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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2002

Volume 1, Issue 86

Santa Monica Daily Press

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Reviving the Expo Line

City council will address funding sources to make light rail line a reality

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Plans for a new controversial light rail line have resurfaced in Santa Monica.

Mayor Michael Feinstein wants to discuss new ways of planning and funding an extension to the Exposition Line light rail project by tying together federal, state and county grant money ear-marked for education, transportation and recreation projects. Feinstein said he'll bring up the issue during the city council meeting Feb. 26.

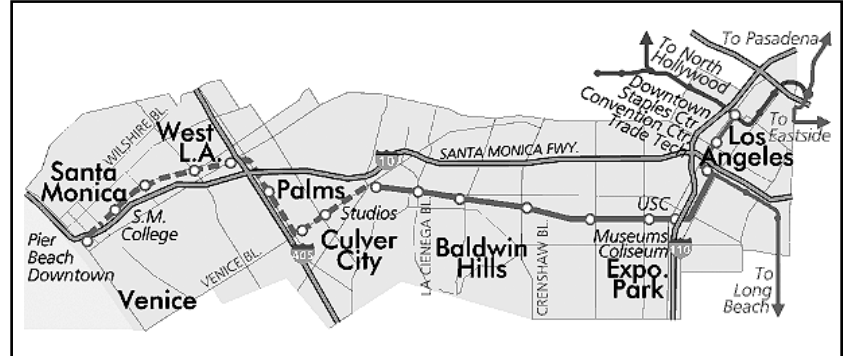
By partnering with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District and the California Department of Transportation, Feinstein said the city can possibly bring together enough money to

finish planning the extension to Santa Monica. Feinstein said it's important to decide soon where the line will come in to the city limits and where it will go once it gets here.

In June 2001, the MTA Board of Directors green-lighted the Exposition light rail project, which will run from Downtown Los Angeles through the University of Southern California to Culver City. The 9.6 mile line will begin at the existing Metro Rail Station at Seventh Street downtown and run parallel to Interstate 10. Construction of the \$344 million project is scheduled to start in 2004 and take four years to complete.

At a meeting last summer, MTA officials unanimously passed a resolution to extend the light rail line to Santa Monica, even though planning and construction could take decades.

"We don't want to get lost," said Santa Monica Councilwoman Pam O'Connor, an MTA board member. "Because of the current time line, we are far off down the line, but if we do the



The Exposition light rail line would run from downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica, paralleling Interstate 10.

planning now we can be ready for when the line comes in."

Planning for the subway line has been long and controversial. Many westside cities rejected bringing the train through their town or having stops along the way.

Officials said the political maneuvering cost the westside a metro line during the 1990's, when

the MTA approved other metro projects ahead of the line that would reach Santa Monica.

Under current plans, Santa Monica's line would follow the Santa Monica Freeway into the city limits and stop at Olympic and 20th Street, Olympic and 14th, and Olympic and Seventh Street.

The line would then continue

See EXPO LINE, page 3

What a racket



Stephen Godchaux takes time out to play a friendly game of tennis at Reed Park Tuesday afternoon.

Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

'Tempest in a playhouse' is question of free speech

City says first amendment rights violated by lawsuit

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

(Editor's note: This is the third story in a series on a lawsuit filed by a Sunset Park family over their son's playhouse.)

A lawsuit filed against Santa Monica City Hall over a backyard playhouse is little more

than an attempt to silence free speech, the city argues.

On the contrary, claims the opposing lawyer. The suit is about getting City Hall to open its rule-making to public appeal.

The "Tempest in a Playhouse" began after the city told David and Beth Levy that the backyard playhouse they were building for their 6-year-old son was fine under the zoning code. But City Hall later changed its mind after then-mayor Ken Genser passed on a complaint from a neighbor, who'd originally approved of the structure. By

See PLAYHOUSE, page 3

City buys non-traditional vehicles

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

After nearly a decade of exclusively buying cars that run on electricity or compressed natural gas, Santa Monica has begun investing in a new kind of vehicle.

It's the Toyota Prius, which runs on an electric motor that is continually recharged by an internal gasoline powered engine.

Since 2001, the city has purchased more than a dozen of the \$22,000 vehicles. Officials say they plan to buy three more over the next year.

Last year the city spent about \$2 million replacing their alternative-fueled Buick Crown

Victoria's. Next year officials say they won't budget nearly as much because most of the older vehicles have already been replaced.

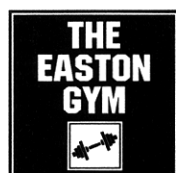
"In an eight-mile wide city, it makes sense to run these cars," said Bernardo Klein, the city's acting fleet maintenance manager. "We are getting 60 miles per gallon on the highway and over 35 miles per gallon in the city. Over the years we'll make our money back in fuel savings."

The car's emissions are so low that it's cleaner than using electricity from power plants, making it a better choice than electric vehicles, officials said.

Since the vehicles are constantly recharging

See VEHICLES, page 3

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Keep conversations going. Speak your mind, but prepare for someone's reaction. Aim for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Wish upon a star. You can pull white rabbits out of black hats. Concentrate and communicate. Tonight: Do your magic!



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ You feel uptight about a financial investment. You might be totally grounded. State your reasons to someone. Sometimes the process of bantering around a problem can also solve it. Feedback adds a new dimension to your work ethic and commitment. Tonight: Balance your checkbook.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Your smile melts someone's resistance, yet you might be too uptight to relax easily. Put on your headphones at lunch and chill out to a favorite piece of music. A positive approach could spell the difference between success and failure. Tonight: Claim your power.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★ Step back rather than plunging forward. You gain another perspective and look at a possibility in a new light. An associate or loved one illuminates your view and helps you see what could happen if you were a little more optimistic. Tonight: Curl up with a good book.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Your intention speaks. Others see your will and determination; lasso in what you want. After you get it, you might discover that you don't want it after all. Integrate your dreams into your life, and you'll navigate your life in the right direction. Listen to a dour friend. Tonight: Chitchat with a pal.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ Others seek you out for answers. As it stands, you could feel rather overwhelmed by what is going on. Discuss with an associate how much work you can defer to this person. Stay in tune to your needs. Don't exaggerate your strength or abilities. Tonight: A must appearance.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Nothing seems impossible with your imagination. Leap barriers and your intellect will follow. Your mind carries you to the finish line, no matter what your project is. Be spontaneous and you find success greets you. Clearly, good news heads your way. Tonight: Listen to a well-versed friend.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Someone's "no" could be changed if you play your cards right. A new idea holds tremendous potential, especially if it involves your home and your personal life. Anything can happen or become possible. Speak to a good friend. Tonight: Make nice.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ An associate or partner lets you know just how serious he or she is. What you decide to do with this information is a whole different story. Speak of your desires openly, letting this person know exactly where you stand. Tonight: Hang out.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Pace yourself if you're going to get all your projects and errands done. If feeling tired, make an appointment for a check-up. You might feel as if you have been dragging for quite a while. Use some of your income on yourself. Don't cut here. Tonight: Call it an early night.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ Your imagination takes you in a new direction. Fortunately, your intuition comes into play, suggesting when to risk and when not to. Sometimes a child or new friend finds you a little tough on him or her. Could you perhaps be controlling with this person? Tonight: Have a caring talk.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★ Handle personal matters that weigh heavily on you. You want to deal with a loved one carefully, or else you might hit a brick wall. Stop and consider how realistic you are with your expectations. Could this be the root of a problem? Tonight: Head on home.



WEATHER

Today ...	Partly Cloudy	High—71°F	Low—52°F
Tomorrow ...	Partly Cloudy	High—79°F	Low—54°F
Friday ...	Partly Cloudy	High—74°F	Low—56°F



QUOTE of the DAY

"The good lord never gives you more than you can handle. Unless you die of something."

—Guindon cartoon caption

Santa Monica Daily Press

Published Monday through Saturday
Phone: 310.458.PRESS(7737) • Fax: 310.576.9913
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LOCAL



City says playhouse lawsuit is politically motivated

PLAYHOUSE, from page 1

now deciding that the playhouse, elevated on posts, was two stories instead of one, City Hall suddenly threatened to prosecute the Levys for a criminal violation of the zoning code.

The Levys sued in September of 2000, bringing in a lawyer who's known for suing City Hall. Some say the attorney, Chris Harding, is nursing a vendetta against Genser. Harding says he's so motivated by pure principle that he's working for free.

It's now about much more than letting 6-year-old Jacob Levy play in his backyard. The games have begun.

Now the case has become a question of free speech. By filing an "anti-SLAPP" motion last month, City Hall invoked a legal argument that protects citizens from being punished for speaking out.

Did neighbor have a right to complain?

The city's move is based on a law that prevents people from being punished for exercising their First Amendment rights. It also is designed to protect them when

they complain to government officials.

Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation — also known as SLAPP suits, are meritless lawsuits often used by big developers to chill the public's free-

dom of speech when speaking out against a project. They've also been used to intimidate opponents so they will stop

See PLAYHOUSE, page 4

Vast majority of residents in favor of light rail line

EXPO LINE, from page 1

south on Olympic to a station near the Third Street Promenade.

"We were divided by the (Santa Monica Freeway) in the 1960s, and this project could physically re-unite the north and south sides of town," Feinstein said. "While at the same time providing us — in a built-out city — with an important civic need."

O'Connor said the MTA does want the Expo line to go to Santa Monica, though it isn't sure which towns it will travel through to get here. And while it may not arrive for some time, she doesn't want it to wait until the last minute.

"The general policy being put out is that the Expo line will go out to Santa Monica," she said. "Now, let's do what is needed to get the planning and funding in place to expedite the whole process."

For Darrell Clarke, a city planning commission member and an active participant in Friends 4 Expo Transit, planning

is the only way to get the line extended to the city.

"Basically we are at the point that gets us half way to Santa Monica," Clarke said. "Now we need to find a way to go the rest of the way."

"Get the planning done and you're that much closer to building when you get the money," he added. "The more planning is completed the closer it comes to becoming a reality."

Clarke said after talking with residents, he found the vast majority in favor of having a metro rail line running through the city.

"Generally, people are supportive of this," he said. "We have had tables at festivals and parks, and when people see us they say 'hey, that would be great.'"

"You always find a few opponents, but most people have lived in a city with good service or have visited one and they want that here too," he said. "The response has been remarkably positive."

A way of life



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

Sarah Evans a Nichiren Dishonin Buddhist, chants Tuesday at the Soka Gakkai Plaza.

New vehicles combine gas, electricity for cleaner air

VEHICLES, from page 1

themselves, they do not need to be plugged into an electrical outlet every eight hours — like most electric-powered city vehicles.

The cars are used by city employees on municipal business, from public works inspectors traveling to a construction site to city administrators driving across town for a meeting.

Currently 75 percent of the city's fleet of cars and trucks has been transitioned

into alternative fueled vehicles. Federal laws require municipalities to buy alternative fueled vehicles, but city officials say they are going beyond the government's mandate.

They have also begun purchasing compressed natural gas garbage trucks, bulldozers and heavy load trucks.

"This is a very environmentally conscious city," said Klein. "We are proving to the world that it can be done. You can provide a high quality of services while not polluting the air."

LETTERS

Santa Monica College already too big

Dear Editor:

I urge a no vote on Prop U. I've lived near Santa Monica College for twenty years. I've watched Santa Monica College build and build without regard to the neighbors. The campus population has exploded. Traffic is horrible and litter is everywhere. If they decide to locate facilities near you, you

will hate it. I heard that land on Stewart Street, where they film "Buffy," is already in the hands of SMC.

The school board should think about what they endorse. Giving so much money away to the college can hurt the K-12 grades when they need the money.

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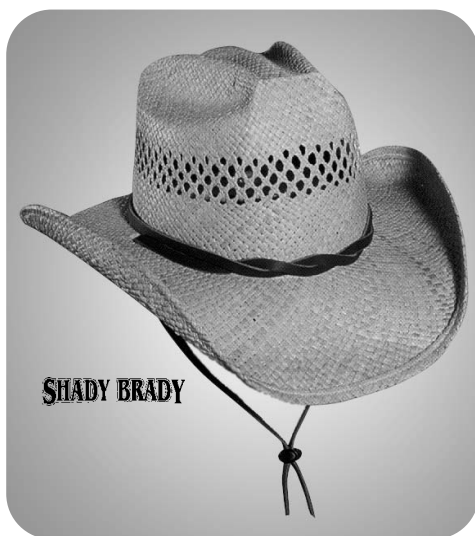


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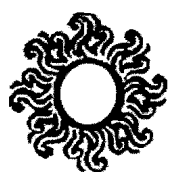
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LOCAL-STATE



Lawsuit now about more than a playhouse

PLAYHOUSE, from page 3

complaining.

In response to those suits, the Legislature enacted California's anti-SLAPP law, to better protect people who want to speak out.

"... An elected official gave his opinion and let city staff attempt to resolve the matter," reads the city's motion. "For this he is sued and vilified, and so is the city he serves. Even in today's jaded world, plaintiff's lawsuit is an affront to Democracy."

Harding, a land use lawyer, has made

support his position. He suggested the playhouse might be illegal, and prodded city staff to look into it. But the e-mails contain no instructions.

"Plaintiff's lawsuit is hopelessly defective, piles self-indulgences upon self-indulgences and most importantly, tramples on the very Democratic rights that California and the country hold so dear," the city's motion states.

City wants law firm tossed from case

The city's ratcheted up its case a notch by asking a judge to disqualify Harding and his law firm from pressing the case. It says Harding's wife, Laurie Lieberman, once gave Genser advice when working as a deputy city attorney nine years ago. She now works part-time at his land use and real estate law firm.

The city argues that Lieberman has created a conflict of interest in the case because she once gave advice to elected officials including Genser.

"Laurie Lieberman gave me specific advice on how to deal with staff," Genser said of her stint nearly a decade ago.

Harding and Levy say the city's attempt to disqualify the law firm is a reach at best.

"The disqualification of us is ridiculous," Harding said, adding Lieberman has only proofed documents relating to the case.

Suit is about more than a playhouse

Genser is at a loss as to why the case has gone this far, especially since the city is allowing the Levys to use the playhouse. The city has made several attempts to settle the case but the Levys and Harding continue to push the issue, attorneys argue.

"We don't see what this case is about," Genser said, adding he thinks it may be politically motivated. "It seems to have other motivations ... Chris and I have had a long history of disagreement."

Levy, a psychiatrist who has lived in Santa Monica since 1975, has never been politically involved — until now. As far as he's concerned, the city went back on its word. He's asked that the playhouse be deemed legal with no strings attached and that a hearing process be set up so those accused of violating zoning laws get heard.

A judge will hear the latest arguments on Feb. 25.

**"Even in today's jaded
world, plaintiff's lawsuit is
an affront to Democracy."**

— CITY LAWSUIT

something of a practice out of suing City Hall. He argues the city's anti-SLAPP motion is "a desperate attempt to prevent a full airing of an obviously embarrassing chapter in city history by preventing this case from proceeding to the merits."

"What makes this case ironic is that the Levys are trying to exercise their constitutional rights and they have to do it in court," said Tom Larmore, a partner in Harding's law firm. "But the city itself is trying to characterize it as a SLAPP. It's a way to intimidate (the Levys)."

All this over a backyard playhouse.

The Levys argue that their lawsuit doesn't attempt to chill the neighbor's right to free speech. They claim the city violated its own laws because Genser influenced city staffers to change their minds and rule the playhouse had two stories, making it illegal under zoning codes.

Genser says he only forwarded the neighbor's complaint and never ordered or advocated city staff to do anything. The Levys' arguments are weak and the suit is nothing more than harassment, the city argues.

A close reading of the pair of e-mails Genser sent to city officials appears to

Housing group sets sight on rent control in Pasadena

By The Associated Press

PASADENA — A housing group wants to put a rent-control measure on a future ballot.

Affordable Housing Action, formed last year, is launching a campaign to place the initiative on a ballot this fall or in 2003.

"Many of the people we work with in the community, low-income folks, are being forced to leave the city" because they cannot pay their rents, group co-founder Shawn McDougal said.

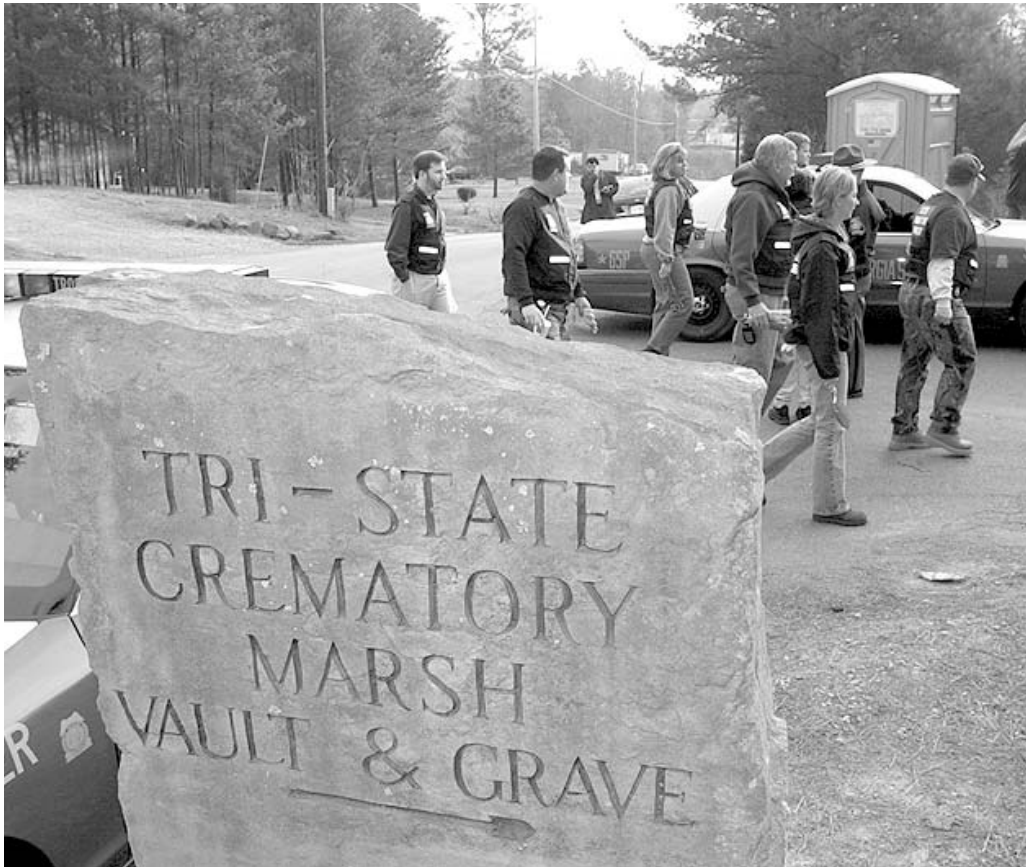
Some rents have risen 25 percent in the past few years, group co-founder Philip Koebel said.

The initiative, which is still being written, might include establishing a board to regulate rental increases, perhaps tying them to inflation, he said.

The group will have to obtain at least 11,000 signatures from registered voters to qualify the initiative for the ballot.



Gruesome work



Ric Feld/Associated Press

Georgia State Troopers guard the entrance as workers arrive at the Tri-State Crematory on the property of Ray Brent Marsh, 28, outside of Noble, Ga., Tuesday. Officials continue to recover bodies at the site where Marsh allegedly took bodies of deceased people for cremation, but instead stored them on the property. Authorities have sealed off the area while they work to recover and identify the bodies.

In Europe, hot new cellular technologies are all about location

BY ANGELA DOLAND

Associated Press Writer

CANNES, France — In Britain, cell phones can track down the nearest pub. Scandinavian teen-agers can use them to find out where their friends are hanging out. And a French company is testing a dating service that will signal when available singles are around.

Throughout Europe, a new mobile technology is gaining ground. It's all about location, location, location.

The technology works two ways — either through global satellite positioning chips embedded in phones or by measuring a caller's distance from cell towers to chart out a position on a map.

Once your cell phone knows exactly where you're calling from, it can point you in the right direction, hook you up with friends or let you play interactive games such as wireless tag.

As the 3GSM World Congress opened Tuesday in the French Riviera resort of Cannes, many companies were showing off so-called "location-based" mobile technologies.

One was the French concern Webraska, which offers a service in Britain called "Pub Finder" that provides a list of the nearest watering holes. Once users find a bar, they can round up friends by sending the pub's name and address in a quick text message. The service is available through Orange, a British company.

A similar directory technology is on the market in 1,600 German cities, available through Britain's Vodafone. Working off a technology developed by Troy, N.Y.-based MapInfo Corp., the service helps people map their evenings out by giving directions to the nearest clubs, cinemas, gas stations and cash machines.

Location-based technology has been spurred on by the U.S. government's Enhanced 911 initiative, which requires carriers to make sure emergency services can pinpoint the location of distressed callers on cell phones to within 300 yards. The system is slowly being put into place — after delays, most U.S. wireless carriers promise it for this summer — and a

similar initiative is under way in Europe.

But compared to the United States, Europe has been quicker to see how the technology could be a moneymaker, not just a lifesaver.

Ben Wood, a senior telecommunications analyst with Gartner in London, said that although most location-based services help people track down taxis, hotels and restaurants, "I think you're more on the money with games, or things that are community-based."

One location-based tag game is available in parts of Scandinavia and is soon to be released in Ireland. The game, developed by a Swedish company called "It's Alive," has people chasing each other through the streets, virtually gunning down complete strangers who are playing the same game. The company wasn't on display at Cannes, but its partners were, including Boulder, Colo.-based SignalSoft.

SignalSoft had 14- to 24-year-olds in mind when it created a product to let people see where their friends are hanging out.

Using a cell phone or the Internet, users can zero in on their friends, find out which neighborhood they're in and how far away they are. Those who want a little privacy can make themselves "invisible" by logging off the system.

Several companies are working on dating services. Unlike the Internet, which often creates long-distance attachments, location-based mobile services would scout out compatible singles in the same city, neighborhood or restaurant.

Paris-based Freever says several European carriers are interested in its singles service — though it's not saying which ones. In a trial, the company let users punch in data about themselves, making it available to compatible singles within range.

But it might take a little time before location-based dating services are widely available — even though the interest is there, said J.F. Sullivan, vice president of marketing with France's Webraska, which also tested a singles service in Europe.

Capital seeks corporate funding

BY DERRILL HOLLY

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Officials in the nation's capital are turning to corporate executives to help raise money to prop up a hospitality industry still ailing after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"We're bringing back the business traveler, now we have to focus on the discretionary leisure traveler," Mayor Anthony A. Williams said Tuesday.

With more than 260,000 regional jobs directly related to hospitality, tourism and travel, the industry is considered key to the area's economic health. Tourism was one reason officials of the District of Columbia Boxing and Wrestling Commission cited for granting Mike Tyson a boxing license Tuesday.

In the past five months the city and its

tourism agency have raised and spent \$2.5 million on an advertising and promotion campaign dubbed "Be Inspired."

Much of the money has been spent on efforts in five cities identified as prime markets for the Washington area: New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Norfolk, Va.

"The whole nation is reluctant to travel," said William A. Hanbury, president and chief executive officer of the Washington Convention and Tourism Corp.

Although industry polling data indicate that people are traveling for business and meetings, families are avoiding major tourist destinations because of security concerns.

Following the terrorist attacks and subsequent discoveries of anthrax-tainted mail, hotel occupancy rates plunged to a low of 25 percent in September but rebounded to 74 percent in December.

Jury sees photos in fatal dog mauling as trial begins

BY LINDA DEUTSCH

AP Special Correspondent

LOS ANGELES — A tearful defense attorney told jurors Tuesday that her client, who is charged in the dog mauling death of her neighbor, risked her life to save the woman.

Marjorie Knoller flung herself on Diane Whipple when she was attacked by a 100-pound plus presa canario owned by Knoller and her husband, Robert Noel, the lawyer said.

"Marjorie was covered in blood," attorney Nedra Ruiz said in opening statements. "No one is sorrier that Marjorie Knoller could not save Ms. Whipple than Marjorie Knoller, who risked her life."

Knoller, 46, is charged with second-degree murder, involuntary manslaughter and having a mischievous animal that killed a human being. Her 60-year-old husband faces the latter two charges.

Knoller was with the dogs, Bane and Hera, at the time of the Jan. 26, 2001, attack on Whipple, 33, outside her San Francisco apartment. The trial was moved to Los Angeles because of extensive publicity in San Francisco.

San Francisco Assistant District Attorney Jim Hammer told jurors they must decide whether Knoller and Noel were warned how dangerous their dogs were and whether they did anything to protect others from them.

Hammer gave jurors a dramatic

description of the scene in the hallway of Whipple's apartment building as she tried to enter her home with groceries, only to be knocked down by Bane.

He said a neighbor — who called 911 — will testify that she heard growling and barking, and then the dog pounded her apartment door so hard that she was afraid he would break it down.

The prosecutor also said there was no proof that Knoller tried to stop the attack and described her as doing nothing to help the victim. He said Knoller passed by the victim and went into her apartment to find her keys.

Hammer said Whipple's clothes were pulled from her body and she was left naked and bloody. By the time police

arrived, he said, Whipple was gasping, and she died "from a combination of blood loss and asphyxia."

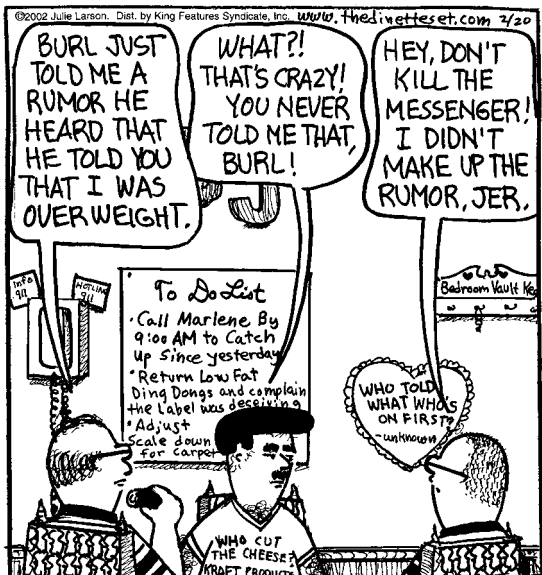
The prosecutor said he would show at least 30 instances in which Bane and Hera attacked other people, including an incident in which one dog severed Noel's finger. He punctuated his opening statement with gruesome photos of Whipple's injuries — the back of her neck bloodied and punctured by the dog's teeth, her buttocks and breasts also punctured, her face covered in blood.

Some jurors looked away, and Whipple's mother cried. The victim's domestic partner, Sharon Smith, left the courtroom when the pictures were shown. The defendants were impassive.

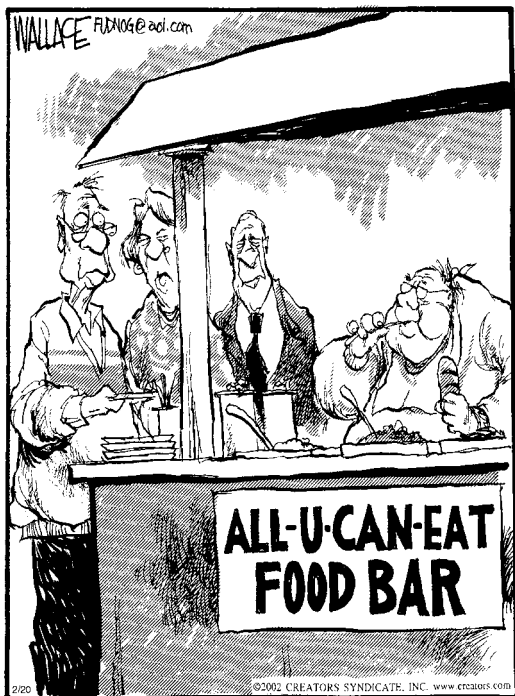


COMICS

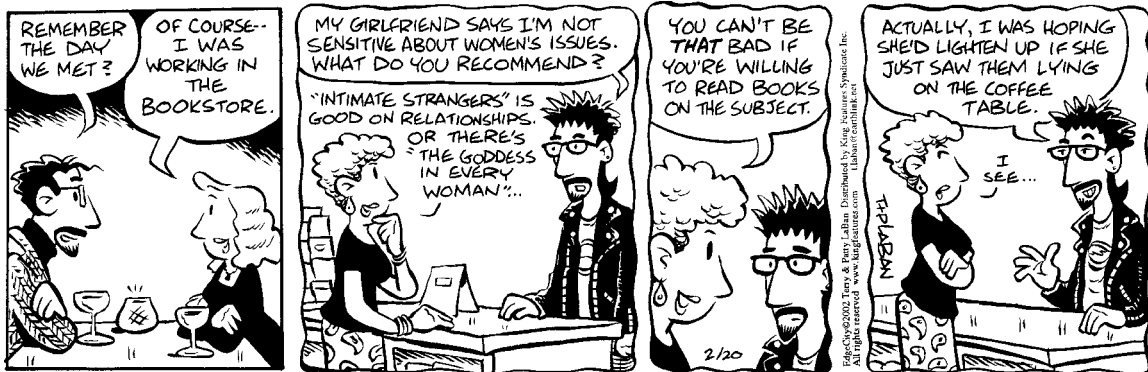
The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



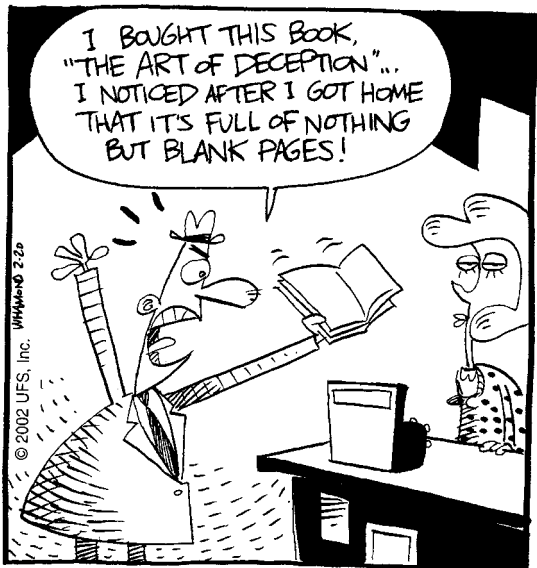
Natural Selection® By Russ Wallace



by TERRY & PATTY LABAN



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CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 1 Fizzy drinks 6 Droops 10 Cessation of fighting 11 Propeller type 12 Noted critic 13 Singer Abdul 14 Broad 15 Chess opening 16 Greek vowel 17 Jiffy 18 Spots on TV 19 Thorough 22 Horse check 23 Fancy wraps 26 Went off the tracks 29 Old boat 32 Hawk's hope 33 Course standard 34 Kind of band 36 Fancy bash 37 Romeo doesn't appear in it 38 Sportscast feature 39 List of candidates 40 Ludicrous

41 Exam 42 Nuisances

DOWN 1 Blotto 2 Satellite 3 Library stamp 4 Farm unit 5 Fixed 6 Con 7 Caribbean island 8 Icy 9 Hits 11 It's below the B 15 Hair goop 17 Oscilloscope sight 20 Lend a hand

B	A	B	E	S		C	R	E	P	E
A	G	I	L	E		R	E	L	A	X
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Yesterday's answer

21 "How — love thee?" 29 Tribute, of a sort 30 Sam or Tom 31 Colorful fish 35 Catching need 36 Heredity unit 38 Tear

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9
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34			35				36		
37						38			
39						40			
41						42			

2-20

STUMPED?

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Councilman requests streets to be named after his children

As one of his last acts in office in November, outgoing Atlanta city councilman Lee Morris tried to vote through name-changes for two obscure streets, to the names of his two youngest kids (in that they had complained to Dad that he had six years earlier gotten a street named for his other daughter). Morris defended his action as an appropriate reward for his apparently nearly perfect children: "The only thing they ever asked from me was this." (Several days later, after constituent complaints, he changed his mind.)



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Santa Monica Daily Press

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BACK PAGE

Jury finds James Brown did not harass former employee

BY ROBERT JABLON

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — A jury ruled Tuesday against a former employee who claimed that soul singer James Brown sexually harassed her. But the panel found that Brown's company wrongfully fired the woman.

The Superior Court jury found in favor of Lisa Ross Agbalaya on only one of the more than a dozen claims contained in her \$1 million lawsuit.

“(James Brown) feels good. He wants you all to know he’s feeling real good today. This reaffirms his long-standing belief that the justice system is alive and well.”

— **DEBRA OPRI**
James Brown's attorney

The panel did not immediately award damages but planned to start those deliberations Tuesday afternoon.

The 68-year-old “godfather of soul,” whose hits include “I Got You (I Feel Good),” cried when informed of the news at his South Carolina home, said his lawyer, Debra Opri.

“He feels good. He wants you all to know he’s feeling real good today,” she said. “This reaffirms his long-standing belief that the justice system is alive and well.”

Opri said the finding of liability against James Brown Enterprises Inc. for wrongful termination would be appealed. The jury cleared Brown of personal liability in the firing.

Agbalaya, who was in court, appeared downcast

after the verdict.

“It’s a little saddening,” she said. “The bottom line is I know what James Brown did, and he knows what he did.”

“I felt like I would have lost if I had said nothing,” she added.

The 36-year-old mother of three claimed that Brown grabbed her by the hips and pulled her toward him when she visited his Georgia home in 1999. At the time she was president of the West Coast office of James Brown Enterprises Inc.

Agbalaya, a seven-year employee, claimed she was fired after rebuffing Brown’s advances.

During the nearly three-week trial before Judge Mel Recana, Brown testified that he never touched Agbalaya, explaining “she’s a married woman and I wouldn’t do that.”

The singer testified that Agbalaya was laid off after he closed his West Coast office because it wasn’t making money.

In closing arguments, Opri told jurors that Agbalaya concocted the story in order to sue and obtain Brown’s money.

The suit alleged sexual harassment, retaliation, wrongful termination and infliction of emotional distress against Brown and his companies.

Moment of symmetry: palindrome minute for a palindrome day in a palindrome year

By The Associated Press

Wow! For one minute, the world will be in perfect symmetry.

In a year that reads the same backward as forward, Wednesday evening will bring 60 seconds of palindromic perfection — at least for those who follow the Gregorian calendar.

Come Wednesday, the time, day, month and year will align: 8:02 p.m., Feb. 20, 2002.

Write that in military time and with numerals for the month of February and it works out to: 20:02, 02/20, 2002. In European style for the day and month it’s just as balanced: 20:02, 20/02, 2002.

“A mirror day like this is a good opportunity for reflecting,” said Mark Saltveit, editor of The Palindromist magazine. He is devoted to palindromes of all sorts — strings of numbers, words or sentences that read the same backward or forward.

The rare moment is drawing its share of attention: Saltveit, a standup comedian, said he already has three radio interviews lined up with European stations.

Separately, a Web site is calling for a two-minute prayer for peace to begin at the start of the palindromic moment.

And an e-mail is making the rounds touting the rare alignment — though it mistakenly says the event last happened on Jan. 10, 1001 and will never happen again.

(Actually, it happened in the year 1111 and will again in 2112).

Of course, all the excitement comes from a Western perspective, leaving aside the many other calendars that track the passage of time — Chinese, Islamic, Jewish, Ethiopian and others.

But that doesn’t bother Saltveit. “Occasions like this are good excuses to party,” he said.

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- 14th and Santa Monica Boulevard
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- Arizona Avenue and Second Street
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- Main Street and Strand
- Main Street and Ocean Park
- Main Street and Ashland
- Montana Avenue and Lincoln Boulevard
- Montana Avenue and Euclid Street
- Montana Avenue and 16th Street

Watch for future newsstands at a location near you!