FREE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2005

Volume 4, Issue 112

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO
10 16 27 41 43
Meganumber: 21
Jackpot: $42 Million

FANTASY 5
3 20 24 36 38

DAILY 3
Daytime: 5 1 0
Evening: 4 3 3

DAILY DERBY
1st: 05 California Classic
2nd: 06 Whirl Win
3rd: 03 Hot Shot
RACE TIME: 1:45.81

NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ "(You'll) have no teeth left in (your) mouth (if you keep that attitude)" (allegedly said by Sister Catherine Iacouzze of St. Cecelia School in Iselin, N.J., to an 11-year-old boy who had sassed her). (The sister was fired in December.)

■ "(W)e do not think it rises to the level of a safety defect" (said Chrysler spokesman Max Gates in December, fighting a threatened recall of 600,000 Dodge Durango and Dakota trucks even though, Gates acknowledged, "upper ball joint separation" might make the trucks' wheels fall off).

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 82nd day of 2005. There are 283 days left in the year.

In 1806, explorers Lewis and Clark, having reached the Pacific coast, began their journey back east.
In 1933, the German Reichstag adopted the Enabling Act, which effectively granted Adolf Hitler dictatorial legislative powers.
In 1942, during World War II, the U.S. government began evacuating Japanese-Americans from their West Coast homes to detention centers

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Having only friends would be dull anyway — like eating eggs without salt."

HEDDA HOPPER

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Police get scant help from witnesses

Partygoers at the site of homicides keeping mum

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

POLICE HDQTRS. — Police are still looking for the suspects who gunned down two Santa Monica men nearly three weeks ago.

Hector Bonilla, 25, and Jonathan Hernandez, 19, were shot multiple times on March 5 at a birthday party held at the Moose Lodge at 16th Street and Ocean Park Boulevard. The killings took place in front of between 50 and 70 witnesses, according to police.

Those in attendance at the party were questioned by police shortly after the 11 p.m. shooting. However, most of them have provided detectives with little information. And the investigation, thus far, hasn't produced as much information as detectives would like.

"We are still investigating, but one of the hurdles we have is that people are not cooperating," said SMPD Lt. Frank Fabrega. "Some of the witnesses are less cooperative, which is hindering the investigation."

See **KEEPING MUM**, page 6

All that and a bag that drips



Devon Meyers/Special to the Daily Press

Mother Nature continues to wreak havoc on life as usual in Santa Monica, with Tuesday's persistent precipitation, thunderstorms and a small earthquake four miles off the coast of Manhattan Beach keeping residents on their toes. According to the National Weather Service, showers are likely each day leading up until the weekend.

Murder trial takes a strange twist

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN LA — Deemed competent to stand trial, a Santa Monica homeless man who decided to represent himself is making the most of his opportunity in court by cross-examining witnesses who have helped build the murder case against him.

David Thomas Wright, 49, appeared at the Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center in downtown Los Angeles on Tuesday for the second day of his court trial in what seemed to be better spirits than his Monday appearance.

The trial has been delayed nearly two years.

Wearing a blue, prison-issued jumpsuit, Wright's hair was unrolled, revealing a dark shoulder-length afro. He kept several worn pieces of paper in a bundle close by, his apparent case notes, which he referenced throughout the proceedings.

Wright is charged with murder for allegedly killing Aviva Labbe, then a 20 year-old woman who authorities found dead on June 14, 1998. Labbe was found lying face

See **TRIAL**, page 7

City Hall bolsters Big Blue, passes the buck to Yale Street

(Editor's note: This is part of an ongoing series that tracks the city's expenditures which appear on the upcoming Santa Monica City Council consent agenda. Consent agenda items are routinely passed by the City Council with little or no discussion from elected officials or the public. However, many of the items have been part of public discussion in the past.)

BY KIM CALVERT
Special to the Daily Press

COUNCIL CHAMBERS — Elected leaders voted Tuesday to spend $785,000 on everything from new bus schedules and maps to neighborhood improvements on Santa Monica's eastside.

The city will provide Big Blue Bus with $465,000 in support of the transportation company's need for new literature to guide users on how to use their system. City Hall will allocate the money over the next three years for materials that are the primary means of communication to bus customers, according to city staff. Distributed at a wide range of locations, they inform bus riders of stop locations, routes, timetables, transfer points, special holiday schedules and fare information.

City Hall requested bids on the printing project and received proposals from 29 vendors. Since no single vendor was the lowest bidder on the project, City Hall will divvy up the work between the two lowest bidders. Monarch Litho, Inc., will handle the maps and LA Modem will provide bus schedules, according to a staff report.

The amount allocated this year is $109,123, which comes from City Hall's 2004-05 budget.

See **CASH OUT**, page 7

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Put on a movie, Cap

Santa Monica Daily Press



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS The stars show the kind of day you'll have:
★★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average ★★-So-so ★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★ Nothing is written in stone right now. Even your opinions are subject to radical swings, as new information comes in. Concentrate on work or your daily routine. You will be able to handle any boomerang if you are centered. Tonight: Take it easy.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★★ You deal well with the excitement and instability that heads your way. While others could be upset, you seize the moment. Zoom in on what you want. Flirt. If attached, flirt with your sweetie. Tonight: Indulge in a special dinner.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ Handle a personal or domestic matter that might have your mind working overtime. Clear out the issue and free yourself up for other matters. Someone you look up to becomes flaky, if not unpredictable. Tonight: Order in.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ Say what you think, but be willing to revise your opinion. Information that heads in your direction tosses yet another perspective on a situation. Make a phone call to someone you have been thinking about. Tonight: Get together with at least one friend.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★ Deal with finances with care; if you are involved with someone else's funds, there could be an unexpected twist. The same goes if someone else is handling your money. Use caution. A solid relationship could take an interesting turn. Tonight: Special time with a loved one.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★★ Hold your ground, even if others test your patience and ability to say "no." What you see and how someone reacts need to be remembered. This person will always be capable of this unusual behavior. You might not like it, or you might find his or her actions very exciting. Tonight: Just ask.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★ Know when to retreat and play ostrich. Work or a project could become so overwhelming that you will naturally seek solitude where you can focus. The unique or different path proves to be the right way to go. Tonight: Take a walk after dinner. Get more physical.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ An unpredictable child or loved one could easily trigger you. Keep your long-term desires regarding this relationship in mind before reacting. Getting into a petty squabble won't help you relate more closely. Tonight: Do what you want.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★ You might not want to, but you will have to take the lead at work or within your immediate circle. Regroup and rethink. You might come to a stunning realization. Let go of a characteristic or habit that impedes your success. Tonight: Still in control.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★★ Look behind others' reactions. Don't take everything you hear as tried-and-true. Work past rigid thinking that could cause trouble when relating with others. Get feedback, as you'll open up to different thinking. Tonight: Let your mind relax. Put on a good movie.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ Work closely with a partner or key person. This person helps you out of any jam or obstacle that you might hit. Get feedback about how to insulate your budget as much as possible from the wild swings you have experienced. Tonight: Go along with another's plans.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Others demand attention and control. You could become unusually reactive. Try to tame your newfound unpredictability. Avoid turning over the apple cart — for today at least. Allow others to run with the ball. Tonight: Where the crowds are.

CIRCULATION VERIFICATION COUNCIL AUDIT PENDING

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LOCAL

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Girls getting their kicks in local tournament

By Daily Press staff



Photo courtesy

The Under-10 All-Stars stand just two victories away from the Tri-Section title.

Fresh from their victory at the Section One Championships on March 13, the Santa Monica Girls Under 10 All Stars have advanced to the TriSection tournament and are now just two games away from winning the highest competitive championship in AYSO.

Coached by Angel Vazquez and Peter Meyer, the nine-member team entered the Section One championships as the Area 1P Champions, having won the area championship over Pacific Palisades, Culver City, Beverly Hills, West LA, Hollywood/Wilshire and Central and South Los Angeles. The team dominated the Section One Tournament by defeating teams from Weschester, Chino and Redlands, each of which had won their respective area championships. The semi-final game was against Aracdia and finally the victory was clinched with a decisive 5-1 victory over the Pasadena All Stars.

Team members racked up a tournament record of 26 goals for and only three against, continuing the winning streak that commenced with their record of 7-0 in the Area 1P tournament. The Santa Monica Saints All Star team members are: Kayla Dickie, Hilary Dubin, Caroline Huber, Dalia Kaufman, Lindsay Levesque, Lucia McGloin, Sasha Meyer, Lily Moriarty and Kristen Vasquez. The SM AYSO is led by its regional commissioner, Maryanne LaGuardia.

They will play the Section 10 winners Moorpark All Stars in the semifinals of TriSection this Sunday morning in Palmdale, and hope to move on to the finals Sunday afternoon.

The Tri-Section Championships cover all AYSO regions from Bakersfield and Fresno to the border with Mexico and from the ocean to Las Vegas.

CORRECTION — In the March 18 edition, the story about the historical value of the Zucky's building contained errors. John Berley is a Santa Monica Landmarks Commissioner. Roger Genser is the chairman of the Landmarks Commission. The Landmarks Commission encourages property owners and the community to bring issues of historic value to the commission and its role is to not comment on the potential historic value of buildings without extensive review first.

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SURF REPORT

On Wednesday, the NW wind swell continues with some similar size as Tuesday, but conditions are expected to be less than favorable.

Today the water is:

62°

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

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	N/A	N/A	12:32	1.0	4:47	4.3	7:37	3.6
SUNDAY	12:07	2.7	1:04	-0.1	5:47	4.5	7:49	3.8
MONDAY	12:42	2.2	1:31	-0.2	6:30	4.8	8:02	4.0
TUESDAY	**1:13**	**1.8**	**1:54**	**-0.3**	**7:06**	**5.1**	**8:17**	**4.2**
WEDNESDAY	1:42	1.4	2:16	-0.2	7:39	5.2	8:33	4.5
THURSDAY	2:07	1.0	2:40	-0.3	8:04	4.7	9:02	4.0
FRIDAY	2:31	0.7	3:02	-0.1	8:34	4.2	9:30	3.4

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The Q Line

A protest was held last week at Santa Monica College by area students who are upset that the Armed Forces are recruiting on campus.

Some argue that college campuses are not the appropriate place for recruitment while others are against it simply because they are against the war in Iraq.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, **"Do you believe it's appropriate the Armed Forces to recruit on college campuses?"**

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

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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Protesters feel left out

Editor:

I must say that I was disappointed and offended by the discriminatory lack of inclusiveness at the SMC students protest as reported by the SMDP on Friday, March 18.

While the main thrust of the gathering of "more than 50 students" was against military recruitment, it was also reported that there were protesters supporting other causes including "anti-war, anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-homophobia" but many, many groups were not included and that's my beef. For example, where were the people representing the anti-transgenderphobia viewpoint, the anti-globalization movement and the Venice Beach walk free speech effort? Also conspicuous by their absence were environmental organizations like those seeking to save the whales, the caribou and the poor naugas who are slaughtered by the millions each year to provide raw material for naugahide furniture.

I would hope that with future protests that the Progressive Alliance organizers will not discriminate and be truly inclusive allowing all to join in the action.

Glynn Morris
Playa del Rey

Marathon man much too modest

Editor:

You should be proud of Thaddeus Reichley (SMDP, "Exercise Your Right," March 19-20, page 5), not only for what was said in his column, but for what wasn't said. The man is a model of modesty. He told us about his failure to meet his goals, but never mentioned that he nevertheless finished the LA Marathon 32nd overall, in a field of nearly 21,000, in 2:42:40, still an excellent performance under tough conditions. Most of those ahead of him were invited runners. Way to go, Thad. You're a home-grown hero.

Michael Mahler
Santa Monica

Get God out of it, for Gods' sake

Editor:

In response to David Alsabery's letter to the editor (SMDP March 18, page 4).

Thanks for the linguistics lesson. The word "dios" in Spanish translates to "God" in English, and "the word 'Hallelujah' comes from the same word as 'Allah.'" How enlightening. Unfortunately, the meaning of the word God, in any language, will vary from person to person. What one person thinks is the "word of god," another might think is complete hogwash. Some might even think the whole concept of God is hogwash. Therein lies the problem — which 10 commandments, and whose interpretation and translation do you want to post in government buildings? The version found in Deuteronomy, chapter 5? The version found in Exodus, chapter 20? How about the version in Exodus, chapter 34? Will Catholics be happy with a Protestant version?

Will Protestants agree with a Jewish version? Do we post the Koran as well? Should we just let George W. decide for us?

Your statement "Now these three religions have some different opinions" should be up for the understatement of the century award. Some "Christians" would say that anyone who doesn't believe in their particular lord and savior is going to burn in hell for eternity. I would classify that as something more than a "difference of opinion." Only three religions? Aren't you forgetting a few thousand others?

I find it strange that anyone in the country could not believe that the 10 Commandments are an endorsement of religion. Maybe we should re-read them ... in church. As the Christian-biased Judge Scalia recently said, "I think probably 90 percent of the American people believe in the 10 Commandments, and I'll bet you that 85 percent of them couldn't tell you what the ten are."

You state that the founding fathers "did not want God forbidden from public sites." Well, there's nothing forbidding you to put up whatever you want on privately owned "public" property. Just don't put up endorsements for your "one God", or for any religion, on taxpayer owned, government property. Why didn't the "God fearing, gun-toting, religious rebels," who you say founded this country, include "God" anywhere in the Constitution? I did not see a passage that said I am required to believe in your "one God" superstition.

Jeff Bender
Santa Monica

Get the guns under control

Editor:

Thank you for printing "Clamp Down on Gun Control" in your letters to the editor (SMDP, March 17, page 4).

The market is saturated with guns and anyone can easily get one. Unfortunately, the gun lobbies block any attempt at meaningful federal control.

The present administration backs the NRA, which donated heavily in the last election.

Here are a few sobering statistics: 58,000 lives were lost in the Vietnam war. In 1999, 30,000 U.S. lives were lost to guns. More than 77 people are killed every day, or one person dying from gunfire every 18.5 minutes. Every two years we experience the same loss as Vietnam. The numbers are growing since 1999. A gun in the home is 22 times more likely to be used in a criminal, unintentional or suicide-related shooting than to be used in a self-defense shooting.

U.S. children ages 14 and younger die from gunfire at a rate 12 times higher than that of 25 other industrialized countries combined.

Tragically, the genie is out of the bottle when it comes to guns in America.

Ruth Rosen
Santa Monica

One heathen who doesn't plan to change his stripes



INCITES
BY ED SILVERSTEIN

"Jesus always loves you. "

This was the second time I had seen it. In fact everywhere I looked it seemed to call out to me.

…"Jesus always loves you."

Maybe it was a sign. After all, the past three of weeks had been, well … hell.

It started just before the holidays. My water heater blew up. The worst part was not the $1,000 for a new water heater, or the other $1,000 damage it caused to my downstairs neighbors, but rather that it occurred on a Saturday, just after we returned from the gym, 10 minutes after every plumbing supply store closed for the weekend.

OK, I know, barely a pimple in the grand scheme of things.

Then Monday the movers didn't show up. They would be delayed, but couldn't give me a definite pick-up or delivery date, which didn't really matter because I had a nonrefundable airline ticket, a giant pile of furniture in my living room with new stuff coming and I had scheduled other deliveries in Montana to coincide with the move.

The electric garage door in Montana had gone to door-opener heaven. But on the positive side, since bad news comes in threes, I figured I was home free.

… Until I tried to call the repair guy and realized I had lost my cell phone. This was not a big deal except when I discovered that my home phone was out of order. And I won't tell how many hours it took to fix the phone other than to say that Qwest stock is a good buy. Then, when the new furniture arrived they were missing half the order and my can opener broke, just after I had added half the ingredients to a year supply of chili.

By now I was getting concerned.

It got worse.

The bill from the contractor was double the budget on every item even though we had not made a single change. Then the rains came … and the leaks … and the leak guy's report that determined our building would require tens of thousands of dollars in water proofing repairs and, oh, the homeowners' association board decided that our percentage of dues and assessments should be increased by 50 percent. Finally, my new Mac computer crashed and, despite three trips to the shop, it seemed highly resistant to being repaired.

As the mishaps mounted I had increasingly begun to suspect that I, like Job, was the victim of a bet between God and the Devil. Though in my case it would have been the opposite of Job, with the Devil wagering that my lack of faith was unshakable.

Then I began to wonder if maybe this was a slap on the wrist from God — a rebuke for some of my more … sacrilegious writing. And that's when I saw it.

"Jesus always loves you."

Maybe this was the sign I had been waiting for. After all, I admired the quiet celebration of faith exhibited by many of my friends. For them, religion provided a moral compass and provided comfort from what sometimes seems a cruel and arbitrary world, not to mention the whole salvation from mortality thing.

Could it be? I looked again.

"Jesus always loves you."

And suddenly, I knew beyond a doubt that it was the sign I was looking for. Those words scrawled over the urinal — scrawled over every single urinal, in every single bathroom in the movie theatre. The fact that someone felt their religion gave them the right to vandalize someone else's property without any concern for that person's beliefs or rights confirmed everything I felt about organized religion.

It is the hubris of religion that allows Islamic fundamentalists to believe it is their duty to blow up innocent civilians. It is such unbendable obstinacy that keeps orthodox Jews clinging to indefensible settlements regardless that such recalcitrance could lead to a war that their religion forbids them to fight. And it is the unverifiable certainty your God is the one and only God that has justified gay bashing, racism, religious bigotry, misogyny, rape, murder, crusades, countless wars and plain old ignorance.

And if I am a Job-like victim of a God/Devil cosmic bet, the smart money's on the devil. Because no matter how tempting it is to embrace the vandal-scrawled urinal messages that promise unconditional love from Jesus, Allah, Yahweh, Vishnu or any number of other deities, there is always a condition. And too often that is a condescending sense of superiority or even hatred of anyone with a different belief.

So bring it on boys. This is one heathen who isn't going to change.

Damn, is that a boil?

(Ed Silverstein can be reached at incites@incites.net.)

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.

COMMENTARY

GUEST COMMENTARY **BY CLIFF NICHOLS**

Schiavo debate a moral, cultural dilemma

What is the real question our culture is grappling with when it comes to Terri Schiavo?

There is no question that she was once a vibrant human being, nor that her quality of life today would be defined by most as all but non-existent. There also is no question that many among us may think we would choose not to live under such circumstances. So why the debate? Why can't we all just agree to let her die and be done with it?

What is it that is nagging at our souls? Could it be the feeling there is more at stake here than the life of one bed-ridden individual? Could it be that how we respond may well define our society either for the better or worse? Could it be that setting aside her medical condition there are other facts of which we are equally certain that make us uncomfortable with a decision to dispatch her into the land of the dead?

There is no question that she is a human being who is alive, nor is there a question that some people's lives will be enhanced by her continued existence in this world. There exist people who love her and, were she able to do so, there is no question that Terri would tell us that she loves them in return. However, in a case like this should such considerations be given any weight, and if so, why?

Could it be that what is nagging us is a belief that Terri is causing us to cull from the deepest recesses of our cultural soul a principal we seem to have set aside: That to love and to be loved may well be the primary purpose of any life? And, if this is true, what factors exist to cause us to find that the love flowing to and from Terri in her present condition should somehow be of less value than the love experienced and cherished by others? She is neither guilty of any heinous crime nor a combatant in a war with anyone other than herself.

So, what is it in her case that outweighs the value we otherwise would ordinarily attribute to a person's life emanating from their capacity to love and to be loved? Is it a concern over money, convenience or a philosophy that for a life to be worth continuing it must contribute some tangible utilitarian purpose to society? If so, our problem grows.

■ If money is our justification, why not do away also with the idle rich and distribute their wealth amongst us?

■ If people like Terri are to be dispatched for the sake of convenience, why not push the severely handicapped over the edge of a cliff?

■ If we attempt to rely on the belief that a life must contribute some utilitarian social purpose to have value, why do we not also extinguish the homeless?

Unthinkable? Before you answer, consider Hitler's Germany, Saddam's Iraq, Mao's China, Stalin's Russia and Pol Pot's Cambodia. These otherwise "civilized" societies did not think such actions unthinkable.

But never could this happen in America, you say? Ponder this: If America is immune, the question is, "Why?" What sets us as a nation apart from others? Could it be that our culture has imbedded among its core beliefs the notion that a civilization must either place an inherently sacred valuation upon human life transcending concerns about money, convenience and a person's utilitarian contributions or it will cease to be civilized?

Surely, as a people, Americans have always traditionally believed that to be true. But, again would we not be derelict if we failed to again ask, "Why?" Why do we feel compelled to value human life above the temporal concepts of money, convenience and utilitarian purpose? It is an imperative predicate to determining if this core belief in our country is inviolable: a principal that America must, and in the future will, keep sacred. For, as we know, citizens in nations where it has not been held inviolate have found they are solely dependent on the shifting winds of political whim and so, may all at some time or another be exposed to peril. Only those nations whose people have collectively clung to the belief that certain principals are derived from God — and, thus, beyond human tampering — have managed to avoid the inhumanities that mankind is fully capable of rationalizing in his absence. That is because a people's acknowledgment and appreciation of God mandates a belief structure that determines the contours of the government they create. Such a people are led to operate on the belief that the value of a human being must be based upon his or her ability to give and receive love.

So, in answering the question of whether or not the lives of people like Terri Schiavo are worth sustaining, we may now better appreciate that the question really being asked is whether or not our society is committed to our historical tradition of core beliefs founded upon our nation's acknowledgment of God and the value that God has placed on such lives? In short, does the God acknowledged by our founders have any role left in today's society at all?

Sadly, the course our nation has set in recent years is not encouraging. Has not our nation's answer to the question already been rendered when we consider the valuation America has afforded its unborn?

Perhaps we would do well to reflect upon the fact that a malevolent dictatorship or regime is not always a prerequisite to placing people's lives in jeopardy. In our country, our core values, and the rights and liberties that depend upon them, appear to be eroding with equal rapidity as a result of our apathy when confronted with judicial tyranny. However, in the end, whether the course we have set ourselves upon is the product of some malevolent intent or mere apathy on the part of the people is irrelevant.

The fact remains — soon "God Bless America" will be useful only to assist us as a nation to define our hypocrisy.

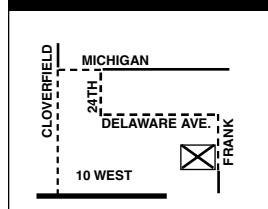
(Cliff Nichols is a West Los Angeles resident and an attorney practicing in Santa Monica.)

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LOCAL

Police urge shooting witnesses to speak up

KEEPING MUM, from page 1

Fabrega wouldn't speculate on why the witnesses are reluctant to provide information to detectives.

Witnesses said Hernandez got into a physical altercation with two or three men near the front entrance to the Moose Lodge, a Sunset Park venue often used for weddings, birthdays and other events.

Guests at the party said as many as 14 shots were fired by two or three gang members who opened fire on Hernandez and later aimed their barrels at Bonilla, a long-time friend of Hernandez' who attempted to intervene.

Bonilla was shot multiple times in his torso and head while Hernandez suffered more extensive wounds to his torso, head and buttocks, according to the Los Angeles County Department of Coroner.

A third victim, who witnesses said threw a chair at the gunmen in an attempt to break up the shooting, was shot in the leg and released from St. John's Hospital Center two days later, according to authorities. The third person's identity has not been released. He apparently did not know Bonilla or Hernandez.

Fabrega on Tuesday declined to say if the incident was gang related. The initial coroner reports referred to the gunmen and the victims as belonging to rival gangs. Still, no weapons were found on the victims. Witnesses said the shooters had tattoos with gang emblems.

The suspects, who fled the scene, are described as two Hispanic men, between 18 and 20 years old, and wearing dark hooded sweatshirts.

Hernandez's mother, Natalie Preciado, said witnesses at the party told her that one suspect was wearing a red sweatshirt and the other was wearing a blue sweatshirt.

Preciado and Krizna Ayala, Bonilla's girlfriend and mother to their three children, both said on Tuesday the wheels of justice need to move faster.

"If people would just cooperate, it would help catch them and help the families," Ayala said.

Preciado said she was frustrated with the police investigation, particularly because detectives won't provide her with details. SMPD detectives spoke with Preciado and Ayala this week, but offered little information on the investigation.

"I'm mad right now," Preciado said. "We need assistance to solve this crime. We know there were a lot of people there and if they know anything, please come forward."

Preciado is considering filing a wrongful death lawsuit against the family who held the birthday party, as well as against the Moose Lodge, the security company hired for the party and possibly the SMPD.

"I'm looking for a lawyer," she said.

No reward has been set up to help catch the suspects in the double homicide. However, last year the City Council approved a $25,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person who killed a Santa Monica teenager on Sept. 2, 2003. Seven months after Jalonnie Carter, 19, was shot in the back with a .22-caliber gun in an alley east of 20th Street, SMPD Chief James T. Butts Jr. asked the City Council that a reward be offered. The case remains unsolved.

Preciado is considering filing a wrongful death lawsuit against the family who held the birthday party.

Anyone with information is urged to call the Santa Monica Police Department at (310) 458-8491. Callers who wish to remain anonymous also may call the WeTip national hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME (27463).

Santa Monica Mayor Pam O'Connor said the City Council hasn't discussed the recent double homicide and offering a reward would likely originate from the city manager's office or the SMPD.

O'Connor was heavily involved in a Feb. 26 gang violence community workshop sponsored by State Sen. Sheila Kuehl and City Hall, which was held at John Adams Middle School and is across the street from where the murders took place. A second community workshop was to be held on March 12, but was postponed until April 9 out of respect to the families.

O'Connor said it's important to continue the work that more than 400 community members started in February to end gang violence in Santa Monica.

"(The murders) certainly point out that it's a real problem and one that has tragic consequences," she said. "It brings a sense of urgency to the issue and it doesn't mean we don't keep trying."

Do you have community news?



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Santa Monica Daily Press

LOCAL

Accused killer takes to cross-examinations

TRIAL, from page 1

down in a walkway on the 200 block of Hill Street, at a vacant Santa Monica home.

Labbe's murder had been classified as a "cold case" and remained unsolved for nearly four years until a sampling of Wright's DNA linked him in 2002 to the murder through the U.S. Department of Justice's database system, authorities said. Convicted felons are required to give a DNA sample, which puts them in the database for authorities to periodically check.

Wright was found in the California state prison system serving a six-year sentence for battery of a Santa Monica police officer during an unrelated incident, authorities said. In January of 2001, a jury found him guilty of battery, resisting arrest and failing to register himself as a sex offender.

The trial has been delayed nearly two years as Wright has fired two public defenders assigned to his case.

The most recent public defender, Leonard N. Garber, is being called Wright's "stand-by" attorney. During Tuesday's proceedings, Garber coughed out loud after several of Wright's remarks. He shifted nervously in his seat and changed seats around the courtroom.

The trial is being presided by Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Ruth Ann Kwan, and the only people present in the courtroom Tuesday was Deputy District Attorney Ellen Aragon, a court clerk, a bailiff, two witnesses and one member of the press.

The trial began at 11 a.m. but was quickly recessed until 1:30 p.m. so Wright could have the opportunity to gather his notes to cross-examine a witness for the prosecution — a Santa Monica woman he allegedly attempted to rape more than 10 years ago at the corner of California Avenue and Second Street.

Wright was scheduled to cross-examine the alleged victim in the afternoon. Earlier in the day, he cross-examined Santa Monica Police Department Detective John Henry.

Judge Kwan frequently interrupted Wright's cross examination, objecting to his line of questioning. At one point, Wright attempted to question Henry's authenticity as a Santa Monica Police officer, who investigated the case.

"Will you agree to let the State Department investigate whether you are a licensed police officer?" Wright asked.

Henry said he would agree, but Judge Kwan intervened.

"Do you have any reason to believe Detective Henry is not a Santa Monica police officer?" Judge Kwan said.

"No," Wright said.

"OK, well then you do not need to question it," Kwan said. "Mr. Wright, we need to move along with the questioning."

Aragon today is expected to call a DNA expert witness from the Serological Research Institute, the laboratory which has examined the semen and saliva samples that match Wright's and were found at the murder scene.

Garber said he explained to Wright that he may do better in court with a jury trial, but Wright refused the advice.

Garber said he felt Wright was not competent to stand trial and informed him as such, which Garber said might have also had to do with why Wright decided to represent himself.

Three psychiatrists evaluated Wright and only one of them felt he was not competent to stand trial, Garber said.

Residents ante up to save trees

CASH OUT, from page 1

RESIDENTS SAVE THEIR TREES

With City Hall contributing $320,000 for upgrades to Yale Street, in addition to the property owners' plans to spend $908,000, the total project cost should exceed $1.2 million.

Residents were displeased with City Hall's original plan to remove existing trees to complete sidewalk and pavement repairs, so they suggested widening the parkway — the green space between the sidewalk and the street — by two feet on each side. It's a move that will save the mature trees from damage during sidewalk and street repairs, while not impacting parking or travel lanes, according to Dave Britton, one of City Hall's principal civil engineers.

City Hall was agreeable to the more extensive plan, but only if the additional costs of widening the parkway were passed on to property owners, according to a city staff report.

Owners had an opportunity to vote on the issue and the majority of them agreed to pay an assessment of $9,750 per parcel with a frontage of 50 feet. The amount can be paid in full or spread over a 10-year payment bond, according to Britton.

"The property owners wanted to save the existing tree canopy," Britton said. "The only way to pave the streets and fix the sidewalks without threatening those trees was to give them more space for root development."

Britton said the work was expected to start in the next nine months and would take three to four months to complete.



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2005 HOLY WEEK & EASTER

MASSES & SERVICES

Monday, March 21st, Tuesday, March 22nd & Wednesday, March 23rd
+ 6:30 a.m. + 8:00 a.m. + 12:10 p.m. + 6:00 p.m. +

HOLY THURSDAY
March 24th
Mass of the Lord's Supper
+ 7:30 p.m. +
Adoration at the Altar of Repose
+ After the 7:30 p.m. Mass until
Midnight in the Auditorium +
Night Prayer at Midnight

GOOD FRIDAY
March 25th
Solemn Liturgy, Holy Communion,
& Veneration of the Cross
+ 12:15 p.m. +
Homily given by Dr. Lloyd Ogilvie.
Stations of the Cross
+ 2:30 p.m. +
Solemn Liturgy, Holy Communion,
& Veneration of the Cross
+ 7:30 p.m. +
Homily given by Dr. Lloyd Ogilvie.

HOLY SATURDAY
March 26th
Easter Vigil Liturgy
+ 7:30 p.m.
There will not be a 5:30 p.m. Mass on this day.

EASTER SUNDAY
March 27th
Mass in the Church
+ 6:30 a.m. +
+ 8:00 a.m. +
+ 9:30 a.m. +
+ 11:30 a.m. +
+ 1:15 p.m. +
Mass in the Gymnasium
+ 8:00 a.m. +
+ 9:30 a.m. +
+ 11:30 a.m. +
Mass in the Auditorium
+ 9:45 a.m. +
There will not be a
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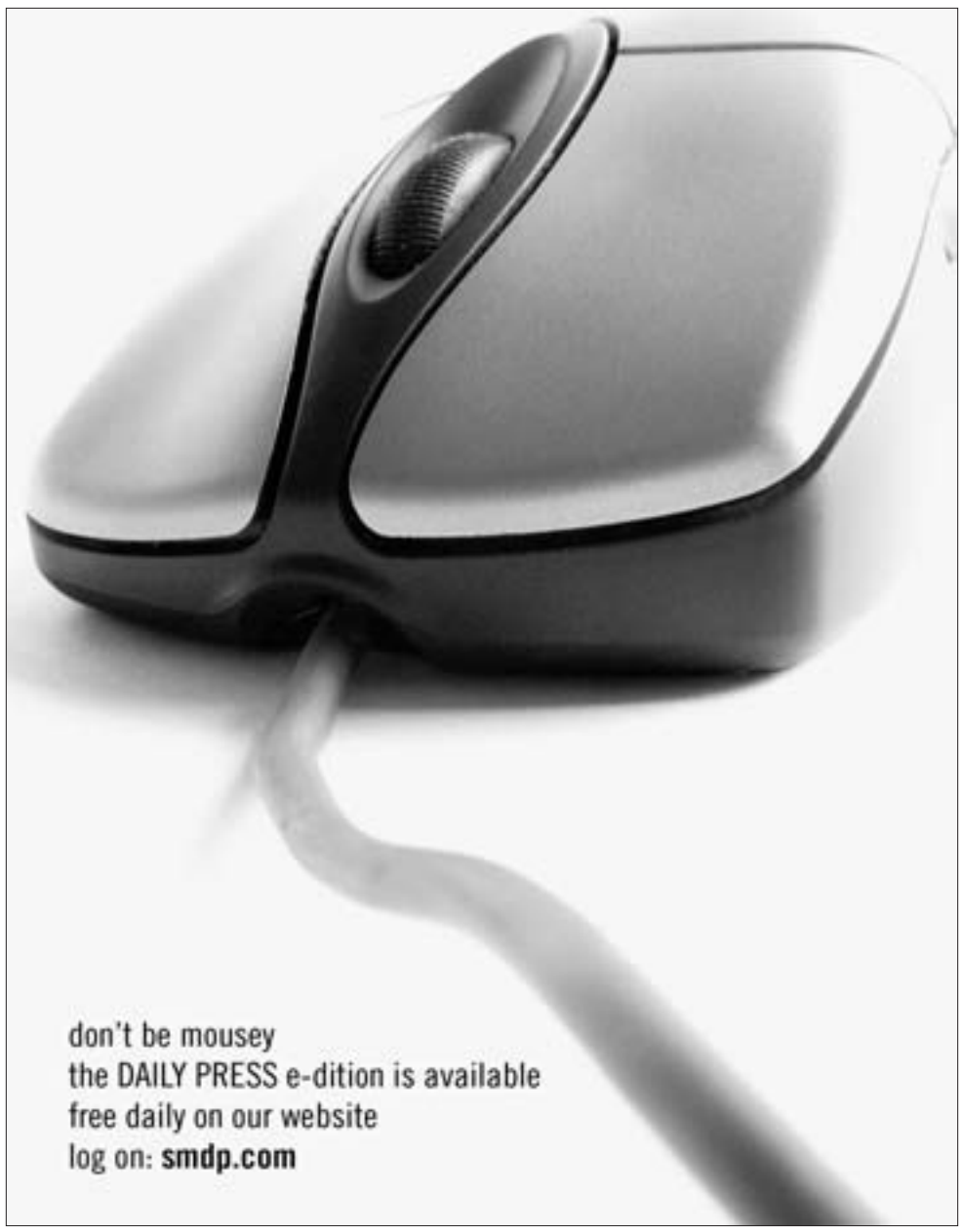
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STATE



Study: Immigrants still stream into U.S.

BY MICHELLE MORGANTE
Associated Press Writer

SAN DIEGO — The tightening of homeland security since 2001 has not stemmed undocumented immigration into the United States, with a report released Monday showing the number of illegal immigrants growing by roughly 485,000 people a year.

An analysis of government data by the Pew Hispanic Center, a private research group in Washington, showed an estimated 10.3 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States last year, an increase of about 23 percent from 8.4 million in 2000.

"The numbers are astounding," said Cathy Travis, a spokeswoman for Rep. Solomon Ortiz, a Texas Democrat who has pressed for greater funding for border security and immigration control. "Until we match our budgetary priorities with our national security priorities, this is going to be the case."

Critics of illegal immigration said there is little political will to stop the trend, despite the lessons of the Sept. 11 terrorists attacks, because businesses benefit from the supply of cheap labor.

"There's been a greater amount of lip service, but there hasn't been a greater amount of attention to border security," T.J. Bonner, president of the union representing Border Patrol agents. "It's a shell game, and the American public are losers in this game."

The union has sharply criticized the Bush administration's proposed 2006 budget, which would provide $37 million to hire 210 Border Patrol agents. The intelligence reorganization bill Bush signed last year called for hiring 2,000 more agents a year over five years.

Currently, there are fewer than 11,000 agents to patrol more than 6,000 miles of the nation's perimeter around the clock, Bonner said.

Harry Pachon of the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute in Los Angeles said the growth in illegal immigrants has risen with the U.S. economy, with American businesses such as Wal-Mart looking to contractors who rely on undocumented workers "to fill jobs no one else will fill."

Arizona and North Carolina have some of the fastest-growing populations of illegal immigrants. Both have metropolitan areas booming with new construction, restaurants and other service-oriented businesses — job sectors that often hire undocumented workers.

Mexicans by far remain the largest group of undocumented migrants at 5.9 million, or about 57 percent of the March 2004 estimate. Some 2.5 million others, or 24 percent, are from other Latin American countries.

Pachon said immigration reform must be part of the answer. Immigrants who are forced to wait years to legally bring over family members have a strong incentive to look instead to smugglers.

Immigration will be a central topic of discussion when Mexican President Vicente Fox meets with President Bush in Texas on Wednesday.

Bush has promoted a guest-worker program that would allow migrants to work in the United States for a limited time. Critics of the plan say it will drive down wages for legal workers and encourage illegal immigrants.

Rep. John Hostettler, an Indiana Republican who chairs a subcommittee on immigration and border security, said the government has failed to punish employers who hire illegal workers or sufficiently fund efforts to find and deport illegal immigrants.

"The idea that we're going to completely seal the border, even with the National Guard or 20,000 to 30,000 Border Patrol agents is a little naive," he said.

"We need the manpower. Without that, we are just going to continue to grow the number of illegal aliens in the country. And we will build a huge haystack where it's going to be more difficult to find that needle — which will be that terrorist or that terrorist cell — that will strike this country."

In a Golden state of mind

By The Associated Press

There were about 10.3 million undocumented immigrants in United States in March 2004, according to an analysis of government data by the Pew Hispanic Center. Nearly one-quarter of the population lives in California.

The percentage breakdown in the top eight states and rest of the country (individual percentages for other states were not provided.) Figures may not add to 100 percent due to rounding:

STATE	PERCENTAGE
California	24
Texas	14
Florida	9
New York	7
Arizona	5
Illinois	4
New Jersey	4
North Carolina	3
All others	32

Source: Pew Hispanic Center.

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Coast Guard rescues passengers of stuck ship

By The Associated Press

OXNARD, Calif. — The U.S. Coast Guard worked through the night to free a two-masted sailing ship that ran aground near a rock jetty, but all 20 people aboard the ship were brought to shore safely Monday afternoon after the ship became stuck in a sandbar.

Authorities said rough surf knocked at least four people off the boat into the 58-degree water, but all were retrieved safely. The rest of the group followed rescuers' orders and one by one jumped off the lurching boat wearing life jackets, as waves rolled over the deck. They were also picked up.

All aboard were accounted for, said U.S. Coast Guard spokesman Prentice Danner.

Three passengers were taken to area hospitals for treatment of hypothermia. The rest received food and clothing from the Red Cross.

The vessel was identified as the Irving Johnson, a brigantine completed in 2003 for the Los Angeles Maritime Institute's TopSail Youth Program.

The boat was being used for a seven-day team-building trip through the Channel Islands by students from the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, said Laura Trulson, the institute's education director. Ten students and 10 crew were aboard the boat, she said. She did not know how the vessel got into trouble.

Danner said the incident was under investigation and that authorities were working with the institute to pull the boat out to sea.

At one point a rescue boat tugged on the vessel with a tow line, straining to pull it bow-first into the waves but to no avail.

The vessel is 90 feet long, with 4,450 square feet of sail, a rigging height of nearly 88 feet and a diesel engine. The sails were furled during the rescue northwest of Los Angeles.

Independence is ensured of a safe tow back to Cape Spencer

BY RACHEL D'ORO
Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A Coast Guard cutter took a commercial fish processing ship with 204 people aboard under tow Tuesday, a day after it began drifting in the heavy seas of the Gulf of Alaska.

The 325-foot Independence's steering system failed Monday in 20-foot seas with blowing snow and winds as high as 60 mph. The weather calmed overnight.

"The seas have died down substantially," said Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Roger Wetherell.

The cutters Storis and Morgenthau arrived on the scene Tuesday, at which point a Kodiak-based C-130 crew left, the Coast Guard said.

The Storis took the Seattle-based Independence under tow. They are headed toward Cape Spencer and Juneau. The tug Chahunta was to take over the tow when they rendezvoused.

No injuries were reported.

The Independence is owned by Trident Seafoods Corp. in Seattle.

The trouble began about 7 a.m. Monday, when the port rudder failed as the ship was heading back to Seattle following the end of its cod season, according to Trident attorney Joe Plesha. Crew members disconnected a hydraulic piston driving the damaged rudder.

About noon, the piston controlling the vessel's other two rudders also failed. The system is not designed to operate on just one piston, Plesha said.

The cause of the system failure is not yet known, Plesha said, and the ship did not lose power, only steering.

The Independence, a floating processor built in 1938, has a history of mechanical and other problems, according to Coast Guard records.

Between 1994 and 2001, the Coast Guard investigated 10 incidents involving the vessel in Alaska, Washington state and Oregon. Seven involved mechanical problems and three involved discharge of oil, records show. No other details were immediately available.

Plesha said he had not seen the Coast Guard reports and declined to comment.

High court protects cities in cell-phone suits

BY PETE YOST
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court limited the liability local governments might face in fights over cell phone towers, ruling Tuesday that a small California town did not have to pay millions in attorneys' fees and damages to a local businessman.

The court unanimously blocked Mark Abrams from collecting money from Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif., which was forced by a court to issue a permit for a 52.5-foot radio antenna Abrams wanted on his property.

With exploding growth in the telecommunications industry, an unfavorable Supreme Court ruling for cities was seen by many as opening the door to further proliferation of towers because local governments would be reluctant to enter into potentially expensive court fights.

The dispute with Abrams rang up $15 million in attorneys' fees, roughly the annual budget of the seaside town 30 miles south of Los Angeles.

Justice Antonin Scalia pointed to the potential financial implications for municipalities around the country.

"Liability for attorneys' fees would have a particularly severe impact, making local governments liable for ... often substantial legal expenses of large commercial interests for the misapplication of a complex and novel statutory scheme," he wrote.

In a concurring opinion, Justice John Paul Stevens called the awards of damages and attorneys' fees "potentially disastrous" for municipalities.

Abrams' lawyer had argued that although the Telecommunications Act of 1996 doesn't specifically grant attorneys' fees and damages, Abrams is entitled to them under a different portion of federal law.

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BUYING AND SELLING
BY THOMAS KHAMMAR & BRENT PARSONS

The California Association of Realtors reported earlier this year that it anticipates the interest rates to hit 7 percent for 30-year mortgages by year's end and might exceed this point should the job growth increase this year.

The year 2005 will be an exciting year in the real estate market. Low interest rates make it great time to purchase a home if you have been waiting to do so. Typically, housing prices react to the raise in interest rates. However, in coastal regions, where jobs are increasing and there is more demand than supply, this might not be the case.

For first-time buyers, 2005 might prove to be a hard year to purchase homes if you wait too long. The California Association of Realtors has released its 2005 Housing Market Outlook, which projects that the median home price for California will increase by 15 percent in 2005. Highly sought after areas like Santa Monica tend to have a higher than average increase in their median prices. So, if you think it would be a tight squeeze now, it will get even harder as the price of homes rises.

If you already own a home and have equity that would be returned to you upon sale, this is an opportune time to upgrade to a bigger home. People that are trading up will have more opportunity to beat out the first time buyers due to the equity that they have saved in their home. First time buyers will have to come up with more money to put down and they may be priced out of the market. If they couldn't afford a home last year, it will be more difficult this year as prices rise.

Today's low interest rates make it a good time to buy a home because you can put more of your payment to principal instead of interest. Interest rates are on the rise. The California Association of Realtors reported earlier this year that it anticipates the interest rates to hit 7 percent for 30-year mortgages by year's end and might exceed this point should the job growth increase this year.

"Homebuyers concerned about future mortgage-rate increases flooded the market in December, driving the median price to an all-time high of $474,480," reported the association's president, Jim Hamilton. "This explains why the housing inventory is down. It also indicates that if you are on the market for a new home, you should take it very seriously and move quickly. As the interest rates rise, you may not be able to afford the home that you want."

If you aren't looking for a primary residence, you might want to consider using some of the equity in your home to purchase income producing rental properties. You will be able to afford to take out more money now at the low interest rate than you would at the higher interest rates.

Income-producing property is a great way to use the equity in your home because you are optimizing its potential to make you money. When equity just sits and grows, it does nothing for you. You aren't making any money on it. However, if you take the equity out as a mortgage, you receive return from the tax credit and if you put it into rental income, you are making money off of the rents, providing that the building is debt servicing.

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Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,350	List Price: $820,000	Bed: 3
03/11/2005	Lot Size: 6,500	Sold Price: $820,000	Bath: 2.00
Sold	**327 ALTA AVE SANTA MONICA 90402**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 3,742	List Price: $3,295,000	Bed: 5
03/09/2005	Lot Size: 10,440	Sold Price: $3,295,000	Bath: 3.50
Sold	**2412 23RD ST SANTA MONICA 90405**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,700	List Price: $949,000	Bed: 3
03/16/2005	Lot Size: 6,750	Sold Price: $956,000	Bath: 2.00
Sold	**1127 GRANT ST SANTA MONICA 90405**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 3,219	List Price: $1,999,000	Bed: 4
03/15/2005	Lot Size: 5,500	Sold Price: $1,980,000	Bath: 3.50
Sold	**715 18TH ST SANTA MONICA 90402**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 4,019	List Price: $3,200,000	Bed: 4
03/10/2005	Lot Size: 8,940	Sold Price: $3,100,000	Bath: 4.50
Sold	**2825 WASHINGTON AVE SANTA MONICA 90403**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,511	List Price: $1,349,000	Bed: 3
03/10/2005	Lot Size: 6,750	Sold Price: $1,396,000	Bath: 2.00
Sold	**3009 2ND ST SANTA MONICA 90405**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: N/A	List Price: $1,350,000	Bed: 3
03/09/2005	Lot Size: 6,499	Sold Price: $1,350,000	Bath: 2.50
Sold	**844 BERKELEY ST SANTA MONICA 90403**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: N/A	List Price: $3,588,000	Bed: 4
03/17/2005	Lot Size: 10,040	Sold Price: $3,250,000	Bath: 5.50
Sold	**528 24TH ST SANTA MONICA 90402**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,246	List Price: $1,875,000	Bed: 2
03/16/2005	Lot Size: 8,698	Sold Price: $2,000,000	Bath: 1.50
Sold	**241 24TH ST SANTA MONICA 90402**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 2,069	List Price: $2,249,000	Bed: 3
03/11/2005	Lot Size: 8,700	Sold Price: $2,439,000	Bath: 1.75
Sold	**2433 28TH ST #0 SANTA MONICA 90405**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,675	List Price: $729,000	Bed: 2
03/14/2005	HOD: $360	Sold Price: $760,000	Bath: 2.00
Sold	**201 OCEAN AVE #PH8P SANTA MONICA 90402**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,228	List Price: $1,195,000	Bed: 2
03/15/2005	HOD: $670	Sold Price: $1,075,000	Bath: 2.00
Sold	**2613 6TH ST #6 SANTA MONICA 90405**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: N/A	List Price: $789,000	Bed: 2
03/16/2005	HOD: $240	Sold Price: $806,000	Bath: 2.00
Sold	**2960 NEILSON WAY #105 SANTA MONICA 90405**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,105	List Price: $669,000	Bed: 2
03/16/2005	HOD: $700	Sold Price: $675,000	Bath: 1.50
Sold	**2930 NEILSON WAY #310 SANTA MONICA 90405**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,420	List Price: $879,000	Bed: 2
03/16/2005	HOD: $675	Sold Price: $855,000	Bath: 2.00
Sold	**1010 CALIFORNIA AVE #2 SANTA MONICA 90403**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,446	List Price: $749,000	Bed: 2
03/16/2005	HOD: $300	Sold Price: $725,000	Bath: 2.00
Sold	**1021 N 19TH ST #1 SANTA MONICA 90403**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,694	List Price: $849,000	Bed: 2
03/09/2005	HOD: $205	Sold Price: $850,000	Bath: 2.00
Sold	**1307 15TH ST SANTA MONICA 90404**		
Santa Monica	SqFt: 0	List Price: $1,475,000	Gl: $0
03/09/2005	Lot Size: 0	Sold Price: $1,811,000	GRM: 0.00

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$929,000

3259 ROSEWOOD AVE , LOS ANGELES 90066

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$575,000

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Real estate thaw could have wide-reaching chill



DAYS ON THE MARKET
BY JODI SUMMERS

California's real estate market is cooling, and that could spell the end to California's recovery, according to the UCLA Anderson Forecast in its first quarterly report of 2005. The report, which was released last week, noted that half of the private-sector jobs created in California in the last two years are in some way connected to real estate.

Statewide, property values have risen $1.7 trillion since 2001. Property wealth is currently equivalent to about 35 percent of the total personal income in California. Last year, property values appreciated 23.44 percent statewide.

"The median home nationally cost $189,000 in January. In California, it cost $485,700," said Robert Kleinhenz, deputy chief economist for the California Association of Realtors.

Between 2001 to 2003, housing contributed more than one-quarter to consumer spending — people had liquid income thanks to real estate equity withdrawals and realized capital gains. In the fourth quarter of 2003, home equity accounted for 19 percent of household wealth, slightly higher than the combination of stocks and mutual funds.

"Solid, but not spectacular," is the Anderson Forecast for 2005. Personal income growth is expected to slow to 5.2 percent from this year's 5.6 percent and taxable sales dropping under 5 percent from 2004's 6 percent. This trend of slowing growth will continue, as rising interest rates have an immediate impact on consumer spending.

"The expansion is now 13 quarters old," said Edward Leamer, UCLA Anderson Forecast. "That's mature by historical standards. Five of the last nine expansions have terminated at 14 quarters or less. The current expansion "is reaching the probable time of death, by historical standards."

"It's a little too early to say the current upswing in the housing market has ended," countered Kleinhenz. "If you look at the economic fundamentals at this time we've got an economy that's improving at the state level in terms of job growth."

Sales volume in Southern California's real estate market have been dropping since the prime rate started rising in August 2004, but properties are still at record high asking prices.

A trend that is piquing the interests of Merrill Lynch analysts is the shift in resource allocation towards residential real estate, and the amount that some people are leveraging their resources to buy property. Adjustable-rate loans were up 91 percent between December 2003 and December 2004. Adjustable-rate loan fundings for the year reached a new high of $190 billion.

Regardless of the indicators, 74 percent of home buyers are confident that housing is a solid investment, according to an Inman News survey. Twenty-two percent are uncertain whether housing is a good investment.

"At best, the state economy can be expected to maintain slow growth over the next few years as the weak housing sector saps off strength created in other parts of the state's recovering economy," said UCLA Anderson senior economist Christopher Thornberg. "There are some good economic indicators in California, however. The falling dollar has helped keep more entertainment production in state instead of moving overseas or to other parts of the country. It has also bolstered manufacturing and tourism. The high-tech industry is in turnaround, with greater employment in this sector just around the corner. Finally, the public sector may be seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, with jobs returning in this area as well."

The UCLA Anderson Forecast is one of the most widely watched economic outlooks for California and the nation, and was unique in predicting both the seriousness of the early-1990s downturn in the state, and the strength of the state's rebound since 1993. Most recently, the forecast is credited as the first major U.S. economic forecasting group to declare the recession of 2001.

Visit UCLA Anderson Forecast on the Web at http://uclaforecast.com.

(Jodi Summers is director of the investment division at Boardwalk Realty Santa Monica. Contact her at jodis@boardwalkrealty.com, or call (310) 309-4219.)

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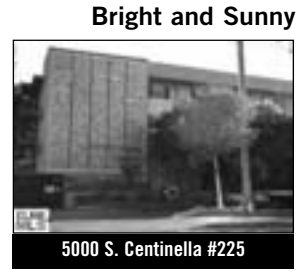
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City needs new plan for commercial buildings



IN YOUR SPACE

BY CHRISTINA S. PORTER

City Hall is embarking on a long and arduous process of updating its general plan, which will govern development in Santa Monica for decades to come. I am not sure what the final plan will include but I believe that there are several reasons for a revision. I have listed a few of them below.

1. Congested traffic. I am sure you have noticed that getting in, out of, and around Santa Monica is increasingly difficult due to traffic congestion. Getting to east the 405 can be a true nightmare, depending on what time of day you are traveling.

2. Functionally obsolete industrial properties. I think functionally obsolete industrial properties are one of the most significant reasons for revisions to the general plan. Most, if not all, of the industrial properties located in Santa Monica have become functionally obsolete — some of them curable and some of them not — for industrial uses. Industrial buildings that come on the market for lease or sale, are being offered at prices that are too high for a manufacturer, making them nonfunctional for their originally intended use. Not only is the rent/sales price too expensive for the basic industrial use but the parking allotted for those properties is severely insufficient as most of them were built before there were so many cars. City Hall might have seen this coming and with a stroke of genius created the Light Manufacturing Studio District (LMSD); which is defined by the city's Web site as "The Light Manufacturing and Studio District is intended to preserve existing light industrial uses; provide a location for studio-related uses such as film and music production and post-production facilities uses, and provide opportunities for artist studio live/work residential development. The Light Manufacturing and Studio District is also designed to accommodate visual and performing arts studios and to provide for the preservation and expansion of existing schools. Allowable development intensity with this district is intended to be among the lowest in the city, consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan."

The entertainment industry can afford the prices being paid for these properties. And it's evident when driving down Cloverfield Boulevard that they have accepted the invitation the city of Santa Monica has extended by creating the LMSD. Incidentally, the only other zones that allow industrial uses are C5 and M1 and both of these zones house many entertainment companies. The M1 zone is officially called the "M1 Industrial Conservation District" and part of the purpose is "for the preservation of light manufacturing," along with the allowance of similar uses as the LMSD. The M2 zone (heavy manufacturing) no longer exists. It's clear that the extinction of the industrial zones in Santa Monica is at hand.

3. Market conditions. Although City Hall obviously had insight in 1995 when it created the LMSD, the commercial real estate market conditions in Santa Monica (and surrounding areas) are what some might call "hyper tight," creating a relatively new dynamic that may very well be adding to the need for a general plan revision. There is a tremendous amount of money chasing a finite amount of property in reaction to many things — among them is a significant demand for high density housing, creative office uses and mixed use developments. Office, industrial, retail, and multi-family properties are all selling for record setting prices, not to mention the prices being paid for a possible development site. This may be a "bubble," but short of a natural disaster or a terrorist attack, I can't imagine that the demand for real estate in Santa Monica will ever drop significantly.

4. Demand for mixed use projects. There is an increasing demand for mixed use projects. They can include retail on the ground floor; office on the second floor and housing on the floors above. You can find many of them already built in Santa Monica like The Tides Building, Fourth Street and Santa Monica Boulevard; The Breeze Suites, Sixth Street and Broadway; the entire block between Colorado Avenue and Broadway on Sixth Street, along with many others. The idea is that people will live, work and shop in the same area, eliminating the need to drive and therefore, alleviating the traffic problem. A prime example of this is the proposal that Macerich Co. which owns Santa Monica Place, has made for the redevelopment of the mall. Although I don't have details of the proposal, the first proposal included three 21 story towers that will be dedicated to residential use along with a good amount of office, retail and park space. I don't think we will see 21-story towers in Santa Monica and it appears to me that City Hall has shown that it's interested in more mixed use projects. The demand for mixed use continues and has extended to the industrial preservation zones.

If history tells us anything the changes, if any, will be well thought out and carefully done.

(The above is for informational purposes only and not meant to be take as advice. Christina S. Porter is in the business of lease and selling office and industrial buildings she can be reached at cporter@naicapital.com.)

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INTERNATIONAL

Continental divide: Martin, Fox, Bush look to mend ties

BY TOM RAUM
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Early in his first term, President Bush proposed easing immigration restrictions and establishing a free trade zone throughout the hemisphere. His first two foreign trips were to Mexico and Canada, emphasizing their importance.

Four years later, both initiatives are unfulfilled, not even on the agenda as Bush meets Wednesday in Texas with Mexican President Vicente Fox and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin.

Instead, the North American leaders will sign a pact pledging to increase border security without hindering the flow of goods or the millions of people that cross the two borders every day. They will agree to more cooperation on energy exploration and on combatting terrorism and drug trafficking. And they will agree to move toward a system of common import duties on goods from China and other exporting nations and blocs.

The three leaders will meet at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and then over lunch at Bush's ranch in nearby Crawford.

They are not expected to propose any fundamental changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement, the landmark 1994 pact that ended tariffs on most goods traded within the three nations.

Bush's earlier vision of extending NAFTA to other democracies in the hemisphere — supported by Mexico and Canada — appears in limbo, in large part due to resistance led by Brazil, South America's largest economy.

"There will be some high rhetoric about the North American community and so forth. But my expectations are low" for the session, said Gary Hufbauer, an economist and trade expert with the Washington-based Institute for International Economics.

"It's not clear to me that any of the three leaders want to commit significant capital to addressing either the current frictions within NAFTA or expanding NAFTA," said Hufbauer, who was a Treasury Department official in both the Ford and Carter administrations.

Bush's hopes for a guest-worker program were dashed by the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, which refocused U.S. attention on securing borders. Bush still advocates liberalizing immigration, but the proposal has generated broad opposition among conservatives.

U.S. relations with neighbors were strained by the Iraq war, which was opposed by both Fox and then-Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien. While all agree ties are on the mend, there have been some recent irritants.

Martin, who took office last year, caught Washington by surprise last month when he rebuffed Bush's offer to include Canada in the U.S. missile defense program. Tensions remain despite attempts by the two leaders to patch up their differences by phone.

Tea for three

By The Associated Press

Key issues before President Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin and Mexican President Vicente Fox at their meeting Wednesday in Texas.

■ Initiative for North America. The three leaders are expected to sign a pact designed to increase border security without hindering trade or normal border crossings. They are also expected to propose a common tariff approach to make North American products more competitive with imports from China and other exporting nations and blocs.

■ The North American Free Trade Agreement. No fundamental changes are expected to be recommended for the 11-year-old landmark pact that eliminated most tariffs on products traded among the three countries. Bush earlier proposed expanding NAFTA to the rest of the hemisphere, but the initiative seems dead in the water for now, in part due to resistance from Brazil, South America's largest economy.

■ Immigration. Fox may press for immigration liberalization, but both Mexican and U.S. officials agree Bush's proposal for a "guest worker" program continues to face considerable obstacles in Congress, especially from conservatives.

■ Terrorism. The leaders are expected to vow to continue to work together in battling terrorism. They could address U.S. concerns that al-Qaida agents may be coming into the United States from Mexico, a suggestion Mexican officials dispute.

■ Missile defense. Canada last month snubbed Washington on missile defense, opting out of the Bush administration's plans for a missile shield to protect the United States and some allies from ballistic nuclear missile attack. The issue continues to be a sore point between the United States and Canada.

■ Canadian beef and softwood lumber. Martin may press on the continued closure of the U.S. border to Canadian beef related to mad cow disease and a long-running dispute over duties on softwood lumber.

■ Drug trafficking. The three leaders are expected to agree to step up efforts to combat drug trafficking. Some U.S. officials have suggested Mexico could do more, but Fox has bristled at such criticism.

■ Energy. The leaders will agree on more cooperation on energy exploration.

■ Other border issues. Fox has complained about militia-type vigilante groups hunting and killing Mexican immigrants along the Arizona border.

■ Other trade issues. Bush may raise objections to Mexico's 20 percent tax on soft drinks containing high fructose corn syrup.

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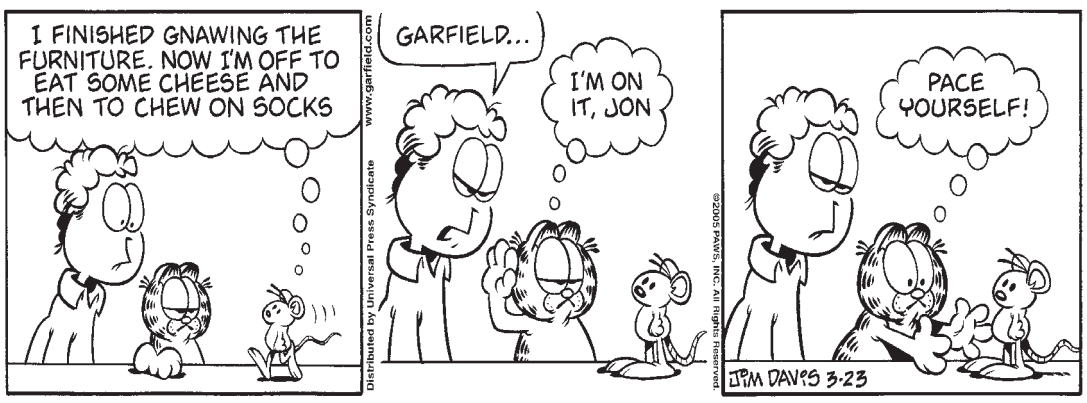
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