

FREE

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Ill-informed fliers seek to discourage Main St. development

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

It could be the beginning of a new community movement or just the actions of a lone malcontent.

But throughout the week someone or a group of someones trying to drum up anti-development sentiment along Main Street posted fliers in Ocean Park neighborhoods and faxed them to city officials and community leaders.

"(Santa Monica) City Council votes (4-3) to build luxury apartments on Boulangerie site," the flier reads. "One-two years of bulldozers, dump trucks and dirt and more dirt. Final vote Tue. 2/19 7PM."

Only problem is, the flier is wrong.

"Obviously, this is someone who is ill-informed and has an ax to grind," said Councilman Richard Bloom, who was

anonymously faxed the flier. "This does a disservice to the entire community because of the misinformation it contains."

First in the long list of misinformation, the city council unanimously voted to conditionally approve the apartment complex for the former-Boulangerie site.

Second, construction is expected to take 18 months from beginning to end, with bulldozers used during only the first three months.

And third, the city council didn't meet this week to decide whether to grant final approval on the project. That isn't scheduled to happen until Feb. 26 at 7 p.m.

The project was publicized in the neighborhood for two years before the vote, said Howard Jacobs, the site's developer. In addition, the "two or three residents with problems" who showed up

See FLIERS, page 3

City Hall closed today for the environment

Other area cities also compress work week in effort to improve air

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Today, Santa Monica City Hall is closed.

In fact, it hasn't been open on alternating Fridays for more than a decade now. And among Southern California cities, it's not alone.

Since the early 1990s, around the nation's first skirmish with Iraq, California enacted stringent ride-sharing rules for all public and private entities with over 100 employees.

Back then, companies and municipalities were forced to enact programs to reduce the number of trips being made by their employees or pay the state hefty fines. But most municipalities west of La Cienega Boulevard went a bit further.

They compressed their week so

employees work 80 hours over nine days and receive every other Friday off. Without it, many public officials said their municipalities couldn't cut the number of trips made by their workers below state mandated levels.

Today, scientists are finding that cleaner burning engines and a greater reliance on mass transportation has improved the air to the point where it's no worse than any major East Coast city.

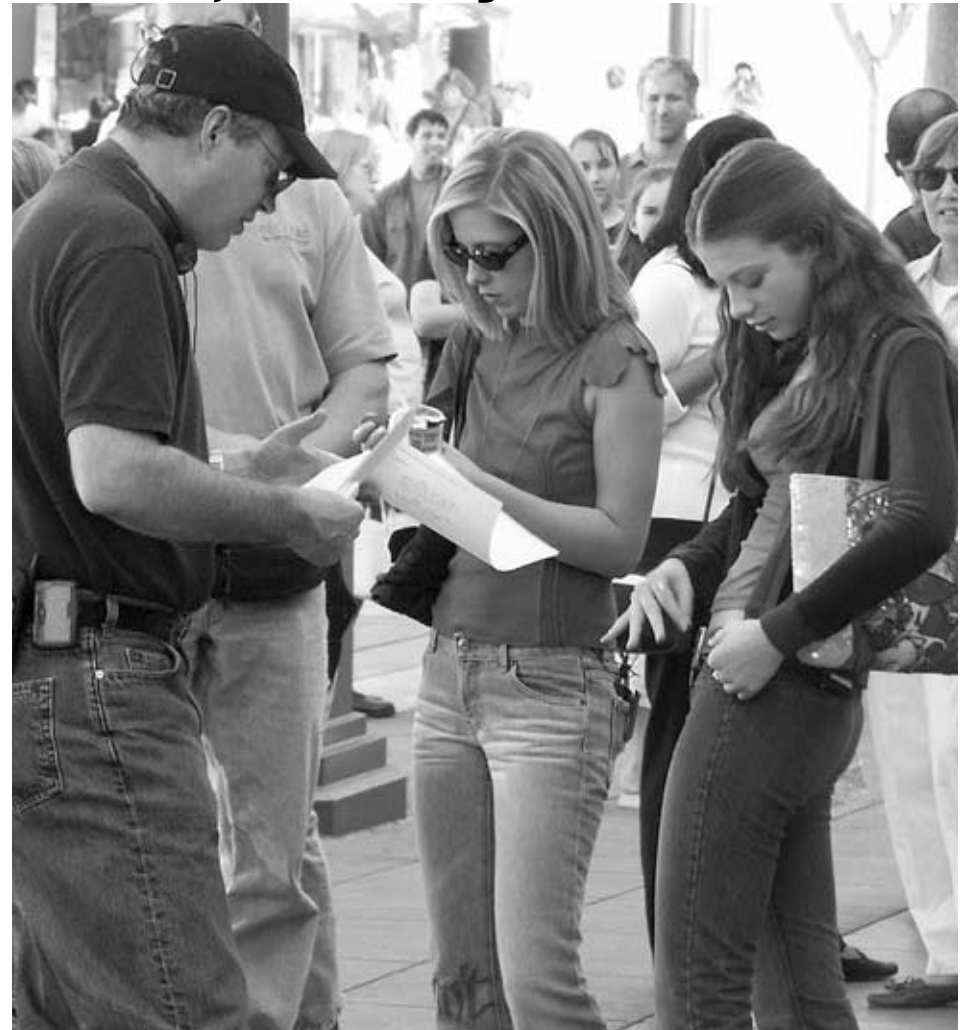
And though the Santa Monica's program isn't clearing out Interstate 10 one day every other week, it is keeping 16,000 employees from driving into the city each year.

The city also features an aggressive carpooling system, which 660 employees use every day. An additional 300 workers carpool on a part-time basis.

Employees who carpool to work are given preferential parking. Those who do it more than three days a week are given a \$1.50 stipend per day. Employees who take public transportation receive free bus fare after paying for the first month.

See CITY HALL, page 3

Action, Ms. Slayer



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press
Actress Sarah Michelle Gellar, center, films an episode of the television program, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" Thursday on the Third Street Promenade.

Father to be charged with murder in deaths of five kids

BY DAISY NGUYEN
Associated Press Writer

PICO RIVERA — Murder charges will be sought against a man suspected of deliberately killing five of his children by lighting a charcoal grill in their living room and filling the home with deadly carbon monoxide, authorities said Thursday.

Los Angeles County sheriff's Lt. Don Bear said investigators are "absolutely certain" Adair Garcia intended to asphyxiate his six children — ages 2 to 10 — and himself.

The sixth child, a 9-year-old girl, remained hospitalized. Her condition was not immediately available, but Bear said she was expected to survive.

Garcia, 30, was conscious and in stable condition. He had been removed from a

ventilator and was talking at Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital in Whittier.

"As soon as he's able, he'll be transported to the jail ward," Bear said.

Space heaters found in the home made it clear the grill wasn't used for heating, Bear said. Deputies found other evidence but declined to say if it included a suicide note.

Authorities said Garcia and his wife, Adriana Ibeth Arreola, had been having marital problems and hadn't been living together at their Pico Rivera home for about a week.

Dr. Nadeem Chishti, who treated Garcia, said his size was a factor that helped him survive in the smoke-filled house.

Paramedics were called to the two-bed-

See DEATHS, page 5

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HOROSCOPE

Don't be alone tonight, Capricorn



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)
★★★ Others pick up on your enthusiasm and drive. Your positive outlook helps those around you, especially someone who is close to your heart. Take time to consider a family member or personal matter carefully. Air out your thoughts. Tonight: Impulsive proves fun.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Express your easiness with last-minute changes, especially around work or a parent. If you don't make a big deal about what is happening, others will relax as well. Make calls and reach out for those around you. You're heading down the right path. Tonight: Pop out of the office.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★ Understand that what seems unexpected could very well work in your favor. You might need to spend a little in order to make some money. Air out ideas with those in the know, especially in your immediate circle. A friend takes a strong stand. Tonight: Treat someone to munchies.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★★ Smile at the unexpected and work with someone. A partner expresses unusual ideas that could set you back on your heels. Think carefully about what you want. You radiate happiness and possibilities. Let it all happen. Tonight: Whatever makes the moonchild happy!

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Step back and enjoy. You could be overwhelmed by what you see mounting on your plate. Ask for help from those who count and can make a difference here. Your intuition feeds you much more information than your intellect. Listen. Tonight: Take off with a favorite person.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Carefully listen to someone who cares a lot about you. This friend will bust his or her chops for you. Others help you in anyway possible, whether the issue is work or personal. Be grateful for all the special friends you have. Tonight: Where your pals are.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ Use your insight to move a project along. Someone might rebel, but this could be to your advantage. Not everything is as simple as you would like it to be. A must appearance has far greater impact than you even hoped for. Your professional status grows. Tonight: In the limelight.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★★ Surprises surround you with an intimate or close friend. Your mind drifts to possibilities. Think about the up-and-coming weekend and what you would like to do. Make calls, organizing the next few days. Invite this special person along. Tonight: Take off ASAP.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★★ You quickly recuperate from yesterday, whether you're dealing with one or many. Others could smile with delight. Choose to deal with someone who is very important in your life on a one-on-one level. Caring buds and blooms. Tonight: Dinner for two.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★★ Concentrate on moving business matters off your desk and freeing up a little extra time. Network, return calls and visit with those you work with. Others like to see you not "all business and no play." Suggest a get-together in the near future. Tonight: Just don't be alone.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★ Others notice that there is a spring in your step this morning. You might be quite happy that today is Friday. Surprise! You might get involved in a work project with such intensity that someone has to drag you out of the office. Tonight: Play away.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Express some of your more imaginative ideas. A hunch that involves finances could be surprisingly right on. Talk to others and reach out for those who are close to you. Listen to feedback from a child or loved one. This person worships the ground you walk on. How nice! Tonight: Express the romantic that lies within.



WEATHER

Today ...	Mostly Sunny	High—83°F	Low—53°F
Tomorrow ...	Partly Cloudy	High—75°F	Low—53°F
Sunday ...	Partly Cloudy	High—71°F	Low—51°F



QUOTE of the DAY

"I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and the report facts."

— Will Rogers (1879-1935)

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PUBLISHER Ross Furukawa ross@smdp.com EDITOR Carolyn Sackariason . . .sack@smdp.com STAFF WRITER Andrew H. Fixmer andy@smdp.com PRODUCTION MANAGER Del Pastrana del@smdp.com CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE Angela Downen angela@smdp.com	SALES REPRESENTATIVE Steve Kenedy steve@smdp.com SALES REPRESENTATIVE William Pattnosh william@smdp.com CIRCULATION MANAGER Kiutzu Cruz kiutzu@smdp.com PUBLIC RELATIONS Jennifer (JT) Tate jt@smdp.com TEST SUBJECT Dave Danforth dave@smdp.com
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LOCAL



Santa Monica, other cities compress work week

CITY HALL, from page 1

According estimates by the Southern California Air Quality Board, only a couple of dozen of the 180 cities in Southern California compress their work week.

"This is one option, but there is no requirement mandating they do this," said Sam Atwood, spokesman for the SCAQB. "The general goal of this rule is to increase the average vehicle ridership, which means trying to get more than one person in each vehicle."

"It says nothing about closing a day every other

week."

The SCAQB operates on a 4-day week, closing every Monday, he said.

Since it's not a mandated practice, SCAQB doesn't track exactly which cities or companies do it. And Atwood could not say whether it is a common practice or if the number of towns with alternating days off has grown or shrunk over the past decade.

Over the years in Santa Monica, there has been talk of altering the system to re-open some services on Fridays, but no official action has ever been taken.

"Whenever rumors start circulating that we might go back to the old system, employees get nervous because they see it as a real benefit," said Jacqueline Brooks, a transportation management specialist for Santa Monica.

And because Monday was Presidents Day, municipal workers had an especially kind three-day week.

Not too many years ago, the city gave its employees Lincoln's Birthday off too.

"But we changed that because we had too many days off at once," Brooks said. "It just didn't work out."

Many westside cities still use a combination of the compressed work week.

In Beverly Hills, city hall is open every day of the week. There, half the work force takes one Friday off and the other half works. The next week, they switch.

"Being closed isn't good customer service," said April Meadow, Director of Human Services for Beverly Hills. "We wanted to provide services to those who need it on Fridays."

Culver City originally closed every other Friday. Then it adopted the schedule Beverly Hills uses, only to return back to the original method at the beginning of this year.

"We weren't going to add people to keep city hall open every Friday just to split shifts," said Seth Fogel, Assistant CEO at Culver City. "There were some departments which were really strained because you would have half the number there as during the week."

"Also, people had it in their minds city hall was going to be closed so they didn't come in."

The City of West Hollywood, like Santa Monica, continues to work the same compressed schedule. However, the city has instituted a "Friday's Light" program, where a skeleton crew at the permit office, the cashier's office and the motor pool are available to the public.

"Our problem here is that we have a small workforce," said Joyce Rooney, an Associate Transportation Planner with West Hollywood. "At the time we started we had 160 employees, now we have a 195. So it wasn't really in our best interest to have people trading days."

However in Santa Monica, the city is the largest employer with about 2,000 employees.

Santa Monica city officials said the system is beneficial to the public. Expanded hours during the week allow greater access to city hall, they argue.

Some local builders say the reduced hours have slowed down the time it takes to work with city staff and get permits approved.

"This is what the schedule is supposed to be, but that's not what it really is," said David Hibbert, a Santa Monica-based architect. "For one reason or another, that schedule doesn't work for them so they don't work well



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

A sign on the door of Santa Monica City Hall informs visitors that the building will be closed every other Friday to help improve area air quality.

that way."

But the system has some advantages. Hibbert said since nobody knows which Fridays City Hall is closed, the day has become the best time to do business.

Flier contains wrong facts

FLIERS, from page 1

at Santa Monica Planning Commission meetings were concerned with affordable housing and traffic issues, he said.

"I don't see overwhelming criticism of this project," Jacob said. "If they are so against it, where were they at all the public meetings we have had."

"I have heard more sentiment in favor of it than against it."

The flier ends, "You hold the key to stopping construction mania. E-mail! (each city council member). Mike Feinstein, swing vote, call and visit."

"Obviously, this is someone who is ill informed and has an ax to grind."

— RICHARD BLOOM
Santa Monica City Council member

However, because the vote was unanimous in favor of the project, there is no need for a swing vote.

And unless new evidence is presented to the city council next week showing why the project shouldn't go forward, Bloom said he and his colleagues are likely to move ahead with the approval.

"I think we have to listen to the public," Bloom said. "If they make a convincing argument why we shouldn't follow through with our commitment I would listen. But I think it's a real long shot."

Stretched across the bottom of the fliers in all capital letters is the word, 'Moratorium.'

"As far as I know there has never been a construction moratorium under consideration for Main Street," Bloom said. "If residents think there should be one then they need to come forward at a council meeting and tell us that. But it seems to me that that end of Main Street is in need of rejuvenation."



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STATE

Japanese billionaire starts western real estate storm

BY JIM WASSERMAN

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — When he sold the family drapery and kimono business in the late 1980s, Gensiro Kawamoto became an Asian land baron, buying high-rent properties in Tokyo and then snapping up hundreds of houses in California and Hawaii.

Along the way, the tycoon tangled with neighbors and local governments and lost millions with his impulsive investment style. Now he's the shadowy and mysterious Japanese figure behind a real estate storm swamping Northern California and Hawaii.

Kawamoto, 69, is evicting residents of nearly 800 rental homes in Hawaii and the Sacramento and Santa Rosa, Calif., because he wants to sell them and use the money to finance what he calls "investment opportunities" in the United States and Japan.

That's generated protests and neighborhood unrest. Gov. Gray Davis and the Legislature have asked the Japanese government to rein in Kawamoto. The Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Northern California has written him to show mercy.

Although his California tenants have often paid below-market rents for their homes, they're mad at having only a short time to find new places to live.

"There's nothing to find on such short notice," said Sharen Aki of Sacramento, a working single mother who lives with her three teen-age children and 76-year-old mother. "I'm in a position with 450 other families. We're all just pulling our hair out trying to figure out what to do."

Kawamoto spokeswoman and Honolulu attorney Carol Asai-Sato has said only that he wants to reinvest in new ventures.

Former Honolulu Mayor Frank Fasi, who tangled with Kawamoto in the 1980s and early 1990s, said he thinks Kawamoto is out to make a profit solely for himself. But many of Kawamoto's real estate deals since he burst into the U.S. market have turned out to be duds.

It seems the man whose impulsive style is driving thousands of Californians from their homes isn't much of a businessman, said Nick Ordway, a University of Hawaii finance professor and real estate expert.

In 1987, the Japan Economic Journal called Kawamoto the sixth richest man in Japan. Forbes magazine reported he owned 57 buildings worth \$1.3 billion in Tokyo's Ginza, Akasaka and Roppongi entertainment districts.

But Kawamoto's investment style and the stagnant Japanese economy that has bankrupted similar investors has eroded Kawamoto's wealth, Ordway said.

"If he made all his investments in the same brilliant fashion he did in Hawaii, he's probably not the richest man any more," Ordway said. "He sure hasn't been making money in Hawaii."

As Kawamoto tries to shed his rental homes, he's also trying to revive a long-disputed 900-home project on farmland on Maui. That project involves 147 acres he bought for \$19 million in 1989, sold six years later for \$1.5 million and then bought again for \$1.15 million.

In 1995, he abandoned a similar 1,050-unit project on the same site, claiming the County of Maui wanted too much money for water, sewers and drainage. County officials have again expressed concerns about traffic, water use and loss of open space.

Kawamoto's U.S. real estate transactions show a pattern of quick decisions and losses, plus a fortune big enough to absorb them.

"He never did due diligence," Ordway said.

— In 1988 the long-unmarried developer paid \$42.5 million for the beachside estate of California steel magnate Henry J. Kaiser — reportedly the highest price ever paid in the United States for a home — then walked away from it. Kawamoto refused to pay \$1 million a year to lease land the estate occupied. Hawaii is one of the few states with "leasehold" property where one person owns a building and another owns the land.

Ordway said Kawamoto misunderstood the system, making a "cultural blunder of colossal proportions."

— Kawamoto's considered responsible for much of the surge in Hawaiian real estate values in the late 1980s, as he shopped for homes from his \$154,000 Rolls Royce dubbed by locals the "Kawamotomobile." After turning to Hawaii when Tokyo real estate became too expensive even for his tastes, he spent an estimated \$100 million for homes without looking inside them, according to Forbes. A California newspaper dubbed Kawamoto a "one-man inflation spiral," and Fasi called him an "Ugly Japanese," a fresh take on the popular term, "Ugly American."

"They were paying more for the land than it was worth," Fasi said Thursday.

— In 1990, Hawaii Business reported that Kawamoto backed away from developing a 312-unit affordable housing complex in Honolulu, claiming public housing sector partners wouldn't let him personally hand the keys to the first occupants.

The California outcry comes only weeks after Kawamoto destroyed a driveway used by two Hawaiian neighbors, one an 83-year-old woman, and put up no trespassing signs on Christmas Eve. Wednesday, the Honolulu City Council approved a plan to condemn three pieces of Kawamoto's land to restore the driveway.

Kawamoto plans to build a home nearby on a "rugged remote site," said Anthony Ching, director of the Hawaii Land Use Commission.

"He seems to value his privacy," Ching said. "He's trying to build on 100 acres of hillside land. One assumes it's for himself."

Meanwhile in Sacramento, Santa Rosa and the island of Oahu, most of Kawamoto's tenants have only 30 days to leave, and they're plunged into tight, expensive housing markets.

California legislators have asked the Japanese ambassador to the United States to intervene, calling Kawamoto's evictions "brash and drastic action that threatens entire neighborhoods of families, disrupts children's lives and education and destroys the local housing market."

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STATE ■ NATIONAL



Couple accused in SF dog attack linked to prison gang

BY LINDA DEUTSCH

AP Special Correspondent

LOS ANGELES — The couple charged in the fatal mauling of a San Francisco woman were associates of the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang, participated in a plan to raise warlike dogs and encouraged an inmate to escape, an expert testified Thursday.

Letters found at the home of Robert Noel and Marjorie Knoller, and in the cells of two Aryan Brotherhood inmates, showed clearly they were working together, said Devan Hawkes, an employee of the state Corrections Department who investigates gangs.

"Is it your opinion that they are associates of the Aryan Brotherhood," asked San Francisco Assistant District Attorney Jim Hammer.

"Yes," said the witness, who pointed to paragraphs in letters from Noel that showed active involvement in the "Dog O' War" business as well efforts to tip off one of the inmates to the location in the prison system of his arch enemy.

Knoller and Noel, who are both attorneys, are on trial in the Jan. 26, 2001, mauling of neighbor Diane Whipple, 33, by two massive presa canario dogs they kept in their San Francisco apartment. The trial was moved to Los Angeles due to extensive publicity.

Jurors saw on a screen enlarged portions of letters in which Noel appeared to encourage Pelican Bay State Prison inmate Paul "Cornfed" Schneider to try to escape.

"I would want to make it clear," Noel wrote, "... If you went for the door, all she and I would do is wave you goodbye and wish you godspeed."

In another letter he wrote, "If you went for the door and your route of travel was through the spot where I was standing, I would get ... out of the way so you had a clear shot at the door."

Hawkes also identified a letter which names and pinpoints the location of an inmate

who had dropped out of the Aryan Brotherhood and is now in protective custody.

"It's very significant," said Hawkes. "... There is a potential danger. He is identifying the location of a potential witness and the potential is that bodily harm could come to this witness."

The letters were presented after Hawkes explained that Schneider and inmate Dale Bretches were working with Noel and Knoller to raise presa canario dogs.

"It is my opinion that Mr. Noel and Ms. Knoller were actively involved in raising, breeding and training these dogs with the Aryan Brotherhood," Hawkes said.

Under cross-examination, Hawkes conceded the dogs were apparently being raised for use as guards rather than fighting. He also testified that the dog business was illegal because prisoners are not allowed to run businesses from inside a prison.

He said he was tipped off about the business by Janet Coumbs, a witness who told of her unwitting participation in the enterprise when she became a visitor to Schneider.

Hawkes said Coumbs called him in 1999 and "she informed me that she was participating in a dog-breeding business with Mr. Schneider."

The prosecutor showed jurors invoices for books ordered by the prisoners — among them "Gladiator Dogs," "Fighting Dog Breeds," and "Manstopper: Training a Canine Guardian."

Hawkes was the first witness to firmly tie the defendants to the violent Aryan Brotherhood. He said Schneider clearly was a member and had "AB" tattooed on a hand.

The letters confiscated from prison cells also showed discussions of violent actions including the crime for which Schneider was imprisoned — stabbing an attorney in court with a knife he smuggled in.

Noel's letter said he and Knoller were told "if he did it he must have had a damn good reason and the schmuck probably deserved it."

The letters were written on the couple's legal stationery and were marked "confidential legal mail." Hawkes said that barred prison guards from reading the letters. They were confiscated after the couple's arrest, and prosecutors say they clearly were not professional correspon-

dence.

Knoller, 46, who was walking one of the dogs at the time of the attack, is charged with second-degree murder, involuntary manslaughter and having a mischievous animal that killed a human being. Noel, 60, faces the latter two charges.

Prosecutors won't charge Tyson with sexual assault

BY ANGIE WAGNER

Associated Press Writer

LAS VEGAS — Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson will not be charged with sexual assault in two separate cases in Las Vegas, prosecutors said Thursday.

"It was simply unclear whether the sexual interaction between each of the two alleged victims and Mr. Tyson was consensual or forced," Clark County prosecutors wrote in a Thursday letter to Las Vegas police.

Prosecutors said there was no question sexual relations occurred between Tyson and the two women, but said there was "no possibility whatsoever" to successfully prosecute Tyson in either case.

"His position, of course, is it's consensual. Their position is, of course, it's not," Clark County District Attorney Stewart Bell told The Associated Press. "It's just not clear. It could have been either. I don't suppose we'll ever really know the truth."

Ten prosecutors reviewed the evidence gathered since police began investigating Tyson in September. They said the police investigation was so thorough that there was nothing more police could have done, or do in the future, that would warrant charges.

"We are grateful that the Clark County District Attorney's Office conducted an independent review of both cases and did not rely solely on information gathered by the police department," Tyson's lawyer, Darrow K. Soll of Phoenix, said in a statement.

"Our parallel investigation reveals what we believe to be substantial evidence of Mr. Tyson's innocence."

Tyson himself won't comment,

spokesman Scott Miranda said.

Police sought arrest warrants from prosecutors for Tyson on multiple counts of sexual assault in each case.

"I'm not going to talk about whether I'm surprised or disappointed or whatever," said police Lt. Jeff Carlson, who heads the sexual assault unit. "It's our job to investigate the facts. I'm proud of the investigation that the detectives did."

In the first case, police began investigating Tyson in mid-September, after a Las Vegas woman went to a hospital with injuries that she said were suffered when the boxer raped her at his home.

Chief Deputy District Attorney Doug Herndon has said the woman had been in a six-month romantic relationship with Tyson.

Police searched Tyson's \$1.3 million home for more than six hours on Sept. 26 and confiscated several boxes of material, including videotapes, sheets and towels.

The second woman went to police Dec. 28 and reported that she also had been attacked at Tyson's home in November 2000. The woman initially went to police near her out-of-state home and reported that she had been raped, Las Vegas police said.

The police department the woman first contacted never reported the case to Las Vegas police, who have not identified the first agency.

In 1992, Tyson was found guilty of rape in Indiana and served three years of a 10-year sentence.

He was cleared of a sexual battery allegation raised by a woman at a Chicago nightclub in 1996 and of an allegation that he raped a woman last year in Big Bear, Calif.

Cops: Man intended to kill his six children and himself

DEATHS, from page 1

room home about 6:30 a.m. Wednesday, when the children's grandmother, who had come over to baby-sit, saw smoke coming from the dwelling.

Arreola had to be restrained by deputies when she arrived.

Coroner's officials identified the five Garcia children who died as Brenda, 10, Jonathan and Vanessa, both 6, Cecelia, 4, and Anthony, 2.

Vanessa, Jonathan and Anthony died in the house. Cecelia died Wednesday at the Whittier hospital, and the 6-year-old girl died at UCLA Medical Center.

Arreola has asked officials at UCLA Medical Center, where her surviving daughter is being treated, to not release information about her condition.

Deputies had said Wednesday the 9-year-old girl was not expected to live.

At the family's home in a modest neighborhood about 10 miles east of Los Angeles, flowers and candles graced the porch while a red poster announced a Thursday night vigil for the victims.

Classmates and teachers of the four

oldest children mourned at La Merced elementary and intermediate schools.

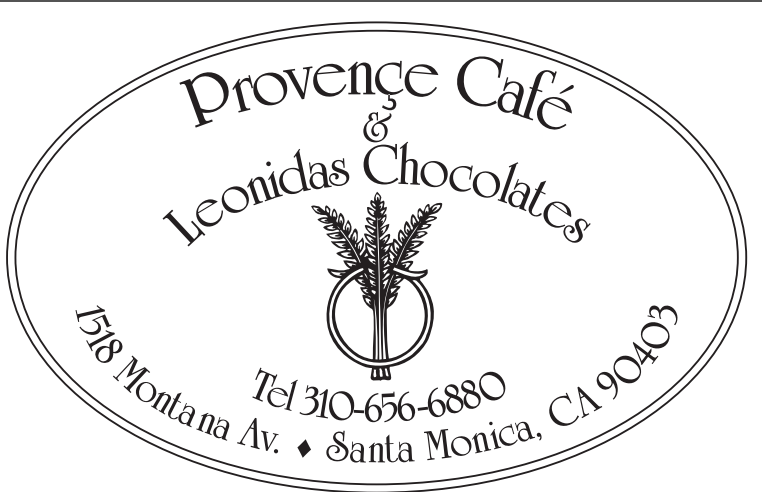
"The people working in those schools are grieving," said Robert Henke, director of student services at Montebello Unified School District. "Some people were clearly upset, but no one got hysterical and the atmosphere wasn't chaotic. It's a tragic loss, and people are grieving like they lost a loved one."

Henke said the schools were notified around 11 a.m. Wednesday. About a dozen school psychologists and counselors were sent to the campuses to help students and teachers cope with the news. School administrators also notified parents of the news through a letter they asked students to take home.

The Garcia family moved in December to their Pico Rivera home about three miles from the schools.

Arnold Ponce de Leon, who has lived in the neighborhood for 17 years, said he hadn't gotten to know the family.

"They kept to themselves like some families these days," he said. "It's too bad what happened. You just never know."



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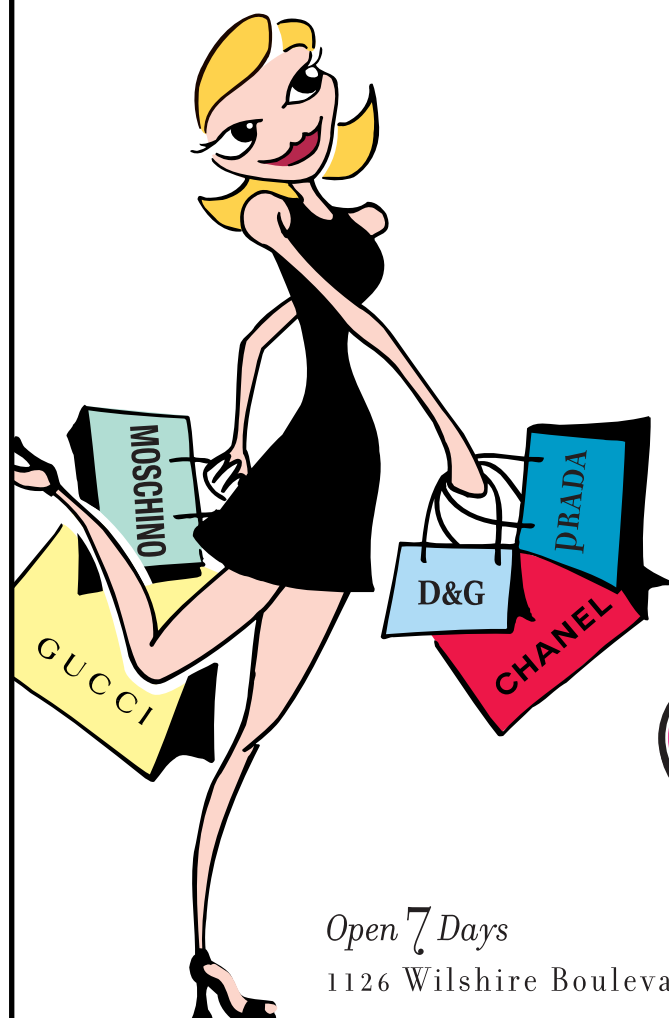
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NATIONAL

State Department declares kidnapped reporter dead

BY RICHARD PYLE
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl is dead, the State Department said Thursday, a month after the journalist was abducted by Islamic extremists in Pakistan.

Pakistani authorities said a videotape indicated Pearl, kidnapped in the port city of Karachi on Jan. 23, had been killed.

"The recorded video contained scenes showing Mr. Pearl in captivity and scenes of his murder by the kidnappers. The tape appears to be correct. Necessary instructions to the investigation teams have been issued to apprehend the remaining culprits," said Mukhtar Ahmad Sheikh, interior minister of the Sindh province, which includes Karachi.

Pearl was abducted after arranging to interview the leader of a radical Muslim faction with purported ties to the al-Qaida terrorist network and terror suspect Richard C. Reid. In December, Reid was arrested on a Paris-Miami flight he allegedly boarded with explosives in his shoes.

Pakistani police have seized several suspects, including an extremist who said in court that he engineered Pearl's abduction.

In Washington, the State Department said the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan received evidence Thursday that Pearl is dead, but spokesman Richard Boucher provided no details on the evidence.

Two U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said a videotape purportedly showed Pearl either dead or being killed, and the FBI was evaluating the tape's authenticity.

It was not immediately clear when the tape was made.

The Journal said it believed Pearl was dead.

"His murder is an act of barbarism that makes a mockery of everything Danny's kidnappers claimed to believe in," the newspaper said in a statement. "They claimed to be Pakistani nationalists, but their actions must surely bring shame to all true Pakistani patriots."

Journal spokesman Steve Goldstein said he did not know if a body had been recovered.

In Beijing, a grim-faced President Bush decried Pearl's slaying and said such crimes "only deepen the resolve of the United States" to fight terrorism. He spoke Friday, on the last day of his six-day Asia tour.

Pakistani officials said there were indications that Pearl had been lured into a trap by false information.

Islamic militant Ahmad Omar Saeed Sheikh said during a court hearing that he had engineered Pearl's abduction to

protest Pakistan's alliance with the United States' post-Sept. 11 war on terrorism.

"Our country shouldn't be catering to America's needs," the militant said.

According to Pakistani authorities, Saeed, a British-born key figure in an airplane hijacking and hostage incident in 1999, first told them Pearl was alive but later claimed the reporter had been killed in an escape attempt around Jan. 31.

In Karachi, police officials said the investigation was now focusing on Amjad Faruqi, identified by Saeed as the man who actually carried out the kidnapping. Police raided his home last week but found no sign of him.

Police are also looking for a man identified as Hashim Qadeer, whom Pearl knew as Arif. His family claims he was killed in Afghanistan.

Pakistani police say they are unsure how many people may have been involved because individual militants sometimes use aliases and tracking them is difficult.

The State Department said it was working closely with Pakistani authorities.

"Both the United States and Pakistan are committed to identifying all the perpetrators of this crime and bringing them to justice," spokesman Boucher said.

Pearl's wife, Mariane, is seven months pregnant with the couple's first child. A free-lance journalist, she had been working with him in Pakistan.

In a statement issued from their home in California, Pearl's parents and two sisters said: "We're shocked and saddened about the confirmation that our worst fears have been realized. Up until a few hours ago, we were confident that Danny would return safely, for we believe that no human being could be capable of harming such a gentle soul."

The Journal statement, signed by Publisher Peter Kann and Managing Editor Paul Steiger, called Pearl "an outstanding colleague, a great reporter, and a dear friend of many at the Journal."

"We will, in coming months, find ways, public and private, to celebrate the great work and good works Danny did. But today is a day to grieve," it said.

Pearl reported from the United States, Europe and Asia in a 12-year career with the financial daily. Based in Bombay, India, for the past year as the Journal's bureau chief for South Asia, the 38-year-old Pearl was on assignment in Pakistan as part of its coverage of the war on terrorism in neighboring Afghanistan.

The Princeton, N.J., native had worked in western Massachusetts before joining the Journal in Atlanta in 1990. He later reported from Washington, London and Paris — where he wrote about the Middle East — before moving to Asia.

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INTERNATIONAL • NATIONAL



Final WTC patient released from burn center

BY JUDIE GLAVE
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — An accountant who was burned over 50 percent of his body as he struggled down 84 floors of the World Trade Center left the hospital Thursday, the last of the Sept. 11 victims to be released.

"Just knowing that I had a family behind me that wanted me to survive gave me the will to do it," said a tearful Donovan Cowan, 34, as he left the New York-Presbyterian Weill Cornell Burn

Center in a wheelchair. "I knew a lot of people were relying on me."

He said he was working at Fiduciary Trust, on the 97th floor of 2 World Trade Center, when the first plane hit the neighboring tower. He started to leave the building but stopped when he heard an announcement that "everything was going to be all right."

"So I was just going to go back upstairs and call my mom and tell her that I was all right," he said.

Cowan had gotten as high as the 84th floor when the second hijacked airliner hit

his building. "I consider myself lucky," he said. "I heard so many of my friends died."

He said he remembered everything about his walk down. "I kept saying, 'Only 60 floors to go, only 50 floors to go,'" he said. "I didn't feel that much in pain at the time." Occasionally, he would stick his head out a shattered window to gasp for air.

Cowan suffered third-degree burns to his torso, legs and hands, and received four skin grafts. He also nearly died of kidney failure and inhalation injuries to his lungs and heart.

"He's being quite modest when he talks about all this," his physician, Dr. Gregory Bauer, said after a hospital news conference. "It's a miracle that he survived."

An avid softball player, Cowan said he hopes to recover enough to run and play softball again, but the first thing he wanted to do after leaving the hospital was to "get a Slurpee ... a cherry one."

Cowan was the 12th person to leave the burn center. He is being transferred to Burke Rehabilitation Hospital in White Plains, where he expects to stay four months.

Criticism of negligence heightens after Egyptian train fire

BY SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press Writer

CAIRO, Egypt — As investigators tried to uncover the cause of a fire that turned a train into an inferno, a growing number of voices demanded punishment Thursday for those to blame for Egypt's worst train disaster and criticized the government for negligence.

The death toll was 363 in the Wednesday disaster and a team of 70 government investigators and coroners led by Egypt's top prosecutor began its inquiry into the cause, interviewing the driver, railway engineers, ticket conductors and other witnesses.

The train's conductors and engineer defended their response, saying they had done all they could to stop the burning train and fight the fire.

On the eve of a major Muslim holiday when families traditionally gather for a feast, victims' relatives converged on Cairo's main morgue Thursday, trying to find the remains of their loved ones among bodies burned beyond recognition.

Many of the victims had been headed from the capital,

Cairo, to their home villages in the south when a fire broke out early Wednesday. The train kept going for more than two miles, as panicked passengers jumped from the cars. And even after the train stopped, the fire burned for hours with scores trapped inside.

Prosecutor General Maher Abdel Wahid promised that his investigators would look not only into the causes of the blaze but also into "those who were behind" the disaster.

Demands for punishment of officials and an overhaul of the rail system grew more feverish.

"Put those responsible on trial, whoever they are," the opposition newspaper Al-Wafd wrote in a front page editorial Thursday. "This is more than gross negligence. We need to know who was responsible and hang them in public squares and curse them for what they have done to the helpless Egyptian people."

The opposition Al-Ahram newspaper wrote that the government should be set "on fire" because of the deadly accident.

In a statement Thursday, the Brotherhood blamed the accident on "gross faults, irresponsibility and negligence." Brotherhood lawmakers intend to quiz the prime minister

and transport minister over the accident when Parliament reconvenes.

The fire was the worst accident in the history of the 150-year-old Egyptian rail system. But the government-funded system has long been considered unsafe, inefficient and plagued by accidents.

Egypt's rail network is weighed down by overstaffing and underinvestment. The government keeps train fares low for Egypt's large population living in poverty.

A possible cause of Wednesday's fire was the explosion of one of the small gas stoves passengers often bring aboard to cook meals or make tea, despite regulations forbidding it.

But an official from the prosecutor general's office, speaking on condition of anonymity, said no blast marks were found on the train. He did not suggest a cause.

The prosecutors' office said 363 people died in the disaster, down from earlier reports of 373. The large number of dismembered human limbs at the site where the burning train eventually came to a stop — Reqa al-Gharbiya, 60 miles south of Cairo — complicated the count, officials said.



Kenneth Lambert/Associated Press

U.S. President Bush, left, is given flowers by an unidentified girl as Chinese President Jiang Zemin, center, greets Bush upon Bush's arrival in Beijing at the Great Hall of the People, Thursday.

Army helicopter crashes with 12 Americans aboard

BY OLIVER TEVES
Associated Press Writer

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines — A U.S. Army helicopter carrying 12 Americans crashed into the sea early Friday after ferrying troops in a counter-terrorism exercise with the Philippine military, officials said.

No survivors were found in the early hours after the crash, lowering hopes of retrieving anyone alive from the water. Both U.S. and Philippine military forces were searching the southern Philippines waters.

Philippine military spokesman Lt. Col. Danilo Servando said the MH-47 Chinook, carrying eight crew members and four passengers, was not brought down in an attack.

"There was no hostile ground fire," Servando said.

Some debris was spotted at the crash

site near Apo, a tiny island in the Bohol Sea off the larger island of Negros.

Apo was being transformed into a staging area for the search-and-rescue effort. Some U.S. and Philippine forces involved in the joint exercise were being pulled away to help.

Officials said the helicopter had just made three night flights between Zamboanga, a major Philippine military base, and nearby Basilan island, parts of which are a stronghold of the Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf. The rebels are holding an American missionary couple and a Filipino nurse.

Along with a second MH-47, the ill-fated helicopter left Zamboanga shortly after midnight for a two-hour flight to Mactan, an islet near the city of Cebu where the United States has a supply base for the Basilan mission, Servando said. It crashed around 2:30 a.m. (1:30 p.m. EST Thursday) in deep water.

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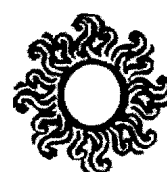
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BUSINESS

Boeing plans 1,000 layoffs in LA satellite division

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Boeing Co. said Thursday it will lay off about 1,000 people from its satellite manufacturing arm in Southern California as it restructures to deal with tough competition in the uncertain economy.

The announcement came four months after Boeing cut 400 other jobs at the satellite division because of the slowing economy.

The Chicago-based company has slashed more than 15,000 jobs nationwide and plans to cut as many as 30,000 jobs by mid-year, most of them from its Seattle-based Commercial Airplanes division. The layoffs announced here Thursday are not part of the 30,000 previously announced.

The new round of cuts include reductions in manufacturing and support staff along with some engineering positions at Boeing facilities in El Segundo and Torrance, said company spokesman George Torres.

"We are restructuring in general to be more competitive in a very tough market," he said.

Boeing acquired the satellite business, which employs about 9,200 people, last year. The unit is the world's largest producer of satellites for military and commercial markets.

The weak economy has slowed orders

from commercial customers, Torres said.

The struggling telecommunications industry saw a number of companies such as Lucent Technologies Inc. and Global Crossing Ltd. falter financially.

Many of those companies were looking to use satellites to help build global wireless communication systems and space-based broadband systems for the Internet.

"They (Boeing) have been building a satellite a month for a long time, but they're looking at the future. They're not seeing the kind of orders they've had," said Marco Caceres, a senior space analyst with the aerospace research firm the Teal Group.

Boeing hopes the final cuts in Southern California will involve no more than 700 people through efforts to reassign workers to 350 current openings and encourage others to retire early, Torres said.

But getting a transfer can be tough.

"When you try to match skills with other parts of Boeing, most of the openings are on the engineering side," he said. "There aren't as many in manufacturing."

Torres said Boeing remains committed to expanding its satellite business.

The company intends to proceed with plans for a 35,000-square-foot addition to its El Segundo satellite factory and continue pursuing new military business that could create about 1,300 new jobs by 2005.

Power regulators approve \$11.1 billion bond sale

BY KAREN GAUDETTE

Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — With a 4-1 vote, California power regulators agreed Thursday to authorize the state to borrow \$11.1 billion to settle its power-buying debt and help pay long-term energy contracts, in one of the largest bond offerings in U.S. history.

However, the agreement bars the Public Utilities Commission from blocking any spending by the state's power buying agency it may find imprudent — drawing severe criticism from consumer advocates and even some commissioners.

The agreement "is a blank check for the Department of Water Resources to pay all power purchases, no matter how imprudent," said Commissioner Henry Duque, the lone dissenter.

Other commissioners also complained, but said agreeing to conditions dictated by the Legislature was the only way to bring the bonds to market. That is essential to prevent the state's deficit, already pegged at \$14.5 billion, from getting worse while also avoiding drastic cuts in essential human services, they said.

"We frankly are on the verge of bankruptcy unless we find a way to pay our bills," said Commissioner Richard Bilas. "Hand-wringing and finger-pointing at this point in time do not make the state's deficit go away."

The financing plan spells out how bond money and ratepayer dollars will be divided to flow into the DWR's operating costs, pay bond holders and energy sellers and begin chipping away at the \$40 bil-

lion in long-term energy contracts California made to stabilize its troubled power market.

Under the agreement, the PUC essentially is forced to rubber-stamp any requests the DWR says it needs to pay the bills. That would include rate increases.

"The legislation provided that the (DWR) is to determine the justness and reasonableness of its own costs, and the commission is left to cover that burden," said Loretta Lynch, PUC president.

This troubles consumer groups, who say ratepayers and taxpayers will suffer, and fear the DWR could use the money to pay other costs before paying back the general fund.

"If we don't have oversight, we don't know what the heck (DWR) is doing with all the money they've acquired," said Doug Heller of the Santa Monica-based Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights.

The money eventually will pay a series of debts:

— \$6.1 billion of general fund money the state spent last year buying electricity for the customers of three troubled utilities;

— A \$4.3 billion loan the state took out to continue buying power;

— \$413 million of interest that would accumulate by June 30 on that loan, according to finance director Tim Gage.

Rating agencies and investors are eager to examine the plan to decide whether to buy the bonds, said Zane Mann, publisher of California Municipal Bond Advisor, an investment newsletter.

SPORTS



Another comeback by Miller helps shroud controversy

BY JAIME ARON

AP Sports Writer

SALT LAKE CITY — Just when controversy threatened to again tarnish the Winter Olympics, American skier Bode Miller returned the focus to competition with a fabulous finish in the giant slalom.

Miller became the first U.S. male to medal in the event by rising from seventh to second with a final run that was the fastest of the day. Miller won silver last week's combined, also with a superb comeback.

Stephan Eberharter, an Austrian who already has silver and bronze medals at these games, nipped Miller for the gold. Norway's Lasse Kjus took bronze.

About an hour earlier, Russian cross-country skier Larissa Lazutina was disqualified from the 20-kilometer relay while preparing for her third medal of these games and 10th career medal, which would match the most ever by a female Winter Olympian.

Ski officials said only that "one athlete had a high concentration" of a performance-boosting substance in blood samples taken before the event. Reports on Moscow TV identified the athlete as Lazutina. The Russian Olympic Committee said it was planning a news conference to discuss the case.

The Russian and Ukraine teams failed to start the race, which was won by Germany. Norway won the silver and Switzerland took the bronze.

The South Korean delegation, meanwhile, was expected to protest a disqualification that cost them a gold medal in the short-track speedskating's 1,500 meters Wednesday night. The ruling made a winner of American star Apolo Anton Ohno.

And, still ongoing, is the pairs figure skating scandal that's loomed over Salt Lake City like an atmospheric inversion.

The attorney for the French skating judge accused of being behind the mess told The Associated Press on Thursday that his client calmly denied to investigators that she was part of any vote-swap deal.

In three hours of testimony Wednesday, Marie-Reine Le Gougne said she voted for the Russian pair on merit, attorney Max

Miller said.

Ohno's victory Wednesday night capped a day that produced the most medals (five) and most golds (three) for Americans at a Winter Olympics. Miller's medal upped the U.S. count to 27, more than double the previous record of 13. The team has nine golds, three more than ever.

The collection will grow Thursday with the U.S. women's hockey team in the finals against Canada. Also, three of the top four women's figure skaters going into the free skate final are Americans.

The U.S. women's curling team missed a chance for a bronze medal Thursday, losing 9-5 to Canada, the 1998 gold medalist.

Sweden beat Finland 2-1 for bronze in women's hockey.

• SHORT-TRACK SPEEDSKATING:

Ohno hung back for most of the 13 1/2-lap race, then darted to second with two laps to go. On the next-to-last turn, Ohno dipped inside Kim Dong-sung, the defending World Cup champion, but the South Korean moved into his path.

Sensing a possible violation, Ohno threw up his arms and finished second. Kim celebrated by carrying his flag around the ice, but referees announced he'd been tossed for an illegal block. Down went the flag.

"He definitely came over on me. Good call," said Ohno, who on Saturday got up from a crash and stuck a skate over the finish line to win silver in the 1,000.

Li Jiajun of China won the silver and Marc Gagnon of Canada took the bronze.

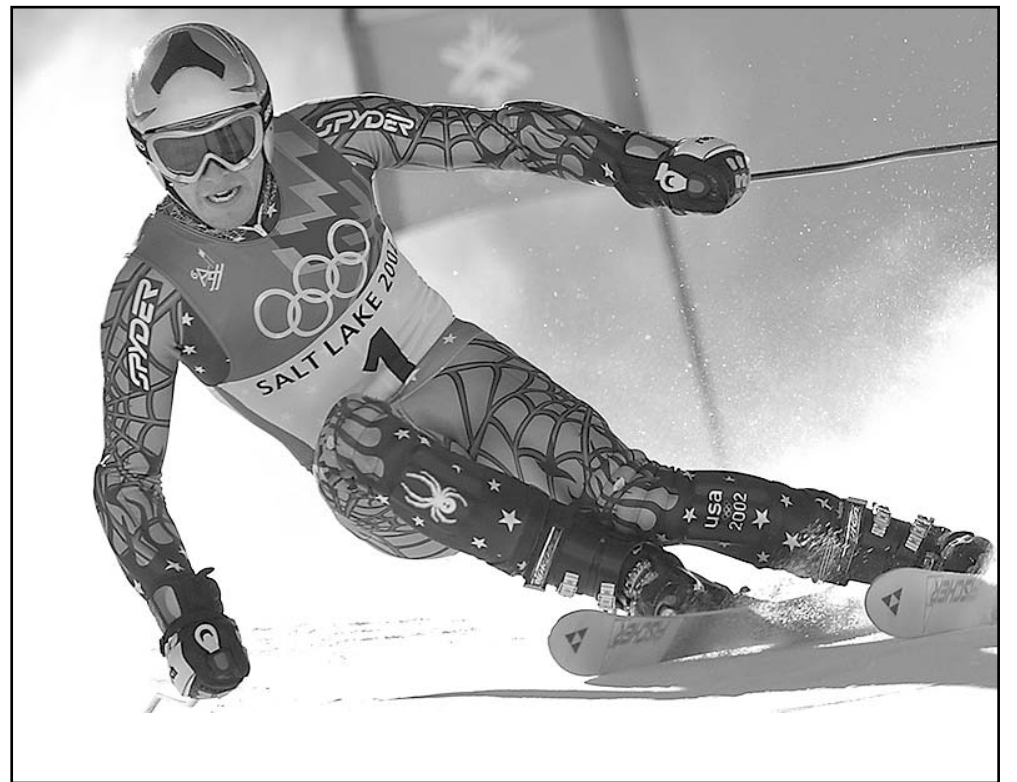
"This is far-fetched," said South Korean coach Jun Myung-kyu. "It doesn't make any sense. The level of the referee was not up to the level of what an Olympic referee should be."

• SKELETON: Jack Shea would've loved this.

His son, Jim, was beside the starting line, smiling as he watched his son Jimmy plow headfirst down the bobsled chute in a skeleton sled and overcome a narrow deficit to catch the leader with a blazing finish. Jimmy then pulled a photo of Jack from his helmet.

"I think his Gramp was there giving him that little extra push," said Jim Shea Sr., who competed in three cross-country events at the 1964 Innsbruck Games.

The Sheas are America's first three-generation Olympic family and the second



Susan Walsh/Associated Press

Bode Miller, of the U.S., speeds down the course during his second run in the men's giant slalom in Park City, Utah Thursday at the Winter Olympics. Miller picked up the silver medal.

with two generations of gold winners. Jack, who won two speedskating events at the 1932 Lake Placid Games, died in a traffic accident last month at 91.

• **HOCKEY:** The 22nd anniversary of the United States' miraculous hockey victory over Russia will be celebrated with another U.S.-Russia game. Once again, it will be an Olympics semifinal on American ice.

The U.S. team beat Germany 5-0 and Russia beat the Czech Republic 1-0, avenging a loss in the 1998 gold medal game, to set up Friday's rematch of a pool-round game that ended in a 2-2 tie.

On the other side of the bracket was an upset that ranks with the "Miracle on Ice" shocker in 1980. Belarus beat undefeated Sweden 4-3 in a quarter-final on a 70-foot shot by Vladimir Kopat that bounced off goalie Tommy Salo's head and landed in the net with 2:24 remaining.

"It is a miracle for us," winning goalie Andrei Mezin said.

Belarus, which has no NHL forwards, next plays Canada, a 2-1 winner over Finland.

• MEN'S BIATHLON:

Speedskater Eric Heiden in 1980. Speedskater Lydia Skoblikova in 1964. And now, following Norway's victory in the 30-kilometer relay, Ole Einer Bjoerndalen in 2002.

Those are the only Winter Olympians to have won four medals in one games, with Heiden setting

the overall record with five.

Three-time defending Olympic champion Germany won the silver and France took the bronze.

• SPEEDSKATING:

By failing to medal in two events in which she was favored, Anni Friesinger was close to going home known more for her glamour than athletic prowess. That changed in 3 3/4 laps.

The victory, in world-record time, gives Friesinger a gold medal to go along with the Celtic flame tattoo above her navel, which is especially visible in the erotic pic-

tures of her in German magazines.

Teammate Sabine Voelker was second and Rodriguez nudged teammate Chris Witty out of third for the United States' eighth long-track medal of the games, matching the standard set in 1980. Heiden led the way then; this time, six skaters have contributed.

• **CURLING:** Britain and Switzerland will meet in the women's finals. On Friday, Canada will play Norway in the men's finals and Sweden will face Switzerland for bronze.



Julie Jacobson/Associated Press

With her team down by three points in the sixth end, United States skip Kari Erickson prepares to make a delivery during the Olympic bronze medal curling match against Canada during the Winter Olympics Thursday in Ogden, Utah. Canada won the match 9-5.



NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY AMENDMENT TO THE HUD CONSOLIDATED PLAN (FY 2000-05)

Notice is hereby given that the City of Santa Monica has developed the Amendment to the HUD Consolidated Plan. The One-Year Action Plan, which is a component of the Consolidated Plan, is submitted annually to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It delineates the City's specific projects and activities for one-year use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds in order to meet the City's overall housing and community development needs as specified in the Consolidated Plan (FY 2000-05) adopted by City Council and submitted to HUD in June 2000. The City is seeking community comments on the Amendment.

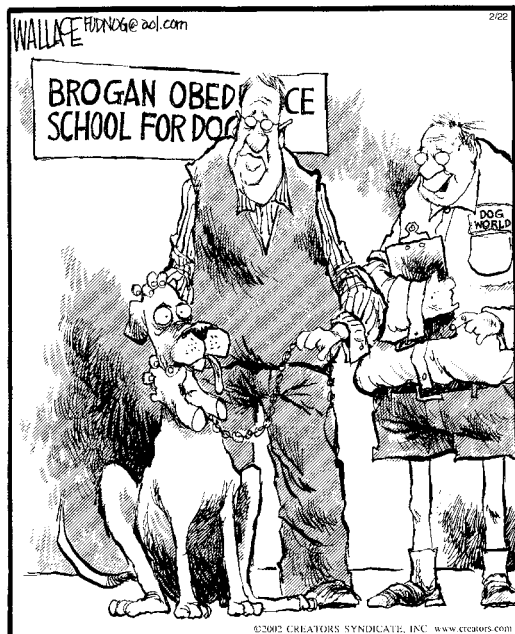
Copies of the Amendment to the HUD Consolidated Plan are now available to the public for a 30-day community review period ending March 26, 2002. To obtain a copy of the Amendment, please contact the Human Services Division, 1685 Main Street, Room 212, Santa Monica, CA 90401, telephone (310) 458-8701, TDD (310) 458-8696. Please send your written comments to the above address by March 21, 2002.

COMICS

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RAKE	IN
TOPAZ	ADDED
ADORE	TEENY
REPEL	SARGE

Yesterday's answer

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						12			
13						14			
15				16	17			18	
19				20				21	
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38			39			40	41		
42						43			
44						45			

2-22

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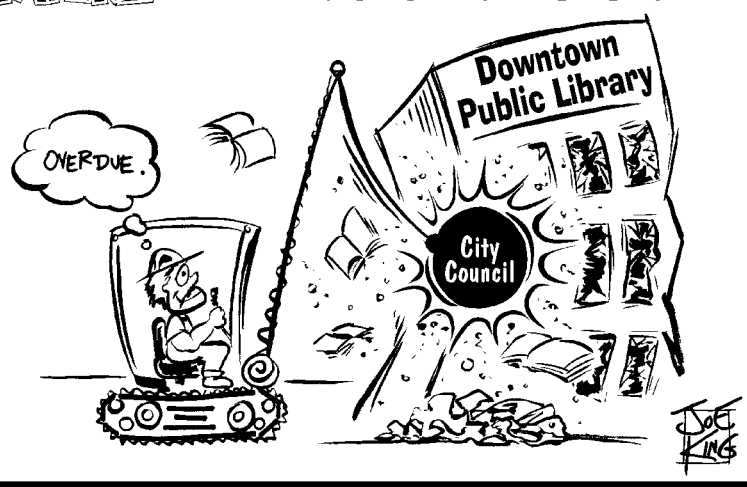
by Chuck Shepard

Criminals busting into jail

- Law enforcement authorities continue to contend not only with people breaking out of jails but into them, too such as Joel Damen Montoya, 26, found in September with bolt cutters outside the fence at the prison in Salem, Ore., from which he had been released earlier in the day.
- An intoxicated Mark Delude, 39, trying to come in over the fence at the County Work Camp in St. Johnsbury, Vt., in December, apparently bringing beer back for the boys.
- James J. Cesarez, 36, was arrested at a St. Croix Falls, Wis., Wal-mart in November allegedly shoplifting toys and medications and was released on bond; that night, someone smashed a window at the police station and grabbed only the box containing Cesarez's shoplifted items. (Cesarez was re-arrested a short time later.)



"PROGRESS?"



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BACK PAGE

Fish bone study suggests El Nino used to occur less frequently

BY PAUL RECER

AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON — El Nino, the periodic warming of Pacific Ocean waters that affects the weather worldwide, started about 6,000 years ago, according to a study of ancient fish bones.

Researchers report Friday in the journal *Science* that fish bones from refuse left about 6,000 years ago by ancient peoples in Peru show that ocean catfish lived in water that averaged six to seven degrees warmer than now and that there was little variation in the temperature.

C. Fred T. Andrus of the University of Georgia, the first author of the study, said that if El Nino was occurring at the modern rate, one every two to seven years, then the bones from the fish would have reflected the temperature variation.

"We don't see that," said Andrus. "Our data strengthen the argument that El Nino, as we know it, began relatively recently - since about 6,000 years ago."

Earlier studies, using chemicals trapped in the shells of ancient mollusks, also suggested that El Nino was absent thousands of years ago, but that work was not widely accepted by others. Andrus said the new study supports the earlier findings.

During non-El Nino times, deep, cold Pacific waters well up to the surface off the South American coast, bringing up nutrients and chilling the surface waters. When El Nino starts, the upwelling diminishes and the surface waters warm. This changes weather worldwide.

For instance, during the 1997-98 El Nino, there was flooding in California, heavy rains across Texas and the southeast, and mild winters in western Canada.

Andrus said that water temperatures off Peru were warmer 6,000 years ago and the climate was more stable. The climate did not experience the rapid changes typically caused by El Nino.

"Given the enormous global impact of El Nino, it's important to understand that climate is a naturally variable system and that just 6,000 years ago El Nino was less fre-

quent," said Andrus.

Amy Clement, a University of Miami physical oceanographer and climate researcher, said that the Andrus finding is important because it combines physical evidence with other observations to search for an understanding of the ancient climates. But she said the work is not strong enough to draw firm conclusions about El Nino's history.

"It raises questions that need to be tested in computer models," said Clement. "The work contradicts some of the existing climate models."

In the study, Andrus and his colleagues analyzed the deposition of oxygen isotope 18 in the ear bones — called otoliths — of a species of ocean catfish that have lived off the coast of Peru for thousands of years.

The fish's ear bones grow a little bit each year, leaving marks rather like tree rings. The amount of oxygen-18 deposited in the bone marks directly reflects the tempera-

ture of the water where the fish lived during the period that the bone was growing. The fish typically live about eight years.

Andrus said the researchers captured modern catfish and showed that their ear bones carried the chemical signature of the 1997-98 El Nino. In warmer waters, more oxygen-18 is deposited.

The researchers then analyzed 12 otoliths recovered from the refuse piles of ancient peoples who lived along the Peruvian coast and regularly feasted on the catfish. The refuse heaps where the bones were found were age-dated at 6,200 to 6,400 years.

Andrus said that out of the dozen otoliths analyzed, the researchers found suggestions of only two El Nino events. If the phenomenon had been as common then as now, he said, each of the otoliths in the catfish, which typically live about eight years, should have borne evidence of a water temperature change caused by El Nino.

Lotus plants grown from ancient seeds

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Scientists have germinated lotus seeds estimated to be as much as 500 years old, marking the first time new plants have grown from seeds that ancient.

An international team led by scientists at the University of California, Los Angeles grew lotus plants from four seeds collected from a dry lake bed in northeastern China, where they had been buried for centuries.

"The cultivation of offspring from old seeds radiocarbon dated at between 200 and 500 years of age is a first in plant biology," said Jane Shen-Miller, a research biologist at UCLA.

The research appears in the February issue of the *American Journal of Botany*.

Shen-Miller was also part of a team that reported in 1995 the successful germination of a 1,288-year-old

lotus seed, gathered from the same lake bed.

In that case, the entire seedling was dried and burned before it matured so it could be radiocarbon dated.

In the new research, advances in radiocarbon techniques required only a small portion of each seed be dated, preserving enough of the seed to allow it to sprout and grow. Indeed, the lotus plants did mature, but did so abnormally, developing leaves that were weak, bent and of a different color than usual.

Scientists suspect genetic mutation-causing radiation from the decay of elements naturally present in the lake bed soils is the likely culprit.

By studying the plant further, scientists said they hope to understand how its seeds can survive low doses of radiation for such an extended period of time — information that could be used to develop new strains of rice, corn and wheat with seeds that now remain viable for only a few years.



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