

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues



NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ Police in Denton, Texas, arrested two teenagers in October and charged them with robbing two visitors who were passing through town from Montana; the victims said they were on their way to Baton Rouge, La., because they needed money and had read on the Internet that a medical school would pay \$100,000 for testicles.

■ The Dutch retirement home Seniorenpannd, in Rotterdam, bills itself as the world's only old-age community for incorrigible heroin addicts and has a long waiting list for its few rooms, according to a December dispatch in *The Scotsman*. (One satisfied resident bragged that he had some "pretty good stuff" the night before.)

■ Britain's Office of Communications, which rules on viewers' complaints about TV programs, decided in November that the on-air, manual collecting of hog semen on the "reality" show "The Farm" did not violate standards in that, in the office's opinion, the pig did not feel "degrad(ed)" by the experience.

■ Because a British Broadcasting Corp. employee got a toe trapped in a revolving door at company offices in Birmingham (cracking a toenail), executives in December sent a memo to the workforce of 800, using stick-figure drawings, with instructions on how to walk through the doors.

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1972, McGraw-Hill Publishing Co. and Life magazine canceled plans to publish what had turned out to be a fake autobiography of reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes.

In 1979, followers of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini seized power in Iran.

In 1986, Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky was released by the Soviet Union after nine years of captivity as part of an East-West prisoner exchange.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Time is really the only capital that any human being has, and the one thing that he can't afford to lose."

THOMAS ALVA EDISON
(1847-1931)

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Setting the stage



Kim Calvert/Special to the Daily Press

Carpenter Armando Cabo is one of many construction workers building Santa Monica College's new \$13.1 million Main Stage Theater. When completed, the 26,000-square-foot facility will include a 280-seat theater, classrooms and faculty offices.

City survey says: Homelessness still No. 1 issue

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

Residents are growing increasingly concerned about the large homeless population that lives in Santa Monica, a survey released this week shows.

Forty-five percent of 400 residents polled named homelessness as a top issue in Santa Monica, as opposed to just 33 percent in 2002, according to results from the tele-

phone survey, which was conducted by City Hall.

The survey suggests traffic also has weighed more heavily on residents in recent years. A quarter of the residents polled last month named clogged roadways when asked to list the two most important issues facing Santa Monica. That number was up over 18 percent in 2002.

See SURVEY, page 6

Open meeting law stifles politicians' participation

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Only three of the seven City Council members will attend upcoming workshops on gang violence and future development in Santa Monica.

The city's top leaders this week criticized a state law designed to keep government transparent as having unintended consequences. The Brown Act precludes full council participation in workshops and forums that are not run as traditional public meetings.

"It seems nuts," City Councilman Bob Holbrook said Thursday. "We can't attend. We can't even sit there and listen. We can't even be sitting there, in the last row, gagged, listening to people."

Public officials under the Brown Act are banned from doing the city's business behind closed doors. That means no more than three of the seven council members can discuss any one item outside of a formally noticed meeting. It also means no more than three council

See BROWN ACT, page 6

Space travelers wonder if industry can fly with regulations

Santa Monica man provided fuel for historic rocket launch last year in Mojave Desert

BY LESLIE MILLER

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Space entrepreneurs say they believe they are on the brink of developing a vibrant tourism industry, but worry that government regulation may stifle it before it can take off.

To prevent that, they have formed a group, the Industry Consensus Standards Organization, to set standards for space flyers.

"If government regulates safety aspects of space flyers themselves, it would be tantamount to killing the industry," a group member, Michael Kelly, said at a hearing Wednesday of the House Infrastructure and Transportation's subcommittee on aviation.

While acknowledging the entrepreneurial space flight will be deadly, Kelly said the industry needs the chance to learn from its mistakes.

He predicted the safety standards

set by space entrepreneurs for rocket ships will work as well as the Underwriters Laboratories' stamp of approval on electrical devices.

"We believe the same stamp of approval will provide the same level of safety," said Kelly, who also is chairman of the Reusable Launch Vehicles Working Group of the Transportation Department's space advisory committee.

A law signed by President Bush in December requires that the government license launches of privately built spacecraft. It also says the Federal Aviation Administration may not issue

safety regulations for passengers and crew for eight years unless specific design features or operating practices result in a serious or fatal injury.

Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn., objects to that approach, which he said amounts to a "tombstone mentality." Oberstar has introduced a bill requiring that the FAA include in its licenses minimum safety and health standards for spacecraft passengers and crew.

"We need at least a framework of safety around commercial space

See SPACE TRAVEL, page 7

Jacquie Banks

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★ You might feel better than you have in a while, but you are thoroughly challenged by news, associates and difficult bosses. You might want to toss your hands in the air, but that won't change anything. Settle in, knowing what is possible. Tonight: Honor your desires.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★ You cannot win for losing. Right now you are best off simply watching what goes down and maintaining your position. Loosen up and enjoy what you can. Many factors and people could be difficult. Your attitude can make or break you. Tonight: Hide out.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Others mean well, though you might have a difficult time ascertaining that fact by what is going on right now. Emphasize your goals and maintain tunnel vision if you want to succeed. Others specialize in creating uproar. Tonight: Do what will make you happy.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★ Sometimes your message gets diluted in the actions and events of others' days. Right now, you might be very uncomfortable with what goes down, and might feel a need to do something differently. All efforts are futile — for now. Tonight: Work late.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★ What appears on your daily path might encourage you to take the high road. If triggered, ultimately you'll be best off if you say little and detach as quickly as possible. Curb a tendency to act out in anger or be accident-prone. Tonight: Make your well-being your primary concern.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ The trust you have for someone might fizzle into smoke and flames. Actually, the problem might not be you but rather that this person cannot handle much more. Don't make decisions based on today's performance. Everyone is stressed out. Tonight: Indulge a dear friend.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Your popularity might be soaring, but controlling the state of events that surround you is impossible. Pressure comes from different directions. You might need to focus on a domestic issue. Concentrate. Tonight: Someone needs to be easygoing — why not you?



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Pace yourself if possible. Observe a tendency to charge full-blast ahead. You might not like what you are hearing, but don't exacerbate the situation by getting into an argument. Be the wise Scorpio! Tonight: Schedule a massage if possible.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ You might be inordinately playful and willing to assume a devil-may-care attitude. The problem might lie in the problems you create for yourself in the near future. Others appear to be out of kilter. Tonight: Dance the night away.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★ You put in your two cents even at the risk of upsetting someone around you. The problem might be that this person has a lot more impact on your life than you can deal with. Be diplomatic. Tonight: Walk or exercise, but don't react.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ You might mean well, but the information you ask for could force many of you to regroup. Anger and frustration mount when dealing with others. If you can, maintain a low profile. You could be a lot happier. Tonight: Flex with change.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★ Expenses incurred will have many a Fish reeling. Though you might not want to say "no," it could be the best action possible. You could feel as if someone does not appreciate your efforts. A boss is very difficult. Tonight: Your treat.



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1427 Third Street Promenade, Ste. #202 • Santa Monica, CA 90401 • www.smdp.com

PUBLISHER Ross Furukawa ross@smdp.com EDITOR Carolyn Sackariason sack@smdp.com STAFF WRITER John Wood wood@smdp.com ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER Robbie P. Piubeni rpiub@smdp.com ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Rob Schwenker schwenker@smdp.com	ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Stewart O'Dell stewarto@smdp.com PRODUCTION MANAGER Alejandro Cesar Cantarero II alex@smdp.com EXECUTIVE TRAFFIC MANAGER Brenda Casas brenda@smdp.com CLASSIFIED SALES MANAGER Mirella Reyes mirella@smdp.com NIGHT EDITOR Lori Luechtefeld lori@smdp.com	NIGHT EDITOR Michael Tittinger moneysurf@smdp.com CIRCULATION Keith Wyatt keith@smdp.com CIRCULATION Glenn Bolan glenn@smdp.com SPECIAL PROJECTS Dave Danforth dave@smdp.com MASCOT Maya Furukawa maya@smdp.com
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LOCAL



Money shot



Photo courtesy Eric Nash, (second from right) recently won \$1,000 in the Westside Rentals Sponsored Half Court Shot contest. (From left to right) Anthony Yannata, Nash's mother, Nash and Kevin Miller. At every home basketball game at Santa Monica High School, Westside Rentals sponsors three spectators to attempt a half court shot for the \$1,000 grand prize. Nash was the first winner in two years since the start of the contest.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Historical society highlights Santa Monica's black history

Daily Press staff

Black history month has arrived. The Santa Monica Historical Society Museum will celebrate Black History Month by showcasing a pair of Santa Monican brothers that contributed to the city in ways still visible today. On Sunday, Feb. 13 the public is invited at 2 p.m. to a slide presentation to learn about Donald and Vernon Brunson, who were born and raised in Santa Monica, and also raised their children there. Admission is free. The museum is located at 1539 Euclid St. Parking is available behind the museum and at Santa Monica Seafood on Colorado Avenue at 12th Street. For further information, call (310) 395-2290.

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Santa Monica Daily Press



SURF REPORT

Today looks quite similar to Thursday, with a steady flow of waist-high NW swell, but conditions may very well be trashed as a storm is expected to move in and bring rain. Winds could also be problematic. The next noteworthy NW is being tracked for the 18th.

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

Today the water is:

59°

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	N/A	N/A	1:22	1.2	5:43	6.0	8:06	3.5
SUNDAY	12:16	2.3	2:04	1.6	6:39	6.5	8:39	3.8
MONDAY	1:12	1.9	2:44	1.9	7:30	6.8	9:12	4.1
TUESDAY	2:03	1.5	3:23	1.8	8:18	6.9	9:46	4.4
WEDNESDAY	2:52	1.2	3:59	1.6	9:04	6.7	10:20	4.6
THURSDAY	3:42	1.0	4:35	1.1	9:49	6.2	10:56	4.8
FRIDAY	3:42	1.0	4:35	1.1	9:49	6.2	10:56	4.8

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The Q Line

There's a movement afoot to create as many as five new high schools in Santa Monica so students can get more personalized instruction. Each school would serve 200 to 300 students, which is much better than the 3,500 student population at Santa Monica High School, education leaders say.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Is this a good idea? Why or why not?" Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your responses in the weekend edition. Please try to limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.

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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Councilman barking up wrong tree

Editor:

In response to councilmember Kevin McKeown's response to my letter regarding the council's irresponsible handling of a proposed "dog beach" (SMDP, Feb. 4, page 4), I must say that his letter speaks volumes about Mr. McKeown's mindset and myopic approach to this and other issues affecting Santa Monica.

While Mr. McKeown is technically accurate while stating that, "we are exploring appropriate means to change state law and/or policy" and, citing the California Constitution, it is indeed revealing on how the councilman views his position to change state law just because of a few vocal zealots have captured his imagination, thus reinforcing his views of a world in which dogs have been elevated to the degree in which they have clouded the bigger picture of Santa Monica's, as well as his own Green Party's mandate of protecting the environment.

True to form, Mr. McKeown may also be violating city policy by still using the term, "dog guardian" even though his own council voted not to use the term, which was also used in the dog beach staff report, in city-related business. While this may, on its face appear to be nitpicking, it illustrates his zeal in pushing through a program which has not even passed simple environmental muster and is rejected by organizations such as Heal the Bay.

I call upon the citizens of Santa Monica to voice their concern about councilmember McKeown's position and that of an unfenced dog beach run that may negatively affect our beautiful coastline. You may send your complaints by e-mailing them to: council@santa-monica.org. You may also lodge your concerns to the California State Park Commissioner's office at Cyndy.Paulsen@resources.ca.gov and to the California Coastal Commission at coast4u@coastal.ca.gov.

While Mr. McKeown's bid for reelection is many months away, his actions now with a new City Council in place will most definitely set the stage for voter's memories when the time comes. And last time I checked, council guardian McKeown, dogs cannot vote in Santa Monica.

Ben Jacobs

Save the Sand Committee

Free ride in Santa Monica?

Editor:

Santa Monica is truly the home of the homeless ("Homelessness hits home in SM," (SMDP, Feb. 8, page 1).

True story: I'm an administrator at a large, downtown Los Angeles hospital. Recently a homeless person was presented to our emergency room. He complained about a number of ailments, none of which we could find any evidence to support his claims. After a period of time he was ready to be discharged. He refused, unless we provided him with a taxi voucher to Santa Monica.

Of all the great things Santa Monica is known for, what a black eye that we are so well known as the top choice among the homeless. Personally, it is the single thing that degrades my quality of life in what I would otherwise consider paradise.

Ron Yukelson

Santa Monica

OPINIONS EXPRESSED are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff.

Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned. Preference will be given to those that are e-mailed to sack@smdp.com. All letters must include the author's name and telephone number for purposes of verification. Letters also may be mailed to our offices located at 1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite 202, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

Bush is not a conservative, but is fiscally irresponsible



HERE'S THE THING

BY LARA M. BROWN, Ph.D

President Bush sent his \$2.57 trillion budget proposal to Congress this week amid numerous misgivings from all sides of the aisle. While some members of Congress felt it was a starting point, many were simply perplexed by the president's priorities. Most of the dissatisfaction came from the actual numbers, which belied unrealistic projections promoted by the White House as deficit reduction strategies.

On the one hand, the budget was lean — nine out of the 15 cabinet agencies would lose funding under this plan, with most of the cuts falling in the areas of discretionary domestic spending. Deficit hawks and fiscally conservative Republicans were generally pleased that the Administration had been so bold in wielding the ax, though many disagreed about the specific programs on the chopping block, including farm subsidies and veteran's benefits.

On the other hand the proposal was outrageously generous — the departments of State, Defense and Homeland Security all are scheduled to receive billions more in the next fiscal year. These increases are on top of significant boosts in spending over the past few years, making their cumulative growth rates enormous. The Department of Defense, if you factor in the proposed 4.8 percent increase in the 2006 budget, will have grown nearly 40 percent in the past five years.

The president asserts that the restructuring is necessary to cut the waste and to reposition the federal government to combat terrorism and defend our homeland. While there may be a need in the post-9/11 world to reconfigure our operations, President Bush is not coming clean about the reason for the ongoing deficits, which necessitate the spending cuts, or the fact that his budget proposal will do little for them.

The largest contributing factor to the deficits has been the Bush tax cuts, which shifted more of the tax burden onto the middle class, away from those who earn above \$200,000 each year. Since 2000, federal revenues have fallen over 5 percent, while spending has increased by 2.5 percent when both figures are measured as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product. Next year, the tax cuts alone will cost the government close to \$200 billion. Should they be made permanent, the government is likely to lose over \$1.1 trillion in the next 10 years.

We can ill-afford this policy solution, especially while conducting a war. Running deficits and paying interest on loans only makes operating government more expensive. There are times when it's justifiable. This is not one of them.

The White House's estimates on how the budget will reduce the deficits are almost laughable. Bush has proposed growing military spending — not including the costs of operations in Iraq or Afghanistan — by nearly \$100 billion over the next five years, from \$400 billion this year to \$492 billion in 2010. This comes alongside his proposal to freeze all other discretionary domestic spending at \$389 billion over the same period. As was pointed out in the Washington Post, "Given expected inflation, this would mean a cut, in real terms, of 14 percent by 2010 in such areas as housing, environmental protection, education and transportation."

And this is supposedly how the deficit will be trimmed in half, down close to \$207 billion, by 2010.

Bush also claims that he is cutting "inefficient programs" from the books, but the truth is that he is more liberal than most Democrats in doling out the public's money to his favorite causes. Community policing, which has been shown to be successful in reducing crime, is facing a \$22 million cut in funding, while Bush's budget proposes to increase by \$39 million the funding for abstinence education for youths, which has proved ineffective at reducing the number of teenage pregnancies.

Here's The Thing:

President Bush is no fiscal conservative. Just because his budget has the largest number of cuts since President Reagan's 1983 proposal does not mean that he is acting in a fiscally responsible manner.

Bush's overall plan, which doesn't include the costs of continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the possible transition costs of his Social Security plan, or the costs on the revenue side of making his proposed tax cuts permanent, is more than one-third larger than the 2001 budget he inherited just four years ago. It's the largest budget proposal ever on record, and it won't do anything to reduce the approximately \$400 billion deficit, now or over the next five years.

Strip away the gimmicks and what you will find is that President Bush is a spend-thrift — pretending to be penny-wise, he is, in fact, pound-foolish.

(Lara M. Brown, Ph.D., is a political scientist from Los Angeles, and is teaching this semester at California State University, Channel Islands. She can be reached at larambrown@aol.com.)



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COMMENTARY



Midevil times: Wearing a Valentine on her sleeve

PISTACHIO PERSPECTIVE

BY SUSAN ANN CONNOR



Mickey Machurzak. He was so dreamy ... blond, blue-eyed, Clark Gable protruding ears. I was smitten. His initials were written all over the inside of my notebook. And in secret places, one could find large hearts with our names engraved side by side. He was the Brad Pitt of the sixth grade at Isaac Newton School.

For fear I would faint if he got too close to me, I avoided him in the halls. Truth be told, there was also another reason. I was already nearly five-foot, seven-inches tall and towered over his five-foot-one frame.

Any time we spent together was on our bikes. "Remain on your bicycle seat at all times" was my motto. This way I figured I could escape his realization of how tall I really was, or how short he really was. Riding together was our form of dating, and I didn't want any awkward angles to hinder our passion for pedaling.

That is — until I couldn't take it anymore. Valentine's Day was near, and so was the dance. I had chosen the perfect Valentine for him. A couple of collies barking, "I ruff you." This was a step, but I needed something more and was determined to go public with my adoration for Mickey.

My best friend, Katie, was wild about Stuart. Stuart and Mickey were best friends, too. Stuart had told Katie to tell me that Mickey liked me. And Mickey told me to tell Katie that Stuart liked her. With that information, we summoned the courage to blab our affection for the boys.

I can't remember whether it was her idea or mine. But we decided to boldly embroider our love's name on the sleeve of our new Valentine's dresses. Cupid had struck, and we were striking back.

Somehow managing to hide my

amorous stitches from my parents, I headed off to the dance in my flats. Once there, it took Katie and me a while to take off our coats. We were brave, but not quite as brave as we thought. After double daring each other, we finally removed them. Then I caught Mickey's eye, and he spotted the sleeve. He smiled. Oh, my.

I was mush. Nothing mattered but Mickey.

A slow song came on, and he asked me to dance. I couldn't speak. But I did nod affirmatively. All embarrassment of our height disparity seemed to diminish. As long as I kept my head tangling over his shoulder, we actually fit quite nicely as dance partners. Me and Mickey sitting in a tree ... how sweet it was.

I was inspired to tell this story after learning some early history of Valentine's Day. Saint Valentine didn't even come aboard until approximately the third century, and confusion surrounds his exact biography. However, most accounts agree he died around Feb. 14 and was the patron saint of lovers.

The actual origin of Valentine's Day comes from Lupercalia, a Roman festival of love held in February. Young women's names were written on "billets" — small papers — and put in a box. Young men would draw a name, and the maiden then became his partner for the festival.

During medieval times in England, the names were picked in pairs. The two exchanged gifts and became sweethearts for a year, each wearing the other's name on their sleeve. Thus, my historical connection to the Mickey memory.

My family moved the summer after that Valentine's Day, and I often wonder what happened to Mickey. I never regretted wearing his name on my sleeve and exposing my feelings. Love at any age is memorable, but young love has a certain magic that is unforgettable. Happy Valentine's Day!

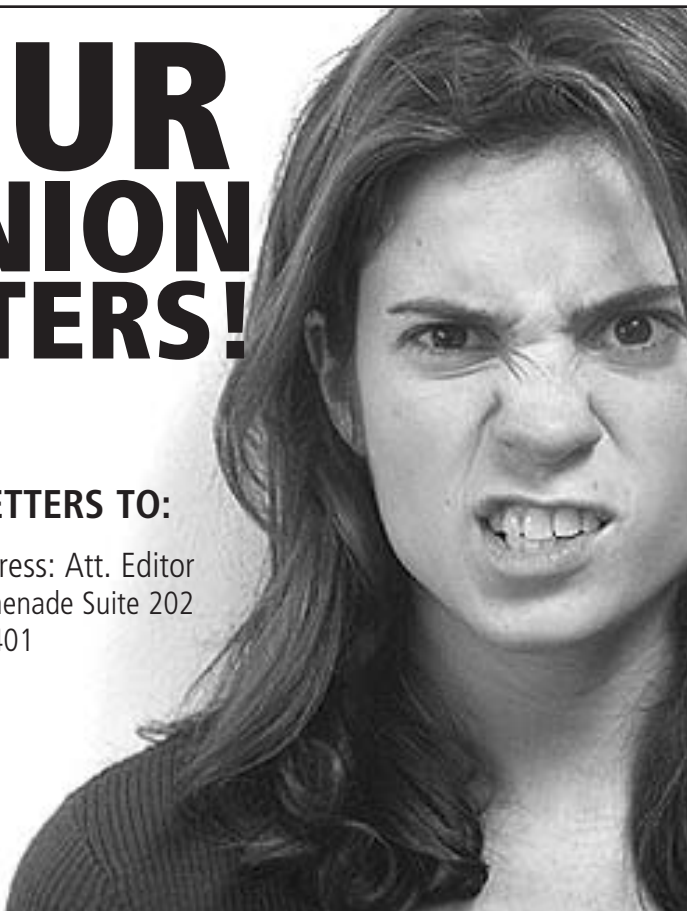
Lalalala ...

(Susan Ann Connor can be reached at pistachiocolumn@aol.com).

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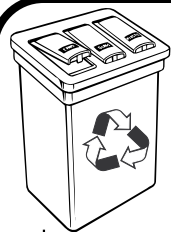
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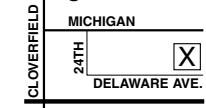
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Resident telephone poll cost City Hall \$28K

SURVEY, from page 1

The lack of parking remained a top concern, with 16 percent of residents listing it as one of the top two issues this year, or double the number of residents who said the same when the poll was conducted three years ago.

Also listed by residents as critical issues facing Santa Monica were excessive growth and overcrowding, which together accounted for 16 percent of votes for the most important issue; education, at 12 percent; lack of affordable housing; and crime, gangs and drugs, according to the survey results, which were compiled in mid-January by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research.

In order to determine the issues most important to Santa Monica residents, pollsters asked what residents' top concerns were, but didn't offer multiple choice answers.

Homelessness has for at least the past five years ranked the No. 1 issue in Santa Monica polls. The fact that resident concern seems to be growing rather than shrinking despite ongoing efforts to stem the problem is cause for concern for some officials.

"The problems aren't getting solved," City Councilman Bob Holbrook said Thursday.

City Council to attend workshops in shifts

BROWN ACT, from page 1

members can attend an informal city meeting or forum.

The issue came up last month before a major community workshop regarding an overhaul of the land use element, a document that governs development throughout Santa Monica. It became more contentious this week as City Hall began planning major forums for addressing gang violence in Santa Monica, one on Feb. 26, the other on March 12.

City Attorney Marsha Moutrie, who routinely advises officials of possible Brown Act conflicts or appearances of conflicts, defended her advice at a City Council meeting this week.

"It is not my interpretation of the Brown Act, it is what the Brown Act says explicitly," Moutrie said. "If the city puts on a community meeting, a majority cannot attend without following all the formalities of the Brown Act."

Following the Brown Act to the letter of the law would mean agendizing the meetings, holding a formal roll call and keeping to a structured itinerary for public input and other procedural matters. Doing so would threaten the fluid and flexible format of community workshops, and may affect the type of input residents offer, officials argue.

There is an exception to the law in regards to community meetings sponsored by outside groups. City officials can attend those meetings, as long as they don't conduct city business. Though there was an opportunity to have the upcoming gang violence forum sponsored by State Sen. Sheila Kuehl, City Manager Susan McCarthy said the city opted to keep control of it.

"Had we not helped to shape the work-

COUNTING VOTES

Only 24 percent of those polled gave City Hall a positive rating for "spending money in the right areas and on the right problems."

While a third of residents said City Hall spends too little on homelessness, 17 percent countered City Hall spends too much. Roughly half of residents surveyed gave City Hall negative ratings for failing to adequately enforce laws against aggressive panhandling, and sleeping in parks and doorways.

Holbrook said he was hopeful the election of Bobby Shriver to the City Council would help reverse that trend. Holbrook said for years he and like-minded council members have not been able to affect change because the council has been controlled by politicians who are more tolerant of homelessness.

"With the homeless situation, I feel very encouraged, because we finally have four votes to move forward on some very meaningful stuff," he said. "I think we're turning the corner."

Shriver campaigned on a platform of reducing homelessness and since taking office in December, he has pushed to cre-

See **SURVEY**, page 8

shop, it would not be a hands-on, community workshop," McCarthy said. "It would have been a talking-heads workshop and I think it's going to be good the way it is. I don't apologize for making the suggestion, though definitely it's possible that we would have suggested something else had we known" that council members would be precluded from participating in the meeting.

In an effort to work around the Brown Act restrictions and still have council participation, members of the council agreed to attend the meetings in shifts. Mayor Pam O'Connor will attend the entire Feb. 26 meeting and City Councilman Herb Katz, who serves as the mayor pro tempore, will be present for the March 12 meeting. The other five council members will rotate through the meetings so each can have a turn participating.

"I'm happy to split the shift," said newly-elected City Councilman Bobby Shriver. "It's very important to me, since I'm starting out, to attend these."

To quell the public's concerns that elected leaders aren't vested in the process, council members asked that it be made clear that they are forbidden from attending the meetings.

Moutrie said a note should be included on fliers advertising the meetings, then suggested the idea could be taken even further.

"You know," she said, "if this gets really bad for you, and you want me to show up at the beginning of those meetings for five minutes and hold forth about the Brown Act, I'll do that, because I certainly don't want you criticized for a process law which is there to protect the public, and the public's business being done appropriately."

LOCAL



Santa Monica man predicts space travel costs will decrease

SPACE TRAVEL, from page 1

travel,” Oberstar said during the hearing. Bush has called for NASA to return to the moon and eventually to send a spacecraft to Mars. Entrepreneurs, meantime, are working to develop spacecraft that can take regular citizens into space.

A watershed event was Burt Rutan’s winning the \$10 million Ansari X Prize in October, which he accomplished by sending his SpaceShipOne rocket plane into space above Mojave, Calif., twice in five days.

The X Prize flights followed a historic June launch in which the craft, funded by billionaire Paul Allen, became the first privately developed manned rocket to reach space.

“The genie is out of the bottle, the fuse has been lit,” said Santa Monica resident Peter Diamandis, X Prize founder, said in a telephone interview. “We are really at the birth of the personal space flight revolution.”

Elon Musk, chairman of SpaceX, said in a telephone interview that government needs to respect the human spirit.

“If somebody understands the risks and puts their life on the line because they think it’s worth it, we should applaud that,” said Musk.

The company in El Segundo, Calif., plans to send a \$30 million Navy satellite into space using a small launch vehicle within the next few months.

FAA chief Marion Blakey agreed that government oversight of commercial space enterprises — “astropreneurs,” she calls them — must evolve along with the industry.

“It was more than 20 years after the Wright brothers’ first flight before government regulations concerning aviation were put into place,” Blakey told the subcommittee, noting that modern airlines began with barnstorming aviators.

Last year, the FAA licensed the Mojave Airport in California as a launch site as a prelude to the historic SpaceShipOne flight. Blakey said the agency also is talking with Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico about their license applications for launch sites.

Starting in 2007, New Mexico’s White Sands Missile Range will be the site of the X Prize’s successor, the annual X Prize Cup, which will be awarded to the winners of five categories of rocket races.

Diamandis predicts a golden age of space tourism, where hundreds and possibly thousands of paying passengers will fly to the edge of space every year.

Four months after Rutan’s rocket darted into space, British entrepreneur Richard Branson’s Virgin Galactic company boasts that thousands of reservations already have been made for a ride on a spaceship modeled after SpaceShipOne — at \$200,000 a pop.

Diamandis said the cost of a personal space flight will fall because today’s space entrepreneurs run such lean operations. It took 20 people to support Rutan’s flight, he said, compared with the 100,000 needed for the space shuttle.

What’s needed for the industry to flourish, he said, is balance.

“We need reasonable guidelines with the understanding that this is risky business,” he said.

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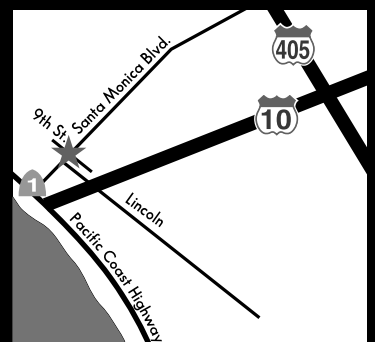
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LOCAL

Official: Homelessness rises with property values

SURVEY, from page 6

ate a special courtroom for homeless offenders, as well as open a sobering center for public inebriates and transform into homeless shelters three unused buildings at the Veterans Administration property in West Los Angeles.

City Councilman Richard Bloom, who sits on a regional board aiming to eliminate homelessness in 10 years, said the situation has worsened due to "years and years and years of neglect" from nearby communities, and the state and federal governments.

Bloom said he was glad Shriver has dedicated his energy to homelessness, but added it was not an entirely new venture.

"In fact, successive City Councils for many years have long been concerned about homelessness," Bloom said

Thursday. "It's the lack of concern that's been shown and the lack of effort that's been shown elsewhere that's the main problem."

Bloom countered the contention by many in the community that the city government's tolerance attracts more homeless people to Santa Monica.

"I don't agree that our programs attract more homeless people to Santa Monica," Bloom said. "I believe that an argument can be made that the feeding programs in the park, which are not city sponsored, have a tendency to do that. And I think there are a range of other reasons why homeless people come to Santa Monica."

"We tend to think only about Santa Monica, but as Santa Monicans we need to think about the big picture too," Bloom added.

John Keaveney, founder of New Directions Inc., a

social service provider that helps some 1,200 veterans and others reassemble their lives annually, called the survey results startling.

Still, Keaveney said the numbers reflect the fact that the problem of homelessness has grown more severe in recent years.

"The cost of housing has increased dramatically, where people can hardly afford to pay for an apartment," said Keaveney, adding all of his programs are running at capacity. "Most people are still one paycheck away from being homeless."

Keaveney also said Westside communities often receive less money, per person, than high-profile areas like Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles.

That can be especially difficult for cities like Santa Monica that attract large numbers of homeless people, Keaveney added.

"In Santa Monica, they've always been benevolent to the homeless, and other cities are not," he said. "They tend to push their homeless towards Santa Monica."

SM DEMOGRAPHIC

City Hall paid Goodwin Simon Strategic Research \$28,700 to conduct the survey, which included interviews with 400 residents.

The cost of the survey also covered polling an extra 150 residents in the Pico neighborhood, and officials hope to use the results from those interviews, which had not been released by Thursday, in a Feb. 26 forum on gang violence.

The community-wide survey showed that residents overall are satisfied with the job done by City Hall. More than 80 percent said they were either very or somewhat satisfied with "the job the city of Santa Monica is doing to provide city services."

Those numbers dropped among elderly residents and those most familiar with City Hall.

"The survey finds slightly lower satisfaction among older residents, long-time residents of the city and those who have been in contact with city departments," the report reads.

City Hall's planning department received the lowest marks for responsiveness, while the police department was ranked as being most responsive, according to the survey. The city failed to earn a majority of positive marks in several areas, including providing youth services, arts funding, early childhood education, keeping traffic flowing, and enforcing zoning and building laws, along with airport noise limits.

Noteable differences also emerged along lines of sex and gender, and in other areas.

"Thirty-eight percent of men over 50 and 32 percent of women under 50 said city departments were not responsive, compared to 15 percent of men under 50 and 19 percent of women over 50," the survey said.

Residents were split over whether City Hall was doing a good job of addressing neighborhood concerns, with 45 percent rating the city's job as excellent or good, and 39 percent rating its job as fair or poor, the survey shows. Those numbers continued a downward trend over the past five years in how residents rate City Hall's attention to neighborhood concerns.

Half of the residents polled said they held down full-time jobs and 70 percent said they did not have children living at home. More than half of those polled lived in apartments, with nearly 30 percent in single-family homes and 17 percent in condominiums.

Nearly a quarter of the people surveyed reported earning more than \$100,000, with 17 percent taking home less than \$20,000. However, almost a third of those polled declined to state their earnings.

The survey covered each major neighborhood in Santa Monica, with 24 percent of those polled living in the Mid-City area, 25 percent in Ocean Park or Sunset Park, 12 percent north of Montana Avenue, 30 percent in the Wilshire-Montana area and 7 percent living downtown.

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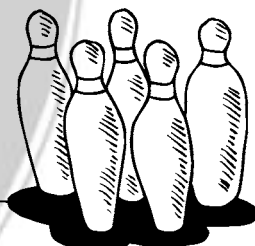
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STATE



Gov. touts education; critics turn up the volume

BY JENNIFER COLEMAN

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — While education officials are badgering Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger about a stagnant schools budget, the governor and Republican lawmakers have been touting an area where more money is being directed — career and technical education.

Schwarzenegger's 2005-06 budget plan calls for a one-time \$20 million investment to ease the transition from high school to community college programs that prepare students for technical jobs, such as auto repair and culinary arts, said H.D. Palmer, spokesman for the Department of Finance.

But the governor's plan to give \$20 million in extra money for vocational education, something on which there's virtually unanimous bipartisan support, is viewed by education groups as a smoke screen. By emphasizing vocational education, they say, Schwarzenegger is papering over what they call a broken promise to schoolchildren.

"The strategy appears to be to take a rather insignificant investment in one small program and use that to hide behind while releasing a budget that will be the most devastating assault on school funding public education has ever seen," said Kevin Gordon, president of School Innovations and Advocacies, which represents public education groups.

A cadre of Republican Assembly members held a press conference Tuesday to praise Schwarzenegger's push to improve work force training. The following day, President Bush announced that he wanted to cut \$1.2 billion in vocational education money and funnel that toward high school testing — something California already does.

Schwarzenegger told KGO radio Wednesday that restoring the federal vocational education money would be on his agenda when he travels to Washington next week.

Schwarzenegger's budget proposal calls for \$36.5 billion for public education — just enough to keep up with enrollment growth and cost-of-living adjustments. It shifts money from schools to fill other gaps next year and proposes a constitutional spending cap that could hurt schools in the future.

But the plan drew howls of protest from former Schwarzenegger allies — the powerful education lobby. Several of the largest players have formed a coalition to counter Schwarzenegger's plan, releasing a new ad campaign Wednesday that claims the governor is breaking his promise to protect school funding.

The state collected more money this year than expected, and education groups say they are entitled to a share of that — totalling \$2 billion for this year and next — under Proposition 98, the voter-approved funding guarantee for schools. Last year, education groups agreed to give up \$2 billion they were due under Proposition 98 in order to close the budget deficit.

That money will be repaid over several years, but education leaders said they should get the extra money now. The Schwarzenegger administration disagreed, saying the unanticipated revenues should go to other parts of the budget, an understanding included in the current budget.

Schwarzenegger has denied breaking his promise and points out that spending would rise by \$2.9 billion over the current year and covers expected increases in enrollment and inflation.

"That kind of an increase in that kind of fiscal environment speaks to the commitment the governor has to education," Palmer said.

The governor's interest in career and technical education, also known as vocational education, is welcomed, said Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell.

"I wholeheartedly welcome his assistance," O'Connell said. "It's something I've been working on for over a year."

O'Connell spent the last year trying to move vocational education's image out of the dusty recesses of high school woodshops and into the real world.

"Jobs today require more problem-solving skills, more technology skills," O'Connell said.

In the last year, he has doubled number of vocational education courses that meet the requirements for admission to the state's two university systems. And next month he will present the final draft of new standards for

career-technical education.

Schwarzenegger's support is helpful, but \$20 million doesn't stretch far in a state the size of California, said Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg, D-Los Angeles.

"The \$20 million is a good idea, but not when you're looking at cuts in basics at the schools," said Goldberg, who is the chairwoman of the Assembly Education Committee. "The other problem is that \$20 million in a state like California is nothing."

The administration recognizes that the money is just a start toward improving vocational education, said Anne

McKinney, assistant secretary for higher education.

"Whatever the number is, it's not enough," McKinney said.

But it gets the conversation started about programs and students that have been "largely ignored" while lawmakers focused on preparing 384,000 students for college, said Assemblyman Mark Wyland, R-Del Mar.

"We're losing kids in school who don't want to read Shakespeare and do calculus," he said. "They can sit through those classes if they have the chance to do something else during the day."

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Entertainment

What’s playing

By Dan Dunn
Special to the Daily Press

THE WEDDING DATE

Why do fools fall in love? Maybe for the same reason they make half-baked chick flicks ... cuz some people never learn.
Starring: Debra Messing, Dermot Mulroney

RORY O'SHEA WAS HERE

Dramatically charged, funny, and most of all uplifting, This is the first best movie of 2005.
Starring: Steven Robertson, James McAvoy

HIDE AND SEEK

What is, for a solid 80 minutes or so, a pretty hair-raising and suspenseful thriller, falls apart more quickly and embarrassingly than a drunken “Real World” cast member.
Starring: Robert DeNiro, Dakota Fanning

ALONE IN THE DARK

A deliriously-edited special-effects cannonade featuring a once-semi-respectable movie star slogging through a morass of detritus left over from seemingly every bad sci-fi flick ever committed to celluloid.
Starring: Christian Slater

ARE WE THERE YET?

Ten minutes into this hapless family comedy, you'll be wishing you were anywhere but there.
Starring: Ice Cube, Nia Long

COACH CARTER

Succeeds thanks to an inspirational story, some highly realistic and exciting basketball action, and a winning performance from Samuel L. Jackson.
Starring: Samuel L. Jackson, Rob Brown, Ashanti

THE AVIATOR

The second-best biopic Scorsese has helmed, behind the exalted “Raging Bull.” DiCaprio’s portrayal of Hughes stands out as the finest work of his career.
Starring: Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett

LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

Inspired adaptation of the wildly popular kids' book series that ‘tis a hell of a lot more naughty than nice.
Starring: Jim Carrey, Meryl Streep

SPANGLISH

James Brooks is one of the best in the business at harvesting fresh perspectives on the human condition.
Starring: Adam Sandler, Tea Leoni

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

At its core, this is a heart-wrenching story about overcoming impossible odds and realizing dreams.
Starring: Hilary Swank, Clint Eastwood, Morgan Freeman

FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

This one's all about the action and the actors have grasped that and have fun with it.
Starring: Dennis Quaid, Giovanni Ribisi

THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU

Filmmaker Wes Anderson’s fourth feature is the ne plus ultra of whimsical cerebation, and fans of his work will no doubt be lifted into the empyrean.
Starring: Bill Murray, Angelica Huston, Owen Wilson, Cate Blanchett

OCEAN'S TWELVE

When taken — not too seriously — as a pastiche of beautiful people, exotic places, groovy tunes, and loosely comic set pieces, this sequel is a snazzy delight.
Starring: Julia Roberts, Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Catherine Zeta-Jones

‘Deepthroat’ goes deep into cultural history of sex

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

In June of 1972, “Deep Throat,” a screwy \$25,000 skin flick about a fellatio virtuoso with a wildly misplaced sex organ, was released at a theater in midtown

Manhattan. Made on the fly in Miami by a group of amateurs led by an erstwhile hairdresser named Gerard Damiano (aka, Jerry Gerard),

the film would go on to gross \$600 million, turn its star, Linda Lovelace, into an internationally-known sex symbol, and ignite a turbulent ideological war that is still being waged today. Thirty-three years after “Deep Throat” swallowed America, acclaimed documentarians Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato (“The Eyes of Tammy Faye”) offer a provocative, highly entertaining look inside the phenomemon and the indelible impression it made on the cultural landscape. Whichever side of the censorship argument you come down on, you’ll likely find “Inside Deep Throat” illuminating.

In addition to getting the inside scoop straight from the mouths of Damiano, star Harry Reems, and a host of others involved in the making and distribution of the film, Bailey and Barbato enlist provocateurs and pundits such as John Waters, Camille Paglia, Erica Jong, Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal to help bring the chain reaction it caused into focus. Archival footage of a Nixon administration-led witch-hunt that led to Reems being brought up on Federal obscenity charges is bolstered by a telling testimonial from the zealous southern prosecutor who to this day believes “Deep Throat” to be a hideous blight on our society. Dennis Hopper is effective in a sparingly used role as the film’s narrator.

Perhaps most compelling are the stories of the impact the movie had on the lives of the principals. After beating the obscenity rap on appeal (after Nixon was ousted from office) Reems wound up homeless and drug addicted, only to be born again as a real estate salesman in Park City, Utah. After her initial 15 minutes were up, Lovelace became an anti-porn crusader, claiming her experience making the film was tantamount to rape. Years later, broke and in her 50s, she had a change of heart and posed nude for a magazine in the hopes of reviving her career. She died in car accident shortly thereafter.

(Rated NC-17, for explicit sexual content. Running time: 90 minutes)



‘Hitch’ more than a romantic comedy

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Will Smith and “The King of Queens” star Kevin James both earn their place atop the marquee in this surprisingly pleasant romantic comedy from director Andy Tennant (“Sweet Home Alabama”). It’s surprising given the early February release (normally a

time for Brittany Murphy and Stephen Dorff films to die at the box office), and because the ubiquitous film trailer, in which True Love transforms Smith’s smooth operator into a bumbling idiot, isn’t all that funny or representative of what “Hitch” is really about.

Alex “Hitch” Hitchens is a notorious and deliberately anonymous New York City “date doctor” who makes a pretty penny coaching bashful fellas on the art of wooing unforgettable women. His biggest challenge yet arrives in the form of an unassuming, overweight accountant named Albert (James) who’s hopelessly in love with one of his clients, the gorgeous Allegra Cole (Amber Valletta). Allegra’s very famous for her looks and money — think Paris Hilton, only a heck of a lot more down-to-earth — but clearly not so unattainable to deter Hitch, who has yet to meet the mismatched pair he couldn’t hitch (clever name-play, eh?) As usual, Smith is the consummate charmer, and here he pretty much has everyone in the film and audience in the palm of his hand before the opening titles finish rolling. He and James make a good team and hit all the right comedic notes working with very funny material courtesy of first-time screen-writer Kevin Bisch, a former “Details” magazine editor with a genuine feel for his characters’ stylish stomping grounds. Rounding out the cast in fine form is Eva Mendez (“Training Day”) as the feisty gossip columnist who gives the date doctor a bad case of lovesickness that leaves him questioning his own sure fire methods.

(Rated PG-13 - for language and some strong sexual references. Running time: 115 minutes)

‘Bridge and Prejudice’ a perfect marriage

BY DAN DUN

Special to the Daily Press

The term “Bollywood” was coined in reference to India’s robust film industry, and a cinematic style that incorporates a rainbow of bright colors, lively dance numbers, clean-cut comedy and, above all, hokey love stories seemingly into every epic the prolific Eastern filmmakers produce (about 800 titles a year). With “Bride & Prejudice,” writer-director Gurinder Chadha (“Bend it Like Beckham”)

scores a lightweight hit by combining the spectacle of B’wood with a classic work of Brit lit, Jane Austen’s “Pride and Prejudice.”

For Anglo audiences, the social conventions that drive the plot may seem quaint: In the tiny village of Amritsar, a meddlesome mother is determined to marry off her four daughters to well-heeled suitors. The most willful of the exceptionally beautiful brood is Lalita, played by Bollywood’s most popular female star, Aishwarya Rai. This is Rai’s first go-round in English-language film and as a result her delivery is just a bit stiff, but she is truly one of the world’s great beauties and there is no doubt that American audiences will be captivated by her. Martin Henderson (“The Ring”) certainly is. The New Zealander plays an American hotel magnate who goes ga-ga for Lalita, and while he’s clearly not a seasoned song and dance man, he does just enough to keep up with his more accomplished counterparts. Chadha’s color-splashed, almost immaculate portrait of Indian life is glorious (and an affront to cultural purists), and the musical numbers are great fun. Nitin Ganatra is a scene-stealer as an inelegant California transplant who returns to his native land hoping to land a trophy wife.

(Rated PG-13, for some sexual references. Running time: 111 minutes)



VD day cocktails served up in the name of love



THE IMBIBER

BY DAN DUNN

Love is in the air this week and, boy, doesn't it stink to high heaven? OK, so with Valentine's Day looming your Imbiber freely admits to being jaded ... mainly because I've just been jilted by a gal-pal who simply could not get comfortable with the notion that for me, excessive alcohol consumption isn't the debilitating affliction it may appear to be. On the con-

trary, it's an exciting, lucrative CAREER, albeit one that has exacted a heavy toll on my liver and bank account. So I'll be drinking at home alone on V-Day, but for those lucky enough to be getting lucky Monday night, below are two cocktail recipes sure to help set hearts afire.

The first, "The Beer-tini," is adapted from a recipe I stumbled upon at a hotel bar in Bisbee, Ariz., and combines the crisp freshness of beer with the fashionable fruitiness of flavored vodka. Believe it or not, the pairing works quite nicely — not something I'd add to my regular cocktail regimen, mind you, but certainly an interesting new wrinkle. Next up is the "Cham-Cham Cosmo" which is, with

champagne, Triple Sec and Chambord in the mix, sweeter than your very first kiss. And no need to thank me for the tips, lovebirds, I'm simply doing my job:

THE BEER-TINI

1.5 oz. Stoli Ohranj
1oz. orange juice
1.5 oz. draft domestic beer
2 fresh orange wedges
1 orange slice

Chill a martini glass. Combine Stoli Ohranj and orange juice in an ice-filled shaker. Pour beer into the martini glass and squeeze wedges of orange into beer. Add strained vodka. Garnish with orange slice.

CHAM CHAM COSMO

Half-shot Chambord liqueur
One-and-one-quarter shot citrus vodka
Half-shot shot triple sec
One shot cranberry juice
An eighth of a shot of freshly squeezed lime juice

Top with Piper Heidsieck Rose Sauvage champagne

Shake first five ingredients with ice and strain into a champagne flute.

(E-mail questions, comments or suggestions for the Imbiber to ddunn@metro.us)

Thoughts from a Japanese filmmaker and the debut of his film, 'Nobody Knows'

BY STEPHEN HUNT

Special to the Daily Press

While Chinese films such as *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon*, *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers* have become such a dominant sub-

Review

genre that North American movie audiences tend to think they represent all Asian cinema, a new generation of young Japanese filmmakers such as Hirokazu Kore-Eda and Naomi Kawase are making films that owe their inspiration to *Dogma 95*, John Cassavettes and the films of Mike Leigh.

Kore-Eda's latest, "Nobody Knows," which opened in New York on Feb. 4 and Los Angeles on Feb. 11, was shot on digital video, features sparse dialogue, urban Japanese cityscapes that owe a debt to Volker Schlöndorff, and long, virtually improvised scenes featuring a posse of Japanese children between 3 and 15 years old. "Nobody Knows" is to *Flying Daggers* what Bukowski is to W.H. Auden: They're both poets, but the similarities end there.

Kore-Eda, 41, who developed his distinctive style shooting documentaries for Japanese television, was in Toronto last September for the Toronto International Film Festival to talk about "Nobody Knows."

"I would say no other movies came to mind when I was making this film," Kore-Eda said, in response to a reporters' observation that "Nobody Knows" didn't seem very Japanese at all.

"I was just trying to weave together a story through the performances of the children. In point of fact," Kore-Eda added, "especially in the second half, there's very little dialogue which is quite a departure for Japanese children's films — so many Japanese have said it doesn't feel like a Japanese film either — and some French critics have said it feels French."

Not coincidentally, Kore-Eda is something of a French critical darling. His 1995 debut, "Maborosi," won the Camera d'Or for Best New Director at Cannes. His third film, "Distance" was a finalist for the Palm d'Or and "Nobody Knows" won the 2004 Best Actor at Cannes for 14-year-old Yuya Yagira's portrayal of the oldest son Akira.

"Nobody Knows" begins when a young Japanese woman and her teenage son Akira move into a new apartment. As soon as they get inside, the story takes a twist when the luggage turns out not to contain personal belongings, but rather three more young children. As the eldest helps the youngest out of his luggage, his first question reveals a matter-of-factness about the facts of this family's life that is heartbreaking in its simplicity. "Was it hot?" he asks. This is followed by their mother issuing a straightforward declaration of the house's one unbreakable rule: Pointing to the three little children, she says, "You don't go outside." Shortly thereafter, she disappears, abandoning them in order to pursue a singing career.

"Nobody Knows" originated out of an actual event and Kore-Eda's own personal memories of childhood.

"I wasn't abandoned as a child, but remember the anxiety of waiting for a parent to come home, the loneliness of walking home alone after you've fought with your friends, plus the (cast of) fantastic kids, watching them and seeing a scene that would play well — a combination of all that," he said.

For all its international sensibilities, "Nobody Knows" can hardly be considered commercial. Not only is it in Japanese and close to two and a half hours long, but Kore-Eda's storytelling is almost obsessively haphazard: The film simply seems to land in the midst of the everyday struggles of a group of Japanese children who have been abandoned by their mother. Also, in a film world where class struggle seems to have been resolved by eliminating everyone but the upper and upper-middle class from them, "Nobody Knows," like the films of Mike Leigh, is set among the urban underclass.

However, the film somehow still manages — in the manner of other similarly-themed films about abandoned children such as Hector Babenco's *Pixote* and Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* — to fluidly combine the innate playfulness and sweetness of children's game playing within a heart-breaking scenario of child abandonment and urban ennui.

"I think that for both myself and the cameraman (Yutaka Yamasaki), our goal was to get the audience to cherish the children in front of us that we were watching," Kore-Eda said. "Every scene was story-boarded and the dialogue written in advance, but the truth is the dialogue was very much based on their natural language written at play," he adds, explaining both his methodology and his gift for coaxing extraordinary performances out of untrained actors. The Japanese film industry — unlike China's — has been moribund for several years now. Japanese independent films such as those made by Kore-Eda and his protégés Yusuke Iseya (Kakuto) and Miwa Nishikawa (Wild Berries) are as likely to be ignored in Japan as they are to go undistributed in the U.S. Yet, much like the children in "Nobody Knows," Kore-Eda remains undeterred — as if the very act of making his brand of films is a game in itself.

"And there were times," he added, as if he had somehow claimed too much credit from his cast and wished to make amends, "when I just shot them at play."



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STATE

Parents protest school mandate that students wear radio ID tags

BY LISA LEFF

Associated Press Writer

SUTTER, Calif. — The only grade school in this rural town is requiring students to wear radio frequency identification badges that can track their every move. Some parents are outraged, fearing it will rob their children of privacy.

The badges introduced at Brittan Elementary School on Jan. 18 rely on the same radio frequency and scanner technology that companies use to track livestock and product inventory.

While similar devices are being tested at several schools in Japan so parents can know when their children arrive and leave, Brittan appears to be the first U.S. school district to embrace such a monitoring system.

Civil libertarians hope to keep it that way.

"If this school doesn't stand up, then other schools might adopt it," Nicole Ozer, a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union, warned school board members at a meeting this week. "You might be a small community, but you are one of the first communities to use this technology."

The system was imposed, without parental input, by the school as a way to simplify attendance-taking and potentially reduce vandalism and improve student safety. Principal Earnie Graham hopes to eventually add bar codes to the existing ID's so that students can use them to pay for cafeteria meals and check out library books.

But some parents see a system that can monitor their children's movements on campus as something straight out of Orwell.

"There is a way to make kids safer without making them feel like a piece of inventory," said Michael Cantrall, one of several angry parents who complained. "Are we trying to bring them up with respect and trust, or tell them that you can't trust anyone, you are always going to be monitored and someone is always going to be watching you?"

Cantrall said he told his children, in the 5th and 7th grades, not to wear the badges. He also filed a protest letter with the board and alerted the ACLU.

Graham, who also serves as the superintendent of the single-school district, told the parents that their children could be disciplined for boycotting the badges — and that he doesn't understand what all their angst is about.

"Sometimes when you are on the cutting edge, you get caught," Graham said, recounting the angry phone calls and notes he has received from parents.

Each student is required to wear identification cards around their necks with their picture, name and grade and a wireless transmitter that beams their ID number to a teacher's handheld computer when the child passes under an antenna posted above a classroom door.

Graham also asked to have a chip reader installed in locker room bathrooms to reduce vandalism, although that reader is not functional yet. And while he has ordered everyone on campus to wear the badges, he said only the 7th and 8th grade classrooms are being monitored thus far.

In addition to the privacy concerns, parents are worried that the information on and inside the badges could wind up in the wrong hands and endanger their children, and that radio frequency technology might carry health risks.

Graham dismisses each objection, arguing that the devices do not emit any cancer-causing radioactivity, and that for now, they merely confirm that each child is in his or her classroom, rather than track them around the school like a global-positioning device.

The 15-digit ID number that confirms attendance is encrypted, he said, and not linked to other personal information such as an address or telephone number.

What's more, he says that it is within his power to set rules that promote a positive school environment: If he thinks ID badges will improve things, he says, then badges there will be.

"You know what it comes down to? I believe junior high students want to be stylish. This is not stylish," he said.

This latest adaptation of radio frequency ID technology was developed by InCom Corp., a local company co-founded by the parent of a former Brittan student, and some parents are suspicious about the financial relationship between the school and the company. InCom plans to promote it at a national convention of school administrators next month.

InCom has paid the school several thousand dollars for agreeing to the experiment, and has promised a royalty from each sale if the system takes off, said the company's co-founder, Michael Dobson, who works as a technology specialist in the town's high school. Brittan's technology aide also works part-time for InCom.

Not everyone in this close-knit farming town northwest of Sacramento is against the system. Some said they welcomed the IDs as a security measure.

"This is not Mayberry. This is Sutter, California. Bad things can happen here," said Tim Crabtree, an area parent.

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NATIONAL



Arizona observatory marks 75th anniversary of Pluto's discovery

BY MICHELLE ROBERTS

Associated Press Writer

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — Clyde Tombaugh might have missed it had he been a little less attentive as he stared through an eyepiece while switching back and forth between photographic images of the night sky.

A recurring speck on two successive images that also contained perhaps another 300,000 dots — pinprick-sized images of stars and other space objects — was all the evidence there was that Tombaugh was on to something extraordinary.

But it was enough. Tombaugh knew he was getting the first view of the solar system's ninth planet. He had discovered Pluto.

It has been nearly 75 years since Tombaugh first spotted the tiny icy planet on Feb. 18, 1930, and since then Pluto's very classification as a planet has been questioned. Astronomers agree, though, that the discovery at Flagstaff's Lowell Observatory remains a remarkable one.

"Whatever Pluto is, it is an extremely intriguing little world," said Lowell Observatory director Bob Millis.

The observatory's search for the solar system's ninth planet, a "Planet X" that had been hypothesized but never seen, was begun by Percival Lowell.

Lowell founded the observatory in 1894 in the mountains of this northern Arizona community to search for intelligent life on Mars.

Shortly before his death in 1916, Lowell published calculations estimating where a ninth planet might be. He and other astronomers believed a planet existed beyond Neptune because of a perceived wobble in Uranus' orbit that suggested it was being affected by another celestial body, said Kevin Schindler, senior supervisor of public

See PLUTO, page 14

Pluto by the numbers

By The Associated Press

A look at Pluto by the numbers:

249 — The number of years it takes Pluto to orbit the sun.

9 — Pluto's place among planets in the solar system, except when it crosses Neptune's orbit and temporarily becomes No. 8.

75 — The number of years since Pluto was spotted by Clyde Tombaugh.

4 — The number of terrestrial, or rocky, planets: Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars. And the number of gaseous planets: Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

1,000 — Approximate number of Kuiper Belt objects that have been identified so far, including Pluto and its moon, Charon.

1/3 — The probable portion of Pluto that is made up of ice.

2,370 — Pluto's diameter in kilometers, smaller than the Earth's moon.

4.5 — The number of hours it takes light to reach Earth from Pluto.

9.5 — The number of years it will take the New Horizons probe to reach Pluto if it can take advantage of Jupiter's gravity to help slingshot it out.

3 — The number of additional years it will take to reach Pluto without Jupiter's help.

Sources: Lowell Observatory, Hal Weaver of the New Horizons mission.

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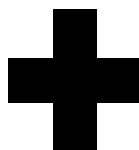
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Debate surrounds Pluto's place in solar system

PLUTO, from page 13

programs at Lowell.

The wobble was an illusion. Pluto was far too small to disrupt Uranus' orbit.

But because of the "serendipity of science," Lowell's calculations proved accurate, Schindler said. Tombaugh found a planet right where Lowell said it should be.

The telescope used to find Pluto was built specifically to search for "Planet X." The base was constructed with local rocks. A piece of railroad track supported the giant camera used to photograph the night sky.

The camera took an hour to capture a fist-sized section of the sky on 14-by-17-inch glass plates.

Each section of sky was shot twice several nights apart, allowing Tombaugh to look for movement. Planets, because they are relatively close to Earth, would move from plate to plate while stars would appear to be in the same place, Schindler said.

Because the plates contained 200,000 to 300,000 objects each, Tombaugh looked at them through a machine that allowed him to flash back and forth systematically, peering at tiny sections.

It took Tombaugh less than a year to find the ninth planet, which was later named for the Greek god of the underworld. The discovery put the observatory on the map and gave Tombaugh instant acclaim.

Shortly after Tombaugh's death in 1997, however, a debate arose over Pluto's place in the solar system. It started in the astronomical community but spilled into the public limelight after someone noticed the Hayden Planetarium at New York's American Museum of Natural History wasn't categorizing Pluto with other planets.

Hayden Planetarium Director Neil deGrasse Tyson said he has "folders of hate mail from third-graders," and the outraged notes keep coming five years after the display opened.

Hayden didn't kick Pluto out of the solar system, as some have accused it of doing, Tyson said.

Instead, the planetarium grouped Pluto with its apparent cousins in the Kuiper Belt — small icy bodies beyond Neptune — making it "the king of the comets. I think it's happier there than being the puniest planet," he said.

The planetarium abandoned the "planet" label for Pluto because recent research suggests it may actually be part of an entirely new group of space objects.

Until the early 1990s, astronomers had only seen Pluto and its moon, Charon.

While it had been hypothesized that other objects were out there, the first views of Kuiper Belt objects weren't captured until 1992.

Since then, about 1,000 have been sighted, and

Pluto is also very small; its diameter is only about one-fifth of Earth's. And it has a much more elliptical and tilted orbit than the other eight planets,

100,000 might be out there, Millis said. Pluto seems to behave like these objects.

Pluto is also very small; its diameter is only about one-fifth of Earth's. And it has a much more elliptical and tilted orbit than the other eight planets, said Hal Weaver, project scientist on the New Horizons mission, which hopes to launch a probe to Pluto next year.

"You start to see where Pluto fits in better with Kuiper objects," he said.

Some astronomers have suggested that the International Astronomical Union, a professional astronomers' group, should demote Pluto. So far, it hasn't.

Part of the problem is the lack of an official definition for a planet. Setting standards like size limits or orbital patterns potentially invites other objects to take the "planet" label, while throwing Pluto out.

Pluto "is just not like anything else we know about," said Schindler. "If you don't call it (a planet), what else do you call it?"

Like other planets, Pluto is very spherical. Asteroids and comets tend to be misshapen, more football- or cigar-shaped, said Weaver, a senior scientist at Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory.

Pluto also has an atmosphere and seasons.

Astronomers hope to learn more about Pluto with the probe, but it will take nearly a decade to reach the icy dwarf, Weaver said.

Astronomers have said that regardless of what Pluto is called, it was a significant find because Pluto is the first of a new class of objects beyond Neptune.

Weaver said Pluto could be important for what it tells us about the origin of the solar system. Its unexplored ice deposits may help explain what the solar system was like when the sun formed.

But the debate over Pluto's status won't likely be resolved without a better definition of planets or better understanding of the Kuiper Belt, he said.

"Some people thought (the debate) was a slight of Clyde Tombaugh. You were trying to take away his planet," Weaver said. "I'm sure that it was nothing personal."

Facts about Pluto and its discovery

By The Associated Press

Some facts about Pluto and its discovery:

WHAT'S IN A NAME? Pluto is also the name of the Greek god of the underworld. It was suggested by many people as a name for Planet X, but the credit was given to an 11-year-old girl from England. Rejected names included: Minerva, the goddess of knowledge, because it was already in use, and Constance, proposed by Percival Lowell's widow, Constance. "That suggestion was quietly ignored," says Kevin Schindler of Lowell Observatory.

MICKEY MOUSE'S DOG? Mickey's dog, though yet unnamed, made his debut in "The Chain Gang" in 1930 — the same year the planet made its debut to earthlings. Pluto, the Disney character, was named the following year, which leads Disney archivists to assume the dog took the name of the planet dominating the news at the time, said Disney archives director Dave Smith.

QUALIFIED JOB CANDIDATE: Lowell Observatory first contacted Clyde Tombaugh, the discoverer of Pluto, when the farmer and amateur astronomer sent drawings, seeking the observatory's opinion. The observatory corresponded with him, looking to see if he was a good candidate to head the search for Planet X. Among the interview questions: Are you in good health? Do you like to work hard?

A BIG SECRET: Clyde Tombaugh said he knew right away the specks he was looking at were evidence of Planet X, but the observatory director thought they should be cautious. More photos would be needed before announcing it to the world. So, Tombaugh went to dinner and waited for nightfall on Feb. 18, 1930. But it was cloudy, so even though he killed another couple of hours at the local theater watching "The Virginian," he was not be able to get more proof of Pluto that night.

OH, BY THE WAY: Several months after Clyde Tombaugh discovered Pluto, he wrote an account of the discovery on the glass plate's sleeve. The objects on the plate, as he listed them:

1. 8 asteroids
2. 7 variable stars
3. 12 temporary objects
4. No comets
5. Planet "X" (Pluto)

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INTERNATIONAL



North Korea announces it has nuclear weapons

BY SANG-HUN CHOE

Associated Press Writer

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea announced for the first time Thursday it has nuclear weapons, and it rejected moves to restart disarmament talks anytime soon, saying the bombs are protection against an increasingly hostile United States.

The communist state's statement dramatically raised the stakes in the 2-year-old nuclear confrontation and posed a grave challenge to President Bush, who started his second term with a vow to end North Korea's nuclear program through six-nation talks.

"We ... have manufactured nukes for self-defense to cope with the Bush administration's evermore undisguised policy to isolate and stifle the (North)," the North Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by the state-run Korean Central News Agency. The news agency used the colloquial term "nukes" in its English-language account.

The claim could not be independently verified. North Korea expelled the last U.N. nuclear monitors in late 2002. It is not known to have tested an atomic bomb, although international officials have long suspected it has one or two nuclear weapons.

The CIA has estimated that with a highly enriched uranium weapons program and the use of sophisticated high-speed centrifuges, North Korea could be making more. Some analysts and observers have put the estimate at six to eight.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the North had no reason to believe the United States would attack.

"The North Koreans have been told by the president of the United States that the United States has no intention of attacking or invading North Korea," Rice said in Luxembourg. "There is a path for the North Koreans that would put them in a more reasonable relationship with the rest of the world."

"Let's see what the North Koreans do down the road," Rice told reporters on the flight home. "Everybody is urging them to get back to the talks."

Traveling with Bush to North Carolina, White House press secretary Scott McClellan said the statement from North Korea was "rhetoric we've heard before."

"We remain committed to the six-party talks. We remain committed to a peaceful diplomatic resolution to the nuclear issue with regards to North Korea," he said.

Previously, North Korea told international negotiators in closed-door talks that it had nuclear weapons and might test one of them, South Korean officials say. The North's U.N. envoy said last year the country had "weaponized" plutonium from its pool of 8,000 nuclear spent fuel rods. Those rods contained enough plutonium for several bombs.

Thursday's statement was North Korea's first public announcement that it has nuclear weapons.

North Korea said Thursday its "nuclear weapons will remain (a) nuclear deterrent for self-defense under any circumstances."

It said Washington's alleged attempt to topple the North's regime "compels us to take a measure to bolster its nuclear weapons arsenal in order to protect the ideology, system, freedom and democracy chosen by its people."

Since 2003, the United States, the two Koreas, China, Japan and Russia have held three rounds of talks in Beijing aimed at persuading the North to abandon nuclear weapons development in return for economic and diplomatic rewards. No significant progress has been made.

A fourth round scheduled for September 2004 was canceled when North Korea refused to attend, citing what it called a "hostile" U.S. policy.

"After its previous claims had failed to draw enough attention, North Korea now seeks to make people take it more seriously, create an atmosphere of crisis and make its negotiating partners pay more in order to persuade it to give up its nuclear capabilities," a senior South Korean official said on condition of anonymity.

South Korea said Thursday the North's decision to stay away from talks was "seriously regrettable," and it repeated its previous estimate that Pyongyang has enough plutonium to build one or two nuclear bombs.

"We once again urge North Korea to rejoin the six-party talks without conditions so that it can discuss whatever differences it has with the United States and other participants," South Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman Lee Kyu-hyung said. "We express our strong concern

with the North Korean statement that it has nuclear weapons and we again declare our stance that we will never tolerate North Korea possessing nuclear weapons."

In London, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan also urged North Korea to rejoin the talks, and he asked the other five nations to help.

"I expect that with efforts by the other countries involved, North Korea could be brought back to the table," Annan said.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said that while it respects North Korea's concerns about its safety, it criticized Pyongyang's statement and strongly urged a return to the talks. North Korea's move "can only cause regret," the ministry said, adding that Moscow believes "that the problem should be resolved through negotiations rather than arms race, especially nuclear arms race."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry's chief spokesman, Kong Quan, said in a statement on the ministry's Web site that Beijing hopes the six-nation talks will continue.

"We consistently advocate the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the preservation of the peninsula's peace and stability," the statement said.

In recent weeks, hopes had risen that North Korea might return to the six-nation talks, especially after Bush refrained from any direct criticism of North Korea when he started his second term last month. During his first term, Bush said North Korea was part of an "axis of evil" with Iran and prewar Iraq.

On Thursday, North Korea said it decided not to rejoin such talks anytime soon after studying Bush's inaugural and State of the Union speeches and after Rice labeled North Korea one of the "outposts of tyranny."

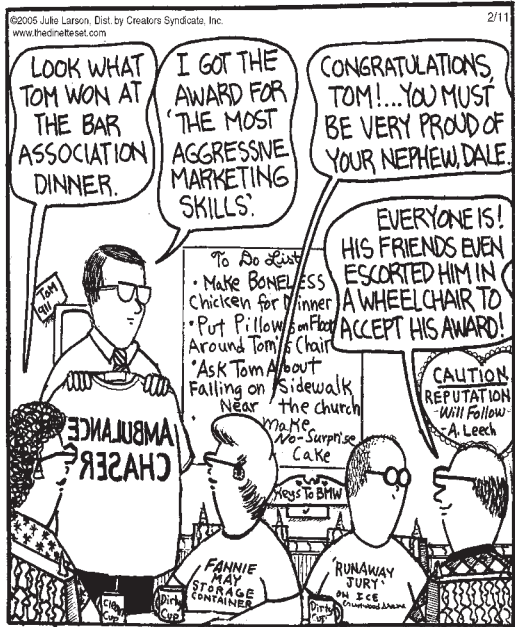
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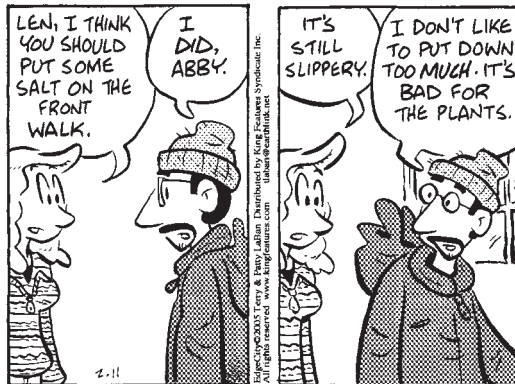


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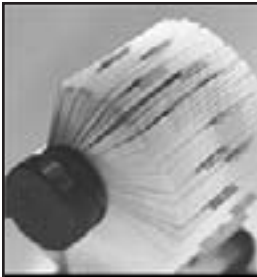
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Oscars only game in town for Vegas casino mogul

By The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Casino impresario Steve Wynn doesn't need the Super Bowl. He's got the Oscars.

The billionaire will use Hollywood's biggest stage to air a commercial about his \$2.7 billion Wynn Las Vegas megaresort that's slated to open April 28.

Wynn decided to book time on the Academy Awards, which will air Feb. 27 on ABC, after the NFL shot down a national Super Bowl spot on Fox because his commercial was associated with gambling, a long-standing league taboo.

Wynn knew the National Football League would probably reject his ad but he was surprised to learn he also had been censored in the gambling capital of the world.

At some of its Las Vegas Strip hotel-casinos, rival MGM Mirage has been accused of using its logo to cover up the Wynn advertisement that ran on local affiliates in the state during the big game.

MGM Mirage might be able to stymie his ads, Wynn said, but the company can't block out his towering 2,700-room hotel-casino that dominates the north end of the Las Vegas Strip.

"What are they going to do when the hotel opens?" Wynn asked. "Cover up the building?"

One MGM Mirage official says Wynn shouldn't get too upset: The move was right out of his playbook. When Wynn ran Mirage Resorts, his hotels blocked out competitors' commercials.

PHILADELPHIA — Singer Elton John will entertain at Fourth of July events in Philadelphia to promote awareness and raise money for the fight against HIV/AIDS.

John will perform with Peter Nero and the Philly Pops

orchestra at the Philadelphia Freedom Concert and Ball.

Organizers said they hope to draw 1.5 million people and raise \$2 million for the Elton John Aids Foundation and Philadelphia's Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld Fund.

John said he recently spent time in South Africa and saw his foundation's work in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

"It will be a long fight, and one that must be met with strength and compassion, but we can all make a difference. I met with vulnerable and orphaned children who have been left destitute," the 57-year-old rocker said in a one-minute appearance by satellite from Las Vegas, where he is performing at Caesars Palace.

The Fourth of July events will include a free concert and fireworks display in front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and a fund-raising ball, with ticket prices from \$500 to \$2,500. Funds also will come from corporate sponsors, concert concessions and donations, organizers said.

Mark Segal, president of the Hirschfeld Fund, said he hoped the events would emulate the success of the 1985 Live Aid concerts held in Philadelphia, London and other cities to raise money for famine relief in Africa.

Segal said the Hirschfeld Fund was created to raise money for research and prevention as well as education about HIV and AIDS. "People think it's gone. It is not," he said.

LONDON — Singer Roger Daltrey of The Who, who received a royal honor from Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace, says he didn't think she was a fan of rock 'n' roll.

"She'd probably fall off her podium if she heard The Who's songs," the 60-year-old rocker said Wednesday after being named a Commander of the Order of the

British Empire. "A good blast of 'My Generation' would go down quite well now."

Daltrey, whose band rose to global fame in the 1960s with songs expressing teenage working-class rage, received the CBE medal for his services to music, the entertainment industry and charity.

He said the award was "something to remember," adding: "I still have criticisms of the establishment, but the queen is an exceptional woman. I think she's amazing."

Daltrey also is a patron of the Teenage Cancer Trust and has raised more than \$3.7 million for the charity by organizing concerts at Royal Albert Hall in central London.

"I didn't expect to get this. None of us work alone so I accept this for those that don't get anything," he said.

NEW YORK — Ashlee Simpson and Teen People magazine have put together an auction to benefit UNICEF's relief and recovery efforts for the young victims of the Dec. 26 Asian earthquake and tsunami disaster.

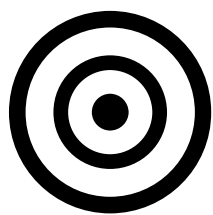
Simpson asked her friends to collect unique items that are being auctioned on eBay until Monday afternoon (5 p.m. EST). Proceeds will benefit the U.S. Fund for UNICEF.

"The tsunami and its aftermath have affected everyone, and I couldn't imagine sitting silent and not doing anything to help. I approached Teen People to partner with me to raise money to help everyone affected by this disaster," the 20-year-old singer said in a statement Wednesday.

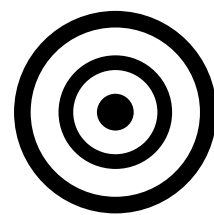
The auction includes phone calls from stars such as Chad Michael Murray and Shane West; concert experiences with Simpson and New Found Glory; autographed merchandise from Jessica Simpson, Good Charlotte and Nicky Hilton; and sports memorabilia.



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