

FREE

TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2002

Volume 1, Issue 109

Santa Monica Daily Press

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Tim Murphy/Special to the Daily Press

A man passes by and notices boarded up windows of the W. I. Simonson Mercedes-Benz dealership on Wilshire Boulevard Monday.

Vandals break several store front windows of Wilshire businesses

Seven local stores sustained over \$10,000 in vandalism damages

BY TIM MURPHY
Special to the Daily Press

A string of vandalism incidents left many Wilshire Boulevard businesses out thousands of dollars and cleaning up broken glass Sunday morning.

Shop windows were shattered by unknown assailants as they traveled east along Wilshire Boulevard, damaging stores in Santa Monica, Beverly Hills and Los Angeles.

At least seven Santa Monica businesses from 11th Street to Centinela Avenue had their windows broken, racking up about \$10,000 in damages.

A Santa Monica police department

spokesperson said officers did not know what vandals used to break the windows, and the police department has not determined any possible suspects.

Some business owners said metal pipes and stones were used to break their windows, while Melissa Powman, store manager of Pier One Imports, said the vandals used her storefront advertisements as target practice for their BB guns.

Two 12 foot tall windows were destroyed and others were riddled with BB holes, Powman said.

Pier One's surveillance tapes during the 3 a.m. incident show heavy vehicle and pedestrian traffic along Wilshire Boulevard due to St. Patrick's Day celebrations, Powman said. However, they don't show who broke the store's windows.

"There were party buses driving by and people walking around, somebody

See VANDALS, page 3

Gangs exchange fire and evade SM police

Suspects led police on a high-speed chase through side streets

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Two rival gang members exchanged fire early Saturday morning and then led Santa Monica police officers on a high-speed pursuit through residential side streets.

Neighbors called police officers who arrived in minutes of the 1:30 a.m. shooting on the corner of 16th Street and Delaware Avenue in the Pico Neighborhood.

Officers witnessed a 1984 Oldsmobile Cutlass speeding out of the area. Police pursued the vehicle but they said the suspects refused to pull over. After the shooting, local residents said they saw a man running west along Delaware Avenue.

Witnesses said they heard approximately 10 shots fired from what they described as a "large caliber weapon," but a police department spokesman declined to comment on the gun or evidence collected by officers at the scene.

Police officers described the two individuals as Hispanics who appeared to be in their late-teens and wearing dark clothing.

After leading police on a high-speed chase south-bound through residential side streets, the suspects ditched their vehicle at Sixth Street and Brooks Avenue in Venice Beach and fled on foot, police said.

Police officers established a perimeter around the area and conducted a search with the help of officers from the Los Angeles Police Department's Pacific Division and a helicopter from The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

However, the suspects were no longer in the area and currently remain at large. The suspect's vehicle was recovered and is being examined by the SMPD Forensic Unit. A police department spokesman said nobody was injured in the incident.

Since January there have been five 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.

The neighborhood surrounding Delaware Avenue has been engulfed in a turf war between two rival gangs — the Graveyard Crips and the Santa Monica

See SHOOTING, page 3

Priced out of the market

Working class are finding it difficult to afford homes in Santa Monica

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

John Deasy thought when he moved to Santa Monica last summer to become the new school superintendent he would have no problem finding a home.

As he and his family began to look for a house he soon realized it wouldn't be that easy. Home prices are triple the cost of where Deasy came from in New Hampshire.

"I had a 4,000 square-foot Colonial house with two acres and I sold it for more than \$250,000," he said.

After succumbing to the realities of Santa Monica's real estate market, Deasy quit looking at home listings and down-

graded to condominiums.

"I thought we would take the money and make a down payment on something here. I'll be lucky if I find a condo (that's) 2,500 square feet," he said.

The Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District has been discussing ways to help Deasy, who makes roughly \$150,000 a year, find a home.

"I think it's the board's desire to have the superintendent reside in our community," said School Board President Julia Brownley. "And we want to find a way to make that happen."

Essentially, they have proposed extending Deasy a loan at a very low interest rate to help with his down payment, and until he finds a home in Santa Monica or Malibu the school district provides him with a \$1,500 a month housing stipend.

"I think the superintendent is an

See MARKET, page 3

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Santa Monica's Daily Calendar



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Big Event!
Paul Greenberg will be reading from his international love story **LEAVING KATYA**, at the Barnes & Noble on the 3rd Street Promenade tonight starting at 7:30 p.m. Corner of Wilshire and 3rd. www.leavingkatya.com

Want to be on the A-list?
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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Your togetherness makes waves and establishes your place within a set circle. Others listen; after all, you're so reasonable. You are able to easily establish precedent right now. Others follow your lead and thinking. You know what you're doing. Tonight: Just don't be alone.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Your actions make a difference. You tend to do the right thing and choose the correct words. Whether you throw a dart with your left or right hand makes no difference: You'll hit the bull's-eye. Check around to see if you are getting the best rates possible on your bank accounts. Tonight: Treat a friend to dinner.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Intuition adds to your decisions, getting the deal or convincing an important someone in your life of the rightness of your actions or thoughts. Others admire your personality and wish they had the same gifts you do. Be thankful for your insight. Tonight: Whatever makes you content.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★ Do your homework, which involves seeking out experts and doing your own personal fact-finding. Networking also provides many options in your life that you perhaps haven't looked at. A friend makes an offer that's too good to be true. Tonight: Take some time for yourself.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ You zero in on the basic principles with ease. Think about your bottom line in a discussion with a partner. This person cares deeply and gives you the best advice possible. Throw the topic of vacation out on the table. You could be surprised at the suggestions. Tonight: Ask someone out.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ You're in the limelight, and others cheer you on. Understand your limits when dealing with someone who sometimes states his or her opinion a bit too clearly for your own taste. This person could sabotage you. Take charge and follow through on your desires. Tonight: A must appearance.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Carefully reach out for someone. Look behind the words to see what is really going on with someone. Deal with another directly. Consider other opinions concerning your finances and spending. You will find even better ideas and solutions. Tonight: Togetherness works.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ A partner does everything he or she can to make your load lighter. Carefully consider your options, especially those involving finances. This person might not be as creative as you, but he or she is more than willing to help out with your ideas. Tonight: Be a friend first.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ If you let others approach you, you will remain more in control and be able to pick and choose your options. Make sure your work is up to snuff. You don't want a problem at the last minute. Details count. Tonight: Accept an invitation.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ You might not be able to center on what you want. You can clear out a lot of work, though, if you just start doing it. Not everything has to have a rhyme or reason. Discussions shed new light on a careless associate. Tonight: Proceed with care.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ Realize that your imagination knows no limit, but others might have difficulty following your rationale or thinking. Go with creative and dynamic ideas, but slow down enough so that others can understand. Don't promote confusion. Tonight: You feel your Wheaties.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Your personality melts barriers, and you come up with solutions for both family and friends. You understand what ails another and quickly take action. Others count on your actions and leadership. Take it slowly with a friend. Tonight: Order in.



QUOTE of the DAY

**"I consider exercise vulgar.
It makes people smell."**

— Alec Yuill Thornton

Santa Monica Daily Press

Published Monday through Saturday
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LOCAL



Neighborhood group cheers higher police presence

SHOOTING, from page 1

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.

High-ranking police department officials met last week 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 have 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 rou-

tinely 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," said SMPD spokesman Frank Fabrega. "We want to be proactive rather than reactive."

Pico community activists said they welcome the heightened police presence and hope the department continues to focus on the neighborhood.

"A police presence deters street crimes," said Peter Tigler, president of the Pico Neighborhood Association. "It has been proven in other neighborhoods in Santa Monica, so we know the correlation works."

Last Monday, officers responded to a

shooting at the 1800 block of 19th Street in the Pico neighborhood. When they arrived they found two vehicles that had been damaged by bullets.

On Sunday March 10, four Hispanic men driving a dark-colored sport utility vehicle shot a black male in the lower torso who was bicycling along the 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, who's identity is being withheld, survived the incident.

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.

Home prices off by 10 percent

MARKET, from page 1

integral member of the community and I think it's extremely important that he live in the community he is helping shape," Brownley said. "The superintendent isn't looking for a palatial mansion, just a home that can comfortably fit a family of five."

Although Santa Monica's housing sales are difficult to gauge because the city is dominated by expensive homes, there has been a pull back in the high-end of market, said Leslie Appleton-Young, chief economist for the California Association of Realtors.

The median home price in Santa Monica dipped from \$745,750 to \$667,000 from January of 2001 to January 2002, representing a 10.6 percent decline. However, those numbers are skewed because of the high number of multi-million dollar homes in areas of the city like north of Montana Avenue. That is one reason the majority of Santa Monica residents are renters.

But it's not just in Santa Monica where the working class can't afford to live.

Fewer Californians could afford to buy their own home in January compared with a year earlier, and the affordability gap between the state and the rest of the nation widened, according to an industry study released last month.

Only 32 percent of California households could afford a median-priced home, compared with 35 percent in January 2001, data from the California Association of Realtors showed.

While mortgage rates are still near

record lows, they are not low enough to offset rising real estate prices, said CAR president Robert Bailey.

Median Californian home prices surged 17.1 percent across the state in January, significantly higher than the 10 percent gain in median home prices nationwide.

Regionally, Contra Costa was the least affordable county in the state in January, where only 16 percent of households could afford a median priced home.

San Francisco County was a close second at 17 percent. But the numbers in San Francisco County, where the technology bust has cooled the once red-hot property market, mark a substantial improvement from a year earlier when only 11 percent of households could afford to own.

In Los Angeles, affordability dipped to 34 percent of households from 38 percent a year ago. In Orange County, the picture improved slightly, with 31 percent able to buy, compared with 29 percent in January 2001.

Tight supply and pent-up demand drove the median price of an existing, single-family detached home up to \$285,860 during January 2002, from \$244,110 a year earlier, the state's association of realtors reported.

Median home prices increased in most parts of the state. Of 307 California cities and communities, 240 had rising prices from a year ago, the association of realtors reported.

(Editor's note: The Associated Press contributed to this report).

Seven local shops damaged

VANDALS, from page 1

had to see something," she said. "I've never seen Wilshire (Boulevard) that busy at that time of night."

Police have not said if St. Patrick's Day festivities were connected in any way to the vandalism.

Powman said when she called to have the store windows boarded up the handyman was exhausted, saying he'd been on eight jobs already that morning.

It cost the shop \$275 to board up the windows, and Powman estimated replacing the two large plate glass windows would cost about \$4,000.

When a large store front window was smashed at Pets on Wilshire, broken glass fell into a fish and turtle pond inside the store.

"The fish had to be removed and the turtles dry-docked," said Kathy Corvo, the store manager.

The store's owner found two chunks of metal inside the store, which she believes were used to smash the window.

"It's disturbing that some people think this is fun, but they don't think about the consequences to the people," Corvo said. "Or in our case the animals."

A large storefront win-



Tim Murphy/Special to the Daily Press

Onlookers watched as the store front window of Pets on Wilshire was boarded up Monday. Some animals had to be removed from their tanks due to fallen shards of broken glass.

dow at Cars With Class was also broken, and the falling debris caused minor body damage to a vintage car parked inside.

When the glass door of Haddad Printing was shattered, store owner Vida Foroutan said her husband received a call from police early in the morning explaining the situation. Foroutan said when her husband arrived at 9 a.m. the door was boarded up and there was glass strewn everywhere. She estimated re-pairing the damages will cost over \$700.

"It's degrading to the neighborhood," Foroutan said. "Our business comes from local residents and it's upsetting to everyone

to see vandalism going on. It would be terrible to see iron gates on the store fronts in this neighborhood."

Moris Pourvaser, owner of the Tehran Market estimated replacing his smashed storefront window would cost roughly \$2,000. At the W. I. Simon Mercedes-Benz dealership at 17th Street several two-story tall windows were destroyed, but no cars inside were damaged.

Vandals also smashed a 15 foot tall window at Al and Ed's AutoSound at Centinela Avenue.

"They're just kids trying to prove something," Corvo said, "but they just prove they are ignorant."

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STATE

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BRIEFS

Proposed double deck freeway annoys residents

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A double-deck freeway designed to unspool the Highway 101 and 405 interchange in the San Fernando Valley has riled some residents.

Drawings from a 101 Corridor Study depict two decks, extra lanes and express lanes on the Ventura Freeway, horrifying Gerald Silver and other members of Homeowners of Encino. Transportation officials quickly note there is little chance of double decking any time soon.

"Double decking is highly unlikely. It all comes down to the costs, the environmental impacts, the social impacts," said Linda Taira, project manager of the three-year 101 Corridor Study.

Double decking, which would involve adding four elevated carpool/bus lanes similar to the Harbor Freeway, would face massive community opposition from people like Silver.

"Before they add to the 101, creating mass destruction along the south valley corridor, they need to look at all the options and share the pain equally," said Silver, who has distributed fliers to get community support during a meeting Tuesday with the California Department of Transportation.

Locals could save big with smaller utility company

By The Associated Press

PALM SPRINGS — The Coachella Valley could save \$25 million yearly if Southern California Edison was replaced with a locally run utility.

Each resident could see an average utility bill savings of \$18 per month, according to a \$300,000 study by EES Consulting of Bellevue, Wash. Edison has 80,000 to 90,000 customers in the Coachella Valley.

Edison opposes a takeover and questions figures in the study for release Monday to a Coachella Valley Association of Government working committee. The cities of Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert, Indian Wells, Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage would need to create a joint powers agreement to run a private utility.

CVAG will be encouraged to take the issue to the voters to see if there is support.

"If we don't get the people's support, then it's dead," said Percy Byrd, the Indian Wells council member who chairs the CVAG working group. "I think (the report) indicates that it's doable."

It will cost \$108 million to \$253 million to take over Edison's local electricity distribution system, with the cost most likely to run about \$123 million.

But Edison estimates local cities would have to pay \$450 million to take over its local system. The utility does not want to sell and has said it will fight a takeover bid.

"They would be exposing their citizens to potentially tens of millions of dollars of cost without any guarantee of success," Edison spokesman Charley Wilson said. "If the cities are going to go forward with this, they need to know the actual cost."

Snow storm traps illegal immigrants

By The Associated Press

PINE VALLEY — The Border Patrol rescued 24 illegal immigrants caught in the snow during a weekend storm in the mountains east of San Diego, a spokesman said Monday.

Most of the immigrants were suffering from the early stages of hypothermia but they did not require hospitalization, Border Patrol Agent Merv Mason said.

"Everybody was OK. They were just really cold," Mason said.

The immigrants were rescued in several groups in the Pine Valley area, about 50 miles east of San Diego and a few miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Among those rescued were a mother and three daughters, including a 7-year-old who became separated from their group and spent the night huddled together in the mountains.

The 24 also included a man authorities believe acted as a guide, who is expected to face a federal charge of immigrant smuggling, Mason said.

Cold weather rescues have become routine in recent years as illegal immigrants, many unprepared for snow, use the mountains to avoid heightened security in the coastal sections of the border.

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STATE



San Francisco is first major U.S. city to approve instant runoffs

BY MARGIE MASON
Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco has become the first major U.S. city to adopt instant runoffs for nearly all municipal races, a move that is encouraging fringe candidates — always a boisterous voice here — to think they may actually have a chance on Election Day.

Currently, if no candidate for a city office gets more than 50 percent of the vote, a runoff is held weeks or months later between the top two vote-getters.

The new instant system would avoid this second round of balloting by allowing the voters to rank candidates as their first, second and third choice. Those preferences would be used to pick a winner.

The idea won 55 percent approval from San Francisco voters on March 5.

Opponents have criticized it as undemocratic and confusing. Proponents have said it will open the political process to more outsiders and save money, since runoffs cost taxpayers about \$1.6 million each. "It will benefit the city in terms of the millions of dollars it will save and also the wear and tear on the department of elections," said Mark Leno, a member of the city Board of Supervisors. "It will encourage greater voter participation."

The concept has been used for decades in Ireland and Australia. London recently elected its mayor using the system, and Cambridge, Mass., has been electing City Council members through instant runoffs since 1941.

In Vermont, where the Legislature steps in and picks the winner if no one gets a majority for governor, lieutenant governor and treasurer, 51 communities recently approved nonbinding resolutions in favor of instant runoffs. Alaska will have a referendum on the ballot this fall.

The San Francisco system will be different from the one in Cambridge, where voters pick from a slate of candidates to fill multiple slots — a method that makes it possible to win with only 10 percent of the vote.

In San Francisco, the process will be used for most major city offices,

including mayor, sheriff, treasurer, district attorney, public defender and Board of Supervisors. The counting method will kick in whenever a candidate fails to get a majority.

Under the system, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated, and the second choices of voters who selected this loser are added to the tallies of the remaining candidates. If this does not create a majority winner, the process is repeated: The third choices of voters whose first and second choices have been eliminated are applied to the remaining candidates, and so on, until someone gets a majority.

Chris Bowman, a Republican political consultant and former member of the San Francisco citizens advisory committee on elections, said the process goes against the "one man, one vote" principle.

"I see it as undemocrat-

ic. There may be challenges made in court," he said.

While Democrats have long dominated city politics, San Francisco voters also have a soft spot for fringe candidates, giving Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader half as many votes as George W. Bush in 2000.

The new system could give some lesser-known candidates a boost against incumbents or other leading politicians.

"It's the Green Party's agenda. They believe it will give the Greens more leverage in controlling the outcome of the elections and controlling the government," Bowman said.

The Center for Voting and Democracy, a think tank in suburban Washington, funneled \$50,000 of the \$70,000 raised in support of the proposition, said Caleb Kleppner of the center's San Francisco chapter. As of Feb. 16, opponents reported contributing

\$20,000. They are not required to report the entire amount spent until July 31.

The Green Party was another big supporter. Kleppner denied trying to secure an advantage for any particular party, saying the center supports instant runoffs because they reduce campaign spending and produce better voter turnout by requiring only one trip to the polls.

The proposition garnered a range of supporters from California Assembly Majority Leader Kevin Shelley, D-San Francisco, to the United Farm Workers, the Democratic Party, Common Cause, the San Francisco Labor Council, the AFL-CIO and dozens of other groups.

The city probably will not have the system in place in time for the general election in November, because the necessary software must first be approved and installed, said elections supervisor Tammy Haygood.

A deadly fire



George Nikitin/ Associated Press

Daly City fire inspector Robert Marshall inspects remains from an apartment fire on Monday in Daly City. A 34-year-old woman and her two sons aged 3 and 6, died after being overcome by thick smoke while trying to escape.

Iranian sentenced to prison for smoking on plane

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — An Iranian was sentenced Monday to 33 months in federal prison for interfering with an Air Canada flight crew by making an anti-American threat after being caught smoking on the jetliner.

Javid Naghani, 37, who lives in suburban Woodland Hills and runs the Cleaning of America janitorial service, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Ronald S.W. Lew, who presided over a three-day trial. Jurors deliberated about two hours before convicting him on Dec. 6.

Lew also fined Naghani \$6,000 and placed him on three years of supervised release after he gets out of prison. He must get substance abuse treatment and submit to random drug tests. In addition, he cannot consume alcoholic beverages.

Naghani, who has been in federal custody since his Sept. 27 arrest, will be transferred to an undisclosed federal prison this week. Because Naghani was allowed to live in the United States after being granted political asylum, immigration officials will review his case before he's

released from prison, said Thom Mrozek, spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's office.

"I did a mistake. I never did mean to harm anybody. I'm sorry about smoking," Naghani told Lew, denying again that he ever threatened anyone.

"Judge, give me a chance," Naghani asked. Naghani was aboard an Air Canada Flight 792 from Los Angeles to Toronto on Sept. 27 when, about an hour into the flight, the pilots turned the plane around and returned to Los Angeles International Airport under military jet escort.



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**DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION ON
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7:30pm**

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STATE

CALIFORNIA BRIEFS

National Guard troops posted at border

By The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — National Guard troops arrived Monday at California’s border with Mexico to temporarily assist federal authorities with security and crowd control.

The first wave of about 260 guardsmen will assist Immigration and Naturalization Service officers at the San Ysidro Port of Entry in San Diego and the state’s five other border crossings.

An additional 40 guardsmen will arrive later to work with Customs Service agents, National Guard Lt. Col. Anne Humphreys said.

Customs and INS jointly handle security at the nation’s borders.

About 700 guardsmen are being deployed this month at border points around the United States.

The guardsmen will not be armed at the border; they will work under the supervision of INS and Customs agents, officials said. They are expected to remain for about six months until the federal government hires additional inspectors to handle increased security imposed after Sept. 11.

For more than 10 years, the Guard has sent small contingents of troops to the border in California to assist Customs with vehicle searches and crowd control as part of anti-drug efforts.

The additional deployment of troops will free INS and Customs agents to conduct more thorough checks on the thousands of people who cross the California border each day, said Adele Fasano, the director of the INS district that includes San Diego.

The deployment, officially dubbed “Operation Border Eagle,” is part of the largest activation of California National Guard troops in decades. The service has placed more than 5,000 of its 21,000 troops on active status since Sept. 11.

Ambitious gambling initiative withdrawn by backers

By The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A secretive group has withdrawn an ambitious ballot initiative that would have loosened state restrictions on gambling and ended the monopoly of Indian tribes in the casino business.

Craig Marlar, a Palm Springs-based spokesman for the group, said he withdrew the measure last week after backers decided it was too costly to get it to get the initiative on the November ballot.

“It could have run \$5 million or \$6 million or more,” he said Monday.

Under the proposed measure, called the Gaming Control Act, all currently licensed gambling establishments would have been free to offer most forms of gambling, including craps, roulette, unlimited slots and sports wagering.

Current law restricts casinos to Indian lands, which are restricted to card games and a limited number of slot machines. No craps or roulette are permitted.

Marlar said the people behind the measure have chosen to remain anonymous. Backers found that the costs of getting the measure on the ballot rose after the attorney general summarized the measure as an effort to legalize “all forms of Las Vegas and Atlantic City casino-type gambling,” he said.

“It made it look like we were looking for authorization to have casinos in every gas station and 7-Eleven and that’s the farthest thing from what they wanted,” Marlar said.

Rainy weather won’t help fight fire or drought

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A cold, blustery storm clogged mountain passes with snow and ice in parts of Southern California, but it wasn’t enough to help fight fire or drought.

The storm dropped just a quarter inch to a half inch of rain and snow Sunday through Monday. The rainfall total for Los Angeles stood at 4.21 inches, still more than eight inches shy of the average 12.78 inches.

“The storm is not going to do a whole lot for the fire issue; it’s just going to give annual grasses a chance to grow real fast,” said Capt. Tom MacPherson of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

In order for a storm to help curb fire hazards, he said, it would have to produce at least two inches of rain. “But every little bit helps,” he added.

“For rainfall, it was a pretty light event,” National Weather Service hydrologist Brent Bower said. “Overall, we’re pretty far behind the average so one storm isn’t going to help the drought a whole lot.”

Rain and snow caused 20 accidents Sunday along an 18-mile stretch of Interstate 5 Highway north of Palmdale, prompting officials to close 35 miles of the freeway. It was reopened Monday.

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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NATIONAL



Floods sweep through parts of South, destroying homes

BY ROGER ALFORD

Associated Press Writer

HARLAN, Ky. — A second day of heavy rain in the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee triggered floods and mudslides Monday that destroyed dozens of homes and forced some to flee by boat as water lapped at the rooftops.

Tennessee authorities blamed at least five deaths on the storm, which dumped as much as 6 inches of rain on the region Sunday. Showers are expected over the next couple of days.

Flash flooding early Monday in the riverfront town of Cumberland sent a trailer plunging over a 50-foot embankment with a family inside. A tearful Jacqueline Bellofatto recounted how she survived the fall and then searched frantically for her 7-year-old daughter in the mud and rain.

"I just started yelling for her and she wasn't there," said Bellofatto, who began digging in the mud beneath the trailer. "I just dug her out with my hands. She was buried alive."

Once the daughter was found safe, Bellofatto, her

husband, their daughter and 4-year-old son struck out for a neighbor's home to seek help.

"We were finding out with each step that we took we would sink down to our chest in the mud," Bellofatto said.

Throughout Kentucky, at least 250 homes were damaged or destroyed. Authorities ordered the evacuations of a string of communities in the Cumberland River basin, where rooftops could be seen protruding from the murky water.

"The water came up so fast that we didn't have time to save anything," said Kimberly Evans, who was forced from her home at Dayhoit. "All we can do now is wait until we can get back in and see what we can salvage."

Officials called the flooding in eastern Kentucky the worst in the region in 25 years. National Guard troops were sent in with three boats, three trucks and a Humvee to assist with evacuations.

Most school systems in the region were closed. Water lapped at the steps of a vocational school outside Pineville, covered two school buses, and inundated a \$12 million golf course.

In Tennessee, where the brunt of the storm had passed,

residents waited for floodwaters that covered roads to recede.

Two people drowned crossing swollen creeks and a family of three died in a traffic accident on rain-slickened Interstate 24.

Red Cross shelters remained open but empty in the hardest-hit counties of the Great Smoky Mountains, Blount and Sevier, where more than 100 families evacuated homes Sunday.

"At this point, unless we have more families needing a place to stay, we will probably put them in motels," said Red Cross spokesman Chris Davis. "It is quieting down."

Nearly three dozen roads were still under water in Sevier County and dozens more in Blount, Knox and surrounding counties. Forecasters predicted more rain later in the week.

In southwestern Virginia, at least 15 people were driven from their homes in the town of Saltville after more than 4 inches of rain caused flooding along the Clinch and Holston rivers.

In Virginia's Wise County, about 400 people were evacuated to shelters.

Pa. Internet service providers to block child pornography

BY GEORGE STRAWLEY

Associated Press Writer

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Starting next month, Internet service providers with customers in Pennsylvania will be legally responsible for blocking access to child pornography.

The law, with maximum penalties that include prison time for repeat offenders, is believed to be the first of its kind.

But by putting the onus on the state attorney general's office to notify ISPs of what should be blocked, the law is expected to have limited success.

Under the law, signed last month, prosecutors would, after

obtaining a court order, give ISPs a list of Web sites and other items to block.

But child pornographers — many of whom operate from overseas — can quickly move to other sites. Child porn sites are generally temporary fixtures that disappear after a few hours anyway, said John Philip Jenkins, a Penn State professor who has researched Internet pornography issues.

"There's probably more out there than anybody knows, but this probably won't be an effective way of doing anything about it," Jenkins said.

The law carries penalties of \$5,000 for the first offense and

\$20,000 for the second. After that, violators are subject to fines of \$30,000 and up to seven years in prison.

The law has the blessing of the state chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. Larry Frankel, the chapter's executive director, said someone whose material is cut off could seek a court hearing.

But ISPs consider the law impractical.

"Once you use my service to get on the Internet, I have no way of controlling where you go and what you see," said Sue Ashdown, director of the American Internet Service Provider Association, an organi-

zation of small ISPs.

ISPs serve as conduits and do not actually control content. They have been likened to the Postal Service, which delivers letters without knowing what is inside the envelopes.

The law does not require ISPs to actively monitor their service, only to block specific sites or services when notified.

But more technically astute users can often bypass blocks by using so-called proxy services.

Kevin Harley, a spokesman for the state attorney general's office, said the agency plans to expand its child sexual exploitation unit and will monitor the Internet for sites that traffic in

child pornography.

Two years ago, a congressional commission called for law enforcement agencies to develop a list of Web sites, newsgroups and other Internet destinations that contain child pornography.

The commission's own lists indicated that about 100,000 Web sites show simulated or real child pornography.

Three federal laws aimed at restricting pornography — involving minors or otherwise — have all been challenged in the courts.

One was overturned, another is before the Supreme Court and a third is scheduled for a trial in Philadelphia this month. None requires ISPs to do the blocking.

NASA launch times a secret to guard against terrorists

BY MARCIA DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Beginning with the next space shuttle flight in two weeks, NASA is keeping its launch times secret until 24 hours in advance to guard against possible terrorist attack.

It is the first time in more than a decade that the space agency is refusing to give out a shuttle launch time well in advance. "NASA is choosing to be extra careful," Kennedy Space Center spokesman Bruce Buckingham said Monday.

Under the new policy, approved late last week by top NASA officials, the space agency will give out four-hour launch periods until about 24 hours before liftoff, when the precise time will be announced. Once NASA releases the exact launch time, everything about the flight — including the landing time — will be made public.

The next launch, by Atlantis on April 4, will occur sometime between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., Buckingham noted. It is a space station assembly mission.

Even though the seven astronauts assigned to the flight were at the launch site Monday, going through the customary practice countdown, NASA did not announce their arrival in advance for

security reasons.

"What we're trying to do is protect the credibility of this agency with the public and the press, and also with the security measures that this nation has put into place at the highest government level," NASA spokesman Kyle Herring said from the agency's Washington headquarters.

NASA, as a civilian agency, needs and wants to put out as much information to the public as possible, Herring said. "But we also want to protect the national assets, that is the hardware, the crew and the personnel that work for this agency," he said.

The launch times of the December and March space shuttle missions were widely known before Sept. 11, and so there was no attempt to make them secret following the terrorist attacks, Herring said. Both launches were conducted amid unprecedented security, which is expected to continue.

Herring said the new policy took a while to develop and will remain in effect for subsequent missions, "with the caveat that it will be reviewed on a flight-by-flight basis."

Still to be decided: whether and how NASA will confirm the start of the launch countdown. The countdown clocks in public view will not start ticking until 24 hours in advance, Herring said.

Saving timbers



Gary Tramontina/Associated Press

Home restorer Gary Coburn looks over a timber frame barn while disassembling in Sandy Lake, Pa. on Thursday. Coburn's specialty is saving old timber-frame houses and barns for homeowners seeking to achieve a rustic, open feel that he says can only be perfected by using the 2,000-year-old building technique.

Even tougher rules were in effect for the seven space shuttle flights that carried classified Defense Department satellites from 1985 through 1990. In those cases,

the launch time was not announced until nine minutes before liftoff and a news blackout was imposed on virtually the entire flight.

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NATIONAL

NATIONAL BRIEFS

Schools closed as city tackles record snowfall

By The Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A record 28.6 inches of snow caught Anchorage by surprise, closing schools and stranding travelers.

The storm started Saturday afternoon and tapered off Sunday night after coming down at nearly 2 inches an hour. The snowfall far surpassed the city's previous 24-hour record of 15.6 inches, set Dec. 29, 1955.

Flights were canceled or diverted and drivers got stuck on roads or wound up ditches. Schools were closed until Tuesday after officials learned the city wouldn't clear side streets and cul-de-sacs until sometime Monday.

On Sunday, Alaska Airlines canceled about a third of its 40 to 50 flights at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, a spokesman said. Eighteen cargo planes were diverted to Fairbanks.

Sometime before 3 a.m. Sunday, an Eva Airways cargo jet collided with an Alaska Airlines passenger jet while taxiing at the airport. Airport spokesman Mark Butler said there were no injuries, but both planes were damaged. Eva is a Taiwanese airline.

South Carolina sues over demonstrations at rest stops

By The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The state filed a lawsuit Monday to stop rest-stop demonstrations by the NAACP and a white pride group in a dispute over the Confederate flag.

Attorney General Charlie Condon said he had warned the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the European-American Unity Rights Organization that their protests were illegal.

The organizations are at odds over whether the flag should be flown on the grounds of the Statehouse. It was put there after being removed from the Statehouse dome and the legislative chambers in July 2000, six months after the NAACP began a state boycott to protest the flag.

On March 2, the NAACP began its "border patrols," with group members gathering at welcome centers along South Carolina's borders to discourage motorists from spending money while traveling through the state.

A week later, the New Orleans-based, white-rights group countered with its own patrols. EURO national director Vincent Breeding said Monday there are no plans for more events.

State NAACP director Dwight James said he would not comment until he had seen the lawsuit filed in York County.

Police arrest 84 in cockfight tournament raid

By The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Police raided a cockfighting tournament at a Philadelphia auto body shop, arresting 84 people as others fled through doors and windows.

Officers found 66 live roosters and 13 dead ones, a 12-by-18-foot fighting ring, a 4-foot high trophy for the winner and a fully stocked bar.

They seized \$51,769 from those arrested and a loaded 9mm handgun. Police also confiscated sharp spurs that cockfighters attach to the birds and hypodermic needles to inject them with stimulants and anticoagulants.

Those arrested were being held pending hearings this week on charges including cruelty to animals, illegal gambling, and liquor violations, Ditchkofsky said.

Pennsylvania is one of nearly 30 states in which it is a felony to conduct or attend a cockfight. It is legal in Louisiana, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

Cockfighting involves two birds equipped with metal spurs. The roosters — bred for power, speed and killer instinct — claw at each other until one of them keels over, usually in a bloody mess.

The sport has run into increased resistance from law enforcement and Congress in recent years as opponents push for a ban on the interstate transfer of birds for cockfighting.

Skull found may be of 11-year-old girl missing since 1997

By The Associated Press

METAMORA TOWNSHIP, Mich. — A skull found by a hunter in a rural wooded area is probably that of an 11-year-old girl who disappeared in 1997, authorities said.

Dental records and other evidence tentatively identified the skull and other remains as those of Andre Bosse, prosecutor Byron Konschuh said. Authorities awaited DNA confirmation of her identity.

Dean Metcalfe, a former neighbor of the girl's family whose daughter was Andre's best friend, admitted shortly after Andre disappeared in June 1997 that he kidnapped and raped her and then shot her in the back of the head as she tried to flee. He later recanted his confession, but he pleaded no contest in 1999 to murder and sexual assault.

He is serving a life sentence, along with two other life sentences in separate child sexual assault cases.

A hunter called police Saturday after finding the skull in the woods in Metamora Township, Konschuh said.

A green jacket was found with the remains; Metcalfe had described covering Andre's body with a green jacket. Konschuh said the remains also had black sneakers like those Andre was wearing when she disappeared.

Metcalfe had maintained he wasn't sure where he left the body. In 1997, the search had largely focused on and near a Boy Scout ranch, because evidence of Metcalfe's presence had been found there. The site where the remains were finally found is about 1 1/2 miles from the ranch.

INTERNATIONAL



Warring sides move toward a Mideast peace

BY STEVE WEIZMAN

Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM — Spurred on by a U.S. peace mission, Israeli troops pulled out of Bethlehem early Tuesday, edging closer to a cease-fire with the Palestinians in the 18-month-old Mideast conflict.

The pullback came after Vice President Dick Cheney arrived to bolster the efforts of U.S. mediator Anthony Zinni, and the pair held talks Monday with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

In the most promising sign since Zinni arrived last week, Israel pulled back after midnight from the West Bank town of Bethlehem — traditional birthplace of Jesus — and neighboring Beit Jalla, El-Khader and the Aida refugee camp.

The Palestinians demanded at security talks Monday afternoon that Israel pull out of all their territory before a cease-fire could be declared.

Palestinian West Bank security chief Jibril Rajoub said the pullback from Bethlehem was not enough. He said Israel must complete its withdrawal from two other towns, Tulkarem and Qalqilya. Israel said it had pulled out of the two towns last week.

Also, Rajoub told The Associated Press that the Israelis must declare an "immediate end to their aggression in all its forms, including house demolition, closures, and assassination," and promise political negotiations as well as military talks.

The Bethlehem pullout ended one of the largest Israeli military operations in decades and takes Israel out of the more than a half-dozen Palestinian towns and cities it entered this month in a search for Palestinian militants. Earlier, they pulled back from the other West Bank Palestinian population centers.

"The meeting today was tough and serious, but positive," Rajoub said. "The Israelis are committed to withdrawing from all (Palestinian-run) areas in the West Bank."

It was not clear whether Israeli troops would remain in a few Palestinian-run areas of the Gaza Strip — a key road and some farmland — which they also seized in recent months, and this was apparently not part of the emerging deal.

In violence Monday, Israeli soldiers shot and killed an

armed Palestinian near a crossing point between Gaza and Israel, the military said.

A 52-year-old Palestinian was killed by tank fire when Israeli forces moved toward Dir al-Balah in central Gaza, Palestinian doctors said.

Palestinians fired two Qassam rockets into Israel from northern Gaza, the military said. Palestinians said Israel sent armored vehicles to search farms afterward.

Also, Israeli soldiers tracked down and arrested two Palestinians who had infiltrated into northern Israel, planning to carry out a terror attack, the military said.

Zinni, who has been shuttling between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, is trying to get the two sides to implement a cease-fire deal that CIA chief George Tenet brokered last year.

Both sides have previously endorsed the plan, which calls on the Israelis to pull back troops to the positions where they were before the fighting began in September 2000. The Palestinians must prevent attacks against Israel and collect weapons from militants.

Many Palestinian militants say their only way they can win concessions from Israel is by fighting. And many Israelis believe Sharon should take an even tougher line and step up military operations against the Palestinians.

Both sides see Cheney's presence as an incentive to reach a truce deal.

Upon arriving, Cheney met Sharon and said he was seeking to revive Israeli-Palestinian talks with an aim to reaching a full-blown peace treaty based on U.N. resolutions. The vice president said both sides would have to make steps to end violence and improve the atmosphere for peace talks.

"We continue to call upon Chairman Arafat to live up to his commitment to renounce once and for all the use of violence as a political weapon and to observe a 100 percent effort to stamp out terrorists," Cheney said.

"In that same spirit, I will be talking to Prime Minister Sharon about the steps that Israel can take to alleviate the devastating economic hardships being experienced by innocent Palestinian men, women and children," he said.

Sharon, meanwhile, compared the U.S. campaign against international terrorism to Israel's battle against Palestinian attackers.

"The terrorists, their dispatchers and those who spon-



J. Scott Applewhite/ Associated Press

Vice President Dick Cheney, left, shakes hands with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon following remarks at an arrival ceremony at Sharon's office in Jerusalem on Monday. Cheney and Sharon will have an evening of private diplomacy aimed at getting Palestinians and Israelis back to the negotiating table following weeks of violence.

sor them must have no immunity or refuge, this is the only way to bring them to the realization that terror and violence will achieve nothing," he said.

The Palestinians, however, say they are resisting 35 years of Israeli military occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with the aim of establishing an independent Palestinian state.

American, British Airways to increase flights

BY SUE LEEMAN

Associated Press Writer

LONDON — Increasingly confident about flying as the shock of Sept. 11

recedes, travelers are returning to the skies over the North Atlantic.

American Airlines and British Airways, which cut services as demand slumped after the attacks, said Monday

that business is growing so well that they are increasing the number of flights on their trans-Atlantic routes.

Traffic on North Atlantic routes was down 7.7 percent in February compared to a year earlier, but that was a strong improvement on October's year-to-year decline of 31.3 percent.

"There was a brief period after Sept. 11 when I didn't want to fly to the States, but that quickly went away and now I have no problems at all with it," said Cambridge businessman Chay Morgan as he waited at London's Heathrow Airport on Monday for a flight to Detroit.

The rebound comes none too soon for British Airways, which reported a 20 percent drop in traffic volume in the fourth quarter of last year. On Feb. 13, the airline announced it was cutting 5,800 jobs, raising its total reductions since August to 23 percent of its work force.

Some passengers said they were unconvinced that the public had shaken off its fear of flying.

David Logue, 27, an information technology specialist from London who was catching a flight to Boston, said many business people "are trying to avoid traveling. There's a lot more use of video and audio conferencing. It's too early to say that confidence is back."

British Airways said its February traffic volume — measured in the distance flown by paying customers — was down 2.5 percent from a year earlier, compared with January, when the figure was down by nearly 7 percent.

Traffic figures for American routes were 3.5 percent lower in February, and 8 percent lower a month earlier, the airline said.

In the month after Sept. 11, the number of Britons visiting New York dipped by 59 percent compared with the previous month.

But on Monday, American Express Travel said the number of Britons visiting New York for short breaks is back to the levels of spring 2001. It said New York remains No. 3 on the list of Britons' favorite short-break destinations, after Paris and Amsterdam.

A spokeswoman for American Airlines said the carrier will shortly announce a return to its pre-Sept. 11 schedules.

From April 1, there will be six instead of five British Airways flights daily from London to New York, and the number of daily flights to Washington and Boston will increase from two to three, the airline said.

Virgin Atlantic has already announced extra trans-Atlantic flights, including new trips to Las Vegas and Newark, N.J.

A bronze salute



Gregory Bull/ Associated Press

U.S. Army Gen. Tommy R. Franks, center, shakes hands with soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division while visiting the military air base at Bagram, Afghanistan on Monday. Franks, the Commander of the United States Central Command, awarded five Bronze Stars to soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division Monday in a brief ceremony on the air base.

COMICS

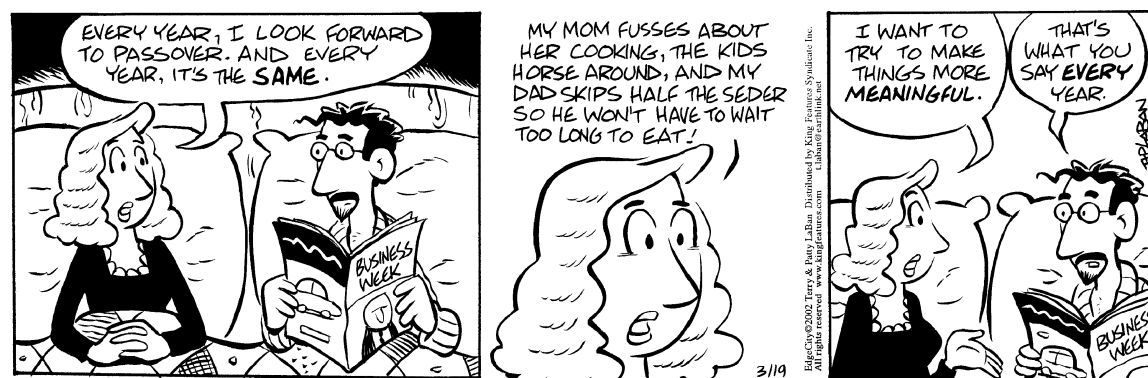
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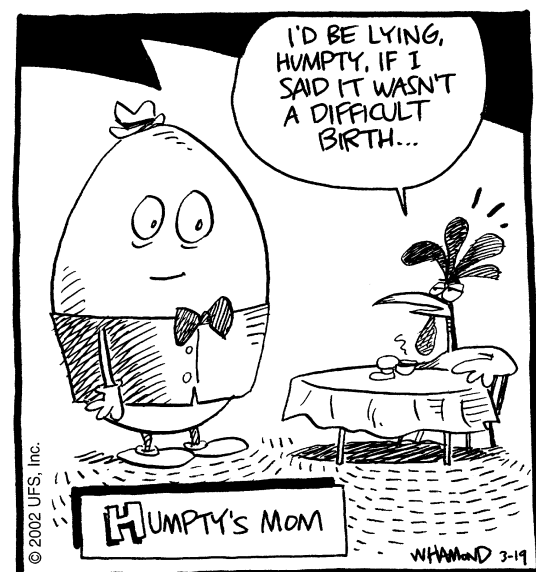
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 - 25 Ornamental shrub
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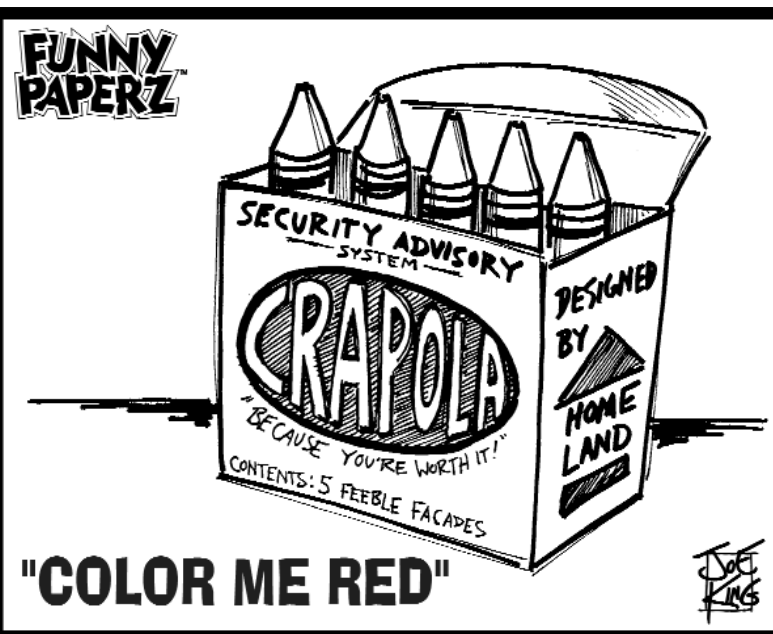
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

Diplomacy is somehow lost in the translation

In March, the manager of a Hartford, Conn., senior citizens' home told residents in the monthly newsletter to "please stop throwing rice in the garbage disposals" and that repairs for such "negligence and carelessness" would be billed to the tenant, but the Spanish-language version of the same newsletter was different (as translated): "You have to get used to the fact that you do not live in Puerto Rico, where leftovers were given to the pigs. We do not have pigsties, but we do have garbage cans." "If (using the garbage can) is too hard for you to do, move and continue with the customs of Puerto Rico." The manager, Carmen Aponte, who is of Puerto Rican ancestry, later apologized.



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BACK PAGE

ODDS & ENDS

Vendor won't hold weapons

By The Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Betrice Gonzalez may sell you a hot dog, but don't expect her to hold your stun gun.

The vendor, fed up with requests to hold items not allowed inside the Clarence Mitchell Jr. Courthouse, posted a sign on her stand recently telling people not to bother inquiring.

"Absolutely no holding: weapons, bags, radios, drugs, etc. while in the courthouse!!," the sign reads.

"I've had people offer me money to hold their bags," she said Friday while serving steaming hot dogs to customers. "People get rude when I say 'no.'"

During the seven years Gonzalez has worked at the stand, a few yards from the courthouse entrance, people have asked her to hold everything from clothes to knives.

"One person even asked me to hold their stun gun," she said, laughing. "They offered me \$20, but I still said 'no.'"

Most are not jurors or courthouse employees, but visitors who have forgotten the items are not allowed inside the courthouse.

"I was stunned when I saw the sign," said frequent customer Stacy Madden, 28, who works at the bank across the street. "I didn't know people actually did that. I could believe it, though."

Manure marks the spot

By The Associated Press

CONNELLSVILLE, Pa. — The prom committee at Conneltsville Area High School is hoping to raise \$20,000 with one smelly pie.

Players can participate in "Cow Patty Bingo" for \$10, claiming one of 3,025 squares marked off on the front lawn of the high school in Fayette County. A lottery will determine who owns which numbered square.

At noon on April 6, a cow will be led onto the lawn

to graze, moo and, hopefully, do her business within two hours. The square with the most pie will win \$10,000. If the pie lands evenly on two squares, both will be awarded \$5,000 each.

"It's a unique idea," principal Robert McLuckey said last week. "It's innovative, and I thought it would be a lot of fun."

Tickets went on sale in November and committee members have sold 1,700 tickets, generating \$17,000.

The committee is trying to raise as much money as it can to offset the \$32,000 cost of the May 18 prom on the Gateway Clipper riverboat in Pittsburgh, about 36 miles northwest.

Tipping from the after-life

By The Associated Press

MARKLEVILLE, Ind. — A farmer who became a regular at restaurants in the lonely years after his wife died has left posthumous tips to some of his favorite waitresses.

Paul Chadwick, who died at age 88 on Dec. 25, 2000, named in his will 10 waitresses, each of whom he bequeathed \$2,500.

Among them was Lana Evans, who, as a teen-age waitress at what was then Pugsley's Diner in Middletown back in 1982, recalled that Chadwick stopped by the restaurant about every day for lunch.

"I met him right after his wife passed away, and he seemed so sad," Evans said last week. "I would sit and talk to him as he ate."

Nine other waitresses from area restaurants were named in Chadwick's will, which also bequeathed amounts to numerous friends, family members and community organizations.

"Mr. Chadwick was a very nice man; I would even say courtly," said G. Douglass Owens, the attorney who was executor of Chadwick's will.

After the 88-year-old farmer died, Owens was charged with locating those named in Chadwick's will.

He found nine of the waitresses. He believes the other is deceased.

"It goes to show, you never know what a little kindness might mean to someone," said Melinda Padgett, township trustee.

Racing snakes for St. Patrick's Day

By The Associated Press

OLD SAN PATRICIO, Texas — Start with the legend of St. Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland. Then give it a Texas twist.

What you end up with is the World Championship Rattlesnake Races, run for the past three decades to celebrate St. Patrick's Day in this tiny south Texas town settled by Irish immigrants.

The basic idea is simple — pay \$20 to rent a rattler, put it down on the ground and do what it takes to coax the reptile along a grassy strip to the finish line 80 feet away.

Racers are equipped with a 6-foot plastic rod — called a "gitter," as in to coax the critter to "git" along. Some use it to beat the ground next to the snake, while others walk behind and scare the snake forward.

There are a few rules, like no smacking the snake. Not only would that be unprofessional, it would also be bad strategy.

"If you get out in front of him, he's gonna stop," said Jack Lewis, the race's general manager. "If you touch him, he's gonna coil up and try to strike."

The latest winner was Don Burkman, of Austin, who swung his gitter like an ax to urge his rented Western diamondback to victory in 69 seconds.

"I was smacking (the ground) pretty good," he said afterward. "He slowed down on me last time. I wanted to keep him going."

The town's St. Patrick's Day festival began in the 1870s, and the first rattlers were raced here in 1973.

"It was wild," Lewis recalled. "We didn't know what we were doing. We had these snakes all over the place."

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