

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

SUPER LOTTO PLUS

25-35-40-45-47

Megamember: 3

Jackpot: \$63 million

FANTASY 5

5, 7, 17, 24, 36

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 5, 9, 2

Evening picks: 4, 6, 5

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 2, Lucky Star

2nd Place: 4, Big Ben

3rd Place: 9, Winning Spirit

Race Time: 1:43.24



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

In February, free-lance photographer Robert Levin filed a \$50 million lawsuit against the Waste Management company for the injuries (including brain damage) he suffered while trying to take photographs at New York City's Ground Zero in December 2001. Levin had surreptitiously climbed atop one of the company's garbage trucks to get a better vantage point when the driver pulled away, causing Levin to fall, which Levin now says showed Waste Management's "failure to respect (my) rights as a pedestrian."



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The more ancient the abuse the more sacred it is."

— Voltaire



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Sign, sign, everywhere there's a sign

Santa Monica has plenty, but many are deemed illegal

(This is the second installment of an ongoing series about City Hall's sign ordinance).

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

Business owners who have illegal signs in front of their stores can be fined by City Hall as much as \$25,000 per day until they comply with the law.

If they refuse, businesses could face a maximum of \$500,000 in fines. That is, of course, if owners think keeping their signs up without a permit is worth a half of a million dollars.

The head of City Hall's building and safety department confirmed this week that his staff is cracking down on Santa Monica businesses that adorn the outside of their stores with illegal signs.

The concerted effort in enforcing the sign code, which was handed down by the Santa Monica City Council, has been occurring for the past three months. Businesses who don't have City Hall's stamp of approval were notified via letter in November of their non-compliance. Since then, a team of building inspectors has been roaming the streets of Santa Monica looking for violations.

See SIGNS, page 6



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

(Top) A pair of competing designer resale clothing stores, located next to one another on Wilshire Boulevard, promote their wares. The one on the left maintains its signs, while the other was ordered by the city to remove its signage or face a possible \$20,000 fine.

(Below, from left) Balloons vying for the public's attention in front of the Printing Palace on Wilshire Boulevard are illegal according to City Hall, as is the vagrant sleeping in the doorway 25 feet away. City Hall has recently beefed up its enforcement of sign violations.

Environmentalists want ships to clean up acts



John Wood/Daily Press

A human-sized toilet in cruise-liner attire stands with Jesse Littlewood of Oceana on Wednesday. Environmental groups called for cruise liners to do a better job of cleaning waste before dumping it.

Treat it before you flush it, they say

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

SM BEACH — Dysentery, pink eye, rashes, hepatitis, and ear, nose and throat infections — the biological reactions to polluted ocean water can be severe.

Citing those effects, a group of activists met on the beach Wednesday to demand that cruise liners do more to clean their waste before dumping it overboard. The large ships aren't required to follow the Clean Water Act and regularly discharge only mildly treated sewage.

At least by Santa Monica Bay

"It's time to end the wake of shame and protect the health of all Californians."

— MOIRA CHAPIN

Organizer for Environment California

standards.

The Hyperion Treatment Plant near LAX filters sewage to a "secondary" level and pumps it seven miles out to sea. Cruise liners, on the other hand, can dump their sewage within four miles of the shore after it undergoes a lesser, "primary" cleaning.

"It's time to end the wake of shame and protect the health of

all Californians," said Moira Chapin, organizer for Environment California. Chapin was joined at the podium by Craig Shuman, scientist for Heal the Bay, Mollie Culligan from the Malibu Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation and Jesse Littlewood, organizer for Oceana, the group that staged the event.

See POLLUTION, page 7

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Happy Birthday, Joe King!



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)

★★★★ You struggle for a new vision, but somehow you get caught up in the humor and goodness of the moment. Don't judge yourself; rather, enjoy the moment for what it offers. A sudden insight or understanding could stop you in your tracks. Tonight: Flip through a travel brochure or two.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Dealing with others lends itself to overindulgence and having a good time. Still, a meeting or dealing with a friend could be provocative and a real eye-opener. Think carefully about this revelation. Tonight: Where you want to be.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ You might still be out of kilter, but you haven't lost your sense of humor. Flow with an opportunity to lighten up and enjoy. A boss could surprise you with his or her adaptability. Get used to this behavior, as it will last for a while. Tonight: Say "yes."

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Pace yourself and think about what needs to be done. Someone could toss a happy boomerang in your path. Enjoy the moment. Remember, life is for living as well as working. A surprise call opens a door. Tonight: Get some R and R.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ You might want to express your playfulness, but a partner could misunderstand you. Laugh and help ease this person through this very serious period. You have a way of bringing out the best in your friends. Encourage lightness. Tonight: Where the gang is.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Deal with personal matters first, as they are likely to float in and out of your mind all day. Check out what others seem to think is a good idea. Learn to accept others' foibles rather than attempt to change them. Tonight: Make it easy.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ You might find associates preoccupied, with their hands full. Don't try to distract those around you; rather, do what you can by yourself. A call might be a bit extravagant or overboard. Nothing is halfway right now. Tonight: Be direct with a friend.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Understand more of what is going on behind the scenes with others. What is revealed could be quite shocking, to say the very least. Use caution with funds and avoid any risks right now. You aren't going to like the end results. Tonight: Spruce up your wardrobe.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Verify what is going on with an important associate, though you could be shocked by his or her response. Not everything is as calm as you would like it to be on the home front. Fortunately, you adjust well. Tonight: It is your pleasure. You decide.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Not all you hear is exactly fact. You find someone close to be lively and unpredictable. Understand what makes you happy, and focus on that area. You can accomplish a lot, both with work or a new health kick. Tonight: Lie low.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Aim for more of what you want, but please do not underestimate the cost of making an important alliance. You discover that unpredictability surrounds investments. Choose to do nothing for now. Tonight: Allow a special person to dote on you.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ You might spook someone by your behavior and desire to be spontaneous and free-wheeling. Think more about the implications of your actions, both at work and at home. Express your caring through a card. Tonight: A must appearance.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Hope springs Parisian on the Pier

By Daily Press staff

Later this month, you might get the feeling you're in Paris. But really, it'll be the Santa Monica Pier.

The annual silent auction will be hosted by the nonprofit Westside Waldorf School on Friday, April 23, from 7:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. at the carousel on the Santa Monica Pier. The theme of this year's auction is "Springtime in Paris."

It's the school's largest community fundraising event and the auction features \$10,000 value vacation getaways in Europe, Asia and the Islands; precious jewels or the newest robotic technology; critically acclaimed and collectible artwork by renown artists; home-delivered gourmet meals; specialty/craftsman childrens' furniture; astrology readings; bodywork sessions; private yoga and pilates classes; concert tickets and many other offerings. The auction is still accepting top-quality goods and services to be added to the auction line-up.

Whatever your thing — scoring premium seats to a Lakers game, a private plane ride, a session with the hippest, hottest tattoo artist, going home with a guitar autographed by a rock 'n' roll legend, or an in-depth consultation on your latest screenplay by a true Hollywood player — organizers say there's something for everyone, including a whimsical carousel ride or two.

There will be wine and champagne, hors d'oeuvres, and a decadent dessert tasting, featuring treats from many of the Westside's top restaurateurs and patisseries. Dancing and entertainment round out the evening's festivities.

"What makes our auction special and different," says organizer Beth Rubenstein, "are our Waldorf-inspired handmade toys, dolls, gnomes, puppet-theater and other artful handiworks. We also offer our famous class baskets filled with handmade and unique gifts. This year, one class has made a quilt, bound to become an heirloom for some lucky family."

Waldorf education — with 700 schools worldwide and more than 125 in North America — is the fastest growing independent K-12 school movement in the world. The first Waldorf school was established in Germany in 1919 by the Austrian philosopher and educational reformer Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Steiner aimed to develop all the human faculties — physical, emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual. Many of the initiatives that he began are thriving today in the fields of medicine, economics, agriculture and art.

The Westside Waldorf School was established in 1988 because a group of dedicated teachers, parents and community members wanted to bring Waldorf education to the westside of Los Angeles. Today, the school offers nursery, kindergarten, and elementary grades one through six. Seventh grade will be added next year, and eighth grade the year after until all grades have been established.

For further information about the auction or to purchase tickets, contact the school at (310) 576-0788 or via e-mail at: info@wswaldorf.org.

Power moves: SMC students get national recognition

By Daily Press staff

It's unusual for community college students to have their research projects published in scientific publications, but four Santa Monica College students have done just that. The students, who served summer internships at The Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, had their research projects published in the Journal of Undergraduate Research of the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Science.

Deepak Malhotra, who worked with Dr. William Stringfellow of the Lab's Earth Sciences Division and Center for Environmental Biotechnology, conducted research on the biodegradation of MTBE, a toxic gasoline additive used to promote combustion efficiency and reduce carbon monoxide emissions from automobiles.

Silja Haapanen did research analysis and study preparation of the low-energy background in the particle detector in the lab's nuclear science division. Her mentor was Dr. Kevin Lesko.

Gustavo Gonzalez did his research project in the nuclear science division focusing on the 88-inch Cyclotron, home to the world's most powerful gamma ray detector. He centered his research on modeling the external beamline optics into the Gammasphere.

Ruzan Shahinian's project was to create a user-friendly input format for the computer program COMIS, which calculates airflow and pollutant transport in buildings. Her mentor was Phillip N. Price.

surf report

The mix of SW swell and leftover WNW energy continues to fade today. Look for most areas to drop into the knee- to waist-high range.

OUTLOOK: Thursday morning will start off on the slow side, but new WNW swell will be on the rise by the afternoon and will eventually peak on Friday. By Friday morning, many of the better exposed NW breaks in the South Bay see solid head-high waves.

Today the water is:

62°

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

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	8:40	1.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SUNDAY	10:25	0.8	N/A	N/A	1:02	4.1	N/A	N/A
MONDAY	11:29	0.4	11:01	3.0	3:01	4.0	7:10	3.4
TUESDAY	12:10	0.1	11:52	2.6	4:33	4.2	7:12	3.7
WEDNESDAY	N/A	N/A	12:42	-0.1	5:32	4.6	7:22	3.9
THURSDAY	12:28	2.0	1:09	-0.3	6:18	4.9	7:37	4.2
FRIDAY	1:03	1.5	1:35	-0.4	6:58	5.1	7:55	4.6

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The Q Line

The Santa Monica City Council recently passed a law forbidding the public from smoking on the beach. Add this to prohibitions against alcohol and dogs on the beach, and some citizens are beginning to feel as though an unreasonable amount of their freedoms are being taken.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Do you think it is OK for smoking to be prohibited on the beach in the

name of public health, or do you think this unfairly violates the freedom of Santa Monica's citizens?"

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

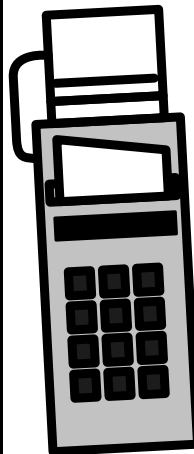
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OPINION

Dems will need to do more than swing into action



HERE'S THE THING

By Lara M. Brown, Ph.D.

The veepstakes are here. Competition is heating up. Recent reports suggest that Sen. John Kerry may choose his running mate as early as the first of May — over two months before the Democratic National Convention.

According to The New York Times, North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, Missouri Representative Dick Gephardt, Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack and New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson have each been interviewed and all are being seriously considered.

Conventional wisdom has it that the vice presidential pick should provide balance to the ticket (regional background, policy expertise, etc.), or at least should help the nominee win a state that he wouldn't likely pick up on his own. This year, the calculus should be different. Kerry should consider two factors of greater strategic import for both his election and the Democratic Party: Money and the Senate.

By money, I don't mean fundraising prowess. Whoever is chosen will need to help with Democratic fundraising. That

goes without saying. I mean Republican spending.

Democrats, if they have any shot at winning, must force the Republicans to spend money in the South. Why? Because the Republicans have so much money that if they only have to spend their resources in the swing states, the Democrats will lose.

President Bush didn't have a primary challenger, and has amassed over \$180 million dollars for his campaign to spend during the next four months. Republicans are holding their nominating convention in late August, which means that they'll receive \$75 million in public financing about one month after the Democrats, allowing them to concentrate their spending in the last 60 days of the campaign. The Republican National Committee has been more successful than the Democratic National Committee at fundraising "hard" money — individual contributions under \$25,000. As of March 31, the RNC had \$54 million cash on hand, while the DNC had \$26 million. These "hard" dollars are critical because, unlike "soft" money or PAC money, they can be spent on directly assisting the nominee, rather than on "get-out-the-vote" efforts or issue advocacy.

There also are five Southern Democratic senators who are retiring and leaving open seats. If Kerry's campaign abandons the South, it would be to the detriment of Democrats across America. The Republicans would likely pick up

those seats, meaning that Democrats would not be able to stop Republican policies because the majority in the Senate would be beyond the reach of a filibuster (60 votes). Should Bush then win reelection and all three branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial) remain under Republican control, it is quite possible that the Democrats would find themselves in an even worse situation than they have been in for the past few years — very nearly powerless.

HERE'S THE THING:

Democrats need to face facts. The battle is not for the hearts and minds of liberals who voted for Ralph Nader in the last election, or for loyal Democrats. Democrats don't need to "excite the base." The base is excited.

In fact, it is livid. The base has been this way since the last election, when Al Gore lost because of one vote on the U.S. Supreme Court. It has stayed riled up for three years because Bush has governed with a mandate he never had. The base will turn out.

If Democrats are going to win this election, then they need to take the fight to Bush. They shouldn't just focus on the Midwestern swing states like Ohio, Missouri and Iowa — they should make the race bigger. They need to make Bush battle in the states that he should win. They should force him to fight for the South.

The Democrats should make a play for states like Louisiana, which has two Democratic senators and a Democratic governor, or Arkansas, which has two Democratic senators and went for Bill Clinton in both 1992 and '96, along with Florida.

The easiest way to do this is for Kerry to pick a Southern running mate, and send him on a tour of the South to raise money and "echo" his message.

While North Carolinians have had a tough year — the Panthers lost the Super Bowl to the Patriots and Duke lost in the Final Four to the University of Connecticut — Sen. Edwards may be the best pick to ensure that the Democrats are competitive in the swing states, not because he will pull one of them into the Kerry column, but because he will stop the Republicans from taking all of them. Sometimes, the best offensive strategy is a defensive one.

Democrats would do well to remember that this year hasn't been a complete Northern sweep — LSU did win the Bowl Championship Series — and Bush is from Texas.

(Lara M. Brown, Ph.D., is a visiting scholar at UCLA's Institute for Social Science Research and she served on Sen. John Edwards National Finance Council for his presidential campaign. She can be reached at larambrown@aol.com)

What a difference a day makes ... and 538 votes

NEWS on the EDGE

By Ron Scott Smith



Thursday, April 8, 2004 ... the way it might have been:

■ U2 is blasting from 22-year-old Pvt. Brandon L. Davis' car radio. "It's A Beautiful Day," and he's living it. He grudgingly shells out the \$1.19-per-gallon at the Arco down the street from his apartment in Cumberland, Md. It could be better, he thinks, but he's feeling Bono and it's all good.

Tank full, he drives off to work this morning — after doing his mandatory weekend in the Army Reserves — to a job in the booming alternative energy sector, a job that is secure, that pays him a decent salary, with health care benefits that no one feels were shoved down anybody's throat, as America finally accedes to the simple notion that everybody's good health is in everybody's best interest. He'll take the stroller when he gets home later, with his infant son in it, to the park for a walk, along with his young wife.

At work, his first task is to fax important documents to company headquarters at the World Trade Center in New York, way up in

the sky, on the 98th floor of the south tower. He reminds himself that he's promised to take the family up to the "Big Apple" soon for a tour of the magnificent twin towers. America is alive and bustling with creative and productive energy, a guiding light of sorts for others around the globe.

■ With the recent sea-change in the nation's energy policy — a bold initiative to move into alternative power sources like hydrogen and solar — dependence on foreign oil is at an all-time low. No longer needed there for any discernible reason, American armed forces have been withdrawn from Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

■ So the man named bin Laden, though continuing to lead the underground radical terrorist group known as al-Qaida, has been somewhat de-fanged. The world is on to him, and is bonded together to keep him and his minions in check. In fact, he seems to be having trouble identifying a supervillain to take his wrath out on. According to the latest readings by revamped worldwide intelligence organizations, new recruits to his proposed Jihad have dwindled to near-nothing.

■ Enemies are out of sight and out of mind. The evil despot ruling the troublesome nation of Iraq is barely a threat, totally contained and in failing health, as an international coalition continues to enforce a no-fly zone over his country, and U.N. inspectors remain hunkered down throughout, making certain that none of his deadly weapons of mass

destruction would ever see the light of day, even if he happened to have them.

■ The reform movement in Iran is alive and well, as young dissidents continue their revolutionary movement away from the grossly backward fundamentalist religious rule that would keep their women clothed in long, blue, sexless robes.

■ Palestine revels in statehood, having at long last come to compromise and peace with Israel, under the relentless prodding and guidance of a U.S. leadership that never stopped believing. Suicide bombing missions in the Middle East appear to be going the way of the dinosaur.

■ Nations of planet Earth are acting in unprecedented harmony. The Kyoto Protocol to stem the rising tide of global warming was signed in unanimity by every attending nation, even the United States of America. An international military court has been created to hand out justice for all with respect to actions taken by the mighty against the weak wherever it may happen. The United Nations is flourishing, with even the "rogue" nations falling in, lining up at the door to apply for admission. When trouble rears its head anywhere, these are the forces sent to keep the peace, not just young Americans.

Thursday, April 8, 2004 ... the way it is:

■ He will not take his son for a stroll in the park tonight. When Pvt. Brandon L. Davis came home from work, it was in a

casket draped with an American flag. He was killed along with four other soldiers when an improvised explosive device hit their armored personnel carrier in Habbaniyah, Iraq, on March 31, while they attempted to quell an uprising of fiercely proud citizens of American-occupied Iraq. It's a little over a year since the overwhelming military conquest of that sovereign nation was officially named "Shock and Awe."

■ Bin Laden's al-Qaida flourishes beyond his own most twisted and wildest dreams. The clash between Palestine and Israel is ratcheted up to its deadliest level of volatility ever. Iran embraces fundamentalist rule even more tightly. There is no hint of a move toward alternative energy sources, so the price of gasoline sits at record highs and climbs on. There is no Kyoto Protocol on global warming. There is no international military court. The United Nations has been disdained and rendered impotent. Many of America's sick cannot afford to go to a doctor. And the twin towers are a ghost haunting the New York skyline. That's the way it is.

■ The way it might have been, with a thorough recount of the Florida vote, is anybody's guess. There are 8 million stories in the naked country. This has been one of them.

(Ron Scott Smith has a lot of stories and many of them are not pretty. E-mail him at Edgethewest@aol.com).

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

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BUSINESS

Point of interest: You can always go home again



IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

By John Kim

Many of today's homeowners have a very valuable financial asset: The equity they have built in their homes. Equity is defined as the difference between a home's current appraised value and any outstanding mortgage loan on the property. Combined, U.S. homeowners hold approximately \$4 trillion in home equity, according to the Federal Reserve Bank System.

The equity in a home can be a valuable resource if you are a homeowner who is looking for an economic way to borrow. There are two ways to accomplish this, a home equity loan or an equity line of credit. Both allow you to borrow up to a given percentage of the equity in your property, and require the filing and approval of a mortgage (credit check, appraisal, title search, recording, etc.). The time it takes to arrange the necessary paperwork and appraisal depends on the lender and current demand for home loans. Some lenders charge an application fee. Generally, costs are significantly less than those for a first mortgage. Interest on home equity loans and lines of credit is

generally much lower than interest on other types of loans. Interest paid on both types of home equity loans may be tax deductible, which can further reduce your cost of financing. You should, of course, always consult a tax advisor for guidance.

That said, there are some important differences between a line of credit and a loan. Probably the most important difference is flexibility. The choice of which type of loan is best for you often depends on how you plan to use the money.

HOME EQUITY LINE OF CREDIT

A home equity line of credit allows you to finance multiple expenses over a number of years without having to reapply for a loan each time you borrow. Many of these loans are tied to a special checking account, or even a credit card making it easy for you to finance a series of purchases such as those required for home improvement projects, education expenses and weddings. Lines of credit are revolving loans — as you repay amounts borrowed, you replenish your available credit for future borrowing. Most lenders allow you to borrow for a period of several years — often up to 10 or 15 years. Some lines of credit are structured so you repay only interest for a certain number of years. Others require repayment of a portion of the outstanding principal and interest beginning with the first payment. These loans typically feature a variable or

adjustable rate of interest that fluctuates with the prime rate or similar index.

HOME EQUITY LOAN

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(John S. Kim is a financial consultant with Smith Barney in Beverly Hills. Call (310) 205-4939 or visit www.fc.smithbarney.com/jkim. This article is based, in whole or in part, on information provided by the credit and lending services department of Smith Barney. Smith Barney does not give tax advice. Please consult a tax advisor for guidance. Smith Barney is a division and service mark of Citigroup Global Markets Inc. Member SIPC).

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LOCAL

Word on the street: City Hall is cracking down

SIGNS, from page 1

They have found many. On Wilshire Boulevard alone, several businesses have been forced to remove their signs in the past few weeks.

One of them was Great Labels, a resale designer clothing shop for women at 1126 Wilshire Blvd. Owner Andrea Waters said she removed the signs two weeks ago after inspectors in March gave her one last chance to comply. However, on Monday, Waters received a hand-delivered letter from the City Attorney's Office informing her that she is facing \$20,000 in fines — \$200 a day for 100 days of non-compliance. An administrative hearing is set for later this month.

While it's unlikely Waters will have to pay a dime, City Hall's mission is accomplished — the threat was enough to prompt the proprietor to take down her signs, signs which she says are crucial for advertising to the public what she is selling.

"Fines are that hefty to be a deterrent," said Tim McCormick, the head of the building and safety department, adding about 85 percent of violators who have been notified end up complying before it gets to the administrative hearing phase. "They immediately comply usually if they know we are going to follow through. It becomes self-regulating."

The signs at Great Labels were hung on a brick wall at the entrance of Waters' shop. The number of signs and their sizes must conform to the code, which is based on a complex set of criteria that includes the amount of square footage in the storefront. Waters' signs were found to be too large and too many in number based on her square footage.

Other signs that are prohibited include rooftop, free-standing pole signs and sandwich boards, among others.

Waters, who is vacationing out of town this week, told the Daily Press on Friday that she feels City Hall's priorities are misdirected. Not only does she feel that the law is arbitrarily enforced — there are numerous violators throughout the city, even right next door to her — but also that City Hall's willingness to allow vagrants to sleep and defecate in front of her business is a far worse violation than signs promoting local businesses.

Waters isn't alone. Many merchants — both those who have been targeted for their signs and those who have not — agree that City Hall's focus on cleaning up Santa Monica through its sign ordinance is the wrong policy.

"You pay rent, you try to do the right thing as a business and then they make it hard for you," said one Wilshire Boulevard store manager, who didn't want to be identified for fear of retaliation from City Hall. That particular business isn't currently complying with the sign ordinance. "They are anti-business and they create this red tape to make more money."

McCormick said his department's code enforcement efforts actually cost City Hall money.

"It's a quality of life issue, not a money-making issue," he said, adding it costs between \$700 and \$800 just for an inspector to handle one case. Fines from code enforcement don't even account for 10 percent of the revenues for the department, he said.

"We are losing money on code enforcement,"



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

The Thai restaurant Toi (top left) on Wilshire Boulevard was ordered to remove its outdoor signs from its facade a few weeks ago. Just one block east, at 11th Street, Farrah's Florist (top right) adorns its entrance with balloons, technically a violation of City Hall's sign ordinance. A few blocks to the east on Wilshire, the new Krispy Kreme doughnut shop (bottom left) entices customers by utilizing a sandwich board, as does the nearby Cingular Wireless, which also employs a large inflatable logo forbidden by law in Santa Monica.

McCormick said. "It's not about the money."

The 18-year-old sign ordinance hadn't been enforced for years. But in 2000, the City Council directed staff to begin enforcing all prohibited signs. Businesses have two options — either remove the illegal signs or get a permit from City Hall and one of its commissions, the Architectural Review Board.

Until recently, the building and safety department didn't have enough staff to adequately enforce not only the sign ordinance, but all codes within the city, McCormick said. While there were only four staffers dedicated to enforcement a few years ago, there are now 10 dedicated to illegal signs.

"The city wasn't in a place to enforce it at the time," said McCormick, adding that zoning officers also must enforce a host of other codes that regulate all types of issues from overgrown weeds to the noise ordinance.

"Everything has priorities."

With more than 6,000 businesses in the city to check, not everyone will be brought into compliance overnight.

"We try to make a concerted effort to not single anyone out," McCormick said. "But we only have so many staff to handle it all ... we are very conscious about being fair and even-handed."

He wouldn't specifically say where inspectors are focusing on, but Lincoln and Wilshire boulevards, as well as the southside of Santa Monica, have been recent targets. Inspections are based on complaints from the public and personal observations from building officials, as well as City Councilmembers.

"We try to concentrate in highly visible areas," McCormick said, adding inspectors are taking one block at a time. "We are just starting and we are committed to doing it."

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LOCAL



Waste not, want not: Cruise liners ask for time

POLLUTION, from page 1

Cruise ships carry up to 5,000 people. On average, each ship dumps 195,000 gallons of "gray" water, 13,000 gallons of treated sewage and 2,200 gallons of oily "bilge" water each day, according to the International Council of Cruise Lines, the trade association for the industry.

Michael Crye, president of the trade association, said the United States Coast Guard regularly checks all vessels and holds the cruise liners to self-imposed regulations that require they dump all treated sewage in international waters at least four miles from shore. Crye said a team of scientists is currently working on recommendations to the industry, adding several liners are testing advanced systems.

At the Wednesday protest on Santa Monica Beach, organizers pointed their criticisms at Royal Caribbean, the second-largest cruise liner in the world with 28 ships. Only three of its vessels, however, are outfitted with advanced wastewater treatment systems. Activists think the company should take the lead and outfit all of their ships. Company officials said that takes time.

How much it costs to install the systems is unclear. Littlewood maintained they cost about \$2 million a piece.

"It's not the sort of thing that you can just go out and buy at K-Mart, put it in and say, 'Hey, this does the job.'"

— MICHAEL SHEEHAN
Spokesman, Royal Caribbean

Michael Sheehan, a spokesman for the cruise liner, said they actually cost millions more, because different models have to be tested and installed — a process already underway.

"The whole industry announced in December our plans to move to advanced wastewater purification systems," Sheehan said Wednesday. "It's not the sort of thing that you can just go out and buy at K-Mart, put it in and say, 'Hey, this does the job.'"

Sheehan went on to say that Royal Caribbean doesn't discharge sewage unless until it is at least 12 miles offshore and traveling at six knots an hour or faster. Dropping the sewage at that speed has been shown in studies to have a negligible effect on the environment, he added.

"This company — and the cruise industry as a whole — has an extremely strong self-interest in preserving the

world's oceans," said Sheehan, who accused Oceana of waging a misleading campaign. "We derive our livelihoods from them. If we don't protect them, we most assuredly will lose our jobs, our way

of life and our very quality of life. We are not about to take that chance."

Sheehan added that Royal Caribbean is at the forefront of the environmental movement among cruise liners and questioned why it's been targeted. Littlewood countered the cruise liner should set an example for others, and pointed out that they tout themselves as environmentally friendly.

"They've refused to retrofit the rest of their line," he said. "They have the opportunity to really set the bar, to really set the standard for environmental accountability."

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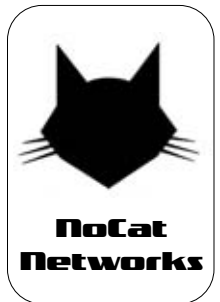
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Altar of Repose until Midnight - Auditorium
Night Prayer at Midnight**

**GOOD FRIDAY, April 9th
12:00 Noon - Stations of the Cross
1:00pm and 7:30pm Solemn Liturgy
Holy Communion and
Veneration of the Cross
7:30pm Solemn Liturgy**

**HOLY SATURDAY, April 10th
Easter Vigil Liturgy at 7:30pm (no 5:30pm Mass)**

**EASTER SUNDAY, April 11th
6:30am, 8:00am, 9:30am, 11:30am and 1:15pm in the Church**

**MASS IN THE GYMNASIUM
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STATE

Google eyes: Critics quick to tear into e-mail service

BY MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP Business Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Google Inc. hails its new e-mail service as a breakthrough in online communication, but consumer watchdogs are attacking it as a creepy invasion of privacy that threatens to set a troubling precedent.

Although Google's free "Gmail" service isn't even available yet, critics already are pressuring the popular search engine maker to drop its plans to electronically scan e-mail content so it can distribute relevant ads alongside incoming messages.

Privacy activists worry that Gmail will comb through e-mail more intensively than the filters widely used to weed out potential viruses and spam.

Gmail opponents also want Google to revise a policy that entitles the company to retain copies of people's incoming and outgoing e-mail even after they close their accounts.

The e-mail scanning, which Google says will be handled exclusively by computers, has raised the most alarms, partly because it seeks to capitalize on messages sent by people without Gmail accounts.

Google intends to deliver ads by analyzing what's being discussed. For instance, an e-mail from one friend to another talking about an upcoming trip might include links to hotels or airlines.

Gmail has a "definite creepiness factor," said Ari Schwartz, associate director of the Center for Democracy and Technology.

Mountain View, Calif.-based Google portrays the commercialization of e-mail as a small trade-off for a service that will give each user one gigabyte of storage — up to 500 times more than other leading free services — and provide a quicker, cleaner way to search e-mailboxes. Most e-mail messages opened on Gmail won't even contain ads, according to Google.

Nevertheless, critics say the free storage — roughly the equivalent of 500,000 pages — isn't worth compromising individual privacy rights.

"Consumers really need to look this gift horse in the mouth because it has rotten teeth and bad breath," said Beth Givens, director of the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, a watchdog group.

The Gmail backlash has inspired Orwellian comparisons likening Google to Big Brother, a disturbing development for a privately held company committed to making money "without doing evil."

"We are not going over to the dark side," said Wayne Rosing, Google's vice president of engineering. "Consumers can expect us to treat their e-mail as private and with a great deal of respect. I don't think we are doing anything unreasonable."

Gmail apparently doesn't bother everyone. Without providing specifics, Rosing said "hundreds of thousands" of people have registered with Gmail.com since Google announced the service last

week. The company is still testing Gmail before offering it to the general public later this year.

The enthusiastic response to Gmail probably is being driven by the chance to get so much e-mail storage space for free, said Chris Hoofnagle, associate director for the Electronic Privacy Information Center.

Hoofnagle estimates Google will pay about \$10 annually for each gigabyte of storage the company gives away, a small price to build an audience likely to be prized by advertisers.

"We don't use the data collected on one service to enhance another."

— WAYNE ROSING
Google's vice president of engineering

"It's not a great deal. Individuals would be throwing away the protections of their communications for a few dollars," Hoofnagle said. "We don't see this as any different than letting a company listen in on your phone conversations and letting the Postal Service open your mail."

Some parts of Gmail even could be illegal, said Simon Davies, director of Privacy International, a watchdog group in London.

Google's current Gmail policy advises potential users that "residual copies of e-mail may remain on our systems, even after you have deleted them from your mailbox or after the termination of your account."

Vast data collection like that appears to be a blatant violation of communication protections in United Kingdom and possibly elsewhere in Europe, Davies said. Privacy International already has filed a complaint against Gmail with United Kingdom regulators.

"If millions of people have their communication history kept on Google computers," Davies said, "then that storehouse becomes a very valuable source of information for a range of unintended consequences."

Yahoo and Hotmail say they delete all e-mail messages shortly after an account is closed.

The watchdogs also worry that Gmail could give Google a way to individually identify the people using its search engine, placing a name with the material being sought.

Google already tracks most searches conducted at its site by tagging users' Web browsers with a chunk of data known as a "cookie." Google users are able to remove or block the cookie, although few do.

Rosing said there will be an information firewall separating Google's search engine from Gmail.

"We don't use the data collected on one service," he said, "to enhance another."

check out your forecast in today's horoscopes ... page 2

Anti-plagiarism tools have familiar ring to them

OAKLAND — White-collar copycats may be less inclined to pilfer the well-chosen words of others now that software designed to ferret out plagiarism is moving out of academia and into the business world.

Now, tainted by scandals or leery of the Internet's copy-enabling power, a growing number of newspapers, law firms and other businesses are using data-sifting tools that can cross-check billions of digital documents and swiftly recognize patterns in just seconds.

Even the U.N. Security Council has begun to protect its credibility this way, using iParadigm's technology since last fall to ensure the originality of reports by its researchers and freelance writers.

Other plagiarism-detection providers, including Glatt Plagiarism Services, MyDropBox LLC, and CFL Software Development also report growing business outside the educational sector.

Few of these businesses are willing to talk about using these tools. Many insist that the software makers shield their identities and keep mum about any transgressions that are exposed.

None of the plagiarism-catchers said their clients were willing to be interviewed for this story. Fearing negative publicity, most “don’t want other people to know they’re using the service,” said Max Litvin, co-owner and inventor of MyDropBox.

Last year, one publisher turned to iParadigms when it investigated — and subsequently affirmed — rumors that an accomplished textbook author had plagiarized other sources. Sworn to secrecy, iParadigms president John Barrie said he watched in disbelief as the publisher quietly revised later editions, leaving the author's reputation intact.

"But I see a lot of plagiarism everyday," Barrie said. "Most authors, whether a student or professional author, they think the odds of being found out are so remote that they'll play the odds and think they're just fine."

IParadigms charges universities a \$500 annual licensing fee plus 60 cents per full-time student. Business customers pay \$1,000 a year and \$10 for each page submitted for screening. Newspapers face different charging options based on word count or circulation.

A different program, WCopyfinder, was employed by USA Today as it probed the work of its embattled former reporter Jack Kelley. The free program compares strings of words only from preselected documents.

IThenticate and MyDropBox, by contrast, are Web-based tools. Users upload documents to the Web sites; the services troll the Internet and other proprietary databases, such as Lexis-Nexis or ProQuest, for any sign of unoriginal work; then they produce reports showing matches. IThenticate also combs its archive of Internet pages, which grows by 40 million pages a day.

Clearly, plagiarism is a growing problem. In a survey of 30,000 undergraduates at 34 colleges, 37 percent admitted committing cut-and-paste plagiarism using the Internet, up from 10 percent in 1999. Only 20 percent of their professors use plagiarism-detection tools, according to the survey by Rutgers University professor Don McCabe, founder of the Center for Academic Integrity.

Plagiarism detectors can be relatively cheap insurance against intellectual property sins, but many businesses and even educators remain reluctant to use them. Some

"It's merely a tool to guide the eye," said Lou Bloomfield, a University of Virginia physics professor who created WCopyfinder in 2001 to check for plagiarism in student term papers.

IParadigms software helped The Hartford Courant conclude last month that Central Connecticut State University's president, Richard Judd, had committed plagiarism in an op-ed piece after an alert reader said it may have lifted sentences from The New York Times.

The Connecticut newspaper tried an Internet keyword search but without much success. IPadigm's software later showed that the opinion piece included not only material from the Times but also three other sources — at least 11 percent of it appeared to be unoriginal.

The criticism upended the respected university administrator's career — Judd, 66, announced on March 19 that he will retire July 1.

The *Courant* doesn't plan to routinely check every story for plagiarism — just submissions for the editorial page, says John Zakarian, editorial page editor. However, the paper now has a fast and effective tool to use if a staff

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"We've come to rely more and more on the Internet," he said, "and it's not humanly possible to verify every sentence and word. I was amazed we have the wonders of technology to help in that fashion."

At the Macon Telegraph, which fired a reporter for plagiarism in March, editors are discussing how to prevent a repeat occurrence — but such electronic tools aren't being considered, said managing editor Mike McQueen.

"We, the editors, trust our writers deeply," he said. "I don't think anybody here would want to challenge our reporters to prove that they are not plagiarizing everything they write. It'll look like a witch hunt."

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NATIONAL

Cell outs: People toting phones to places of refuge

BY BECKY BOHRER

Associated Press Writer

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, Wyo. — It was a sunny spring day in Yellowstone National Park, and tourist Judy Brendalen paused for a midday snack at a roadside picnic table. Close at hand in her purse was her cell phone — just in case.

"I think for emergency purposes, you need it," Brendalen, of Clearbrook, Minn., said as she relaxed, not even noticing a cell phone antenna tower on a nearby ridge.

Cell phones have long been virtually unavoidable on city streets and in shopping malls. But they now are showing up in some of the very places people go to escape such things: national parks.

For park managers, this is a challenge. Officials say they want to ensure public safety and meet the needs of visitors. But they also must protect park resources and the visitor experience. There is no set policy on how to strike this balance, on what role cell phones and the antenna towers

"It's possible you could come to a trail in Yellowstone and see someone yacking on the phone to their stockbroker."

— DENNIS MCKINNEY
Development director at PEER

they require should play in their parks.

Some conservationists worry that parks run the risk of becoming too civilized, even scarred by development.

"You have to keep in mind what the purpose of a park is," said Laura Loomis, government affairs director with the National Parks Conservation Association. "There's visitor enjoyment, but it shouldn't be at the sacrifice of the resource. And the resource includes the landscape."

At least 15 national park units have one or more cell towers within their boundaries, according to regional Park Service offices, though they acknowledged the number may be incomplete.

Also, many parks may receive cell cov-

erage in some areas from towers outside their boundaries. Park Service officials say that, on a national level, they do not track the number of cell phone towers in the parks.

Permitting for telecommunications sites is done at the local park level, where officials are supposed to study the potential effects a proposal may have on such things as the environment and view and provide an opportunity for public comment, said Lee Dickinson, special park uses program manager with the Park Service.

"It's important to keep the evaluation on the park level because they understand the park resource," she said.

Some groups have questioned the process through which such sites are approved and say they would like to see more open discussion.

One Yellowstone tower, near Old Faithful, has been criticized as an eyesore by groups such as the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

Among the concerns raised by PEER about such development is the potential it sees for the "death of solitude in national parks."

"It's possible you could come to a trail in Yellowstone and see someone yacking on the phone to their stockbroker," said Dennis McKinney, development director at PEER.

For Michael Scott, that kind of scene detracts from every else's enjoyment of the park experience.

"Providing for the safety and enjoyment of national parks is necessary to address," said Scott, executive director of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. "But the concern on the other side of that is, if you take your family to Old Faithful to enjoy it, ... is it appropriate to have people talking on their cell phone?"

Lane Baker, Yellowstone's deputy chief ranger, said many people expect to be able to use cell phones and that officials can't dictate how tourists use them.

"We can't control what people do on their cell phones," she said. "You can't control what they do at Old Faithful like you can't control what they do in downtown New York."

And Baker said cell phones in the park have a definite positive side, making a difference in the way officials can receive

and respond to calls.

"As an emergency responder, I wouldn't want to do my job without one," said Baker.

Yellowstone is developing an "antenna management plan" that would look at such things as the park's needs and help with long-term planning, spokeswoman Cheryl Matthews said. The park has five cell towers, including two that were built on existing equipment, and all are in developed areas within the park, she said.

"We felt, with the requests we were getting, that it was appropriate to move forward with this," she said.

Matthews said she couldn't estimate how much of the park receives cell coverage, but noted that only about 2 percent of Yellowstone is developed.

The issue isn't just at Yellowstone.

At Grand Teton National Park, for example, there are cell towers within and just outside the boundaries. Some backcountry areas have cell coverage, and that may create a false sense of security for tourists, said Joan Anzelmo, a park spokeswoman.

"With that access, people think, 'With my cell phone, I can be rescued.' That's not a good attitude to have," she said. "When you head out to the backcountry, you need to be knowledgeable and prepared to deal with hazards without help."

But cell phones have saved lives.

Last July, a desperate cell phone call from 13,000 feet on the Grand Teton in Wyoming alerted rescuers that lightning had struck a party of 13 climbers near the summit. Rangers flew to the mountain by helicopter, and were able to pluck the most badly injured from the mountain before dark closed in. One climber was killed by the lightning strike, but the others survived.

But on the other side of the equation, Yosemite spokesman Deb Schweizer said the park also has gotten calls from hikers who are simply pooped and want a lift out. They get a polite refusal.

"Just because you're tired doesn't mean we're going to send someone out," she said.

Roxanne Dey, a spokeswoman at Lake Mead National Recreation Area, said she wasn't even aware of the location of towers in that unit until they were pointed out to her recently. She said about 10 percent of the park has coverage with the three towers within its borders and that she feels safer, particularly when she is with her kids, having her cell phone along.

"I wouldn't want a cell tower next to the Washington Monument or in the most popular hiking area at Lake Mead," she said. "But I think you can strike a balance."

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Blackout highlighted need for power grid rules

BY H. JOSEF HEBERT

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — A seven-month investigation into the nation's worst blackout is putting new pressure on Congress to boost the reliability of power grids — but legislation addressing the problem remains in limbo.

Nearly eight months after all or parts of eight states and sections of Canada went dark, a U.S.-Canadian task force earlier this week called for urgent approval of mandatory reliability rules to govern the electric transmission industry.

Many of the voluntary rules, managed by a private, industry-sponsored group, were largely ignored by the Ohio power company and others whose failures led to the blackout, the task force said in a 228-page report.

Most of the causes for the massive outage that cascaded from Michigan to New York on Aug. 14, 2003, were detailed in a preliminary report last November. On

Monday the task force issued 46 recommendations, the first of which was to "make reliability standards mandatory and enforceable with penalties for non-compliance."

It's something the White House, a bipartisan array of lawmakers and industry representatives demanded within days after the lights went out last summer.

However, provisions to establish mandatory rules on the electricity industry, along with measures to make it easier to build transmission lines, have been caught up in a partisan fight over broader energy legislation.

As the task force report was being released Monday, Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., took another stab at trying to get his energy bill out of the Senate, announcing he would attach it to a popular jobs bill.

Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, also cited the blackout findings as a fresh reason to pass energy leg-

islation. But Barton also has said he won't go along with an energy bill that doesn't provide liability protection to the makers of a gasoline additive, MTBE. That issue helped kill the energy bill — and its electricity section — late last year.

Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., whose state was hit by the blackout, has argued for a stand-alone electricity bill for months.

"Each day this legislation is not considered is another day consumers remain unnecessarily at risk of another blackout," Dingell said after Monday's report was released.

Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., co-sponsor of a separate bill that would address only electricity matters, said, "There's no good reason (for) ... letting this legislation get stuck in a political quagmire" of the broader energy bill.

The U.S.-Canadian task force said its seven-month investigation uncovered evidence that the industry's attempt at self-policing the reliability of the power

grids is inadequate and could spawn another blackout.

There was a clear understanding long before the blackout that the Ohio region where the line problems began was highly vulnerable to grid instability, said the task force.

Had FirstEnergy Corp., the Ohio utility whose lines initially failed, and the grid monitoring organization in the Midwest followed industry-recommended standards, they would have been better prepared to deal with the situation, the report said.

Something as simple as shutting off 200 megawatts of power an hour before the blackout might have kept the problem from spreading, investigators said.

Investigators said they found at least seven violations of industry-sponsored North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) reliability rules linked to the blackout. The report also said NERC was too closely tied to industry and dependent on it for funding.



WORLD BRIEFLY

Sept. 11 accomplice released

By The Associated Press

HAMBURG, Germany — The only Sept. 11 suspect ever convicted was ordered released by a Hamburg court Wednesday, his lawyers' offices said, after his guilty verdict on charges of aiding the suicide pilots was thrown out last month.

Mounir El Motassadeq, 30, has been serving a maximum 15-year prison term in Hamburg since a court in the city convicted him in February 2003 of giving logistical help to the Hamburg al-Qaida cell that included three of the Sept. 11 pilots.

An appeals court has ordered a retrial starting June 16, saying the Moroccan was denied a fair trial because the U.S. government refused access to a key witness in its custody.

Assistants at the offices of both of his Hamburg lawyers, Gerhard Strate and Josef Graessle-Muenschner, told The Associated Press they had received the court ruling ordering el Motassadeq's release.

Strate's office said El Motassadeq's release included several conditions, including that he cannot leave Hamburg and cannot be issued a new passport.

Prosecutors allege el Motassadeq helped cell members conceal their involvement in the plot to attack the United States while they lived and studied in Hamburg.

Hong Kong pressured on politics

By The Associated Press

HONG KONG — A Chinese official flew here Wednesday to explain Beijing's decision to assert more control over Hong Kong politics, leaving critics divided over whether it was a real attempt at dialogue or an empty gesture.

Some said mainland legislative official Qiao Xiaoyang should have come earlier if he was truly interested in Hong Kong people's views, but others wanted to hear what he had to say.

"It's certainly late, but it's better to be late than never," said Martin Lee, an opposition lawmaker Beijing has branded as a "traitor" because of his pro-democracy views.

Pro-democracy figures claim China has violated constitutional law though a heavy-handed ruling issued Tuesday, and some predicted the move could stir unrest in the territory.

China's Standing Committee of the National People's Congress said Hong Kong must get Beijing's blessing before trying to change the way it selects its leader and lawmakers — giving the central government more con-

trol over such matters than is spelled out in the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution.

Qiao is the deputy secretary-general of the Standing Committee, China's most powerful legislative body.

Train derails in Mississippi

By The Associated Press

YAZOO CITY, Miss. — A 68-year-old passenger was killed and more than 60 others were injured when an Amtrak passenger train jumped its tracks in a swampy area of the Mississippi Delta, the first deadly accident involving the rail line in two years.

The nine-car train, traveling from New Orleans to Chicago, derailed Tuesday night near the town of Flora, tumbling off a trestle five or six feet approximately 25 miles north of Jackson.

Coroner Ricky Shivers identified the dead passenger as Clara L. Downs, 68, from Chicago. Lee Stokes, of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, said it appeared about 65 people suffered "minor to critical injuries."

Dan Stessel, a spokesman for Amtrak, said 68 passengers and 12 crew members were on the train, the City of New Orleans. He said he had no information on what caused the accident.

All passengers and crew were accounted for late Tuesday.

Stokes said that while the derailment was believed to be an accident, the FBI had sent agents to the scene. Gov. Haley Barbour declared a state of emergency.

Nader calls for Bush's impeachment

By The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader called this week for President Bush to be impeached for "deceiving the American people night after night after night" about U.S. involvement in Iraq.

"When you plunge our country into war on a platform of fabrications and deceptions, and you bring back thousands of American soldiers who are sick, injured or dead, and that war is unconstitutionally authorized to begin with, Mr. Bush's behavior qualifies for the high crimes and misdemeanor impeachment clause of the Constitution," the 2000 Green Party presidential nominee said to applause from about 200 students at Columbia College Chicago.

Merrill Smith, a spokeswoman for Bush's re-election campaign, declined to comment.

Nader, a longtime consumer advocate, was in Illinois to gather the 25,000 signatures he needs before June 21

to qualify for the state ballot. He failed Monday to qualify for Oregon's ballot, but said he would try again under another option there.

Alleged immigrant smuggler in custody

By The Associated Press

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — A Texas man who police say played a role in the nation's deadliest smuggling tragedy has been arrested in Mexico, according to Mexican authorities.

Victor Rodriguez, 57, of Brownsville, was arrested March 29 in the border town of Matamoros by investigators from the Mexican attorney general's office.

Rodriguez has been linked to a botched smuggling operation uncovered May 14 when dozens of illegal immigrants were locked in a tractor-trailer and abandoned in Victoria, 100 miles southwest of Houston.

Seventeen immigrants were found dead in the trailer, and two others later died. The victims, including a 5-year-old Mexican boy, died from dehydration, hyperthermia and suffocation.

Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney Nancy Herrera in Houston said that "until the legal process continues in Mexico, we can't talk about a possible extradition request or any legal options we have."

Parties do battle over malpractice

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans are trying for a third time to persuade Democrats to curb medical malpractice lawsuits and help alleviate what proponents of limits call a health care crisis.

"The ultimate victims are the patients who see their access to care, to that obstetricians, to that emergency room, to that trauma center, threatened and in some cases, that access totally disappearing," Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., said this week as the Senate prepared for another vote on medical malpractice legislation.

Republicans on Wednesday will try to overcome a Democratic blockade on the medical malpractice legislation. Senate Republicans and President Bush have argued that the measure — which would set caps on damages — could help reduce unnecessary lawsuits that make it harder for doctors to practice. They've said the lawsuits drive up obstetricians' and gynecologists' insurance costs.

But Democrats have been refusing to allow the almost evenly divided Senate to debate the legislation, saying that Republicans are just playing up to their donors in the medical and insurance lobbies.

"I've never seen such special interest legislation," said Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt. "Instead of going about doing the people's business, we seem to be doing about the political action committees' business, and that's why, of course, nothing is getting done."

COMICS

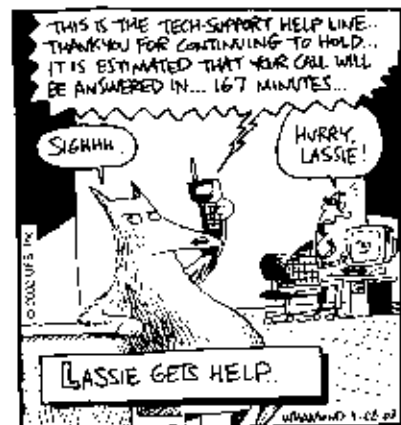
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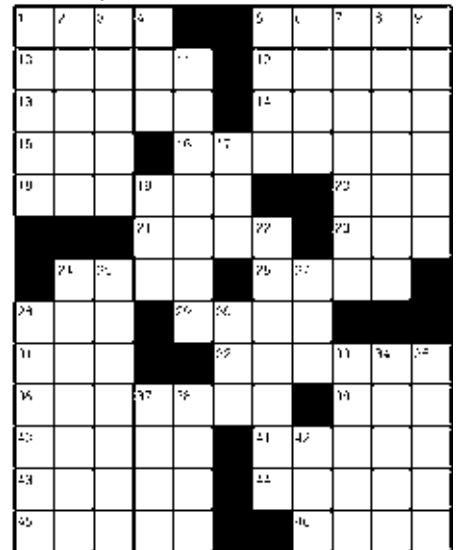
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Obituaries

DANIEL M. BENDIKSEN
Dan, a retired Santa Monica Fire Captain, lost a four-year battle with cancer on March 26, 2004, at Saint Johns Hospital, Santa Monica, California. Since 1985 Dan & his wife Rudi have resided in the Broadbeach are of Malibu, California. Dan was an avid surfer and surfboard shaper. He was born on February 15, 1941 and began surfing in 1953. He shaped his first board in 1954. With some technical advice from Dale Velzy, Dan followed a career as an un-renowned pioneer of long board shaping. In 1963, Dan began shaping, sanding and laminating surfboards for Bing Copeland and in 1964 he married Rudi. In 1974, Dan began a new career as a firefighter with the City of Santa Monica and was promoted to Fire Captain in 1979. Dan received the Medal of Valor award in 1992 from the California State Firefighters Association for his physical actions in the rescue of a distraught citizen. Throughout his career as a firefighter, Dan continued his love for the ocean, surfing, diving and fishing. Dan also continued making surfboards (over 4000) under his own trademark, "BENDIKSEN SURFBOARDS OF MALIBU". Dan was a true sports enthusiast who also enjoyed snow skiing with family and friends. Dan retired from the Santa Monica Fire Department after 27 years of service, on December 18, 2001. Dan will be missed by his mother Berneta (Granny), Rudi and hundreds of loving friends. A ceremony, honoring Dan, will be held on April 12, 2004 at 1:00pm at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 1855 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be sent to the Malibu Chapter of the Surfriders Foundation, 715 Broadway Suite 320, Santa Monica CA 90401, or donations may be sent to the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation, 3600 Oceanview Bl., Glendale CA 91208

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

CNN's O'Brien chews more than she can bite off

By The Associated Press

■ **NORTH PLATTE, Neb.** — Soledad O'Brien knows something about diversity and balance.

The anchor of CNN's daily "American Morning" program has parents who are Irish, black and Hispanic. She has been named one of America's top 100 Irish people and she is a member of both the National Association Black Journalists and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

O'Brien left NBC last year for her new job with CNN. The Harvard graduate also takes a handful of speaking engagements, hoping people will be inspired by her story. She spoke Tuesday in North Platte.

Perhaps the best legacy today's young professionals can leave for people who follow them is a lesson in better achieving balance between work and family life, she said.

The 37-year-old is an example of the challenges of balancing family and work life. The mother of two young daughters is pregnant with twin boys due in August.

"Finding joy in constant chaos" is how O'Brien says she survives and thrives in her family and work. She said she bites off more than she can chew — and chews it anyway.

■ **COACHELLA, Calif.** — Without any specific strategy, dealmaker Donald Trump battled a live chicken and won \$250.

The real estate mogul showed up at his namesake Trump 29 Casino Tuesday and played the Apprentice Chicken Challenge, a tic-tac-toe game with live poultry in a booth pecking its board selections while a gambler makes picks outside the box.

The Donald beat the bird.

Trump dropped in and spent a half-hour answering questions about his hit TV show, NBC's "The Apprentice," and his recent stint as host of "Saturday

Night Live." He also signed T-shirts and books and humored fans by spouting his catchphrase, "You're fired!"

■ **BEVERLY HILLS** — A misdemeanor battery case against former Motley Crue singer Vince Neil was dismissed Wednesday after he completed more than 100 hours of community service, prosecutors said.

Superior Court Judge Richard Stone granted a March 26 request to dismiss the case against Neil, said a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles County district attorney's office.

The charge stemmed from an April 2002 run-in outside a Sunset Strip nightclub.

Separately, Neil, 43, is accused of battery last July on a prostitute at a Nevada brothel. Prosecutors allege Neil grabbed the woman by the neck and threw her against a wall.

He is scheduled for trial April 22 on the misdemeanor battery charge, his attorney said Wednesday.

■ **STOCKHOLM, Sweden** — The sounds of ABBA, Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones have bounced off its padded walls.

Now, Sweden's most famous recording studio, Polar Studios, must shut its doors because the owners can't pay the rent.

"It's a mistake being made right now," said Lennart Oestlund, part-owner and one of the studio's original sound engineers. "I see it as a museum of Swedish music history, especially ABBA."

The Swedish pop quartet's record label started the studio in 1978 and the group recorded its last three albums there. But the first big album recorded at Polar Studios was Led Zeppelin's "In Through the Out Door" in 1978.

Hundreds of bands and solo artists followed, including the Backstreet Boys, Genesis, the Beastie Boys, the

Cardigans and Roxette — making Polar Studios a hot spot on the international music scene.

Oestlund said he and studio co-owners Tomas and Marie Ledin pay \$184,000 a year in rent to the housing cooperative that owns the building on Kungsholmen, one of many islands that make up Stockholm.

"It's almost double the market rent," he said, adding that attempts to bring payments down had failed. "Two-thirds of our revenue goes to rent."

Oestlund said the five-room studio would close in May and probably be turned into office space. He hasn't given up on music, though, and hopes to set up a new studio elsewhere.

"I'll keep a mixer board and some microphones and try to start a new operation on a smaller scale," he said.

■ **LONDON** — Brad Pitt will narrate a British Broadcasting Corp. radio series about one of his musical idols, Nick Drake.

The BBC said Tuesday that the actor had recorded a two-part documentary about Drake, which will air on music station Radio 2 next month.

The plaintive singer-songwriter recorded three albums before his death from a drug overdose in 1974 at 26. Although he was a commercial failure during his lifetime, many bands have said he was a major influence, from R.E.M. to The Cure.

"I was introduced to Nick Drake's music about five years ago, and am a huge admirer of his records," Pitt said. "When Radio 2 approached me to get involved in this project, I was delighted to be asked and pleased that I was able to fit it into my schedule."

Pitt, due to start filming soon on "Ocean's Twelve," the sequel to "Ocean's Eleven," recorded his voiceover in Los Angeles last week, the BBC said.

"Lost Boy — In Search of Nick Drake" is scheduled to air May 22.

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