

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

8 10 19 21 30
Meganumber: 27
Jackpot: \$12 Million

FANTASY 5

7 13 14 19 38

DAILY 3

Daytime: 1 9 3
Evening: 0 3 1

DAILY DERBY

1st: 01 Gold Rush
2nd: 09 Winning Spirit
3rd: 03 Hot Shot

RACE TIME: 1:44.32

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

A 23-year-old woman, attempting a handstand on a hotel balcony railing in North Fort Myers, Fla., fell to her death but only after shouting to friends to "watch to see what I can still do" (January). And a 21-year-old student at the University of Nebraska Lincoln was killed when, not belted in, he was ejected from the back seat of an SUV in a crash; the student was prominent for his libertarian political views, including a defiant stand in the student newspaper against mandatory seatbelt laws. (He described himself as one of "a die-hard group of non-wearers out there who simply do not wish to buckle up.") (January).

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1981, a jury in Salt Lake City convicted Joseph Paul Franklin, an avowed racist, of violating the civil rights of two black men who were shot to death.

In 1994, in New York, four extremists were convicted of the World Trade Center bombing that killed six people and injured more than 1,000.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"When a man gets up to speak, people listen, then look. When a woman gets up, people look; then, if they like what they see, they listen."

PAULINE FREDERICK
AMERICAN BROADCAST JOURNALIST

INDEX

Horoscopes

Go with the flow, Gemini 2

Surf Report

Water temperature: 59° 3

Opinion

A city of green takes LEED 4

State

LA mayoral race gets commercial 7

Entertainment

What's playing on the silver screen 8

National

Bush militant on environment? 11

Comics

What a goof 12

Classifieds

Ad space odyssey 13-15

People in the News

Mel's latest passion ires natives 16

Time is running out for this old house



John Wood/Daily Press

Preservationists have until April 15 to come up with a plan to save this historic 'shotgun' house, which was one of dozens that once lined the shore in Ocean Park.

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

SM AIRPORT — It's known as a "shotgun" house because a blast fired through the front door would travel through each of its three small rooms and directly out the back door.

The quickly built cottages lined the shores of Ocean Park in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Now preservationists say just one remains. It rests on blocks in a parking lot at Santa Monica Airport, locked in by a sea of new cars stored there by local auto dealers.

Moving the house to a new location and fixing it up may cost as much as \$400,000. Still, move

See **BLAST FROM THE PAST**, page 5

New neighborhood group sprouts up in Ocean Park

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

OCEAN PARK — A group of residents from this beachside community have formed a new neighborhood group to make their voices heard at City Hall.

Leaders of the recently formed Ocean Park Association (OPA) said they will focus first on building membership, lobbying for changes on Ocean Park Boulevard and urging residents to weigh in on an update to the city's general plan, a planning document expected to control development throughout Santa Monica for the next two decades.

"Ocean Park is historically a very activist community and there are a lot of issues between the beach and Main Street, and development and preservation," said Joel Brand, the group's interim chairman and a seven-year resident. "There are a lot of things that go on in Ocean Park and I think there was a general feeling among the people who came together that the city wasn't paying as much attention to Ocean Park as it was to some other neighborhoods."

OPA fills a void left by the Ocean Park Community Organization, a neighborhood group that disbanded two years ago after an acrimonious legal dispute among some members of its board of directors. OPCO still has a committee dedicated to pre-

See **OPA**, page 5

Downtown development stacking up

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN — The transformation of nearly an entire block of prime real estate is slowly taking shape as a luxury apartment and retail center.

After years of construction, it's expected that businesses along the south side of Santa Monica Boulevard between Fourth and Fifth streets will open their doors in 2006.

Toys "R" Us, at 402 Santa Monica Blvd., is scheduled to close in April. It was recently purchased by the CIM Group, a real estate development firm that directs its investment toward

See **DEVELOPMENT**, page 6



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Luxury apartments are beginning to take shape where a Target store had once been proposed between Broadway and Santa Monica Boulevard on Fifth Street.

Pasadena among many cities looking to end homelessness

By The Associated Press

PASADENA — Officials here are embarking on a 10-year strategy to end homelessness, establishing a good Samaritan program that creates a "safe haven" for chronically homeless people and doubling the operations of the bad weather shelter.

The City Council still must approve the program. To receive funding, federal officials have

ordered cities nationwide to create 10-year plans to end chronic homelessness. A plan for Los Angeles also is underway, which Santa Monica is heavily involved in.

One of the primary goals in the Pasadena strategy is to prevent additional residents from becoming homeless.

The Good Samaritan program would involve community groups, churches and neighborhood asso-

ciations either providing assistance or referring the city's poorest residents to existing resources so they can pay their bills.

Providing 500 of these at-risk households with about \$1,300 of supplemental resources a year would cost about \$651,000.

The Safe Haven program would provide case management and permanent shelter to a portion of the chronically homeless com-

munity, many of the mentally ill who have been on the streets for a long period of time.

The Safe Haven would cost approximately \$2 million to establish and then \$100,000 annually to operate. Most of the start up money would be available through HUD and state grants.

The strategy includes doubling bad weather shelter operations to 120 nights a year.

Jacquie Banks

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Go with the flow, Gem

Santa Monica Daily Press



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)
 ★★★★★ A last-minute hassle might force you to rearrange your schedule. You also might be able to sort out the situation quickly and save your evening plans. Check in on an older relative or friend before flying out the door. Tonight: You speak; others listen.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
 ★★★★★ Work with partners. Be subtle if you want or need to question another's opinion or facts. Give each person the attention he or she deserves. Consider alternatives, especially regarding a joint venture. Clear the air early on. Tonight: Detach. Ask questions. Weigh the pros and cons.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
 ★★★★★ You might think you want one thing and find out by the end of the day that you have changed your mind. Don't worry. Be flexible with suggestions. A friendship could be transforming right in front of you. Don't overanalyze; feel. Tonight: Go with the flow and remain sensitive to others.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
 ★★★★★ Tackle your must-do list. You will want to be free by the end of the day, when your gregarious personality takes over. Someone lets you know how much he or she values you. Accept compliments gracefully. Tonight: Just don't be alone.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
 ★★★★★ How you approach your day could change as it progresses. You hear a lot of news. Decipher a message by noticing what isn't being said. By detaching and thinking, you will gain greater insight. Clear your desk. Tonight: Just for you!

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
 ★★★★★ Carefully establish your priorities and honor them. Much will happen, presenting many choices and adding a touch of confusion. Deal with each situation knowing that it's Friday; you are about to get a break. Tonight: Let your hair down. Let go of tension.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
 ★★★★★ Keep communication flowing. You might want to rethink plans or a decision. Postpone any major purchases, like a car or computer, for now. Others might not understand how annoying they can be. Tonight: Happy at home.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
 ★★★★★ Use care with your finances, as you could make a mistake or be vulnerable to a pick-pocket. Check your balances as well. A friend or partner might not grasp what you are dealing with. Later on, explain it again. Tonight: Out ...

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
 ★★★★★ Push to accomplish all you can. Hop over an obstacle and don't waste any time. Confusion or bad information could be at the source of the issue. Give others the benefit of the doubt. Check your bills and checking-account balance. Tonight: You go way overboard.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
 ★★★★★ You might be slow to get started, but a veritable tiger once you're in action. Don't worry about a misunderstanding. In fact, prevent the problem by clarifying what you say. Do what you need to do to start the weekend well. Tonight: The Moon beams you wherever you want.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
 ★★★★★ Good news surrounds meetings and friends. Use care with a child or partner. You can be sure you aren't on the same page. You also might not want to agree with this person. Schedule an important chat. Tonight: Play it low-key.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
 ★★★★★ Others might hassle you, or at least that's how you feel. Try not to let your personal opinions and life interfere with your work performance. Schedule important conversations for the evening. Don't put off the inevitable. Tonight: Be open.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Don't read the book, watch the movie

Daily Press staff

Sometimes movies aren't made. They are born — from books.

Santa Monica College is launching a Friday night film series "Made Into Movies: Literature to Film" that will include a scholarly component as it analyzes adaptations of literary works to the big screen.

Four films will be screened, followed by moderated discussion, beginning today, March 4 and continuing through June 3.

"What makes this film series unique is that it combines scholarly insight with pure entertainment," said SMC cinema professor Josh Kanin, who will moderate the post-screening discussions with SMC English professor David Zehr. "We will have lively and intellectual discussions after watching each of these superb films."

Kanin also noted that the series features an eclectic line-up, both in terms of style and source material. Scheduled are:

■ Friday, March 4: "Z," Costa-Gavras' 1969 political suspense-thriller, a condemnation of the Greek military junta's ruthless power seizure in 1966. Winner of the Cannes Film Festival jury prize and an international sensation at the time of its release, the film, based on the novel by Vassilis Vassilikos, blends documentary fact and thriller-like narrative in a story that is still relevant today.

■ Friday, April 1: "Tom Jones," the classic adaptation of Henry Fielding's novel, which is a comedy of a young man's adventures in 18th-century England. A hit around the world, the 1963 film was written by noted playwright John Osborne, who received the Oscar for best adapted screenplay. The movie also garnered several other Oscar nominations.

■ Friday, April 29: "Woman in the Dunes," Japanese director Hiroshi Teshigahara's 1964 masterpiece in which an entomologist finds himself held prisoner in a sand pit with an alluring woman who expects him to work at her side. The haunting, surreal allegory was adapted to the screen by Kobo Abe from his own existentialist novel.

■ Friday, June 3: "The Taming of the Shrew," the earthy and robust 1967 version of the classic Shakespeare comedy that teamed Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in director Franco Zeffirelli's first film.

All screenings are free and are held at 6 p.m. in room 214 of the SMC art complex, 1900 Pico Blvd. Free parking is available.

The film series is co-sponsored by the SMC communication and English departments. For information, call (310) 434-4588 or (310) 434-4098.

'Fantasticks' continues its staying power in SM

By Daily Press staff

The world's longest-running musical is coming to Santa Monica.

"The Fantasticks" tells the story of a starry-eyed boy who falls in love with the girl next door and what happens when the two are forced to choose between the dangerous temptations of the outside world and the warmth and comfort of home and each other.

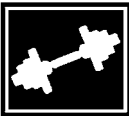
"The Fantasticks," originally premiered off-Broadway at the Sullivan Street Playhouse in New York's Greenwich Village on May 3, 1960, where it ran for nearly 42 years and 17,162 performances.

"The Fantasticks" opens today, March 4 and continues through Sunday, April 10 with performances Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., Sunday matinees at 2 p.m., and one Saturday matinee March 19 at 2 p.m. There will be a special performance Sunday, April 3 at 7 p.m. to benefit the Santa Monica Theatre Guild. Tickets can be purchased by calling the Morgan-Wixson Theatre box office at (310) 828-7519. The theater is located at 2627 Pico Blvd.

CORRECTION — In the March 3 edition, the starting time for the Santa Monica Pony League opening day ceremony was incorrect. The festivities will begin at noon at Los Amigos Park on Saturday, March 5.

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SURF REPORT

Today we're expecting the NW to drop as the light SW continues. West facing breaks are looking at chest- to head-high sets while south facing breaks continue to see knee- to waist-high conditions. Weather and winds may be problematic, however.

Outlook: On Saturday, another NW burst is expected, enough to bring west facing breaks into chest- to head-high sets with some pluses. SW may pick up a tad as well, but not much more than waist high. On Sunday, standout west facing breaks may see some overhead set waves.

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

Today the
water is:

59°

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	4:08	1.0	4:25	0.2	10:05	4.8	10:45	4.7
SUNDAY	4:49	1.0	4:46	0.7	10:42	4.3	11:11	4.8
MONDAY	5:38	0.9	5:06	1.2	11:27	3.6	11:42	4.9
TUESDAY	6:41	0.9	5:26	1.7	12:30	2.9	N/A	N/A
WEDNESDAY	8:10	0.8	5:38	2.2	2:31	2.4	12:23	4.9
THURSDAY	9:59	0.5	N/A	N/A	1:24	4.8	N/A	N/A
FRIDAY	10:34	0.6	6:08	2.4	1:52	4.2	3:03	2.1

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The Q Line

This past weekend, more than 400 Santa Monicans turned out for a workshop to discuss and develop solutions for quelling gang violence in the city. Suggestions included developing an inter-agency partnership, increasing parent involvement, re-examining the way officers police local neighborhoods, partnering with the business community to offer jobs and training to youths, and developing new education programs for students, teachers and counselors.

Another workshop has been scheduled for March

12, at which time officials hope the community will formulate a specific plan for tackling the problem.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "What needs to be included in the community's plan to end gang violence?"

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your responses in the weekend edition. Please try to limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.



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OPINION

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- News Item

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Axis of evil: GOP, credit card companies

Editor:

Thanks for re-running Ed Silverstein's excellent article on the perils of credit cards (SMDP, March 2, page 4). The banking industry is racking up incredible profits (better than all other industries in the fourth quarter of 2004), thanks to numerous practices that overwhelm the least sophisticated card holders, those least able to afford the multitude of draconian fees.

This is an industry that is resisting the addition of some minor changes to statements to help card users understand the credit card hell they are entering. What has been proposed is a calculation of how long it will take to pay off the remaining balance if the cardholder makes only the current minimum monthly payment. With minimum monthly payments pegged at 2 percent of the balance and interest rates close to 2 percent per month (24 percent per year) the answer for card holders paying the minimum would be: Never.

Now, why isn't the religious right (and they are neither) demanding that money-changers leave their house of worship? Perhaps they don't want to upset the "Mods" (Republican moderates) in their party?

Roger Swanson
Santa Monica

Bush bad for America

Editor:

Ordinary Americans are facing severe cuts if George Bush's new budget becomes law. Bush plans devastating cuts to America's top priorities, from homeland security to health care to education to benefits for veterans and much more. Despite these cuts, this budget is a fiscal disaster, with Bush's trademark irresponsibility pushing America deeper into the red with another record deficit.

The Bush budget cuts \$45 billion from Medicaid, enough to provide health care to 1.8 million children. California's share of these cuts is \$4.7 billion.

The Bush budget cuts the COPS program, which has put 15,801 officers on California streets, by 96 percent.

Bush's budget cuts the very same community and rural health care programs he touted during the campaign, even though more than 200,000 California residents have lost their health care coverage since Bush took office due to his failures.

Bush underfunds his own No Child Left Behind Act by \$13.1 billion in his budget. In California, that means a shortfall of \$1.7 billion, leaving behind 420,086 California children.

Bush promised to fund Pell Grants in his state of the Union address, but his budget is \$6.6 billion short. That's \$759.9 million less than what's needed in California, a real burden for the 528,609 students in California who receive the grants.

Bush cuts \$12.5 million from California job training programs in his 2006 budget.

The Bush budget would require many veterans to pay a new \$250 annual "user fee" to use the Veterans Administration health care system, and would double the prescription drug co-payment for the 2,569,340 California veterans.

Bush cuts California clean water programs by \$27.6 million.

The unprecedented Bush tax cuts for the wealthy and his immoral war for oil in Iraq continue to decimate the U.S. treasury and give the conservative agenda an excuse to cut humane programs. We must protest what these cuts would do to California and its citizens.

Judy Brown
Santa Monica

City Hall needs to take
the LEED on the green

OUR TOWN
BY TED WINTERER

The five or six avid readers of this column (and yes, Mom, I'm counting you) will recall that in my last opus I sounded off about Santa Monica's Sustainable City Plan and the ways in which our government could do more to promote the goals of this plan. Apparently I'm not done with this rant.

Consider if you will the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for green design. LEED is a voluntary third party certification system for new and renovated buildings. Credits are awarded for various features promoting sustainability and a structure is then rated as Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum.

Much to its credit, our City Council decided in 2001 that all new municipal construction should meet the LEED Silver benchmark. Thus, the new Public Safety Building employs a variety of resource conservation schemes and the new parking structure at the Civic Center will feature an array of solar panels to provide its energy. So if City Hall continues to suffer from the edifice complex behind its seemingly endless construction binge — which my mother can tell you I believe is ill-advised — at least the impact of these new buildings will be reduced.

But there's a wrinkle here. While Santa Monica was one of the earliest cities to impose the LEED Silver standards upon itself, Vancouver is now the first to require that its new buildings attain Gold status. Now that the bar's been raised, shouldn't we aspire to the same goals of sustainability as our neighbor to the north?

And what about private construction? What can be done to advance green design? Again, Santa Monica has been visionary and in 2001 put into effect the "Green Building Ordinance," which requires energy and water conservation measures and the use of recycled materials. City Hall also developed "Green Building Design" and "Construction Guidelines," which encourage but do not require additional sustainable practices.

But once again, our government could take further steps to foster environmentally sensitive structures. There's talk of fast-tracking permits for LEED-registered commercial and multi-family projects. LEED for single family residences won't be available for another year or two. Expedited permits are a nifty idea, one I

hope the City Council adopts later this year. But why not offer greater incentives for green design, such as reduced fees for permits on a sliding scale, so that attaining successively higher LEED ratings yield a corresponding reduction in the cost of approvals? Or what about bonus densities so a sustainable building, just like an affordable housing project, can exceed the height and mass limits of the zoning ordinance?

And when LEED standards are introduced for single-family homes, they likewise ought to be used to promote green design. Since owners of individual residences are more likely than developers of larger projects to be deterred by the capital investment required by some aspects of resource-conserving construction, why not waive all permit fees for single family homes which meet certain green criteria? After all, City Hall currently waives fees for renovations of landmarked structures. Aren't environmentally sensitive buildings equally important?

And as our "Land Use Element" — which governs development in Santa Monica — is revised in the next couple of years, our leaders would do well to incorporate the goals of their own Sustainable City Plan. For instance, the most current report on the progress of the plan acknowledges: "Since 1995, energy use, water use and waste generation have been increasing, largely as a result of new office construction and larger daytime populations resulting from higher occupancy rates in hotels and office buildings." Sounds to me like we don't need any more office complexes or hotels.

Finally, City Hall could do more to promote adaptive reuse of existing structures, which is the most sustainable way to redevelop a property. For instance, our current land use policies make it easier and cheaper to scrape an old building in a multi-family district and build condos then to renovate it and add housing. It ought to be the other way around.

But first City Hall would have to disavow its penchant for demolishing and rebuilding. Why would I consider a green-designed reuse of my own home when our government plans to demolish instead of refurbish the RAND Corp.'s old "Z" building, by far the most architecturally and historically compelling structure on the southern stretch of Ocean Avenue? It's sort of like telling the indigenous people in rain forests they're better off harvesting nuts than felling trees and then heading home to gorge on Big Macs while driving a SUV.

(Ted Winterer is a writer who lives in Ocean Park. He can be reached at ourtownsmdp@aol.com.)



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Preservation group has seven weeks to raise up to \$400K

BLAST FROM THE PAST, from page 1

it must: City Hall says the house sits on borrowed space at the future site of a new park.

It was taken there by preservationists in July of 2002 to avoid demolition. The same group that wheeled it across town is hoping to raise enough money to bring the house back to Ocean Park, to a small community garden on the north end of Main Street, where it would be used only by gardeners and mostly for storage.

Doing so may prove difficult. A city report issued last month indicated the preservation group already had let nearly three years go by without formulating a feasible plan. Even with a plan, fundraising would be challenging, the report says, because the house would be accessed only by gardeners, and the gardeners themselves don't support the move because it would take away one of their plots.

Those obstacles haven't deterred the subcommittee of a former neighborhood group called the Ocean Park Community Organization. OPCO disbanded more than two years ago and a bitter legal dispute ensued among its members. The committee to preserve the shotgun house, however, apparently remained.

Mario Fonda-Bonardi, an architect and member of the preservation committee who has lived in Ocean Park for nearly 30 years, said Thursday the pre-1900 Victorian house was the oldest remaining example of authentic Santa Monica architecture. No more adobe huts from the mid 1800s. No more of the tent cabins that once were typical of the Santa Monica Canyon, Fonda-Bonardi said.

"They're kind of the seeds," he added. "Everything else has sprung up from these seeds."

Asked how much money, if any, the shotgun committee had raised to save the little house, Fonda-Bonardi replied, "None right now, but we have some good leads. We've applied for grants and are waiting for those to come through. We're pursuing other leads too."

Moving the house will only cost about \$15,000, Fonda-Bonardi added.

"It's a very small house, like a Winnebago," he said. "You could put it behind a pickup truck and tow it down the street."

Though City Hall estimated the cost of moving and repairing the old house at \$400,000, one local conservancy official said preservationists may be able to find economies after it's decided how the house will be situated and what its exact uses will be.

"It (the \$400,000 estimate) is obviously is a number that, it raised our eyebrows, but it's hard for us to say if that's an accurate number or not without having a historic accountant do a review and have more technical work go into the process. It's an enormous undertaking certainly, but a very worthy project," said Joel Brand, president of the board of directors for the

New group to tackle, traffic, development

OPA, from page 1

serving an historic "shotgun" house (see related story) from the late 1800s, but the main group doesn't hold formal meetings.

Neighborhood organizations are entitled to up to \$4,000 a year in funding from City Hall. Brand said OPA likely will apply for that money once it's been formally established. In the meantime, the fledgling group hopes to deepen its ranks by holding mixers, workshops and other community events in Ocean Park, according to Brand.

The first order of business will be to lobby for improvements to make one of the neighborhood's key traffic arteries more friendly to pedestrians.

"Basically Ocean Park Boulevard was designed as kind of a freeway to a high-rise coastline that never got built," said Brand, adding the group hadn't decided what upgrades to push for, but would consider new plantings and medians like on Wilshire Boulevard.

"The idea in the early '80s was that the coastline of Ocean Park was going to become a series of high rises ... Thankfully, we never got the walls of high-rise apartment buildings and, as a result, we really don't need a freeway coming down Ocean Park Boulevard," Brand said.

Another priority, he said, will be encouraging residents to weigh in on the general plan and thereby help shape the neighborhood's future on everything from building heights to how traffic flows.

So far, turnout at OPA functions has been higher than expected, said Brand, adding some 15 to 25 people have attended previous meetings. The group will meet next on Sunday, March 13 at 4:30 p.m. in the community center at Joslyn Park.

Santa Monica Conservancy. The conservancy is a nonprofit organization started by residents in 2002 with a goal to preserve the city's character through its architecture.

Brand is the interim chairman for OPCO's successor, the Ocean Park Association (see related story), but said he is not affiliated with the shotgun preservation group.

No matter how much money it ultimately takes to save the aging house, the timing will be tight, said Karen Ginsberg, who works in City Hall's community and cultural services department. Bids for a planned 8.3-acre Airport Park are due April 15, and city officials want to decide by then what to do with the house. Early park plans called for two lighted youth soccer fields, a one-acre dog area, a separate picnic area, a children's playground, a paved path, restrooms and 116 parking spaces.



John Wood/Daily Press

The inside of the historic shotgun house is in disrepair and officials expect it will cost up to \$400,000 to have the house moved and renovated.

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Kim Calvert/Special to the Daily Press

Luxury apartments and commercial space will soon face Fourth Street between Broadway and Santa Monica Boulevard, a block lined with restaurants and retail stores.

Luxury apartments in downtown expected to be complete in 2006

DEVELOPMENT, from page 1

downtown business districts, according to a company profile. CIM owns nine properties in Santa Monica, with seven located on the Third Street Promenade.

City Hall records indicate no new merchants have applied for a business license at the Toys "R" Us site, but Kathleen Rawson, executive director of the Bayside District, which helps manage the downtown area, said if the space were to remain vacant for a short period of time, it would be normal.

"It's up in the air," Rawson said. "CIM is a close partner in the community, so I am sure they are waiting to find the right fit. Sometimes it takes a while."

The Toys "R" Us building is 52,500 square feet and four stories high. The two bottom floors are designed for retailers, while the top two floors have been designated for residential space.

Planet Action, also located at the Toys "R" Us property, will continue to operate in its 8,600-square-foot building.

CIM representatives weren't available for comment but sources have previously said they are excited about acquiring the site, which they speculate will be an opportunity to lease a prime location that will grow stronger over time.

The total transaction for the Toys "R" Us purchase is valued at more than \$30 million, \$24 million of which CIM paid for the building, according to the Los Angeles Business Journal.

The site adjacent to Toys "R" Us, the Santa Monica Luxury Apartments and various retail shops, is under construction. Officials fought for years to build a Target store at the location, but that proposal was shot down in 2001 because of concerns over the traffic problems it would cause downtown.

Three Coast Limited Partnership then bought the property for \$11 million. Bill Hammerstin, a general partner for the firm, said the mixed-used residential and retail project will cost \$30 million.

JSM Construction is developing the Santa Monica Luxury Apartments, four five-story buildings east of the Toys "R"

Us site along Santa Monica Boulevard and Fifth Street. Each apartment building will have between 50 and 60 housing units, comprised mostly of one- and two-bedrooms that range from 700 to 1,100 square feet. There will be anywhere between 3,000 to 6,000 square feet of retail space on the ground floor, according to Tracy Lavarney, the project architect.

"It's up in the air. CIM is a close partner in the community, so I am sure they are waiting to find the right fit. Sometimes it takes a while."

— KATHLEEN RAWSON
Executive director,
Bayside District,

Lavarney said each of the four buildings will have a distinct style. The building at 456 Santa Monica Blvd., on the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Fifth Street, will be a modern stucco building with a flat roof, aluminum windows and columns, and limestone on the ground floor. The building next to it, facing Fifth Street, will have a Mediterranean look with a sloped, ceramic tile roof and medallions set into the walls, Lavarney said.

The two projects in the middle of the block also will be unique. One is modeled after the Italian style and the other will be contemporary, architects said.

The entire project is scheduled to be completed next January.

Par Commercial, a commercial brokerage firm, will lease the retail portion of the project. Rafael Padilla, Par Commercial owner, said he is looking for merchants.

"We have seen very strong interest from a number of retail clients, but none that compliment the city," he said.

STATE



Television magic reshapes LA mayoral candidates

BY MICHAEL R. BLOOD

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — The candidate bounds down the sidewalk like an overcaffeinated aerobics instructor, his finger a dancing exclamation point, his voice a bullhorn bark. A rainbow of adoring supporters form a human backdrop as he beams a smile that won't quit.

Who is this man on the TV screen?

Los Angeles voters familiar with the famously starchy Mayor James Hahn might have trouble recognizing him as the star of his re-election campaign commercials. This is not the bookish lawyer who cringes when recognized in restaurants, the candidate who once said you don't have to bounce up and down to get noticed.

With the mayoral primary less than a week away, a vulnerable Hahn and his four major challengers are hoping voters will be swayed by makeovers that would make Hollywood proud.

In the city that made King Kong famous, maybe the key is a candidate 75 feet tall. That's what former state Assembly Speaker Bob Hertzberg is trying in his TV ads, in which the supersized candidate dwarfs freeways, stoops on a police station and waves at toothpick-sized basketball players.

As the announcer says, "Big city, big job."

Breaking out of the Los Angeles media blur isn't easy. Making matters worse, candidates in Tuesday's election have been forced to compete for attention with deadly mudslides, the Michael Jackson trial — even the run-up to the Oscars.

In a wide-open race that hasn't generated much public enthusiasm, TV ads are the most important path to voters. To grab attention, commercials from the major candidates feature unorthodox approaches, like the inflated Hertzberg.

Hahn, the incumbent whom polls suggest is struggling to fend off a field of fellow Democrats, is showcasing an energetic, can-do image to counter suggestions that he's out of touch. His customary suit is sacrificed for an open collar shirt and sports jacket. He doesn't talk about probes into allegations that members of his administration traded city contracts for campaign

donations, instead reminding voters that crime is down and job growth up.

City Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa, who ran four years ago as a success story from the barrio, now appears in commercials as a seasoned statesman, trig in suits and ties. It's an appeal that appears tailored to reach beyond his Hispanic base into the largely white, moderate-to-right-tilting San Fernando Valley.

You'd never know from listening to centrist Hertzberg's talk of new ideas that he was once a figure of the Sacramento status quo. And while his centerpiece idea is breaking up the Los Angeles Unified School District, he ignores the fact that the mayor has no authority over the massive school system.

For each candidate, what counts is reaching the right voters with the right message at the right time. Analysts predict no candidate will win a majority on March 8 — and each of the two top finishers might advance to a May 17 runoff with little more than 25 percent of the vote.

"We definitely didn't want to be conventional. ... We wanted to catch people's attention," said state Sen. Richard Alarcon, D-Sun Valley, who appears in one ad flailing at a boxer's punching bag while carrying on an interior monologue about water rates and alleged City Hall corruption. In another, he appears on a set reminiscent of "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," lamenting the shortage of street cops.

"You have to be memorable, but do you become a caricature of yourself?" asked Hahn consultant Kam Kuwata, warning of the risk of radically resculpting an image. "In order to break through, you have to be clever ... but not be a laughingstock."

As yet unclear is whether any candidate will turn to attack ads, which can backfire in a crowded field with a public weary of negative political images.

Four years ago, Hahn won his first term after airing an ad that used grainy images of a crack pipe to imply Villaraigosa, who had written a letter on behalf of a convicted drug trafficker, was weak on crime.

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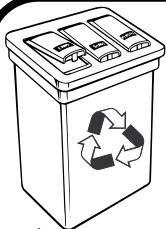
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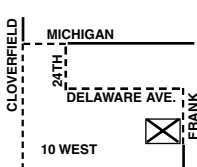
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Entertainment

What’s playing ...

By Dan Dunn
Special to the Daily Press

CONSTANTINE

A visually spectacular yet emotionally barren, at times gratingly inconsistent comic book adaptation.
Starring: Keanu Reeves, Rachel Weisz

BECAUSE OF WINN DIXIE

Some might be put off by the film’s anachronistic unreality and manifest righteousness, while others will no doubt revel in the quixotic Bushiness of it all.
Starring: AnnaSophia Robb, Jeff Daniels

IMAGINARY HEROES

What starts out as a kind of poor man’s “Ordinary People” quickly deteriorates into an unintentional comedy of errors filled with virtually every staple of the after-school special genre.
Starring: Sigourney Weaver, Emile Hirsch

HITCH

Smith and James make a good team and hit all the right comedic notes working with very funny material.
Starring: Will Smith, Kevin James, Eva Mendez

BRIDE & PREJUDICE

American audiences will be captivated by Aishwarya Rai, Bollywood’s most popular female star.
Starring: Aishwarya Rai, Martin Henderson

INSIDE DEEP THROAT

A provocative, highly entertaining look inside the “Deep Throat” phenomenon and the indelible impression it made on the cultural landscape.

THE WEDDING DATE

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

RORY O’SHEA WAS HERE

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

HIDE AND SEEK

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

ALONE IN THE DARK

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

ARE WE THERE YET?

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

COACH CARTER

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

THE AVIATOR

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

LEMONY SNICKET’S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
Inspired adaptation of the wildly popular kids’ book series that ‘tis a hell of a lot more naughty than nice.
Starring: Jim Carrey, Meryl Streep

SPANGLISH

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

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

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

The Vic jazzes it up on Main Street

By Daily Press staff

MAIN STREET — Santa Monica’s only intimate jazz setting will feature an eclectic line-up of musicians this month, as well as late-night sessions.

The Vic on Main Street continues with its 2005 Jazz Series with two shows every Thursday at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m., and late night jazz from midnight to 2 a.m. that showcases what’s been described as extraordinary young talent.

Here’s the line-up at the Vic for March:

March 10

Jackie Ryan with the Tamir Hendelman Trio. “At a time when superficial flirtations with jazz abound, with cabaret singers heavily into jazz-style accompaniment and rock favorites from the ‘60s and ‘70s discovering the jazz-associated attractions of Gershwin, Rodgers & Hart and Cole Porter, Ryan’s performance was a reminder of the art’s richly layered depths of expression and creativity.” — Don Heckman, L.A. Times

Tamir Hendelman, Dan Lutz and Dean Koba.

Late night jazz: Kathleen Grace Quartet

March 17

Angela Hagenbach, is a jazz vocalist who finds more in a song than the composer penned — certainly more than one finds on the lyric sheet. Like Sarah Vaughan or Shirley Horn, Angela Hagenbach inhabits a song, and breathes new life into her carefully selected material.

Tamir Hendelman, Dan Lutz, Danny Embrey and Doug Auwarter.

Late night jazz: Garrett Smith Quartet

March 24

Tom Scott: This is a rare club appearance by the acclaimed sax man. Scott is a renowned composer, arranger, producer, musical director and saxophonist. He has 25 solo recordings to his credit and has earned 12 Grammy nominations and two Grammy Awards. Scott is joined by Roger Kellaway on piano, Jeff D’Angelo on bass, and Nate Wood on drums.

Late night jazz: Josh Nelson Quintet

March 31

Interplay: “Spontaneous, self-effacing musical interaction is something that one always hopes for but too rarely experiences in small jazz ensembles.” This trio plays with ... “collective enthusiasm and musicality that defines the work of this superlative ensemble.” — Don Heckman, L.A. Times

Dave Mackay, Lori Bell and Ron Satterfield.

Late night jazz: Sara Gazarek

Thursday shows require reservations. There is a \$20 cover and two item minimum. Open from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m., dinner is served from 7 p.m. to midnight. There is a \$5 cover and two drink minimum for the late night jazz session, which doesn’t require reservations.

The Vic is located at 2640 Main St. Call (888) FOR-JAZZ (367-5299), or log onto www.thevicforjazz.com.

‘The Pacifier’ a dud all the way

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

In comparing this manifest attempt to broaden the appeal of beefy action hero Vin Diesel to similar efforts by, oh, let’s say, senescent beefy action hero Arnold Schwarzenegger,

Review

“The Pacifier” rates a tad higher than the transcendently sucky

“Jingle All Way,” but is far inferior to the Ivan Reitman-directed comedy classic, “Kindergarten Cop.” (Remember, kids, “It’s NOT a too-muhhhhh!”) In short, if Vinny D has designs on someday being elected governor of California, he best begin attaching his bad self to significantly better transitional material. On second thought maybe he’s onto something, because just like a politician, this dud from the Disney factory doesn’t deliver on promise and offers almost nothing beyond the same old, same old.

Seeing a bald beefcake like Diesel yukking it might be funny under the right conditions, but here it isn’t. Not at all. To Vin’s credit, even ace jokesters like Will Ferrell and Jim Carrey would be hard-pressed to squeeze a laugh or two out of this lemon. Having the oft-amusing Carol Kane on board can usually provide a middling film a boost, but here it certainly doesn’t. In truth, Kane’s housekeeper is the most annoying character in a film that’s got more than its bearable share of them.

The trailer tells us all we need to know about the plot: Vin is tough-guy Navy SEAL Shane Wolfe, given an improbable assignment protecting five Ritalin-ready brats. They don’t dig his rigid military style; he can’t change a diaper. Of course, they eventually come to understand and even depend on one another, but by the time that happens you’ll have long since stopped caring.

(Rated PG for action violence, language and rude humor. Running time: 91 minutes.)

‘The Jacket’ not a perfect fit

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

A talented cast gets lost in the confusion that is this whirling dervish of a motion picture from director John Maybury (“Love is the Devil”). “The Jacket,” which was scripted by Massy Tadjedin, challenges viewers to execute such strenuous mental gymnastics, it is inevitable most will wind up completely spent by the midway point. The studio is hyping the film as a “gothic thriller,” but instead it’s a confounding mishmash of genres that draws inspiration from the likes of the similarly labored head trip “The Butterfly Effect,” only without the welcome comic relief Ashton Kutcher provided, albeit unintentionally, in that inexplicably profitable venture.

Adrien Brody plays Jack Starks, a Gulf War veteran who survives a gunshot wound to the head and is set adrift in Vermont with severe recurring amnesia. While hitchhiking along a remote highway one snowy winter’s day in 1992, Jack encounters a besotted young mother and her 8-year-old daughter stranded by the side of the road. He fixes their truck and connects with the charming little girl, Jackie, in a way her mother finds disagreeable enough to leave poor Jack in the cold. He then gets a lift from a shifty fellow headed for the Canadian border, loses consciousness during a police stop, and awakens to find himself accused of murdering a cop. Found not guilty by reason of insanity, Jack is committed to an institution under the care of a mad scientist named Dr. Becker (a creepy Kris Kristofferson) who subjects him to a brutal experimental treatment involving mind-altering drugs and physical restraint inside a corpse drawer.

That claustrophobic chamber is the portal Maybury misuses to propel his tortured hero back and forth through time to discover what really happened in the past, along with what might be in the future: The year 2007, to be exact. There, Jack reconnects with Jackie, who’s grown up (into Keira Knightley) emulating the wasted life of her dead mom. Jennifer Jason Leigh is also in the mix in an underdeveloped role as a psych ward doc who tries to save Jack. The actors give it their all intrepidly wading through the muddle, and there’s an effectively gloomy mien to the film courtesy of cinematographer Peter Deming (“Lost Highway,” “Mulholland Drive”). But trying to get comfortable inside such a ruffled narrative is difficult, and the primary reason why “The Jacket” doesn’t fit very well.

(Rated R for violence, language and brief sexuality/nudity. Running Time: 103 minutes.)



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The Imbiber offers up a Gonzo drink suggestion



THE IMBIBER

BY DAN DUNN

ASPEN, Colo. — The talk of the town here in the fabled winter wonderland that has long been a playpen for the rich and famous is the recent suicide of its most notorious resident, gonzo journalist Dr. Hunter S. Thompson. From the rustic Woody Creek Tavern to the half-moon copper-topped bar at the ritzy Little Nell Hotel, folks are raising glasses to the late author who also happened to be, as your Imbiber discovered first-hand over the course of the past decade, a world-class whiskey aficionado.

Accordingly, this dispatch is being scrawled on a Scotch-soaked bar napkin (to be transcribed later by some unlucky intern) at the J-Bar in the Hotel Jerome, one of the good Doctor's favorite haunts and the campaign headquarters during his run for county sheriff in 1970. Thompson was fond of strong drink, particularly Chivas Regal 12-year-old (\$27 retail per bottle) on the rocks. He used to place the palm of his hand over the glass and quickly flip it upside down and back again, to give it what he called "the soda pop effect." Being from Kentucky, Hunter was also quite enamored with bourbon. For a long time, Wild Turkey (\$20) was his favorite label, but in recent years he also took a shine to Maker's Mark (\$22) and, on occasion, high-end "small batch" whiskeys like Booker's (\$55).

Thompson once said, "I hate to advocate drugs, alcohol, violence, or insanity to anyone, but they've always worked for me." Here, here, Doc! In tribute to that sentiment, I heartily advocate that the following cocktail be enjoyed while listening to "White Rabbit" at high volume, preferably as the University of Kentucky makes a run for yet another NCAA basketball title. Be sure to raise the glass good and high to toast the end of all the fear and loathing, and the beginning of a new chapter in the Book of Gonzo ... this one about an untamed spirit that will never die.

"The Gonzo Old Fashioned"

2 ounces Maker's Mark or Wild Turkey
Half-ounce dry vermouth
Half-ounce sweet and sour mix
A dash of Angostura bitters
1 shot simple syrup
Maraschino cherry garnish
Orange rind garnish

In a shaker, mix cherry and orange rind in simple syrup, then add other ingredients. Shake briefly, and pour into an ice-filled glass.

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

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NATIONAL

Majority leader wants Social Security action now

BY LAURA MECKLER
 Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist said Thursday that Congress must confront Social Security’s problems this year, dialing back comments earlier in the week that action might have to wait. “We need to do it this year. Not the next year,” Frist said Thursday on the Senate floor. “We are working towards this goal.” Two days ago, Frist noted intense Democratic opposition and suggested he might not be able to move a bill to the Senate floor this year, as Bush has pushed for. “I want to be realistic,” Frist said on Tuesday. Other Republicans have expressed skepticism about the Bush plan, and polls have shown public support falling. That’s left opponents feeling optimistic about how the

debate is shaping up, a month after Bush laid out his ideas in his State of the Union address. On Thursday, Frist said he would work to move the legislation forward. “This president and this Congress are facing this challenge and the challenge is to fix Social Security for seniors, for near retirees, and for that next generation,” he said. “And we need to do it this year.” He added that it will be “much easier” to take action now than it will be later, as Social Security’s financial problems grow. His comments come as Bush tries to navigate a challenging political landscape.

On Wednesday, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee suggested focusing on the long-term solvency of Social Security rather than Bush’s divisive proposal for personal accounts.

A new national poll found support for the president’s Social Security plan falling. And Treasury Secretary John Snow said the president might be willing to jettison its centerpiece. Alternative “add-on” accounts that rely on other sources of funding are also on the table for debate, Snow said.

Some of these proposals would pay for the accounts with general tax revenue; others would require workers to contribute more of their pay.

“I think right now, the more ideas, the better. We like to see ideas,” Snow told reporters.

Bush did get a repeat boost from Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, who prodded Congress to curtail the cost of government health and retirement benefits promised to baby boomers “sooner rather than later.”

Bush has called for congressional action on his proposal this year. His administration is launching a two-month blitz, with Bush and other top officials visiting 29 states to campaign for the plan. He plans visits to New Jersey and Indiana on Friday.

Like other GOP leaders, Sen. Charles Grassley said he personally supports Bush’s plan to divert payroll taxes into personal accounts. Grassley, who chairs the Senate Finance Committee that would consider Social Security legislation, added that the controversy surrounding it is giving Democrats an excuse to ignore the program’s serious financial problems.

“Maybe we ought to focus on the solvency and bring people to the table just over what do you do for the solvency for the next 75 years,” Grassley, R-Iowa, said Wednesday.

Grassley said “personal accounts don’t have a lot to do with solvency,” a distinction that Bush glosses over but that his advisers concede.

“This president and this Congress are facing this challenge and the challenge is to fix Social Security for seniors, for near retirees, and for that next generation. And we need to do it this year.”

BILL FRIST
 Senate Majority Leader

“It really has given the Democrats an opportunity to focus on the personal accounts and avoid the responsibility that we all have about the solvency of it,” Grassley said in an interview with Iowa reporters.

The program’s problems could be fixed, he suggested, with a combination of benefit cuts and tax increases.

Without changes, the Social Security trustees project that by 2042, the program won’t have enough to pay promised benefits fully.

Congressional Democrats are virtually unanimous in their opposition to Bush’s plans, arguing the president wants to inject market risk into a program that has lifted millions of seniors out of poverty. Some Republicans are skittish about tackling the issue, as well, fearing the political repercussions of making such fundamental changes in a program that benefits 52 million Americans.

Some Republicans also object to the policy. “The government should not invest Social Security funds in the stock market,” said Rep. Heather Wilson, R-N.M., who faced a tough re-election fight last year. “Social Security has always been the safety net.”

A new survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press showed support for such accounts tumbling. The survey said the idea has 46 percent backing, down from 54 percent in December and 58 percent in September.

Bush envisions no change for current retirees or workers age 55 and older. Younger Americans could divert a portion of their payroll taxes into personal accounts, to be invested in a limited selection of mutual funds of varying risk. In exchange, the guaranteed government benefit would be cut for these workers when they retire.

All younger workers are likely to see other benefit cuts as well, to help bring the program into financial solvency.

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NATIONAL



Both parties decry border security, lack of funding

BY SUZANNE GAMBOA

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Democratic and Republican House members found common ground Thursday in decrying the state of security on the nation's borders — particularly with Mexico — and criticizing President Bush's proposed spending for immigration enforcement.

Lawmakers shared concerns that terrorists may hide themselves among hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants and said the Border Patrol doesn't have the manpower or equipment to weed them out.

Particularly vexing to the lawmakers was the federal practice of releasing into the United States non-Mexican immigrants arrested for illegally entering the country so they can await deportation hearings.

"The Border Patrol remains our first line of defense against the entry into the country of terrorists, drug smugglers, gangs, criminal aliens and others seeking to break our laws," said Rep. John Hostettler, R-Ind., chairman of the House Judiciary border security subcommittee. He added that he was disappointed by Bush's Border Patrol funding proposal.

The lawmakers also said they were disappointed with Bush's spending plan for 2006, which would provide \$37 million to hire 210 Border Patrol agents. The intelligence reorganization bill Bush signed last year called for hiring 2,000 more agents a year over five years — nearly doubling the size of the Border Patrol.

Texas Democratic Rep. Solomon Ortiz, whose district abuts the Mexican border, said the "strength of the Border Patrol is dwindling." He said 24 more agents from the McAllen, Texas, sector, which takes in several border counties, were deployed with the National Guard for the Iraq war.

Salvador Zamora, Customs and Border Protection spokesman, did not immediately know how many agents have been deployed nationally for the Iraq war.

Meanwhile the numbers of non-Mexican immigrants entering the country are increasing, Ortiz said. Nearly 40,000 non-Mexican immigrants were released in the country last year, and they came from 135 countries, he said.

Although they are required to report later to authorities for deportation hearings, the no-show rates are 90 percent or higher, Ortiz said. Texas had the highest no-show rate at 40 percent, he said.

Ortiz showed news video of some of the non-Mexican

immigrants being released and dropped off at bus stations. He said some take taxis to Border Patrol stations to turn themselves in and get "walking around papers" — paperwork stating they are required to show up for a deportation hearing. Often they use aliases, he said.

"At least those we stop. Let's be sure we know who they are," Ortiz said.

When fiscal year 2004 ended Sept. 30, Border Patrol had 11,100 agents, up from the previous fiscal year's total of 10,700, Zamora said. As of January, the total dropped to 10,700, but the goal is to have 11,200 agents by the end of this fiscal year, he said.

T.J. Bonner, president of the Border Patrol union, said the fine print in Bush's budget actually calls for hiring only 105 full-time Border Patrol agents in 2006.



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Looser environmental restrictions on military sought by President Bush

BY JOHN HEILPRIN

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration is asking Congress to amend three environmental laws to reduce their impact on military ranges after failing to win the changes last year.

Administration officials circulated among federal agencies their proposed language for changing the laws in a Jan. 6 document obtained by The Associated Press. The language calls for the same changes that stalled in Congress last year.

The Defense Department wants the Clean Air Act amended so any additional air pollution from training exercises wouldn't have to be counted for three years in the state plans for meeting federal air quality standards.

The document says that under the current law "it is becoming increasingly difficult to base military aircraft near developed areas."

Other changes sought are in the Superfund and the Solid Waste Disposal Act. The Pentagon opposes having to remove unexploded ordnance from its operational ranges. It also wants to delay cleanups until after contamination spreads beyond military boundaries.

Pentagon spokesman Glenn Flood said the White House Office of Management and Budget was taking the lead on the three requests. "It's not in our hands," he said Wednesday. OMB officials had no immediate comment.

The Pentagon spends about \$4 billion yearly on military environmental programs.

The Defense Department has worked with the Environmental Protection Agency to make the requests more palatable to lawmakers. House Republicans want more details from the Pentagon before making a commitment to act on the administration's latest request, said GOP aides, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Environmentalists continue to oppose the requests. "They would allow the Pentagon to pollute our air and our drinking water and neither the states nor local communities would have any recourse," said Karen Wayland, legislative director of Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group.

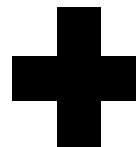
Since 2002, the Bush administration has sought more flexibility in complying with environmental laws, claiming the restrictions are compromising training and readiness.

Congress initially rejected most of the Pentagon request after investigators found little to support those claims. However, it did temporarily waive a law protecting migratory birds and eased restrictions for land conservation and transfer of surplus property in 2002.

A year later, Congress amended the Endangered Species Act to require that less land be set aside for species habitat on military bases. The Marine Mammal Protection Act was also changed to lower the threshold on "harassment" of a marine mammal to allow the Navy greater use of sonar technology.

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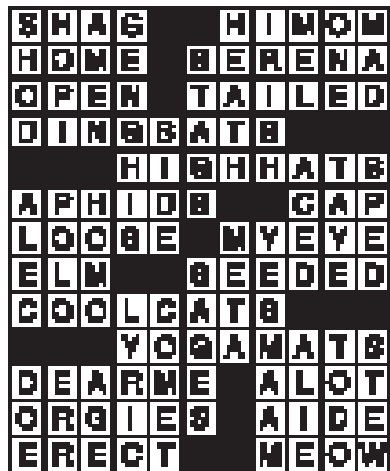
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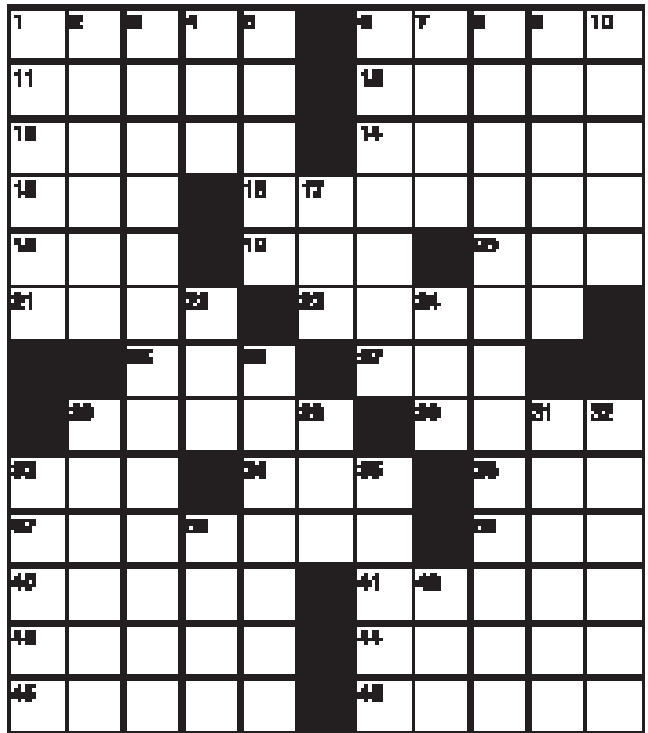
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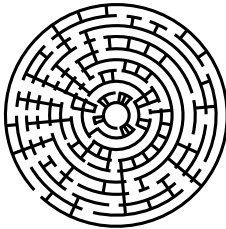
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Mel Gibson buys up Mago Island; natives restless

By The Associated Press

SUVA, Fiji — Mel Gibson has purchased a Pacific island hideaway in northern Fiji, but the sale may face a legal challenge from villagers who claim their ancestors were forced off the island.

Gibson bought Mago Island from Japan's Tokyu Corp. for about \$15 million. The Fiji government's Cabinet approved the sale last month, principal lands officer Laisa Raratabu said Wednesday.

"We received all the papers from Mel Gibson's agents in mid-December last year and approval from the minister (of lands) and endorsement from the Cabinet came on Feb. 9," she said.

Any legal challenge is likely to be difficult, but a landless tribe of indigenous Fijians say their ancestors were forced from the island in the 19th century — and they want it back.

The 500 tribe members are raising funds to challenge the sale in court, the Fiji Times newspaper reported.

"Our island was sold for 2,000 coconut plants, and stories told by our forefathers are that they were forced to leave at gunpoint," tribal member Timoci Waqalevu told the newspaper this week.

The actor-director is required by law to "honor the sovereignty of Fiji" now that he owns the island and explain his reasons for buying it.

Raratabu said the purchase documents show that Gibson wants to turn Mago into a private getaway. "He has stated his intention to retain the pristine conditions of the island," she said.

VIENNA, Austria — Austrians recognized Michael Jackson's star — the one he wore on his chest that is.

The pop singer has been photographed before recent court appearances in Santa Maria, Calif., wearing what experts say is the Order of Vienna, a medal awarded to

artists, businessmen or others of merit, Austria Press Agency reported recently.

The gold star with an eagle in the center has been given to about 50 people a year for their contributions to society. Jackson, 46, who is accused of molesting a now-15-year-old cancer survivor at his Neverland ranch in 2003, hasn't been among the recipients.

Jackson's staff bought the medal at an antiques shop in downtown Vienna, APA reported.

It is illegal in Austria to wear such medals if one hasn't earned them, and Jackson theoretically could face a \$919 fine.

City officials say they don't plan to press charges.

NEW YORK — Lindsay Lohan says her father has no right to claim a share of her earnings.

"He didn't do anything for my career except go out and not come home at night," the 18-year-old actress-singer tells W magazine in its April issue, on newsstands Friday. "So I don't think he deserves anything. He doesn't even deserve my respect."

Michael Lohan's estranged wife, Dina, filed divorce papers in January. Lohan responded, saying he wants half of the 15 percent his daughter allegedly gives her mother — a figure that could be \$6 million to \$7 million a year, his lawyer has said.

Lohan has also said he wants to do a reality TV show that would follow the family through the course of the divorce.

"As sick as it sounds, a reality show might help, actually," Lindsay Lohan told the magazine. "At least then people could get the truth."

Michael Lohan was arrested last month after a fiery car crash in the Long Island town of Syosset and was charged with driving while intoxicated. In December, he pleaded guilty to several charges, including assaulting a brother-in-law at a communion party, and was ordered

into drug and alcohol treatment and therapy.

Lohan, 44, has said his headline-grabbing problems have helped — not hurt — his daughter's career.

In the magazine interview, Lindsay Lohan also weighed in on two issues much discussed in the tabloids — her rapid physical maturity and her party-girl reputation.

"I'm young and I only got my boobs, like a year and a half ago, so of course they're going to look good. I love 'em," she said.

Of her "dancing-on-tables" reputation, Lohan said, "I go to clubs and everything, and if I hang out with Paris Hilton, I don't think that's a bad thing. She's a nice girl."

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Lars von Trier has cut a scene from his latest film that showed a donkey being butchered for food.

Von Trier said he cut the scene from "Manderlay" not because he thought it was cruel, but out of concern that it would draw attention away from the movie's political and social content.

"I feel that my conscience is clean in regard to animal welfare," the filmmaker said in a letter he sent to several Danish animal rights groups who had protested the scene.

His production company, Zentropa, said Thursday that the Danish director had received more than 300 letters from groups and individuals in the United States, Germany, Britain and Denmark about the scene, which was shot in Sweden last year.

"The charge made in many of the letters of killing a donkey 'for entertainment' is one that I refute on the grounds that such charges can only originate from ignorance of my films," he said.

"Manderlay," expected to be released this summer in Europe, is the second film in von Trier's trilogy about evil in small-town America during the Depression. The first, "Dogville," which starred Nicole Kidman, won much acclaim.



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