based on recommendations of a "working group" which has created the current proposal, the civic center area would have a town square, a garden walk with botanical and sculpture gardens, plenty of open space and bicycle paths, as well as a childhood development facility and a revamped City Hall.

An estimated 300 housing units are planned that could include family townhouses, flats and live-work units for artists. The working group suggested that 160 of those units be affordable to very low-income households.

The project would take up to 10 years to complete and would be paid for through the capital improvement plan, redevelopment agency tax increment funds, general obligation bonds and regional, state and federal funding sources. Affordable housing would be supported by local, state and federal housing funds.

Not only will the design of the plan around City Hall be heavily scrutinized, but many people want there to be less low-income housing and more playing fields.

"I think a lot of people were there for that," said Tom Larmore, a resident who waited three hours to speak on the plan but gave up and went home before the public hearing began. "I think a lot of people were there for that."

Santa Monica Pro Tem Kevin McKeown, along with Bloom and Genser, said the council most likely will be in favor of adding ball fields in the civic center area.

McKeown points out that the four remaining council members decided to open the civic center public hearing even though it was 1 a.m. because they knew the meeting would be rebroadcast on channel 16 at least twice before Feb. 5, assuming most residents have cable television.

"If we did not have City TV we would not have made that decision," he said. "Now (citizens) can come to the (Feb. 5) debate more informed."

NATIONAL

Study finds media reverting back to its old ways

BY JENNIFER LOVEN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — News coverage immediately after the Sept. 11 attacks was based on solid sources and "just the facts," but media standards have since slipped, a journalism think tank says.

Researchers for the Project for Excellence in Journalism examined 2,496 television, magazine and newspaper stories from mid-September, mid-November and mid-December.

Every assertion in the stories was categorized as either fact, analysis that could be attributed to reporting, or unattributed opinion or speculation.

The researchers analyzed stories from four newspapers — The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Cleveland Plain Dealer and the Fresno Bee — as well as Time and Newsweek. The survey also covered a variety of national TV programs.

"The news media reacted to the terrorist attacks of September 11 with great care about not getting ahead of the facts," the report said. Three-fourths of the coverage was strictly factual and just 25 percent was involved some level of interpretation.

By December, however, when the war in Afghanistan was well under way, the share of factual coverage overall had fallen to 63 percent — a level "lower than those seen in the middle of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal," according to the study. Analysis, speculation and outright opinion picked up the slack.

The researchers identified a stark difference between newspaper and magazine stories and television reports: 82 percent of print accounts were factual, compared to 57 percent of what was on TV.

The study said government restrictions imposed on journalists could be a cause for the decline in factual reporting. Researchers also cited newsroom cutbacks and the competitive, 24-hour pace of journalism.

Group holds reporter hostage in 'inhuman conditions'

BY RICHARD PYLE
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — A group claiming to have seized a Wall Street Journal reporter missing in Pakistan said he was being held in "inhuman conditions" comparable to those of suspected terrorists in U.S. custody, the newspaper reported Sunday.

An e-mail from "The National Movement for the Restoration of Pakistani Sovereignty" accused reporter Daniel Pearl of being a CIA officer posing as a journalist, the Journal reported Sunday on its Web site.

The newspaper said the e-mail was accompanied by four photographs of Pearl, with one showing him with a gun to his head, and demanded better treatment for fighters being held by the United States at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba.

In Pakistan, police sources speaking on condition they not be identified told The Associated Press they believe Pearl was kidnapped by Harkat ul-Mujahedeen, which has close ties to al-Qaida and is on the U.S. government's terrorist organizations list. A number of Harkat fighters were known to have been killed in Afghanistan during the bombing campaign.

Pearl, 38, a reporter based in Bombay, India, has been missing since Wednesday, when he went to visit a source near Karachi, Pakistan, for a story about terrorism, the newspaper said.

Steven Goldstein, a vice president of Dow Jones & Co., the Journal's owner, said the newspaper "has not had any direct contact with the group" that claimed to hold Pearl, and didn't have any knowledge of the police sources' report on possible kidnappers.

He said the photographs appear to be legitimate but would not be distributed.

Both the newspaper and the Central Intelligence Agency denied that Pearl worked for the agency..

The Journal quoted the e-mail as saying Pearl was being held "in very inhuman circumstances quite similar in fact to the way Pakistanis and nationals of other sovereign countries are being kept in Cuba by the American army. If the Americans keep our countrymen in better conditions, than we will better the conditions of Mr. Pearl and all other Americans that we capture."

Goldstein said the group had made a mistaken assumption.

"As a private citizen employed by an independent newspaper, neither Mr. Pearl, nor we, can change the policies of the United States or Pakistan," Goldstein said.

The e-mail said Pakistanis being held at Guantanamo must be given access to lawyers and their families, and "must be returned to Pakistan and they will be tried in a Pakistani court."

It also called for the release of Afghanistan's former ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Salam Zaeef, who was the Taliban's most-recognized spokesman. He was deported from Pakistan to Afghanistan in early January and turned over to U.S. military forces, and is one of the highest-ranking Taliban officials in U.S. custody.

Goldstein said the e-mail had been sent to "many different people" at The New York Times and The Washington Post, and "was sent to us by couple of people." He said the Journal received it early Sunday.



Ahikam Seri/Associated Press

Israeli medics and police officers evacuate a wounded woman from the site of a suicide bombing in downtown Jerusalem on Sunday. A suicide bomber detonated explosives in downtown Jerusalem just after midday Sunday, killing one bystander on a busy street that has been the scene of several previous attacks.

Marines find chilling images of war

BY KIMBERLY HEFLING
Associated Press Writer

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — The guns and ammunition were expected. The poster of New York's Twin Towers set against Afghan mountains was not.

U.S. Marines who joined elite Navy SEALS in searching al-Qaida caves said Saturday they made some unsettling discoveries: a photo of President Bush with blood running down his face and another of Osama bin Laden holding a Kalashnikov rifle and marked with the words "Leader of Peace."

The Marines' accounts, given during interviews at the U.S. military base here in southern Afghanistan, provided a rare glimpse into the cave-by-cave war being waged by U.S. forces hunting for elusive al-Qaida and Taliban fighters and any tidbits of information about bin Laden's worldwide terrorist network.

With the Taliban ousted from power and hiding out in Afghanistan's rugged mountains and valleys, U.S. bombing is winding down. Instead, the battle against terrorism has shifted to the painstaking search of caves and other remote locations for al-Qaida and Taliban renegades as well as intelligence information to prevent further terrorist attacks.

It's dangerous, daunting work.

Marines described the cave complex they searched this month as elaborately constructed. Reinforced with concrete and tall enough to walk freely around, the caves had an irrigation system to water trees and flowers outside.

"It didn't look like a cave. Someone put some time into this place," said Sgt. Charles Calfee, 28, of Dublin, Va. "It reminded me of the Flintstones."

Originally, the 50 Marines from Lima Company, Battalion Landing Team 3/6 of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit were flown to the caves in the area between Khost and Gardez in eastern Afghanistan to guard the SEALS while they searched.

The SEALS, along with special forces from the Army and Air Force and CIA operatives, are taking a lead in the current phase of the Afghan conflict, which began after the U.S.-backed northern alliance routed the Taliban in last year's fighting.

The mission was meant to last 10 hours. Instead, it took several days and the SEALS — overwhelmed with the amount of intelligence information they found — had to enlist the Marines in their search.

"Every day we found more," said 1st Sgt. Joseph Bolton, of Gillette, Wyo.

The Marines, stationed at Camp Lejeune, N.C., refused to reveal the exact location of or give details about the caves. They also would not say what type of information or how many weapons and rounds of ammunition were found.

Marines spokesman 1st Lt. James Jarvis said the information is being analyzed and could help American forces find suspected Taliban and al-Qaida fighters.

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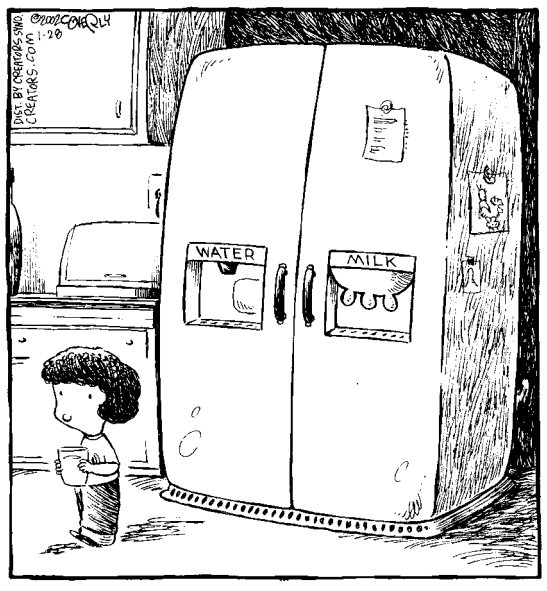
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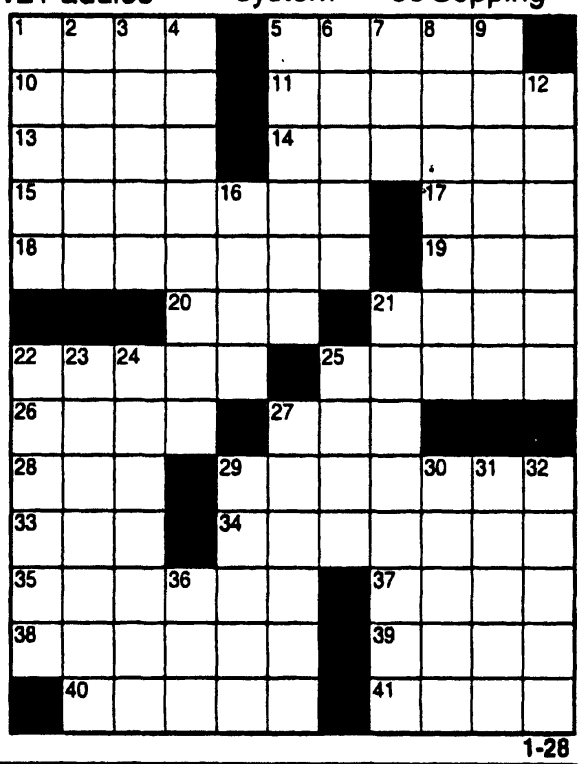
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Reach across
5 Old poets
10 Like bulls and rams
11 Warns
13 Largest continent
14 Clean a spill
15 Catch off guard
17 Nabokov novel
18 Once-famous person
19 About half of the population
20 Corn serving
21 Brother, of a sort
22 Slander's kin
25 Trousers
26 Actor Sharif
27 Crone
28 Helium, for one
29 Soap operas
33 Maturity
34 Accept a humiliating defeat
35 Pinhead
37 Friend to Françoise
38 Allergy symptom
39 Packing string
40 Computer key
41 Forest unit

DOWN
1 Big hit
2 Noodles
3 Assumed name
4 Prohibition beverage
5 One who wails
6 UFO occupant
7 Agent, for short
8 "You wish!"
9 School attendee
12 Paddles
16 Blue hue
21 Show with rabbits and rings
22 "— Run" (1976 movie)
23 John Lennon song
24 Our number system
25 Role
27 Gangster's gun
29 Grab
30 Knight wear
31 French river
32 Garbo, for one
36 Sopping

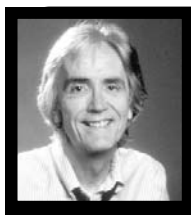
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Saturday's answer



1-28

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

'Pig pen' son tries to take mom for $100,000

Brian D. Beaudoin, 42, who was charged in August in Providence, R.I., with embezzling more than $100,000 from his mother in an investment scheme, first aroused suspicions when the mother and her two daughters entered Beaudoin's private bedroom to search for papers and discovered what the Providence Journal called a "stomach-churning, garbage-strewn mess," including "moldy food and soiled clothes" and "bottles and jars of thick liquid with unusual substances floating in them." Beaudoin later admitted that he sometimes urinated in bottles because he was too lazy to go to the toilet, which was in the next room. The sisters told reporters they suspected Beaudoin was storing strange liquids in order to poison their mother for insurance money.

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BACK PAGE

Owner of world's largest U.S. flag remembered

By The Associated Press

LONG BEACH — Thomas "Ski" Demski, who owned the world's largest U.S. flag, was remembered at a quirky funeral Saturday centered on a see-through coffin and ending with a sing-along of "God Bless America."

Demski was 72 when died Jan. 19 at his Long Beach home. He had clogged arteries and complications of diabetes that friends say he ignored.

Several hundred people, ranging from war veterans to homeless people, attended the service at St. Anthony Roman Catholic Church and a wake a few blocks away in Demski's flag-draped garage.

Pallbearers in jeans and flag T-shirts carried the clear Plexiglas coffin, which was mirrored to display the shirtless Demski's chest and back adorned with tattoos of flags, eagles and Santa Claus.

"It was exactly as Ski wanted," the Rev. Richard Krekelberg said. "He came to me four years ago with this."

,Two years ago, Demski held what he called a "fake wake" at his home, hiring a hypnotist to help him stay still inside the coffin while guests dined.

The Nanticoke, Pa. native was a disabled coal miner and construction worker, but his real fame came from his flag company.

His "Super Flag," as he called it, weighed 3,000 pounds, measured 255 feet by 505 feet and cost $80,000. The flag has been displayed at the Washington Monument and Hoover Dam. It was the world's largest American flag, according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

"There will never be anybody else who will march to that drumbeat of Ski's. But that beat's always in my heart."

— JIM ALEXANDER
Best friend

Demski had recently put the flag up for sale for $100,000. It was not immediately known if it had been purchased.

He also made other flags. One measuring 47 feet by 82 feet was carried down Pennsylvania Avenue in the 2001 inaugural parade for President Bush.

His giant flags gained renewed popularity across the country after the Sept. 11 attacks. His flags were used to cover the fields at Dodger Stadium and the Rose Bowl for UCLA's first home game after the terrorist attacks. In October, Demski went to New York to fly one of his flags from a construction crane at the World Trade Center site.

He erected one flag on a 132-foot pole outside his home, placing the ashes of a friend in the gold eagle crowning the pole.

His best friend, Jim Alexander, is executor and trustee of a living trust that Demski created to support his flags, his two dozen birds, his home and an annual St. Patrick's Day meal for the homeless.

"There will never be anybody else who will march to that drumbeat of Ski's," Alexander said during the funeral. "But that beat's always in my heart."

Demski also was a perennial mayoral and City Council candidate and appeared as Santa Claus during Christmas Eve midnight church services.

"It was part of his magic," Alexander said. "We should all be so lucky, to have that little bit of Ski's magic. It's why so many different kinds of people loved him."

Playboy Playmate escorts boy to winter formal

By The Associated Press

TUSTIN, Calif. — A high school senior turned heads Saturday with his winter formal date: Playboy Playmate Petra Verkiak.

The 35-year-old pinup, who was Miss December 1989, offered to accompany Toby Hocking after she read his college entrance essay. The straight-A clarinet player who sometimes fences wrote about how he felt like an outcast before deciding that it was up to him to seek out friends and make the most of his years at Foothill High School.

"I thought it was really deep," said Verkiak, who had received the essay from a mutual friend who had received it from Hocking's mother. "And I related to it."

Verkiak offered to go with Hocking to the girl-asks-guy winter formal if no one asked him out. "At first I thought, 'Go to the dance with a 35-year-old?' Hocking said. "But then I realized, she's really hot."

The day before the dance, Foothill Principal Al Marzilli made sure Verkiak knew the dress code: Nothing sheer or strapless.

"I'm so excited," Verkiak said, clutching Hocking's arm and wearing a black Del Rosario gown as the couple emerged from a black limousine to attend the formal. "This is like a fairy tale."

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