

FREE

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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More SM police officers will be deployed in Pico

Shooting on 17th Street Monday night is the fourth incident this year for Pico

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Santa Monica Police Department officials announced Tuesday they will deploy more officers to an east-side neighborhood, which experienced its fourth shooting of the year Monday night.

The shooting happened at about 10:30 p.m. Monday on the 1800 block of 17th Street. When officers arrived they found two vehicles that had sustained or had bullet holes in them, according to Lt. Frank Fabrega.

Nobody was injured in the gun fire and the incident is under investigation by police department detectives, who are still interviewing witnesses.

High-ranking police department officials met Tuesday about the recent spate of shootings in the Pico neighborhood and increasing the department's presence in the neighborhood.

To protect the operation, police department officials declined to say

how much it would increase its presence there or how many officers are currently based in the Pico neighborhood.

However, four officers and a sergeant are based out of the Virginia Avenue Park Police substation and beat officers routinely check through the Pico neighborhood with an overlapping of patrols between 10 p.m. and 3 a.m.

"We want to deploy our officers to deter and arrest these suspects that are armed," Fabrega said. "We want to be proactive rather than reactive."

The neighborhood surrounding Delaware Avenue has been engulfed in a turf war between two gangs — the Graveyard Crips and the Santa Monica 17th Street gang — for years. And the tension appears to be not only racially motivated between the two groups — one black, the other Latino — but also drug-related.

Since January there have been four shootings in the Pico neighborhood, which runs south from the Santa Monica Freeway to Ocean Park Boulevard and east from Lincoln Boulevard to Centinela Avenue.

On Sunday four Hispanic men driving a dark-colored sport utility vehicle shot a black male in the lower torso who was bicycling along the

See PICO, page 3

A dog's day



Tim Murphy/Daily Press

'Zoltar' takes the helm of his owner's convertible on Tuesday, ready to take a joy ride with no adult supervision.

Local parents laugh at school's expense

Comedic benefit raises money for arts programs and teacher aids

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Parents of Franklin Elementary School students took it upon themselves Monday to ease the facility's funding woes by making it a laughing matter.

Six parents, who are nationally known professional comedians, hosted a benefit at the Aero Theater on Montana Avenue that raised about \$5,500 for the school's Parents and Teachers Association.

The event, dubbed "Parents with Punchlines," brought Steve Mittleman, Bobby Collins, Glenn Hirsch, Fran Solomita, Dave Coulter, and Wendy Kamenoff together to spoof everything from the elementary school and Santa Monica to the war on terrorism and national politics.

The PTA sold about 350 tickets at \$20 a pop to benefit music programs, musical instruments, arts supplies and teacher assistants to keep class

size ratios low. And the show only cost the PTA \$1,500 to host, so most of what they raised went directly to the school.

"Parents want to come out to support their kids," said Franklin Elementary Principal Pat Samarge. "They make this a wonderful place to work."

Though most of the crowd were parents of the school's students, many teachers and administrators also were in attendance. The show was for adults only, and the event was far from politically correct.

"I came to see all the funny parents," said school nurse Sheryl Bader, "because I'm always treating their funny kids."

Kamenoff, who is married to fellow comedian Steve Mittleman, called her friends and got them to agree to the benefit. She had done a similar fundraiser for her son's nursery school.

"I came from San Diego Unified," she said, "and it's amazing the difference in parent support here at Franklin and in Santa Monica."

Many comedians said before the show that they were a little worried about the crowd, who they see on a daily basis and who are parents of their childrens' friends.

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Broker ordered to pay back commission

Behind-the-scenes brokering kicked around in court

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Just because someone pays a bill doesn't mean he can't successfully dispute it later, a judge ruled Monday.

In a case involving real estate leasing commissions, small claims judge pro tem Caroline Welch ordered a broker to return \$2,093 to a real estate company — even though the outfit originally paid the bill in full.

In legal reasoning that resembles the courthouse equivalent of "finder's keepers," local real broker John Alle argued that he shouldn't have to disgorge any money because his invoice

See COURT, page 3

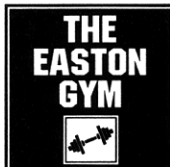
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HOROSCOPE

Take a break tonight, Aries



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)
 ★★★ Slow down when dealing with someone. Pressure builds around communication. You might feel as if another pushes way too hard. A new beginning becomes more than a possibility in the next few weeks. It could be personal, rather than something that involves others. Tonight: Take a break.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
 ★★★★★ Meetings prove to be significant and important right now. You might gain a totally different perspective of someone. You have a hard time convincing an important associate of the wisdom of your ways. However, others will back you. Tonight: Where your friends are.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
 ★★★★★ You're in the limelight, whether you like it or not. A partner or friend could simply be having a bad-hair day, as he or she expresses his or her cantankerousness. Stay in charge of your work. Don't let go of control before you need to. Remain empowered. Tonight: A must appearance.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
 ★★ Listen to feedback surrounding an idea. Some of your cohorts could think you've gone way off the deep end. In truth, you're able to absorb a more avant-garde approach than many. Make a resolution about seeking out facts and figures on your own. Tonight: Rent a movie.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
 ★★ Let others lead, even if you have strong feelings. A child could become unusually rebellious. You want to make it clear who is doing what to whom. Your best bet is to kick back and let what needs to happen, happen. One-on-one relating brings positive results. Tonight: Dinner for two.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
 ★★★★★ Another pushes you hard and for a long time. Pressure builds within your immediate circle or in your personal life. You might have to let another know that you have had enough. Sound the alert system if necessary. A relationship will heat up if given the chance. Tonight: Say "yes."

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
 ★★★ Recommit to getting the job done, rather than getting intertwined in a conversation where a misunderstanding or power play seems inevitable. An offer comes your way that could be unusually exciting. Think in terms of gains. Tonight: Off to the gym.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
 ★★★★★ Think about your expectations carefully. Another has an unusual way of expressing his or her caring. Be careful as far as expectations; you could go down the wrong path. Don't think that money or a gift could make a big difference. Tonight: Let another lure you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
 ★★ You could definitely be out of sorts and causing yourself a major problem. Carefully listen to someone who might be trying to clear the airwaves, despite your interference! Lighten up and be more easygoing with others, especially those close to your heart. Tonight: Put up your feet.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
 ★★★★★ Review a situation carefully. You might be making more of a problem than need be. How you see someone could change substantially as a result of an important discussion. You see a personal matter far differently. Tonight: Talk and share.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
 ★★★★★ Take your time making a choice. A loved one indulges you in an unprecedented way. You could change your mind about what you want and where you are heading. New beginnings surround your finances. Think in terms of gains. Tonight: Treat someone.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
 ★★★★★ Another might pressure you inordinately. In the long run, you make decisions for yourself. You don't need to announce your plans; rather, make a resolution to yourself to change direction. New beginnings mark your life. Tonight: Keep smiling.

QUOTE of the DAY

"If God lived on earth, people
would break his windows."
 — Jewish proverb

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LOCAL



Neighborhood watches to be emphasized in Pico

PICO, from page 1

1900 block of Delaware Avenue.

A teenager was shot twice in the head Feb. 11 on Virginia Avenue, near the Edison Elementary School located between Virginia Avenue and Kansas Avenue. The boy — whose identity is being withheld — was in stable condition at an area hospital earlier this week, police and residents said.

On Jan. 25 police locked down a portion of the neighborhood after a driver tried to evade police when officers tried to

pull the vehicle over on a traffic stop. Officers stationed at 18th Street and Delaware reported being fired upon — the bullet hit a patrol car. No one was injured.

However, police do not consider any of the recent Pico neighborhood shootings gang-related, officials said.

Peter Tigler, president of the Pico Neighborhood Association, said the organization has been seeking more police presence for years, though some neighbors are split on the issue.

"But I guess I would say to those who don't want more police, 'there's a lot of

bullets flying around'," he said. "Is that OK with you, because it's sure not OK with me."

Oscar de la Torre, director of the newly opened Pico Youth and Family Center, said a stronger police presence is not necessarily the answer to the neighborhood's crime problems.

"A lot of it is related to gangs but I attribute this youth violence that we have been experiencing to hopelessness and despair and the lack of stable income for our young people," de la Torre said recently. "They feel a lot of social

advancement opportunities are being closed to them."

Fabrega said the police department's community relations office has been in contact with Pico residents requesting information on forming neighborhood watch groups.

Many of the groups already exist in the area, but police and some residents would like to heighten their presence. Residents requesting additional information on forming or joining neighborhood watches can call the police department's community relations office at 458-8474.

Foot doctor caught in middle of broker bickering

COURT, from page 1

for commissions was paid, only to be later disputed.

Medical Associates, a subsidiary of Held Properties which owns the Medical Center Santa Monica at 20th Street and Santa Monica Boulevard, sued Alle after the company's accounting department discovered it paid Alle more than what its lease agreement stipulated.

Alle represented Medical Associates in the leasing of office space. For such services, leasing brokers commonly receive real estate commissions in the form of a small cut of the lease payments.

When Dr. Steven Silvers, a local podiatrist signed a lease in July of 2000, he had no idea it would cost Alle, his golfing buddy and broker, more than \$2,000 in lost commissions.

Alle argued in small claims court that he and Joel Delman, a broker for Medical Associates, verbally agreed Alle would get 4 percent over 10 years, the term of the lease. But Delman argued that, perhaps unknown to Alle, Dr. Silvers — the tenant — finally signed a Medical Associates' counter offer for 4 percent for the first five years and 2 percent for the second five years. Since Silvers was the principal and was Alle's client, his signature was controlling, Delman argued.

Alle said he never saw the counter offer his client signed. He asked Welch, the judge, to rule in his favor because Medical Associates had already paid two invoices totaling \$11,480, which represented the 4 percent over 10 years commission structure.

"When you submit an invoice, you take great pains to add it up," Alle said. "My understanding was 4 percent over 10 years and I wouldn't have come up with those numbers if it wasn't my understanding."

However, several months after it paid two bills submitted by Alle, Medical Associates' accounting department realized it had paid too much and alerted Delman, its broker, to the error.

Delman admits he didn't look closely at Alle's invoices. When he e-mailed Alle nearly a year later to ask that the overpayment be returned, Alle responded that he was entitled to the 4 percent commission to which the two brokers verbally agreed. He politely refused to refund Medical Associates and said Delman would have to take him to court to get the money.

"I made a mistake by not doing the computation," Delman said. "I think John and his company get a windfall here because of my mistake."

Judge Welch made her ruling based on Dr. Silvers' signed counter offer, which

called for the lower commission.

"Both of you appear to be credible witnesses," she said. "But I have to go with what the document says."

On Tuesday, Welch said while Alle provided his original proposal that pushed the 4 percent for the entire lease as evidence, the counter offer by Medical Associates was the one that held water.

"It appeared that the proposal provided by the plaintiff had Dr. Silvers' signature," she said. "If he hadn't had that document it would have been more of a gray area."

Despite Alle's claims that 4 percent commission over 10 years is customary for a lease, Delman said his company would have never agreed to it.

"We would never pay 4 percent over 10 years," Delman said. "He knows our company and we wouldn't have paid that just

because he was a nice guy. In this business there is nothing customary about commissions."

Silvers, who had no idea there was behind-the-scenes bickering between the two brokers, said he didn't pay attention to the commission stipulation in the lease for his 750-square-foot office that he moved into in December of 2000. The commission dispute wouldn't affect what he owed in lease payments.

"All I look at is what I pay per month," he said. "John is a good broker and I felt like I got a good deal. It's too bad he lost."

Dr. Silvers added that rarely does the average business person know or care about the legal wranglings involved in brokerage deals.

"They are the big land barons and we are just the surfs on their land," he quipped.

Comics raise nearly \$6,000 for school

PARENTS, from page 1

"I've never known almost all my audience by first name before," said Glenn Hirsch, a 16-year resident of Santa Monica. "It should be great though. I laugh individually with almost everyone here when we pick up our kids after school."

Other comedians made the crowd promise not to tell their kids what went on at the benefit.

"If any of us suck tonight, just please don't tell your kids," said Fran Solomita, whose son Marvin attends Franklin. "Really, our kids already have enough problems without having to deal with that too."

During his performance, Solomita commented on the city's large homeless population and the lengths they go to when they ask for spare change.

"Here in Santa Monica our homeless are creative," he said. "This one guy came up to me the other day and said, 'My wife has just been kidnapped and I have the entire ransom except for 35 cents.'"

"What? Was she being held in a candy machine?" he joked.

Collins, who lives on 17th Street, talked about his run-in with the Santa Monica dog catcher. After the dog was lost for three days, the city called to say the animal was safe in its kennel.

"But they said they were closing now and I would have to come in the morning to get him," said Collins. "I said lady, look I'll come down right now and get him but she insisted they were closing right then and I would have to wait until 8 a.m. tomorrow morning."

"When I got down there and paid my \$109 fine, they led my dog out, and he was wearing a dress and a wig," he said. "I know Santa Monica's a nice town but I think something kinky's going on at the dog pound."

Dave Coulier, who is known for his starring role in ABC's show "Full House" said he liked volunteering at the school's other fundraiser, a Halloween carnival. His son, Luke, attends Franklin and Coulier joked his performance that night was the pinnacle of his career.

"So, yeah, my career's doing well," he said. "Finally I'm getting a chance to perform at the Aero Theater on Montana."



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LOCAL

Celebrities predict outcome of boxing match tonight

BY SEAN DALY
Special to the Daily Press

"I grew up thinking I could beat up anybody," said former Partridge Family star Danny "Boom Boom" Bonaduce (5' 7", 155 lbs.), who climbed into the ring last Thursday night in Los Angeles to battle Brady Bunch actor Barry Williams (5' 11", 185 lbs.) in the first match-up of Fox Television's "Celebrity Boxing."

The special airing tonight at 9 p.m. also features embattled Diff'rent Strokes actor Todd Bridges taking on rapper Vanilla Ice and Olympic skater Tonya Harding slugging it out with Presidential accuser Paula Jones.

In preparation for the big fight, Bonaduce, 42, worked out daily at the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood, while continuing his duties as morning disc jockey on LA radio station KYSR-FM and co-host of the syndicated television program, "The Other Half."

"Three days a week I came to the gym twice a day, then on the weekends I would run," he revealed. "I have a whole gym at my home as well."

This was not Bonaduce's first well-publicized fight. In 1994, he won a charity bout with singer Donny Osmond and in 1991, he was arrested for knocking out a transvestite hooker in Arizona.

"That was my first unsanctioned fight," he laughed. "I was a winner by a TKO. Usually, when you win a boxing match, they don't make you pay to repair the other guy's nose."

Williams, 47, knew he was facing a tough opponent.

"Danny's an expert in Karate and he's been boxing for several years," he noted prior to the fight.

"I have to use what I have going for me, which is height and reach and weight. The best thing for me to do is keep him outside and not let him punch."

Williams received support in his corner from Backstreet Boy Howie Dorough and donated his entire appearance fee to the singer's Lupus charity.

Bonaduce — who was joined in the ring by his sparring partner, "The Other Half" co-host Mario Lopez — helped recruit Bridges (5'11", 183 lbs.) for the

evening's second match-up with Vanilla Ice (6', 180 lbs.).

"At first I was supposed to fight Coolio, then it was Hammer, then it was Luther Campbell from 2 Live Crew," said the rapper, 32, whose biggest hit, "Ice Ice Baby" topped the charts in 1990.

Now a building contractor in Texas, Ice, whose real name is Rob Van Winkle, continues to tour in support of his most recent CD, "Bi-Polar."

"I grew up thinking I could beat up anybody."

— **DANNY BONADUCE**
Former Partridge Family star

While Ice admits that fighting Bridges "looks like a lot of fun," the celebrity he really wants to take a whack at is Eminem.

"I'm 180 pounds, he's like 80," Ice laughed. "People would sh-- to see that!"

The third and most anticipated contest of the night pitted Harding against Jones, who was added to the card when "Long Island Lolita" Amy Fisher was KO'd from competing by her parole officers.

"I gotta go with Tonya on this one," Bridges predicted prior to the six-minute, three-round contest. "Paula Jones probably doesn't know what she got herself into."

Williams agreed: "I think Tonya is the bigger B."

Fisher's Ex, Joey Buttafucio sat ringside with wife Mary Jo for all three bouts, and offered to fight Bonaduce at a later date.

No word if he will accept, but the fiery red-head told us: "There are certain people out there I would like to fight. Mostly other disc jockeys. I can't think of one disc jockey off hand that doesn't deserve a good beating. Then other daytime talk show hosts. I want to fight the entire cast of The View."

(Sean Daly is a local entertainment writer and writes for Showtime Entertainment).

No misdeeds clearly shown in Winona Ryder security tape

By The Associated Press

BEVERLY HILLS — A newspaper's review of security camera film starring actress Winona Ryder has found the video doesn't live up to the hype.

The Los Angeles Times viewed a copy of the 90-minute surveillance tape and reported Tuesday that many of the theft, burglary and vandalism charges levied against the actress are based on what security officers reported they saw, not what was captured on tape.

Ryder, who was arrested Dec. 12 at the Saks Fifth Avenue store in Beverly Hills, was charged in February with felony counts of theft, burglary, vandalism and possession of a pain reliever without a prescription.

At the time the charges were filed, the district attorney's office issued a news release quoting Beverly Hills police as

saying Ryder had been seen on a closed-circuit camera using scissors to clip security tags from merchandise.

The Times said no scenes involving scissors were shown on the tape.

"Contrary to the public perception, this tape exonerates her," said Ryder's lawyer, Mark Geragos. "I'd say this is a prosecution, interrupted."

The newspaper said the tape does show Ryder donning a black hat and riding an escalator with it on at one point. The price tag is clearly visible on the hat when she enters a dressing room, the newspaper said, but can't be seen when she emerges 15 minutes later.

The star of such films as "Girl, Interrupted," "Heathers" and "Edward Scissorhands" is free on \$20,000 bail. The tape is to be screened at her preliminary hearing on Thursday.

STATE



STATE BRIEFS

Couple pleads innocent in slaying of Las Vegas teen

By The Associated Press

RIVERSIDE — A Rialto couple pleaded innocent to the killing of a Las Vegas teen-ager.

Janeen Snyder, 22, and Michael Thornton, 46, re-entered their pleas Monday after a new attorney was appointed to the case.

The pair face the death penalty if convicted in the April 2001 murder of 16-year-old Michelle Curran. Her body was found hidden in a horse trailer at a Rubidoux ranch.

Riverside County Superior Court Judge Paul Zellerbach ordered Snyder and Thornton back to court on May 17, when he will set a new trial date.

Thornton's attorney withdrew from the case last month, saying he did not have the resources to represent a client in such a high-profile case. The couple was arraigned again on murder charges when Thornton was appointed a new attorney.

Curran was seen leaving her Las Vegas home for school the morning of April 4. Her body was found April 22, five days after the two were arrested on burglary charges.

In addition to murder charges, Deputy District Attorney Michael Rushton has filed four counts of special circumstances against the couple for allegedly kidnapping, torturing and raping Curran.

Gov. Gray Davis cheers federal color-coded terrorism alerts

By The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gray Davis cheered a federal color-coded terror alert system announced Tuesday, saying it will keep the federal and state government and 90,000 California law enforcement officers "on the same page" in assessing terrorist threats.

Davis, noting that California's "level of readiness is very high," said the five-color system, unveiled Tuesday by the nation's homeland security adviser Tom Ridge, communicates public danger levels more clearly than spoken language.

The governor, who drew some criticism last November for announcing possible Friday rush-hour attacks on the state's major bridges, said the chart resembles one he and his security adviser George Vinson showed Ridge in December. Davis said Ridge asked California, Indiana and New York, which all wanted to implement color-coded threat indicators, to wait until he issued a national version.

Davis also told reporters that 10 days after he announced the Nov. 4 threat against state bridges, Ridge warned him of a possible 5 a.m. Sunday threat against the Golden Gate Bridge. Ridge said the threat lacked credibility and couldn't be corroborated, but came from a Bay Area university. National Guard troops already stationed at the bridge stopped and investigated trucks entering the bridge, the governor said.

Ridge's system, with green as lowest danger and red as highest, listed the nation's risk Tuesday as yellow, the third highest of five levels. Yellow indicates an "elevated" and "significant" risk of terrorist attack.

Flood of wine from truck lost for good on highway

By The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The wine flowed freely but no one tasted a drop when a tanker truck tipped over on Highway 16 east of Petaluma on Tuesday morning.

About 3,200 gallons of white wine flooded from a broken steel tank after the semitrailer's driver lost control going around a slight curve and capsized about 7 a.m.

"I think it was chardonnay," said Shannon King, a spokeswoman with the California Highway Patrol.

Traffic was slowed for more than an hour on the two-lane highway about 30 miles north of San Francisco. The driver was not injured.

"He was just happy no one else was hurt," said CHP officer Curt Lubiszewski.

Lubiszewski said the semi-trailer, owned by Cherokee Freight Lines in Stockton, slid 600 feet after tipping on its side. One of the steel tanks broke open, bathing the highway in a river of white wine and forming small, pinkish pools in the neighboring pasture.

"It just smelled like fermented wine," Lubiszewski said, noting the strong aroma was earthy — rather than bold or fruity.

Nearly 20 firefighters, highway patrolmen and Caltrans workers were on scene to tow the truck away. As for the wine, there was no salvaging to be done, although emergency workers joked that cows in the pasture might get drunk if they decided to conduct a tasting.

Lubiszewski said the chardonnay could have been toxic to drinking water, but since it didn't run into a stream or groundwater, posed no risk.

Gladys Horiuchi, communications manager for the Wine Institute in San Francisco, said 3,200 gallons equates to about 16,000 bottles of wine. At a meager \$10 a bottle, that could mean a loss of \$160,000.

Cherokee Freight Lines executives could not be reached for comment.

"What a shame," Horiuchi said. "I haven't heard of wine getting dumped since Prohibition."

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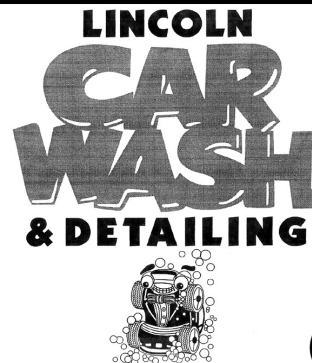
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STATE

Suspect in van Dam case had photos of another Danielle

BY BEN FOX

Associated Press Writer

SAN DIEGO — A man accused of the kidnap and murder of 7-year-old Danielle van Dam had provocative photos of another girl named Danielle along with child pornography in his home, a detective testified Tuesday in the second day of a preliminary hearing.

While searching the home of David Westerfield, investigators found photos of the other Danielle, the daughter of a former girlfriend, taken in suggestive poses while the teen was wearing a bikini, San Diego police Detective James Watkins said.

The detective testified that he and an FBI agent also found pornographic photos and cartoons, involving what appeared to be children, on computer discs in Westerfield's home office.

The testimony came in a hearing that also focused on blood stains allegedly found on Westerfield's jacket, fingerprints taken from his motor home and a rushed trip to a dry cleaner after Danielle's disappearance.

Westerfield, a 50-year-old self-employed engineer, is charged with kidnap, murder and child pornography. He has pleaded innocent.

Until his arrest last month, he lived two

doors down from the van Dam's San Diego home, where Danielle was last seen alive Feb. 1.

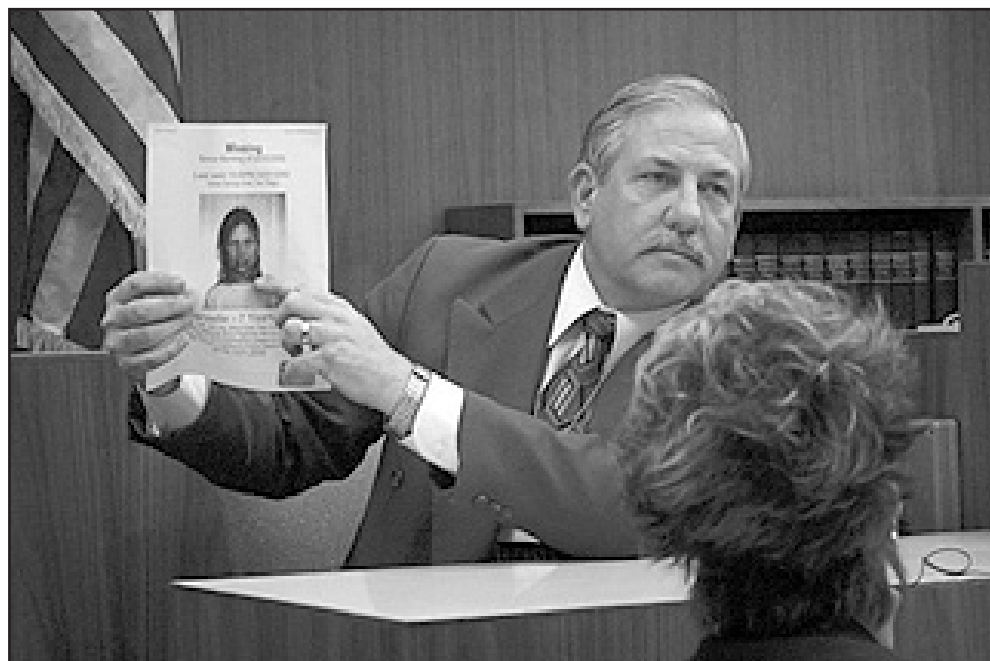
Westerfield met Danielle and her mother, Brenda, when they came to his house to sell Girl Scout cookies a few days before her disappearance. But both he and the girl's parents said they were acquaintances, not friends.

A preliminary hearing is held to determine whether enough evidence exists for a trial. Much of the testimony is provided without context or comment, making it hard to gauge how it would be used in the trial.

Prosecutor Jeff Dusek said the images found in Westerfield's home were evidence for the misdemeanor child pornography count and may also establish a motive for the kidnap and murder.

The suggestive photos of the former girlfriend's daughter, who is in her early to mid teens, were taken while she wore a bikini and sunbathed and sat in a hot tub, the prosecutor said.

Westerfield's attorneys plan to have their own experts evaluate the images to argue that the images aren't child pornography. They made no direct reference to the photos of the teen-age girl, other than to ask that the detective's testimony be excluded as "unduly prejudicial."



Dan Trevan/Associated Press

San Diego Police Department Lt. Jim Collins answers questions while holding a photo of missing 7-year-old Danielle van Dam, during a preliminary hearing for David Westerfield on Monday in San Diego. Westerfield is charged with kidnapping and murder in the disappearance and death of van Dam, who was reported missing Feb. 2 from her San Diego home.

Treasurer, lawmakers pitch \$6 billion high-speed rail bond

BY STEVE LAWRENCE

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Calling it a project whose time has come, the state treasurer and a group of Democratic lawmakers proposed a \$6 billion bond measure Tuesday to begin construction of a high-speed rail line linking California's major cities.

"This is going to happen in California. The question is whether it happens sooner rather than later," said state Sen. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, the bond bill's lead author.

Sale of the bonds — if approved by lawmakers, the governor and voters — would generate about half the money needed to build a line linking Los Angeles and the San Francisco area with trains running at top speeds of more than 200 mph.

The federal government and possibly private sources would provide the rest of the money, supporters said. Revenue from the first link would pay for extensions to San Diego and Sacramento.

"We're not going to finance this by ourselves, just as we have not financed the interstate freeway system by ourselves," said Costa, pointing to signs that Congress is increasingly interested in helping fund high-speed rail.

Completion of the system would avoid a repeat of the transportation disruptions caused by the Sept. 11 attacks and help meet the state's needs as its population nearly doubles in the next 40 years, supporters said.

"We need this for mobility," Treasurer Phil Angelides said at a news conference with Costa, several other lawmakers and officials representing unions and environmental groups.

"We cannot succeed just by building more lanes on freeways and expanding our airports," he added, citing the cost

and controversies that could be generated by such moves.

Costa said European countries and Japan have demonstrated the value of high-speed rail, and Angelides said the state could afford the additional debt created by the bond sale.

"I don't think we can afford not to do this," he said.

California has been moving toward development of high-speed rail for several years.

A state commission, the California High-Speed Rail Authority, has proposed a 700-mile system that would connect the Central Valley with Los Angeles, San Diego and the Bay Area. The authority is in the midst of completing environmental studies needed before rails could be laid.

The authority will decide the exact route later, but the San Francisco-to-Los Angeles line would generally run south from San Jose, through the Pacheco Pass to the San Joaquin Valley and then south to Los Angeles. Trains would share existing commuter tracks between San Francisco and San Jose.

An express trip between San Francisco and Los Angeles would take about 2 1/2 hours.

Costa's bill will need two-thirds majorities to get out of the Legislature. That means it will need votes from at least a handful of Republicans. Costa said some Republicans have indicated at least a willingness to consider the project if the authority shows them it is feasible.

But at least one Republican, Sen. Tom McClintock, R-Northridge, is highly critical of the proposal, saying the money would be better spent on more freeway projects. He calls projections that the San Francisco-to-Los Angeles line would produce enough revenue to pay for extensions to Sacramento and San Diego "happy thoughts and pixie dust."

Hospital therapist pleads guilty in 'angel of death' case

BY ERICA WERNER

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — A former respiratory therapist who once called himself an "angel of death" pleaded guilty Tuesday to murdering six hospital patients and attempting to murder another, accepting a plea bargain that let him avoid the death penalty.

Efren Saldivar, 32, was nearly inaudible as he answered "guilty" to each count and agreed to seven consecutive life sentences. Formal sentencing was set for April 17.

Deputy District Attorney Al MacKenzie explained the charges and sentence.

"The bottom line being that you will spend the rest of your life in prison and eventually die in prison. ... Mr. Saldivar, is this what you wish to do today?" MacKenzie asked.

Saldivar softly answered, "Yes."

Saldivar, who has been in custody for 14 months, also admitted two special circumstances, the commission of multiple murders and murder by administration of poison, the muscle relaxer Pavulon.

A count of receiving stolen property, the sedative Versed, was dismissed in the deal.

Saldivar admitted killing six elderly patients in 1996 and 1997 while working at Glendale Adventist Medical Center, injecting them with the drug that stopped their breathing. One patient who survived testified against Saldivar before the grand jury.

Saldivar told police in 1998 that he may have contributed to "anywhere from 100 to 200" deaths and actively killed up to 50 patients with drugs or by withholding treatment. He later recanted in television interviews, saying he fabricated his statements because he was depressed and wanted to die.

Saldivar spent nine years as a hospital worker.

The decision to accept the plea "avoids a lengthy, costly trial and more importantly, ensures the public that the defendant will no longer be a danger to society," District Attorney Steve Cooley told a

news conference.

"You have to appreciate that we don't have a smoking gun in the sense that you don't have an eyewitness seeing Mr. Saldivar kill these patients," MacKenzie said.

The actual number of victims will likely remain uncertain, he added.

"I don't think we'll ever know. Mr. Saldivar has told so many different stories — I killed people, I didn't kill people — we'll never know," MacKenzie said.

Asked whether Saldivar expressed remorse, MacKenzie said, "I think he expressed remorse today by pleading guilty."

The prosecutor said none of the victims' relatives were in court, but the families were "appreciative."

"I think it's the best outcome for everybody," said Larry Schlegel, 50, whose 77-year-old mother, Eleanora, was found dead in her hospital bed in January 1997. "We don't have to deal with the jury system, I don't have to testify, there's no appeal, so I think it heads off an awful lot of problems down the road."

Schlegel added: "He sure administered his own death penalty, so it's easy to make the argument that that's what he deserved. But that comes with a lot of other issues I'm happy not to deal with."

Saldivar entered guilty pleas "not to avoid punishment, but rather to accept responsibility, and of course, finally now to, in his mind, make peace with God," Deputy Public Defender Verah Bradford said.

Saldivar was charged in January 2001 after authorities exhumed 20 bodies and found Pavulon in the remains of six victims.

In addition to Eleanora Schlegel, the victims were Salbi Asatryan, 75, Jose Alfaro, 82, Luina Schidlowski, 87, Balbino Castro, 87, and Myrtle Brower, 84.

Seven lawsuits have been filed against the hospital where Saldivar once worked. Four have been dismissed. Asatryan's family accepted a \$60,000 settlement from the hospital. Alfaro's family also settled for an undisclosed amount.

NATIONAL



Houston mother convicted of murder in drownings

BY PAM EASTON
Associated Press Writer

HOUSTON — Andrea Yates, the 37-year-old housewife who admitted she drowned her five children in the bathtub, was convicted of murder Tuesday by a jury that rejected her claim of insanity in just 3 1/2 hours.

Yates was found guilty of two counts of capital murder covering the deaths of three of her children. She could be sentenced to death or to life in prison following the penalty phase that begins Thursday.

Standing between her attorneys, Yates showed little reaction as the judge read the verdict. Her husband, Russell, muttered "oh God" and buried his head in his hands, and some of Yates' relatives left the courtroom in tears.

"I'm not critiquing or criticizing the verdict," defense lawyer George Parnham said. "But it seems to me we are still back in the days of the Salem witch trials."

He described his client as "very upset." Prosecutors left the courthouse without comment.



The Associated Press

Andrea Yates listens to closing arguments in her capital murder case in Houston, Texas in Tuesday. Yates, 37, pleaded innocent by reason of insanity. She faces life in prison or the death penalty if convicted in the drownings of 7-year-old Noah, 5-year-old John and 6-month-old Mary. Charges later could be filed in the deaths of Paul, 3, and Luke, 2.

The defense argued that she suffered from postpartum depression so severe that she had lost her ability for rational thought.

"We can't permit objective logic to be imposed on the actions of Andrea Yates," Parnham said. "She was so psychotic on June 20 that she absolutely believed what she was doing was the right thing to do."

Parnham also told the jury in the closely watched case: "This is an opportunity for this jury to make a determination about the status of women's mental health. Make no mistake, the world is watching."

After deliberating about 2 1/4 hours, jurors passed a note to District Judge Belinda Hill asking for the definition of insanity. Thirty minutes later, jurors asked for a cassette player. Among the evidence were the audiotapes of her 911 call and her confession in which she described how 7-year-old Noah tried to run from her, but "I got him."

Yates called her children into the bathroom one by one and drowned them in the tub, then called 911 to tell authorities what she had done. Police found Noah in the tub; the other children were under a wet sheet on a bed.

She was tried for the deaths of Noah, 5-year-old John and 6-month-old Mary, though only two capital murder charges were filed.

One count listed the killings of Noah and John as two victims killed during the commission of the same crime to qualify for capital punishment. The second count listed the death of Mary.

"Andrea Yates knew right from wrong, and she made a choice on June 20 to kill her children deliberately and with deception."

— KAYLYNN WILLIFORD
Prosecutor

Andrea Yates never testified. But her videotaped interviews with psychiatrists, her audiotaped confession to police and her 911 call the day of the drownings all were played for jurors.

Deliberations began after prosecutors told the jury of eight women and four men that Yates, a former nurse, had thought about harming her children for years and ignored a doctor's orders in 1999 to refrain from having any more.

They said that even though Yates is mentally ill, she knew drowning her children was wrong.

"That's the key," prosecutor Kaylynn Williford said. "Andrea Yates knew right from wrong, and she made a choice on June 20 to kill her children deliberately and with deception."

Zoo fined for bear's death

By The Associated Press

DENVER — The Denver Zoo, criticized by animal rights activists for its decision not to separate two Asiatic black bears that fought often, paid a \$700 federal fine for failing to protect one bear, which was fatally mauled by the other.

A female bear named Sherpa died Oct. 10 after an attack by a larger male bear left her with a crushed throat, a mangled leg and internal injuries.

The zoo was fined Feb. 27 after an investigation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA spokesman Jim Rogers said Tuesday.

Under the terms of a settlement, the

facility did not admit or deny that it violated the federal Animal Welfare Act by not separating the bears.

Animal rights activists criticized the amount of the fine.

"This is a joke," said Dave Crawford, director of the Rocky Mountain Animal Defense. "The USDA should be embarrassed, the Denver Zoo should be embarrassed and the public should be outraged."

A federal veterinarian inspecting the zoo found records of more than 36 fights in the preceding 10 months. USDA veterinary medical officer Ruth Nelson said the records show evidence of a serious case of incompatibility.

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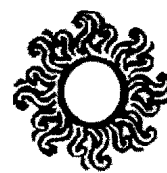
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NATIONAL

America's waterways polluted by medications

BY JOSEPH B. VERRENGIA
AP Science Writer

A government analysis shows the nation's waterways are awash in traces of chemicals used in beauty aids, medications, cleaners and foods.

Among the substances: caffeine, contraceptives, painkillers, insect repellent, perfumes and nicotine.

Scientists say that the problem is that these substances largely escape regulation and defy municipal wastewater treatment. And the long-term effects of exposure are unclear, they say.

The compounds are sold on supermarket shelves and found in virtually every medicine cabinet and broom closet, as well as farms and factories. And they are flushed or rinsed down the drain every day. But they do not disappear, researchers warn.

Hydrologists with the U.S. Geological Survey tested water samples in 30 states for 95 common compounds, an emerging class of contaminants known as pharmaceutical and personal care pollutants, or PPCPs. The results of the three-year analysis appear in the March 15 issue of journal Environmental Science and Technology.

The scientists found that the chemicals persist in the environment in concentrations as low as one part per billion or less. The results mirror similar studies of PPCPs in Europe and Canada.

Yet little is known about PPCPs' potential health and environmental effects. The use and disposal of 81 of the 95 compounds in the study are entirely unregulated, officials said.

"Compounds that we use in households or even consume can persist though wastewater treatment and affect resources on a pretty broad scale," said Herb Buxton, USGS coordinator of the USGS toxic substances hydrology program.

For example, many scientists suspect the widespread use of anti-bacterial agents in human medicines, household cleaners and veterinary medicines has encouraged the development of germs

that are resistant to antibiotics.

The USGS study found at least 31 antibiotics and anti-bacterial compounds in water samples. The study also tallied traces of at least 11 compounds linked to birth control and hormone supplements.

Some studies have linked environmental exposure to hormones to deformed sex organs in wildlife, sex reversal in some fish and declining fertility in humans, as well as cancers and other diseases.

Scientists who did not participate in the USGS survey said PPCPs represent the "next big unknown" in environmental contamination.

Exposure to even tiny amounts may result in cumulative risks, they said, especially when the compounds combine in unanticipated ways.

"You don't need therapeutic doses of a drug to have an effect," said Christian Daughton of the Environmental Protection Agency's exposure research laboratory in Las Vegas. "Some organisms have potential to suffer multigenerational exposures. Parts per billion could have profound effects."

Industry and water utility officials said they expect the EPA to decide in the next few years how to regulate PPCPs.

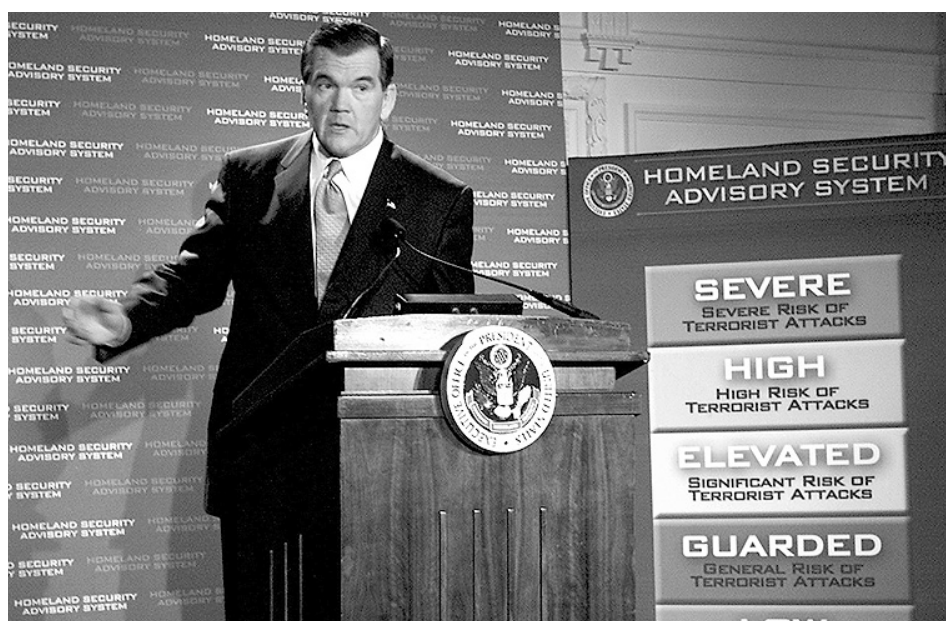
They said promising new wastewater treatment technologies can break down many of the chemicals using biological methods, or even exposure to ultraviolet light.

"We're not ignoring it," said Alan Roberson, regulatory affairs director for the American Water Works Association in Washington. "One question is what do you do with the concentrated form of these chemical compounds if you take them of the water."

In 1999-2000, USGS scientists collected samples downstream from cities, farms and factories. Many of the waterways contribute to municipal water supplies.

They included the Sacramento River at Freeport, Calif.; the South Platte River in Denver; the Mississippi River above Minneapolis/St. Paul; and the Charles River in Boston. Seven or more chemicals were found in half of the streams sampled.

Color-coded risks



Joe Marquette/Associated Press

Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge unveils a color-coded terrorism warning system Tuesday, March 12, 2002, in Washington. Ridge said the nation is on yellow alert. The five-level system is a response to public complaints that broad terror alerts issued by the government since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks raised alarm without providing useful guidance.

INTERNATIONAL



Refugee camp raid; 31 Palestinians, seven Israelis dead

BY HADEEL WAHDAN

Associated Press Writer

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Israeli tanks and troops thrust into Palestinian refugee camps and took command of the streets in this key West Bank city Tuesday, killing 31 Palestinians in one of Israel's largest military operations ever in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Seven Israelis were killed, including six in an ambush just inside the border with Lebanon. The attackers disguised as Israeli soldiers were reportedly Palestinians who slipped across Israel's previously quiet northern frontier — raising the prospect of a new front in the current Mideast conflict.

Israel began stepping up its military operations against Palestinian militants two weeks ago after a series of deadly attacks on Israeli civilians. Since then, large numbers of tanks and troops have charged into six Palestinian towns and refugee camps.

Israeli security sources said Tuesday that most combat soldiers in Israel's standing army and some reserve troops were deployed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip — the most expansive operation since Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Israel's Channel 1 television said 20,000 Israeli troops were involved.

The operation was one of the largest in the West Bank and Gaza since Israel captured the territories in 1967. During the 1973 Mideast war, when Israeli mobilized all its reserves, thousands of soldiers were stationed in the Palestinian areas to maintain calm, and during the first Palestinian uprising, in 1987-93, many soldiers were posted there permanently but large-scale combat operations were rare.

"This is a dangerous escalation from the Israeli government that will lead the whole region into more violence," said Nabil Aburdeneh, spokesman for Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Also Tuesday, Palestinians killed a suspected Palestinian collaborator and strung him up by his ankles in Ramallah.

In the heaviest battle, more than 20 Israeli tanks entered the Jebeliya refugee camp just north of Gaza City and plunged it into darkness when Israeli fire struck a



Yaron Kaminsky/Associated Press

Israeli soldiers take cover along a highway after shots were fired from a hillside at Israeli vehicles near the northern Israeli border with Lebanon, next to Kibbutz Metsuba, Tuesday March 12, 2002. Israeli troops killed two gunmen and exchanged fire with a third for more than one hour. It was not immediately clear whether the gunmen were Palestinian or Lebanese guerrillas.

transformer.

Hundreds of Palestinian gunmen exchanged fire with Israeli forces, and at least 18 Palestinians were killed and 75 wounded by Israeli fire, doctors said.

Israel demolished three buildings it said were used to manufacture weapons — but Palestinians denied the claim. The fighting lasted into the early hours of Tuesday before the Israeli troops withdrew from the camp, a stronghold for militants where 100,000 Palestinians are crowded into cinderblock homes. Jebeliya is the largest of more than two dozen refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli government spokesman Dore Gold said Israel was showing restraint and "not using the full strength of its air force against the refugee camps."

A Hamas leader, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, threatened revenge. "We have no choice but to kill the occupier, to kill him everywhere, every village and every city. There's no other way to defend ourselves," he said.

Israeli tanks also took control of the West Bank city of Ramallah and the adjacent Amari refugee camp, where heavy gunbattles raged during the night.

Five Palestinians, including two policemen, two unarmed guards at the parliament building and a taxi driver were killed by Israeli fire, doctors said.

In two other refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, four Palestinian civilians and a policeman were killed in the Israeli raids, and an 18-year-old Palestinian was shot dead by Israeli fire in central Gaza, Palestinian officials said.

In a gruesome scene, Palestinians killed a fellow Palestinian, Raed Naem Odeh, who was suspected of collaborating with Israel and strung him up by his ankles from poles at a traffic circle in Ramallah.

The dead man's bare chest was streaked with blood. Behind him was a billboard of a scowling, finger-wagging Arafat.

Israel's takeover of Ramallah came a day after Sharon announced he was lifting Arafat's three-month confinement there and said the Palestinian leader would now be free to move around the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli troops announced over loudspeakers that boys and men between the ages of 16 and 40 must come out of their homes and surrender to Israeli forces in Ramallah. Local TV stations urged the men not to comply.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Tuesday that "we have to be careful not to humiliate (people), not to treat human beings with contempt," adding that he believed Arafat felt humiliated by the Israeli actions.

Deputy Defense Minister Dalia Rabin-Pelossof, a moderate, said she expected the Israeli raids to end by the time Zinni comes. "I assume that when Zinni is here, this will not be the way things are done," she told Israel Army Radio.

In northern Israel, at least two gunmen opened fire on Israeli vehicles near Kibbutz Metsuba, a communal farm close to the border with Lebanon.

Six Israelis were killed and another six were wounded, the army said. Security forces reaching the scene killed two attackers. There were reports of a third attacker, but security officials said it could not be confirmed. A seventh Israeli motorist died in a West Bank shooting.

Militant threat to attack U.S. nuclear sites not passed on

BY JIM GOMEZ AND DAFNA LINZER

Associated Press Writers

U.S. officials received a warning as early as 1995 that Islamic militants were plotting to attack an American nuclear site, but did not pass along the information to the agency that oversees nuclear facilities or to the plants themselves, The Associated Press has learned.

The warning came in police interrogations of convicted terrorist Abdul Hakim Murad and from a computer seized in the Philippines from Ramzi Yousef, mastermind of the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center. Both men were linked to Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida terrorist network, and are serving life in prison in the United States for plotting to blow up 12 U.S.-bound airliners.

The AP learned of the 1995 warning through secret intelligence documents and interviews with officials in the United States and the Philippines.

According to a secret Philippines report, a letter obtained from Yousef's computer indicated he was "planning to attack any nuclear facilities in the U.S. and unspecified targets in France and Great Britain."

Yousef, who ran the al-Qaida cell that targeted the World Trade Center in 1993, discussed the plan with Murad when the two met in October 1994 in Quetta, Pakistan, according to statements Murad made to interrogators.

Rodolfo Mendoza, a former police official in Manila who was among those who supervised Murad's interrogations, said the details on the nuclear threat were

immediately shared with U.S. authorities.

"During a debriefing session, Murad told us about this planned attack on an unspecified nuclear facility. We passed on that information from Murad to them (U.S. officials)," Mendoza said.

Murad also told investigators that he and other Middle Eastern students took pilot training at U.S. flight schools in the early 1990s and that he had proposed a suicide mission in which he would fly a jetliner into a federal building.

That information, provided six years

before the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, also was shared with FBI agents in Manila. An FBI agent who accompanied Murad back to the United States for trial, testified in 1996 that Murad spoke about plans for a nuclear attack.

Victor Dricks, spokesman for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said the government agency charged with overseeing the country's 104 nuclear facilities had not heard of such a warning during 1995.

An FBI official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said at the time that the NRC had acted on old information that had been deemed not credible. But the NRC communication said the agency decided to issue the alert after an FBI agent in Washington state contacted a nuclear power plant about the threat.

The NRC ordered the nation's nuclear plants operating in 31 states to their highest alert level after Sept. 11 and at least seven states are using National Guard troops to help secure reactors.

Wife claims bin Laden took tranquilizers

BY MAAMOUN YOUSSEF

Associated Press Writer

CAIRO, Egypt — A woman claiming to be a wife of Osama bin Laden is quoted by a Saudi magazine as saying he took tranquilizers and became enraged when she asked who was behind the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in East Africa.

The woman — identified in the Al-Majalla interview only as A.S., the initials of bin Laden's fourth and youngest wife, Amal al-Sadah — also said she believes bin Laden is alive and in Afghanistan, but has no proof. Amal al-Sadah is thought to be a 19-year-old Yemeni.

Shortly before the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States, bin Laden he moved his family to a safe house in a remote corner of Afghanistan, the woman told Al-Majalla.

"I feel inside me that he is still alive and, if he were dead, the whole world would know because the death of Osama cannot be concealed," she was quoted as saying.

She said that after the United States began bombing al-Qaida and the Taliban on Oct. 7, "we moved to a mountainous area with some children and lived in a cave for two months."

The family moved again, she said, and were then taken to

Pakistan by one of bin Laden's sons and some tribesmen and handed over to local authorities there.

"He always wished to die there and he once told me if he ever leaves Afghanistan, he will leave to meet God," she was quoted as saying.

The woman also said bin Laden took tranquilizing drugs and suffered from kidney ailments. She also said he grew extremely angry when she questioned him on who was responsible for the nearly simultaneous bombing attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on Aug. 7, 1998.

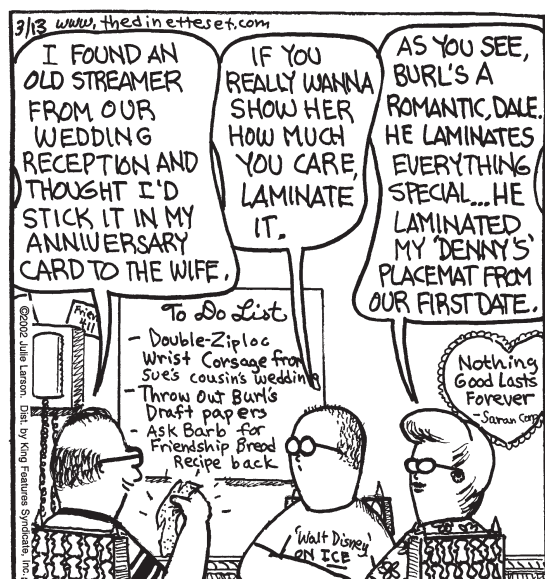
U.S. officials blame bin Laden for the attacks, which killed 224 people, and he has been indicted for his suspected role. The United States fired missiles at an al-Qaida camp in Afghanistan in an attempt to kill him after the bombings.

Al-Majalla is a sister publication of the respected London-based, Saudi-owned newspaper Asharq al-Awsat. The media group's owners are believed close to the Saudi ruling family, which has sought to distance the kingdom from bin Laden and weaken any influence he might have among Saudis.

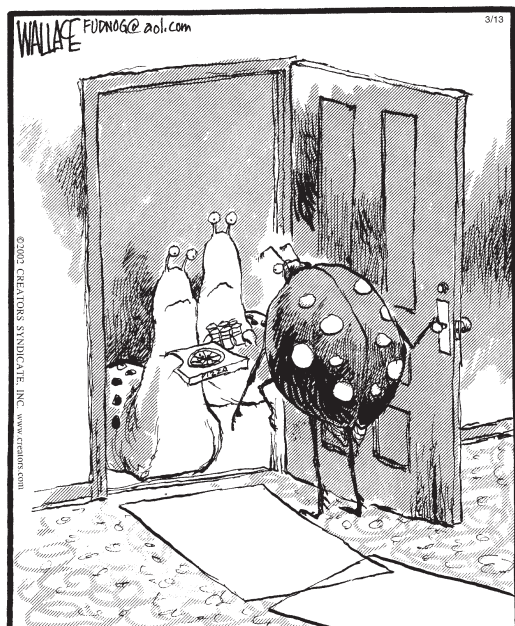
The magazine did not say where or when the interview was conducted but published a picture of the woman's identity card with the photograph and essential details obscured.

COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



Natural Selection® By Russ Wallace



"Can you guys try to stay on the mats? Shirley got really mad about the carpets last time."

edge city by Terry & Patty Laban



Reality Check® By Dave Whammond



Speed Bump® By Dave Coverly



CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Close tightly
 - 7 Tiny bit
 - 11 Legendary jockey
 - 12 Use a drill
 - 13 Quick rest
 - 14 Treat for birds
 - 15 Shrewd
 - 17 Congress worker
 - 20 TV vampire
 - 23 Clock numeral
 - 24 Breeding
 - 26 Stray
 - 27 Copy
 - 28 Writer Levin
 - 29 Yo-Yo Ma, for one
 - 31 Dress in
 - 32 Mystery-writing award
 - 33 Some tooth-pastes
 - 34 Annual golf tourney
 - 37 Writer Kingsley
 - 39 God of sunlight
 - 43 Stow cargo
 - 44 Lower
 - 45 Perfect place
 - 46 Taken care of
- DOWN**
- 1 Pouchlike part
 - 2 Pitching stat
 - 3 Do something
 - 4 Knight's weapon
 - 5 Russian river
 - 6 Vatican VIP
 - 7 Missing
 - 8 Sight shower
 - 9 Mine yield
 - 10 Convened
 - 16 Gentleman's gentleman
 - 17 Jigsaw unit
 - 18 Broadcast
 - 19 British scout
 - 21 Flynn of film
 - 22 Is inclined
 - 24 African capital
 - 25 Good times
 - 30 California peak
 - 33 Dwarf of lore
 - 35 Knee protectors
 - 36 Fencing weapon
 - 37 Heady brew
 - 38 Fuming
 - 40 Actor Cariou
 - 41 Counter-part of long.
 - 42 Artist Yoko

C	O	N	C	H		H	E	A	R	D
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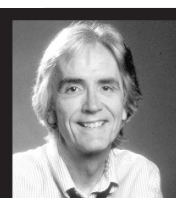
Yesterday's answer

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		34			35	36				
37	38				39			40	41	42
43					44					
45					46					

3-13

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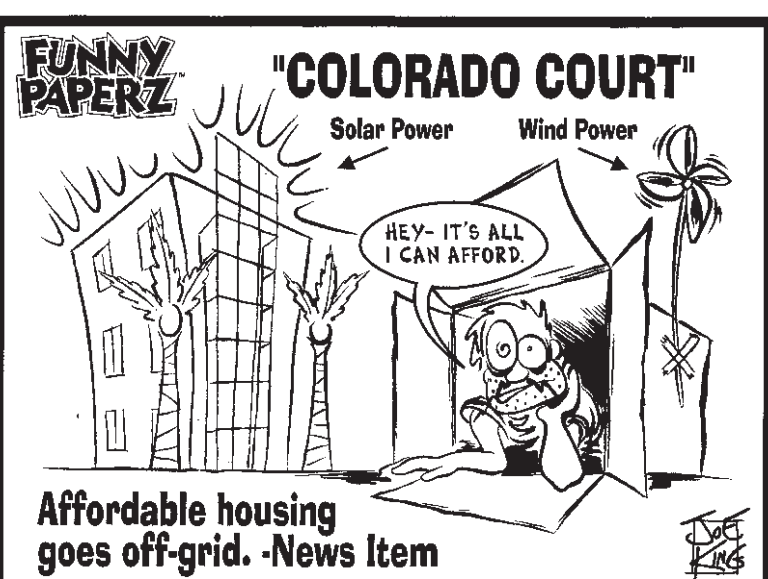


NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

'Break-up' agencies emerging in Japan

A January Los Angeles Times report described a dozen emerging businesses in Tokyo and Osaka, Japan, devoted to staging elaborate break-up schemes (for couples and for business partners) so that the dumping partner does not have to convey the bad news personally. In complicated cases (highly resisting dumpees, or with much money at stake), the breakup agent might charge \$100,000 and employ schemes as elaborate as a CIA caper, perhaps creating false identities and false companies or staging sham events.



Affordable housing goes off-grid. -News Item

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SANTA MONICA \$500.00 Guest house, studio, 1 bath, pet ok, refrigerator, stove, parking included. Westside Rentals 395-RENT.

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BACK PAGE

ODDS & ENDS

White man is team's mascot

By The Associated Press

GREELEY, Colo. — Unable to persuade a school district to drop a mascot name that offends them, some American Indian students at the University of Northern Colorado have decided to fight fire with fire.

They've named their intramural basketball team "The Fighting Whities."

The team, made up of American Indians, Hispanics and Anglos, have chosen a white man as their mascot and wear jerseys that say "Every thang's going to be all white."

They are upset with Eaton High School for using an American Indian caricature on the team logo. The team is called the Reds.

"I am really offended by this mascot issue, and I hope the people that support the Eaton mascot will get offended by this," said Solomon Little Owl, who is leading The Fighting Whities.

"It's not meant to be vicious, it is meant to be humorous," said Ray White, an American Indian on the team. "It puts people in our shoes, and then we can say, 'Now you know how it is, and now you can make a judgment.'"

Eaton School District superintendent John Nuspl said their logo is not derogatory and called the group's criticism insulting.

"Their interpretations are an insult to our patrons and blatantly inaccurate," he said. "There's no mockery of Native Americans with this."

Lost keys cost tax payers \$53K

By The Associated Press

WESTVILLE, Ind. — After keys went missing at the state's largest prison last month, security was tightened and locks were changed at a cost of \$53,000 to prevent escape.

vent escape.

All the while, the keys apparently were safe — at a warden's home.

That's where a prison warden's wife found them while cleaning house, said Pam Pattison, a state Department of Correction spokeswoman.

The keys — slightly larger than car or house keys and distinct in appearance — were believed to have been in James Smith's coat pocket when he left the Westville Correctional Facility on Feb. 15 to go home.

Smith, who was the prison's interim superintendent at the time, lived in one of several houses for prison supervisors located on the prison grounds 35 miles west of South Bend.

The keys, which were supposed to be kept in Smith's office, were reported missing when he returned to work and couldn't find them.

Prison officials ordered a partial lockdown, temporarily restricting movement of the 2,559 inmates at the medium-security prison. The lockdown ended eight days later after all sensitive areas of the prison were equipped with new locks.

"There's a possibility there will be disciplinary action," Pattison said.

Boy dishes out life-saving beating

By The Associated Press

LEBANON, Pa. — Fifth-grader James Capello knew something was wrong when his lifelong friend's face turned red during lunch in the cafeteria.

Zac Zeeger had a piece of cheese from a pizza sub stuck in his throat and was choking.

"I was unable to breathe," Zeeger said. "I was trying to get it out, and it got stuck."

First, Capello yelled for help. Then, he snapped into action.

"He hit me on the back a couple times," Zeeger said. "Then he pushed on my stomach a couple times. Then he

slammed his fist on my back, and the cheese came out."

The two boys have been friends since first grade.

Principal Barbara Heckard praised Capello for staying calm during the incident last month.

"He took the responsibility to make sure an adult knew what was happening, and he stayed with Zac," Heckard said. "He did what he knew."

Capello's grandfather had told him he might need to use the technique someday.

"I told him, 'If ever it happens around here, you're gonna have to do this to your grandpa,'" said Earl Mohn.

Belgium officials have lead feet

By The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Just days after berating Prince Laurent for driving at almost twice the legal limit, Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt faced his own speeding crisis.

On Tuesday, it was reported that his official car was caught going 111 mph in a 75 mph zone.

Verhofstadt had sent an angry letter last Friday to the son of King Albert II calling on him to change his ways on the nation's roads. The premier said members of the royal family should act as role models.

The letter came after revelations that the prince had been caught driving 86 mph in a 43 mph zone and did not have to pay a fine.

The newspaper Het Belang van Limburg, however, reported Tuesday the premier's car also was caught speeding and escaped without a fine.

In both cases, the cars were going enough above the posted speed limit to normally merit the immediate suspension of the driver's license.

Both incidents date back to late 2000, but are only receiving media attention now because road security has moved up the political agenda in recent months after a series of high-profile accidents.

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