

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTO

FANTASY 5

8, 32, 19, 37, 11

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 9, 8, 5

Evening picks: 8, 4, 4

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 8, Gorgeous George

2nd Place: 3, Hot Shot

3rd Place: 10, Solid Gold

Race Time: 1:43.56



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Practitioners of the Santeria religion are such a presence in Miami area courthouses, where they spread white dust on the furnishings to bring good luck to their friends and relatives, that attorneys have begun to complain about their higher dry-cleaning bills. Also found from time to time in those courthouses: remnants of Santeria-sacrificed chickens and goats, and mysterious candle formations. In a recent case, Haitian defendant Emmanuel Etienne claimed that his deceased victim had the power to turn himself into a headless donkey by "expelling three flatulents."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Whether they be Christian, Jew, or Muslim, or Hindu, people have heard the universal call to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be called themselves."

— George W. Bush

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Educators tout Schwarzenegger propositions

Millions of dollars at stake for local schools

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

If Propositions 57 and 58 fail at the polls March 2, every school in Santa Monica will feel the effects of a paralyzing budget crush, educators said Wednesday.

For local K-12 schools, there will be a \$14 million overnight reduction in funding — meaning more than 100 teachers and 75 classified workers will lose their jobs, while programs and classes will be under siege, schools superintendent John Deasy said.

A similar situation is true at Santa Monica College, where millions of dollars in cost-of-living increases, growth money and other state funds are at stake. Those benefits are part of the pro-

posed state budget, which will be redrafted if the propositions fail.

The two propositions are designed to help lift California out of its budget deficit and will allow it to more adequately fund education throughout the state.

Prop. 57 calls for a \$15.2 billion bond, to be paid back between nine and 14 years. That bond would replace a \$10.7 billion bond enacted by the legislature that is under attack in court because it wasn't approved by voters. Prop. 58 demands politicians enact a balanced state budget, sets up an \$8 billion reserve and prohibits future deficit bonds, like Prop. 57. The two are tied together, meaning both need to pass on March 2 in order to take effect.

Deasy said local schools can expect a 15 percent reduction across the board if the propositions

See PROPOSITION, page 7

Bush backs away from ban on MTBE

Gasoline additive cost SM safe drinking water and millions of dollars

By staff and wire reports

The gasoline additive that contaminated Santa Monica's drinking water and resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in cleanup costs for City Hall apparently will continue to have the potential to seep in the ground water elsewhere.

The Bush administration last week quietly shelved a proposal to ban MTBE contaminates drinking water in many communities, helping an industry that has donated more than \$1 million to Republicans.

The move is criticized by local politicians, who have been fighting to keep MTBE out of Santa

Monica and have supported California's ban on the additive, which began this year.

"Bush's disregard for the environment is legendary and this is hardly surprising," said City Councilman Kevin McKeown.

The Environmental Protection Agency's decision had its origin in the early days of President Bush's tenure when his administration decided not to move ahead with a Clinton-era regulatory effort to ban the clean-air additive MBTE.

It said the environmental harm of the additive leaching into ground water overshadowed its beneficial effects to the air.

The Bush administration decided to leave the issue to Congress, where it has bogged down over a proposal to shield the industry from

See BAN, page 6

Coffee wars



Del Pastrana/Daily Press

Laborers work on Hear Music on the Third Street Promenade. The newly remodeled store will feature a Starbucks coffee shop — the fifth corporate coffee outlet on the Promenade. Three are Starbucks.

New study fuels the debate over elderly drivers

By staff and wire reports

The elderly driver who killed 10 people and injured dozens more last year in the Farmers' Market tragedy falls into an age group that traffic safety experts say are more of a danger to themselves on the road than anyone else.

Drivers over 65 are more likely to get into crashes because of declining perception and motor skills, but the biggest risk is to themselves, not others on the highway, says a study based on nearly 4 million traffic accidents.

The study, released Wednesday by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, also found that drivers 65 or older are nearly twice as likely

to die in a crash as drivers between 55 and 64. Drivers over 85 were nearly four times as likely to die.

Often, older drivers are frail and can die from injuries that wouldn't be fatal to younger drivers, the report said.

Santa Monica resident Russell Weller, 87, walked away from a horrific accident in downtown Santa Monica last July after he plowed through the Farmers' Market, killing 10 and injuring 63 people. He currently faces 10 counts of felony manslaughter.

As they grow older, some drivers are more likely to cause a crash because of a lapse in perception,

See ELDERLY, page 7

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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

The stars show the kind of day you'll have:

★★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average
★★-So-so ★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Express your strong sense of direction, especially among groups and in meetings. You will find that others are full of ideas. Listen to news from a distance or make a call. Read between the lines or listen to what is not said. Tonight: Enjoy your pals.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Stay on top of your work. You might not be as direct as you can be with a boss. A partner twists and turns to avoid a clear statement. Stay focused on your work. You might want to refocus on your goals. Tonight: You're in charge. Don't forget that fact.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Reach out for others. Spread your news. Read between the lines. Stay in tune with your work and adjust to someone's changing point of view. Hop on the computer or do some research. Keep your thoughts to yourself right now. Tonight: Rent a movie.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Deal with a partner head-on rather than let him or her interfere with your work and long-term plans. You might have a major disagreement, but you can deal with it. Detach and refuse to be triggered. Boundaries remain important. Tonight: Have that talk.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Allow others more self-expression. You don't always have to be king or queen of every situation. As a result, many others will reveal much more of themselves. Allow those doors to open. Your creativity and happy ways make a difference. Tonight: Say "yes" to another's request.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Work seems to flow, especially when you deal with others. You might be surprised by how much you are appreciated in the present circumstances. You are coming from a more solid point of view, unlike the majority right now. Tonight: Work late if necessary.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Your lightness and flirty ways make a difference in what is happening in a relationship. Perhaps you might opt to be more nurturing and caring. Adapt your approach and words to each situation. Tonight: Play away.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Stay intact and talk about what you want. Listen to a family member who presents a different view. Consider what might be happening with a child. Use your charm and creativity to get more of what you want. Tonight: Happy at home.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ You reverse gears, and others handle it well. Right now you are on cruise control, able to get through a lot of muck. Others delight in your efficiency and ability to get through what seems like a maze. Tonight: At your favorite hangout.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★ Listen to a loved one. Speak your mind and express yourself in a new way — through manifesting your caring in your actions. You'll want to listen to your inner voice; still, carefully examine what you are hearing. Tonight: Treat yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ You express your joy and happiness, and others respond. Look toward a major indulgence or purchase in the next few weeks. Think carefully about what you want, and be sure this is the right way to go about it. Tonight: Just ask, and it could be yours!

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ The Sun moves into your sign, energizing you. Take charge and handle a superior in such a way that you can communicate and work together. Remember this person's ego. Play it low-key for now. Tonight: Get some extra zzz's.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Webcam shows library construction

BY SARA VAN DYCK

Special to the Daily Press

If you're wondering what is going on behind the fencing at Sixth Street and Santa Monica Boulevard, site of the new Main Library, you can now watch the construction from your home computer.

"It's starting to look like a building," assistant city librarian Greg Mullen said. A web camera on the roof of a building at Seventh Street and Santa Monica Boulevard feeds images of the project to the library's Web site, www.smpl.org. Click on "Construction Update."

Site excavation has been completed and construction is beginning, said Assistant City Manager Gordon Anderson. Already in place below the parking structure is a cistern to capture water runoff, to be used for irrigation. This is the first element in what architects plan to be a "green building."

Anderson said City Hall has what is called a "guaranteed maximum price" contract with Morley Construction for \$57.7 million for the library. Three hundred additional parking spaces will be funded by the Redevelopment Agency for \$12.9 million. Since the costs are funded by a bond issue and one-time monies, none of this affects the current city budget deficit, Anderson said.

The project has been developing for the last 20 years, Mullen added.

"The city has made a commitment on this building," he said. "The community really wanted it, and the city responded."

Santa Monican goes 'Hollywood square'

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica resident Robert Wu's proficiency for trivia, strategy and current events will be tested against America's favorite TV crime fighters when he steps in as a contestant on Hollywood Squares, beginning on Feb. 24. Wu will interact with Brad Garrett (Officer Robert Barone), one of the many stars who are occupying the Center Square during the current season. The Santa Monica resident will have to jump through intellectual hoops while facing the age-old "agree or disagree" quandary, in order to win prizes, including cars, trips and cash giveaways. The nationally syndicated Hollywood Squares can be seen locally each Monday through Friday at 7:30 p.m. on Los Angeles' KCAL-TV (Channel 9).

Wu, a police officer for the Los Angeles Police Department, keeps himself busy by practicing Jiu-Jitsu and collecting comic books. To secure his spot on the popular show, he did what hundreds of others have done to get their big "TV break" — he called the Hollywood Squares hotline and auditioned. Other Santa Monica-area contestant hopefuls also can call the show's hotline in Los Angeles at (323) 850-0707 for an interview.

When contestants come to Hollywood's CBS Television City to play, they can expect to tape up to five episodes each production day before the show's live studio audience.

"I had such a great time," said Wu.

In addition to Center Square Brad Garrett, Wu shared the stage with a wide range of television crime fighters, including Chips' Erik Estrada, Kate Jackson (Charlie's Angels), Mike Connors (Mannix), Barney Miller's Hal Linden, Sherri Shepherd (Everybody Loves Raymond), McCloud's Dennis Weaver, Robert Culp (I Spy) and Adam 12's Martin Milner and Kent McCord. Emmy Award-winning Tom Bergeron is host of the most engaging game show on television.



Photo courtesy
Officer Robert Wu with host
Tom Bergeron.

surf report

Murkmaster conditions keep it chock-a-block in the bay. So stay away — for your health.

Another W-WNW swell fills in this morning. This has some better exposure, but slightly shorter periods than Tuesday's swell. Wave heights will be mainly the same. Most spots will have waist-to shoulder-high surf, with bigger sets.

OUTLOOK: Slow fade in the surf on Friday and Saturday.

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

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MONDAY	4:30 AM	5:08 PM	10:28 AM	11:37 PM
TUESDAY	5:23 AM	5:38 PM	11:14 AM	N/A
WEDNESDAY	6:30 AM	6:06 PM	12:15 AM	12:15 PM
THURSDAY	8:03 AM	6:48 PM	12:59 AM	1:47 PM
FRIDAY	9:43 AM	7:45 PM	1:54 AM	4:15 PM

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The Q-Line

Cell phone companies are pressuring City Hall into allowing them the right to install antennas and other infrastructure throughout Santa Monica to improve reception. Two of them — AT & T and Verizon — have sued City Hall because it doesn't have an ordinance in place to regulate them and therefore can't grant them permission.

In response, City Hall has created a draft law that aims to regulate where, when and how the industry will install

equipment here. The proposed law will be discussed by the City Council on Feb. 24.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Would you mind visible cell phone equipment in your neighborhood if it meant better reception?"

Call (310) 285-8106 with your response before Thursday at 5 p.m. We'll print them in Friday's paper. Please limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.

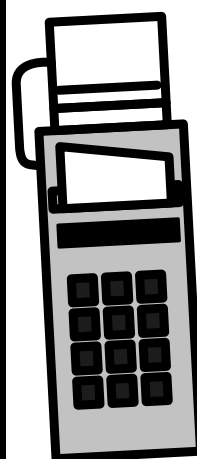
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LETTERS

A three-day work week?

Editor:

What a load of nonsense and doublespeak we have to wade through reading the letters from the two city employees complaining about your report of the paid holidays and every other Friday they have off (SMDP, Feb. 18, pages 6-7).

The city employees' union leader who whines that city employees didn't really get a holiday for Lincoln's birthday last Thursday, Feb. 12, and were paid to work that day goes on to admit that, yes, because of Lincoln's birthday we actually get another day off with pay when we want it — a floating holiday.

Who is this woman trying to kid? We get a paid holiday whenever we want it but let's call it something else?

And please stop whining about having every other Friday off, days when the city is closed and those who need something from City Hall have to wait until the next business day. No wonder there is universal criticism about the lack of service to the public from City Hall.

Oh, and by the way, with this past Monday's President's Day holiday and the city being closed this Friday city employees have another three-day work week.

Enough said.

Saul Cohen
Santa Monica

Listen up, school board

Editor:

Can you hear me now? Can you hear me now? Now? Now?

In reading Superintendent Deasy's first revision of the equity fund policy, I am reminded of the cellular ad on T.V. The distinct difference is that out there in the wilderness, someone actually does hear. It has been well established that one of the biggest problems with Mr. Deasy's original policy was that it was arbitrarily created without consulting the community, or as one person recently articulated, his customers. How many thousands of hours are going to be spent going 'round and 'round on this issue according to Mr. Deasy's agenda? I know my time could be spent more productively ... wouldn't Mr. Deasy's and the School Board's as well?

Mr. Deasy's revised policy is now a three-tiered effort. First, the mandatory 15 percent tax on all donations. (No revision there ... can you hear me now?) Second, there will be a committee of parent volunteers to raise money for the same fund. This committee would be modeled after Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation's "For the Arts" committee. Third, a "sister school" program would be established to share

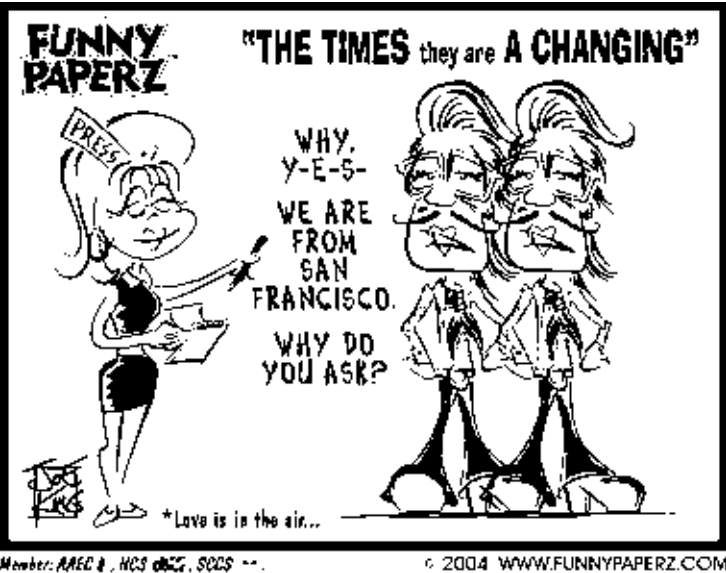
fundraising successes. The revision also exempts non-monetary gifts from the fund and offers a paltry incentive (2 percent per \$100,000 raised) in the form of a sliding scale.

Does Mr. Deasy actually believe that after imposing the demotivating, demoralizing first stage of the plan (15 percent tax), that "his customers" will even be around for the voluntary second and third stages? It seems to me that real results are not the main objective here, that the primary goal is to control the money.

Several school board members, after hearing public comment at their most recent meeting, expressed interest in trying a voluntary approach first. In addition, documentation of specific needs at each site was requested. Mr. Deasy's revision disregards the comments of his customers and his superiors, and should not be introduced as another three-month exercise in futility and animosity.

Sandy Thacker

Webster Elementary parent



Lines are being drawn — without a ruler — for election

NEWS
on the
EDGE

By Ron Scott Smith



■ As if Janet Jackson wasn't enough — this just in: Gays are getting married, and Katy — whoever and wherever you are — bar the door. They're lined up around the block at City Hall in San Francisco and they're tying some strange-looking new knots in that line. Is it mere coincidence that America's terror alert color-code thing has just been re-elevated to the grimmer level orange? The conservative crowd, already scared to death and up to its ass in alligators in the ongoing mission to save civilization from itself, now has this thing added onto its overflowing plate. Of course, by definition, fearing is what they do best, and for starters, they're calling for swift punishment of S.F. Mayor Gavin Newsom, the one who's apparently opened the floodgates from hell. Some have proposed sending him down to the cages in Guantanamo Bay to join the others who have committed crimes against America. Actually, the saner response to the whole issue would be to say to the ones who wish to take the vows, "Come on in, the water's fine. We dare you." With more than half of all righteous marriages between a man and woman ending in divorce, bitter litigation, messy child custody, and broken heart, the

question to the ones lining up in San Francisco would appear to be, "Why?" But if you must, then by all means, have at it. Civilization will survive, but as for you newlyweds, we're not so sure.

■ These self-appointed guardians of all that's right might make better use of their time and anger by taking a long look at one of their true guiding lights — the church. I don't think Mel Gibson was pleased with the timing of this one, but on Tuesday, LA's Cardinal Roger Mahony confessed that at least 244 priests have been accused of molesting at least 656 minors in the LA archdiocese since 1931, staggering numbers of staggering crimes. And they're obsessing over a couple of girls getting married?

■ We all knew this race for the presidency in November was going to turn on the war. But we sure as hell didn't think it would be that war, did we? Welcome home, Vietnam. A nation turns its lonely eyes on you, once again. As if there's not enough divisiveness right here, right now in 2004 Bushamerica, that old ghost is back in the room, and if this contest is going to be a duel of 30-year-old war stories, it would appear to be one-sided. A decorated Vietnam War hero vs. a guy who dodged the thing by having Dad get him into the National Guard — not that there's anything wrong with wanting to have dodged that thing. It's the man who came home from that war, three times wounded, and threw his medals back into the water in protest of its madness vs. the man whose presidency is best summed up in his own tough-guy words. "I'm a war

president," George W. Bush proudly declared to Tim Russert last week on Meet the Press, and nobody can argue with that one. But with all the attention being paid to Bush's spotty attendance records and early discharge from the Guard — here comes the Karl Rove gang with a vengeance, firing off their own retort. Now sit down — they actually found a photo of Senator John Kerry, seated at an anti-war rally in 1970, a few rows behind Jane ... Hanoi Jane if you will ... Fonda. And that battle line is redrawn, ancient and tired as it may be.

■ Seeing as how America has fought with itself about as much as it can stand to over that sordid piece of history, the election will much more likely be determined by a simpler thing — the old quadrennial question — "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" I know you've got eight more months to consider it, but if you started now you'd have to think about this, wouldn't you? Money. A guy who's making 50 grand a year sees a net increase of 16 dollars every two-week paycheck thanks to the Bush tax cut. The guys who sat with Dick Cheney behind closed doors in 2001 to set the course for America's aggressively backward energy policy, along with all the other super-rich, can tack an extra three zeroes onto that 16 for every two-week paycheck increase they see. Now that sixteen bucks is still sixteen bucks, I know, but with the resulting services cut, and state and local taxes up to compensate for the lack of help from a federal government 600 billion dollars in debt, tell me again, who are the ones better

off now than they were four years ago? Back then, at the end of the Bill Clinton reign, I got a gallon of regular unleaded for about a buck-twenty. Just today, I forked over six dollars for three gallons, and you do the math. I'd have to say, regardless of political preference, that the cash in my pocket was better off when I pulled into that same Arco four years ago.

■ Fear and loathing on our planet seem to have reached delirious new highs. What many have been living through these past few years must seem like a bad, hallucinogenic dream, full of explosion and bloodshed. Where's Hunter S. Thompson when we need him? The "war president" has given us war on and occupation of Afghanistan, war on and occupation of Iraq, war on and preoccupation with terror in all its possible gruesome manifestations, and whatever's next is anybody's guess. There's more money piled up in less bank accounts in direct proportion to more bodies sleeping on more city streets than we've ever seen. There are more people screaming at more people for more hateful reasons than we ever knew existed. We used to say to those guys running the show in Washington, even if we knew it was far-fetched, "Watch yourself, you work for us." Those words never rang so hollow as they do right now. I don't recognize my own country. Somebody tell me if you spot it. There are 257 days left before that first Tuesday in November. Leave no chad hanging.

(You can E-mail Ron Smith @ EdgeoftheWest@aol.com.)

OPINION



Viva Las Vegas! A look at sin city through virgin eyes

Visit Las Vegas — it's a must.

From here, one just has to get on the I-15 north to arrive in Las Vegas in about four hours. It will be bumper to bumper at times, but it's worth it. Every dollar saved by not buying a plane ticket is another chip for the slot machines.

Of course, the choice to fly is always there. Nowadays, a round trip fare to Las Vegas can be as low as \$100 and arrival time is within the same hour as departure.

In the '70s, flight attendants (stewardesses back then) would ask everyone to place a dollar in a bag and their boarding pass in another. The person whose pass was drawn collected the money.

Thirty years later the big-money excitement is equally as sophisticated. Upon walking off the plane at McCarran International Airport during my first visit to Vegas, I was met by a receiving line of slot machines. Their bright lights and polished chrome smiled welcome. Such warm hospitality!

While waiting for my suitcase, I was able to bet the \$20 my friend gave me to gamble for her. Imagine. I could've been "up" before ever leaving the airport.

And that's just the beginning.

Another feature that makes Las Vegas a fierce competitor amongst other tourist destinations is the short 10-minute taxi ride between the airport and the strip. Before you know it, the cab driver will have delivered you to your hotel. You'll be equipped with the latest Celine Dion saga and Siegfried and Roy joke; you'll have made it through the hotel check-in line; and, you'll find yourself forever lost in the casino searching for your hotel room.

You'd think the Vegas hoteliers would have spent more time and consid-

eration mapping the flow within their hotels before painting their ceilings sky blue with white fluffy clouds. What sort of first impression is it for jet-legged, small-town tourists lugging their suitcases through rows of slot machines, clusters of black jack tables and unconcerned gamblers drinking "free" booze?

Isn't Las Vegas lucky to have such customer-oriented cab drivers who keep bags in their cars for clients who need to throw up? That's value-added service — service was when my cab driver spent several hours one morning calling around to hotels on behalf of a customer who couldn't remember where he was staying.

"It happens," the cab driver explained. "You're gambling and drinking all night and then you step outside and the sunshine and fresh air just hit you." Huh?

Anyway, I bet you Vegas cabbies don't accelerate their meter speed.

Kudos to the female waitresses in all of the hotels. Rarely seen in most cities today, these ambassadors abide by what appears to be a dress code — high heels, short skirts, tight tops and breasts with deep cleavage squeezing out of them. Amongst the smoke-filled casinos decorated with brown carpeting and orange curtains, men hoot and holler from craps tables raising their fists in the air. Always on their feet, you wonder how these women keep from spilling their trays, heavy laden with beer bottles, all over them.

There is the magnificent Hoover Dam in Black Canyon just a short 25-minute

drive from the center of Vegas. In the early '30s, men died building the monolithic structure that provides electricity to Southern California. Tourists can also drive four or so more hours to view Arizona's Grand Canyon. The chasm leaves one speechless.

But who needs a natural wonder of the world when you've got Paris' Eiffel Tower, New York's Statue of Liberty and a wax museum full of stars including two versions of Elvis Presley — fat and not-so-fat? These landmarks are an easy walk from your hotel, nestled between casinos in all shapes and sizes for your gambling pleasure.

For the active tourist, there are full-service fitness centers in the hotels — \$30 for an all-day pass — if you could find them. But who can afford to spend the table price of two rounds of blackjack to run on a treadmill when you're down and you owe your friend \$20?

Still today, more than 50 years after The Flamingo opened its doors, anything goes in Vegas. I just wonder what message we're sending the children walking around the casino at one o'clock in the morning with their parents?

Visit Las Vegas ... at least once and for 48 hours max, 72 if you're down.

(You can reach Amy at aperritt@hotmail.com.)

Guest Commentary

By Amy Perritt



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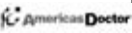
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Christina S. Porter
Senior Associate

LOCAL

MTBE additive continues to pose a health threat

BAN, from page 1

some lawsuits, like the ones levied by Santa Monica City Hall. That initiative is being led by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Texas.

The Associated Press obtained a draft of the proposed regulation that former President Clinton's EPA sent to the White House on its last full day in office in January 2001.

It said: "The use of MTBE as an additive in gasoline presents an unreasonable risk to the environment."

The EPA document went on to say that "low levels of MTBE can render drinking water supplies unpotable due to its offensive taste and odor," and the additive should be phased out over four years.

"Unlike other components of gasoline, MTBE dissolves and spreads readily in the ground water ... resists biodegradation and is more difficult and costly to remove."

People say MTBE-contaminated water tastes like turpentine.

The Santa Monica City Council in December approved the settlement with Shell, ChevronTexaco and ExxonMobil, who have acknowledged their responsibility in contaminating half of the city's drinking water in 1996 by allowing the chemical to seep into the ground water. The contamination forced the closure of five of Santa Monica's 11 drinking water wells.

City Hall's lawsuit was levied against 18 oil companies and manufacturers in 2000. City Hall has reached separate settlement agreements with other companies and hundreds of millions of dollars they agreed to pay will be used to cover out-of-pocket costs, and other city needs — like continued water quality improvements and water security.

Litigation is still ongoing with Texas-based Lyondell Chemical, which has refused to settle.

MTBE producers are Lyondell Chemical and Valero Energy and the Huntsman companies of Salt Lake City.

"This is a classic case of the Bush administration helping its campaign contributor friends at the expense of public health," said Frank O'Donnell, executive director of the Clean Air Trust, a Washington-based environmental group.

Huntsman spokesman Don Olsen, echoing comments by other MTBE producers, said, "We were not a huge campaign contributor and this has absolutely nothing to do with campaign donations. It has to do with good public policy."

There are dozens of cities throughout the country that are battling with oil companies because of MTBE contamination. Before Santa Monica's settlement, the largest pay-out by oil companies relating to MTBE was in Lake Tahoe for \$69 million, said Joe Lawrence, City Hall's assistant city attorney who led the lawsuit against the companies.

"We're the poster child for MTBE, and it could take decades to clean this up," Deputy City Attorney Joe Lawrence said when the settlement was announced.

In 2000, the MTBE industry's lobbying group told the Clinton administration that limiting MTBE's use by regulation "would inflict grave economic harm on member companies."

Three MTBE producers account for half the additive's daily output.

The three contributed \$338,000 to

George W. Bush's presidential campaign, the Republican Party and Republican congressional candidates in 1999 and 2000, twice what they gave Democrats, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. Since then, the three producers have given just over \$1 million to Republicans.

The industry says it has become a victim in a Washington power struggle.

"Because of MTBE there has been a marked improvement in air quality and reduction in toxics in the air," Huntsman's spokesman, Olsen said. "Because of leaking underground storage tanks in some relatively few instances, MTBE found its way into places it shouldn't be. But that has nothing to do with the product, which has done exactly what it was designed to do."

Said Valero Energy spokeswoman Mary Rose Brown: "It would have been impossible to fulfill the requirements of the Clean Air Act without MTBE."

A daily Washington newsletter disclosed the existence of the draft rule shortly after Bush's inauguration; outside the industry, few people noticed.

At the direction of White House chief of staff Andrew Card and Mitch Daniels, then the White House's budget director, all government agencies withdrew their pre-Inauguration Day draft regulations.

The EPA withdrew agency rules, including the MTBE one, in mid-February 2001, White House budget office spokesman Chad Kolton said.

In subsequent months, agencies rewrote many Clinton-era regulatory proposals and went public with them. The proposed MTBE regulation, however, never surfaced.

"As legislation looked more promising in 2002 and 2003, we focused our energies on supporting language in the Senate's energy bill," Jeffrey Holmstead, the EPA's assistant administrator for air quality, said in a statement last week.

"We have not ruled out the possibility of seeking a solution" by regulation, Holmstead said.

The EPA favors a phase out of MTBE through legislation. But the legislation has stalled and it no longer calls for a ban in four years.

On their own, 17 states banned the additive and dozens of communities are suing the oil industry.

"Nobody's talking about the trial lawyers campaign contributions to their supporters in Congress and its the trial lawyers who are the force behind these unjustified lawsuits," said Brown of Valero Energy.

To regulate MTBE, the EPA would have to use the Toxic Substances Control Act, which the agency considers cumbersome and unwieldy.

MTBE industry representative Scott Segal said, "It took EPA a decade to develop enough data to justify issuing a regulation for asbestos" under the law. "Even then, the courts still blocked it."

Bob Perciasepe, an EPA official during the Clinton administration, said a regulatory approach would have provided "a pressure point" to pass legislation.

Georgetown University law professor Lisa Heinzerling said regulating MTBE would be difficult, but "if we can't use the Toxic Substances Control Act to regulate MTBE, which has contaminated water supplies all over the country, then what can you use it for?"

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BUSINESS

Giving back: Why now may be an opportune time for charitable planning



IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

By John Kim

Many people assume charitable giving simply involves giving money away, never to be seen again. But implementing a charitable giving program may actually help investors achieve important financial goals while saving substantially on taxes. And current market and interest rate conditions can make certain charitable gifting vehicles even more beneficial.

A properly structured gifting program can create a source of income for you and your beneficiaries, as well as provide potential income, estate and gift tax benefits. You may, for example, receive an immediate charitable income tax deduction on your gift to charity (subject to AGI limits). And placing assets in certain charitable vehicles removes them, and any subsequent appreciation, from your estate. That could lower your future estate tax liability. Finally, today's low interest rates have the effect of reducing the value of certain gifts to family made through charitable gifting vehicles (which means a lower possible gift tax liability).

Most people are accustomed to charitable giving in response to direct requests or specific fundraising campaigns. But there are numerous, potentially more tax-advantaged, ways to give to charity. Investors can contribute cash or securities to donor-advised funds, charitable trusts, private family foundations and other charitable giving vehicles. Two of these vehicles — charitable remainder trusts and charitable gift annuities — have become particularly attractive to some investors seeking income in today's low-yield environment. And for certain individuals, the combination of low-interest rates and depreciated stock values has created an ideal climate for charitable lead trusts, another type of gifting strategy.

CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUSTS

Charitable remainder trusts can help investors create a current payout stream, diversify assets, receive a potential income tax charitable deduction and leave money to charity, without paying immediate capital gains tax. This type of trust provides investors with annual payouts for the length of the trust's term, with the remainder of the assets in the trust going to charity at the end of that term.

There are two types of Charitable Remainder Trusts: The Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust (CRAT) and the Charitable Remainder Unitrust (CRUT). The CRAT can pay out a fixed amount to the investor each year, based on the initial value of the trust. The fixed payout may appeal to investors with shorter time frames who are concerned about market volatility. The CRUT also pays out annual amounts, but payouts vary based on the annual value

of the assets in the trust throughout its term. Because payouts are variable, the CRUT may be more appropriate for investors who have longer time horizons and expect market values to rise over time.

CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITIES

A charitable gift annuity (CGA) is another strategy that can create fixed annual payout streams. Gifting to a CGA requires an investor to enter into a contract with his or her charity of choice. In exchange for a gift usually consisting of cash or securities, the investor receives fixed annuity payments from a charity for life, starting at the time of the gift or at a future date of the investor's choosing.

Typically, the investor receives a potential charitable income tax deduction equal to the value of the transferred asset, minus the present value of the lifetime annuity payouts. Each annuity payment to the investor is partially income tax-free.

CHARITABLE LEAD TRUSTS

The decreased stock values that prevail today have been painful for many investors. But coupled with the current low interest rates, the lower stock values have actually created a unique opportunity for some investors who create Charitable Lead Trusts. The interest rate used to compute the value of the gift for gift tax purposes has been at or near record lows. The lower the interest rate, the lower the value of the gift (which means a lower possible gift tax liability).

Once investors transfer assets to a CLT, the designated charity receives a fixed annual payout from the trust for a specified term. The gift is equal to the value of the transferred asset, minus the present value of the annual payouts to charity. Any assets remaining at the end of the trust's term pass to the beneficiaries designated by the investor in the trust document (often the investor's children) free of estate and gift taxes. (CLTs are not exempt from income or capital gains tax). For this reason, a CLT can be particularly beneficial if its assets substantially appreciate in value during the term of the trust.

We all have personal reasons for giving to charity, but many of us give out of a common desire to share our good fortune with others. And while the current market environment may have impacted that good fortune, it has also created some powerful opportunities for wealth management. Talk to a professional about how implementing a charitable giving program can help you meet your financial, estate planning and philanthropic goals.

(John S. Kim is a financial consultant with Smith Barney, located in Beverly Hills. Call (310) 205-4939 for more information or visit www.fc.smithbarney.com/jkim. This article is based, in whole or in part, on information provided by the planning services department of Smith Barney. Smith Barney does not provide tax or legal advice. Consult your own tax and/or legal advisor for such guidance. Smith Barney is a division and service mark of Citigroup Global Markets Inc., member SIPC.)

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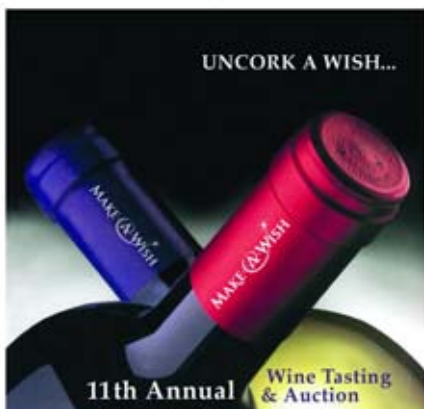
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STATE



Study shows more immigrants settling outside California

BY MICHAEL R. BLOOD
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — For many immigrants, the American dream has a different address.

California's share of the nation's new arrivals dropped sharply between 1990 and 2000, snapping a long-standing trend as immigrants looked elsewhere in the country for jobs and housing, University of Southern California researchers said Tuesday.

California, which attracted 38 percent of new immigrants in the 1990 census, saw that proportion tumble to about 25 percent in the 2000 population index. In that time, 34 states lured a larger share of immigrants, with Texas, Georgia and North Carolina recording the largest gains, researchers said.

"Immigration has crested in California and it's subsiding. It's not going to come back here to the same extent," said USC professor Dowell Myers, the study's lead author.

Newcomers "discovered all these other locations where they could live more cheaply and find jobs," Myers said. "We think the trends are going to continue downward. This is a permanent change."

California has long been a magnet for immigration, and its share of newcomers climbed dramatically between 1970 and 1990, according to the school's study, which was based on U.S. Census Bureau data and funded by USC's Urban Initiative and the nonpartisan Haynes Foundation.

In 1970, the state attracted 23 percent of new arrivals in the country. That jumped to 32 percent in the 1980 census and 38 percent by 1990.

The turnaround in 2000, a drop to 25 percent, was a 13-percentage point dive — a far larger decline than in any other state, researchers found.

The total number of immigrants coming to the state remained roughly constant between 1990 and 2000. The difference is that as the number of new immigrants increased nationwide, California became home for a smaller share compared to other states.

New York, a historic destination of choice for many immigrants, also saw its share of new arrivals drop in the 2000 census by about 2 percentage points compared to a decade earlier, from 14 percent to 12 percent, the study said.

In turning away from California, immigrants settled widely and no state gained more than 2 percentage points between 1990 and 2000.

Texas' share was pegged at 10 percent in 2000, from about 8 percent in the 1990 census. North Carolina climbed to 2 percent, from less than 1 percent. Georgia's share was notched at close to 3 percent, up from 1 percent.

In other states, "immigrants are popping up all over," Myers said.

Myers said the economic downturn in the 1990s was the driving force that compelled immigrants to look beyond California.

"You might say the immigrants overflowed the state. And with the trigger of the recession, it just pushed them out."

— DOWELL MYERS
USC professor

"You might say the immigrants overflowed the state. And with the trigger of the recession, it just pushed them out," Myers said.

The study also found the financial well-being of the state's immigrants has improved.

The percentage of impoverished immigrants arriving in the state dropped slightly, and "evidence shows that poverty rates amongst immigrants fell substantially when they are observed 10 and 20 years after their arrival," the report said.

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NATIONAL

Democrats down to two men going into 'Super Tuesday'

BY NEDRA PICKLER

Associated Press Writer

MIDDLETON, Wis. — The race for the Democratic nomination narrowed to a two-man contest between front-runner John Kerry and plucky rival John Edwards on Wednesday after Howard Dean ended his bid before the campaign spread to the 10 crucial "Super Tuesday" states.

Kerry won the primary with about 40 percent of the vote while Edwards finished a close second with 34 percent. Dean, who had banked his future on a strong showing in Wisconsin, drew just 18 percent. The former Vermont governor then decided to end his campaign, two party officials told The Associated Press.

Dean planned to oversee a new effort to keep his issues alive and his supporters organized on behalf of Democratic causes, party officials told the AP on condition of anonymity. Dean would eventually support the Democratic Party's nominee, they said, and he was considering whether to endorse one of his rivals.

For Edwards, second place in Wisconsin was a boon to a campaign that was not expected to survive a weak finish. He promised to campaign across the country and contended his organization was in strong shape financially.

"The voters of Wisconsin sent a clear message," Edwards said Tuesday night. "The message was this: Objects in your

"We play everywhere, unlike John Edwards and Howard Dean and anyone else in the race."

— STEVE ELMENDORF
John Kerry's deputy campaign manager

mirror may be closer than they appear."

Kerry gave no indication he was fazed by the Edwards surge in Wisconsin. "We're going to win the nomination," Kerry told the AP.

Kerry's advisers pointed out that even though Edwards closed the gap in Wisconsin, Kerry still has won 15 of 17 contests. Edwards has only one, South Carolina, where he was born.

"We play everywhere, unlike John Edwards and Howard Dean and anyone else in the race," said Steve Elmendorf, Kerry's deputy campaign manager. "The problem these other candidates have is they are not competing in a serious way to get enough delegates to get the nomination."

The March 2 contests are in California, New York, Ohio, Minnesota, Vermont, Georgia, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maryland. At stake will be 1,151 delegates, more than half the total needed to claim the nomination.

Utah, Idaho and Hawaii will vote next Feb. 24, but with only 61 delegates up for grabs total, those states will not be a focus

of the campaign.

Aides say Edwards' populist message will resonate in Ohio and upstate New York, areas hard hit by job losses. The Southern-bred candidate also should do well in Georgia. California is by far the day's biggest prize, with 370 delegates, followed by New York with 236.

In the final days of the Wisconsin race, Edwards criticized Kerry's support of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The message found a receptive audience: In exit polls, three-fourths of voters said trade with other countries takes jobs from their state.

Edwards and Kerry split the vote among those voters, though the North Carolina senator did better than the front-runner among voters who cited the economy and jobs as top issues.

Kerry repeatedly told the state's voters that he would review all trade agreements upon taking office, seeking to protect labor and environmental standards. His position has satisfied labor unions, and the AFL-CIO plans to endorse Kerry on Thursday.

Edwards finished far better than pre-primary polls suggested he would, his surge fueled by the highest Republican turnout of the primary season and voters who made up their minds in the last week. His deepest support was in the GOP suburbs of Milwaukee.

"That's been happening in other primaries too," Edwards said in an interview. "Republicans who would consider voting Democratic and independents are the people we have to win over to win the general election. That's why I'm the best candidate to take on George Bush."

The strong GOP turnout was boosted by city government elections in Milwaukee and a controversial referendum on casino gambling by an Indian tribe.

Primaries in Georgia, Ohio and Vermont on March 2 will be open to all voters as will the caucuses in Minnesota.

Now the only Democrat with a glimmer of hope to beat Kerry, Edwards is pushing for a one-on-one debate with the front-runner before next month's showdown.

The Democratic race once had 10 candidates, but the field is now down to four, including Dennis Kucinich and Al Sharpton, two candidates who haven't won a single contest.

After coming in a distant third in Wisconsin, Dean told supporters, "We are not done." However, advisers said his campaign was effectively over.

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Fuel train blows up hundreds

By The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Runaway train cars carrying fuel and industrial chemicals derailed in northeastern Iran on Wednesday, setting off explosions that killed more than 200 people, injured hundreds and destroyed five villages, according to the official Islamic Republic News Agency.

The freight train cars — hauling sulfur, fuel oil and other industrial chemicals — blew up outside the city of Neyshabur, 400 miles east of Tehran, the capital, IRNA reported.

Fifty-one freight cars were waiting at the Abu Muslim train station near Neyshabur when they were set in motion by “some vibrations,” the agency reported without elaborating.

The train cars, picking up speed and moving without an engine or conductor, overturned when they reached Khayyam, the next stop, starting a blaze. It wasn’t immediately clear how far they’d traveled.

Firefighters trying to put out the fire when the cars exploded were among the dead, IRNA said.

At least 300 people were injured. IRNA quoted local officials as saying most of the casualties were in five nearby villages that were destroyed.

Bishop should’ve stopped, police say

By The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Authorities say Bishop Thomas O’Brien would be a free man had he simply stopped and waited for police after striking and killing a jaywalking pedestrian with his car.

But O’Brien sped away instead, and a jury on Tuesday found him guilty of leaving the scene of a fatal accident — believed to be the first-ever felony conviction for a U.S. Roman Catholic bishop.

The 68-year-old bishop said he thought his car hit a dog or was struck by a rock on the night of June 14, when he slammed into 43-year-old Jim Reed, who had been drinking and was not in a crosswalk.

Now, O’Brien could receive from probation to three years and nine months in prison. No sentencing date has been set.

O’Brien, who appeared in court each day wearing his clerical attire, showed no emotion after the verdict was read Tuesday. He and his attorney left the courtroom without comment.

Bill Ryan, a spokesman for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said he doesn’t think the conviction will lead to restrictions against O’Brien’s participation in the church.

‘Do not call’ supporters claim victory

By The Associated Press

DENVER — Consumers annoyed with telephone sales won a big victory when a federal appeals court upheld the popular do-not-call registry, but telemarketers refused to concede defeat, predicting the legal wrangling would go all the way to the Supreme Court.

The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Tuesday dismissed claims the list violates free speech rights and is unfair to business, saying it is a legitimate safeguard against “the danger of telemarketing abuse.”

Telemarketing officials promised not to pester people on the list for now — but also vowed to pore over the

appeals court ruling for holes that may help them in future appeals.

“We haven’t accepted it at face value. We think it is best to move forward, but that does not mean we don’t think there are problems. There are problems,” said Louis Mastria, spokesman for the Direct Marketing Association.

The appeals court said the registry of more than 56 million phone numbers is a reasonable attempt by government to protect privacy.

Was first mad cow lame?

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A House committee is challenging the Agriculture Department’s view that the nation’s first cow sick with deadly mad cow disease was lame.

Contrary to the department, three eyewitnesses at the Washington state plant where the Holstein was slaughtered on Dec. 9 say the cow appeared healthy, lawmakers on the House Government Reform Committee said in a letter Tuesday to Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman.

The issue is significant because Agriculture Department officials that monitor meat plants target “downer” cattle — animals that are sick, injured or that exhibit symptoms of disease — for testing of mad cow, a brain-wasting illness. Critics have argued that the agency needs also test healthy animals as a safeguard against the illness, which can incubate for four or five years.

Committee chairman Tom Davis, R-Va., and Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Santa Monica), the senior Democrat on the committee, questioned the adequacy of the government’s mad cow testing program.

“If the new information is accurate, USDA’s surveillance system may need to be significantly expanded,” they said.

Attack at Polish base kills at least eight Iraqi civilians

BY MATT MOORE

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Two trucks packed with explosives blew up Wednesday outside a Polish-run base south of Baghdad after coalition forces opened fire on the suicide bombers racing toward them. Eight Iraqi civilians were killed and at least 65 people were wounded.

The two drivers also were killed, according to the U.S. military, but no information about their identities was available.

Also Wednesday, U.S. troops reported capturing seven suspected militants believed linked to al-Qaida in a raid in the central Iraqi city of Baqouba.

Troops from the 4th Infantry Division carried out the raid targeting an “anti-coalition cell” that may have ties to Osama bin Laden’s terror group, a statement from U.S. command said.

Seven suspects specifically targeted in the raid and 15 other people were detained, the statement said.

Baqouba is in the so-called “Sunni Triangle,” north and west of Baghdad, the heartland of anti-U.S. violence in Iraq.

In the suicide assault, the Polish commander of the region, Gen. Mieczyslaw Bieniek, called the bombings near the base in Hillah, 60 miles south of Baghdad, a “well-coordinated attack.”

U.S. officials have predicted an

“The enemy’s strategy is fairly clear. They plan to isolate us from the Iraqi people.”

— LT. GEN. RICARDO SANCHEZ
Coalition military commander

increase in attacks as the June 30 date for the transfer of sovereignty to Iraq approaches. Some insurgents fear their campaign could lose steam once power is returned to Iraqis, U.S. officials believe. However, major differences remain on how to choose a new government.

“The enemy’s strategy is fairly clear,” coalition military commander Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez told reporters Wednesday in Tikrit. “They plan to isolate us from the Iraqi people.”

The bombing happened after 7:15 a.m. when two trucks loaded with explosives approached the front of the coalition base known as Camp Charlie. Guards fired at the vehicles, causing one to explode, said Lt. Col. Robert Strzelecki. The other struck a concrete barrier and exploded.

Eleven homes near the base collapsed in the blast and others were damaged, entire sides blown off. Debris littered the area.

Mohyee Mokheef, a 50-year-old cafe owner, who lives near the camp, said he was having breakfast with his family

when he heard a faint first explosion and a second, louder one that shattered the windows in his home.

“I went out and walked toward the base, and I saw about eight damaged houses,” he told The Associated Press. “I saw dead and injured Iraqis lying on the ground.”

Men, women and children were among the dead. The wounded included at least 32 Iraqis, 12 Filipinos, 10 Poles and 10 Hungarians, officials said. One American soldier was hurt. The wounded Poles and Hungarians were all coalition soldiers; the wounded Filipinos included seven soldiers, two police officers and three civilian health workers.

Poland leads a multinational force of about 9,500 soldiers in south-central Iraq.

The violence also came as members of the U.S.-appointed Governing Council distanced themselves further from the U.S. idea of holding regional caucuses to elect an interim government after the planned June 30 handover of power.

In Baghdad, Mouwafak al-Rubaie, a

Shiite Arab member of the Governing Council, said Wednesday that the idea of using caucuses was “gone with the wind,” adding that the only solution palatable to Iraqis are general elections, as demanded by Shiite clerics.

“Anything else will make things worse and the results will be damaging to Iraq,” he said. “Only elections will give the legitimacy needed for any future political process or body.”

Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday that the United States was committed to giving the Iraqi people control of their country by July 1 but remained open to ideas from the United Nations about how to choose the interim government. The world body is expected to give a report this week.

On Tuesday, the United States also unveiled a list of 32 wanted people, including suspected cell leaders, former members of Saddam’s military and regional Baath leaders thought to be helping the insurgency.

At least seven of the names were former colonels or other high-ranking officers in Saddam’s military who held important posts in the Baath party.

Atop the list, with a \$1 million reward, is Mohammed Yunis al-Ahmad, a former top Baath Party official. Rewards between \$50,000 and \$200,000 were offered for the others.

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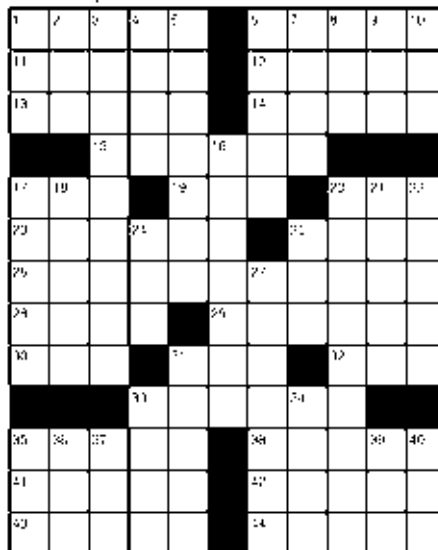
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Obituaries

PALFY, TOM: Born Aug. 6,
1952 in Cleveland, Ohio. Tom
was the only child of Sander &
Ysabel Palfy and was the last
surviving member of his family.
Tom was employed at the Rad-
isson Huntley Hotel for 13 yrs.,
and Restoration Hardware, SM
for 3 years. He was a regular at
Gold's Gym in Venice. Prior to
his move to LA, Tom lived in
NY, Boston, and Europe with
his longtime companion: Peter
Hamburger. He was a radio
disc jockey in New Hampshire
after graduating from WIXY
School of Broadcasting. Tom
will be greatly missed by many
friends and co-workers. A me-
morial service is planned for
Sat. Feb. 28, 2004, at St.
Augustine's By the Sea, 1227
4th Street, S.M. at 2:00pm. In
lieu of flowers, donations can
be made, in Tom's memory to
APLA or the Los Angeles Gay &
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Hong Kong's SARS recovery anything but 'feel good'

By The Associated Press

■ **HONG KONG** — Hong Kong spent millions in a "feel-good" campaign to bounce back from SARS, but critics are calling it a publicity blitz that did little to foster an economic recovery.

"People see beyond a stage show," lawmaker David Chu said Monday. Chu said he voted for the expenditure in May, when he believed that most of the money would be used to create temporary jobs. Now he calls the program a waste.

The Legislative Council authorized spending up to \$128 million for the "relaunch" effort, but only about \$91.7 million will be spent, said Christina Lai, a spokeswoman for the investment agency that handled the cash.

The campaign included a concert series headlined by The Rolling Stones and a friendly soccer match featuring Spanish team Real Madrid.

But Chu said Hong Kong should have used the money to address pressing economic problems such as unemployment, which was pushed by SARS to a record 8.7 percent, though it has since eased.

Lai declined any immediate comment.

■ **LONDON** — Naomi Campbell went to the tradition-steeped House of Lords Wednesday, hoping to win legal privacy rights for Britain's beleaguered celebrities.

The supermodel, dressed in a pale turquoise pants suit, watched as her lawyers appealed a court ruling that a newspaper had the right to print a picture of her leaving a drug rehabilitation meeting.

Campbell wants to overturn the October 2002 ruling that the Daily Mirror was justified in publishing a picture of her leaving the Narcotics Anonymous meeting because she'd lied previously to the media about her drug use.

Her lawyers began arguments Wednesday before a panel of five Law Lords — judges who sit in the upper chamber of Parliament and constitute Britain's highest appeals court.

Barrister Andrew Caldecott said the judges had to consider how the laws governing freedom of expression could be balanced with rights to privacy. He argued that previous cases had established "a notion of privacy in a general sense."

The hearing is expected to last two days.

Campbell had sued the Daily Mirror, claiming the tabloid had breached her right to confidentiality and invaded her privacy by running the February 2001 story. The 33-year-old told the court she felt "shocked, angry, betrayed and violated" by the piece.

In April 2002, the High Court ruled in Campbell's favor and ordered the paper to pay her legal costs and \$6,700 in damages. The decision was overturned on appeal six months later, and Campbell was ordered to pay the newspaper's legal costs, estimated at \$670,000.

■ **CASPER, Wyo.** — A white supremacist group has circulated fliers questioning a scheduled rap concert, saying the music promotes violence.

The flier, circulated by the local chapter of National Alliance, targets this weekend's performance at the Casper Events Center of rappers Ludacris and Chingy and criticizes efforts by Casper city officials to promote diversity.

The flier also denounces the recent appearance of rapper Mystikal, who was sentenced last month to a six-year prison term for committing sexual battery on his hair stylist.

Mystikal, whose legal name is Michael Tyler, was the featured artist at the Dec. 6 Rap Fest 2003.

The flier states: "Over a month ago, the city welcomed the rapist rapper Mystikal. Now the city is throwing out the red carpet to welcome yet another black rapper. Why are we allowing this violent diversity to be forced into our city?"

About 2,500 fliers were distributed in Natrona County, said National Alliance Membership Coordinator David Pringle, who's based in Alaska.

Pringle's group despises all rappers — even if they're white — because they promote a "criminal culture," he said.

The flier also criticizes the city of Casper for promoting diversity, singling out Casper Vice Mayor Guy Padgett. The mayor said blaming a whole group for one person's crimes is outrageous.

One of the fliers was left on the porch of Joseph VanLandingham, a black Evansville resident. He said he returned home Saturday evening and tripped over the flier, which was anchored by a sandbag.

"I've been living in Evansville for two years now and this is the first time I've ever had a problem, and this is the first time I've ever heard of the National Alliance," VanLandingham said. "If it's a scare tactic, it's not working. I've dealt with this my whole life."

■ **LONDON** — An English town where the late Rolling Stones guitarist Brian Jones was born has dropped a plan to name a street after him because of opposition from upscale homeowners.

A street named Brian Jones Close was to be part of a new development of 70 homes in an area of Cheltenham.

Housing developer Bryant Homes applied for the name to be changed in November, following objections from residents and prospective buyers of the properties, which cost as much as \$637,000.

On Tuesday night, the Cheltenham Borough Council voted unanimously that change the proposed name. Jones, who drowned in 1969 at 27, was born and is buried in Cheltenham.

"Some members of the cabinet thought it was a shame to change the name from Brian Jones but recognized that they must listen to the residents," said Jane Grunner, assistant director of policy and public relations at the council.

When Bryant Homes first objected to the name, Rolling Stones fans described it as a "slap in the face."

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