

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

11 27 34 39 43
Meganumber: 21
Jackpot: \$48 Million

FANTASY 5

8 11 23 32 37

DAILY 3

Daytime: 3 3 1
Evening: 3 5 2

DAILY DERBY

1st: 10 Solid Gold
2nd: 06 Whirl Win
3rd: 12 Lucky Charms

RACE TIME: 1.49.72

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site: <http://www.calottery.com>

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

Twice in a two-week period, couples were found asphyxiated and enjoined in sexual positions in cars whose engines had been running in closed garages. A New York City couple, ages 28 and 21, who had been dating about a month, died in March, and a Milwaukee, Wis., couple, ages 23 and 17, died in February in a car whose engine had quit (though still with plenty of gas) because the concentration of carbon monoxide had prevented oxygen intake to the engine.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 97th day of 2006.
There are 268 days left in the year.

On April 7, 1862, Union forces led by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant defeated the Confederates at the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee.

In 1927, an audience in New York saw an image of Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover in the first successful long-distance demonstration of television.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Only where there is language is there world."

ADRIENNE RICH
AMERICAN POET

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The ball's in his court



Chris Ojikian, owner of Ojikian Tennis, puts students through some drills during the Cardio Tennis open house at the Yahoo Center on Thursday.

Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

City Planners greenlight beach club renovations

BY KEVIN HERRERA

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Despite threats of a lawsuit, the Planning Commission Wednesday approved plans for the creation of a public beach club at the old Marion Davies estate.

The unanimous decision moves the project, now a decade in the making, to the next phase of development, where it must be reviewed and approved by the Landmarks Commission and the City Council before going before the state's Coastal Commission.

News of the vote was warmly received by supporters of the project, who rallied together in advance of the commission's meeting to fight off attempts by a handful of homeowners looking to block the project.

Homeowners living near the estate have threatened to sue City Hall if the beach club is built, unless elected officials sign a con-

"You may laugh at that, but the weekend is when we have the highest amount of traffic."

JULIE DAD

Planning Commissioner

tract that enforces certain operating conditions, such as 24-hour security, enhanced lighting and the installation of a traffic signal at the beach club's proposed entrance and exit along a dangerous stretch of the Pacific Coast Highway.

City Attorney Marsha Moutrie has advised against any such agreement that would bind City Hall indefinitely, and has suggest-

See **BEACH CLUB**, page 9

STATE

Police choke pit bull after it turned on boy

By The Associated Press

IRWINDALE, Calif. — A police officer strangled a pit bull that was mauling a 6-year-old boy in the backyard of a home on Wednesday.

Officers killed the dog in an effort to free the boy, Sgt. John Falone said. The boy was attacked while playing with his sister in the backyard.

The dog was a family pet.

The boy was airlifted to Childrens Hospital Los Angeles with cuts to his face and torso. His name and condition weren't released.

Officer Raymond Gonzalez kicked down a small wooden fence to get into the backyard and he used a rope to strangle the dog.

Gonzalez, who formerly handled police canines for the city, suffered a cut hand, Falone said.

'Bring' it: Officials cite need for \$12B

BY KEVIN HERRERA

Daily Press Staff Writer

MIDNIGHT MISSION — To house the estimated 90,000 homeless people in Los Angeles County over the next 10 years, elected officials at the local, state and federal level must work together to identify \$12 billion, much of which would go towards affordable housing, new shelters and enhanced services, according to a plan unveiled Thursday.

"My mother always says, 'we need less talk and more action.' Well, the time for action is now," said City Councilman Richard Bloom, who was joined by, among others, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, County Supervisors Zev Yaroslavsky and Sheriff Lee Baca for the release of a 10-year-plan to end homelessness, which was developed by a panel of experts over a three-year period under the banner of "Bring Los Angeles Home," or BLAH.

Implementing the plan, detailed in a 116-page report, may seem daunting and expensive, but the costs of doing nothing are far greater, elected officials said, as they encouraged everyone — from the state Legislature to federal officials to the average citizen — to lend a helping hand to those in need.

"This is an investment, make no mistake," Villaraigosa said during a news conference at downtown Los Angeles' Midnight Mission, where just a few feet away dozens of homeless, including young children and their mothers, were gathered to receive food and shelter. "It's one we're willing to make together. We will not be the city with the ignominious distinction of being the homeless capital of America, but a city with a new model, a new plan, a city on the other side of midnight."

Villaraigosa was referring to a

See **BLAH**, page 8

Jacquie Banks

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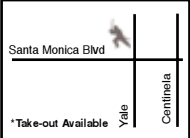
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Santa Monica Daily Press



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)

★★★★★ Possibilities seem to file in front of you. Yes, you might feel overwhelmed, and yes, you can make waves. Optimism, creativity and good will surround your life. Join in and let events unfurl. The good life is here. Tonight: Need we remind you that it's Friday evening?



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ Others cannot do enough for you. Why not let them show their caring? Your personal and domestic life benefits from others' willingness and suggestions. Sit back, dear Bull, and enjoy yourself. Listen. Tonight: At home.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ You have a lot of ground to cover, and quite quickly at that. You will be able to do what you want, and more. Remain positive, and others will respond. Your high energy helps others as well. Schedule an important talk. Tonight: Easy does it.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ Sometimes you could be overwhelmed by what goes on in your immediate environment. You find that others have a very caring style. You might want to take a risk. Make sure you can absorb the damages. Tonight: Ever playful.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Your fire and get-up-and-go will make a difference. Others cannot wait to join in and be part of the changes around you. Enthusiasm seems to follow you left and right. An emotional or financial investment proves to be great. Tonight: At home wherever you are.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ If you maintain a low profile, you will gain. Your smile and actions say much more than your words at this point. You will see how a situation reverses in your favor if you simply keep mum. Tonight: An offer might be too good to turn down.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ You zero in on a long-term desire just by being yourself. Laugh and relax. Yes, you might spend a lot to make yourself happy, but make that OK. In the long run, being happy is more important. You'll loosen others up on the way. Tonight: Happy as a cat.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ Someone you respect has many great ideas. Brainstorm together, and you could be delighted by what will come up. Anything is possible. Trust in the power of positive thought and an enthusiastic attitude. Tonight: Out and about.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ Your sixth sense points out the direction. You will want to explore mentally or literally. Do just that, because a happy Sagittarius is an adventurous one. Don't hold yourself back; go forward with confidence. Tonight: Take off ASAP.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ You might want to take another path or head in a new direction. Your ability to handle change positively emerges once more. Friends point you in the proper direction. Don't stop at Go. Tonight: Happy as a cat.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ Slow down, and you will come out smiling. Once more, listen to what is being said. Others might expect a lot from you. Remember, you need to set your boundaries and limits. Move slowly. Tonight: Accept another's idea, or don't go. No one is in the mood to give up on what he or she thinks is a great idea.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★ News could cause excitement and a change in your plans. Be ready to toss the status quo into midair. You will be a lot happier if you lie back and relax. Others knock on your door with ideas and support. Tonight: Tune in to what you feel.



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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Police pursuit an award-winning chase

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica’s criminal suspects may find it more difficult than ever to outrun police.

Chief James T. Butts, Jr. recently announced that the Santa Monica Police Department’s 2006 Baker to Vegas Team finished third out of 24 teams in its division. The team’s time was 15 hours, 40 minutes and 59 seconds, its best placement yet.

On April 1, the SMPD participated in the 22nd Annual Baker to Vegas Challenge Relay Race. This year, officers ran the race in memory of Rick Crocker, a Santa Monica police officer and a major in the United States Marine Corp. Crocker was killed in 2005 in a rocket-propelled grenade attack during his second tour of duty in Iraq.

The Baker to Vegas Challenge Cup Relay is the largest and most unique law enforcement race in the world. It’s a 120-mile, 20-stage foot relay race, which starts in Baker, Calif., and continues through the California desert, over the mountains, to Las Vegas.

The SMPD gave special thanks to the three team captains: detective HeeSeok Ahn, motor officer Shaun Nichols, K-9 officer Roberto Villegas and the support volunteers.

Sustainable quality awards announced

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica’s tradition of honoring its environmentally-conscious businesses continues, with the naming of this year’s finalists for the Sustainable Quality Awards (SQA).

For 11 years the SQA has celebrated business’ achievements in economic development, social responsibility and stewardship of the natural environment.

The annual awards are sponsored by the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce and City Hall.

“Versatile, dynamic, responsive and profitable businesses are required as the driving force for sustainable communities and contribute to the on going integration and resolution of environmental, social and economic challenges,” said Kathy Dodson, president and CEO of the chamber.

This year’s finalists have made a commitment to leadership in sustainable business practices and are part of the driving force in a sustainable Santa Monica. They include: Allen Janitorial Supply; The Ambrose Hotel; Boys and Girls Club; California Recycles; EDSA; Euphoria café; Koning Eizenberg Architecture; Patagonia; RAND Corp.; UnUrban Coffeehouse; and Waldorf, ECC.

The judging will take place in early April and winners will be honored at the Chamber of Commerce luncheon on May 2 and at the Santa Monica Festival on May 13.

The luncheon will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on May 2 at the Le Merigot Hotel. Tickets can be purchased at www.smchamber.com/events.

SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS					DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM
BEAR MOUNTAIN					
NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 12"	BASE DEPTH 36" - 72"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 27	LIFTS OPEN 11/12	
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder					
JUNE MOUNTAIN					
NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 144" - 168"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 50	LIFTS OPEN 6/6	
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed					
MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN					
NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 6"	BASE DEPTH 12" - 36"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 50	LIFTS OPEN 8/28	
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed					
MOUNTAIN HIGH					
NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12" - 36"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 10:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 23	LIFTS OPEN 8/16	
CONDITIONS: Spring, Wet					
MT. BALDY					
NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12" - 36"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 4:30 pm	RUNS OPEN 22	LIFTS OPEN 4/4	
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed					
SNOW SUMMIT					
NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 12"	BASE DEPTH 36" - 72"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:30 pm	RUNS OPEN 26	LIFTS OPEN 14/14	
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder					
SNOW VALLEY					
NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 26"	BASE DEPTH 42" - 72"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 22	LIFTS OPEN 5/11	
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder					

CONDITIONS

WATER TEMP: 56°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (1-5 FT)

Today we'll see another swath of SW swell from a system that stirred up in the lower 50s last week. The NW will fade even more, leaving the best size around south facing breaks in the waist high + zone. West facing breaks can expect knee to waist high surf.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

SW and NW for weekend...
South swell due 11th...
Significant WNW swell on 12th...
Rain and wind issues in the forecast...

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA

MONDAY

LOW TIDE
HIGH TIDE

8:39AM
12:41AM

0.8FT
5.2FT

6:21PM
4:32PM

2.8FT
2.8FT

TUESDAY

LOW TIDE
HIGH TIDE

10:14AM
1:37AM

0.3FT
4.7FT

8:21PM
7:23PM

3.2FT
3.2FT

WEDNESDAY

LOW TIDE
HIGH TIDE

11:40AM
3:08AM

0.2FT
4.3FT

11:29PM
7:31PM

3.1FT
3.5FT

THURSDAY

LOW TIDE
HIGH TIDE

N/A
4:55AM

N/A
4.2FT

12:40PM
7:50PM

0.1FT
3.8FT

FRIDAY

LOW TIDE
HIGH TIDE

12:41AM
6:11AM

2.6FT
4.3FT

1:21PM
8:09PM

0.0FT
4.0FT

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The streets of Santa Monica and across the Southland rang out with the cries of protesters last week, decrying efforts by the U.S. government to enact stricter legislation against illegal immigrants. Many of last week's protests were spearheaded by high school students, who staged a series of "walkouts" — leaving school to march and make their voices heard.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know: **Should students be excused from school to exercise their freedoms of speech, or does this open the floodgates for all students to skip out on classes for any causes?**

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- Clean inside microwave
- Clean range top
- Damp wipe cabinet doors
- Clean counters
- Hand wash floor
- Load dishwasher

BATHROOMS

- Clean sinks, counters; change towels
- Clean, disinfect toilets, tubs, showers
- Hand wash, disinfect floors

ALL ROOMS

- Pick up & straighten
- Dust sills, ledges, wall hangings
- Remove cobwebs
- Dust/vacuum furniture
- Vacuum floors, carpets
- Vacuum stairs
- Vacuum under beds
- Change linens, make beds
- Empty trash

WINDOWS

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- Clean window over kitchen sink

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LOCAL

Beach Tennis courts fans for national tour

By Daily Press staff

SM BEACH — A tennis tournament here this weekend will kick off a national tour for Beach Tennis USA.

Beach Tennis USA, the organization that launched the sport of beach tennis in North America last year, will feature high-caliber play by local tennis pros as well as top-ranked players from last season's tour.

Last year, Beach Tennis USA held tournaments and "learn and play" events in cities along the East Coast. Through a grass-roots campaign, the company introduced beach tennis to people of all ages and skill levels as more than 25,000 Americans played the sport between last May and September, event organizers say.

The event will be held at Santa Monica Beach, just south of the Santa Monica Pier between lifeguard stations 17 and 18, and directly across from Shutters on the Beach Hotel Resort.

The tournament will begin on Saturday with registration at 11 a.m. Open play starts at noon and ends at 6 p.m. On Sunday, open play begins at 11 a.m. and the tournament begins at 1 p.m., ending at 6 p.m.

There also will be a "fun division" for those who are more interested in learning a new sport while enjoying a day at the beach. Tennis rackets and tennis balls will be provided and there is no fee to play. Instruction will be provided all day. Beach

tennis is played on a regulation beach volleyball court. Using regulation tennis rackets, two players on each team try to hit a tennis ball back and forth, directly over the net, without letting it hit the sand. Only one hit per team is allowed on each volley and scoring is the same as in tennis. If a player's serve hits the net and goes over, it counts — just as in beach volleyball.

The founders of Beach Tennis USA are Marc Altheim, a New York City real estate developer, and his uncle, Fredric Finkelstein, a New York marketing and advertising executive, and Sjoerd de Vries, of Aruba. They started the company with the ultimate goal of making beach tennis a mainstream American sport.

Beach Tennis USA will head cross-country to Florida and then work its way up the East Coast. In addition to pro-level competition, events in each city along the tour will include teaching clinics for adults and children who want to learn how to play beach tennis. For the tournaments, Beach Tennis USA will draw its talent pool from 2005's top-ranked players as well as newly recruited pros in the cities that will host the tour events.

Players wishing to compete in either of Beach Tennis USA's California weekend tournaments should contact James Russo at (212) 318-1828 or jrusso@beachtennis-usa.net. For a full listing of events on the Beach Tennis USA 2006 National Tour, visit www.beachtennisusa.net.

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LOCAL



CRIME WATCH

By Daily Press staff

A hunka, hunka burning love

On Saturday, April 1, at 11:35 p.m., Santa Monica Police officers responded to the 1200 block of 12th Street regarding an arson investigation at a private residence. When officers arrived, they spoke with a woman who said she set a batch of her boyfriend's clothes on fire as she was smoking a cigarette. The woman, 27, of Santa Monica, allegedly told officers that she wanted her boyfriend to move out and had placed some of his clothes on the front porch as motivation for him to leave. While on the porch smoking, she said she tossed her cigarette on the clothes, causing them to catch fire, police said. Firefighters were called to the scene and quickly extinguished the blaze. She was arrested and booked for arson. Her bail was set at \$50,000.

On Wednesday, March 29, at 6:15 p.m., undercover detectives were in the area of Lincoln Boulevard and Marine Street when they saw a young woman loitering for what they believed was the purpose of prostitution. An undercover detective approached the female and the two began to talk about exchanging sex for money, police said. The young woman was placed under arrest for prostitution. She was identified as Shenelle Heart Gaines, 18, of Los Angeles. She was booked for prostitution and a probation violation. Her bail was set at \$10,000.

On Wednesday, March 29, at 1:33 a.m., police responded to the 1800 block of Ninth Street, the CLARE Foundation, after receiving a call that someone had been stabbed there. When officers arrived, they saw several men trying to detain a subject who they said was responsible for the attack, police said. When officers spoke to the alleged victim, they saw he had been stabbed several times to the lower torso. The victim told police that while he was in his room, the suspect entered and began to stab him. The two knew each other, police said. The victim was transported to a local hospital, where he was treated for his injuries and released. The suspect, identified as Ryan Elliot Giroux, 32, of Santa Monica, was taken to jail and booked for attempted murder and a parole violation. No bail was set.

On Sunday, March 26, at 2:20 p.m., police responded to the 300 block of Santa Monica Boulevard — Tower Records — regarding a possible theft. When they arrived on scene, they spoke with an employee at the music store who told them he saw a man enter the store and remove security sensors from several CDs and then placed them in his shorts before walking out without paying for the items. He was confronted by security once outside the store. Police said security found \$32.98 worth of merchandise. The man was booked for commercial burglary. The suspect's name is James Andrew Fitzmaurice, 25, a transient.

On Tuesday, March 28, at 8:33 p.m., police responded to O'Briens Pub in the 2900 block of Main Street regarding a man who allegedly pulled out a knife and threatened to attack bouncers at the bar who refused to let him into the pub. Police said the bouncers had asked the man for identification. He refused and got into an argument with security, and during the argument, pulled out a knife. Officers arrested the man, who was booked for assault with a deadly weapon. He was identified as Victor Raymon Lozowski, 35, of Hollywood. His bail was set at \$25,000.

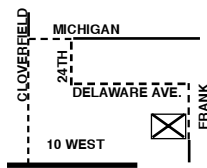
On Thursday, March 30, at 2 p.m., officers were called to the Santa Monica Pier regarding a suspect who witnesses had seen writing graffiti on city property. Officers said they saw the suspect writing graffiti on a bathroom wall. He was placed under arrest and booked for vandalism. He was identified as Benjamin Gonzalez, 22, a transient. His bail was set at \$10,000.

On Saturday, April 1, at 3:29 p.m., police responded to the Urban Outfitters store on the Third Street Promenade after receiving a report of a petty theft suspect in custody. When officers arrived, they spoke with a security guard at the store who said a woman activated the store's security system when she tried to leave the store. Security confronted the woman and asked her to swing her purse through the sensor again, at which time the alarm went off again. When officers searched her purse, police said they found several items that were stolen from Urban Outfitters and two additional stores on the Promenade. Some of the items found were an umbrella, three T-shirts, three ruffled panties and a flask. Officers arrested the woman and she was booked for theft. She was identified as Carolyn Tran, 19, of Winnetka.

On Saturday, April 1, at 5:35 p.m., officers responded to the 1900 block of 19th Street regarding a suspicious vehicle. When officers arrived, they approached the vehicle and said they could smell a strong odor of marijuana coming from within the vehicle. Officers said they could also see a clear, plastic baggy containing a "green leafy substance." When officers asked the driver to step out of the car, he told them that he had some marijuana on him, police said. Officers allegedly found crack cocaine, and a crack pipe on the subject. He was arrested and booked for possession of a controlled substance and a parole violation. The suspect is identified as Timothy Sean Mansion, 25, of Santa Monica. No bail was set.

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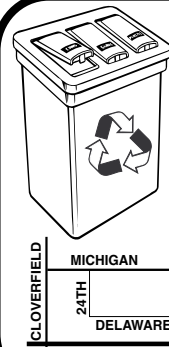
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OPINION

EDITORIAL

Time for neighbors to help shoulder load



Now that Los Angeles County supervisors have allocated \$100 million toward solving the homeless problem in 88 different cities, Santa Monica needs to go on the defensive.

Why? Because supervisors will be looking at Santa Monica as one of five potential cities to put a “regional stabilization facility,” the main concept behind the plan approved Tuesday. The idea would be to convert existing smaller facilities that serve as drop-in centers and temporary shelters into 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operations that will be used to house up to 40 people and provide them with social service programs.

The local facility being eyed by supervisors is Ocean Park Community Center’s SAMOSHEL, an-already crowded shelter located at the corner of Seventh Street and Colorado Avenue. The shelter is attached to OPCC’s day center, which offers drop-in services such as clothes, food and counseling.

We applaud the supervisors for allocating the money in an attempt to solve the growing issue of homelessness, especially since the federal government continues to ignore the national problem. We also applaud our local elected officials for taking recent steps to ensure other jurisdictions understand that they must play a role in the solution.

The majority of our City Council knows that Santa Monica has taken on more than its fair share of humanitarian causes when it comes to this issue and now it’s time for other cities to do the same. Therefore, these new “regional stabilization facilities” need to go somewhere else besides Santa Monica. We agree with City Councilman Bobby Shriver that placing a regional center here would be counter to the local government’s efforts to get others involved.

It’s pretty safe to assume that all cities will fight against such a facility being put in their communities. We expect the “Not In My Back Yard” syndrome to become the mantra for years to come while officials sort it all out. We expect that to be the case here in Santa Monica and support it.

As part of the county initiative, local governments have no power to block construction of the shelters. While we understand the purpose is to force the hand of some cities who would never agree to it, Santa Monica could become one of them. We call upon our local leaders, especially our new “homeless czar,” Ed Edelman, who is a former county supervisor, to nurture their relationships with high-ranking politicians and convince the current county board to keep Santa Monica out of its plan.

Local officials are right when they say it’s time for surrounding Westside cities to step up to the plate and begin bearing some of the burden of helping the homeless population. Santa Monica already has close to 2,000 people sleeping on the streets daily, and that’s partly because of the services the city offers to them.

This eight-square-mile city can’t handle the influx of homeless individuals these centers will bring. They’ll be used by law enforcement as an alternative to arresting homeless people with minor offenses but in need of social services. The centers also will serve people who are discharged from county jails and hospitals who have no where to go.

Most plans dreamed up by politicians, like the one unveiled Thursday which will supposedly end homelessness in 10 years, are typically unrealistic. While it won’t put a dent in getting the 90,000 homeless people off the street in LA County, the supervisors’ plan does give people who really need help a chance to get it through on-site counseling for everything from drug and alcohol abuse to mental illness and applying for government aid.

Arguably, the two most dense areas of homeless populations are Skid Row downtown and the Westside cities of Santa Monica and Venice. Some say providing regional centers is one way to spread the population, but others contend it’s just spreading the problem. Perhaps. But until the federal government gets serious about taking care of its own, it’s going to have to a patchwork of solutions from state, county and municipal governments.

Santa Monica has done its part. Now it’s somebody else’s turn. How about it Brentwood? Beverly Hills? Culver City? We’re comin’ a knockin’, hopefully you’ll let us in.

Keeping the dogma at bay in keeping true to heritage

THE SOAP BOX BY BENNET KELLEY



A Missouri House Committee recently ignited debate over whether the United States was a “Christian nation” when it approved a resolution that the founding fathers “recognized a Christian God and used the principles afforded to us by him as the founding principles of our nation.”

This resolution is not the first of its kind and follows the 2004 Texas Republican party’s platform which declared that the “United States of America is a Christian nation.” The Christian nation movement is part of an escalating assault on the separation of church and state by the Republican right, so that the real question today is not whether we are a Christian nation but whether we are still a First Amendment nation.

Pat Robertson has often commented that the phrase “separation of church and state” appears in the Soviet, not the United States Constitution and that “our judicial establishment (has successfully imposed) the Soviet strictures on the United States.” While Robertson’s views were once on the fringe of the Republican Party, today they are echoed by Republican leaders such as former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay and Senate Conference Chairman Rick Santorum.

The Republicans are actively seeking to implement their vision of a Christian nation through programs such as the Faith-Based Initiative which seeks to expand the role of faith-based organizations (“FBOs”) in providing federally funded social services. In implementing this program, the Bush administration removed several constitutionally required safeguards (e.g., allowing federal funds to build religious structures) and limited oversight to “self-audits.” Not surprisingly, courts have found a number of grants to FBOs, such as a grant to instruct nursing students on the use of prayer as a therapeutic practice, to be unconstitutional.

Christian nation advocates should leave their red state cocoon and stand on the banks of the Providence River. For this is where Roger Williams, who had been banished from Massachusetts by the Puritans for his religious views, founded the colony of Rhode Island in 1636 based on his vision that there should be a “wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world,” and that religious freedom must extend to all and not just Christians. As a result of Williams’ vision, Rhode Island became known as “the safest refuge of conscience” and home to the New World’s

first Baptist Church and synagogue.

The seed sown by Williams ultimately blossomed into the First Amendment, which in the words of Thomas Jefferson prohibits Congress from enacting any “law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between church and state.” While it is true that the actual phrase “separation of church and state” does not appear in the First Amendment, the concept was invoked by the First Amendment’s author, James Madison, who explained that “(t)he purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe with blood for centuries.” The founders also addressed the Christian nation question in the Treaty of Tripoli, signed under President Washington and ratified under President Adams, which states that “the government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”

Robertson, DeLay, Santorum and even Roy Moore, Alabama’s infamous “Ten Commandments” judge, all condemn the courts for failing to interpret the Constitution according to its “original intent.” To DeLay this is the product of “an imperial judiciary that knows no bounds to its power or its tenure” and “is a recipe for tyranny.”

They are right about the “recipe for tyranny,” except that they are its cooks. To advance their war against the separation of church and state they must ignore the intent of the nation’s first four presidents and, instead, embrace the views of the Puritans that Roger Williams rejected 370 years ago.

It is an outrage that while our troops are fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan. At home the Republican right is embracing its American equivalent — the “Alabamaban.” Not only is the Alabamaban’s Christian nation movement a repudiation of our founding principles, but it also has nothing to do with promoting the actual teachings of Christ and is instead driven by the Alabamaban’s desire to impose their dogma on others.

For more than two centuries Americans of all faiths have freely worshiped because the United States was founded as a First Amendment nation based on tolerance and pluralism. This is because our founders recognized what the Alabamaban and their supporters in Missouri simply do not — that only in a nation so conceived and so dedicated can we freely be a Christian — or Jewish, Islamic, Hindu or Agnostic — nation.

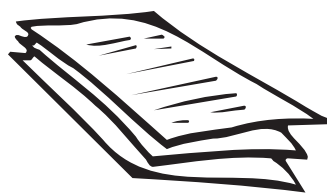
(Bennet Kelley (bennet@bennetkelley.com) is the former national co-chair of the Democratic National Committee’s young professional arm, a native Rhode Islander and a Santa Monica attorney.)

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

City has become a ‘bizarre campground’

Editor:

While I sincerely respect Mr. Grymkowski of HOPE and his concern for his fellow man, serving lunch to 150 homeless in Palisades Park each day does nothing good for the city of Santa Monica.

Like it or not, we live in a tourist town, and much of our success relies on visitors enjoying themselves and returning regularly. Having scores of homeless congregate in one of the most beautiful parks in the world is both intimidating and embarrassing, since it makes it painfully obvious that our city has no control over the homeless situation.

Sadly, it’s even more obvious to residents. We see the same homeless in the same locations day after day: The man with the matted hair at Seventh and Wilshire; the woman wrapped in blankets conversing with her reflection in Promenade store windows; the man with the huge lump on his head who hits people up for change or cigarettes in the Staples parking lot on Lincoln.

These are people with serious issues. We can’t call them transients, since they don’t seem to go anywhere. The entire city has become a bizarre campground.

Even a city as large as New York, once thought unmanageable, has learned that paying attention to “quality of life” issues and minor crimes lowers the overall crime rate and improves life for all. But Santa Monica seems to have ignored a small problem long enough for it to become a citywide blemish, angering residents and making it unpleasant to walk our streets, enjoy our parks as they were intended or even use our public restrooms.

Until we pass and yes, enforce laws on vagrancy, loitering and camping in public spaces, and come up with a proper location to feed, process and find help for those who truly need it, Santa Monica will remain the poster child for civil mismanagement.

Based on public outcry, I don’t think our City Council should get too comfortable. The homeless problem stares Santa Monica residents in the face every day, and I would think that anyone with some political ambition and the backbone to do something about it could gain a seat in the coming election.

Matthew Finio
Santa Monica

Turning your back on homeless is criminal

Editor:

I have been reading editorials from the Santa Monica Daily Press newspaper for some time and I have noted the increasing hatred expressed from some residents on the homeless issue. Needless to say, it is increasing as time progresses with statements such as these, “business leaders who were part of the public safety task force put pressure on the City Council to do something about the growing homeless population and the anti-social behavior they bring along with them.”

As a result of this, I feel it would be criminal not to say anything. The abolitionist John Russwurm once said, “We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us.”

I am currently homeless, and I am tired of having to endure glares, open hostility, and the unjust indignation that some Santa Monica residents display. I am also fed up with the police abuse endorsed by the highbrow residents of Santa Monica.

However, I don’t escape the blame. I am guilty of sitting silent for so long. I did not want to bring more light on the matter knowing that just by doing so has prompted a public outcry against the homeless. Many of the affluent look maniacal when the homeless topic crops up. I was delusional in hoping that sense and compassion will prevail. I recognize now what Florynce Kennedy meant when she said, “You’ve got to rattle your cage door. You’ve got to let them know that you’re in there, and that you want out.”

Thus, I am rattling to let the more conservative affluent members of the community know we deserve to be treated with respect and to stop kicking people when they are down. There is no easy solutions to the homeless problem, and hatred disguised as righteous indignation and entitlement. Carter G. Woodson the historian said, “Man is terribly selfish, and he will take his chances for keeping things as they are in his favor rather than yield to any sacrifice of his position as an exploiter and self-styled superior of his victims.”

Draconian “quality of life” laws criminalize homelessness such as sitting on a crate, riding a bike on a sidewalk and having a shopping cart. It costs millions of dollars every year to incarcerate and prosecute people just for being homeless. Not long ago, an article appeared in the Santa Monica Press about 12 people who were rounded up by the police and arrested for living under the freeway. The article was slanted to present the homeless as a major criminal element in Santa Monica.

The lack of affordable housing in the Los Angeles area generally, along with low-wage jobs, high unemployment, growing affluent and continuing institutional racism are pushing more people into homelessness and give rise to “sun-down town” environment. Homelessness is not a luxurious or camping endeavor, one has to brave the elements, police abuse and public apathy and disdain. One is criminalized for being on the street. Many of the homeless people are mentally ill and require something other than jail to get them help.

W. E. B. Du Bois said near the end of his life, “Today I see more than yesterday that back of the problem of race and color lies a greater problem which both obscures and implements it: and that is the fact that so many civilized persons are willing to live in comfort even if the price of this poverty, ignorance, and disease of the majority of their fellow men.”

Theodore Henderson
Santa Monica

The Q Line

IRONING OUT THE CITY’S BRAND

Due to our April Fool’s joke last weekend, in which the entire April 1-2 edition was made-up, the responses to the previous week’s Q-Line question didn’t get published.

“What is your current perception of Santa Monica? How can Santa Monica best brand itself as an ‘unforgettable beach city?’”

Here are your responses:

☉ “My current perception of Santa Monica is that our politicians have sold our sleepy little beach city out. Think about it. They welcome high density, parking problems, traffic, low-income housing, the homeless, rodents in the park and a dog beach, all the while banning second-hand smoke. It’s unforgettable all right, just the way it is.

☉ “This can only happen by returning to the past. My family and I have been residents of the city for almost 40 years and remember it as a clean, happy, pleasant and peaceful place to work, travel, shop and play in. That climate has changed for the worse over the years with the growing vagrant population and the filth and overall degrading quality of life around us. Until this problem is remedied, we will never have a beautiful beach city again. There are other problems like too much overgrowth, parking, etc., but vagrancy is the absolute worst.”

☉ “Trust me, anyone who has resided or visited Santa Monica, have that occasion engraved in their conscious mind with a form of memory ink that cannot be erased with laser.”

☉ “We all know very well what the perception of the city is ‘home of the homeless,’ and that is really a euphemism for ‘Skid Row by the sea.’ They are one and the same. That wolf in sheep’s clothing, the ACLU, and the do-gooders, most of whom are from outside Santa Monica, keep this mess going. Until this problem has been cleared up, our wished-for image as a lovely beach community will never become a reality.”

☉ “I love the city of Santa Monica. I have lived here for many years. I am a disabled person, and I think you should fix the streets, because this weekend I was in my wheelchair, and the streets were just awful. So, please fix the streets and put some of the overflow of the money we have into fixing them, OK?”

☉ “My current perception of Santa Monica is that it is one big urinal. It is already an unforgettable beach city because it is so dirty, gross and dangerous now. Living here, one doesn’t have the luxury of forgetting all of the smelly, disgusting transients and the filth that comes with them. Everywhere you look or breathe, there is the stench and the sound of crazy and antagonistic rotting bums. What I have forgotten is how beautiful and clean this city once was. Thanks to our City Council, this city is now one big toilet. Nice job.”

☉ “Unfortunately, Santa Monica already has an unforgettable image or whatever you want to call it, because of the bums. Any time a tourist comes to Santa Monica and had a run-in with a bum on Third Street or at the beach or wherever, these wild-eyed drunken bums harass and spit on them, that tourists will never forget it, you can be sure of that.”

☉ “What is my current perception of Santa Monica? How can Santa Monica brand itself as an unforgettable beach city?

Well, it already has. My perception of Santa Monica is that it’s a neat city, where the debris meets the sea ... one where there is commerce despite the fact the local government police the haves so they can give hand-outs to the have-nots. Actually, the city has a lot more heart than brains. It’s a showcase for homelessness, where having a shopping cart is actually is even a status symbol. There is talk of a shopping cart lane replacing the diamond lane, because the homeless would not have to wait in traffic like the rest of us. I know the police prefer to give jaywalking tickets to the well-groomed and let the homeless slide. It makes me sick. It makes me want to quit my job and buy crack with rent money and hang out all day at the Bum-a-nade.”

☉ “Well, all in all, I think I would rather live in the projects in the inner city. The projects have good underwriting, reliable service contracts, and warranties. Most important, products improve with customer demands and needs, something Santa Monica does not.”

☉ “My perception of Santa Monica is that it is a stinking city over-run by bums, who turn our streets into trash dumps and latrines.”

☉ “Too bad Nat King Cole isn’t here to sing ‘Unforgettable.’ Even his singing couldn’t help the misdirection of this town. Has anyone on the council ever been to the beach, surfed or swam in the ocean? Our leaders are more intent on copying downtown Los Angeles with its high-density population, escalating building heights, traffic, parking and bum issues. Santa Monica needs to look at Laguna Beach, Manhattan Beach or Santa Barbara for examples of efficiently-run, beautiful beach towns. The city has got to restrict its runaway building growth and its endless quest to get more taxes to fund its self-induced problems.”

☉ “We are already branded as an unforgettable beach city. The People’s Republic of Commie-Monica, the Dizzy-land tourist trap and paradise bum beach where apartment owners are policed and with thousands of over-paid and unneeded city employees and programs, yet not one clean toilet or street, we are the city urinal of the Pacific.”

☉ “Many rude and unsafe drivers. The beaches could be kept cleaner.”

☉ “Home of the homeless. That’s my current perception of Santa Monica. How can we best brand the city as an unforgettable beach city? You’ve got to be kidding me. We’re paying somebody over a \$100,000 a year as the head of tourism for Santa Monica, to do this kind of ‘branding’ marketing and advertising. So you want us to do the heavy lifting for Santa Monica, when we’re already paying somebody over \$100,000 a year for a silly job like head of tourism? Give me a break. Clean up the scum and get rid of the bums and let’s start from there.”



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VIOLET-At Violet restaurant the atmosphere is casual, comfortable, and, like its cuisine, is uncluttered. Chef Jared Simons' flavorful small plate fare has something to suit everyone, from light eaters to those with a taste for a more robust fare. The Braised Short Ribs with Shallot Potatoes (\$14.50) melt apart while the Multi-Colored Beet Salad with Eel delights with Kumquat and Ginger Vinaigrette (\$9) and the favorite among the regulars is the Baked Macaroni and Gruyere Cheese with Serrano Ham (\$7.50). Unique selection of new and old world wines by the bottle, glass or flight as well as an impressive list of domestic & imported artisan beers. Hours: Lunch: Tuesday-Friday, 11:30am-2pm. Dinner: Tuesday-Friday, 6pm-10pm & Saturday and Sunday, 5:30pm-10pm. 3221 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica. www.violetrestaurant.com (310) 453-9113.

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LOCAL

Homeless advocates
see plan as 'new dawn'

BLAH, from page 1

song by recording artist Gil Scott-Heron in which the singer refers to midnight as being both the darkest hour, and the beginning of a new day.

"There will be some who say this is just another press conference, that it won't do any good. I see it differently," the mayor said. "For those cynics who see midnight as the darkest hour, I see it as the new dawn. This is the other side of midnight."

The panel said initial funding for the joint city-county \$12 billion plan to build 50,000 short- and long-term affordable housing units could come from a variety of sources, including Villaraigosa's proposed \$1 billion affordable housing bond issue and \$150 million for permanent housing previously announced by the mayor and county officials.

Additional funds could come from tax and fee hikes, securing bonds and tapping into mental health service dollars allocated under Proposition 63, which was approved by state voters in 2004, according to the report.

The group also agreed that \$5 could be leveraged from state and federal sources for every \$1 the city and county spends on affordable housing.

Phil Mangano, executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, promised federal funding — as long as the plan is implemented.

"On this issue of homelessness, partnership trumps partisanship," said Mangano, who was named the nation's homeless czar by President Bush in 2002.

"In this issue, there is no 'D' or 'R,' we're Americans coming together to end a national disgrace."

City and county officials vowed that that past bickering over responsibility of the region's burgeoning homeless population is over. Both government entities have promised to spend more than \$150 million to improve housing for the homeless.

County supervisors approved Tuesday a \$100-million initiative to create five regional, homeless stabilization centers throughout the county to help the down and out get back on their feet. The centers would each provide temporary shelter for

40 people, who would be able to access physical and mental health services as well as register for public assistance.

"The problem is acute in Skid Row, there's no doubt about it, but that's not the only place we have homelessness in this county," said Yaroslavsky, who chided those who might take a "not in my backyard" stance when homeless shelters are built in their neighborhoods.

"This is not a high-rise building, this is not a toxic waste dump," he said. "These are human beings, and all of us should put our shoulders together and embrace these human beings."

Yaroslavsky said that his office has been flooded with calls by residents who are opposed to any homeless shelter being built in their neighborhoods, proof that selling the BLAH plan will be difficult.

"We have to change the whole mentality around homelessness," the supervisor said. "These are not ugly people. They are beautiful people, just like us who are one paycheck, one bankruptcy away from being homeless ourselves."

"All they need is a little help to take their broken lives and put them back together."

The plan also recommended the creation of a homelessness council to coordinate services among county departments after the panel found that more than half of the homeless visited county emergency rooms in 2005.

The BLAH panel included representatives from more than 60 government, business, faith-based and nonprofit groups who didn't always see eye-to-eye on issues during three years worth of meetings, but found a way to come together.

"We all must continue to play a powerful role to gain national, state and local support," Bloom said. "Forming an effective, regional governing body will be key to our success ... This plan is a comprehensive document with over 200 detailed recommendations that we are not in charge of implementing. The only way to do so is by working cooperatively as a region, getting everyone involved. That is the only way we are going to have an impact."



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LOCAL



Planners shrug off threatened lawsuits

BEACH CLUB, from page 1

ed the council could include the operating conditions as part of the site's use permit.

An attorney representing the homeowners said his clients are considering whether or not to file an appeal with City Hall over the commission's vote.

Commissioners said they were aware of the concerns of homeowners as well as the threat of a lawsuit, but decided to vote in favor of the beach club after reviewing scores of concessions City Hall has agreed to make in efforts to appease homeowners.

"We have had an extensive public process in which city staff has worked very hard to address all of the concerns and create a world-class facility that all of us can enjoy," said commissioner Julie Dad. "We have heard doubts, as we always do, but the city can come through as it has in the past. Now is not the time to consider a lawsuit."

The commissioners' decision was made easier after learning from city staff that the California Department of Transportation, Caltrans, had agreed to erect a traffic signal at the club's proposed entrance. The light would only be operational during the weekends, but commissioners felt this was a good first step towards getting a full-time signal installed.

"You may laugh at that, but the weekend is when we have the highest amount of traffic," Dad said. "We can work with that."

The 5.5-acre beachfront estate was built by William Randolph Hearst in the late 1920s for actress and mistress Marion Davies. It was designed by architect Julia Morgan, who created Hearst Castle in San Simeon. The estate had 100 rooms, guest-houses, tennis courts, an elaborately decorated swimming pool, and dog kennel.

The property was sold in the 1940s to a private party and converted to a hotel and beach club. The state purchased the property in 1960. Under an agreement with the state, City Hall leased it to a private beach club — the Sand & Sea Club — and later operated it as a seasonal public beach facility.

Damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake, all structures except the beach cafe have been "red-tagged," or designated as unsafe to occupy.

After an extensive community planning process, in 1999 the council approved a re-use plan that determined the site's

potential as an important public resource, leading to the current development proposal.

If approved as is, the beach club design would preserve and restore the original swimming pool, which is constructed of Italian marble tiles with inlaid designs. The north house would also be rehabilitated along with its interior design, including hand-painted bathroom tile, the marble fireplace, cabinets, and a crystal chandelier.

New facilities include an entry pavilion, an event house and pool house (for more information, go to 415pch.smgov.net).

The project is being funded primarily through a \$28 million grant from the Annenberg Foundation.

If a lawsuit is filed, there is concern by supporters that the project will be put on hold, jeopardizing the \$28 million donated by the Annenberg Foundation for the restoration and reuse of the historic, but earthquake-battered facility.

A spokesman for Annenberg would not say whether or not a lawsuit might trigger the foundation to pull its grant, but a significant delay due to a court case could have an impact on funding that would, without a doubt, put pressure on elected officials to make up the difference in construction costs.

Members of the Palisades Beach Property Owners Association, which has threatened the suit, have said they are not opposed to a public beach club, but said that City Hall will operate the facility at a loss. If so, they believe City Hall will allow the facility to go into disrepair or will cut back on security, creating the potential for accidents, loitering and camping by the homeless.

William Delvac, an attorney from Latham & Watkins who is representing the homeowners, said there are concerns that the final environmental impact report is incomplete and that the project violates Proposition S, which limits construction on the beach. Homeowners could sue on those grounds, Delvac said.

"All we are asking for here is the city to play by the same rules that it sets for everyone else," Delvac said. "In 1990, the city required a traffic signal to be installed at the same site when a private beach hotel was looking to locate there, but now that it's a city project, that requirement is no longer there. It seems the city is trying to have it both ways."

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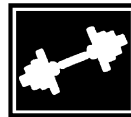


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Entertainment

ENTERTAINMENT BRIEFS

Speaking easy with Playwrights 6

By Daily Press staff

Playwrights 6, the critically acclaimed and only playwright-managed theatre company in Los Angeles, is presenting “14 by 14: A Night of Monologues with Playwrights 6,” on Wednesday, April 12.

The free evening of 14 eclectic dramatic and comedic monologues features the work of 14 writers and 14 actors in Playwrights 6’s Writers/Actors workshop, which meets twice a month at Celebration Theatre in Hollywood. Actors were randomly paired with writers, who then created a piece designed for the actor.

“This is an exciting way to spotlight our talent and to continue to present new works in different forms,” says Amy Tofte, lead producer of the monologue show.

The writers are Nancy Beverly, Laura Black, Steve Blackburn, Troy Cardenas, Thomas Cook, Kimberley Joy Ferrin, Larry Dean Harris, Kelly Maglia, Robert Manning Jr., Jan O’Connor, G. Bruce Smith, Amy Tofte, Jamie Virostko and Gib Wallis.

The actors are Josette DiCarlo, Carolann DiPirro, Mona Eadington, Daniel Hepner, Morris Nash, Randy Ross, Barry Saltzman, Lily Sauvage, Lisa Temple, Lori Allen Thomas, Alecs Vildosola, Donald Williams, Elliott Williams, and Jennie Yee.

Playwrights 6 is the only playwright-managed theatre company in Los Angeles. In its short history, Playwrights 6 productions have earned several L.A. Weekly Theatre Award nominations and Backstage West Garland Award honorary mentions. Playwrights 6 productions have also made several “Critics Top 10” lists and garnered several “Critic’s Picks.”

The show will be presented at 8 p.m. at the Powerhouse Theatre, 3116 Second St., between Rose and Marine just off Main Street in Santa Monica. A reception with food and refreshments follows. For information, call (323) 860-6625.

‘That May Well Be’ extended

By Daily Press staff

The Ruskin Group Theatre has announced that its critically acclaimed production of “That May Well Be True” has been extended to April 30, the show was originally slated to close April 1.

“That May Well Be True,” which is recommended by both the Los Angeles Times and Los Angeles Weekly, is a comedy by Jay Reiss about two friends who reunite after 15 years over a dispute about which of the men really came up with the story for a critically acclaimed novel.

Performances are at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 5 p.m. Sundays. Sunday shows are at 2 p.m. until April 1, but will be moved to 5 p.m. in subsequent weeks. There will be no Sunday performances on April 16 or April 23.

Ruskin Group Theatre is located at 3000 Airport Dr. at Santa Monica Airport.

The L.A. Weekly said the “intense comedy drama crackles with snappy dialogue, rich emotional undercurrents and vivid characters.”

In its review, the Los Angeles Times said, “Beneath the surface of Reiss’ free-and-easy dialogue runs a deeper current of emotion, so subtly and realistically conveyed that we theatergoers feel like voyeurs stashed among the shelves of books and recordings.”

“That May Well Be True” was commissioned by the Manhattan Theatre Club. Reiss, who graduated from the Juilliard School’s playwriting program, has authored several plays but is best known for being one of the creators of the Tony Award-winning “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.” Reiss also acted in the Broadway hit, despite having had no acting background.

“That May Well Be True” is directed by Paul Linke. Tickets are \$20 general and \$15 for students and senior citizens. Call (310) 397-3244 or go to <http://www.ruskingrouptheatre.com>.



Ensemble cast is just too cute

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press



REVIEW

This Hitchcockantino-esque offering — a crude modern approximation of classic film noir — from director Paul McGuigan (“Wicker Park”) boasts a stellar cast of veteran thespians hamming it up, spewing epigrammatic zingers as they navigate through scribe Jason Smilovic’s (he developed the tragically short-lived series “Karen Sisco”) slick, labyrinthine con game. One need only inspect the title to deduce that “Lucky Number Slevin” yearns to be clever, but the canniness that makes it interesting most of the way is also the very thing that ultimately kills a bit of the buzz. In Act Three, Smilovic and McGuigan get too cute for their film’s own good.

Josh Hartnett does a fine job as the mysterious title

character, a perpetual punching bag that happens to get mistaken for his deadbeat buddy who happens to be indebted to two New York organized crime bosses (Morgan “The Boss” Freeman and Sir Ben “The Rabbi” Kingsley) who happen to be at war with each other. Here it’s worth mentioning the film’s instant-classic moment: An across-the-street stare-down between The Boss and The Rabbi, who inhabit facing high-rises.

Bruce Willis is well cast as the chilly-as-cold-steel hitman named Goodkat hired by both crime lords to off Slevin, but not before Slevin settles his tabs with them by offing their only sons. Confused yet? The filmmakers certainly hope so. From the get-go it’s clear that nothing is at it seems, and McGuigan and Smilovic effectively pull off several slights-of-hand even as they get caught cheating on some others. Their biggest flub may be allowing the wise-cracking Slevin to appear so utterly fearless in the presence of such ruthless thugs — a clear indication that our leading man isn’t the ordinary guy he’s purported to be. Lucy Liu is this murky pic’s bright light, playing against type as the sweet-tempered coroner next door who falls for Slevin.

(RATED R. RUNNING TIME: 109 MINUTES)

Having fun with Aniston’s ‘Friends’

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press



REVIEW

LA’s affluent Westside is the setting for writer-director Nicole Holofcener’s excellent third feature, “Friends with Money,” which was given the honor — and with good reason — of opening this year’s Sundance Film Festival. As she did in her previous efforts, 1996’s “Walking and Talking” and the 2001 release “Lovely and Amazing,” Holofcener again offers astute, often brutally honest observations about the fragile, complex relationships between women. This time out she dresses up the old axiom “money changes everything” and takes it for a spin in the Beemer down the sun-bleached streets of Santa Monica. Her dialogue is nimble, and what passes for narrative rather static. Not a bad thing, mind you, for Holofcener is far less interested with what her characters are doing than she is in how they’re BEING.

The female leads in this ensemble dramedy are beyond lovely and amazing, beginning with Jennifer Aniston (back in “The Good Girl” form) as Olivia, a stoner whose financial and romantic woes are the catalyst for the story.

THE MOVIE: Friends with Money
THE DIRECTOR: Nicole Holofcener
THE STARS: Jennifer Aniston, Catherine Keener, Frances McDormand, Joan Cusack

LA’s affluent Westside is the setting for writer-director Nicole Holofcener’s excellent third feature, “Friends with Money,” which was given the honor — and with good reason — of opening this year’s Sundance Film Festival. As she did in her previous efforts, 1996’s “Walking and Talking” and the 2001 release “Lovely and Amazing,” Holofcener again offers astute, often brutally honest observations about the fragile, complex relationships between women. This time out she dresses up the old axiom “money changes everything” and takes it for a spin in the Beemer down the sun-bleached streets of Santa Monica. Her dialogue is nimble, and what passes for narrative rather static. Not a bad thing, mind you, for Holofcener is far less interested with what her characters are doing than she is in how they’re BEING.



Unlike her three BFFs, the self-esteem deficient Olivia is unmarried, unmotivated and poor. Having abandoned her teaching career, Olivia is cleaning houses, much to the chagrin of the richest gal of the bunch, Franny (Joan Cusack), who refuses to loan Olivia money unless she agrees to enter counseling.

Catherine Keener is predictably fabulous playing a screenwriter whose marriage is failing, and Frances McDormand rocks it as Jane, a fiery fashion designer in the midst of a disturbing personal transformation. Men are mostly relegated to the background, but Simon McBurney stands out as Jane’s ambiguously gay hubby.

(RATED R. RUNNING TIME: 88 MINUTES)



SANTA MONICA ART PALETTE

MAKING ARTS AND CULTURE COME ALIVE IN SANTA MONICA

Welcome to the Santa Monica Art Palette for the weekend of April 8. The goal of the Art Palette, created by City Hall's cultural affairs division, is to showcase the many eclectic arts and cultural opportunities available in Santa Monica every week, highlighting one or more of the many happenings within our borders.

While there aren't many new openings this weekend, Highways offers up their Second Annual Poetry and Performance Fest — a not-to-be-missed event which mixes the hip of the beat generation with the hop of contemporary urban life, resulting in performances only possible at our local performance vanguard. There's a new children's play at the Santa Monica Playhouse and quite a bit of theatre to catch up with at the Morgan Wixson, Edgemar, and Santa Monica High School. So, get out there and support our local artists.

Made possible by a grant from the city of Santa Monica, "In the Beginning Was the Word" features a line up of accomplished writers who also happen to be performers. The diverse range styles and voices will include California Book Award Finalist Kamau Daaood, co-founder and artistic director of the World Stage in Leimert Park; two-time LA Grand Champion Slam Poet Shihan, who has five seasons of HBO's "Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry" under his belt, and LA's only two-time female Grand Slam Champion.

Second Annual Poetry and Performance Fest
In The Beginning Was the Word
Curated by Levan D. Hawkins



Friday
Common Ground: Highways 2005 Slam Champion Mollie Angelheart (seen on HBO's DEF Poetry Jam). Poetic cohort Miss Natalie joins her as they explore the oneness of humanity in the midst of our separateness.
8:30 p.m.
\$15
Saturday
Testifyin': Major Performance poets let it all hang out. Reception with entertainment follows.
8:30 p.m.
\$15



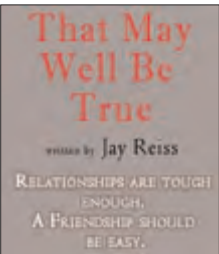
Saturday at midnight
Love and Sex (At Midnight): Erotic and love poetry by some of LA's finest.
Pre-show reception at 10:30 p.m. \$15
Both Saturday shows. \$25
All events Fest Pass, plus workshop. \$40

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And just in case you missed one of the other terrific theatre performances currently on the boards in Santa Monica, here's a recap of what's happening at the Ruskin Theatre, the Morgan Wixson Theatre, Edgemar Center for the Arts, and Santa Monica High School's Barnum Hall.

Extended through April 30.
Performances at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 5 p.m. Sundays.

Ruskin Group Theatre Co.
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<http://www.ruskingrouptheatre.com>

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Music by Darin Goulet
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(310) 828-7519
<http://www.morgan-wixson.org/>



Steel Magnolias

by Robert Harling



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The Barnum Hall Theater
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Cheeky charm keeps ‘On a Clear Day’ afloat

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press



THE MOVIE: On a Clear Day
THE DIRECTOR: Gaby Dellal
THE STARS: Peter Mullan, Brenda Blethyn, Ron Cook

Director Gaby Dellal's "On a Clear Day" contains many of the trappings we've come to expect from stock inspirational dramas from the UK — a working-class hero at a crossroads, familial discord and gooey sentimentality, triumph over adversity, and, bless her heart, Brenda Blethyn. Like its formulaic forebears, "The Full Monty," "Billy Elliott," and "Calendar Girls," this flagrantly feel-good feature is as warm and comforting as a spot of tea on a rainy afternoon. What it lacks in originality, "Clear Day" makes up for with a delightful cast, some cheeky Brit wit, and oodles of pub-style charm.

Peter Mullan ("My Name is Joe") stars as Frank Redmond, a poker-faced 55-year-old Glaswegian shipbuilder who suddenly

finds himself unemployed after 30-some-odd years on the job. Frank's little boy drowned 25 years ago and his relationship with loving wife Joan (Blethyn) and surviving son Rob (Jamie Sives) has been in gradual decline ever since. Unsure of how to repair his strained family ties or what to do with his newfound free time, Frank decides to take on a daunting challenge — he'll swim the English Channel. He enlists his best mates — a motley assortment of types led by ex-hobbit Billy Boyd as the funny guy — to help him train, all the while hiding his intentions from his family, who begin to suspect something wicked is afoot.

Performances and technical elements are solid all around, but Mullan is the movie's anchor. Not only is the swim designed to restore Frank's sense of purpose, it's symbolic of his epic struggle to exorcise his demons and save his family. Mullan adroitly captures all the pathos of Frank's situation while avoiding waves of schmaltz. His is an utterly convincing portrait of an ordinary man on an extraordinary quest, one in which he attempts to figure out one stroke at a time.

(NOT RATED. RUNNING TIME: 98 MINUTES)

The Strokes keep their distance in making good ‘Impressions’

BY MICHAEL TITTINGER
Daily Press Staff Writer

UNIVERSAL CITY — The Strokes' performance on Thursday, March 30, at the Gibson Amphitheater — the first of two sold-out shows here — may not have been a lovefest between the New Yorkers and its

REVIEW fist-pumping fan base, but it was another skillful workmanlike performance by the acclaimed post-punk revivalists.

Touring on the strength of their solid third release, "First Impressions of Earth," the Strokes wasted little time engaging the crowd with that album's driving opening tracks "You Only Live Once," "Juicebox" and "Heart in a Cage," before tearing into older hits like "Last Nite," a song from its landmark first album that is quickly approaching classic status.

The band's hook-laden, garage rock filled the arena, with guitarists Nick Valensi and Albert Hammond Jr. — bedecked in a white jumpsuit — driving each song with tight familiarity and orchestrated grit. Lead singer Julian Casablancas seemed to perform with a newfound sense of urgency, hitting all the radio ready hooks and sudden crescendos in turn.

After Casablancas told the crowd early on that the Gibson Amphitheater was his "favorite place to play in LA," the crowd was his for the taking. But in the end, Casablancas declined the offer.

In keeping with his persona of cool detachment, Casablancas turned his back on the crowd each time vocals weren't called for, seemingly squandering much of the love being heaped upon the band at Universal City. The band's decision to kill the stage

lights after each song, rather than face the crowd or segue into another song, made the Strokes seem unapproachable and distant.

This too-cool-for-school approach has served the Strokes well in the past, adding an aura of mystery to the band's hard driving, yet radio friendly songlist. But it is just such a performance that feeds into the divisive camps that surround them — critics convinced they are the band to revitalize rock n' roll and those who see them as agonizingly reluctant to take the next step to superstardom.

Still, the Strokes' show last Thursday was exactly what fans of the band could have hoped for, if a bit business-like, as the New Yorkers tore through the best of their three albums of material, even adding a typically cohesive cover of The Ramones' "Life's a Gas." Frustrations and expectations aside, the Strokes are still the standard bearer for indie rockers out to kick some retro butt.

The night's opening act, the Eagles of Death Metal, played in stark contradiction to the Strokes' melancholy, rattling the still-filling arena with a sense of whimsy and enthusiasm, all played to a head-banging beat. Lead singer and guitarist Jesse "The Devil" Hughes — who looks like a "Super Troopers" reject with his thick moustache, aviator sunglasses and severe haircut — appeared happy to be along for the ride throughout the band's 30-minute opening set.

Relying heavily on its 2004 release "Peace, Love, Death Metal," the Eagles of Death Metal got stragglers into their seats in a hurry, with Hughes infectious shaking about the stage and calling upon the audience to 'give it up' for the Strokes, who seemingly could take a lesson or two from their warm-up players.



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NATIONAL

Mexican flag symbol of pride

BY AMANDA LEE MYERS

Associated Press Writer

PHOENIX — Hundreds of protesters gripped Mexican flags as they marched for immigration reform in the past few weeks, but they say a display of cultural unity is being mistaken as a lack of loyalty to the United States.

The displays turned off many Americans. Conservative talk show hosts admonished the protesters, while everyday people wrote angry letters to the editors of their local newspapers.

Some called for those carrying the Mexican flag to return to Mexico. Others questioned why immigrants demanding rights in the United States would wave symbols of Mexico.

But those who carried them, and scholars of the immigrant community, say that pride in their culture should not be misconstrued as a lack of patriotism in their adopted nation.

"Nobody gets upset with the Irish on St. Patrick's Day," said Gabriela Lemus, director of policy and legislation at the Washington, D.C.-based League of United Latin American Citizens, the group that organized most of the recent protests and is heading the dozens of marches and rallies scheduled across the nation Monday.

Critics of waving the red, white and green have questioned marchers' loyalty to the United States, but Latino activists deny the implications.

"The Mexican flag is like a symbol of dignity and identity and pride for the people who carry it," said Dolores Huerta, who co-founded the United Farm Workers of America with Cesar Chavez. "If people try to read more into that flag than what it is, they're wrong."

Huerta, who spoke from her home in Bakersfield, Calif., carried the Mexican flag during the farm workers' movement in the 1960s, and she carried it more recently during rallies in Los Angeles and Tucson.

"Pride and roots is what it is," she said. "It definitely does not mean separation or nationalism in the sense that we want to go back to Mexico."

Isidro D. Ortiz, a political scientist and professor of Chicano and Chicana studies at San Diego State University, said the flag is primarily a symbol of Mexican pride. But, in the current climate of the United States, Latinos also wave it to express dissatisfaction with how they are treated, Ortiz said.

"(Immigrants) have been trying for some time to imagine themselves as a part of the United States," he added. "What they've experienced is refusal."

Intentional or not, protest organizers acknowledge that the controversy over the Mexican flag is detracting from the message demonstrators want to send.

"(The flag) is a distraction," said Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano. "What the marchers were marching for was to say, 'Hey, we are here, we work, we're tired of being made to blame for every ill that people experience.'"

Lemus said her organization is encouraging protesters to carry both the U.S. and Mexican flags to show their pride in both countries.

"The American flag is a symbol of what they are trying to become — a U.S. citizen," she said.

Jennifer Allen, executive director of the immigrant rights group Border Action Network, said she is not discouraging anyone from bringing the Mexican flag to Monday's march in Tucson. Rather, the protesters themselves are spreading the word.

"A lot of immigrant families in southern Arizona are telling one another to carry the American flag in their hands, but hold the Mexican flag in their hearts," she said.

Former immigration official alleges fraud

BY LIZ SIDOTI

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Corruption plagues the agency that determines the legal status of immigrants, and its employees often don't conduct proper background checks of immigration applicants, a former agency official told lawmakers Thursday.

As a result, "the integrity of the United States immigration system has also been corrupted and the system is incapable of ensuring the security of our homeland," Michael Maxwell said.

"Ours is a system that rewards criminals, facilitates the movement of terrorists, (and) supports foreign agents," said Maxwell, who had been in charge of the Office of Security and Investigations at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services until resigning in February.

The agency's director, Emilio Gonzalez, has said that the Homeland Security Department's inspector general will investigate reports of fraud and sloppy procedures. Gonzalez also has insisted that security concerns come first even though the agency is under pressure to get through a backlog of immigration applications.

Angelica Alfonso-Royals, a spokeswoman, said

Thursday the agency's top priority "continues to be preserving and enhancing the integrity of the immigration system." She said the agency has confidence in the system but continually strives for improvement and "it takes allegations seriously."

Maxwell testified before the House International Relations Committee's terrorism and nonproliferation panel. He alleged that the agency has awarded immigrant benefits, including citizenship, without complete background checks.

In addition, he said, the agency has failed to investigate more than 500 criminal complaints against its own employees for allegations that include bribery, harboring illegals, money laundering and aiding known terrorists or being influenced by foreign intelligence services.

In one example, Maxwell said, the agency employed an Iraqi-born U.S. citizen suspected of being a foreign intelligence agent to review asylum applications.

"These breaches compromise virtually every part of the immigration system itself, leaving vulnerabilities that have been and likely are being exploited by criminals and adversaries of the United States," Maxwell said.

He said the agency's senior officials repeatedly ignored major national security vulnerabilities, covered them up or dismissed them.

Immigration reform has GOP, Democrats seeking compromise

BY DAVID ESPO

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Putting aside party differences, Senate Republicans and Democrats coalesced Thursday around compromise legislation that holds out the hope of citizenship to an estimated 11 million immigrants living in the United States unlawfully.

"We can no longer afford to delay reform," said Republican Sens. John McCain and Edward M. Kennedy in a statement that capped weeks of struggle to find common ground.

President Bush said he was pleased with the developments and urged the Senate to pass legislation by week's end.

But the emerging compromise drew fire from both ends of the political spectrum. Conservative Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, likened it to an amnesty bill that cleared Congress in 1986, while AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said it threatened to "drive millions of hardworking immigrants further into the shadows of American society, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation."

Still, after days of partisan, election-year rancor, an overnight breakthrough on the future of illegal immigrants propelled the Senate closer to passage of the most sweeping immigration legislation in two decades.

In an indication of the complicated political forces at work, officials of both parties disagreed about which side had blinked. But they agreed that a decision to reduce the number of future temporary workers allowed into the country had broken a deadlock that threatened as late as Wednesday night to scuttle efforts to pass a bill. The change will limit temporary work permits to 325,000 a year, down from 400,000 in earlier versions of the bill.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., characterized the developments as a "huge breakthrough." Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid of Nevada said he was optimistic about final passage, but cautioned, "We can't declare victory."

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said: "While it admittedly is not perfect, the choice we have to make is whether it is better than no bill, and the choice is decisive."

Officials described a complex series of provisions:

— Illegal immigrants who have been in the country for at least five years could receive legal status after meeting several conditions, including payment of a \$2,000 fines and any back taxes, clearing a background check and learning English. After six more years, they could apply for citizenship without having to leave the United States.

— Illegal immigrants in the country for between two and five years could obtain a temporary work visa after reporting to a border point of entry. Aides referred to this as "touch base and return," since people covered would know in advance they would be readmitted to the United States.

— Officials said it could take as long as 13 to 14 years for some illegal immigrants to gain citizenship. It part, that stems from an annual limit of 450,000 on green cards, which confer legal permanent residency and are a precursor to citizenship status.

— Illegal immigrants in the United States for less than two years would be required to leave the country and apply for re-entry alongside anyone else seeking to emigrate.

Separately, the legislation provides a new program for 1.5 million temporary agriculture industry workers over five years.

It also includes provisions for employers to verify the legal status of workers they hire, but it was not clear what sanctions, if any, would apply to violators.

To secure the border, the bill calls for a virtual fence — as opposed to the literal barrier contained in House legislation — consisting of surveillance cameras, sensors and other monitoring equipment along the long, porous border with Mexico.



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Report: Criminal investigation under way in North Slope oil spill

By The Associated Press

LONDON — U.S. environmental regulators are conducting a criminal investigation into the management of pipelines in Alaska's North Slope by British energy group BP PLC, a newspaper reported Thursday.

An investigation has been under way for several months by officials at the Environmental Protection Agency and was expanded to include a March 2 spill of an estimated 134,000 to 267,000 gallons of crude from a BP-operated pipeline at Prudhoe Bay, The Wall Street Journal reported.

London-based BP spokesman Robert Wine said that the company has not been served with any papers or informed of any charges.

Wine said that BP cooperated fully with the EPA in the days after the Prudhoe Bay spill, including providing access

to the site. There had been no communication between investigators and the company since then, he added.

Alaska environmental regulators said Wednesday that an investigation into the spill could result in fines against BP subsidiary BP Exploration (Alaska) Inc. of more than \$2 million.

The Wall Street Journal quoted people familiar with the matter that it did not identify by name as saying that federal investigators are looking at corrosion issues on the ruptured line, as well as others in the area, to determine if BP has committed any violations of the federal Clean Water Act.

A Washington-based spokesman for the EPA, Dale Kemery, would neither confirm nor deny the existence of any probe, citing agency policy.

BP shares slipped 0.07 percent to \$11.82 in midday trading on the London Stock Exchange.

Voters reject \$2M bond to save historic theater

BY RACHEL D'ORO

Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A theater that emerged undamaged in the great Alaska earthquake of 1964 could not survive the will of voters who rejected an effort to help buy and restore the Anchorage landmark.

Voters overwhelmingly turned down a \$2 million bond Tuesday to help the city pay for the \$4 million price tag on the 4th Avenue Theatre. Had it passed, the city would have had to come up with another \$2 million in matching funds.

Despite the failure, the city is still committed to securing the downtown building, Robin Ward, director of the municipality's Heritage Land Bank, said Wednesday.

The city also is seeking state and federal money to restore the opulent 59-year-old structure, which was designed in the art moderne style by the architect of Hollywood's famed Pantages Theatre.

And theater fans are planning to seek funds from private sources, including individuals, corporations and

foundations, said Gina Hollomon, director of Anchorage Historic Properties, a nonprofit operator for the city.

Members of the city task force believe the theater could flourish as a multiuse community venue. They have looked at such options as movies, plays, recitals and lectures. And they envision the city placing a protection easement on the 40,000-square foot building to retain its original character, which is more streamlined than art deco, highlighted by Italian marble, fluted walnut and murals of Alaska wildlife, industries and Mount McKinley.

But that won't happen without money — and \$4 million is just the beginning expense. Additional funds are needed to make necessary improvements like replacing the roof and electrical system. The structure itself is sound, undamaged by the 9.2 magnitude earthquake more than four decades ago.

To date, just \$250,000 is available through the Anchorage Historic Properties. But Hollomon and other preservationists are confident.

"I don't think it will be torn down," Hollomon said. "I think everybody wants to work together for this."

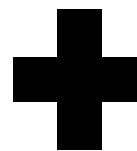
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INTERNATIONAL

Ehud Olmert tapped to be Israel's next prime minister

BY ARON HELLER
Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM — Israel's president formally chose acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Thursday to form the next government, and Olmert said he'd quickly put together a coalition committed to carrying out his West Bank withdrawal plan.

During the election campaign, Olmert said Israel would pull out of much of the West Bank, but strengthen its control of major Jewish settlement blocs there, and draw the country's final borders by 2010.

"My political positions were expressed in detail and will also be expressed in detail in the written program of the government that I will head," Olmert said. "These plans are known to the Israeli public, to the Israeli political community and of course to the international community. These plans will definitely be the basis of the government I will head."

Olmert said he planned to embark on a "serious and genuine attempt" to negotiate with the Palestinians. If talks fail, Israel would define its borders "even without an agreement," he said.

Moshe Katsav, Israel's ceremonial president, asked Olmert to try to form a coalition government. Olmert's

centrist Kadima Party won 29 seats in the 120-member parliament, the most of any party, but not enough to govern without other parties.

Olmert, who has served as acting prime minister since Ariel Sharon suffered a stroke Jan. 4, has 28 days to try to put together a governing coalition of at least 61 lawmakers. If he fails, he can ask for a two-week extension.

"I ask that you all be patient," Olmert said, "but I promise we will try to do this as quickly as possible."

He said he would try to include a cross-section of parties from across the political spectrum in his government. "It is not easy to form a coalition that is stable, that enjoys a secure majority that can last a full term," he said.

The potential coalition could include as many as 80 members of parliament with the left-center Labor party, middle-of-the-road Pensioner's Party, two ultra-Orthodox parties and the right-wing Israel Beitenu party, which advocates drawing Israel's borders by excluding Israeli Arab communities and bringing in West Bank settlers.

Olmert has said he would only sign up parties that support his West Bank plan but is considering as broad a coalition as possible to protect him against political blackmail and instability.

Katsav said that he supported Olmert's goal of forming a broad coalition.

Shiites seek to delay prime minister decision, may turn to top cleric to break the deadlock

BY QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Shiite leaders decided Thursday to oppose convening parliament next week to decide the future of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and may turn to the country's top Shiite cleric to break the deadlock over formation of the new government.

Sunni and Kurdish politicians had suggested that the 275-member legislature meet to decide whether al-Jaafari will head the next government after the prime minister refused their demands for him to step side.

Sunni and Kurdish opposition to al-Jaafari, who was nominated by his dominant Shiite bloc for a second term, has emerged as the main stumbling block to forming a government of national unity to reverse the country's slide toward anarchy.

However, Khalid al-Attiyah, a prominent Shiite politician, said representatives of the seven factions in the Shiite alliance met Thursday and decided to oppose taking the issue to parliament until all Iraqi parties agree on other top posts, including the president and speaker of parliament.

The decision signals further delays in forming a unity government despite the personal intervention of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. The two flew to Baghdad on Sunday to express international frustration over the slow pace of government talks since the Dec. 15 national elections.

Sunni elder statesman Adnan Pachachi had called a press conference for Thursday in which he was expected to call for convening parliament Wednesday to take up the al-Jaafari issue. Following the Shiite meeting, however, Pachachi canceled the press conference without explanation.

Al-Attiyah said the deadlock was now "very complicated" and that al-Jaafari's supporters within the alliance want to ask the advice of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the country's most respected Shiite cleric, before deciding their next moves.

Al-Attiyah said other Shiite politicians who are not affiliated with the major Shiite parties have also agreed to seek al-Sistani's opinion.

Talk of referring the matter to al-Sistani is a sign that the Shiite politicians themselves cannot agree on what to do about the impasse over al-Jaafari.

The killings of three boys in Venezuela spark protests against violent crime

BY CHRISTOPHER TOOTHAKER
Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela — Troops fired tear gas in Venezuela's capital to disperse protesters demanding a crackdown on crime following the slayings of three young Canadian brothers, while the justice minister acknowledged police forces were in need of sweeping reforms.

Protests erupted in five parts of Caracas on Wednesday. In one of the demonstrations, hundreds gathered to block a highway near the affluent neighborhood of Altamira in eastern Caracas, a stronghold for opponents of President Hugo Chavez.

As the protesters were pushed back, some set tires and trash bins afire on nearby roads.

"Chavez always criticizes the United States and talks about thousands of innocent people killed in Iraq, but what about the thousands who are killed here," said protester Gustavo Marin, 26.

The unrest was touched off by the discovery Tuesday of the bodies of the three Faddoul brothers — John, 17, Kevin, 13, and Jason, 12, with dual Canadian-Venezuelan citizenship. The bodies of the boys, who were shot in the head and neck, were found outside Caracas more than a month after they were kidnapped at a bogus police checkpoint on their way to school.

The body of their 30-year-old driver was also found.

Justice Minister Jesse Chacon said every police force in the crime-ridden South American nation needed to be purged of corrupt cops. He urged Venezuelans to unite against violent crime, but not to turn the incident into a politically motivated attack against the Chavez government.

Attorney General Isaias Rodriguez said investigators have questioned two police officers in the killings, which drew widespread mourning and a sudden outburst of frustration at the constant anxiety Venezuelans feel over their security.

"Today it was them, but tomorrow it could be my sister and me," said Fady Rahal, a 16-year-old classmate of John, as she spoke through tears at a protest. "What kind of a country is this?"

A Venezuelan photographer died after being shot on his way to cover a protest Wednesday at the Central University of Venezuela. The photographer, Jorge Aguirre of the newspaper El Mundo, was approaching the university when an unidentified man on a motorcycle tried to stop his car, then shot him and fled, said Jose Gregorio Yepez, an editor at the paper.

Aguirre managed to take a picture of his killer's back as the man — wearing a blue jacket and helmet — rode away. Chacon said the photograph would help solve the crime.

Earlier Wednesday, some 400 demonstrators halted traffic at a different spot on the highway. As two police on a motorcycle approached, the crowd chanted "Respect!" and "We want justice!" while other police holding gas masks looked on from a distance.

About 200 protesters also gathered in front of the Justice Ministry in downtown Caracas, accusing authorities of failing to fight crime effectively. Dozens of cars and buses passing through downtown had "mourning" scrawled in white shoe polish across their windows.

Earlier, dozens of the boys' classmates — some with black ribbons tied on their wrists — shed tears after a Mass at their Catholic school.

The Venezuela-born brothers lived with their Canadian father and Venezuelan mother, both of Lebanese descent, in a gated community in an upscale Caracas neighborhood.

The boys were abducted Feb. 23 when unidentified men dressed as police stopped their car at a roadside checkpoint on their way to school. Officials said the kidnappers demanded more than \$4.5 million — a ransom too steep for the parents to pay, their lawyer, Santiago Georges, said.

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Eminem and wife on outs again

By The Associated Press

DETROIT — Eminem's dysfunctional relationship with wife Kim has hit another low — he has filed divorce papers, less than three months after remarrying her.

“There has been a breakdown in the marriage relationship to the extent that the objects of matrimony have been destroyed and there remains no reasonable likelihood that the marriage can be preserved,” according to the filing, which was made Wednesday in Macomb County on behalf of Marshall Bruce Mathers III, Eminem’s real name.

The filing also states that the 33-year-old rapper and his wife signed a prenuptial agreement a week before their Jan. 14 wedding ceremony in Rochester. It doesn't describe the specifics of the prenuptial agreement, other than to say that "the property of the parties should be divided in accordance with" the agreement.

It also says that Kim Mathers isn't pregnant and that Eminem is seeking joint custody of their 10-year-old daughter, Hailie Jade Scott.

Kim Mathers' lawyer, Michael J. Smith, said the filing caught his client off-guard. "But we have to deal with it, and we will deal with it," he said.

Eminem's publicist, Dennis Dennehy, and lawyer, Harvey Hauer, both confirmed the filing, but neither had any other comment. "I will not discuss their personal life," Hauer said.

The rapper has used his tormented relationship with his high school sweetheart — the pair grew up in the suburbs along Eight Mile Road, Detroit's northern border — as a source of his most popular and demented rhymes. He's killed her off in song and assailed her with his lyrics — but that was before they got back together.

Their first marriage ended in 2001. They reconciled in late 2004, and Eminem announced in December 2005 that they would get back together.

PARIS — A French screenwriter who alleges that “Syriana” was largely plagiarized from her script has filed a lawsuit against George Clooney and Warner Bros.

Stephanie Vergniault claims the complex global thriller borrowed “very largely” from a script she completed in 2002. Titled “Oversight,” her story line involved CIA intrigues with oil companies in the Persian Gulf, according to the court filing.

A preliminary hearing is set for Monday. Warner Bros. France said this week it had no immediate comment.

The lawsuit targets Clooney's production company, Section Eight, which he formed with director Steven Soderbergh, Warner Bros. and "Syriana" writer-director Stephen Gaghan.

Clooney received a best-supporting actor Oscar for his portrayal of a veteran CIA officer in the film.

NEW ORLEANS — Jazz clarinetist Pete Fountain, hospitalized last month for quadruple bypass heart surgery, is back home.

“He’s doing great, watching his diet, listening to the doctor,” said Fountain’s agent, Benny Harrell. “He’d like to get somebody to bring him a fried oyster po’boy, but I told him I’d kill them if they did.”

Fountain, 75, hadn't been feeling well since Mardi Gras. His Half Fast Marching Club made its trek down St. Charles Avenue without him on Fat Tuesday for the first time in 46 years.

Fountain, a New Orleans native, lost his \$1.5 million house in Mississippi, as well as his gold records, memorabilia and 10 musical instruments to Hurricane Katrina. His New Orleans home also was damaged but has been repaired.

“He really wants to be able to play at Jazz Fest,” Harrell said. “His doctor told him to start playing some and we’d see how it goes.”

Fountain is scheduled to close out the Louisiana Jazz and Heritage Festival on May 7.

NEW YORK — Tom Cruise says his father was abusive and that school, where he faced other bullies, was difficult, in an upcoming issue of Parade magazine.

“He was a bully and a coward,” the 43-year-old actor says of his father, Thomas Cruise Mapother III. “He was the kind of person where, if something goes wrong, they kick you. It was a great lesson in my life — how he’d lull you in, make you feel safe and then, bang!

“For me, it was like, ‘There’s something wrong with this guy. Don’t trust him. Be careful around him.’ There’s that anxiety.”

Cruise has two children, Connor, 11, and Isabella, 13, from his marriage to Nicole Kidman, and his 27-year-old fiancée, Katie Holmes, is in the final stages of her pregnancy with the couple's first child.

The star of the upcoming film, "Mission: Impossible III," also says he was bullied regularly in the 15 different schools he attended in 12 years.

“So many times the big bully comes up, pushes me,” he says. “Your heart’s pounding, you sweat, and you feel like you’re going to vomit. I’m not the biggest guy, I never liked hitting someone, but I know if I don’t hit that guy hard he’s going to pick on me all year.

"I go, 'You better fight.' I just laid it down. I don't like bullies."

In 1974, when Cruise was 11, his parents divorced. Cruise's mother, Mary Lee, moved her family to Louisville, Ky., her hometown, the magazine says in its April 9 issue.

Ten years later, Cruise says he reunited with his father, who was “in the hospital dying of cancer, and he would only meet me on the basis that I didn’t ask him anything about the past.”

“When I saw him in pain, I thought, ‘Wow, what a lonely life,’” Cruise says. “He was in his late 40s. It was sad.”



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MOVIEGUIDE

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ATL (PG-13)
1:50 4:30 7:20 10:00
Basic Instinct 2 (R)
1:30 4:05 7:00 9:45
Hills Have Eyes The (R)
10:15
Phat Girlz (PG-13)
2:30 5:25 8:00 10:30
She's the Man (PG-13)
2:10 5:00 7:40

Mann's Criterion Theatre
1313 3rd Street
(310) 395-1599

Ice Age: The Meltdown (PG)
11:30am 12:00 1:40 2:30 4:00 4:50
6:30 7:20 9:00 9:40

Lucky Number Slevin (R)
11:50am 2:20 5:00 7:40 10:30

Slither (R)
12:20 2:50 5:20 7:50 10:10

Take the Lead (PG-13)
1:10 4:10 7:10 10:00

V for Vendetta (R)
1:20 4:20 7:30 10:20

AMC7 Santa Monica
1310 3rd Street
(310) 289-4262

16 Blocks (PG-13)
10:15
Benchwarmers The (PG-13)
12:00 12:50 2:10 3:10 4:30 5:30 7:00
8:00 9:20 10:30 11:30
Failure to Launch (PG-13)
12:10 2:30 5:00 7:20 10:00
Inside Man (R)
12:30 1:50 3:20 4:40 6:40 7:40 9:50
11:00
Shaggy Dog The (PG)
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:50
Stay Alive (PG-13)
12:50 2:40 4:50 7:10 9:10

Nuwilshire Theatre
1314 Wilshire Blvd
(310) 281-8228

Thank You for Smoking (R)
11:45am 2:15 4:45 7:15 9:50
Tsotsi (R)
1:30 4:00 7:30 9:55

Laemmle 4-Plex Theatre
1332 2nd Street
(310) 394-9741

Devil and Daniel Johnston The (PG-13)
9:30

Friends with Money (R)
12:45 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

Kinky Boots (PG-13)
7:00

L'Enfant (The Child) (R)
1:40 4:20 7:00

**Marilyn Hotchkiss' Ballroom
Dancing & Charm School (PG-
13)**
1:20 4:10 7:10 9:45

Maxx (NR)
1:55 4:30 7:20 9:50

Questions or comments? Email calendar@smdp.com

MORE TODAY IN HISTORY

- In 1939**, Italy invaded Albania. (Less than a week later, Italy annexed Albania.)
- In 1945**, during World War II, American planes intercepted a Japanese fleet that was headed for Okinawa on a suicide mission.
- In 1947**, auto pioneer Henry Ford died in Dearborn, Mich., at age 83.
- In 1949**, the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "South Pacific" opened on Broadway.
- In 1953**, the U.N. General Assembly elected Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden to be secretary-general.
- In 1966**, the United States recovered a hydrogen bomb it had lost off the coast of Spain.



COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



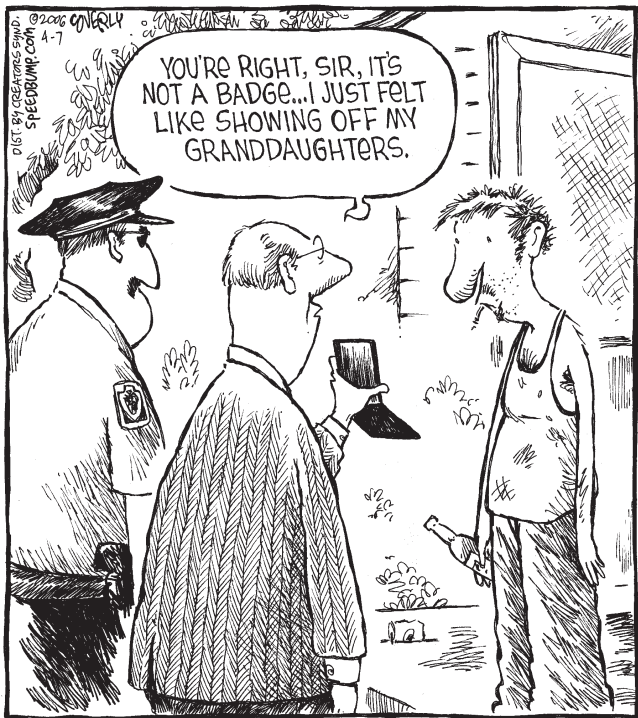
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 - 15 Self-esteem
 - 16 See 12-Down
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 - 21 Form
 - 22 Network junction
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 - 24 Particle
 - 25 Office helper
 - 27 Tussle
 - 29 Will Smith film
 - 30 "Six Feet Under" family
 - 32 Ancestry
 - 34 Miniature
 - 35 Rejoice
 - 36 Battery, for one
 - 38 Alaskan city
- DOWN
- 39 Mystical deck
 - 40 Stagger
 - 41 Adopted son of Claudius

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Applicants interested should send their resumes to editor@smdp.com. No phone calls please.

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2724 ABBOT Kinney Bl. MDR Adjacent Studio. Includes 1 car gated subterranean parking. Quiet neighborhood with courtyard area & onsite laundry. 1 year lease, No pets. \$1145. Available 05/01/06 Mike (310) 578-9729 ellynis.com

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SANTA MONICA \$2100/mo 3bdrms/1.5Bath, Pet ok, Hardwood and Carpet Floors, parking, laundry. (310) 395-RENT www.westsiderent-als.com

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Notices

NOTICE OF PETITION TO AD-MINISTER ESTATE OF: MARGARET BUSH ALLING CASE NO. SP006793

To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the WILL or estate, or both of MAR-GARET BUSH ALLING. A PETITION FOR PROBATE has been filed by HENRY H. DEARING AND WARD R. NYHUS, JR. in the Superior Court of California, County of LOS ANGELES. THE PETITION FOR PROBATE re-quests that HENRY H. DEARING AND WARD R. NYHUS, JR. be ap-pointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the de-ce-dent. THE PETITION requests the de-ce-dent's WILL and codicils, if any, be admitted to probate. The WILL and any codicils are available for exami-nation in the file kept by the court. THE PETITION requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Es-tates Act . (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be re-quired to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent admini-stration authority will be granted un-less an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority. A HEARING on the petition will be held on 05/26/06 at 9:15AM in Dept. F located at 1725 Main St., Santa Monica, CA 90401

IF YOU OBJECT to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objec-tions or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney.

IF YOU ARE A CREDITOR or a contingent creditor of the deceased, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the per-sonal representative appointed by the court within four months from the date of first issuance of letters as provided in Probate Code section 9100. The time for filing claims will not expire before four months from the hearing date noticed above.

YOU MAY EXAMINE the file kept by the court. If you are a person inter-ested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special No-tice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate as-s-ets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code Section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk.

Attorney for Petitioner
LEROY B. TAFT, AP/LC
11661 SAN VICENTE BLVD. #303
LOS ANGELES, CA 90049
4/6, 4/7, 4/13/06
CNS-949095#
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