

FREE

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2003

Volume 2, Issue 109

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

SUPER LOTTO PLUS

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Megamember: 13

Jackpot: \$10 million

FANTASY 5

14, 22, 25, 26, 32

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 8, 1, 3

Evening picks: 7, 4, 2

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 08, Gorgeous George

2nd Place: 01, Gold Rush

3rd Place: 11, Money Bags

Race time: 1:45.73



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

■ Charles Edward Jones was convicted in February of robbing a Wachovia Bank in Miami with the key evidence being a DNA match to two gold teeth that were knocked out of his mouth when he stepped into a street during his getaway and was hit by a school lunch van. Compounding his lack of clear getaway thinking was the fact that he had just fired his gun into his pants as he tried to stuff it into his waistband.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

Old people shouldn't eat health food. They need all the preservatives they can get.

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Jason Auslander/Daily Press

Dozens of people pack the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on the Third Street Promenade Wednesday to hear best selling author Gore Vidal speak as part of an on-going book signing tour.

Liberal author skewers the country's leaders

Chosen locals privy to Gore Vidal's political insights, humor

BY JASON AUSLANDER

Daily Press Staff Writer

With bombs beginning to fall on Baghdad, best-selling author Gore Vidal's appearance in Santa Monica on Wednesday night seemed fortuitous.

"This is an extraordinary moment — when our republic is transformed into something that is not clear yet," Vidal said as he sat down and placed his walking cane across the table in front of him. "I can't criticize something if I don't know what it is."

"But I certainly do know how we got here and I'll criticize that."

And criticize he did, noting that the present U.S. administration functions amid so much secrecy that "perhaps we may never be told" the true reasons behind this latest Iraqi war.

"Maybe our descendants will be told," he said.

Vidal repeatedly displayed a barbed tongue and a sharp wit in a brief "chat" with about 75 Santa Monicans at Barnes and Noble Bookstore on the Third Street



Gore Vidal

Promenade.

Vidal said Saddam Hussein poses a threat only because the United States is attacking his country.

"If we attack him, then he will use the mustard gas he has accumulated," Vidal said. "We are forcing him to use the things we don't want him to get."

"It's insanity. It's a pretext to dominate the oil fields of the Middle East and Eurasia, as I write in my little book."

Vidal's "little book" is his

See VIDAL, page 5

War breaks out in Baghdad, Iraqis flee

BY HAMZA HENDAWI

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Anti-aircraft tracers flashed across the skies of Baghdad and explosions sounded in the city at dawn Thursday as President Bush launched war against Saddam Hussein.

Less than two hours after Bush's deadline for the Iraqi leader to leave the country, the U.S. military attacked with Tomahawk cruise missiles and precision-guided bombs dropped from F-117 stealth fighter-bombers.

"The criminals, the enemies of God, homeland and humanity, launched the aggression against our homeland and people. May God humiliate them."

—IRAQI STATE RADIO

U.S. government officials said the strikes targeted Iraqi leaders in what the president called the opening salvo in an operation to "disarm Iraq and to free its people."

Bush emphasized the war was not against the Iraqi people but their leadership. American messages broadcast on Iraqi airwaves to the population declared, "This is the day you have been waiting for," according to Al-Jazeera TV.

At about 5:30 a.m., air sirens blared in the Iraqi capital and yellow and white anti-aircraft tracers streaked through the sky. A number of strong explosions could be heard. Most seemed to be at locations outside the city, but one was followed by a rising ball of fire toward the southern part of the capital.

Frequent sonic booms and the sounds of aircraft could be heard in northern Iraq above the city of

Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdish autonomous enclave.

In Baghdad, the initial firing stopped after about a half-hour, and the capital returned to the hush that reigned there as the deadline neared. The only sounds during the brief lull was a mosque's muezzin making the call for dawn Islamic prayers.

Shortly after, the sound of anti-aircraft and more distant

See BAGHDAD, page 10

SM braces for war

City's 'Emergency Operations Center' ready if needed

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

As American forces invaded Iraq Wednesday evening, local officials stood ready for possible domestic attacks in Santa Monica.

Police, fire and other response workers are on "heightened alert." Systems are in place for a variety of emergency scenarios, including chemical and biological offensives, officials said.

On Monday, the office of Homeland Security raised the national alert level to orange — the country's second-highest level — and dubbed the domestic protection effort "Operation Liberty Shield."

City officials, who are in constant communication with county and state intelligence officials, said there was no immediate threat to Santa Monicans and assured residents that response workers have gone through rigorous training to deal with a terrorist attack.

Santa Monica is part of a statewide mutual aid program that allocates resources to

See READY, page 4

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HOROSCOPE

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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

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

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

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Deal with others more directly. With the sun entering your sign, you might be close to unstoppable. Opportunities will strike right out of the blue if you open up. Possibilities seem to happen where and when you least expect them. Brainstorm. You start your birthday cycle today. Tonight: Play away.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ Others do all they can to gain your attention and feedback. You could be mistaken about a choice. Listen well to others. Read between the lines when dealing with family and loved ones. Security ranks high as a priority, but so do interpersonal relationships. Tonight: Take your time.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Be more in touch with what needs to be done. You could easily go on overload when handling a personal matter. Pace yourself, if possible. Know when you have gone far enough. Be willing to apologize for a problem. Friends surround you, but don't get distracted from work. Tonight: Take it easy.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ Your ingenuity comes into play. You finally have the audience you want and desire. Do nothing halfway right now. Review a personal matter that's close to your heart. Expenses could be the direct result of your recent extravagance. Be willing to put a halt to it. Tonight: Play doesn't have to cost.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Continue working with the basics. If you possibly can, bring work home, or take care of a personal priority first. You might want to be more playful and expressive. Pressure builds because of your ability to charge in and see an opportunity. Tonight: At home.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ Speak your mind, especially in situations that involve a creative endeavor with a partner. In the next few weeks, you work much better as a team than you have in the past. Use your instincts with friends, conversations and those close to you. Keep the atmosphere light. Tonight: Swap jokes with a friend.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Expenses continue to soar unless you take someone's advice. Be more imaginative in how you handle a personal matter. Others help you get more of what you want. You'll hit a home run if you allow yourself to listen to those around you. Partners really are there for you. Tonight: Balance your checkbook.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ Take your bows. You are a star, no matter how you cut it. Believe in yourself and your abilities. Focus on work and responsibilities, and you'll gain as a result. Believe a boss who pushes you harder than many. This person really is on your team. Go for what you want. Tonight: What would make you happy?

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★ Carefully recognize your limits involving a child and a creative project. Know when you do need to work behind the scenes. Acknowledging what needs to happen can make a big difference in the end results. Remain discreet. Tonight: Lie back.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ You might not be in the mood to deal with all that comes toward you, especially something involving a loved one or family member. Close relating draws out others' personalities. The unexpected could happen financially. Trust an associate or loved one. Tonight: Find your friends.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Take stock and don't push others too hard. You might understand your limits, but not to the extent that you need to. Don't be surprised if someone develops an attitude. Work with a boss or someone who has a great deal of status. Tonight: A must appearance.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ You might not be exactly sure what someone is thinking. Ask. You might need to understand this person much better. Use your people skills. Finances demand your attention. Work through a problem more carefully. Pace yourself. Tonight: Rent a movie on the way home.

CORRECTION — In the March 19 edition, information stating opposition toward the narrowly defeated Measure EE in the November election, ran incorrectly as a letter to the editor. The measure, which was a parcel tax, would have funded the local school district. The statement and the authors attributed to it were mistakenly placed in the newspaper.

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LOCAL

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Stars shine tonight for school district musicians

By Daily Press staff

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District will present the 54th Annual Stairway of the Stars at the Civic auditorium in Santa Monica today and Friday at 7:30 p.m.

This event remains one of the most popular annual events in the city as it spotlights the proud tradition of music excellence in the community and showcases the talents of the district's music students, teachers and curriculum. This year's event will hold special meaning because of the looming budget cuts that have already eliminated the elementary instrumental music program, the fine arts coordinator position, accompanists and music aides.

Without passage of the upcoming school funding initiative on June 3, these programs will not be reinstated, officials said.

The guest conductor this year is Dr. Mary Breden, choral director from Loyola Marymount University.

This year's award recipient is Neil Hofland. Hofland grew up in South Dakota and Minnesota where he was active in instrumental music, vocal music, and athletics, winning statewide honors in all three. He attended the University of Minnesota on an athletic scholarship and set university records, but continued to be active in music, becoming the first student to win letters in both music and athletics.

Some of the ensembles that will perform this year are the All-District Honor Orchestra (Elementary), High School Jazz Ensemble, Middle and High School Orchestras. This year the Middle and High School Choirs will be spotlighted and featured. Some of the musical selections this year include, O' Fortuna/Carl Orff, Sing, Sing, Sing/Louis Prima, Pater Noster/Jacob Handl and an inspirational Finale involving nearly all 1,000 performers

Tickets cost is \$10 and are available at the Professional Development and Learning Center, located at 2802 4th St. or call (310) 450-8338 ext., 79538.

Iraqi trip to be discussed this weekend

By Daily Press staff

A Santa Monica woman who recently returned from Baghdad will be on hand this weekend to talk about her experience and the impacts of war will have on Iraqi women and children

Kelly Hayes-Raitt, a commissioner for the Santa Monica Commission on the Status of Women, visited Iraq the first week of February to meet with Iraqi women and bring home their perspectives on impending war.

Palisadians for Peace and the League of Women Voters host Xandra Kayden from the National League of Women Voters, and Hayes-Raitt, who will address community members about the impact of war on women.

The event will be at Pacific Palisades Library, located at 861 Alma Real Dr. in Pacific Palisades on Saturday, March 22 from 10 a.m. to noon.

Photos Hayes-Raitt took of the women and children with whom she spoke may be previewed at www.communitycampaigns.com/iraq.

"I was struck by how open and friendly the women were," she said. "They approached us on the street and implored us for fight for peace. The mood on the street really changed after President Bush's 'the games are over' speech. I can't imagine what it's like today."

Road construction begins today near high school

By Daily Press staff

There will be construction on Fourth Street from the off-ramp to Civic Center Drive beginning today.

One southbound lane will be closed from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Depending on how much work is completed, the closure also may be in effect on Friday and Saturday. However, work is expected to be completed by noon on Friday.

Traffic service officers will be directing traffic in the area for the duration of the lane closure, but it is expected to create a traffic slowing and may impact people's commute.

surf report Information compiled by Jamie Seborer

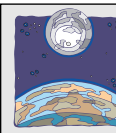
Current northwest swell, steep for LA, loses some strength today, but enough leftover energy should be left to keep the county going until the next swell.

In the north, expect waist- to shoulder-high waves, while the South Bay's west exposure pulls in more swell, meaning better consistency and size, chest- to head-high at good spots.

There's a chance of rain and a good possibility that wind will cause problems today.

Reports are tracking a northwest swell, expected to reach Southern California Friday. It's got a more westerly angle than the last swell, so size should improve, likely to reach overhead at good spots.

Rumor of the day: The ocean's not really that dirty.


Today's Tides:

Low-	4:22 a.m.	-0.24'
High-	10:30 a.m.	4.87'
Low-	4:23 p.m.	0.44'
High-	10:39 p.m.	5.67'

Location	Thursday	Friday	Water Quality
County Line	3-4'/Fair	3-5'/Fair	A
Zuma	3-4'/Fair	3-5'/Fair	A
Surfrider	1-2'/Fair	3-3'/Fair	C
Topanga	2-4'/Fair	3-5'/Fair	B
Breakwater	4-5'/Fair	5-6'/Fair	A
El Porto	4-7'/Fair	5-7'/Fair	A

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The Q-Line

To deal with faltering budgets, revenues must be increased while expenses have to be cut. It's no different here in Santa Monica.

While the Santa Monica City Council continues to grapple with what else it needs to cut to close a growing \$11 million deficit this year, it's also looking for ways to make money.

Last week, the Council approved increasing parking rates for spots along the beach and downtown from 50-cents an hour to \$1 an hour. Remaining

meters will be raised from between 35-cents and 50-cents to 75-cents an hour in compliance with new parking zones designated by the city.

This week, Q-Line wants to know, "Do you think the increase is fair? Why or why not?"

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

NEED SOMETHING FUN TO DO? CHECK PAGE 15!

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Santa Monica Daily Press



LOCAL

‘Operation Liberty Shield’ in effect in Santa Monica

READY, from page 1

communities in need, officials said.

Santa Monica Police Department Lt. Frank Fabrega said the alert change from yellow (elevated risk) to orange (high risk) automatically triggered a reaction in the department.

“We’re making periodic checks at specified locations,” said Fabrega, who declined to identify specific locales in the city. “And we’re very involved with the L.A. county task force on terrorism.”

Santa Monica Fire Department Chief Ettore Berardinelli said his department has “upped” its diligence in response to the war and is prepared for the worst.

About 30 of Santa Monica’s 100 fire-fighters are authorized to work with hazardous materials, which includes chemical and biological substances, officials said. The department also is equipped with high quality, “A-level” protective suits and has devices that detect anthrax.

“We’re in a heightened state of alert,” Chief Berardinelli said. “This is our business, to be prepared. And we’re being even more diligent.”

Los Angeles County along with eight of its cities, including Santa Monica, conducted terrorist attack drills and exercises in November as part of its ongoing training efforts.

The city on Wednesday reminded its employees to stockpile three day’s worth of supplies at home, keep essential items at work in the event long shifts are required and double check emergency plans with family members and loved ones, making sure support systems are in place for children.

After some debate, officials said they have decided to keep the city’s “Emergency Operations Center,” located in the basement of City Hall, closed for now.

Fire Department Chief Mike Curtis said the city decided to keep the EOC closed because there is currently no pressing threat to the city. If it’s warranted, the response center could open in a matter of minutes.

“There was discussion (of opening the EOC),” Curtis said. “But when we looked at a copy of the likely terrorist sites, we decided against it. We’re not going to activate it unless there is a need.”

Intelligence officials have identified LAX as the most likely location of a terrorist attack in the county. The sites closest to Santa Monica that officials are currently watching are the Federal Building in West L.A. and the Staples Center downtown.

No locations in Santa Monica are on the list. Curtis said terrorists usually target sites with maximum exposure, such as airports and subways, or high-profile

events like the Academy Awards.

“Disneyland is an international icon. The (Santa Monica) pier is not,” he said. “Terrorists are looking for a simple device that causes a lot of apprehension or terror — or dead people.”

**“Terrorists are looking
for a simple device that
causes a lot of
apprehension or
terror — or dead
people.”**

— MIKE CURTIS
Santa Monica Fire Chief

According to a statement released this week by Gov. Gray Davis, intelligence on possible homeland attacks is currently being gathered and distributed by the following sources:

■ The FBI’s Joint Terrorist Task Force, which has components at all four FBI district offices in California, shares top secret information with cleared state and local officers.

■ The California Anti-Terrorist Information Center collects information from the more than 90,000 law enforcement officers statewide and distributes it nationally.

■ The Terrorist Early Warning Groups, first established in California, consists of regional groups committed in responding to terrorist activity in their area and work with the FBI.

Representatives from every department of the city are on call 24 hours a day should something go wrong, officials said. Curtis added that the city’s response center can expand and contract, depending on the scope of the emergency. He said city employees are trained and drilled twice a year on emergency response routines.

“It’s heightened alert around here and everyone is ready,” said Judy Rambeau, a spokeswoman for the city. “But there is no immediate and present danger. It’s been determined that there is no credible threat to Santa Monica at this time.”

The SMPD urges citizens to log onto its Web site, www.santamonicapd.org for updates and information on how to respond to a variety of emergencies. On April 5, the SMFD will hold a Disaster Assistance Response Training (DART) course which is open to the public. For information, contact the SMFD at (310) 458-2221.

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Gore Vidal: Today's politicians 'blow dried'

VIDAL, from page 1

latest, entitled "Dreaming War: Blood for Oil and the Cheney-Bush Junta." His appearance in Santa Monica was part of a tour of Southern California to promote the book.

He called the Bush Administration's pre-emptive strike doctrine "ludicrous."

Soon, Vidal noted wryly, Attorney General John Ashcroft is likely to travel to Utah, where he will begin arresting men over the age of 18 because they might decide one day to kidnap young girls to use as wives.

Vidal's comments, however, were not only confined to the war with Iraq, which began in earnest Wednesday.

"Let's chat," he said to the audience, opening the floor to questions.

Asked if he thought the U.S. possessed any leaders with ideas, Vidal said, "Well, re-election is an idea."

He characterized most of today's politicians as "blow-dried" who "seem to all be from Florida."

"I've never seen people in public life at such a low level," Vidal said. "Congress no longer takes itself seriously."

Modern politicians have "allowed the whole Constitution to go out the window," he said, noting that the U.S. hasn't officially declared war since World War II.

"Since then, we've fought numerous wars," he said. "We've had perpetual war for perpetual peace — much good it has done us."

Vidal also criticized the state of the U.S. educational system, which he said was much better in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the Supreme Court's behavior in the last election and television news.

"I've been on TV with some of the most goddawful people," he said.

Vidal said he was being interviewed recently over the phone by Alan Colmes, co-host of the Fox News Channel program Hannity and Colmes, who criticized Vidal's opinions on the Iraq conflict.

"I said, 'I know you like (the war),' " Vidal said, "and he said, 'What do you mean I like it — I'm the liberal.' "

Vidal said he then asked Colmes to define the word "liberal."

"I heard a huge gulp over the line," he said. "I said, 'Not only have you not read the Constitution, you haven't read Webster's Dictionary.' By then he was making all kinds of terrible noises."

Vidal said Colmes then defined a "liberal" as a person who furthers "measures toward the extension of democracy."

There's one easy way to determine who are the liberals on TV, he said.

They "have green makeup and pointed heads," Vidal said.

Start of Iraq campaign ends uncertainty for Californians

BY SETH HETTENA

Associated Press Writer

SAN DIEGO — One kind of uncertainty for Suzanne Hoefler ended with Wednesday night's military strike in Iraq, only to be replaced by another.

Like many Californians, Hoefler has been on edge wondering when President Bush would authorize war as the deadline neared for Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq. When a strike was launched just 90 minutes afterward, she began worrying about the safety of her husband, Navy Petty Officer John Hoefler.

"I thought I was prepared for this, but I'm really not," said Hoefler, of Coronado, whose husband left in January for the Persian Gulf. "It's really hard because my husband's out there. Everybody's trying to take my mind off of it, but it's never off of it because my husband is in the area."

Addressing the nation Wednesday night, Bush said the strike was the opening of a "broad and concerted campaign" to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. He warned that the campaign might be difficult.

"President Bush said, hopefully, this would be quickly over with, but it might take a long time for this to happen. I'm frightened... We have to be prepared to lose some lives over there in Iraq," said Marcielle Caganap, whose husband, Elvin, is stationed at Camp Pendleton and was deployed to Kuwait.

The couple have a 4-year-old son and 7-month-old daughter.

"I'm just waiting for my husband to return home safely. That's all that really

matters," she said. "I just want him to come home to me and my kids."

The threat of war had placed the nation on high alert by late Tuesday. Californians already were reconsidering travel plans, reviewing emergency preparations and stocking up on food and water as anxiety simmered.

Officials Wednesday sought to assure the public that they are doing all they can to thwart potential terrorist attacks. Across California, security was tight at airports, bridges, public buildings and elsewhere.

"In California, we are using every resource at our disposal to protect our citizens and vital assets from all terrorist threats," Gov. Gray Davis said after Bush's address Wednesday night.

The shift from talk to action over disarming Iraq did not end public disagreement over whether Wednesday's strikes were necessary or right.

Rich Hubbard, a musician and piano tuner from Berkeley, was among thousands of protesters in the city's Mission District. He said he wasn't surprised to hear that a military strike was ordered after the deadline passed.

"All I can say is this, if I don't speak out, then the blood is on my hands," he said. "If I sit still and stay silent, it's on me and I don't want that."

Others said the action was necessary to disarm a dictator they believe endangers the United States.

"I don't trust Saddam Hussein for anything," said Chris Mordin, 21, a salesman from Tustin. "I think (Bush) is doing the right thing. Saddam Hussein is a threat to the nation."

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OPINION

LETTERS

Save our neighborhoods, vote yes on Prop. A.

Editor:

Eliminate expensive bureaucracy and give the homeowners the choice to proceed with making their homes historical landmarks. Help rebuild Santa Monica to be the beautiful beach city it should be, not a collection of dilapidated structures. In the quest for statistical data, from an earlier letter "only 16 landmark houses and one small historic district in Ocean Park in over 26 years" have been created. How many developments have been slowed because of petitions to protect perceived historical landmarks? Multiply each of these by tens of thousands of dollars and see the impact of the existing historical landmarks ordinance.

Mike Smith
Santa Monica

Who's the tyrant?

Editor:

Bush says the tyrant will soon be gone. Well, if you call January 20, 2005 soon, he is right.

Mike Kirwan
Venice

Follow the money in Prop. A campaign

Editor:

Prop A organizers claim that theirs is a grassroots movement of homeowners giving \$5, \$10, \$50, \$100 donations is just another example of the way they make up "facts" to rally support for their economically-driven cause. The public campaign reports they have filed in 2002 and 2003 to date tell a far different story. Read on if you want to know more.

Prop. A organizers have raised almost \$237,000 since their campaign began. Two thirds of that, over \$156,800, has come from real estate interests, corporations and businesses, and individuals wealthy enough to contribute \$1,000 or more. If you include individual contributions greater than \$500, more than 75 percent of Prop. A's

money has come from these sources, over \$178,800!

Real estate interests include developers, real estate attorneys, property management companies, realtors and brokers, investors, contractors and builders, and others whose business and livelihood come from buying, selling, building, and investing in real estate.

Some of Prop. A's biggest supporters are their own organizers, who collectively have donated almost \$83,300. These folks include Tom Larmore, real estate attorney with the Santa Monica real estate law firm of Harding, Larmore, Kutcher & Kozal. Larmore has contributed together with other attorneys in his firm over \$26,600. The firm represents developers and, according to Mr. Larmore himself, banks and other financial institutions which finance developers and their projects.

See LETTERS, page 7



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A life of debauchery no longer exists in Santa Monica



TITTINGER'S TAKE

By Michael J. Tittinger

And on the Seventh Day, he washed away all the sin, and it was good.

Lying in bed the night before, I ducked my head under the covers to escape the chill, escape my surroundings, and truth be told, escape my visiting friends. Finally, the four of them had all passed out before me and I had my modest double bed all to myself for the night. Oh, sweet respite!

The rain was pounding just outside my open window, but I wasn't getting out of this womb-like setting. It was too long in coming.

"Mike."

I heard my buddy Joe's voice loud and clear but I wasn't in the acknowledging kind of mood. Can't he see how I'm relishing this slimmest of slices of privacy? Can't he appreciate the concessions I made opening up my one-bedroom apartment to four boyhood friends from back East for the week? Can't he just hear that my silence is deafening?

I didn't care what his next move was to be honest, as long as it didn't entail infringing on my moment of space. He

wants to streak down Wilshire Boulevard? Cool. He wants to run through Santa Monica parks blowing smoke at people? Super. He wants to shellac himself with a bowl on his head and call himself "Rook" down at Chess Park? Go get 'em. Just please let him turn around and go back to the piece of rug he was sleeping on. Give up this uninspired moment of clinginess as I'm all bonded out.

Wait, maybe he left.

"Mike?"

Damn.

"What?" I responded in my best disgruntled sleeping-guy voice.

"Can I sleep in here on the bed?"

I wanted to cry right then and there. Lying on the edge of my suddenly crowded bed, one arm on my nightstand to retain balance, I recalled how excited I was my buddies were coming out to Santa Monica for a week's vacation. Six nights of partying, touring, flirting, drinking, smoking and flatulating seemed like such a great idea. Six nights of partying, touring, flirting, drinking, smoking and flatulating had taken its toll. I was burnt. I was spent. I was ready to hop in the car and tour the wondrous and mysterious terminals at LAX as I drop these guys off.

It had been a full week — Third Street, Venice Beach, Sunset Strip, PCH, Las Vegas — still, there was so much more we could have done had there not been drinking to do and couch sitting to take care of. In retrospect, it's surprising my four "roll

dawgs" managed to see anything. Each day I sat in frustration watching them watch TV, watch them smoke and watch their eyelids close.

I'm cognizant that they were on vacation and wanted them to do what they wanted. I guess it's just what they wanted to do that made me step back and take stock — where I am, where I was and where I hope I'm headed. The slacker lifestyle no longer fits into my plans as it once did, evidently, it just gives me fits.

Trouble surfaced early in the guise of my TV set, which I strategically keep in my bedroom so as to eliminate distractions. The first night was an interesting study in sociology as the Fearsome Foursome grappled with life in the Radio Days epoch. Thinking the lack of television might actually prompt them to do something creative, get out and about or just plain talk, the experiment was akin to a broken beaker. The night widdled down to five thirtysomething guys watching a gel-filled wave machine until they passed out on the floor.

No creativity emerged. No plans were made. No breakthroughs discussed.

The downward spiral continued the following day when I arrived home from work to find my TV set rewired and broadcasting Sportscenter loud and true from my living room. Conveniently, it was just a few feet from the futon, just in case there would be any late-week lost-remote control crises, I assume.

I'm no longer angry or frustrated with my buddies from back East. Those feelings were soon eclipsed by sadness following their departure this past weekend. I know where they are coming from and where they are at, but I'm fearful about where they are going. I hope I can somehow help them see all they are missing.

Driving away from LAX on a beautiful Sunday morning I headed straight for the coast, spending a couple of hours walking the bluffs, the beach and the Pier in attempts to reclaim my spirit. All of Santa Monica, or so it seemed, was out and about and soaking up the sun.

The apartment was scrubbed from showerhead to footrest. Wiping away all the filth and debauchery of the previous week was cathartic. Three hours or so into my dwelling delousing, it dawned on me that I was erasing much more than could be gleaned in the spilled ashtrays, sticky floors and a hair-laden toilet bowl. I was using some serious elbow grease to wipe away a part of my youth.

It was a part of my youth I had determined to forsake long ago. Sometimes we just need a little reminding of where we are in life, where we came from and where we are going.

(Mike Tittinger is a freelance writer living in Santa Monica.)

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

OPINION



LETTERS

LETTERS, from page 6

The Prop. A organizers also include Marc Schrobilgen (and members of his family) who have contributed \$8,450 to Prop. A. Mr. Schrobilgen is the fellow whose third development project triggered the Prop. A campaign. Mr. Schrobilgen listed his occupation and employer in 2002 campaign reports as a "Realtor, Threshold Company." 2003 campaign reports now list him as a music/video producer/editor with threshold sound and vision.

These folks also include Lorene (Leah) Mendelsohn, who describes herself as a retired real estate broker. She has contributed \$10,100. They include Beth and Phillip Grunland, who in 2002 described their occupations as property management, but describe themselves as "retired" in 2003, and Eleanor Haynes who describes her occupation as property management. These folks have given \$4,000 between them.

Greg Poirer, the most visible spokesperson for Prop. A, describes himself as a screen writer and is not apparently involved in real estate, at least not publicly. However he is the single biggest donor to Prop. A coming in at a whopping \$34,090!

Just a few examples of other big real estate and investor donors to Prop. A include the companies which own Casa del Mar and Shutters (\$5,000); Abbott Brown, former executive with Global Crossings (\$5,000); Jeanette Trepp, family of Warren Trepp, a former executive with Michael Milken (\$5,000) and organizer of Nevada Securities Bank; Barry Smooke, real estate manager of Souvenir Properties (\$4,500); U.S. Equipment Co. Inc., which manufactures building equipment and air conditioning systems (\$2,500); Barry Weinstock, a mortgage broker (\$2,500); the Monkarsch family, principals in a real estate development company (\$2,500); Freeman Group, Inc., construction consultants (\$2,000); Sullivan Dituri Company, Santa Monica Property (apartment) Management (\$1,500); Howard Alphson, Santa Monica Real Estate Attorney (\$1,500); Steve Donahue, Construction (\$1,000); Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles (\$500); Brian Shirken, real estate investor, Columbus Pacific

Properties (\$500); Harris Toibb, Developer (\$500); Peter Doerken, real estate developer (\$250); Carrie Tilton, real estate development, 2KS Real Estate Services (\$250); and so the list goes.

Lastly, Prop. A organizers are trying desperately to have the public believe another made-up "fact" that Save Our Neighborhood, their opposition, has been mostly funded by "outside" groups. Of the approximately \$76,000 we have raised, only \$9,200 has come from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Los Angeles Conservancy, the Santa Monica Conservancy, the Hollywood Heritage Foundation, and Stanford Heritage. These are all non-profit organizations committed to historic preservation. They are not profit driven or economically motivated. Their combined contribution is less than 4 percent of Prop. A's total collections and expenditures.

So who, really, is behind Prop. A? Just follow the money.

Bea Nemala
Santa Monica

Are we prepared?

Editor:

Maybe I missed it but as of right now I'm rather disgusted with Santa Monica because as far as I know right now there has nothing been said how we as a city are preparing for this coming war.

If nothing has been said or done I would hope the powers that be might get off their you know what and alert everyone as to what this city has planned. What's the answer City Council and police department?

Jim Azine
Santa Monica

Shock and awe ... March Madness is upon us

EDGE
of the
WEST

By Ron Scott Smith



They met Sunday on an island in the Atlantic, the four nations — the coalition of the willing — in the briefest summit in the history of the world as we know it. All that was at stake was the peace and stability of the planet. No big deal.

After about an hour or so behind closed doors, the leaders of the USA, Britain, Spain, and Portugal emerged, and stated to everybody in general but nobody in particular — except maybe France — you've got 24 hours to get a clue.

There will be no further need for the United Nations, they said, because that body has remained firm in its opposition to a war that by all common sense appears to not be necessary. Funny thing about how the UN, which set out to contain the rogue nation of Iraq, suddenly finds itself with an urgent new mission — to contain the rogue nation of the United States of America.

"It's us against the world" is essentially what the four leaders came forth to say after the brief, but surely deep, deliberations. And the world is the heavy underdog.

Isn't war, by its very definition, a last resort, the action of — not the "willing,"

but of the "unwilling" — forced into action by circumstances so dire that there is no other alternative to sending young human beings in the prime of their lives to far away lands to lay down their lives.

By the time you read this, the shit may well be hitting the fans that cool the homes of the unlucky ones who happen to be living in the country which has been officially declared the mother of all evil by the President who has a finger on the pulse of all that's good. Never mind that what seems like all the rest of the world views it as a middle finger raised high in its collective face. What's right is right. We are and they aren't, so here we come, and look out below.

This is being done to protect you and me. Are we that fearful of this nation — of this man — Saddam Hussein? Bush cleverly refers to the enemy — not as the country of Iraq — but as Saddam Hussein. It works better for the cause to focus on one solitary, evil, mustachioed new Hitler, than on a sovereign nation teeming with innocent life that's about to be pounded into rubble by the massive air campaign they've officially dubbed "Shock and Awe." The new Hitler? Since when did he get the ethnic superiority complex, the military, and the designs for taking over the world?

Recently, on the very day we tested the MOAB — proudly declared to be the biggest, baddest bomb in the history of such things, Powell, Rumsfeld, and all the rest, were beside themselves over the discovery of a remote-controlled "Drone"

plane in Iraq, which might, they feared, be able to deal out mass destruction. They shook in their boots. This horrific Drone, as the facts bore out, has a wingspan of 26 feet, is held together by duct tape, and runs on an engine similar to the ones that power Weed Whackers in backyards all across America. All this, I repeat, on the day we test, and declare ready for use — the MOAB — the Mother Of All Bombs.

Who's next in our sights? North Korea gets the free pass for now, even though they're firing off test missiles into the Pacific, and have brazenly declared they are developing nukes and will not entertain even the slightest notion of America telling them not to. Iran's building the nukes too. China is the real deal though — communist as all hell, fully loaded arsenals, bazillions of citizens to throw out in ground wars, 180 degrees opposite to anything America stands for. Let's-get-them-next would be the logical strategy for the righteously frightened leaders in Washington.

The twin towers came down and we were shook to the bone. We have mourned, we will never forget, and we will stand vigil against anything close to it ever happening again. But, America, how far do we let the fear factor take us? Has Bin Laden won already? Look around.

Where is the wisdom? Do you find it in the eyes of the Commander-In-Chief? We have to get our army out of Mecca. If it hadn't been there, those towers would still be standing.

Even those of you who rail for war

must admit — it's a fine mess we've gone and gotten ourselves into. You don't get the whole world abhorring you, just a year and a half after they were all lined up in sympathy and support, without a major bumbling effort. You don't get the whole world abhorring you without serious repercussions somewhere down the road. Nobody's the top gun forever, not even the mighty United States of America.

Will this preemptive and unprovoked war reduce the threat of terror attacks here at home as the administration claims it will? The answer comes, ironically and indisputably, from their own ludicrous terror-color-alert thing. Not five minutes after Bush gave his endgame speech Monday night, the terror alert was elevated to "level orange," offering absolute proof — by their own colorful standards — that threats to the U.S. will increase with the war-making, not decrease. Level blood-red is next up.

The President spoke directly to Iraqi soldiers Monday night. "Do not fight for a dying regime that is not worth your life," he compassionately warned them. But, in another stroke of twisted Bush logic, it is worth the lives of our own soldiers to fight against a dying regime, and there they go, our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters, along with the 70,000 body bags that have been sent to the front lines, just in case.

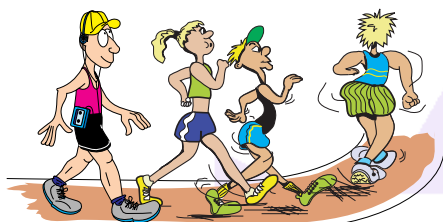
(Ron Scott Smith is a freelance writer living in Santa Monica. To reach him, e-mail him at edgeofthewest@aol.com).

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For further information regarding the survivor's reception and lap, contact survivor chairperson Judy La Patka at (310) 579-7100 or judylapatka@aol.com Tracey Mayer at the American Cancer Society (310) 348-0356 option 3/ext. 246 or tracey.mayer@cancer.org.

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STATE

Barry Diller resigns as Vivendi Universal CEO

BY GARY GENTILE
AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES — Barry Diller resigned Wednesday as co-chief executive of Vivendi Universal Entertainment, saying it was appropriate for him to get out of the way while its cash-strapped French parent company is seeking to sell its assets.

The entertainment unit includes Universal Studios, Universal's theme parks and a television production company.

The move is seen as clarifying Diller's priorities, which had been a matter of confusion as he served simultaneously as head of Vivendi Universal Entertainment and chairman of USA Interactive, which operates the Home Shopping Network, Ticketmaster, Match.com and Expedia, among other companies.

In a seemingly unrelated announcement Wednesday, USA Interactive said it will buy the shares of publicly held Expedia that it doesn't already own in a deal valued at \$3.3 billion.

Analysts said both moves signal that Diller, who helped start the Fox Television network, has cast his lot with USA and is less likely to make his own bid for any of Vivendi's entertainment assets, as had been speculated.

"I think most people felt he probably couldn't run two public companies," said Richard Read, an analyst who follows USA Interactive for Credit Lyonnais Securities. "This reiterates his commitment to USA Interactive, which is a good thing."

Diller said he has no immediate plans to bid for any of Vivendi Universal Entertainment's assets but said he would be open to an opportunity if it made sense.

"We are a minority shareholder in VUE," Diller said during a USA Interactive conference call. "It's possible an opportunity will be presented to us. Who can tell about that? But we are part of no group, we are part of no plot, and we will see what we will see."

Diller, 61, owns a 1.5 percent stake in Vivendi Universal Entertainment. USA Interactive owns 5.4 percent of VUE, as well as preferred stock.

He once served as head of Paramount and Twentieth Century Fox, where he helped launch the Fox Television network. While at Fox, he was instrumental in creating such shows as "Married with Children" and "The Simpsons."

He started his entertainment career at ABC, where he is credited with creating the "movie of the week" concept.

Vivendi Universal said Diller's resignation comes with the company's "full agreement" and that Fourtou will become full CEO. The current management team running Universal's film studio, television production company and theme parks will remain, Vivendi said in a statement.

Vivendi Universal is trying to reduce a

\$13.5 billion debt left from its acquisition of companies since it was created in 2001 when Vivendi, a French utility, bought Universal from Seagrams.

The deal never achieved its ambitious promise of sending Universal's entertainment content over wireless telephones and other devices throughout the world.

"Now that Vivendi Universal has begun a formal process in reviewing options for its entertainment assets, it is appropriate to step aside from any direct management responsibility," Diller said in a statement.

**"I think most people
felt he probably couldn't
run two public companies.**

**This reiterates his
commitment to USA
Interactive, which is a
good thing."**

— RICHARD READ
Analyst

His resignation was expected.

Last year, Vivendi Universal bought Diller's USA Network, Sci-Fi Channel and a television production company and installed him as CEO of Vivendi Universal Entertainment, a joint venture between the two companies. Diller's role changed later in the year when Fourtou became Vivendi Universal chief executive in a management shakeup and Vivendi decided to sell its U.S.-based entertainment assets.

At that time, Diller agreed to run the company on an interim basis and share the title with Fourtou.

Despite his resignation, Diller still will play a key role in the sale of Vivendi Universal Entertainment's assets because USA has said it will be owed billions of dollars in tax payments in the coming years if the partnership is dissolved. Vivendi Universal disagrees with that interpretation, and negotiations to resolve the matter are ongoing.

After Fourtou became CEO, Vivendi said it would sell Universal Studios, its Universal theme parks and television production company.

Former oilman Marvin Davis has offered \$20 billion for the entertainment arm, plus Universal Music Group, a separate unit. Vivendi also is holding talks with Viacom, MGM and other buyers interested in acquiring all or parts of its entertainment companies.

**check out
your forecast in
today's horoscopes ...**

page 2

NATIONAL



Government can't ensure food plants are secure

BY EMILY GERSEMA

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Congressional auditors say the country's food supply is vulnerable to terrorist attacks, partly because the government cannot ensure the security of processing plants.

The General Accounting Office issued the report Tuesday as the Agriculture Department told food companies, retailers and farmers to increase security because of the heightened security alert.

The Food and Drug Administration issued additional security guidelines to food companies Wednesday. Among the recommendations: employee background checks, banning workers from bringing purses or other

Also on Tuesday, food companies and farmers were asked to increase security because the nation's terror level was elevated from yellow to orange.

personal items into food-storage areas and training workers to recognize suspicious behavior or possible food tampering.

The FDA also increased inspections of certain food factories and of imported foods.

The congressional auditors said that USDA and the FDA, which share oversight of the food supply, could lower the risk of an attack if food companies had to share detailed security plans with them.

Now, companies are asked to volunteer the information.

"Without the ability to require food processing facilities to provide information on their security measures, these federal agencies cannot fully assess industry's efforts to prevent or reduce the vulnerability of the nation's food supply to deliberate contamination," said the report by GAO, the investigative arm of Congress.

Garry McKee, administrator of food safety at USDA, said the agency generally agreed with the report. FDA officials said their agency has laws in place to protect food from tampering.

Manufacturers disagree with GAO's suggestion that they be required to share security plans with regulators. That would make them susceptible to terrorist attacks, they argue, because their plans could be released to the public.

The voluntary system is better because "it would allow flexibility to change, to fit the evolving needs and also to protect the security of information," said Tim Willard, spokesman for the National Food Processors Association.

Also on Tuesday, food companies and farmers were asked to increase security because the nation's terror level was elevated from yellow to orange. The orange

alert indicates a high risk of attacks in the United States or against American interests abroad. The government is especially concerned as the nation prepares for a possible invasion of Iraq.

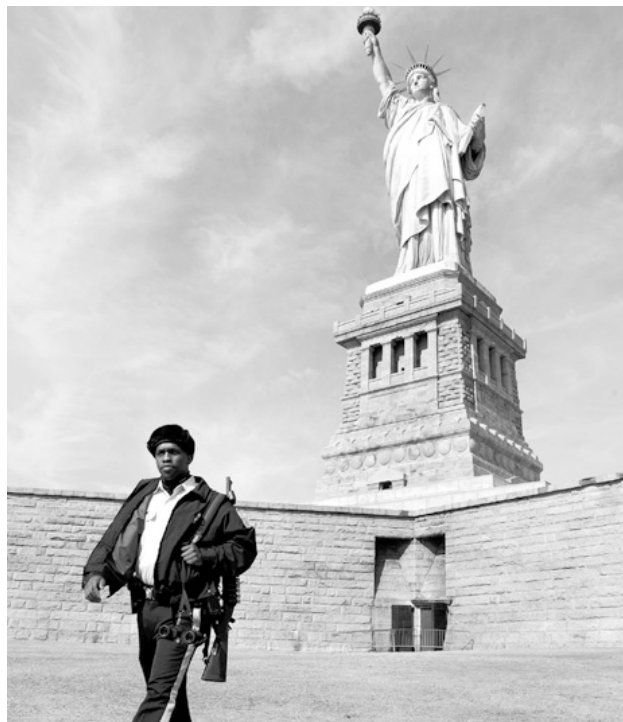
Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said USDA experts "have provided security guidelines for producers, processors and food providers in order to strengthen systems at the local level."

The department also increased security at crucial USDA buildings, such as laboratories. Veneman said emergency response teams at the department are on standby in case of an attack.

Public events and tours at USDA sites have been restricted.

The agency improved food security after Sept. 11, 2001, by hiring 20 additional inspectors to check imported meat for contamination. Veneman also said the agency developed a network of laboratories to help detect and diagnose diseases, such as anthrax, which terrorists could use as a weapon.

Guarding liberty



Matt Moyer/Associated Press

U.S. Park Service Police officer Robert Chatman patrols in front of the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor on Wednesday. As the U.S. military went to war in Iraq, security at New York landmarks and transportation hubs has become more visible.



briefs

WESTSIDE/CENTRAL

The Alternative To \$2 A Gallon

Don't let the rising price of gasoline keep you home or empty your wallet. Try the affordable alternative of Metro Bus and Metro Rail. For long-haul commuters, think Rideshare or Metrolink. Check out the options at 1-800-COMMUTE or mta.net

Public Hearing Set For Westside

Metro Westside/Central is holding a public hearing April 1 on proposed bus service changes for June 2003. It begins at 6:30 p.m. in Hoffman Hall at the Westwood Presbyterian Church, 10822 Wilshire Boulevard. For further information, call 213-922-1200 and press 5.

Metro Cures Jury Duty Blues

Got a jury summons, but dreading the drive to the courthouse? The Superior Court in downtown Los Angeles is easing that burden by offering to exchange the juror mileage reimbursement for a Metro Weekly Pass. Check with court officials for details.

Metro Honors Its Best

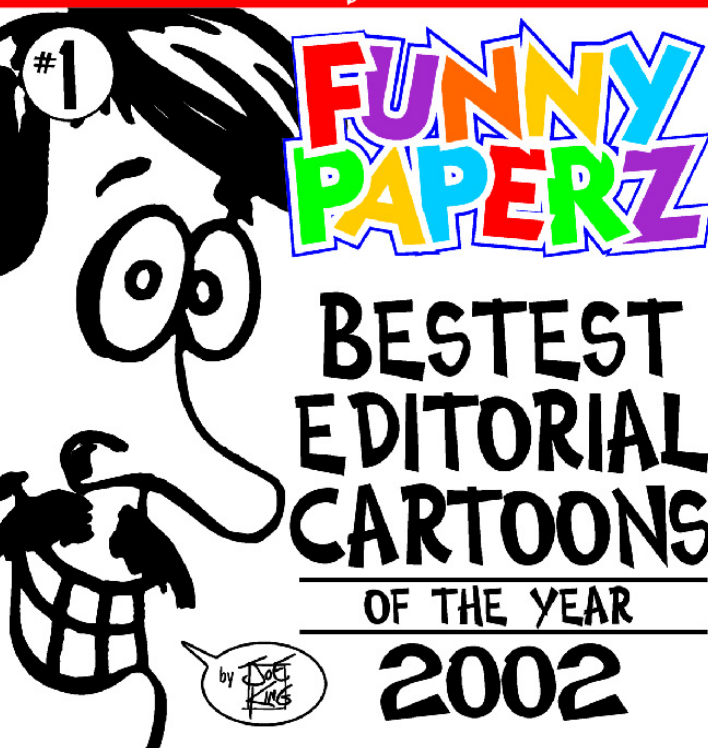
Nearly 200 Metro Bus and Metro Rail operators and mechanics were honored recently for outstanding performance and safe work records. The awards criteria covered the individual employees' work history over a five-year period.

MTA Fare Hearing Set For April 12

A public hearing is being held for comments on proposed Metro fare changes. Options being considered are lowering the base fare to \$1.25, replacing transfers and tokens with a \$3 day pass, and increasing pass prices. The hearing will be Saturday, April 12, beginning at 10 a.m. at MTA Headquarters, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles.

If you'd like to know more, please call us at 1-800-464-2111, or visit mta.net

Anniversary Collection



AS SEEN IN
 Edited by ROSS FURUKAWA
Santa Monica Daily Press
 "See ya' in the Funny Paperz"

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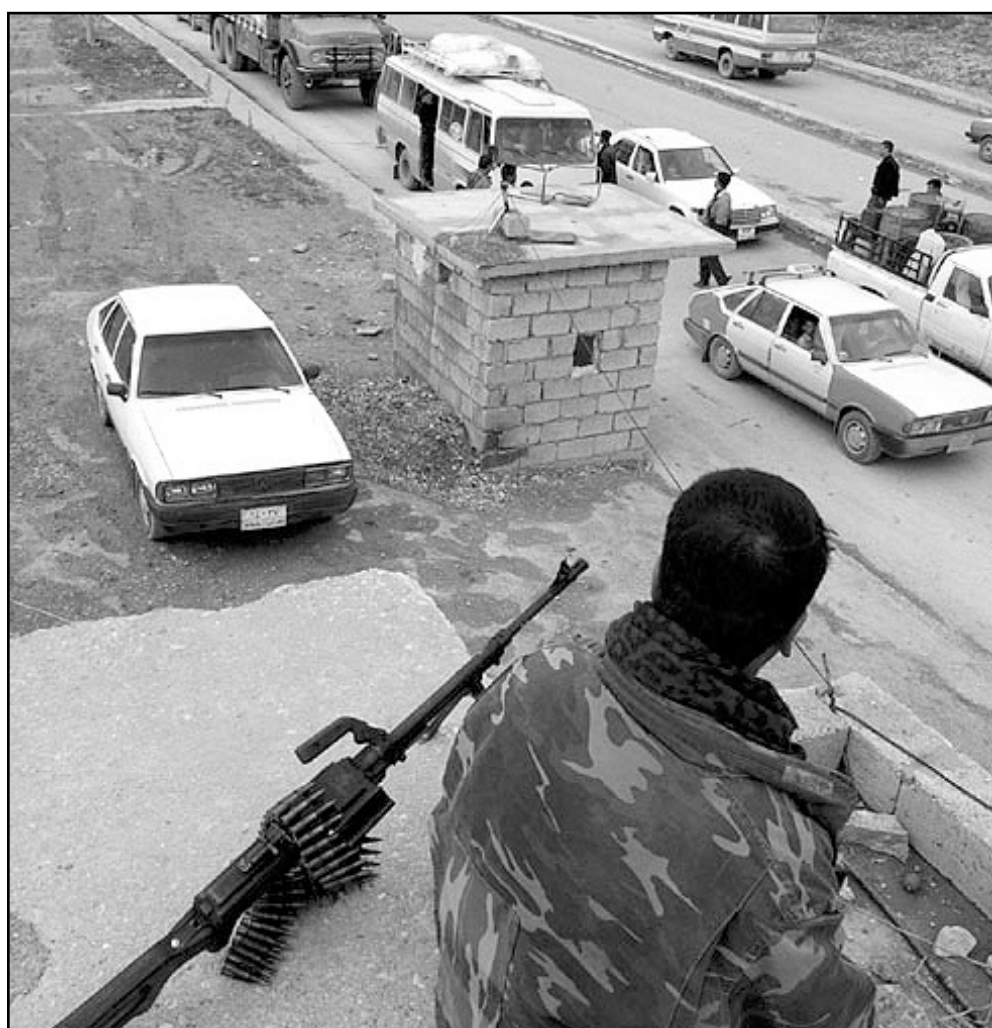


INTERNATIONAL



Markus Schreiber/Associated Press

A shooter gives a thumb-up to a F/A-18 Hornet aircraft before take off from the flight deck the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier which cruises in the eastern Mediterranean Sea on Wednesday.



Kamran Jebreili/Associated Press

A Kurdish guard looks on as people leave the city of Sulaymaniyah, Iraq ahead of a U.S.-led war on Wednesday.

Iraqi people duck and cover from U.S. bombs

BAGHDAD, from page 1

explosions shattered the silence, setting off car alarms.

After the attack, Iraqi state radio broadcast a message saying, "The criminals, the enemies of God, homeland and humanity, launched the aggression against our homeland and people. May God humiliate them."

Hundreds of armed members of Saddam's Baath party and security forces took up positions in Baghdad after the attack, though the streets of the capital were mostly empty of civilians.

There was no sign during the day of regular army troops or armor in or outside Baghdad, where Saddam was widely expected to make his final stand against any invaders.

The president on Monday gave Saddam and his sons 48 hours to leave Iraq, a deadline that expired at 8 p.m. Wednesday EST and 4 a.m. Baghdad time. The Iraqi leadership rejected the ultimatum Tuesday.

Tony Blair — Bush's key ally against Saddam — was informed about an hour before the deadline expired that attacks on Iraq were being brought forward, his office said, declining to specify who contacted the British prime minister.

On Wednesday, almost every store was shut in Baghdad and traffic was light as residents continued to stream out of the capital, heading for the relative safety of the countryside.

"We cry for Baghdad," said civil servant and part-time Baghdad historian Abdel-Jabar al-Tamimi. "Tonight, we shall be awake waiting for the bombs to fall, but we will also remember that God is stronger than oppression. Wars come and go, but Baghdad will remain."

Al-Shabab — the most watched station in Iraq and owned by Saddam's son Odai — broadcast hours of patriotic songs Wednesday and extensive archive footage of Saddam greeting crowds and firing off a rifle.

At night, the station showed an American movie, "The Guilty," starring Bill Pullman as a lawyer who rapes an employee and hires his estranged son to

kill her.

In the minutes after the 4 a.m. deadline expired, Iraqi TV replayed footage of a pro-Saddam march earlier in the week, with people brandishing rifles, chanting slogans and carrying pictures of the Iraqi leader.

**"We cry for Baghdad.
Tonight, we shall be
awake waiting for the
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also remember that God
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sion. Wars come and go,
but Baghdad will remain."**

— ABDEL-JABAR AL-TAMIMI
Civil servant

Iraqi officials have remained defiant in the face of about 300,000 U.S. and British troops backed by 1,000 warplanes and a fleet of warships — all ready for an attack on Iraq to rid it of weapons of mass destruction that Washington and London say Saddam is concealing.

Members of Iraq's parliament declared their loyalty to Saddam on Wednesday and renewed their confidence in his leadership.

"We are dedicated to martyrdom in defense of Iraq under your leadership," they said in a message to Saddam issued at the end of their session.

Bahrain, a small Persian Gulf state allied with the United States, offered Saddam a haven Wednesday, the first such offer to be publicly extended to the Iraqi leader as Arabs scramble to avert war. There was no immediate Iraqi comment on the offer.

U.N. weapons inspectors flew out of Iraq on Tuesday, ordered to leave by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan after the United States indicated war was near.



John Moore/Associated Press

A U.S. Army vehicles from the 3rd Infantry Division convoy to a position near the Iraqi border on Wednesday. The commander of the 3rd Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Buford Blount III, ordered his troops to reposition to locations near the border as President Bush's deadline for Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq approached.

SPORTS



Shaq belittles Bibby before next Lakers-Kings meeting

BY GREG BEACHAM

AP Sports Writer

SACRAMENTO — Shaquille O'Neal hasn't even committed to play for the next U.S. Olympic team, and he already has opinions about who shouldn't be on the roster: Mike Bibby.

As if the Los Angeles Lakers' rivalry with the Sacramento Kings needed any more vitriol, Shaq provided some in the days before the three-time defending champions' final regular season trip to

Cowbell Country on Thursday night.

At issue is the Olympic team's selection of Bibby, the Kings' quietly efficient point guard. He played the best basketball of his NBA career during last season's epic Western Conference finals against the Lakers — but O'Neal apparently wasn't impressed.

"How did Mike Bibby get on the team?" Shaq wondered aloud. "Any Cub Scout with Boy Scouts can do Boy Scoutish things. When (Bibby) was in the Cub Scouts, he was a Cub Scout. When he

was with Vancouver, nobody heard about (him). Now that he's with Sacramento ... he's on the team. I ain't going.

"And Allen Iverson isn't on the team? Why not? (U.S. coach) Larry Brown should have said, 'If he's not on the team, I'm not going.'"

After the Kings' victory over Golden State on Tuesday night, Bibby refused to take the bait. Though he has become much more vocal on and off the court during his two seasons in Sacramento, Bibby prefers living in relative anonymity — and doing his talking on the court.

"I don't care what he says about me," Bibby said. "I don't care what anybody says. It's not going to affect me."

"That's just talk from a guy who likes to talk," Sacramento's Bobby Jackson said. "Nobody cares. You can't listen to everything he says. Even he don't listen to everything he says."

"Shaq is looking to get the rivalry started already, before the playoffs even start. He has no right to criticize Mike about making the Olympic team."

At least the scouting analogies are an improvement on O'Neal's previous description of the Kings this season. The Queens, as Shaq dubbed them, remain focused on the merit badges they still don't have.

The NBA's most entertaining rivalry has been full of intrigue this season, starting when Doug Christie and Rick Fox fought each other in an exhibition game and continuing through the Kings' convincing win at Staples Center on Christmas Day, spoiling the debut of the Lakers' new white uniforms.

The teams have met twice so far this season, with each winning on the other's home floor. With less than a month left in the regular season, both teams are less concerned about sending a message to their rivals than improving their playoff position.

"We know it's become much more difficult over the last three years, but we've never doubted our abilities to beat this team," Lakers coach Phil Jackson said. "That's one of the great things about being a champion is that you have the confidence factor to go back to things that have happened."

Though Sacramento is in position for its second straight Pacific Division title, the Lakers are steadily gaining steam with an eye toward the playoffs. Los Angeles has its eye on Minnesota and Portland, which currently hold the fourth and fifth spots in the Western Conference.

If the Lakers can overtake one or both, they'll avoid a first-round matchup with San Antonio, Sacramento or league-leading Dallas — not that they'd ever admit to concern about any playoff opponent.

"We're the ones that other people have to worry about," guard Derek Fisher said. "We've got the rings."

There's one difference in the Kings' preparation for Thursday's chapter of the rivalry: For the first time all season, Sacramento is completely healthy.

Reserve big man Scot Pollard, an important factor in the Kings' ability to limit O'Neal's effectiveness, is back near playing shape after missing all but 10 games this season, while Chris Webber, Vlade Divac and Keon Clark are in top shape. Even seldom-used backup Lawrence Funderburke, occasionally called upon to spell his teammates against O'Neal, is ready to go.

"I don't know if you can ever be prepared for Shaq, but we've got healthy bodies, and that's a start," Sacramento coach Rick Adelman said. "It's always a motivation to play those guys, but nobody is seeing this game as anything more than another one we've got to win if we're going to catch Dallas."

Flying to victory



Jim Cole/Associated Press

Julia Mancuso, of Squaw Valley, Calif., flies through the downhill course at Whiteface Ski area in Wilmington, N.Y. on Wednesday. Mancuso won the downhill event of the U.S. Alpine Ski championships.

Baseball cancels trip, NCAA tournament will go on

BY RONALD BLUM

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — Baseball will open its season in Anaheim, not Tokyo.

Commissioner Bud Selig decided Tuesday to cancel the season-opening series in Japan because of the threat of war in Iraq, and other sports discussed whether military action would cause changes to their schedules.

The NCAA said its men's and women's basketball tournaments, which start this week, will go on as scheduled. But men's games could be forced off CBS if that network goes to war programming.

The NBA and NHL said their schedules would remain unchanged, and those sports discussed security arrangements, as did the tennis and golf tours. This month's figure skating world championships in Washington plan to go forward.

Baseball's Seattle Mariners and Oakland Athletics had been scheduled to leave Wednesday for Japan for a two-game series on March 25-26. It would have been baseball's second opener in Japan, following games between the New York Mets and Chicago Cubs in 2000.

"Given the uncertainty that now exists throughout the world, we believe the safest course of action for the players involved and the many staff personnel who must work the games is to reschedule the opening series," Selig said. "It would be unfair and terribly unsettling for them to be half a world away — away from their families at this critical juncture."

The NCAA has spent four months reviewing options in case of war. The latest ultimatum President Bush delivered to Saddam Hussein in a television speech Monday night "heightened the urgency of our considerations," NCAA president Myles Brand said.

He consulted Tuesday with Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge and members of the NCAA's governing bodies before deciding.

"We are also concerned that life go on as normal," Brand added. "We see no reason, after consulting with Secretary Ridge, to make any alterations to our plan."

He said it was up to television networks whether their coverage of the tournaments take second billing to war coverage if a U.S.-led coalition attacks Iraq.

CBS holds the rights to the men's tournament. But the network, which is owned by Viacom Inc., has discussed switching the games to ESPN or other outlets. ESPN and ESPN2 are scheduled to show the women's tournament.

The PGA Tour doesn't plan to cancel the Bay Hill Invitational this week or any of its other tournaments.

"With a lot of things that are going on, I think it's a wonderful distraction for us, and hopefully we can provide the type of entertainment for people who decide to tune in and watch," Tiger Woods said. "This gets their mind freed up from what's been going on."

The NBA said no changes had been decided on.

"In the event of war, we would work together with those agencies to determine if any changes in our season are appropriate," league spokesman Brian McIntyre said. "Following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the NBA has been working with our teams and a major international security firm to ensure the safety of our employees, teams, players, officials and fans. Since Sept. 11, the NBA has made significant changes in team travel policies and in procedures relating to security inside and outside our team offices, practice facilities, playing arenas and hotels."

Said NHL spokesman Frank Brown: "We anticipate all games being played as scheduled. All appropriate plans for security have been in place and remain in

place."

The International Skating Union has no plans to postpone or move its March 23-30 world championships. The governing body said no teams have withdrawn and authorities are taking appropriate security measures. President and Mrs. Bush agreed last month to serve as honorary co-chairs of the event.

Football players are working out in Orlando, Fla., and are scheduled to leave Tuesday and Wednesday to go to six European cities for the NFL Europe season, which starts April 5.

"We are monitoring developments, but at this point, there has been no change in our plans to go forward with the NFL Europe season as scheduled," NFL spokesman Greg Aiello said.

NASCAR is scheduled to race this weekend in Bristol, Tenn. The U.S. Army sponsors Jerry Nadeau's car and he visited troops in Afghanistan in December. The Air Force is an associate sponsor for Ricky Rudd, the National Guard is a sponsor for Todd Bodine, and the Navy sponsors the truck driven by Jon Wood.

"We believe there is a special bond between our troops and our sport," NASCAR president Mike Helton said. "Every branch of the American military is represented in NASCAR racing, and our chairman, Bill France, has always described NASCAR fans as 'the kind of people who go to war and win wars for America.'"

Officials of the Nasdaq-100 Open tennis tournament plan to start as scheduled in Florida on Wednesday.

"Life goes on. I think that's what the president wants us to do," tournament chairman Butch Buchholz said. "We're just going to deal with it on a day-to-day basis."

Heightened security is in place for the 12-day event, which each year draws more than 200,000 spectators from around the globe.

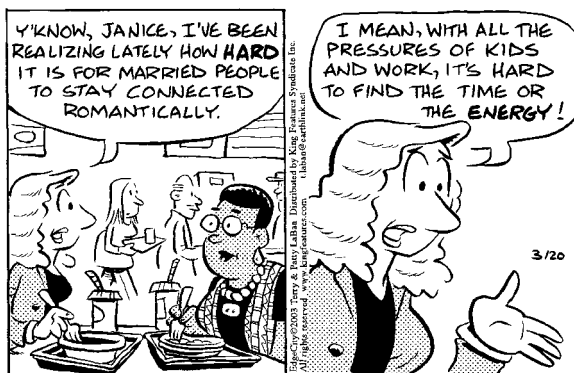


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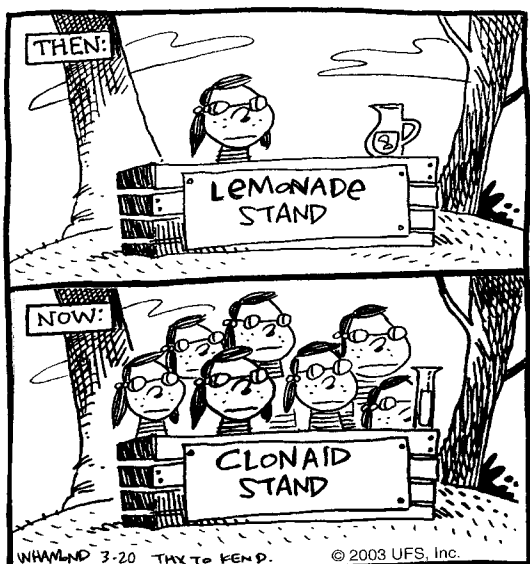
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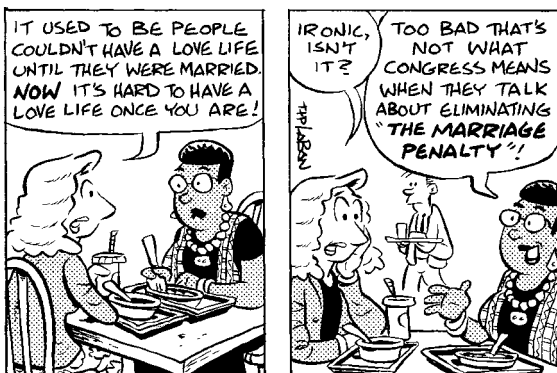
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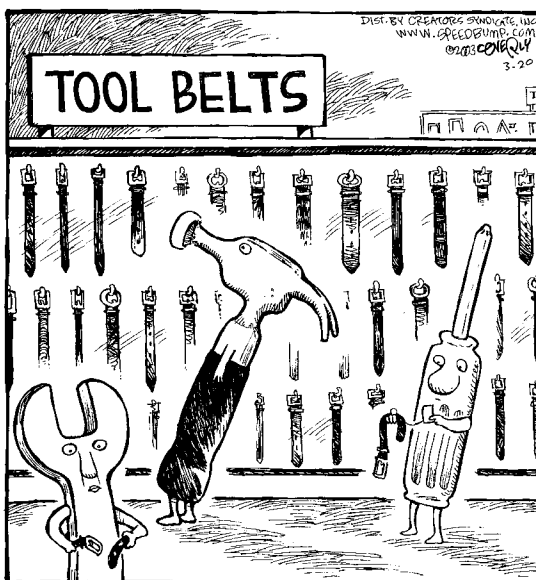
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SANTA MONICA °SCENE

your guide to dining, entertainment and events

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2003



°EVENTS

JOHANNA ISRAEL PRESENTS GOTHAM COMEDY NIGHT! with top headliners every Thursday. March 13 will feature Jimmy Dore. Gotham Hall, 1431 3rd Street Promenade, Santa Monica at 7:30pm. FREE + 2 item min., 21/over. (323)525-5254.

BLUE 7 PRESENTS 'NEAR AND FAR - Photographic Images of Nature.' The featured photographers are Scott Connell, Michael Gordon and Gavin Lauchenauer. Exhibit ends April 5th. Blue 7, 3129 Pico Blvd. (310)449-1444

ONGOING SUPPORT GROUPS FOR PEOPLE 55 AND OLDER. Current openings in Men's Group. Thursdays, 11:15 to 12:45. Center for Healthy Aging, 2125 Arizona Avenue. Sliding scale fee. Not drop-in groups. Phone interview required. Call Information and Referral. (310)576-2550.

DHARMA AT THE CLUBHOUSE. A weekly book and multi-media study group, no fee. Applying studies of Buddhism-Dharma into our daily lives. Every Thursday night at the Clubhouse at Douglas Park, 25th & Wilshire. 7:30 to 9pm. Dan (310) 451-4368 www.santamonicakksg.org

O'BRIENS IRISH PUB, 2941 Main St., Santa Monica, pours A Pint of Funny, every Thurs., 8 p.m. FREE! (310)396-4725.

SENIOR SUPPERS - Discounted meals for people AGE 55 or older are served daily, from 3:30 p.m. To 7 p.m., in the cafeteria at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center, 1250 16th Street in Santa Monica. \$3.69 Info only: (310)319-4837.

°DINING

EL CHOLO - Famous for award-winning margaritas

& green corn tamales. Enjoy our lively bar, comfy dining rooms or sunny patio for lunch and dinner daily. 1025 Wilshire Blvd., 310.889.1106

LIBRARY ALEHOUSE - A gathering place for great food, hand crafted beer and friendly service. Beautiful garden patio. Daily specials. 2911 Main St., 310.314.4855

THE LOBSTER - A legend redefined! A local favorite serving classic American seafood, specializing in live Main Lobster. Open 7 days serving lunch & dinner. 1602 Ocean Ave., Reservations recommended. 310.458.9294

DK DONUTS - Best fresh baked donuts in Santa Monica. Also serving excellent breakfast sandwiches & muffins. Classic favorites include: refreshing ice blended mochas, smoothies and bobas. New sub sandwiches & more. Open 24hrs. a day, 7 days a week. 1614 Santa Monica Blvd., 310.829.2512

OMELETTE PARLOR - Best breakfast in LA. This is where the locals go! 2732 Main St., 310.399.7892

PANINI GARDEN - "The Locals Favorite" for gourmet European breakfast, lunch & dinner. Featuring fresh crepe, panini grilled sandwiches and delightful salads. dine on our charming patio, or call for delivery. 2715 Main St., 310.399.9939

THE SLICE - New York style pizzeria also serving pasta, salads, subs and wings. Voted best pizza in Los Angeles by AOL. Sit on our beautiful patio for great pizza and movie star sightings. 915 Wilshire Blvd, for fast delivery call 310.351.7542

WOLFGANG PUCK CAFE - Enjoy Wolfgang's favorite entrees, famous wood-fried pizzas, pastas, fresh salads, sandwiches, and of course, unforgettable desserts! Fun Happy Hour: 1323 Montana Ave., 310.393.0290

SONNY MCLEAN'S - A perfect Irish pub that attracts a variety of people. It's the hotspot to kick back, enjoy a beer and watch a ball game. Good Happy Hour specials. 2615 Wilshire Blvd., 310.828.9839

ORIGINAL THAI DISHES - Best Thai food in Santa Monica! Family owned restaurant since 1980. A local favorite serving classic Pad Thai noodles, pineapple fried rice and seafood specialties. All dishes can be made vegetarian. 1910 Wilshire Blvd., 310.828.5634

EARTH, WIND & FLOUR - "Great Italian cooking. Just slightly west of Italy." This restaurant celebrates 22 years in the neighborhood for its friendliness and freshness. Pizza, pastas, salads, subs and more. Lunch and dinner specials and happy hour. 2222 Wilshire Blvd., 310.829.7829

ACADIE'S - Voila! Fresh from the south of France, Homemade Crepes have just arrived in Santa Monica! Located right off the 3rd St. Promenade, this authentic French storefront radiates charm and ambience with indoor seating and a quaint side patio for an outdoor experience. The menu offers a range of options to suit your individual mood. 213 Arizona Ave. (310)395-1120

MOVIE °GUIDE

LOEWS CINIPLEX BROADWAY CINEMA
1441 Third St. at Broadway
About Schmidt (R) 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30. **City of God (R)** 12:45, 3:45, 6:45, 9:45. **The Hours (PG-13)** 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00. **Willard (PG-13)** 12:15, 2:45, 5:15, 7:45, 10:15.

MANN CRITERION
1313 Third St.
Bringing down the House (PG-13) 11:00, 11:30, 1:45, 2:15, 4:30, 5:00, 7:15, 7:45, 10:00, 10:30. **How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days (PG-13)** 12:45, 3:45, 7:20, 10:20. **Tears of the Sun (R)** 12:30, 1:00, 3:30, 4:00, 7:00, 7:30, 9:50. **Old School (R)** 11:15, 1:35, 4:15, 7:10, 9:40, 10:15.

AMC THEATRE SM 7
1310 3rd Street
Jungle Book 2 (G) 2:10, 4:00, 6:05. **Shanghai Knights (PG-13)** 7:45, 10:15. **Agent Cody Banks (PG)** 1:45, 4:10, 7:00, 9:20. **Chicago (PG-13)** 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00. **Cradle 2 the Grave (R)** 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30. **Daredevil (PG-13)** 12:20, 4:50, 7:30, 9:55. **The Hunted (R)** 2:20, 5:15, 7:40, 10:05. **The Life of David Gale (R)** 1:35, 4:20, 7:10, 10:10.

LANDMARK NU-WILSHIRE
1314 Wilshire Blvd.
The Pianist (R) 3:45, 7:00, 10:00. **Laurel Canyon (R)** 5:00, 7:30, 10:00.

LAEMMLE MONICA
1332 2nd St.
Irreversible (NR) 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50. **The Quiet American (R)** 1:45, 4:20, 7:20, 9:55. **Bend it Like Beckham (PG-13)** 12:00, 2:35, 5:10, 7:45, 10:20. **Talk to Her (R)** 2:00, 4:40, 7:15, 9:55.

AERO THEATRE
1328 Montana Ave.
Far From Heaven (PG-13) 5:00, 7:30, 10:00.



BACK PAGE

DVD players, beach chairs, toys taken into war

BY ALEXANDRA ZAVIS

Associated Press Writer

IN THE GULF REGION — Video games. CDs. TV sets. Beach chairs. Stuffed toys.

When U.S. Marines go off to war, they have a lot more than camouflage gear and padded socks stashed in their sea bags.

"You name it, somebody is going to find a way to pack it," said Capt. Jennifer Knotts of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

Perched on a beam above the Miami woman's military-issue, green-canvas cot is a small stuffed-toy dog sent by her mother on behalf of the family pet, Biscuit.

"She said everyone should have a dog," Knotts, 29, said with a smile.

After more than a month at a secret desert air base, waiting for the order to invade Iraq, Marines have found ways to make the rows of dusty, windblown tents feel like home.

In one tent, or "hooch" as the Marines call them, men pull up beach chairs and lounge on cots in front of the flickering screen of a portable DVD player to watch an action movie. In another, they cluster round a folding table to play cards.

"Laptops have revolutionized the way we go to the field," said Capt. Michael Critchley, 32, of Alexandria, Va. "Now we get to watch movies every night."

Many tents feature state flags tacked up above the cots, small rugs picked up at

"Laptops have revolutionized the way we go to the field. Now we get to watch movies every night."

— CAPT. MICHAEL CRITCHLEY
United States Marines

local markets, and shelves hammered together out of plywood.

"Music is the key thing," said Sgt. K.C. Iversen, 22, of Garrison, N.C. He has thousands of recordings stored on an MP3 player. "Everything from classical to Metallica, I got it all."

Putting on a pair of earphones at night, he can drown out the flapping of the tent as yet another sandstorm rips through camp.

An inflatable mattress is also key to a good night's sleep. Capt. Anthony Crawford, 27, of Memphis, Tenn., has an extra-thick one he inflates with a foot pump.

"My goal is to make it last through the war — and to find the bastard who keeps letting the air out of it so I have to blow it up every night," he said.

Little luxuries after a 12-hour day filling sandbags or repairing aircraft include cigars, coffee brewed from freshly ground beans and lots of candy.

"If only we had electricity," said Lance Cpl. Michael Barrow, 20, of Oldsmar, Fla. Most tents have light, but few have outlets.

Members of ground units, who have to carry everything they bring on their backs, tend to travel lighter.

Cpl. Chris Pappas, deployed in northern Kuwait with Marines of the 7th

Rotten sneaker emerges from sub

By The Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. — An annual rotten sneaker contest included a little international competition when an entry came in from the crew of the USS Montpelier submarine.

The sneaker arrived double-bagged from an undisclosed location in the Persian Gulf where the submarine is currently deployed. But the shoe arrived with an unmistakable odor of fish.

Contestants are required to be under the age of 15, but contest organizers still gave the military shoe an honorary title of "most rotten sneaker."

"That's a weapon of mass destruction right there," said commentator Dave Moody, who moderated the 28th annual contest.

Regiment, wears a silver ring with his dog tags. It was a gift from his best friend, whose grandfather wore it in World War II, father wore it in Vietnam and brother wore it the 1991 Gulf War.

"I was touched by it, because it's usually a family thing," said Pappas, 22, of Valencia, Calif.

Back at the air base, Cpl. Leonardo Ochoabazante, 28, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Ecuador, pulls out a tiny baby's sock scented with perfume before going to bed each night. He is carried home to his wife and 10-month-old baby.

The rotten sneaker contest began in 1975 as a way to help a local sporting goods store sell shoes.

Ten-year-old Jeffry Soto walked away with the contest's top prize Tuesday — a \$500 savings bond. He's not taking full credit for the sneakers, which stumped a judge in the "heels" category because they didn't have any heels left.

The fifth grader says his pit bull helped make his entry the winner.

"I had a fight with my dog," said Soto, who lives in the Bronx, N.Y., and advanced from the local competition held there last November. "I was trying to get it away from him because he uses it as a chew toy."

DID YOU KNOW?: In 1487 the Aztec ruler Ahuitzotl, had 20,000 people sacrificed by literally ripping out their hearts and casting them into a fire.

Santa Monica Daily Press



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