

FREE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2004

Volume 3, Issue 88

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues



NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

■ A 400-pound man fell to his waist through the floor of his home at the Orangewood Lakes Mobile Home Community and said he had been trapped there for two days; a neighbor had called on him during his ordeal, but the man declined help (October). And in nearby Largo, Fla., according to police, a 41-year-old woman offered to pay three teenagers \$20 to come beat up her son (but told them to be careful with the furniture) (January).

■ A cleaning crew forgot to lock up at a Bank of the West branch, and a customer had the whole place to himself when he came by on the Martin Luther King holiday (but he notified the police) (Long Beach, Calif.). Officers ticketed a 19-year-old driver for running into an ambulance, charging that the man was distracted by reading a speeding ticket he had just received (South Brunswick, N.J.). A bill was introduced in the Indiana legislature permitting life-without-parole inmates to voluntarily choose to be executed.

■ While the Statue of Liberty remains shuttered for lack of \$5 million in post-Sept. 11 upgrades, Congress in January mandated \$10.7 billion in "earmarked" projects (also known as home-state "pork"), including: \$50 million for an indoor rain forest in Iowa, \$50 million to make sure a Florida beach resort bridge remains toll-free, \$450,000 to decipher the gene structure of rainbow trout, \$225,000 to repair a public swimming pool whose drain U.S. Rep. Jim Gibbons of Nevada clogged with tadpoles when he was a kid, \$200,000 to introduce golf to youngsters, \$90,000 for the Cowgirl Hall of Fame, and, ironically, \$500,000 for a University of Akron program that analyzes how Congress makes difficult budget decisions.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Well, me don't swim too tough so me don't go in the water too deep."

— Bob Marley



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Action! All of Santa Monica is a stage



John Wood/Daily Press

The American Film Market, which spotlights Santa Monica this week, is expected to generate at least \$250,000 in hotel bed taxes for the city and untold millions in revenue for local merchants.

City stands to enjoy a double feature of film market in 2004.

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN — Thousands of filmmakers and buyers will descend on Santa Monica this week, inking as much as \$500 million in motion picture deals.

The eight-day American Film Market, featuring more than 450 films from 70 countries, officially kicks off Wednesday. About 7,000 buyers, exhibitors and guests are expected to participate in the 18th annual event.

For City Hall, the film market typically equals between \$250,000 and \$300,000 in hotel bed taxes. For local merchants, the thousands of additional visitors to Santa Monica translates into untold millions of dollars in meals, sales and cab rides.

This year is a little different, for two reasons. First, the event coincides with the Academy Awards in Hollywood — prompting local merchants to work towards keeping the movie buffs in Santa Monica. Secondly, the film market will return this November, when it will be staged each year from now on.

The idea is to shift the film

"The difference is when Disney puts out a move, like 'Finding Nemo,' they already know what movie theaters it's playing at in China."

— ANDREA KELSDEN
Manager, AFM

market so that it is on a natural cycle with some of major film festivals. For Santa Monica, it means twice the revenue this year. For local hoteliers, it means an extra 12,000 room nights sold. In other words, most, if not all, of the city's 3,700 hotel rooms will be booked for several days straight.

"November would be a great time," said Denise Waggoner, a sales manager for the bureau. "It's a great time for them to come back. It's the soft time before the holiday season starts and it's actually the best time for their company to have this."

At Loews Santa Monica Beach

See AFM, page 4

Weathering the storm for 37 years

Community profiles is a weekly series that appears each Monday and delves into the people who live, work and play in Santa Monica.



BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

SANTA MONICA PIER — When the big storm of 1983 battered the old pier, ripping loose its wooden pilings and leaving them strewn across the beach, Chris Volaski didn't consider leaving.

Like so many other merchants on the Santa Monica Pier, she rebuilt. And today, after more than 37 years as owner of the Oatman Rock Shop, Volaski remains a daily fixture here.

Volaski, 62, a native of Georgia who was raised in Chicago, hopes to see a multi-million dollar breakwater built around the pier in her lifetime, a goal officials have long discussed. She's also hopes a planned miniature golf course and year-round outdoor concerts will attract more visitors.

The pier has suffered from the drop in tourism since 9-11 and struggles to attract locals, especially with the Third Street Promenade and Main Street just blocks away. She also readily admits there are other forces to contend with.

"We live by the weather," she said last week, sitting on a plastic chair in front of her husband John's bait shop, wearing a heavy



John Wood/Daily Press

Chris Volaski, owner of the Oatman Rock Shop on the pier, with husband John.

See PROFILES, page 5

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On September 11, 2002, at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., "Visions of America" imagery was featured throughout the White House's memorial to the victims of 9/11. President Bush, Ted and Carolyn Kennedy, James Earl Jones and other Hollywood notables attended as Joe's images were projected on giant screens over the National Symphony Orchestra.

Experience the beauty and magnificence of America in the one-of-a-kind presentation by "Joe Sohm". Joe's photographs are published daily in magazines such as Newsweek, National Geographic and Time. Witness Joe's unique take on our great country and see for yourself why he is a favorite photographer of the White House, the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton Presidential Library.

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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

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

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

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★★ Your fire and creativity do not go unnoticed. Others might be more impressed than they let on. You also need to display your kind, caring and soft side within. Your gentleness deeply touches a child or admirer. Tonight: As you like it.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★ Do a good job listening. There is much to share and learn about right now. In fact, you might want to step back from the immediate situation. A boss who's authority you often question in your mind has much to share. Tonight: Vanish home.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★★ Emphasize what you have rather than what you don't have. Allow your creativity to filter into your work and life. Some idea or venture you have been pondering or dreaming about needs to come forward. Others will help you make it real. Tonight: So what if it is Monday?

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★ You know what works, especially if you follow advice. You might not be inclined to take this path, but it will work in the long run. Others seek you out, but you, too, need to know when to delegate or ask for more help. Tonight: Work late.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★★ You might think an associate is not grounded, but you could discover otherwise if you work with this person. Listen and give yourself the opportunity to play with far-out ideas. You'll actually like what might come up. Tonight: Read between the lines.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★ You see someone quite differently than before. Understanding takes you down a new path, whether you are emotionally and/or financially tied. You like the end results. One-on-one relating bonds a tie with new softness. Tonight: Express your dedication.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★★ You will naturally do the right thing at the right time. Your imagination merges with a partner's ideas. Brainstorm away. List your mutual ideas and go over them together. Tonight: The more people around you, the better.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★ Pace yourself carefully. You'll get a lot done if you avoid making the "schmooze" at work or doing whatever you want. A flirtation could be building and developing into a lot more. You might have a difficult time anchoring. Tonight: Daydream away. Relax in a preferred manner.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★★ You have a very charming way with certain people that achieves the results you desire. You also have a sixth sense as to how to approach others and get excellent results. Go for what you want while the planets wave you on. Tonight: Express your innate friskiness.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★ Be more forthright in your dealings with a family member and/or a domestic issue. You find that your intuition about what is needed here could make a big difference. Think in terms of stabilizing a changing situation. Tonight: Snuggle in at home.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ Your intuition serves you well when dealing with those in your immediate environment. You instinctively choose and say the right words. You lure others just by being yourself. Some might think you have a very ethereal or spacey quality. Tonight: Favorite haunt, favorite person.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★★ If you follow your sixth sense, you are likely to go shopping and choose an enticing gift. You also might decide to go shopping for yourself. Why not? It might be time to indulge in something new and special. Tonight: Moderate your spending.

Santa Monica Daily Press

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



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Local farmers spring up in the kitchen

By Daily Press staff

The first cooking show to feature local farmers as growers and guests in the kitchen, City TV is offering cooking tips for seasonal recipes.

The second episode of "Fresh from the Farmers' Market" will run on Santa Monica CityTV Channel 16. Host Amelia Saltsman, is joined by guest, Barbara Spencer, of Windrose Farm to prepare "Wintry West Coast Favorites," including beans, greens and pork stew; date, mandarin and arugula salad; and Meyer lemon ice cream.

Each half-hour episode features a shopping segment at the local farmers' market with advice on how to choose and store produce. Saltsman and the guest farmer then prepare three seasonal recipes from ingredients available at local farmers' markets and discuss farming life and cooking tips.

"Fresh from the Farmers' Market" is a collaboration of the Santa Monica Farmers' Market and CityTV, and is made possible by the Santa Monica Farmers' Market, the California Department of Food and Agriculture's "Buy California" campaign through the Southland Farmers' Market Association to promote California specialty crops in Los Angeles County-certified farmers' markets.

The Southland Farmers' Market Association is a grower-funded, non-profit organization that supports farmers and farmers' markets on a state level and was one of 50 recipients of "Buy California" grant funds distributed by the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

Saltsman is a Santa Monica-based food writer, cooking teacher and longtime farmers' market shopper who has given numerous cooking demonstrations that showcase seasonal market produce at the Wednesday Santa Monica Farmers' Market.

Guest farmers are selected from the 200 California-certified growers who attend one of Santa Monica's four certified farmers' markets.

Air dates for the show's second episode are as follows:

Santa Monica CityTV Cable Channel 16: Feb. 23 at 4:30 p.m.; Feb. 24 at 4 p.m.; 27 at 6:30 p.m.; March 1 at 7:30 p.m.; March 4 at 8:30 a.m.; March 7 at 6:30 p.m.; March 10 at 10 a.m.; March 13 at 10:30 a.m.

For Los Angeles Cable Channel 36 listings, visit www.la36.org.

For more information on the show's recipes, call (310) 458-8712 ext. 2 or visit www.farmersmarket.santa-monica.org.

Past stands 'Still': Photographer's show evokes past

By Daily Press staff

"Still Life," a collection of black-and-white images that evoke 17th Century painters and legendary photographers, will be exhibited March 1 through April 2 at the Santa Monica College Photography Gallery.

The photographs — taken with a large-format camera by Malibu photographer Sondra Wampler — are composed images of botanicals that create tension and subtle sensuality, according to officials.

Wampler said she has drawn on the "rich heritage" of the 17th Century still life master painters, as well as such major photographers as Imogen Cunningham, Josef Sudek and the Westons.

An opening reception is scheduled for 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, March 6 at the SMC Photography Gallery, located on the second floor of Drescher Hall, 1900 Pico Blvd.

Gallery hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

"Still Life" is a project I began in the mid-1990s, inspired by my love of gardens and the intricate design found in nature," Wampler said. "It is my intent that viewers see beyond the simplicity of these organic portraits to the cycle of life they embody."

Wampler, an SMC alum, has had her work exhibited throughout the United States, including the NOPE Gallery in Los Angeles, the L.A. Art Association and the Virginia Miller Gallery in Miami.

Four of her botanical images in 1996 were published as fine art posters and so far have sold nearly 400,000 pieces internationally. With more than 200 images published as fine art reproductions, Wampler has enjoyed a rare kind of popularity, according to officials.

For information, call (310) 434-4289.



Today: 3-5 ft., waist- to head-high, occasionally 8 ft. sets, and poor-fair conditions.

Outlook: We'll see the NW ground swell slowly wind down on Monday as the short period wind swell turns more to the WNW and holds, with reinforcing NW wind and ground swell keeping the surf up Tuesday and Wednesday.

For Monday, look for a very slow fade in NW wind and ground swell (285-300).

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

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The Q Line

Local politicians and city leaders have been recently discussing whether a hike in the hotel bed tax would be appropriate to help fund the local school district, which is financially faltering.

The tax, which is strategically set at 12 percent — 2 percent lower than the city of Los Angeles and surrounding cities — is tacked on to room rates at hotels in Santa Monica.

The increase would have to be voter

approved, and could appear as a ballot measure this November.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Do you support an increase in the hotel bed tax. Why or why not?"

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



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LOCAL

Market generates hundreds of thousands for SM

AFM, from page 1

Hotel on Ocean Avenue, hundreds of laborers have beat the clock over the past 10 days, transforming the 342-room luxury hotel into offices for movie executives. With registration set to begin today, the hotel is bracing for a swarm of visitors.

More than 340 independent companies — including Miramax, New Line Cinema and Lion's Gate Films — will be selling films at the event. The movies are screened at all 23 theaters on the Third Street Promenade. Loews acts as a sort of tradeshow floor, where executives view clips and sell distribution rights. Past favorites from the market include "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" and "Slingblade," among others.

"The difference is when Disney puts out a movie like 'Finding Nemo,' they already know what movie theaters it's playing at in China," said Andrea Keldsen, a manager for AFM overseeing exhibitor services.

Keldsen and fellow AFM staffers were

at Loews on Friday as workers prepped the hotel. By today, all of the hotel's beds will be removed and placed into storage, making room for desks, telephone and fax lines, audio/visual connections, plasma TVs and DVD players.

"To do something like this in a convention hall is one thing, but to do it in a luxury hotel is a completely different feat," said Misti Kerns, president and CEO of the Santa Monica Convention and Visitors Bureau, who called the event the biggest in the city.

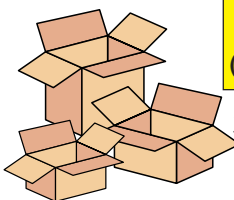
The film market was launched in 1987 with just 50 members. For the first several years, it took place in Beverly Hills. But Kerns, who worked at Loews for more than seven years before taking her post at the bureau, said local hotel officials "hustled" the large piece of business on a tradeshow floor, setting it up for its premier in Santa Monica in 1991. The event is contracted here through 2006 and officials are currently working on locking up 2007.



John Wood/Daily Press

Workmen load up a big rig with furniture from the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel over the weekend. The hotel is being transformed into hundreds of small offices in anticipation of this week's American Film Market.

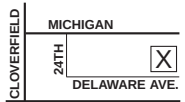
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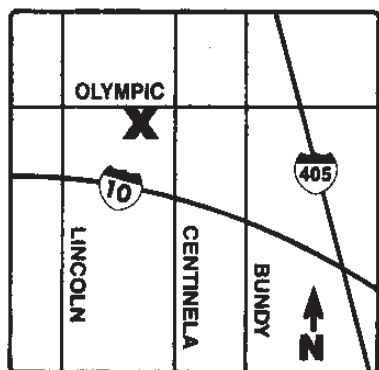


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LOCAL



PROFILES, from page 1

sweater and sunglasses on a cold, overcast afternoon.

Her little shop, once situated on the lower deck at the end of the pier, was one of the first targeted by the wicked '83 storm. Now, it sits nearer the base of the pier. She's seen the formation of the Pier Restoration Committee.

Over the years, Volaski has watched the pier evolve, witnessing the city work to clean up a large homeless population, as well as the demise of such landmarks as the Boathouse, a popular family-run restaurant now slated to become a corporate chain.

Fourteen years ago, Volaski married John, who owns the Santa Monica Pier Bait and Tackle shop at the end of the pier. John, also a fixture on the pier for decades, runs the shop with Volaski's son Mannie, an acclaimed fisherman who in 2002 reeled in a record 44.7-pound Halibut in the Santa Monica Bay.

The Daily Press sat down with the proud mother of five on the trusty pier and asked her about its' past and future, and how she ended up on the edge of the West.

The big storm of 1983 — what was that like?

"I think the only word that comes to my mind is devastation. It was quite a sight, to watch the pier go down, from up on the hill ... And you know, that's an act of God, so your insurance doesn't cover anything ...

"It was like a bad movie, to see pilings up on the beach, in the sand, something that I think one can't even visualize if you weren't here, firsthand. It was not a good feeling."

You've watched the pier rebuild, and were around for the formation of the Pier Restoration Committee, which runs the pier. How would you like to see things out here continue to evolve in coming years?

"I think that it would be awfully nice if we could have a breakwater where we could have sportfishing — that's a hot topic around town.

"I don't know if I'll see it in my life, but I'd like to, and hopefully in my kids' lifetimes we'll get that ambience out here, with the boats moored ...

"I would like to be able to tell someone, 'Yes, you can get a boat here' ... And I think at some point we'll see it happen. Maybe I'm just being an old fool, but I don't think so.

"I think, as with everything in this town, persistence and patience — all in due time, I think it will come about ... There are different members of the City Council that support it. But it's costly."

Visitors to the pier have long complained about the homeless population around the pier. Do you think the city's done enough on that issue?

"I think, over the years, that I have certainly seen improvement. We don't have the homeless down here that we had 10 or 15 years ago. It's better. And that may be because of all the different shelters and whatnot ...

"We do have some people — and they don't want help, they want to be left alone. Maybe they'll go in and take

a shower and get a meal every once in awhile, but that's about it ...

"But as far as women with children, I think there's been a 360-degree turn-around ... as far as that small population, these are guys everybody knows, and they're not drug addicts and they're not drunks."

There's been a lot of talk recently about banning smoking on the pier — by the City Council and by other local groups. Where do you stand on that issue?

"Well, that's a very hot topic with us down here on the pier, and one of the reasons is I'm from that old school, and once something is taken away from us, we'll never get it back ...

"If business for us improves with the European market, how many signs can you write in how many languages (to ban smoking)? ...

"It's an outside pier. I think if someone comes down here for an afternoon of leisure and they happen to be a smoker, I certainly hope that they would be courteous and not smoke in Pacific Park in front of children or elsewhere, but I just don't see it as something we can support ...

"If you are here, visiting our fair city ... you should have the right to smoke a cigarette, if that's what you choose to do ... Now, if you asked my husband, he'd tell a different story."

A lot of people think the pier has lapsed and lost some of its popularity. Are we falling behind other popular piers in California?

"I don't know that any pier is attracting a lot of tourists, especially since 9-11 ... I think 9-11 hurt our entire country and especially those of us that are in this industry.

"Actually, from Thanksgiving to now, I've noticed an increase in European visitors. I have friends up in Santa Barbara and down in Redondo, and they're having the same problem ... A lot of it is weather, too.

"Of course, this pier is going through a long-term change right now, losing the Boathouse ... and I think that we all realize that all good things come to an end now or later."

What's that like, losing the Boathouse? How did the merchants down here feel when its owners and the city couldn't work out their differences?

"As I say, any kind of change is strange and startling, especially if you're personally involved with the people. I think, of course, most of the merchants would have liked to see the Boathouse stay, but time moves on.

"If you're in, and you realize, behind closed doors, the conversation going on, you see there are reasons for these things ... It got to a point where they couldn't reach a mutual agreement as to what the city envisioned and, maybe, as to what they envisioned for the Boathouse."

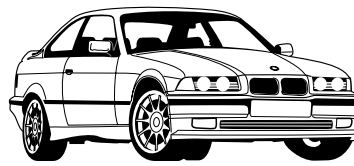
How do you feel about Bubba Gump Shrimp Company — the chain restaurant slated to move into the place occupied by the Boathouse?

"I've been to a few of them, the one in Maui, and another one up north. It's very family oriented and that is something the city wants to see down here. They don't want a bar down here ...

See PROFILES, page 8

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OPINION

LETTERS

California has a 'Golden' opportunity

Editor:

There really is hope for California. Despite the political and economic tumult that has essentially defined the state over the past several months, we now have the opportunity to collectively pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and get down to the business of restoring California to a place so deserving of the moniker, "The Golden State." In that vein, there are some important, and immediate, first steps Californians can take to help ensure the state is on the path to recovery.

On March 2, Californians will have the opportunity to vote for a pair of propositions that will alleviate the budget deficit brought on by past fiscal mismanagement and ensure that the state doesn't find itself in this sort of financial crisis again. Propositions 57 and 58 were placed on the ballot by both Democrat and Republican lawmakers who jointly agree that these measures represent the right mix of short- and long-term solutions for the state's economic troubles. And in the new spirit of bipartisanship at the capitol, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Democrat State Controller Steve Westly are co-chairing the campaign for passage of Propositions 57 and 58.

Proposition 57 provides for a one-time \$15 billion bond to refinance and consolidate the deficits of the past several years — at a time when interests rates are at historic lows. This will allow us to wipe the slate clean and get a fresh start, without dramatically raising taxes or severely cutting spending for crucial state programs like education. It's not the perfect solution, but it is the reasonable and responsible solution when it's combined with Proposition 58.

Proposition 58 requires California's elected state officials to balance the budget every year in the future and prohibits bond financing of any future deficits. Under Proposition 58, California will have to live within its means. Proposition 58 also creates a "rainy day savings account" to be used for paying the bonds off early and helping us through any future economic downturns. It also prohibits the legislature from adjourning during a fiscal crisis unless solutions are proposed.

Passage of Propositions 57 and 58 will protect the state from having to make difficult short term decisions affecting all Californians, such as deep cuts to critical programs like education, or tax increases. And, passage of the companion propositions also will put our state on a strong economic path for the future — resulting in job growth, an improved business climate and ultimately, more state revenues to get California healthy and keep it that way. That is why large and small business, taxpayer advocates, and teachers are among the broad and diverse list of supporters of Propositions 57 and 58.

Allan Zaremborg

California Chamber of Commerce, president

Larry McCarthy

California Taxpayers Association, president

Seniors get short end of housing stick

Editor:

Recently, as I was looking into the opportunities for affordable housing for senior citizens in Santa Monica, I ran into a very strange and disturbing situation that I would like to share.

While discussing this situation with my friends, we all came up with the conclusion that the process by which seniors are selected for available housing seems not to favor us in Santa Monica, but people that seem to be well organized and not from Santa Monica or U.S. citizens even, but from other countries. Especially from Russia,

Armenia, etc. After giving this some thought I decided to check for myself and sure enough, I found so much evidence of that at various places such as Upward Bound Senior Villa at 11th Street and Washington Avenue; HDSI Management, Westminster Towers, 1112 Seventh Street; Santa Monica Senior Housing, 1148 Fourth Street; So. Cal Presbetyrian Home, 151 Ocean Front Walk, etc. Many of us exclaimed, "How can this be? Our own citizens have been bypassed by people from foreign lands?" And just as we noticed this irregularity and thought what can we do about it, we figured that not many of us get to be informed of upcoming sign-ups for housing unless by accident, connections, etc. but organizations that are aware of these opening get to sign up first.

Many people in Santa Monica are well aware of what's going on but think it's futile trying to do something about because you know, special interests for whatever reasons using our resources (I mean Santa Monica's) our taxes, etc. And we ask ourselves "why" and I think one of the reasons is our system of selection for housing and of course the federal government has a lot to do with it. So what else is new? So we seniors in Santa Monica are going to have to direct ourselves to our representatives and hope that there is still justice in "our" country.

We will see.

Antonio Mendez

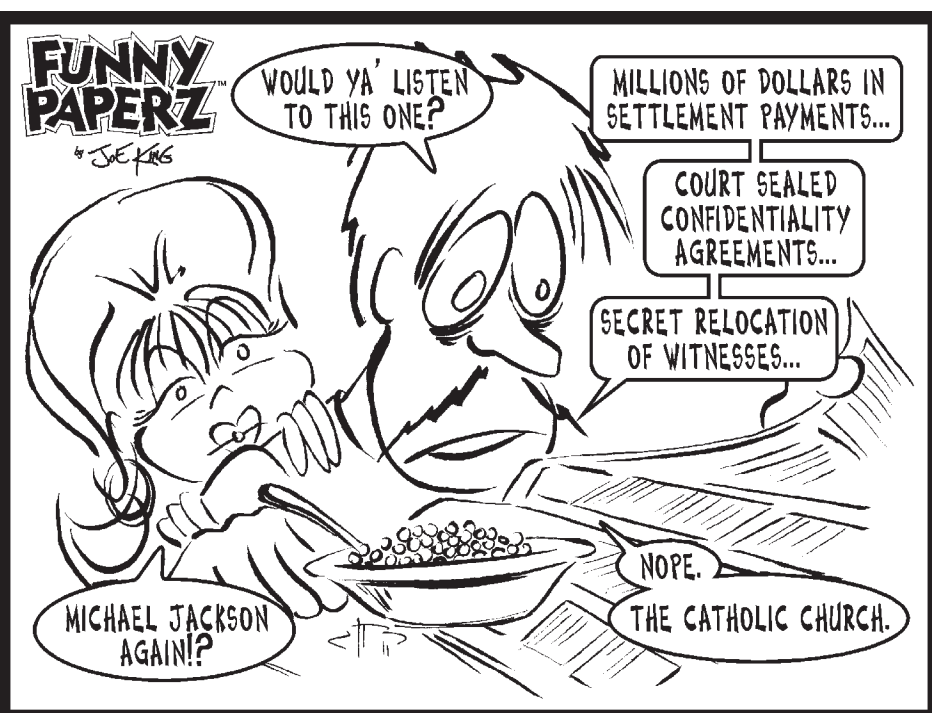
Santa Monica

Will living wage move them on up?

Editor:

With regard to your community profile of Vivian Rothstein and her campaign for

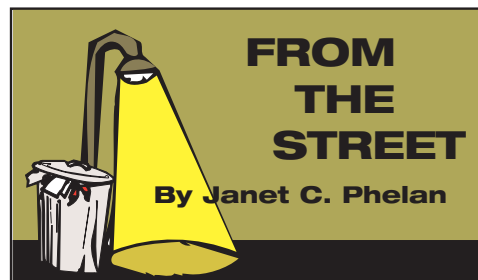
See LETTERS, page 7



Member: AAEC, NCS, SCCS

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A beautiful mind? Man's credibility hurt by admitting delusions



Mick Morrissey's reputation preceded him. Several people had spoken to me about the brilliant young geneticist and how the military had cut him off at the knees.

His friend Kyle Coobs had told me Mick was the brightest person he had ever met. He said that Mick's research into "mad cow disease" had been actively discouraged by his government employer. Another friend countered that Mick was mentally ill, and was on experimental psychiatric medicine.

Neither report prepared me for the articulate, handsome red-haired 26-year-old who wandered into peace camp one

spring evening. He carried a sheath of papers detailing his personal passion — his detailing of the architectural symbolism embedded in free-masonry.

We walked around the university campus, built in an earlier century by the free-masons. He pointed out the prevalence of groups of sixes in windows and columns, and explained the significance of the strange animal carvings above the portals. We stood in front of the old city hall and he showed me the direct line-up of the front door with the front door of the old Masonic temple, miles across town.

On his urging, I downloaded a map of Washington, D.C. Connecting by lines the capitol, the memorials and the Masonic temple, I effectively produced a drawing of a Masonic symbol. "Magic," was how Mick explained the intent of embedding symbols in building plans.

Mick's former job, which led him to his research on Krutchfield-Jacob, or "mad-cow disease," indicated a genesis of the disease more sinister than an unfortunate and happenstance dietary contagion.

It was this discovery, and Mick's

attempts to "go public" with his findings, that had propelled Mick into homelessness.

The military, which had poured thousands of dollars into his education, informed him that he was to leave governmental employ. His social security number was canceled, leaving Mick unable to secure work. Nine months later, he was arrested for desertion and placed in a mental hospital, where he was plied with potent and experimental anti-psychotic medication.

He was then discharged, and Mick packed up and fled to California.

Tall and lanky, Mick had lost over 100 pounds in his first year of homelessness. "Homelessness does not agree with me," he said.

Then looking at me with a steely gaze, he announced, "I am a schizophrenic."

I was shocked that this brilliant young man would make a statement so completely undermining his credibility.

Fishing, I offered that the medicine must have helped him.

"I don't take it," he confessed. "It

makes me worse."

Confused, I asked what his symptoms were.

He said he had been told he was delusional.

His delusion? "They are really messing with me," he said sadly.

He then leaned toward me, and revealed the trade-off. "I can rent again."

Later that day, I spoke with Abby, a shelter employee, concerning Mick's embracing a diagnosis that destroyed his believability.

"It is probably healthier for him to do so," she said carefully.

I ran into Mick one more time, just as I was leaving town. He was sitting outdoors on a bench, alone.

I saluted him, a fallen soldier in the hidden war.

(Janet C. Phelan is an university graduate and experienced freelance writer. She has been homeless in Santa Monica for a year).

OPINION



LETTERS

LETTERS, from page 6

living wage (SMDP, Feb. 16, page 1). In a previous news article Rothstein was quoted that if the living wage passed, working class families, some of whom now subsist on food stamps, would get off public assistance if their salaries were adequate to pay for the necessities in life. I have one question for the socially conscious Ms. Rothstein: If the City Council authorizes and the voters ultimately approve such living wage ordinance, will a two-parent family with one child, who now have a \$40,000 combined yearly income, be willing to also move out of their two-bedroom subsidy apartment in the Community Corp. of Santa Monica building? I will await her or your paper's reply.

John Hilton
Santa Monica

School head flexing his muscle?

Editor:

At the Feb. 19 Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District Board meeting it was revealed that of the several school districts that Superintendent John Deasy cited in public parent forums as precedents for his gift fund proposal, none have any such policy governing private donations. Of the specific districts he has listed, every one confirmed either by phone or in writing that 100 percent of the private donations to an individual school remain with that school.

Mr. Deasy has misrepresented this important fact and misled the public on the issue of these precedents for his proposal.

Also in several forums with parents in the district, the superintendent has often cited the ease with which charitable foundations and corporations donating to non-profits will accept that their privately donated funds to specific schools will be subject to his equity fund redistribution. Yet, he has offered no concrete specific evidence to the public substantiating that foundations and corporations would acquiesce to their donations being diverted to entities other than to those they designate for their gifts.

However, at the same board meeting, the largest corporate and charitable founda-

tion donating to non-profits in the Los Angeles region (and to at least seven schools in Santa Monica and Malibu) submitted a letter to the board expressing their strong objections to the superintendent's proposed policy of diverting private donations under his plan.

Again, without specific and concrete evidence supporting his broad general assertions, Mr. Deasy has misled the public on this issue of broad corporate support of his proposal.

While these lapses might be dismissed by some as just part of the public discourse of a controversial issue, they apparently are not sufficient for the superintendent.

On Thursday before the board meeting at which an active and vocal Malibu parent was planning to speak opposing his gift policy, Mr. Deasy phoned the parent at home to express his strong displeasure with her personal writing of a letter to the editor. In her letter, she expressed her frustration at the lack of public engagement by the superintendent on the substantive issues put forth by opponents to his policy.

While a discussion of the issues in public is welcome and encouraged, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Superintendent using his position to call a parent at home to express his displeasure with her is highly inappropriate and clearly over the line.

There are honest and passionate advocates for and against the superintendent's proposed gift policy. Many of us have expressed our views and attempted to engage each other and the board, publicly and privately in this debate. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the policy, one would hope for a level of personal respect, academic honesty in the arguments, and a high level of civility in the discourse. With that, our representatives can better make an honest and fully informed decision on this gift policy and every other issue they are called upon to decide on our behalf.

Misrepresentation and intimidation have no place in the debate over the future education of our children.

We Santa Monica and Malibu parents deserve a higher ethical standard of behavior from this district's chief executive responsible for our children's education.

Ken Peterson
Malibu

Victory for animal rights is a defeat for mankind

The "animal rights" movement is celebrating its latest victory: An earlier, more painful death for future victims of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's disease.

Thanks to intimidation by animal rights terrorists, Cambridge University has dropped plans to build a laboratory that would have conducted cutting-edge brain research on primates. According to The Times of London, animal-rights groups "had threatened to target the centre with violent protests ... and Cambridge decided that it could not afford the costs or danger to staff that this would involve."

The university had good reason to be afraid. At a nearby animal-testing company, Huntingdon Life Sciences, "protesters" have for several years attempted to shut down the company by threatening employees and associates, damaging their homes, firebombing their cars, even beating them severely.

Many commentators and medical professionals in Britain have condemned the animal-rights terrorists and their violent tactics. Unfortunately, most have cast the terrorists as "extremists" who take "too far" the allegedly benevolent cause of animal rights. This is a deadly mistake. The terrorists' inhuman tactics are an embodi-

ment of the movement's inhuman cause.

While most animal-rights activists do not inflict beatings on animal testers, they do share the terrorists' goal of ending animal research — including the vital research the Cambridge lab would have conducted.

There is no question that animal research is absolutely necessary for the development of life-saving drugs, medical procedures, and biotech treatments. According to Nobel Laureate Joseph Murray, M.D.: "Animal experimentation has been essential to the development of all cardiac surgery, transplantation surgery, joint replacements, and all vaccinations." Explains former American Medical Association president Daniel Johnson, M.D.: "Animal research — followed by human clinical study — is absolutely necessary to find the causes and cures for so many deadly threats, from AIDS to cancer."

Millions of humans would suffer and die unnecessarily if animal testing were prohibited. Animal rights activists know this, but are unmoved. Chris DeRose, founder of the group Last Chance for

Animals, writes: "If the death of one rat cured all diseases, it wouldn't make any difference to me."

The goal of the animal-rights movement is not to stop sadistic animal torturers; it is to sacrifice and subjugate man to animals. This goal is inherent in the very notion of "animal rights." According to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the basic principle of "animal rights" is: "Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment" — they "deserve consideration of their own best interests regardless of whether they are useful to humans." This is in

exact contradiction to the requirements of human survival and progress, which demand that we kill animals when they endanger us, eat them when we need food, run tests on them to fight disease. The death and destruction that would result from any serious attempt to respect "animal rights" would be catastrophic — for humans — a prospect the movement's most consistent members embrace. "We need a drastic decrease in human population if we ever hope to create a just and equitable world for animals," proclaims

Freeman Wicklund of Compassionate Action for Animals.

To ascribe rights to animals is to contradict the purpose and justification of rights — to protect the interests of humans. Rights are moral principles necessary for men to survive as human beings — to coexist peacefully, to produce and trade, to provide for their own lives, and to pursue their own happiness, all by the guidance of their rational minds. To attribute rights to nonrational, amoral creatures who can neither grasp nor live by them is to turn rights from a tool of human preservation to a tool of human extermination.

It should be no surprise that many in the animal rights movement use violence to pursue their man-destroying goals. While these terrorists should be condemned and imprisoned, that is not enough. We must wage a principled, intellectual war against the very notion of "animal rights"; we must condemn it as logically false and morally repugnant.

Alex Epstein is a writer for the Ayn Rand Institute (ARI) in Irvine, California. The Institute promotes the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead. Send comments to reaction@aynrand.org

Guest Commentary

By Alex Epstein

Opinions expressed are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned. Preference will be given to those that are e-mailed to sack@smdp.com. All letters must include the author's name and telephone number for purposes of verification. Letters also may be mailed to our offices located at 1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite 202, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.



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3rd Annual Santa Monica Relay For Life Santa Monica College, Corsair Field July 24 and July 25, 2004

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Team Captains responsibilities:

- Organize a team of 15-20 people and distribute team member's packets
- Attend the Captain's meetings (there will probably be 2 including one where registration fees will be collected)
- Attend the Bank night 2 weeks before the event (Bring the money raised by your team)
- Create a team name and select your team's campsite
- Be enthusiastic and urge team members to Fundraiser. Most of the money will come from fundraising.

The next team captain's meeting for Relay For Life will be held at Santa Monica Place in the Community Room located on the 3rd floor. The meeting will be on Thursday, February 26, 2004, beginning at 6:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Parking is free.

Teams are forming now!

For more information: Please call LaShawndra Pace at the American Cancer Society (310) 348-0356 option 3/ext. 246 or lashawndra.pace@cancer.org



LOCAL □ STATE



PROFILES, from page 5

Rusty's (Surf Ranch) is geared to a different audience ... and Mariasol.

"But I think the city had something more in mind that would serve families with small children."

You mentioned that tourism has dropped off, but what about getting more local residents to come down to the pier? Has that been difficult?

"That's what they've been trying to

do over the years, is bring the locals back, and that's what we've been doing with the dance series — not only with the Twilight Dance Series, whose audience is mostly 18 up to 30, but also the Winter Concert Series, which is more family-oriented music.

"Again, it's all about the weather. We could be giving something away on this pier and the locals still wouldn't come. We live by the weather.

"And the other thing is a lot of our nightlife is on the Promenade. I can't tell you how many times people come up and say, 'Which way to the Promenade?' or 'Which way to Main Street?'"

Chris Volaski

The head of the Santa Monica Pier Lessee's Association ended up in Santa Monica after she opened up a map, closed her eyes and brought her finger down on Los Angeles.

Born: Chris Sinacola, April 19, 1941, in Savannah, Georgia.

Raised: In Chicago. Her Italian-born father was an Army medic, who later ran a restaurant, as well as a popular bar called the Cat and the Fiddle. He also owned a company that made parts for slot machines. Her mother was a nurse.

Education: Two years at Northwestern University.

Background: Volaski moved to Santa Monica in 1965, after divorcing her first husband. She rented a house at Pearl and Euclid streets and invested \$1,500 into the Oatman Rock Shop, which she now owns, while working at an area restaurant.

Family: Husband John Volaski owns the bait shop at the end of the pier. Daughter Lisa, 42, and sons Mark, 43, Michael, 43, John, 40, and Mannie, 38.

San Fran mayor sleeps well amid all the unrest

BY LISA LEFF
Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — He's been called a renegade and a rogue, a thorn in the side of the Democratic Party's presidential ambitions. Enemies are calling for his political head and old allies are keeping their distance.

Yet what really matters to Mayor Gavin Newsom is what they're saying in the neighborhoods of San Francisco — that his decision to buck California law and grant marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples makes him a hero.

"At the end of the day I sleep well, and in life there is nothing I think more important than that, whether you agree with me or not," Newsom said Saturday during an interview at City Hall, where nearly 3,200 same-sex couples have taken vows in the last 10 days. "What matters is doing the right thing. What matters is being true to yourself. What matters is standing up on principle."

The 36-year-old mayor had been in office just five weeks when he effectively threw kerosene on the national debate over same-sex marriage, ordering city officials to allow gay and lesbian couples to wed. Critics have filed two lawsuits seeking to stop the unions, and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has said the state will also try to step in and block the marriages.

A spokeswoman for Democratic Attorney General Bill Lockyer said Saturday that the state Department of Justice planned to seek a judgment soon declaring San Francisco's action in violation of state law.

"We are conferring with the governor's legal affairs staff to develop strategy," Lockyer spokesman Nathan Barankin said. "They are on board, we are on board and we will be taking action soon."

Still, Newsom said he feels "no anxiety" about his move, which he insists was

the only legal one based on his reading of the California Constitution.

"I've never felt more certain about something than this," he said. "It was almost non-debatable."

At the same time, he acknowledged that he's been surprised by the lack of support he's received from fellow Democrats.

Newsom, the scion of an old-line San Francisco political family and a graduate of the Roman Catholic Santa Clara University, said that his decision has already cost him friends and connections. Whole tables full of guests, he said, canceled plans to attend a dinner honoring him and his father, a retired state appeals court judge.

"Actually he has yet to be wrong, which is good," Newsom said of his father, although he added that the older man has warned of potential legal pitfalls ahead.

Before he won office in a runoff election against a Green Party candidate who campaigned far to his left, Newsom, a wealthy restaurant and winery owner, was cast as a heartless conservative, at least by San Francisco's decidedly left-wing standards.

Although he endorsed allowing gay men and lesbians to wed, securing those rights wasn't on his agenda.

While some on the left have cynically hinted that Newsom latched onto gay marriage as a cause to secure his re-election four years from now in a city sometimes called the gay capital of the world, the mayor laughed at the idea that embroiling himself in the issue has been a boon for his fledgling career.

"It was happening anyway," he said of the role gay rights has played in national debates over the last year. "Eventually, when we look back at this and the absurdity of the controversy, people will say, 'Well this is so obvious.'"

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STATE



Poll: Voters remain skeptical of bonds, governor's proposals

BY TOM CHORNEAU
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — California voters appear doubtful over all four measures on the March 2 ballot, including Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's \$15 billion bond and another \$12.3 billion for schools, according to a new statewide poll.

The Public Policy Institute of California found that Democrats have joined the bandwagon of Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, taking him from fourth to first among contenders in the Democratic presidential primary. Also, California seems to have moved solidly in the Democratic category for the November presidential election, as a majority of voters favor an unnamed Democrat over President Bush.

The poll, which was drawn from interviews conducted between Feb. 8-16, also found a majority, 56 percent, of likely voters do not approve of the way Bush is handling the situation in Iraq, while 67 percent say the federal government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves.

Proposition 57, the governor's \$15 billion bond measure, has support of 38 percent of the voters, up just three percentage points since the group's January poll. Forty-one percent say they would vote no on the bonds, while 21 percent are undecided.

Proposition 55, which would provide \$12.3 billion in bond money for improving school facilities, is favored by 49 percent of the voters, down slightly from the 50 percent support it had one month ago.

A measure that would allow the state budget to be adopted with just 55 percent of lawmaker support, Proposition 56, is favored by just 41 percent of voters — unchanged in the last month despite a statewide TV ad campaign.

Only Proposition 58, a constitutional amendment that would restrict future borrowing by the state, has majority support: 52 percent are in favor — but this measure could not become law unless voters also approve Proposition 57, as they are companion initiatives.

"There's a lot for voters to sort out in this election and clearly many are skeptical," said Mark Baldassare, poll director for the Public Policy Institute. "Nothing is really resonating with them yet. There's confusion about what is the best thing to do."

Schwarzenegger needs voters to approve the bond so that he can pay off short-term loans that come due in June and help close next year's budget gap. Without the bond money, the governor has said that deep cuts would have to be imposed.

He and several Democratic leaders — including Controller Steve Westly and Sen. Dianne Feinstein — have been campaigning in support of the bonds. The governor is also spending about \$1.5 million a week on TV ads that are playing statewide.

But Baldassare said voters, so far, are not impressed. When the ads began on Feb. 10, the poll found 37 percent in favor, 45 percent opposed with 18 percent undecided. Not much has changed since then, except that the number of undecided voters has increased to 24 percent and voters saying they are opposed has

"People have misgivings about doing anything that will put the state further into debt."

— MARK BALDASSARE
Poll director for the Public Policy Institute

dropped to 38 percent.

"People are wondering if this is the best time to be borrowing money," he said. "I think people are skittish about what we are proposing here."

One benchmark, he said, is support for the education bonds which voters traditionally support. Baldassare notes that support for local school bonds was at 70 percent of likely voters in October 2002.

Schwarzenegger's popularity does not seem to be a factor. Sixty-one percent of likely voters approve of the way the governor is doing his job — down slightly from the 64 percent approval he got in January.

But of those who approve of Schwarzenegger, only 49 percent also support his bond proposal. Of the 65 percent of voters who say they know that the governor is backing the bonds, just 44 percent say they, too, support the borrowing.

Baldassare said there does not seem a sense of urgency among voters that the only way to solve the state's budget problem is by passing the bond measure. "People have misgivings about doing anything that will put the state further into debt."

Among the candidates vying for the Democratic presidential nomination, Kerry leads with 55 percent of his party's vote in a runaway. Trailing far behind is former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean — who dropped out of the race Wednesday — at 11 percent; and North Carolina Sen. John Edwards at 10 percent.

If the election were held today, the Public Policy poll, found likely California voters would favor the Democratic nominee over Bush by 17 percentage points.

Meanwhile, Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer has a commanding lead over any of the Republican challengers in the November runoff — 53 percent to 36 percent.

Based on the PPIC poll, her most likely opponent is former Secretary of State Bill Jones, who is favored by 24 percent of GOP voters over former U.S. Treasurer Rosario Marin at 12 percent; former Assemblyman Howard Kaloogian at 6 percent; and former Los Altos Hills Mayor Toni Casey at 2 percent. But there is a huge bloc, 52 percent, of undecided voters who could swing the election any way.

The poll of 1,013 likely voters, has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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NATIONAL

A workplace where daily grind is welcome release

BY ANDREW KRAMER

Associated Press Writer

ONTARIO, Ore. — Chris Harry is a model employee for the call center industry in America.

The 25-year-old dresses in a button-down blue denim shirt, arrives promptly at his cubicle, speaks courteously on the phone and considers his job a step up.

"Hello, this is Chris. I'm with quality control marketing. How are you today?" he begins his calls.

He is never late, never absent and never takes a vacation. He plans to stick with his job for three years — a boon in an industry plagued by high turnover. And he gladly works for money many Americans would scoff at: \$130 or so a month.

After all, he could be back swabbing cell block floors for a third of that.

"I can't complain about fair," said the convicted robber. "I did a crime and I'm in prison. At least I'm not wearing a ball and chain."

Prison inmates like Harry are the reason Perry Johnson Inc., a Southfield, Mich.-based consulting company, chose to remain in America rather than join a host of telemarketing companies moving offshore. Perry Johnson had intended to move to India.

The company chose instead to open inside the Snake River Correctional Institution, a sprawling razor wire and cinder block state penitentiary in a sagebrush field a few miles west of the Idaho line.

The center's opening followed a yearlong effort by the Oregon Department of Corrections to recruit businesses that would otherwise move offshore, and echoes a national trend among state and federal prisons to recruit such companies.

"This is a niche where the prison industry could really help the U.S. economy," said Robert Killgore, director of Inside Oregon Enterprises, the quasi-state agency that recruits for-profit business to prisons.

"I'm really excited about this," he said. "We keep the benefits here in the United States with companies where

it's fruitless to compete on the outside."

Prison officials have long praised work programs for lowering recidivism and teaching inmates skills and self-respect, yet have been criticized by unions for taking jobs from the private sector.

Those concerns are moot if a company planned to leave the country anyway, Killgore said.

National prison labor trade groups support the idea. "Repatriation is the big buzz word right now in prison industries," said Carol Martindale-Taylor, spokeswoman for the Baltimore, Md.-based group National Correctional Industries Association.

Ten states including Oregon employ inmates in for-profit call centers, while Oregon and many others make garments and furniture — industries that have largely moved offshore, other than in prisons. Inmates are paid between 12 cents and \$5.69 an hour, according to Bureau of Prisons statistics.

Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., introduced a bill in 2003 that would exempt federal prison industries, which sell under the brand name Unicor, from a Depression-era ban on interstate trade in prison-manufactured goods — as long as those sectors are at risk of losing jobs overseas.

Perry Johnson Inc. opened its call center in an Oregon prison for half the price of relocating to India — and achieved many of the same benefits, according to Mike Reagan, director of Inside Oregon Enterprises at Snake River.

One benefit is low turnover among inmate employees. Short of escape, they have few options.

"They're looking for the quality of work they get overseas, where turnover is typically not so high," Reagan said.

At Snake River, to qualify for the call center job, inmates must have three to five years remaining on their sentence. Outside, the typical turnover is nine months.

Also, inmates make good telemarketers, prison officials said.

"They see an opportunity to talk to people and learn how to communicate," said Nick Armenakis, a manager for Inside Oregon Enterprises. "They are told that to keep these jobs, they have to be very patient and very contrite, and follow protocol."

The convicts pitch Perry Johnson's quality control consulting service to executives at American businesses, sometimes even company presidents.

Prison officials ensure convicts don't make personal

calls or do anything illegal by randomly monitoring the phone conversations. Also, all calls are digitally recorded so authorities can go back later and review what was said.

As another security measure, convicts place calls by clicking a company name on their computer screens; they cannot punch in numbers on their own.

The cons work 40-hour weeks in rows of nondescript cubicles. Rather than family pictures, each cubicle is adorned with a mug shot — so guards can ensure inmates are sitting in their assigned seats. The walls to the office bathroom are clear plexiglass — so guards can keep an eye on call center employees at all times.

Critics assail the idea of retaining American jobs in prisons as a flagrant violation of minimum wage laws and an affront to free workers.

"It's kind of a cynical joke," said University of Oregon political science professor Gordon Lafer, author of a study on prison labor.

"Obviously, it doesn't do anything for the labor market here. It's like bringing little islands of the Third World right here to the heartland of America," he said. "You get the same total control of the work force, the same low wages, and it does nothing for the inmates."

Also, convicts don't benefit much from training for jobs that no longer exist in America because they have all gone overseas or into prisons, he said.

Canada bans goods made in prisons in America, which has the world's largest incarcerated population at about 2 million people behind bars. Incarcerated workers comprise just over one-half of 1 percent of the U.S. workforce.

In 1996, Harry pulled a pistol grip shotgun during a robbery in Eugene and was sentenced to 10 years and eight months in the state penitentiary under Oregon's minimum sentencing rules. He said he is thankful for the skills he has learned in prison, and intends to attend college when he is released.

In the meantime, he can use his earnings to buy candy, toiletries and brand-name sneakers at the prison canteen, and saves up for when he will get out.

"I don't agree with these jobs going overseas," Harry said. "Even though we're inmates, we're still Americans. We're still keeping the business in America."

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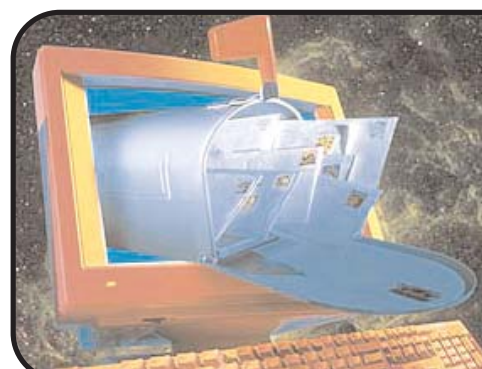
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NATIONAL



Lights are on at House but nobody is home

BY JIM ABRAMS
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — These are the dog days of February in Congress, when visitors to the Capitol can view the statues of a lot of dead lawmakers but will have a hard time finding a live one.

Congress always gets off to a slow start in January and February, but the lack of action is particularly noticeable this year, an election year when the Republican majority is more interested in selling its accomplishments than venturing into new legislative territory.

Since convening Jan. 20, the House has met for legislative business on eight days, working only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. House members have spent the rest of the time back in their districts, or on fact-finding trips at home and abroad. This week the House and Senate were both gone for the "President's Day district work period."

The pace will pick up in coming months as Congress gets serious about the 2005 budget, but House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Texas, has scheduled only about 94 working days this year, low even by recent standards. Senators, who have a more time-consuming legislative process, always spend more time in Washington.

House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer of Maryland noted one recent Wednesday that they would be in at 10 a.m., would recess at 1 p.m. and would be gone Thursday. "This country has very substantial problems," he said. But "we are going to meet less days projected this year than I can remember."

In addition to the usual two-week spring break in April, and a week off each for Memorial Day and Independence Day, there's a six-week recess to coincide with the party presidential conventions this summer. The goal is to adjourn by Oct. 1 so lawmakers can prepare for the election.

House days in session have been on the decline since around 1980 because of what lawmakers say is the pressure of running for re-election, even though the number of competitive races appears to decline every two years. Younger lawmakers with growing children also like returning home a lot — where their families live.

In the 1970s, the House met 160 to 170 days a year. More recently, with lawmakers often arriving on Tuesday and leaving late Thursday, the average has been closer to 130 days.

DeLay, asked recently about the abbreviated schedule, said the House worked hard in 2003, knowing that an election year was coming up. "We will not be sitting around waiting" while the Senate catches up, he said.

"I can't help it if we are more efficient than Democrat Houses of the past," he added.

The Senate this year has been occupied so far on a major pension bill and the massive spending package — four months late — for the 2004 budget year that began last Oct. 1. The House passed both last year.

But the Senate also spent two weeks on a six-year, \$318 billion highway spending bill that the House has yet to take up.

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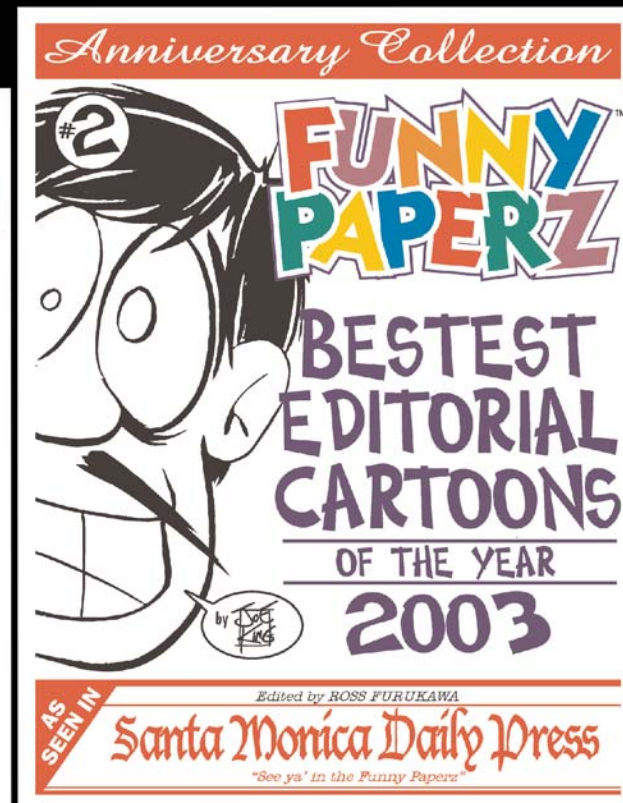
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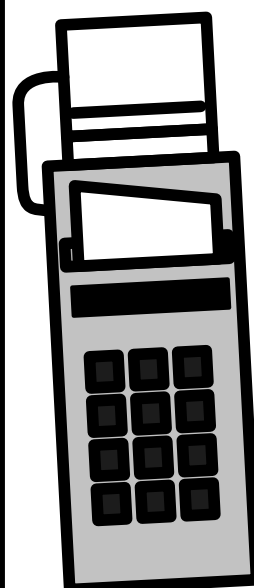
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Magic Johnson still knows how to dish out assists

By The Associated Press

■ **MIAMI** — Even though Magic Johnson's basketball career is over, he's still providing assists.

Through his foundation, the Hall of Fame player helped donate \$200,000 in computer equipment Friday to the Mattie Koonce Learning Center in Overtown, one of Miami's poorest neighborhoods.

It's the 12th Magic Johnson HP Inventor Center to open in an inner-city community in the past three years. Another opens next week in Seattle and nine more are planned by July 1.

The center includes two dozen desktop computers, digital cameras, printers, a server and other accessories donated by Hewlett-Packard Co.

Johnson, whose playing career was cut short in November 1991 when he tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS, won five NBA titles with the Los Angeles Lakers.

■ **LONDON** — Charlotte Church, the bright-eyed Welsh soprano who has sung for two U.S. presidents, the pope and Queen Elizabeth II, turned 18 on Saturday, meaning she now has control of her \$30 million trust fund.

Church — whose bursts of rebelliousness, family spats and a now-discarded boyfriend have become a tabloid soap opera — now faces the difficult transition from child prodigy to adult star.

With more than 10 million records sold around the world, the singer's financial future seems secure. But Church said she planned to leave most of the trust-fund money where it was, telling Britain's GMTV television: "I just don't want it. I don't need a lot of money now."

Church's last album of new material appeared in 2001 and there is no set date for a new one. She said she

wants to leave behind the light classical musical that endeared her to millions and forge a pop career.

Her next album will include "some rocky stuff, some soulful songs and some electric — it's really mixed," Church told Britain's Daily Mirror in an interview published Friday.

■ **KNOXVILLE, Tenn.** — Actor David Keith, whose film credits include "An Officer and a Gentleman" and "Daredevil," is in a dispute with movie theater executive Gregory W. Dunn over the right to buy a house.

Keith, a Knoxville native, said he was promised first right to buy the house where he and his wife have been living. The Knoxville house is owned by retired physician Matthew Bargas.

Dunn, chief operating officer for Knoxville-based Regal Entertainment Group, said he made a deal with the doctor to buy the house.

Keith refuses to move out and Bargas' lawyer, C. Paul Harrison, said he would go to court Monday to ask that Keith's claims be rejected and Dunn be allowed buy the house.

Court records show Keith will fight the effort.

■ **BOMBAY, India** — Producer Ismail Merchant says pop diva Tina Turner's two-week tour of India has prepared her for her role as a singing, dancing Indian goddess in a new Merchant-Ivory film.

"The Goddess" will be funny, intelligent and a musical," Merchant said. "It's a film about Shakti. It says women are here to rule and men better accept it."

Shakti is a Hindu goddess of power and energy and the Hindi word also means "strength."

Merchant said Turner, who left India on Wednesday,

traveled with him from Varanasi, a holy city in the north, to the beaches of southern Kerala state. She met with Indian singers and dancers to prepare for the role.

"In a few weeks she has been given a big dose of Indian culture," said Merchant, who has produced dozens of movies with American director James Ivory.

Merchant said the movie would also star Matthew Modine, who plays a jealous husband in Merchant-Ivory's recent comedy "Le Divorce," which has garnered good reviews.

Turner, 64, bid farewell to her pop career four years ago and her previous big screen appearance was alongside Mel Gibson in "Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome."

■ **TAIPEI, Taiwan** — Sean Connery will not be joining Taiwan's human chain protest against China next week as the island's official media had claimed, a spokesman said.

On Thursday, a ruling party official in Taiwan said the Scottish-born actor was considering whether to join the Feb. 28 protest against China's use of missiles to threaten the island.

However, the official media on Saturday cited a U.S.-based agent for Connery who denied the actor ever planned a trip to Taiwan.

"Sean Connery is not now, nor was he ever, planning a trip to Taiwan or Japan," the English-language daily Taipei Times quoted Nancy Seltzer as saying in an e-mail.

The island's "Hand in Hand to Protect Taiwan" protest against China's missiles is a human chain which will stretch across the island over a distance of more than 190 miles, organizers said.

Connery plans to be in Los Angeles to attend the Academy Awards ceremony on Feb. 29, Seltzer told the paper.



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