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Judge to determine fate of community college parking

Santa Monica College's new garage could be parked during lawsuit

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

A \$5.2 million community college parking garage could sit empty if activists convince a judge that city officials supplied misleading information before the project was approved.

The Pico Neighborhood Association sued the city and the Santa Monica College over anticipated traffic impacts of a new 438-space parking deck at the corner of Pico Boulevard and 17th Street. Residents on the east side of Santa Monica believe their neighborhood will be overloaded with cars when the structure opens next month.

Attorneys for the city and the college say they performed a thorough traffic study and found that the parking garage would generate only a small increase in traffic. According to their study, the brunt of traffic traveling to the new garage would come from the Santa Monica Freeway.

The 18-month old lawsuit, heard Monday in Santa Monica Superior Court before Judge Terry B. Friedman, asks the court to prevent the structure from being used until a new traffic study can be completed. Judge Friedman is expected to make a decision next week.

"When we get an accurate measurement, we can develop proper ways to mitigate the damage being done to our neighborhoods," said Don Gray,

vice-chair of the Pico Neighborhood Association. "We're not saying tear down the parking deck and move it someplace else. We just want an accurate study of the traffic here."

"We're not saying tear down the parking deck and move it someplace else. We just want an accurate study of the traffic here."

— DON GRAY
Pico Neighborhood Association, vice-chairman

Pico activists never asked the court to force SMC to stop building the structure.

"The reason why their lawsuit is purely theoretical is because they didn't seek an injunction blocking construction of the parking structure," said Cara Silver, deputy city attorney.

The new structure will replace a similar one ruined in the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Instead of replacing the old structure, the college decided to build in a different location and increase the number of parking spaces.

As a result, a new environmental impact

See GARAGE, page 3



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

Crews are nearly finished with a new parking structure at Santa Monica College on Pico Boulevard. But neighbors hope cars won't be able to park there until a new traffic study is conducted.

Promenade to get valet parking

City officials and business leaders plan new system

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

It's a luxury to some, but to others an expanded downtown valet parking system "will make or break" the Third Street Promenade.

City officials and business owners are planning a downtown-wide valet parking system that would offer curbside service throughout the commercial core. They hope to eliminate the headaches of finding a place to park for people who visit downtown.

Business leaders and elected officials met Monday to discuss ways the city can regulate valet parking so the service is available to most downtown businesses and their patrons.

City officials want a privately run valet network that would not use any public parking lots. They

envision private businesses who own parking lots to partner with local valet companies to provide more spaces, without encroaching on the city's public parking ramps.

"The emphasis should remain on the public parking we have downtown," said Santa Monica Mayor Michael Feinstein. "I think we want to have this service for those who are willing to pay for it, but I think we should continue our focus on providing public parking."

Business owners are skeptical of the plan because none of the partnerships with parking lot owners have been formed.

Kathleen Rawson, executive director of the Bayside District Corporation — a non-profit organization that brings together downtown business owners and city officials — recommends that the city take a hands-off approach to the proposal.

She wants the city to approve more valet curbside locations, specifically along every intersection

See PARKING, page 3

Time ticks away for council

By Daily Press Staff

Prompted by the threat of a lawsuit brought on by two of its members looking to shorten public meetings, the Santa Monica City Council was scheduled to discuss the issue Tuesday night.

But because the council wanted to hear public testimony on the controversial Civic Center redevelopment plan first, the council put its discussion at the end of the meeting. By presstime, the council hadn't talked about how to shorten its meetings.

However, council members did spend the first hour of the

meeting talking about how to proceed with the evening's agenda.

Councilmen Herb Katz and Bob Holbrook, along with local attorney Rosario Perry, plan to sue the city, arguing that the public doesn't have fair access to council meetings because they run into the wee hours of the morning. The suit would ask a judge to prohibit the council from conducting the public's business beyond 11 p.m., arguing anything beyond that would be a violation of the state's open meeting law.

Perry said his clients asked him to hold off on the lawsuit to see if a solution could be reached Tuesday night.

Tuesday's meeting was continuation of the council's Jan. 29 meeting that lasted until 3 a.m. and left about 140 people waiting for hours to speak on the Civic Center redevelopment plan.



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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Fatigue could mar a close-to-perfect day. Use your high drive and innovative thinking to lessen the physical work and maximize your energy. Your mind still has its sharpness and acute memory. Read between the lines with a boss. Tonight: Take in a movie.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★ Build a relationship through discussion and sharing different perspectives. You could feel uptight about a money matter. Don't let this matter ruin your day. Seek out someone who can help you. A partner has the power to reverse a trend. Tonight: Express your gratitude.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Your fatigue or ill humor could have an impact on you. If you can call it an early day, do so. Someone assists you in getting down to the basics of a problem. Think about what you want from a key person. Stay in sync with others. Encourage mutual discussions. Tonight: Go along with someone's plans.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★ You're tired and dragging. Your imagination takes you in a novel direction if you just float and give up being uptight. A boss declares exactly what he or she wants, leaving nothing to your imagination. Restructure your workday if possible. Tonight: Bring work home.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Listen to a child who often has a lot of suggestions. At first you might be having difficulty seeing a situation clearly. Reach out for someone at a distance. Your creativity surges in a new direction. Others extend themselves to you. Work with those willing to help. Tonight: Playful, aren't we?



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ Build on basics, understanding what you need to do. Others count on you, especially in your personal life. At times you might be too work-oriented. Carefully realize your limits. Adjust your schedule for someone who is close to your heart. Tonight: Put your feet up.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Extend yourself. Clearly talk through a problem. You might be having a hard time reading between the lines. Detach, and you might find some answers. Change your style of verbalizing and thinking. Carefully review a decision. Tonight: At a favorite haunt.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Don't overspend. Be careful with a partner who might be touchy. Your fiery side comes out with someone. Through your willingness to take action, you succeed. Money doesn't need to be the priority. Demonstrate your versatility. Tonight: Let someone treat.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Your fun side emerges with someone who could be a bit dour. Trying to lighten this person up could take all the skill you can muster up. Talk about what is on your mind. Be direct in how you proceed, especially with a new friend or child. This person can be quite fiery. Tonight: The world is your oyster.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★ Your high energy takes you in a new direction. Avoid a problem with a family member. Just remember that you could be overly tired. Pace yourself and don't react. Spending could get a bit out of control. Listen to your inner voice. Be sure of yourself. Tonight: Do your thing.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Listen to your instincts about a long-term goal. What might have made you smile months ago might not fit the bill anymore. Be smart. Update your preferences. Let your imagination help create much more of what you want. Tonight: Invite your favorite friends over.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★ Be sure of yourself. Think about what you want with your work. You might be more depressed than you realize. Use your instincts and follow through on what is important to a boss. Trust that you cannot sluff your way through a project. Spend to invest. Tonight: Burn the midnight oil.



WEATHER

Today ...	Sunny	High—68°F	Low—44°F
Tomorrow ...	Mostly Sunny	High—68°F	Low—46°F
Friday ...	Partly Cloudy	High—71°F	Low—47°F



QUOTE of the DAY

"If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal."

— Unknown

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LOCAL



Valet parking may help lunch crowd

PARKING, from page 1

with Third Street, which would be city regulated. However, businesses off Third Street should be allowed to set their own prices, she added.

"Valet service would also help us attract the high end consumer the Promenade has been losing over the past few years."

— WEST HOOKER
Owner, Lago restaurant

"The city could really screw it up or really make it easy and efficient for people to get in and out of downtown," Rawson said. "We would like to see valet service in walkable distances to businesses, or about one location per block."

Rawson argued the city should set weekday valet parking rates, so people coming into the city know ahead of time how much parking will cost. However,

she argued each business should be allowed to create its own signs advertising the service.

Some local valet parking operators said they could handle more businesses on weeknights and weekends, but they said there wasn't a lot of room for more valet parking during weekdays.

"Without some kind of subsidy from the city," said Steve Resnik, a valet parking manager. "I don't see this succeeding."

City parking staff said the price for a permit to operate a valet parking service could cost as much as \$1,700 a year. The fee would be on top of an existing 10 percent city tax on valet parking, but officials said the new fee would off-set added enforcement for expanded services.

Officials said they would like to see a new valet parking system operating by September.

Restaurant owners along the Promenade said expanding weekday valet parking during the lunch hour could really help their business.

"There are a lot of businesses and employees that might come down to the Promenade for lunch if we made it easier for them," said West Hooker, owner of Promenade restaurant Lago. "Valet service would also help us attract the high end consumer the Promenade has been losing over the past few years."

Residents want new traffic study for SMC garage

GARAGE, from page 1

review had to be completed to study how the changes would affect the surrounding areas. The study was completed in 1999 and approved by the city council in 2000.

Pico activists say the report indicates 750 new vehicles would come through the intersection of Pico Boulevard and 17th Street, but they claim another traffic study performed in March 2001 shows nearly seven times that amount.

Attorneys for the city and the college say the March report studied 17th Street as a whole and not just the intersection at Pico Boulevard. They say the two numbers represent entirely different studies and can't be compared to each other.

Silver said after the city council approved the environmental impact review, the law prevents newer data from affecting the judge's decision.

"The data collected last March can't be considered," she said. "End of story."

LETTERS

Counsel's claim not fact

Editor:

Mr. Fixmer's story about the PNA-city/college litigation states that the traffic study prepared for the city's EIR concluded that 750 cars would be added by the replacement structure to the intersection at 17th and Pico whereas a later study determined that the number would be 4200.

While this statement may have been made by PNA's counsel, it is far from factual as a glance at the record will make clear. While there are several inaccuracies in the paragraph, it is sufficient to note that the March, 2001 study referred to in that paragraph never looked at the 17th and Pico intersection, made no conclusions whatsoever about the impact on that intersection, or any other intersection, of the replacement parking structure, and made no conclusions about future traffic impacts on 17th.

In converting a statement made by PNA's counsel into a seemingly factual statement, Mr. Fixmer leaves a very significant misimpression in the mind of the reader. If he wanted to make a factual statement about traffic, he should have checked the record.

Tom Larmore
Santa Monica



Tim Murphy/Special to the Daily Press

Is he an artist or simply a craftsman? The city says Mikel Proudlock's "Forever Roses" operation is not an art, but a craft.

He's proud, but may be down on his 'luck'

Promenade performer frustrated his work is categorized

By Daily Press staff

Third Street Promenade performer Mikel Proudlock expects to be barred from operating this weekend.

"This morning the head monitor (of the Promenade) gave me the heads up that I'll be shut down this weekend," Proudlock said Monday. "He'll pass on information of steps I can take in a couple days."

Proudlock creates "Forever Roses" by twisting, turning and knotting palm tree fronds in the shape of a rose. He said he's been operating under a "performance" permit for the past three years.

A week ago Proudlock tried to renew his permit but was denied. He said the city now deems his art a "craft" and is no longer permissible.

Proudlock obtained the permit by saying he uses paint on canvas, which the city deems as art.

"Every once in a while I bring a bottle of paint and a brush, these (the palm fronds) are my canvas," he said.

Proudlock is frustrated that the city has authority to categorize his work.

"I've been asking people all week if this is art or a craft, and they all say it's art," he said.

Proudlock produced a copy of the performance permit ordinance and pointed to the paragraph that stipulates what the city considers a performance. Included with playing music and dancing is the clause "creating tangible art objects to entirety."

Proudlock said with frustration, "I take a palm and turn it into a rose, that's creating an art object to its entirety. I wish I had a picture of the crowds watching me make these (the roses). Then I'd have proof this is performance."

City Attorney Marsha Moutrie said the city has the right to make a distinction between art and crafts. The distinction is based on whether the product is unique in object or is mass produced.

"We try to use standards that can be articulated," she said. "The hardest distinction to make is between arts and crafts."



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LOCAL



CrimeWatch

A week of crime: Armed robberies and assaults

By Daily Press staff

• An armed robber took off with an undisclosed amount of cash from a Santa Monica gas station Jan. 24 after he brandished a knife to the cashier, according to police.

At about 7 p.m. the suspect entered the Shell gas station on Cloverfield and Michigan Avenue and asked how much a piece of candy costs. The cashier rang up the item and the register opened. The suspect then demanded all of the money in the register and fled the scene in a 1980s black Chevy Blazer with California plates.

The suspect is described as a male Hispanic in his 20s, 5' 9" tall, weighing 200 pounds.

• Police are looking for a Hispanic male wanted for assault with a deadly weapon after he allegedly beat a man with a baseball bat at Marine Park on Jan. 29.

According to eyewitnesses, at about 12:30 p.m. police were called to the park after one of the victims called for help. Officers spoke to two victims, an uncle and nephew, who were allegedly attacked by a man they knew.

The uncle, not identified, said he saw his nephew get into a verbal fight with the suspect while he was on the baseball field bleachers. When the uncle ran toward the suspect, he slipped and fell. While on the ground, the suspect hit him in the thigh with the bat. As he tried to stand up, the suspect hit him in the shin.

The suspect fled in a white Nissan Sentra and is described as a male Hispanic in his 20s, 5' 9" tall and 170 pounds.

• A verbal argument between two men turned physical at the Circle Bar on Main

Street Jan. 25, sending the victim to the hospital with facial injuries.

The victim said he was in the back patio of the bar when the suspect approached him. For an unknown reason, the suspect struck the victim who fell to the ground. The suspect reportedly kicked the victim in the face before leaving the bar.

The suspect is described as a white male, 25 years old, 5' 11" tall and 175 pounds. He has brown hair, brown eyes and was wearing a dark shirt and pants. That night, he was wearing a beanie with red flames and a jean jacket.

The victim was treated for facial injuries and transferred to a nearby hospital.

• A transient was arrested Jan. 27 after he lunged at a man with a knife on the 400 block of Wilshire Boulevard.

At about 6:30 a.m., police were called to the scene where the victim said he was at a bus stop when the suspect, identified as Lloyd Laville McGinnis, approached him and made comments to him.

McGinnis allegedly lunged at the victim, which caused him to slip off the curb and fall. He was able to get away and police later found McGinnis. After a line-up, the victim identified McGinnis as the suspect. His bail is set at \$50,000.

• A man called police Jan. 27 after he was bumped and pushed by another man on the Third Street Promenade.

He said the suspect walked toward him, held out a hand-made flower and said, "I have something for you." He told him to leave him alone and the suspect responded by pushing him. The suspect is described as a white male in his 20s, 5' 9" tall, 170 pounds with short dark hair.

Winona Ryder pleads innocent to four felonies

By The Associated Press

BEVERLY HILLS — Actress Winona Ryder pleaded innocent Tuesday to four felony counts of theft, burglary, vandalism and possession of a controlled substance, the Los Angeles County district attorney's office said.

Ryder was arrested Dec. 12 for allegedly stealing about \$4,800 in clothing from Saks Fifth Avenue in Beverly Hills. Police said she also possessed the painkiller Oxycodone, a morphine derivative, without a prescription.

The 30-year-old actress faces up to three years and eight months in prison if convicted, but could also be sentenced to

as little as probation.

Ryder remains free on \$20,000 bond, and a preliminary hearing was scheduled for March 11.

Beverly Hills police said store security officers saw Ryder remove security tags from several items, place them in her bag and leave the store.

Her attorney, Mark Geragos, said Ryder was only carrying items between store departments and had a valid prescription for the drugs.

Ryder earned Oscar nominations for playing the heroines in the period films "Little Women" and "The Age of Innocence."

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NATIONAL



Congress subpoenas Kenneth Lay for a second time

BY DAVID ESPO
AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Congress dug forcefully into the Enron debacle on Tuesday with a second subpoena for Kenneth Lay, the former chairman of the energy trading firm, and a sympathetic hearing for a laid-off employee whose retirement savings all but disappeared when the company failed.

"This should not and cannot ever happen again in America," said Deborah Perrotta, who tearfully told lawmakers she lost \$40,000 from her retirement account when Enron's stock price plummeted last fall.

On a day in which hearings spilled across Capitol Hill, lawmakers pummeled the head of Arthur Andersen, Enron's former accounting firm, for its handling of the energy firm's books. "At the end of the day we do not cause companies to fail," said Joseph Berardino, chief executive officer of Andersen Worldwide.

The vote was unanimous in the Senate Commerce Committee to compel Lay's appearance on Feb. 12. "We have no choice," said Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., one day after Lay scrubbed a voluntary appearance.

Lawmakers predicted Lay would invoke his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination when he appears.

Lay's attorney, Earl Silbert, said he had already accepted a subpoena from a second congressional panel seeking testimony, this one in the House. The lawyer said any suggestion that Lay was "making himself scarce" is "absolute nonsense. He's in Houston with his family."

Congress aside, the Justice Department and Securities and Exchange Commission are investigating the Enron bankruptcy, and politicians in both parties have scrambled to return campaign donations connected to the firm and its executives.

President Bush has called for legislation granting greater protection for the retirement accounts of average Americans.

"This is a business problem that our Justice Department is going to investigate and if there's wrongdoing we'll hold them accountable for mistreatment of employees and shareholders," he told reporters during the day, turning aside a suggestion from one Democrat for the appointment of an independent counsel.

Millions of investors lost money, and thousands of



Stephen J. Boitano/Associated Press

Arthur Andersen accounting firm CEO Joseph Berardino, is sworn in before testifying before the House Financial Services Committee hearing on Tuesday, in Washington. He defended his company's audit of the bankrupt Enron Corp.

current and former Enron employees lost the great bulk of their retirement savings, when the company collapsed. An Enron-sponsored investigation released over the weekend blamed senior management for failing to provide proper supervision over a complex web of partnerships that helped the company hide debt and post unrealistic profit figures.

Once disclosed, these transactions contributed to the company's unraveling.

At four hearings during the day, lawmakers expressed concern for the victims of the bankruptcy and anger at the actions taken at Enron and Arthur Andersen, the firm's accountants.

"You have squandered the integrity of your company," Rep. Gary Ackerman bluntly told Berardino, chief executive of Arthur Andersen.

Rep. Michael Oxley, R-Ohio, noted that the Enron internal investigation found active participation by Andersen in setting up the partnerships, and that the accounting firm had received \$5.7 million for advice on the subject.

"You weren't just checking the boxes," he told Berardino.

The Andersen executive said he was still gathering the facts about his firm's relationship with Enron. "I did not do the audit of the company," he said at one point. At another, he added, "Information was withheld from us."

The company fired auditor David Duncan in January, accusing him of organizing the destruction of Enron documents.

At least two members of the panel asked Berardino whether his firm would donate any of its fees to the former employees who suffered catastrophic loss of retirement funds. He offered no commitment.

"We're deluding these ... people that they're ever going to get anything back," a third lawmaker, Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Pa., observed at one point.

Perrotta, testifying before a Senate committee, said, "I am not alone in my pain. I'm just one of the thousands of former employees and retirees desperately looking for relief and eventual reform."

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., who presided, said he would subpoena information about last-minute bonuses paid to executives before the bankruptcy.

The committee also heard testimony about a period of roughly three weeks last fall when individuals were barred from selling any stock in their retirement accounts, a lockout attributed to a change in plan by administrators.

Because the price of Enron stock was dropping at the time, officials debated whether to postpone the lockout, but eventually decided not to. The company found "it was not feasible to notify more than 20,000 participants in a timely fashion," said Cindy Olson, Enron's executive vice president for human resources.

Enron's stock peaked at \$82 a share, on Jan. 26, 2001. It was selling for \$15.40 at the close of trading on Oct. 26, the day the lockout began, and had fallen to \$9.98 on Nov. 13, the day it ended.

Olson also testified that Sherron Watkins, the company's vice president of corporate development, told her last summer she had concerns about the company's financial practices. Watkins wrote an anonymous letter to Lay detailing those concerns and later met with him.

Olson said she did nothing to pass on Watkins' concerns.

Democrats worry Bush will expand war on terrorism without Congress consent

BY PAULINE JELINEK
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Democrats on Tuesday questioned whether President Bush's defense budget would give him too much room to expand the war on terrorism without consulting Congress.

At one point, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers acknowledged it is "absolutely possible" American troops will come in harm's way in the Philippines, where the anti-terror effort is already widening.

In a hearing on Bush's 2003 budget plan, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin asked about the Pentagon's plans for a proposed \$10 billion reserve fund for unspecified future war needs.

"Could those funds be used for any activity that the president or you decided to use them for ... without further authorization or action from Congress?" Levin, D-Mich., asked Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld. He noted Congress generally doesn't appropriate money in advance for unidentified military operations.

Levin specifically asked about Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Bush called those countries members of an "axis of

evil," singling them out for what analysts said was a surprising and harsh warning in his State of the Union address last week.

Rumsfeld noted that the United States is spending \$1.8 billion a month for the war on terrorism abroad and heightened security at home since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"My understanding is that the funds would be used for the war on terrorism that the president has announced," Rumsfeld said. "He's indicated that al-Qaida is in some 60 countries — the task has to be to root out those terrorists."

The \$10 billion reserve is a relatively small amount that couldn't include "anything the size you're talking about," he told Levin.

Holding up a copy of the Constitution, Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., asked how far the war on terror might be taken after Afghanistan.

"Yes, Mr. Bush is the commander in chief, but take a look at this Constitution, ... a look also at the congressional powers," said Byrd, the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

"We're in a conflict now and we intend to win, but ... how many more years will we be appropriating at the rate of a billion dollars a day?" he

asked of the \$379 billion defense budget proposal.

Rumsfeld also heard some criticism from Sen. Jim Bunning, R-Ky., who complained that the Pentagon has been unable to say whether al-Qaida leaders such as Osama bin Laden are "alive or dead or where they're at."

"I'd like to have a little more assurance that you're going to finish the job that you started after Sept. 11," Bunning said. "If we're going to spend a billion-plus dollars a day, we have to be able to do that."

Levin also asked Rumsfeld and Myers what the U.S. mission is in the Philippines.

"This is not an operation like you saw in Afghanistan — this is assistance and this is training," Myers answered. Troops will give advice on improving communications intelligence analysis, for example, to the Philippines' military.

Americans are training local armed forces in their fight against the Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf, which has been linked to the al-Qaida terror network and has been holding an American couple and a Filipino nurse hostage on southern Basilan island for more than eight months.

Some 660 U.S. soldiers, including 160 special forces troops, are involved.

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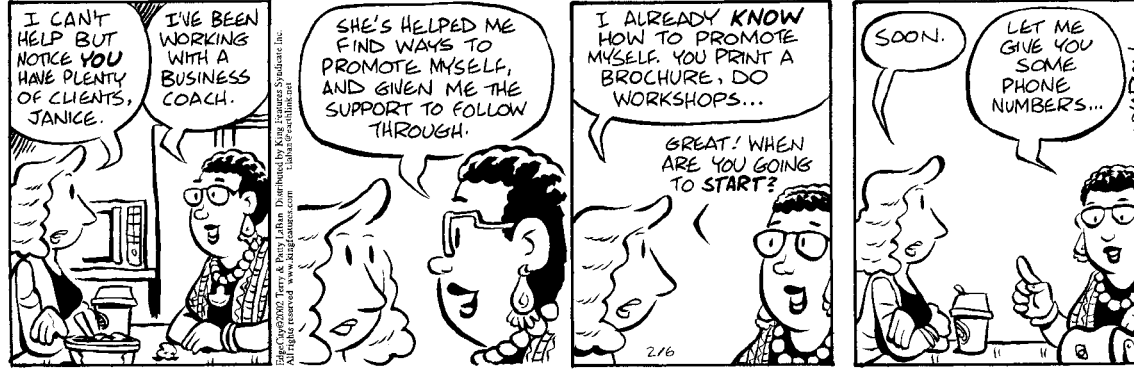
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- ACROSS
- 1 Volcanic output
 - 5 Go and bingo
 - 10 Rapper-turned-actor
 - 11 "Don Giovanni" composer
 - 12 Fighting
 - 13 Blood carrier
 - 14 Scooter's kin
 - 16 TV news needs
 - 20 Cold showers?
 - 23 Summer sign
 - 24 Not as good
 - 25 Promotional item
 - 27 Here (Fr.)
 - 28 Antisocial sorts
 - 29 SUV cousins
 - 32 City green spot
 - 36 Belarus neighbor
 - 39 Heaps
 - 40 Wise sayings
 - 41 Arrive
 - 42 Gives
 - 43 Fencing weapon
- DOWN
- 3 Blood vessel
 - 4 Occasionally
 - 5 Russian writer
 - 6 Victim of Cortes
 - 7 West of film
 - 8 Blunder
 - 9 Pig's place
 - 11 Big pipes
 - 15 Mosquito attack
 - 17 Out of the wind
 - 18 Golda of Israel
 - 19 Male heirs
 - 20 Do the crawl
 - 21 Places
 - 22 The Emerald Isle
 - 25 Singer Braxton
 - 26 Between stars
 - 28 Touches down
 - 30 Mirror sight
 - 31 Tarzan transports
 - 33 On the roof
 - 34 Vatican sur-rounder
 - 35 Pad's place
 - 36 Lobbying grp.
 - 37 Keats work
 - 38 Young fellow

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Yesterday's answer

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2-7

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

Mexico City uses mime performances to help curb traffic problems

In November, Mexico City began its latest tactic to help drivers cope with the capital's monumental traffic problem, by hiring five mimes to team with four special traffic officers in street theater sketches to encourage drivers at the city's most dangerous intersections to buckle up, curb their cell-phone usage and obey all traffic laws. (A 1999 tactic had the city reassign its 900 traffic cops in favor of handing all citation-writing over to 64 female officers, who, it was felt, would be less likely to accept motorists' bribe attempts, but the traffic problem has soared since then.)

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BACK PAGE

ODDS & ENDS

Cat tracks his way home

By The Associated Press

HIBBING, Minn. — An orange tabby cat managed to find his way back home, after a 350-mile journey across two states.

With raw paws and protruding ribs, Skittles showed up at Charmin Sampson's northern Minnesota home 140 days after her family last saw the 2-year-old feline in southern Wisconsin.

Sampson says her family saw Skittles last on Labor Day weekend when the Sampsons were packing up to return home to Hibbing, Minn.

More than three months later, Skittles showed up at the Sampson's front door.

"I knew it was Skittles," said Jason Sampson. "The cat is orange, with white paws and he's got a look to him — a unique look."

Now, Skittles has settled into his old routine — snoozing in the living room armchair.

Running from crime without legs

By The Associated Press

LONDON — A homeowner who discovered three men trying to rob his house had no difficulty in describing one suspect — he had no legs.

On Monday, would-be burglar Robert William Bate was spared a jail sentence after his lawyer told a judge he was giving up his life of crime.

Bate, 22, was carried away by an accomplice as the gang fled the scene last June. He was arrested soon afterward.

Bate, who has previous convictions for burglary and shoplifting, pleaded guilty to attempted burglary.

He said he had drunk 16 pints of beer before friends persuaded him to act as a lookout while they robbed a

house in Easington Colliery, northeast England, on June 1.

Going up the river in style

By The Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Three people rode a limousine to jail after police said they used a stolen credit card to hire the car.

A limousine company notified a Cheektowaga man Monday that service in his name had been ordered for an address in Buffalo, police said. The man had earlier reported to police that his credit card was stolen.

So with a police officer at the wheel instead of the usual driver, the limousine made three stops — picking up the alleged suspects.

A 15-year-old boy claimed to be the owner of the credit card, which was found in his pocket, police said. He was charged as a juvenile.

Two adults, Charles Rogers, 44, of Cheektowaga, and Westover Robinson, 40, of Buffalo, were charged with theft of services, criminal impersonation, conspiracy and endangering the welfare of a child.

Dog's best friend: Mailman

By The Associated Press

HIGH POINT, N.C. — A North Carolina mailman really is a dog's best friend.

Dale Baity has handed out treats to about 50 dogs on his route for the past three years until recently. The U.S. Postal Service told him to stop after a treat-seeking canine scared a substitute carrier.

The dog was pepper sprayed by the frightened postal worker.

The dogs' owners supported Baity and praised his work as well as his good heart. Now, Baity is back in business delivering his doses of goodwill.

Postal officials refused to talk about the issue and referred questions to Bill Brown, a spokesman for U.S. Postal Service in Charlotte.

Carriers are forbidden to pet dogs, and feeding them is discouraged because of the possibility of being attacked, Brown said.

The occasional dog biscuit is left up to the carrier, Brown said.

"We don't encourage it, but some situations may be different than others," he said.

Japanese man, 112, becomes world's oldest

By The Associated Press

TOKYO — Yukichi Chuganji, a 112-year-old retired silkworm breeder from Japan, has inherited the Guinness Book of Records title for the world's oldest man.

Guinness informed the Ogori city government on Japan's southernmost main island of Kyushu on Jan. 25 of Chuganji's achievement, his 72-year-old daughter, Kyoko, said.

The Guinness Web site confirmed the title.

Born March 23, 1889, in the farming town of Ogori, Chuganji had been a silkworm breeder and adviser since graduating from technical school as a teen-ager in the early 1900s.

Chuganji was honored by Guinness after Italian Antonio Todde, died in Sardinia at the beginning of January, just shy of his 113th birthday. Todde was born on Jan. 22, 1889.

"I was surprised and pleased by the honor. I could live a few more years," Kyoko quoted her father as saying.

Asked about his secret to longevity, Kyoko said: "My daddy eats and drinks alcohol moderately. And he is an optimist."

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