

FREE

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Man arrested for several local armed robberies

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Police have arrested a Los Angeles man accused of at least six armed robberies that occurred in Santa Monica last month.

Saul Garcia Cuevas, 30, was arrested March 9, after investigators from the Santa Monica Police Department and the Los Angeles Police Department linked him to several armed robberies in the area, said Lt. Frank Fabrega.

A joint investigation between the two departments launched on Feb. 22 linked Cuevas to several robberies in Santa Monica and the San Fernando Valley, Fabrega said.

Evidence recovered at one of the crime scenes in Santa Monica was processed through the state's identifica-

tion system, which led police to Cuevas. "It was a good piece of work from our forensics section," Fabrega said. "It was our information at the crime scene that led to the investigation."

A surveillance team found evidence in Cuevas' home and car that connected him to the robberies in Los Angeles and Santa Monica.

The Los Angeles District Attorney's office on Tuesday filed 28 counts of robbery and two counts of kidnapping against Cuevas. He is currently being held in the Los Angeles County Jail on \$5 million bail.

Cuevas allegedly used a handgun during the armed robberies. Police would not reveal which businesses Cuevas allegedly robbed because they are part of the ongoing investigation.

A windy mess



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

Chon Perez, a gardener at a Washington Avenue home, cleans up leaves and branches that fell on the lawn after a windy afternoon Wednesday.

For pedestrians' sake traffic will go 'round

City to install a traffic circle at the intersection of Washington Avenue and 26th Street

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Santa Monica's first-ever roundabout is planned for what some describe as a dangerous intersection in a northeastern neighborhood.

City officials found that pedestrians were traveling well out of their way to avoid crossing 26th Street at its intersection with Washington Avenue, so they ordered traffic engineers to rework traffic flows.

"It was problematic because kids cross there to get to the Franklin Elementary School," said Santa Monica City

Councilman Kevin McKeown. "And it's not like you can go around it because it's almost two miles between traffic lights where people can safely cross."

"With the roundabout, people would drive slower through the intersection..."

— BETH ROLANDSON
Transportation planner

The city council approved \$498,000 for the roundabout and other pedestrian improvements for the intersection last

November. A city traffic engineer said the department hopes to have a contractor and city approval to begin construction by June.

In the center of the proposed roundabout will be an island around which traffic entering from 26th Street and Washington Avenue will yield. Once entering the loop, vehicles will have the right of way until they reach their exit.

Since vehicles traveling through the streets will have to yield to traffic in the circle, said Beth Rolandson, a city transportation planner, adding that pedestrians would be given ample opportunity to cross safely.

A 1999 traffic study found that over 18,000 vehicles travel through the intersection of 26th and Washington daily. Because of the high volume, city officials said they could not put up four-way stop signs.

And if the city erected a traffic light, daily commuters would likely use the street as a way to bypass Wilshire Boulevard, over-running the residential side streets with traffic, a city traffic engineer said.

"With the roundabout, people would drive slower through the intersection, giving pedestrians the ability to cross the

See TRAFFIC, page 3

National study concludes that 'living wage' reduces poverty

By staff and wire reports

SAN FRANCISCO — Cities that mandate minimum wages be boosted well above the federal floor are adopting a policy that increases unemployment but ultimately benefits the working poor by reducing poverty rates, according to a new national study.

The Santa Monica City Council passed a living wage ordinance last summer that would require businesses in the coastal zone which generate more than \$5 million in revenue to pay their employees \$10.50,

plus provide health benefits. If they don't provide health benefits, the business must pay an additional \$1.75 per hour.

The ordinance is being vehemently fought by large businesses and hotels. An initiative will be placed on this November's ballot in an attempt to throw out the ordinance.

More than 60 U.S. cities, counties or public agencies have adopted a "living wage" since 1994. But this movement has stumbled over criticisms that requiring

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♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ If opportunity and energy measure the quality of your day, count on this one. Much goes on within your mind as you seek out solutions and ideas. Sincerely consider another's offer. You will be put in a position of making a choice. Tonight: Let the Ram dominate.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Phones ring. Others seek you out. Close your door or put on headphones if you want to focus. You're in your own world right now. Sort out valid information from the gossip. Take a walk at lunchtime to clear your overactive mind. Tonight: Dance away.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ Knowing what your goals are helps you make fast choices. Expect to be hit with many options involving making and spending money. If you've done your homework, you will find your choices to be easy. Otherwise, slow down and think each option through. Tonight: Follow your friends.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Take charge at work. Fortunately, you have the necessary amount of energy to handle the hectic pace. You have a tendency to spread yourself thin. You test that ability right now. Keep your priorities in mind, and you'll glide through the day. Tonight: Work late.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★ Your instincts mixed with your intellect steer you down the right path. Detach from what goes on around you. Take your time making a decision. Research, and find more experts. Find a way to relax at lunch, perhaps take a walk or get some exercise. Tonight: Relax to a favorite piece of music.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ Though you could be obsessing about certain goals, take time with each person that surfaces in your life. How you view a matter could change substantially as a result of individual discussions. Vocalize your opinions. Don't hold back. Tonight: Start the weekend early.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Others make demands, and you respond. You could be on overload. Listen to feedback from an associate or trusted partner. Open up to new visions and possibilities. Separate a personal bias early on in order to respond more openly. Tonight: Where the crowds are.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ You could feel overwhelmed by your work and its demands. Break through, making a call or reaching out for another who helps you gain perspective. What is happening is good. Remain positive, even if at moments you are stressed out. Tonight: Go for a strenuous workout.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ Your creativity coupled with another's resourcefulness create a close-to-unbeatable team. If you haven't worked together on a project yet, do so, as you will enhance each other's ability to make money. Brainstorm to your heart's delight. Tonight: Do something you love.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ You're coming from a basic, constructive point of view. Your ability to visualize helps you present your case to someone. For others, your charming, upbeat manner draws many admirers, making this prime time for networking or making key requests. Tonight: Put your feet up.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ Screen your calls, especially if you feel your plate is too full. Others seek you out to ask for help or advice. Your ability to handle a lot in a unique style separates you from others. Listen to each person carefully, even if you feel you are too busy. Tonight: Hang out with a friend.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★ Expenses must come to the forefront. You cannot keep risking or thinking that a money tree grows in front of your house. Grasp the fact that everyone and everything has limits. Express emotional happiness in a more constructive manner. Tonight: Pay bills first.

QUOTE of the DAY

"Nothing is wrong with Southern California that a rise in the ocean level wouldn't cure."

— Ross MacDonald (1915-1983)

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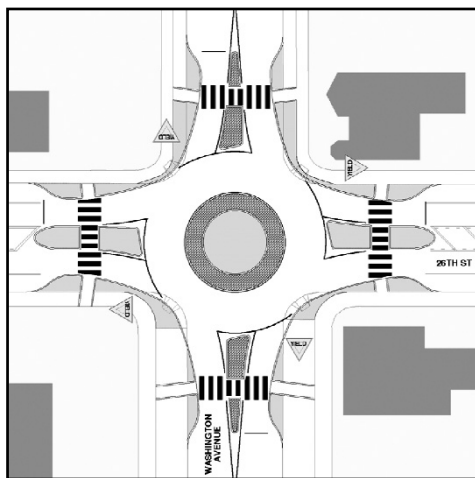
LOCAL



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

Above: The intersection of Washington Avenue and 26th Street becomes very busy at rush-hour. Making a left onto or crossing 26th Street becomes difficult for motorists but next to impossible for pedestrians.

Right: The proposed roundabout has been designed so traffic entering the loop must yield to vehicles already traveling through it. By delaying drivers from entering the intersection, the city hopes to make the intersection safer for pedestrians.



Intersection can be dangerous to cross

TRAFFIC, from page 1

street while still allowing traffic to flow freely through the area,” Rolandson said.

Right now, east-west traffic traveling along Washington Avenue backs up at the stop sign at 26th Street. The busy through traffic on 26th Street makes it difficult to make left turns or cross the street from Washington.

“Sometimes this can be a very dangerous place to cross,” said Emrani Heydar, an elderly area resident. “I have to be very careful of all the cars when I’m walking around here.”

The city has said it will study traffic levels when the roundabout opens and six months afterward to check for traffic volume increases. If problems still exist they pledged to develop more “traffic calming measures.”

Santa Barbara recently installed roundabouts successfully, and city officials say they are following that municipality’s example.

“There’s going to be a confusion factor in the beginning — there always is,” McKeown said. “But we plan on doing an educational program to let people know how this works.”

With wage, jobless rate rises but poor benefit

WAGES, from page 1

firms to pay more than the federal \$5.15-per-hour minimum leads to layoffs while benefitting only a fortunate few who keep their jobs.

The new study, published Thursday by the San Francisco-based Public Policy Institute of California, will encourage living wage advocates — not least because its author is a noted minimum wage critic.

“Living wages actually reduce poverty,” said author David Neumark, an economics professor at Michigan State University. “If someone’s getting up on a soapbox saying these are a disaster, they may believe it, but there’s really no evidence.”

Living wage ordinances often are not as radical as they sound. None of them applies to all workers in a city — most cover only city employees or private firms with significant government contracts. And Neumark said that the average pay raise equals around 3.5 percent, though it may be significantly higher for some workers.

Still, the movement has been growing.

California has at least 10 living wage cities, according to the study, including Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose. Baltimore passed the first living wage law, with Boston, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Milwaukee, Omaha and San Antonio among the large cities that followed.

Urban poverty rates fell from 1996 through 2000, the span Neumark studied using Census Bureau data. But the living wage accelerated the drop in those cities,

he said.

Neumark concluded that cities where the living wage is 50 percent higher than the federal or state minimum see poverty drop 1.8 percentage points.

There are losers, too. According to Neumark’s projections, the 10 percent of workers who earn the least in these cities would experience a 7 percent increase in unemployment.

On balance, however, “it looks like the winners win more than the losers lose,” Neumark said.

San Francisco’s living wage of \$10 an hour is about 50 percent higher than the state’s \$6.75-an-hour floor. Over a 2,000 hour work year, that could mean a \$6,500 raise to \$20,000 — and the difference between official poverty and a lifestyle less desperate.

The government says a family of two adults and one child needs \$15,020 a year to stay out of poverty, though that is low for a high-cost regions such as the San Francisco Bay area.

Home health care worker Claudia Arevalo said her life changed in 2000, when San Francisco enacted its living wage and her employer, which receives city funds, raised her pay.

In 1998 she earned \$6 an hour and to get by rented out a room in her apartment and worked 300 hour months which included night shifts as a janitor. Now Arevalo, 37, works a regular schedule.

“I have more time for my family, for myself. I have a better life,” she said. “It’s the living wage that made the changes come.”

Indecent exposor caught

By Daily Press staff

A man who exposed himself to two women and began masturbating three weeks ago was arrested Tuesday, police said.

The man, who was not identified, was arrested for an unrelated, unidentified crime by Los Angeles Police. Investigators from that department then called Santa Monica Police.

Santa Monica Police were investigating an incident of indecent exposure, which took place Feb. 23 on the 200 block of Adelaide Drive. Two women had

reported that they saw a man hiding in nearby bushes as they walked along the street. The man then jumped out of the bushes, wearing only a T-shirt, and began masturbating in front of them, police said.

One of the witnesses to that incident positively identified the man arrested by Los Angeles Police as the man who exposed himself to her. The case will be forwarded to the Los Angeles District Attorney’s office.

Police are investigating the man, who was described as black in his late 20s, for several indecent exposure incidents, police said.

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LOCAL



CrimeWatch

Handicapped man beaten with own cane, robbed

■ A handicapped man was the victim of his own cane last month after a robber used it against him to steal his cash.

On Feb. 22, police responded to Bay Cities Deli on Lincoln Boulevard, where a victim reported he was sitting outside the restaurant at 11:35 p.m. when a man approached him and demanded money.

The victim, who was in a wheelchair and had a cane, stood up. But the suspect grabbed the cane and hit the victim with it several times before it broke. He then fled on foot, taking the victim's jacket and \$58. Minutes later, police caught the suspect and the victim identified him.

Dean Edward Henning, 38, was booked for armed robbery and assault with a deadly weapon. His bail was set at \$35,000.

■ A Santa Monica High School student was taken into custody last month for being stoned and possessing a pot pipe.

On Feb. 22 at 11:30 a.m., a school official reported that he found the student in possession of a pipe. Preliminary investigation showed that the student, a 14-year-old, was high on marijuana.

The student's parents were notified and picked up their son from school.

■ A woman was robbed while walking in the 1000 block of Lincoln Boulevard after her attackers punched her in the face and stole her belongings.

Police responded on Feb. 27 at 10:15 p.m. to a woman's call that she was approached by two suspects who demanded her money. The first suspect grabbed her bag and the second one punched her. Both men took off on foot. The victim sustained a swollen right eye.

■ Thomas Dean Correll, 38, was arrested for a strong-armed robbery attempt Feb. 24, after he was caught by police 30 minutes after he head-butted a man who wouldn't give up his belongings.

At the 100 block of Colorado Avenue, Correll allegedly approached the victim and demanded money, but the victim refused. That's when he head-

butted him and took off on foot. Correll had an outstanding parole warrant. He is currently being held in the Santa Monica Jail without bail.

■ A man who tried to intervene in a fight between his friend and another man in Palisades Park on Feb. 26, was assaulted with a curtain rod.

When the victim got involved in the argument, the suspect pushed him to the ground and hit him in the face and back with a curtain rod. The suspect, described as a 40-year-old Hispanic, fled on foot.

■ A man was robbed while walking in the 2300 block of Santa Monica Boulevard last month.

On Feb. 27 at 1:50 a.m. a victim told police he had been approached by two suspects who demanded his money. The first suspect simulated a handgun under his sweatshirt and said, "Give me your money." The second suspect held a pole behind his back while his partner took the victim's wallet, emptied its contents and handed it back to the victim.

The suspects both described as Hispanic males, took off on foot with about \$240.

■ A woman's purse was ripped off her shoulder last month while she was sitting at a Santa Monica bus stop.

On Feb. 23 at 8:50 a.m., police responded to 28th Street and Pico Boulevard where a woman said that a black male had driven up in a full-sized pick-up truck with no license plates, grabbed her purse and another bag and then sped off. The suspect made off with \$5 to \$7 and miscellaneous identification and credit cards.

■ A fight broke out at Renee's bar at the 500 block of Wilshire Boulevard just before closing time on Feb. 24.

Police responded to a fight in progress at 1:35 a.m. where a victim said he was struck in the face with a glass, but didn't see who did it. Several people were involved in the fight, police learned through interviews. No suspects were identified.

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STATE



Hall of Fame football player surrenders for jail sentence

BY SANDY YANG

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Football Hall of Famer Jim Brown surrendered Wednesday to begin serving a six-month jail sentence because he refused court-ordered counseling and community service after being convicted of vandalizing his wife's car.

Brown, wearing a denim jacket, jeans and green hat, arrived arm in arm with his wife, Monique Brown.

The former running back was sentenced on Jan. 5, 2000 for misdemeanor vandalism. Jurors acquitted him of making a terrorist threat against his wife during a June 15, 1999, argument at the couple's Hollywood Hills home.

"You cannot take my dignity. You cannot take my manhood."

— **JIM BROWN**
Football Hall of Famer

Brown did not speak when he surrendered. He was not handcuffed.

As Brown was led off by deputies, he thrust his fist into the air. Friends in the courtroom did the same and several said, "Love you man."

Brown previously said he would serve the jail sentence with "dignity and pride," even though he believed

he was being singled out for prosecution.

"I believe that the court abused their discretion. The incarceration of Mr. Brown is vindictive," Brown's attorney Milton Grimes said Wednesday. "(Monique Brown) called the police but didn't want anything done. He was convicted of the destruction of his own property."

Grimes intends to continue efforts to have Brown released.

Judge Dale S. Fischer initially sentenced Brown to a year of domestic violence counseling. She also ordered the former Cleveland Browns star to spend 40 days on a work crew cleaning up streets or to put in 400 hours of community service, pay \$1,800 in fines and serve three years on probation.

When Brown refused to go to counseling, the judge imposed the jail term, although she ordered it stayed pending an appeal that was later denied.

Brown also tried to have Fischer disqualified for bias, but the motion was also denied.

"We pursued this case as we pursue any case," City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo told reporters after Brown surrendered. "It's different because he is a celebrity and you're here."

Brown will begin serving his sentence at the Ventura County Jail.

"You cannot take my dignity. You cannot take my manhood," Brown said after he was sentenced to jail. "Fifteen years, 20 years, 27 years Nelson Mandela spent to fight apartheid in South Africa. Only that man did it."

Brown, one of football's greatest running backs, was No. 6 on The Associated Press list for top athlete of the 20th century.



Damian Dovarganes/Associated Press

Former football star Jim Brown, right, walks with his wife Monique Brown to surrender to the Los Angeles Criminal Courts on Wednesday to begin serving a 180-day misdemeanor jail term. The Pro Football Hall of Fame running back was sentenced to jail in January 2000 for refusing court-ordered counseling and community service for vandalizing his wife's car in 1999.

Oldest photo to undergo unprecedented analysis

BY ANDREW BRIDGES

AP Science Writer

LOS ANGELES — One summer morning, Joseph Nicéphore Niepce peered from the window of an upstairs bedroom in his home in the French countryside, framed the view of several farm buildings, the sky and a pear tree and did something remarkable: he took a picture.

Opening the lens of a rudimentary camera for eight hours that day in 1826, Niepce exposed a polished, thinly varnished pewter plate to a view that was as banal then as it is famous today. For the resulting image is acknowledged as the world's first photograph.

In June, 176 years later, the faint image will arrive at The Getty Conservation Institute, where scientific experts will analyze the priceless image for the first time since it was rediscovered and authenticated in 1952.

Exact details of its chemistry remain a mystery, leaving experts with precious little information about the science behind its making.

"There are legends about how it was done and with what materials, but no one really knows," said Dusan Stulik, a Getty senior scientist eager to begin analysis of the work he calls the "Mona Lisa" of the photo world.

The analysis is part of a joint photo conservation project with Getty, the Image Permanence Institute at the

Rochester Institute of Technology and France's Centre de Recherches sur la Conservation des Documents Graphiques.

The goal is to understand the chemical processes used since Niepce's day to produce photographs, which conservators say is essential to preserve the art form.

During its two-week stay in Los Angeles, scientists will pore over the 8-inch-by-6.5-inch photograph with advanced scientific instruments, assess its state of preservation and construct a new airtight case.

In 2003, it will go on display again at the University of Texas at Austin's Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, its home since 1964.

Conservators believe light hardened the bitumen, a petroleum derivative sensitive to light, that Niepce used to coat the plate. Washing the plate with a mixture of oil of lavender and white petroleum dissolved the unexposed portions of bitumen.

The result was a permanently fixed, direct positive picture — the first ever captured from nature. Niepce called his work a "heliograph" — a tribute to the power of the sun.

"What we are so familiar with today in terms of images and being able to snap pictures, this is where it all began," said Barbara Brown, who will accompany the artifact to California as head of photographic conserva-

tion at the Ransom Center.

In Getty laboratories next to the hilltop museum of the same name, scientists will use an X-ray fluorescence spectrometer to determine the photograph's inorganic makeup. An infrared spectrometer will do the same for whatever organic compounds were used.

Scientists hope to discover what substances Niepce may have used to enhance the bitumen's properties. They are unsure about the composition of the pewter plate — or whether it even is pewter, Brown said.

Using a digital microscope, they also will map the image's surface in detail. Multispectral imaging will look for oxidation that could threaten the photograph. Conservators will repair its gilt frame. And experts will try to photograph the work, an almost impossible chore because the image is so faint and can be seen only at oblique angles.

"This is the first time there will be an in-depth, scientific investigation. There are many unknowns," Stulik said.

All the methods will be quick, reliable and noninvasive, said Herant Khanjian, an assistant scientist at the Getty.

Getty scientists estimate the first photographers used anywhere from 80 to 100 different chemical processes to produce images.

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NATIONAL

'Dear Abby' columnist aids in the arrest of child pornographer

BY MELISSA MCCORD

Associated Press Writer

MILWAUKEE — A man who wrote to "Dear Abby" for advice on how to handle his fantasies about having sex with girls was charged Wednesday with possessing child pornography after the columnist turned him in, authorities say.

"I was torn, because my readers do turn to me for help ..."

— JEANNE PHILLIPS
"Dear Abby" columnist

Paul Weiser, 28, was charged with three counts of possession of child pornography and faced a court appearance later in the day.

Police said 40 pornographic photographs of children were found in his computer after his arrest Monday.

"He acknowledges he needs help and denies ever acting upon any desires," said prosecutor Paul Tiffin.

"Dear Abby" columnist Jeanne Phillips, the daughter of the column's founder, Pauline Phillips,

called police after receiving the letter.

Jeanne Phillips, who shares her mother's pen name Abigail Van Buren, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel she agonized over whether to report Weiser, since the column's credibility is based on the anonymity given those seeking her advice.

"I lost sleep, didn't sleep for days, because I really believe this man wrote to me genuinely seeking help," she said. "I was torn, because my readers do turn to me for help, yet there was the priority of the safety of those young girls."

Phillips added: "I believe he was seeking help, and I hope that is considered and I hope he gets the help he so obviously needs."

She was said to be traveling on Wednesday and did not immediately return a call from The Associated Press.

Weiser could get up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine on each count.

Pauline Phillips created the "Dear Abby" column in 1956. Her daughter has contributed to the syndicated column since the early 1980s and took over most of the duties in the early 1990s. The column appears in more than 1,200 newspapers around the globe, according to Universal Press Syndicate.

The elder Phillips' twin sister, Eppie Lederer, is the advice columnist Ann Landers.

Treadmill test used to prove 'survival of fittest' theory

BY JANET MCCONNAUGHEY

Associated Press Writer

A person's peak exercise capacity as measured on a treadmill test is a more powerful predictor of how long someone will live than risk factors such as heart disease, high blood pressure or smoking, a study says.

The study, done by researchers from the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System/Stanford University, amounts to some of the strongest evidence yet of the importance of physical fitness.

"We're now beginning to prove the hypothesis of Darwin's whole 'survival of the fittest' category, in that people who are fitter tend to do better and live longer," said Dr. Gary J. Balady, a Boston Medical Center cardiologist.

For the study, patients with and without heart trouble were given treadmill tests, which are routinely used to check people for heart trouble.

In treadmill tests, patients are hooked up to sensors — including a mask to measure the amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide in each breath — and

walk on a treadmill at gradually increasing speed and angle. They continue until they are exhausted, reach their maximum heart rate, or develop chest pain or other symptom of heart disease.

The study found that a person's chances of staying alive rise 12 percent with each increase of one "metabolic equivalent" when exercising as hard as one can on a treadmill.

A metabolic equivalent, or MET, is defined as the amount of oxygen used by an average seated person. Two METs is very roughly equivalent to walking less than 2 mph; 5 METs to walking at 4 mph; and 8 METs to jogging at 6 mph.

Many studies have shown that fitness reduces the chance of developing heart disease and a host of other ailments, but there have been few studies of its effect on people who already have heart disease, lead author Jonathan Myers said.

The researchers looked at more than 6,200 men whose VA doctors had referred them for treadmill testing. Some had heart disease, some did not. A

Life or death?



Associated Press

Andrea Yates, center, looks back at her mother as she leaves the courtroom with her attorney George Parnham, far right, in this image from television, after being found guilty of capital murder Tuesday in Houston. The verdict came after less than four hours of deliberation by a jury that heard testimony from 38 witnesses over more than three weeks. Yates, 37, who pleaded innocent by reason of insanity to two capital murder charges, faces life in prison or the death penalty.

total of 1,256 died during the next decade or more.

When people were grouped by risk factors, the risk of death in people who could not get beyond 4 MET was more than double that of people who could get past 8 MET.

Aside from age, fitness was a better indicator of potential lifespan than any of the other risk factors checked, such as smoking, heart problems, high blood pressure, diabetes or high cholesterol.

"Whether you have heart disease or don't have heart disease going into the test, the higher you can go on your exercise test, the better you'll do in the long run. It makes a very compelling statement in that regard," Balady said.

Moreover, the test had nothing to do with endurance — it was peak exercise capacity, said T. Edwin Atwood, one of the VA researchers.

"It's not how long you exercise or how long you can exercise. It doesn't have to be marathons or running," he said. "Walking briskly every day for half an hour is a great risk factor modifier."

In fact, the study found that the improvement in death rates was largest between the lowest 20 percent and the next-lowest 20 percent.

"If this data were for a drug, I can tell you the pharmaceutical company having this drug would be very, very happy. And here this is just a modification of lifestyle," said Eric Ravussin, a physiologist at the Pennington Biomedical Institute in Baton Rouge, La.

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NATIONAL



Postmaster general says deficit could top \$2 billion

BY RANDOLPH E. SCHMID
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The Postal Service is facing a loss of more than \$2 billion this year as mail volume lags and costs of sanitizing the mail and cleaning up contaminated offices mount.

Postmaster General John E. Potter told a House Appropriations subcommittee Wednesday that the projected deficit for this year is "somewhere above \$2 billion."

Potter said the agency is hoping the Postal Rate Commission will accelerate consideration of a rate increase so the higher prices can take effect this summer rather than in the fall as planned.

The post office is seeking a 3-cent increase in the price of sending a letter, to 37 cents.

If the higher prices do not go into place early, losses could rise to \$3 billion or more, Potter said.

Affected by slowing business in the declining economy, the post office had a \$1.68 billion loss last year and the anthrax attacks have cost the agency millions.

For the first two quarters of this year

The post office is seeking a 3-cent increase in the price of sending a letter, to 37 cents.

mail volume is down 4 billion items, with the biggest drop in advertising mail, followed by first class, Potter said.

In addition, he said the agency has spent an added \$150 million on transportation costs because of federal rules that prohibit sending anything heavier than 16 ounces on commercial airliners for security reasons. To continue moving Priority Mail and other larger items the post office increased its shipments with Federal Express.

Two postal facilities, in Trenton, N.J., and Washington, remain closed because of anthrax contamination, Potter said.

Last fall's anthrax attacks killed two postal workers among the five people who died and forced closing of many offices.

Potter said it will be several months before the two remaining closed offices

can be completely sanitized and reopened.

Since the terrorist attacks, President Bush released \$175 million to assist the postal service and Congress voted an additional \$500 million to help in the cleanup and in preparing security plans to prevent future attacks. Potter said he expects cleanup costs to require an additional \$87 million.

The agency now is sending mail for federal agencies to facilities in Ohio and New Jersey to be radiated to kill any anthrax or other germs. It has ordered radiation machines for use in postal facilities and is studying other equipment to detect biological or chemical threats.

Potter said that in the next few years the post office will need an additional \$1.5 billion to increase the level of security, and if that money has to come from

operating funds, it could affect the efficiency of the system.

The biggest threat, Potter said, is from "open-access" mail — items dropped into collection boxes. They account for about 17 percent of all mail, he said.

Chief postal engineer Thomas Day said the agency is working on ways to develop what he called "intelligent mail," where the post office knows where the mail came from, who sent it and can track it to delivery.

Facing mounting losses, the post office last year froze new construction and cut some 12,000 jobs, Potter said. An additional 8,000 have been eliminated this year.

The agency has submitted a request that \$928 million in funds owed to the Postal Service by the federal government be paid in 2003 to enable the post office to resume construction programs. The money had been scheduled to be paid in 32 annual installments, without interest.

The subcommittee chairman, Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., told Potter that he doubted whether the committee would be in a position to consider a request of that size.

Credit-card-abusing Pentagon employee promoted

BY DAVID PACE
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — A Navy employee investigated for charging nearly \$12,000 in personal expenses on her government credit card has been promoted to a key Army financial management office at the Pentagon and placed in charge of "cash integration," a senator said Wednesday.

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, told a House panel that the employee, Tanya Mays, was never disciplined and has never been asked to repay the government for any of the purchases, which included a computer, a kitchen appliance, clothing and groceries.

"When you put one of these cases under the microscope," Grassley said, "it seems like the whole problem comes into much sharper focus."

Attempts to reach Mays for comment through the Army press office were not immediately successful.

Grassley testified before the House Government Reform subcommittee on government efficiency, financial management and intergovernmental relations. The panel, in conjunction with the General Accounting Office and Grassley, has been investigating credit card abuses by the 1.7 million Pentagon employees who have government charge cards.

More than 46,000 Defense Department employees had defaulted on \$62 million in official travel expenses charged to the government cards as of last November,

Grassley said. The bad debts, which banks that issue the cards have been forced to write off, are growing at the rate of \$1 million a month.

"Somebody over in the Pentagon needs to come down hard on the officer scofflaws."

— SEN. CHARLES GRASSLEY
Iowa Republican

Rep. Stephen Horn, R-Calif., chairman of the subcommittee, and Grassley said they intend to ask Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld to determine what action should be taken against 713 commissioned officers who have defaulted on \$1.1 million in charges on their gov-

ernment-issued travel cards.

"Somebody over in the Pentagon needs to come down hard on the officer scofflaws," said Grassley, who provided the panel with a confidential list of the 713 officers. "Credit card abuse in the military will never stop until the officers clean up their act."

Grassley said the accounts of the 713 officers have been unpaid for seven months or more and include individual balances of up to \$8,000. He said the officers range from junior lieutenants to senior colonels and a Navy captain.

Evidence of unauthorized personal purchases by Mays was uncovered last summer by GAO investigators auditing the Navy Public Works Department in San Diego. The case was referred to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, but an assistant U.S. attorney in San Diego declined to prosecute.

Mays was promoted to the Army job at the Pentagon in October.

Crematory owner to face additional charges in Georgia

By The Associated Press

NOBLE, Ga. — Authorities filed 30 more charges Wednesday against the operator of the Tri-State Crematory, where 339 corpses have been discovered.

Ray Brent Marsh, 28, now faces a total of 204 charges in Georgia of theft by deception for allegedly dumping the bodies on the crematory grounds rather than cremating them, as he was paid to do.

Marsh has been behind bars since last month.

He could also face charges in Tennessee. Records show at least 250 bodies sent to the crematory since 1998 were from Tennessee. Tri-State also contracted with funeral homes in Alabama.

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INTERNATIONAL

Allied troops take valley, search for remaining fighters

BY KATHY GANNON

Associated Press Writer

SHAH-E-KOT, Afghanistan — U.S. Marine helicopter gunships blasted cave entrances Wednesday in the rugged mountains, seeking to stop al-Qaida and Taliban fighters from escaping after U.S. and Afghan troops seized control of this valley.

Afghan commanders said many al-Qaida and Taliban fighters — including their commander, Saif Rahman Mansour — got away before Afghan troops overran three villages and a commanding ridgeline early Wednesday.

U.S. officials said they were holding about 20 prisoners who were being interrogated.

Pentagon officials had repeatedly said the only choice facing the enemy troops was to “surrender or die,” although Afghan commanders had been prepared to allow them to leave.

A U.S. officer estimated that 500 al-Qaida fighters were killed in the 12-day offensive in eastern Afghanistan. But Afghan troops said they found only 25 bodies in the initial sweep of the area. Others may be buried in caves that collapsed during the bombing.

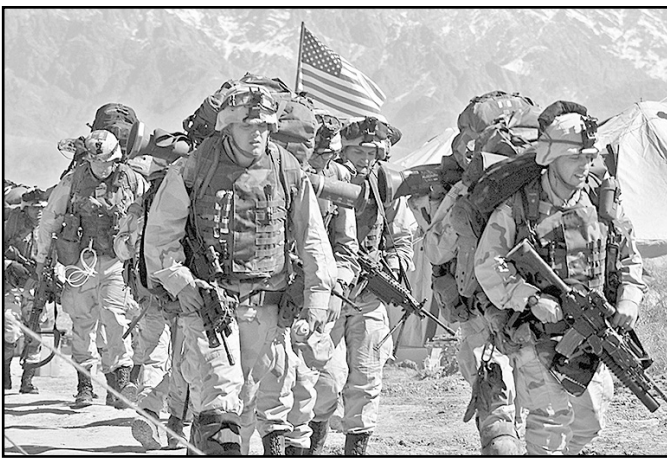
Leading the final assault were Afghan commanders Zia Lodin and Gul Haider, who had floated the idea of a negotiated exit.

“They’re trying to slip away,” one Afghan commander, Mohammed Qasim, said of the al-Qaida and Taliban fighters. “They’re going in different directions in the mountains” toward Pakistan, he said.

In an attempt to block their escape, U.S. helicopter gunships, including Marine Cobras, blasted cave entrances Wednesday with rocket and machine gun fire.

About 500 Canadian troops landed high in the snow-capped mountains to search for al-Qaida fugitives. U.S. helicopters that brought them in flew close to the jagged terrain to avoid possible enemy fire.

The Canadians, who were joined by about 100 U.S.



Mikhail Metzel/Associated Press

U.S. troops from 10th Mountain Division prepare to board a Chinook helicopter to be taken to eastern Afghanistan on Wednesday.

troops, made their way up icy mountain trails, carefully avoiding unexploded ordnance littering the area after days of intense American airstrikes.

Lt. Col. David Gray, an operations officer of the U.S. 10th Mountain Division, said about 500 enemy fighters were killed in Operation Anaconda, mostly non-Afghans from Osama bin Laden’s terrorist network.

“What we have done is denied al-Qaida of its most important, well-trained fighters,” he said.

However, it was unclear how many enemy fighters died in the biggest U.S.-led offensive of the five-month Afghan war, which brought conventional American ground troops into combat for the first time in the five-month conflict.

Initial U.S. estimates put the total number of enemy combatants at 150-200, but the figure later was increased to 500-600.

One Afghan commander, Naeem Sadat, said a captured Taliban fighter told him there were 14 Arab com-

manders and about 250 Chechens around the village of Shah-e-Kot when the Americans initially attacked. They were joined by a large number of Afghans who deserted as the bombing grew more intense, he said.

Afghan commanders said they found about 25 bodies in the valley, which they judged were those of Chechens, based on skin and eye color.

It was not known whether others may be buried in the scores of nearby caves. Afghan commanders said earlier that the al-Qaida force also included Arabs, Pakistanis, Uzbeks and Uighurs.

“I think we got a lot of them but we’re not really sure,” said one U.S. special forces officer, who refused to give his name. He said operations would continue in the area for 30 to 35 more days, but on a smaller scale.

Fighting died down during the last five days, enabling the United States to withdraw most of the estimated 1,400 troops from the 101st Airborne Division and the 10th Mountain Division who fought in the battle.

The coalition casualty toll since the offensive began March 2 stood at eight U.S. special forces troops and three Afghan allied fighters.

On Wednesday, U.S. special forces and Afghan troops drove through this bomb-shattered mud-brick village in jeeps mounted with 30-caliber machine guns.

U.S. officers said Operation Anaconda yielded valuable information about al-Qaida, blamed for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that triggered the war on terrorism.

Col. Frank Wiercinski, a brigade commander of the 101st Airborne, said cave searches had turned up al-Qaida training manuals, bomb-making equipment and other intelligence on the terrorist network.

“They had been building this place and this defense for years,” Wiercinski said. “We definitely put a spike through their heart.”

An American special forces officer said many caves were believed to have collapsed in the bombing. Afghan commanders said searching them would take time because of land mines and booby traps.

Mugabe declared winner in Zimbabwe election

BY RAVI NESSMAN

Associated Press Writer

HARARE, Zimbabwe — President Robert Mugabe was declared the winner Wednesday of Zimbabwe’s bitterly contested presidential election — a victory opponents and independent observers said was tainted by intimidation and fraud but backers saw as a mandate for seizing white-owned land.

The government said Mugabe was re-elected to a six-year term with about 56 percent of the vote. Morgan Tsvangirai, who waged the first serious challenge to Mugabe since independence from Britain, had 42 percent of the 3.1 million votes cast.

Tsvangirai denounced the results as “the biggest election fraud” he’s seen. The former labor leader also charged that the election was “illegitimate in the eyes of the people.”

The United States and several European nations said Mugabe’s victory was marred by violence and intimidation.

“We are dealing with our friends to try to figure out how to deal with this flawed election,” President Bush said at a news conference. Secretary of State Colin Powell said in a statement that the election’s “numerous, profound irregularities” had thwarted the will of the people.

In London, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said Mugabe’s ZANU-PF party had conducted “a systematic campaign of violence and intimidation designed to achieve one outcome, power at all costs. It is no surprise this outcome has now been achieved.”

Zimbabwean security forces were on “full alert” Wednesday to put down any

unrest, state television reported. Military police set up roadblocks on main roads leading into Harare and a strong police presence was visible in many parts of the city.

Riot police patrolled the poor suburb of Mabvuku on Wednesday night, dispersing gatherings of more than three people, while a group of about 20 ruling party supporters drove around Harare singing victory songs from the back of an open truck.

Government officials, who have repeatedly denied irregularities in the election, exulted in the final results.

“This is a runaway victory,” Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa said. “It was won on the issue of the land,” he added, referring to Mugabe’s policy of seizing white-owned land and turning it over to landless blacks.

But independent observers from Norway, southern Africa and Zimbabwe described a complex tapestry of intimidation, unfair laws and chaotic voting procedures that tipped the poll in Mugabe’s favor.

“The electoral process could not be said to have adequately complied with the norms and standards for elections,” said G.D. Lefhoko, leader of the Southern Africa Development Community Parliamentary Forum’s observer mission. He said his observers were attacked by militants as they visited a rural area in the weeks before the campaign.

The presidents of Kenya and Tanzania congratulated Mugabe on a victory they said reflected the will of the people.

Observers said ruling party militants and security forces conducted a campaign of intimidation against the opposition

Movement for Democratic Change, frightening many opposition voters away from the polls.

The opposition was also hamstrung by recently passed security laws police used to cancel many opposition campaign events while allowing the government to campaign freely, observers said. Tsvangirai also had no access to state television and radio — the main source of news for most Zimbabweans — which gave strongly biased coverage.

Observers also criticized numerous irregularities with voter registration and the government’s refusal to accredit thousands of local independent election observers. Many opposition party polling agents were reportedly abducted from their stations by ruling party militants or in some cases detained by police, they said.

The observers also condemned the reduction of polling stations in the nation’s cities, considered opposition strongholds.

In rural areas, where people were only voting for president, there was one polling station for every 1,000 people, the Norwegian observer team said. In Harare, where residents also voted for mayor and city council, there was one station for every 5,300 registered voters.

Long lines in Harare led the High Court to extend voting for a third day Monday, but the registrar general inexplicably opened stations nearly five hours late and thousands of potential voters were chased away by riot police at closing time.

State television announced that turnout was 41.6 percent in Harare. In Mugabe’s rural strongholds, the announced turnout

was as high as 69 percent.

“Without the participation of the whole electorate there can be no democracy,” said Reginald Matchaba-Hove, chairman of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network.

Under new, restrictive security laws, it is illegal in Zimbabwe to call a general strike. So a coalition of opposition church and civic groups, the Crisis in Zimbabwe Committee, called on Zimbabweans to protest the elections in a “constitutionally acceptable” manner Friday.

Mugabe, 78, would never allow himself to lose an election, said Lovemore Madhuku, an official with the National Constitutional Assembly, a local group opposed to Mugabe’s increasingly autocratic rule.

Mugabe faced little dissent until recent years, when the nation’s economy collapsed and political violence became rampant.

The United States and the European Union have imposed limited sanctions on Zimbabwe’s leaders to protest the increasing lawlessness and electoral irregularities.

The South African observer mission acknowledged problems with the poll, but dismissed many as “administrative oversights” and said the election “should be considered legitimate,” said Sam Motsuenyane, head of the 50-member team.

The election was viewed as a chance to return stability to the chaotic southern African nation. But the situation may only get worse now, Matchaba-Hove said.

“Flawed electoral processes are a potential cause of conflict,” he said. “That is our warning.”

INTERNATIONAL



Tanks patrol streets as Palestinians, photographer killed

BY HADEEL WAHDAN

Associated Press Writer

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Enforcing a curfew, dozens of Israeli tanks patrolled the deserted streets of this West Bank town city Wednesday and waged sporadic firefights with bands of Palestinian gunmen. A senior Palestinian security officer, an Israeli soldier and an Italian photographer were killed.

In the Gaza Strip, Israeli soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian after he opened fire on an Israeli vehicle in the Gaza Strip. Late Wednesday, two Palestinians entered Nahliel, a Jewish settlement northwest of Ramallah, and stabbed a settler, seriously wounding him, settlers and the military said.

The Israeli action in Ramallah was a continuation of its two-week-old military offensive; army chief Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz told a parliamentary committee about 20,000 Israeli soldiers are now stationed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On the diplomatic front, Palestinians cautiously welcomed a U.N. Security Council resolution endorsing a Palestinian state. Israel praised elements of the measure, but refrained from commenting directly on the statehood issue.

International diplomatic efforts have mounted as the Mideast endures its bloodiest stretch since fighting erupted nearly 18 months ago. However, there is widespread skepticism that they can quickly reverse the momentum of recent fighting, which has included multiple Palestinian suicide bombings and a half-dozen Israeli incursions into Palestinian towns and refugee camps.

More than 160 people have been killed on the Palestinian side and almost 60 have been killed on the Israeli side in March.

U.S. envoy Anthony Zinni was to arrive Thursday for his third attempt to arrange a cease-fire or at least dampen down the hostilities. The Bush administration told Israel and the Palestinians on Wednesday that Zinni would keep working for a truce and peace steps only so long as he is making progress.

"He's got a lot of work to do, but if I didn't think he could make progress I wouldn't ask him to go," President Bush told a news conference.

Secretary of State Colin Powell called Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat late Wednesday. Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rdeneh said they discussed Zinni's mission and Israel's occupation of Ramallah and other places in the West Bank and Gaza.

Many Israelis favor the tough military action against the Palestinians launched by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, including the current mission, described as the largest Israeli military operation since its 1982 invasion of Lebanon. But in a stormy Cabinet session Wednesday, Sharon and Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer exchanged heated words about how to conduct operations, Israeli media reported.

Sharon said the Cabinet had agreed that Israel should maintain continuous military pressure on the Palestinians for now and accused Ben-Eliezer of halting a number of military operations in Ramallah, the reports said, adding that Ben-Eliezer threatened to resign at one point.

In Washington, Bush criticized the forceful Israeli reaction to terror attacks, saying that while Israel has a right to defend itself, "the recent actions are not helpful."

Avoiding any perceptible tilt to one side, White House spokesman Scott McClellan called on the Palestinian Authority "to do everything it can" to stop attacks on Israel and chided Israel for attacks on the West Bank and in Gaza that injured civilians.

Dozens of Israeli tanks drove into Ramallah early Tuesday and enforced a curfew Wednesday in the largely deserted streets. In several locations, including downtown Manara Square, there were fierce gunbattles.

In one exchange, Fuad Obeidy, the deputy commander of the Palestinian security service Force 17, was killed by Israeli tank fire, doctors said. A 21-year-old Israeli soldier was also killed.

Italian free-lance photographer Raffaele Ciriello, 42, was killed near Manara Square — the first foreign journalist killed since the fighting broke out in September 2000. Fellow journalist Amedeo Ricucci said he and Ciriello were following Palestinian gunmen when an

Israeli tank appeared from around the corner and fired a machine gun from about 150 yards without warning, striking Ciriello in the stomach.

Army spokesman Lt. Col. Olivier Rafowicz expressed regret at the death but declined to discuss the circumstances without more information. "There has been crossfire for several days and we don't know where he has been killed," he said.

A French photographer working in Ramallah was injured by shrapnel from an explosive device that went off near a group of journalists, witnesses said. In recent fighting, Palestinian gunmen have often placed homemade bombs near Israeli tanks.

About 20 armed Israeli troops searched the seven-story building that houses The Associated Press office in Ramallah, entering the AP office for several minutes. Soldiers then took positions on another floor upstairs,

taking some Palestinian fire. Seven members of the AP staff later left the building safely, and soldiers remained; the army promised they would leave the building.

Israeli tanks also surrounded Ramallah Hospital, keeping ambulances away, said Dr. Moussa Abu Hmeid, the head of emergency departments in West Bank Hospitals. He also said Israeli troops cut off water and electricity to the hospital.

Israel's military denied it was preventing people from reaching the hospital and said soldiers inadvertently interrupted the water and electricity supply and were cooperating with Palestinians to repair the damage.

Late Tuesday, the U.N. Security Council approved a U.S.-sponsored resolution that for the first time affirms "a vision of a region where two states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-side within secure and recognized borders."



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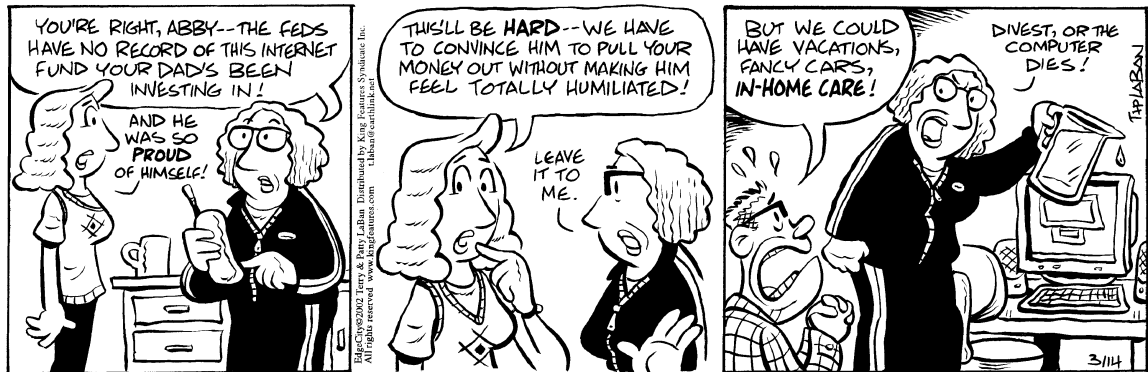
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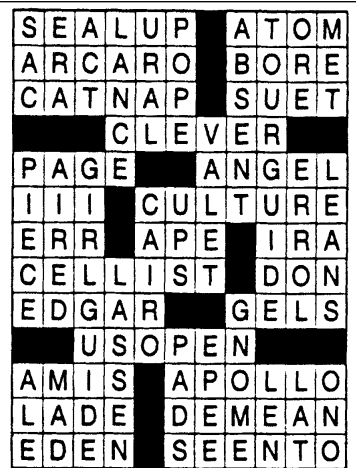


CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

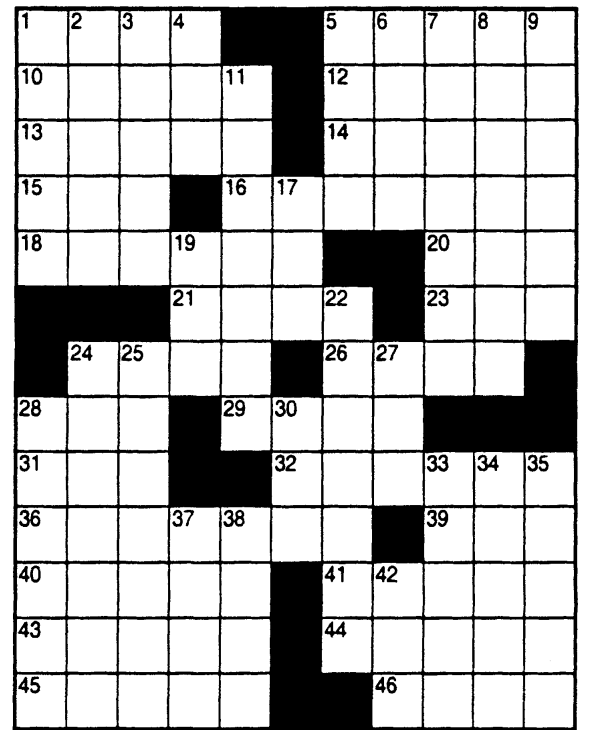
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- 1 Rough guess
 - 5 Actor Fernando
 - 10 Lost color
 - 12 Singer Piaf
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 - 15 Jerry's cohort
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 - 18 Hot
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 - 23 Farm beast
 - 24 Stubbs of the Four Tops
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 - 28 Ogden Nash trademark
 - 29 Oompah producer
 - 31 Join the cast
 - 32 Fructose and lactose
 - 36 Crystal buyer, perhaps
 - 39 Pertness
 - 40 Impel
 - 41 Woman in white
 - 43 "Tomorrow" singer

- 44 Natural in Vegas
- 45 Watermelon waste
- 46 Ernie's pal

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 - 2 Portentous deck
 - 3 Texas mission
 - 4 Hazard
 - 5 Lower amount
 - 6 Com-motions
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 - 8 Con-founded
 - 9 Moles' cousins
 - 11 Bad mark
 - 17 Squid's squirt
 - 19 Tyler of "Armageddon"
 - 22 City surroundings
 - 24 Swiss city
 - 25 Become twisted
 - 27 Joplin song
 - 28 Zoo favorites
 - 30 Exploit
 - 33 Still kicking
 - 34 Bus patron
 - 35 Used up
 - 37 Keen
 - 38 Turns right
 - 42 Yank's opponent



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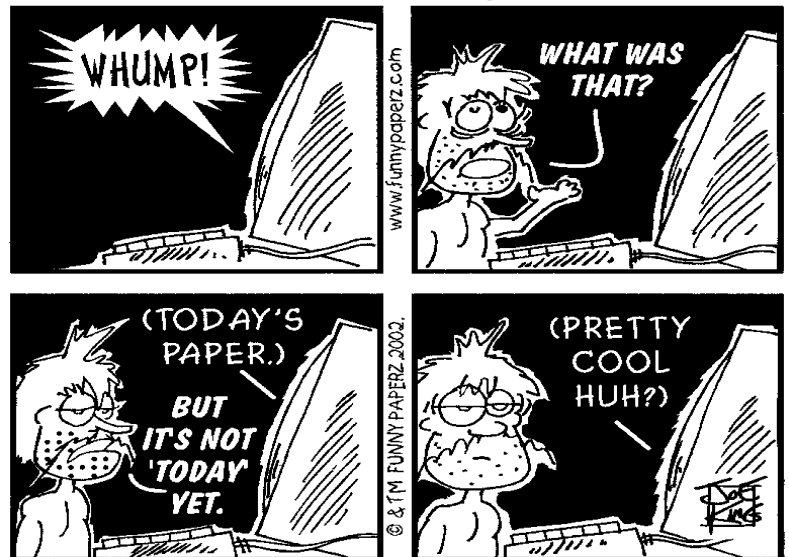


3-14

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

Having a bad habit can get you jail time

- Mohammad Saboor, 56, was arrested in January as the well-dressed man who has spontaneously kissed at least nine female strangers on Toronto streets since November.
- Melvin G. Hanks, 54, was arrested in Belleville, Ill., in February, accused of stealing 92 ponytails in 13 attempts from a salon that was collecting the hair to make wigs for children who had lost theirs because of disease.
- Ronald Castle Sr., 54, was arrested in Syracuse, N.Y., in January, suspected as the man who has been masturbating into colleagues' coffee cups at the county Department of Social Services.

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BACK PAGE

ODDS & ENDS

Escaped emu stops traffic, injures one

By The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The fugitive was a 5-foot male native to Australia who flew the coop after being bitten by a pregnant donkey.

He ran wild for three days, leaping a fence, injuring an officer trying to subdue him and stopping traffic in front of a high school.

The fugitive, an emu named "Emu," was recovering in a barn Wednesday from scrapes he suffered during his capture.

"I knew this bird would become famous sooner or later," his owner, Gail Bornstein, said.

The flightless bird, which resembles an ostrich, is one of several exotic pets Bornstein keeps on her miniature horse farm in Escondido, a suburb 22 miles north of San Diego.

"Emu" escaped early Sunday from the 20-acre ranch and evaded his owners for two days.

"We almost had him, then Bam! he just took off," Bornstein said.

The local animal control department stepped in Tuesday after nearby residents reported a roaming emu.

Three officers located the bird not far from Bornstein's ranch and managed to get a blindfold over its small head.

"Emu" was subdued and bound with a rope, but not before a powerful kick dislocated the finger of one of the officers, Mike Wix.

Mature emus weigh as much as 150 pounds and are capable of reaching speeds of more than 30 mph. When cornered, they can deliver swift, punishing kicks.

During his transport to a shelter, the emu kicked open the rear doors of the animal control truck. He fell

out, still bound, onto a busy street in front of Escondido High School, just as classes were letting out.

Police were called in to direct traffic while animal control officers tried to control the frantic bird.

"It was chaos," said Lt. Mary Kay Gagliardo of the North County Animal Shelter. "We'd been chasing him around and the pavement was hot. It's not uncommon for these big birds to die of stress."

A tranquilizer was administered and Bornstein took the emu home in a horse trailer without incident.

A veterinarian predicted the bird would survive but needed a few days to recover from the excitement.

"I think he's going to take it easy," Bornstein said. "At least, that's what I'm hoping."

Chardonnay flows freely — all over the road

By The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The vino flowed freely but no one even got a taste when a tanker truck filled with wine tipped over on a highway.

About 3,200 gallons of white wine gushed from a broken steel tank Tuesday morning after a semitrailer's driver lost control going around a curve on Highway 16, east of Petaluma. The driver was not injured.

"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.

CHP officer Curt Lubiszewski said the semitrailer, 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 a neighboring pasture.

"It just smelled like fermented wine," Lubiszewski said, noting the strong aroma was earthy — not bold or fruity.

"What a shame," Gladys Horiuchi, communications manager for the Wine Institute in San Francisco, said after hearing of the accident. "I haven't heard of wine getting dumped since Prohibition."

When you speak to a judge, leave the drugs at home

By The Associated Press

VANCOUVER, Wash. — A woman who was trying to keep her boyfriend out of jail wound up in the slammer after a packet of methamphetamine fell out of her pocket in court, officials said.

The episode occurred Tuesday during a hearing in Clark County Superior Court for Randy Lee Baker, 33, accused of failing to pay court fines.

Lisa Marie Brecht, 31, of Longview, stepped forward to tell Judge James E. Rulli that she mailed in a payment for Baker last week.

"She was gesturing with her hands, which had been in her pockets, and when she took them out the baggie flew out," court clerk Julie Brown said. "The poor defendant, he just covered his face with his hands and shook his head."

As Brecht bent down to pick up the baggie, custody officer Albin Boyse told her to put it on the table.

"The judge said to the defendant, 'I thought you were clean and doing well,' and he said, 'I am, and I thought she was, too,'" Brown said.

Brecht already was wanted for failing to pay court fines for third-degree theft and driving with a suspended license. She was jailed without bail pending a court appearance.

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