

FREE

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Helicopters take flight over Pico neighborhood

Police unveil new surveillance tactic for gang-addled area

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

In response to increased gang activity on Santa Monica's east side, police will patrol the area with helicopters beginning tonight.

"Operation Prime Time" is part of the Santa Monica Police Department's increased presence in the Pico neighborhood, which runs north of the Santa

Monica Freeway to Santa Monica Boulevard, south to Pico Boulevard and east from Lincoln Boulevard to Centinela Boulevard.

The SMPD will borrow a helicopter that belongs to the Hawthorne Police Department. Police officials wouldn't say when the helicopter will be used or for how long.

"They will be flying over Santa Monica randomly, monitoring and talking to our officers," said Lt. Frank Fabrega, a police department spokesman. "They will have direct communication with our field officers and our ground units."

"Mainly the helicopter will provide assistance," he added. "It will do a fly

over and spend time in the city if needed. And when it's done, it will go back to Hawthorne. But it will fly over several times during its shift."

The use of the helicopter and air support will be evaluated on a weekly basis, based on how successful the operation is.

About a month ago, high ranking police department officials held a meeting to discuss the recent spate of shootings in the Pico neighborhood and how police could increase their presence there.

At the time, four shootings had occurred since January, though no fatalities or serious injuries resulted.

Since more officers have been deployed to the neighborhood, there has

been only one shooting. Two rival gang members were involved in a shoot-out. They led officers on a high-speed chase through the residential area before evading police.

A Pico neighborhood task force, which works closely with police in curbing gang-related crime, also has been set up.

More officers — both in patrol cars and on bikes — have helped curb crime in the area, officials say.

"It gives officers the ability to stop and talk to residents and they are able to walk their bikes and talk to kids and hear their concerns," Fabrega said. "On the other

See HELICOPTERS, page 3



Andrew H Fixmer/Daily Press
Santa Monica High School students and faculty rally in support of unionization efforts at a hotel located on school district property. A newly-painted mural honoring labor activist Cesar Chavez is in the background.

Students rally for union cause, Chavez

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Students and faculty of Santa Monica High School rallied Thursday in support of unionization efforts at a hotel located on adjacent school district property, while also honoring a renowned labor activist.

Hundreds of students, faculty members and union organizers marched through the SAMOHI campus, then met in front of a newly-painted mural at the school celebrating the life of Cesar Chavez.

The after-school rally was largely in response to a recent advertising campaign launched by the management of the Doubletree Guest Suites Hotel, located at 1707 4th St., against the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union Local 814.

"This was about taking the message of Chavez's life's work to the management of the Doubletree," said Oscar de la Torre, director of the Pico Youth and Family Center, one of the rally's organizers.

Hotel officials did not want to comment on the rally.

The Doubletree is built on property owned by the Santa Monica-Malibu United School District.

"This has become a war of propaganda," de la Torre said. "This is the poor man's ad. We may not have the financial resources they have, but we obviously have the edge when it comes to people."

Students said the fight to unionize the hotel was equivalent to a civil rights movement for workers.

"All the students were here because they feel strongly about

"This has become a war of propaganda.

This is the poor man's ad. We may not have the financial resources they have, but we obviously have the edge when it comes to people."

— OSCAR DE LA TORRE
Rally organizer

unionization and the betterment of society as a whole," said junior Carl Lisberger.

The hotel's full-page advertisements — two of which have appeared in the Santa Monica Daily Press — reprint a petition it says a majority of its workers presented to hotel management recently.

"I am asking for help in stopping the local hotel union from visiting my

See PROTEST, page 5

Unsafe conditions may close downtown public restrooms

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Four of the six public bathrooms in downtown Santa Monica may be closed in the next two weeks because they are perceived as havens for the homeless and illegal drugs.

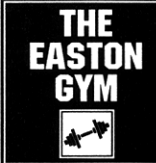
At the next Bayside District Corporation board meeting April 25, board members will be asked to approve a recommendation to close the restrooms and consider safer loca-

tions for new ones, said Kathleen Rawson, the corporation's executive director.

Bayside was planning a \$2 million renovation of the public restroom facilities, but it delayed those plans because a newly-approved city parking plan may demolish several of the downtown garages where the restrooms are located.

Rawson said board members would decide

See RESTROOMS, page 3



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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Reach out for someone. A change you have been considering could take you in a new direction. Your personality radiates and makes new beginnings possible. Your high energy helps clear out any excess work. Finish off e-mail. Tonight: Make a splash wherever you are.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Take your time and think through a decision. Slow down and consider your options. You also might opt to start a diet or do something special for yourself. Consider options surrounding a partnership that is unusually important to you. Tonight: Vanish and do for yourself.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Where your friends are is where you'll need to be. A meeting at work could turn into a social occasion. Your opinion of an associate could transform as a result of what is going on. Reach out for someone at a distance. Tonight: Lead the gang out of work.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ You're in the limelight. Display more of your leadership characteristics when dealing with a work situation. Consider options that surround your office situation. Take your time clearing your desk and e-mail. Others appreciate your efficiency. Tonight: Out late.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Start at the beginning once more. Creativity mixed with impeccable clarity makes an idea sounder. A child or loved one changes his or her tune. Hop on the computer and do research. Your vision of what is possible could change dramatically. Tonight: Take off ASAP.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Another cares deeply about you. Discussions help both of you understand how different you are in the way you express your affection. Carefully establish limits. Reorganize your finances accordingly. Tonight: Opt for togetherness.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Allow someone to take the lead. After listening to this person, you might decide that another approach to the conversation could be desirable. A discussion takes you in a new direction. Visualize more of what you want and desire. Tonight: Go along with another's plans.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Have no qualms about reaching out for someone. You find that a positive mind-set helps you get work done but also allows others to be more efficient. Don't underestimate your potential when dealing with another close to you. Tonight: Get a treat on the way home.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Charge some of that zest and flex into your work. Creativity comes out of nowhere. You seem to be an endless source of ideas. You could reverse direction, if necessary. Schedule time for a special person in your life. Tonight: Romp on out the door.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Deal with others directly, especially someone involving your home and security. Still, get more information about an investment. Your instincts direct you with real estate and a personal matter. Trust your decisions. Don't undermine yourself. Tonight: Stop and rent a movie on the way home.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ You bubble forth with information and ideas. You take a new direction when dealing with someone. Your sense of humor helps another change his or her position. Don't take another's word as the final say-so. Brainstorm with associates. Return calls. Tonight: At your favorite Friday-night spot.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Your high profile might be disconcerting to another. How you feel about a personal matter could change substantially. Work with a flexible boss. You gain much more insight as a result of your interactions with this higher-up. Tonight: Curb your spending.



QUOTE of the DAY

**"There is no gravity.
The earth sucks."
— Graffito**



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LOCAL

Downtown public restrooms covered in feces, litter

RESTROOMS, from page 1

the specific restrooms to be closed, though she said those in parking garages located at 1234 4th St., and 1320 4th St., may remain open.

That plan would leave one restroom each on the extreme north and south ends of the Third Street Promenade, she said. The other restrooms are located on the ground floor of the parking garages at 1235 2nd St., 1321 2nd St., 1440 4th St., and 1431 2nd St.



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

Many of the public toilets are covered in urine and feces, like this one at the parking structure located at 1440 4th St.

Regardless of what the board decides, it is clear there will be a significant change in policies regarding the public restrooms, where they are located and how they are patrolled, Rawson said.

Santa Monica Mayor Mike Feinstein said the issue is not about the homeless but about making the restrooms safer. He said criminals often lie in wait and rob people when they enter the restrooms.

"We've been struggling with these safety issues for several years," he said. "All too many people are simply dishonest and violent and use the bathrooms to harm others."

However, police said that while they regularly respond to calls for assistance at public restrooms for reports of criminal activities, they mostly find homeless people hanging out.

"The perception is there are criminal acts going on rather than actual crimes being committed," said Lt. Frank Fabrega, a Santa Monica Police Department spokesman.

Homeless people often use the sinks as places to wash their clothes and fill up water bottles, he said. There are often many complaints about the bad odors and clutter.

A visitor to all six bathrooms Thursday afternoon found that while the facilities smelled mostly of disinfectant and bleach,

many of the stalls, walls and toilets were covered in feces and urine. Also, nearly all the bathroom users appeared to be transients.

In two of the structures, toilet bowls were overflowing with toilet paper, making the floors treacherously slippery. Litter also was strewn about the floors.

In another structure, moans from a man in one of the stalls drove away others in the bathroom.

City maintenance workers have increased the number of times they clean

the bathrooms, making them much cleaner than in recent years.

"They are not unclean because of their design or because our staff isn't doing their work," Feinstein said. "The problem is that people are classless when it comes to how they treat public restrooms."

By decreasing the number of public facilities there will be fewer places for homeless people to go to the restroom, other than in public streets, alleyways and parks or on private property.

Bayside officials believe the decrease in the number of public restrooms won't affect businesses or act as a deterrent to shoppers coming downtown.

They said public restrooms located in Santa Monica Place and private ones in shops along the Third Street Promenade, including many of the larger bookstores and

the movie theaters, would remain open.

"There are a lot of bathrooms downtown," Rawson said. "There happen to be more options if you are a patron visiting stores than if you're just hanging out."

The Bayside District Corporation is a public-private management company in partnership with the City of Santa Monica, charged with the responsibility of overseeing public safety, security, and maintenance of streets surrounding the Promenade, including the alleys and the six city-owned parking structures.



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

A homeless man wheels his shopping cart Thursday afternoon into the men's public restroom at the parking garage located at 1321 2nd St.

"The problem is that people are classless when it comes to how they treat public restrooms."

— MICHAEL FEINSTEIN
Santa Monica mayor

Increased police patrols in neighborhood lauded

HELICOPTERS, from page 1

side of the coin, it acts as a deterrent.

"People up to criminal activity may be able to see or hear the police cars coming, but they may not see the bicycle officers coming. It gives them the ability to do patrols a little more effectively in a concentrated area."

Fabrega said the patrols have not only been effective, but have garnered the support of the community.

"Residents are calling police officers more frequently and reporting more crimes," he said.

The neighborhood has been engulfed in a turf war between two gangs — the Graveyard Crips and the Santa Monica 17th Street gang — for years. The tension between the two groups has flared up in the past several months.

Despite reports that increased graffiti has plagued the Pico neighborhood in recent weeks, Fabrega said there has been a dramatic decline in gang tagging.

"We attribute that not only to the law enforcement aspect but also to community members calling and having it removed immediately," he said.

"If they are just going to buzz around and wake everybody up then I'm not sure."

— PETER TIGLER
Pico Neighborhood Association president

But some say graffiti has become a problem in recent weeks.

"I would disagree with (Fabrega) on that one," said Peter Tigler, president of the Pico Neighborhood Association. "Just on my street there was tags three nights in a row."

However, Tigler wasn't complaining about the heightened police presence.

"Almost everybody has noticed the increased patrols," Tigler said. "There haven't been any shootings since they beefed up the patrols, which is nice."

Pico residents have been asking for more police for years, but haven't gotten it until now, he said.

"I know they are doing it on a week by week basis but we have been asking for it on a more permanent scale," Tigler said.

As far as patrolling with helicopters, Tigler said he will reserve his judgment until he can determine if it's effective.

"If they are just going to buzz around and wake everybody up then I'm not sure," he said.

"A slice of NY in your own backyard."

—Anthony Dias Blue
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OPINION

Boathouse owner won't go down without a fight

We, at the Boathouse, have read Mr. Michael Klein's editorial opinion letter published April 4, 2002, in the Santa Monica Daily Press. On behalf of my family, Boathouse employees, and patrons, I want the people in Santa Monica to know that they can bet that I am going to fight for the integrity of my family and the contributions my family have made to Santa Monica and, to a lesser extent, the greater Los Angeles community, for the last 50 years.

My grandfather, Ben DeSimone, built the Boathouse almost five decades ago. Ben, his daughter and my mother Patricia DeSimone, and I have continued the restaurant during the good times and the bad times experienced on the pier. Since my grandfather passed in 1989, I am happy he was spared seeing the disregard by the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation and the Santa Monica City Council of Santa Monica's culture, historical beginnings, and the true meaning of doing and attracting business on the Santa Monica Pier.

Many people have contacted us in bewilderment that the Boathouse may not continue in business.

In 1993, my mother went before the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation's so-called leasing committee and received approval to negotiate the termination of our 20 year lease earlier so that we could obtain a lease for many more years. Mr. John Gilchrist, the then executive director of the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation, promised us that all terms of the lease were accept-

able to him. We discovered later, after Mr. Gilchrist retired, that his promises were not being honored or respected by the representatives of the City of Santa Monica through the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation and/or its identical twin sister, the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation Leasing Committee.

When we were promised a new lease, it was the beginning of a process whereby we were prepared to invest millions of dollars in this old restaurant. We also agreed to provide the utmost in disability access to our restaurant as we have for years.

After we were promised a lease by Mr. Gilchrist, we attempted to temporarily "shore-up" the restaurant by investing some \$300,000. The Boathouse, for certain, is showing its age. Nonetheless, we have kept on paying our rent, storm or no storm damage.

The Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation has pointed its finger at us for being old. Interestingly, the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation has been composed of corporate board members which have participated as corporate board members since its inception, nearly 20 years ago.

The negative buzzwords by city officials about the Boathouse being a motorcycle themed restaurant abound. The first

and historic Route 66 was a transnational automobile route from coast to coast. Legend has it that the west side termination point was the Santa Monica Pier.

The emphases on motorcycle images were a very convenient way for the Santa Monica City Council and the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation to conjure up, denounce and degrade our years of service so as to purposefully mislead others to replace us by incorrectly "tagging" us with a motorcycle moniker, through its undefined and deceitful lease program.

To further nurture the economic and cultural well-being of the Santa Monica Pier visitors and the Santa Monica Pier tenants, we have heard that the Santa Monica City Council and the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation consider that Bubba Gump Shrimp is a chain restaurant, but only a "small chain."

This is blatant violation of the guidelines. Gee whiz, should a multiple chain restaurant financed by Paramount Studios, the financial partner of Bubba Gump, and an investment banker from Pennsylvania, fall within the established public pier guidelines published by the City of Santa Monica and relied upon us for so many years be considered as a local business enterprise? How about a mom-and-pop restaurant existing for

more than four decades?

Since the incorporation in 1983 of the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation, there have been many business failures on the Santa Monica Pier which have cost the City of Santa Monica dearly in terms of good faith and hope. If it were not for a continuous flow of monies "gifted" by the City of Santa Monica through the Santa Monica City Council, the Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation more than likely would fail to exist if it were treated as a normal business enterprise.

This is not what the City of Santa Monica had in mind when it founded Santa Monica Pier Restoration Corporation.

We continue to enjoy an "A" rating from the Department of Health and have enjoyed numerous awards and patron endorsements for our affordable seafood.

We are happy to continue our unique service to those folks without socks in their shoes. The old Boathouse has the character in what has made the City of Santa Monica a special place for many years. Unfortunately, a landmark family business that is proud of old business and is only one of a few other beach cities on the California coast that now exist, enjoy the cultural ambiance of the Boathouse, which the City of Santa Monica and its representatives will deprive the people should they get their way. Thanks for your support to continue the memories.

(Naia Sheffield is the president and family member of the Boathouse.)

Guest Commentary

By Naia Sheffield

LETTERS

Santa Monica needs a people's advocate

Editor:

Santa Monica needs a strong ombudsman mayor, a people's advocate. Currently, the mayor is largely a ceremonial figurehead who lacks political legitimacy. The mayor is "elected" by only seven people, the plurality seven members on the city council — where in 20 years no member ever has been elected by a majority vote. In contrast, the strong VERITAS ombudsman mayor will be accountable and politically legitimate. To encourage a majority vote, if no candidate receives over a 50 percent vote in the spring state primary, there will be a runoff in the November election. This will make the mayor a politically legitimate ombudsman for the people, not a mere spokesperson for the council majority.

VERITAS also creates a long overdue "check and balance" system between the city council and the mayor. The ombudsman mayor will have the power to veto legislation, subject to a two-third over-ride vote by the city council. This check and balance system is a cherished American tradition as old as the U.S. Constitution. Checks and balances are part of our California Constitution and part of many city governments. Indeed, this check and balance system was part of Santa Monica's first City Charter.

Whether or not you support VERITAS, surely everyone will benefit from a full and open discussion. Not since 1946, when our current city charter was enacted, has there been such an important debate on reforming Santa Monica government.

Paul DeSantis
Santa Monica

YOUR OPINION MATTERS!

Please send letters to:

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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 530 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 200, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

LOCAL □ STATE

Tight security at high school union rally

PROTEST, from page 1

house and harassing me," the petition states. "This note/petition is being signed by my own free will with no pressure from anyone."

"The students have a right to organize and voice their concerns."

— **JULIA BROWNLEY**
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School Board

Hotel workers recently testified before Santa Monica-Malibu Unified school board members, saying they are paid less than \$10 per hour and toil under poor working conditions.

Mainly through Spanish interpreters, workers told of a lack of health insurance and of a harassing campaign by the hotel's management to prevent the union from organizing the resort's labor.

At the meeting, union organizers also urged the school district to audit the Doubletree because rent paid by the hotel hasn't increased in nearly four years.

Superintendent John Deasy said he had instructed school district attorneys to review the lease six weeks ago and begin an audit to ensure the hotel has been paying the proper rent.

Julia Brownley, president of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School Board, said she attended the rally to show support as a Santa Monica resident.

However, she said no official stance has been taken by the school district administration or the school board.

"The students have a right to organize and voice their concerns," Brownley said. "It's always fine when they do that, as long as its in a peaceful and controlled manner."

There were numerous Santa Monica Police officers, school security officers and faculty members on hand to ensure the rally remained under control. School officials said they treated the union rally like a football game, a pep rally or any other school event.

First appearance for latest charged in insurance scandal

BY **DON THOMPSON**
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — The first person charged with state crimes in an Insurance Department scandal had his initial court appearance on eight felony allegations Thursday, but declined to enter a plea.

Ronald Leo Weekley, 49, a Los Angeles businessman, is alleged to have profited during the scandal that brought the resignation of Insurance Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush in 2000.

He is charged in Sacramento County Superior Court with grand theft, perjury, receiving stolen property and preparing false documents. He asked for a court-appointed attorney, and his next court appearance was set for April 25. Weekley has not been arrested or required to post bond.

Weekley, the former president of the California Research and Assistance Fund, is alleged to have approved an \$18,000 payment in December 1999 to Community Connections, a consulting firm he allegedly created and owned.

He also is charged with lying about the \$18,000 payment on a state financial disclosure statement by claiming Community Connections had earned less than \$250 in 1999.

He's accused of later creating a false invoice and work plan to support the payment, filing them with federal, state and local officials after he was served with a federal grand jury subpoena.

He also is accused of stealing a state computer authorities said they found in

his home. That computer was one of 11 donated by Dell Computers to the state Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, but never used by the department.

Weekley is the third person to face criminal charges in connection with the scandal involving Quackenbush, but the first charged with state crimes by Attorney General Bill Lockyer.

George Grays, a former deputy insurance commissioner, pleaded guilty in federal court to mail fraud and money laundering. Brian Thompson, a former coach who operated a camp for troubled children, is awaiting trial on federal fraud and conspiracy charges.

Quackenbush reached secret agreements with insurance companies that allowed them to donate millions of dollars to his foundation instead of paying fines for mishandling claims from the 1994 Northridge earthquake. He resigned in 2000 rather than face impeachment and has since moved to Hawaii.

Grays and Thompson, and now Weekley, are accused of mishandling foundation funds.

Quackenbush created the foundation under a state law that required it to be operated by an independent board for charitable acts.

An investigation by the Assembly Insurance Committee discovered that the foundation was actually run by Grays, who used its assets to distribute money to friends such as Weekley, and to buy television advertising designed to enhance Quackenbush's political career.

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STATE □ NATIONAL

Enron manipulated power market, witnesses claim

BY MARK SHERMAN

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Companies controlled by Enron Corp. sold each other large amounts of electricity in California, artificially driving up the price of power, the head of the state's Public Utilities Commission told Congress Thursday.

Five Enron affiliates traded more than 10 million megawatt hours of electricity among themselves in the last three months of 2000, the same time that power prices in California were spiraling out of control, CPUC President Loretta Lynch said.

"These were sham transactions, causing the price to rise with each supposed sale," Lynch said. "The same individuals were managing these companies. They had the same employees, trading with themselves."

Lynch's testimony was the latest allegation that Enron manipulated California's electricity crisis in late 2000 and early 2001. She appeared at a Senate Commerce Committee hearing to consider whether the bankrupt energy trading company played a role in the power crunch.

Enron spokeswoman Karen Denne later denied the company manipulated California's energy market. "Market structure was the cause of California's energy crisis, not Enron," Denne said.

No Enron officials appeared at the hearing, called at the request of Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., and largely sympathetic to the proposition that Enron was heavily involved in the meteoric rise in power prices.

One cautionary note came from Sen. Peter Fitzgerald, R-Ill., who said he was "skeptical ... as to whether Enron had any

effect on California's energy crisis."

But five witnesses, who also included state Sen. Joseph Dunn, D-Santa Ana, and California Power Authority Chairman S. David Freeman, told the committee that Enron initially sought the deregulation of the electricity market in California by falsely promising that consumers' electric bills would go down, then leaned heavily on federal energy regulators not to step in when power prices began to climb in the newly deregulated market.

Dunn is leading a Senate investigation into the energy crisis, in which wholesale power rates jumped tenfold, three investor-owned utilities faced financial ruin and Californians experienced rolling power blackouts.

"The deregulation, led by Enron, has become perhaps the greatest fraud ever perpetrated on the American consumer," Dunn said.

The Senate on Wednesday rejected a proposal, inspired by the Enron collapse, that would have required federal regulation of financial contracts used to speculate on energy prices.

The financial contracts, known as derivatives, were at the center of the way in which Enron provoked the rise in power prices, Lynch said.

The witnesses also said Californians and other Westerners would again see soaring power prices if the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission were to lift the price caps it imposed last year on wholesale power purchases throughout the West. The caps, credited with helping bring down prices, are set to expire Sept. 30 unless FERC extends them.

Police release suicide note left by ex-Enron executive

BY KRISTEN HAYS

Associated Press Writer

SUGAR LAND, Texas — An anguished note left behind by a former Enron Corp. executive who killed himself in January makes no specific mention of the energy giant's collapse but says "where there was once great pride now it's gone."

The police department in this Houston suburb released the seven-sentence note from John Clifford Baxter immediately after the Texas attorney general's office issued an opinion that the document was a public record.

About two hours later, a judge granted a request from Baxter's family for a temporary restraining order sealing the handwritten note. The family had opposed its release, citing privacy issues.

Baxter, who resigned as vice chairman in May 2001, months before Enron collapsed, was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound on Jan. 25. He was 43.

The note, addressed to his wife, Carol, said: "I am so sorry for this. I feel I just can't go on. I have always tried to do the right thing but where there was once great pride now it's gone. I love you and the children so much. I just can't be any good to you or myself. The pain is overwhelming. Please try to forgive me." It was signed, "Cliff."

The note was handwritten in all capital

letters on a blank sheet of paper. An attorney for the family, Pike Powers, has said it was left in Carol Baxter's car in the garage of the family home. The home is a half-mile from the spot where his body was found.

Police spokeswoman Pat Whitty said officials saw no reason to delay release of the note once the attorney general's office issued its opinion. However, she said the restraining order was granted before photos of Baxter's body and car were released, so those items will not be made public immediately.

Powers said the family had no comment.

The attorney general's office had until Friday to make a decision. It turned aside arguments that the note might embarrass or invade the privacy of Baxter's family, "given the substantial public interest in the causes of Enron's failure and its far-reaching consequences."

The opinion also determined that Baxter became a public figure. He had been a defendant in investor lawsuits because of Enron stock sales that netted him about \$35 million before the energy giant's stock price began falling last year.

Enron's collapse was the biggest bankruptcy in U.S. history.

Baxter was named in an explosive warning that another Enron executive sent to company Chairman and Chief Executive Kenneth Lay in August about questionable financial practices.

NATIONAL



Spider-Man flick caught in legal web over altered signs

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The owners of several Times Square buildings have filed a lawsuit against the makers of the upcoming "Spider-Man" movie for digitally altering a sign appearing in the motion picture.

In a lawsuit filed in Manhattan federal court, the owners of 2 Times Square allege that Columbia Pictures digitally replaced a Samsung advertisement on the side of the building with one for USA Today. The sign appears three times in the film, according to court papers.

Samsung is a competitor of Sony,

which owns Columbia Pictures.

"We think it's inappropriate to substitute your own image for the one that exists," Anthony Costantini, a lawyer for building owners Sherwood 48 Associates, told the Daily News in Thursday's editions.

The Samsung advertisement also was changed in some television commercials promoting the movie with an ad for a wireless telephone company.

A spokesman for Columbia Pictures in Los Angeles declined to comment.

The movie, starring Tobey Maguire as the Marvel Comics superhero, is scheduled to be released May 3.

National identity system needs careful study, panel says

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — While a national identity card has been widely discussed following the terrorist attacks, a panel of the National Academy of Sciences says any such system must carefully balance security needs with privacy concerns.

A well-run national system would make it more difficult for a person to have multiple identities and would help in finding people such as potential terrorists, the committee concluded.

But serious questions must be addressed about how to protect privacy, who would use the system, whether participation would be mandatory, the type of information to be collected and how to deal with any failure or misuse of the system.

"The technical challenges, the expense

and the strong potential for infringement on the civil liberties of ordinary citizens demand that any proposed identity system undergo strict public scrutiny and a thorough engineering review," said Stephen Kent, chairman of the committee that wrote the report: "IDs — Not That Easy."

Kent is chief scientist for information security at BBN Technologies, a research firm based in Cambridge, Mass.

National identity cards are used in some other countries but there is no common system, the report noted.

The committee was organized by the National Research Council, an arm of the academy. The National Academy of Science is an independent organization chartered to provide advice the government on scientific matters.

CDC study puts economic loss from smoking at \$7 a pack

BY ERIN MCCLAM

Associated Press Writer

ATLANTA — Each pack of cigarettes sold in the United States costs the nation \$7 in medical care and lost productivity, the government said Thursday.

The study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention put the nation's total cost of smoking at \$3,391 a year for every smoker, or \$157.7 billion. Health experts had previously estimated \$96 billion.

Americans buy about 22 billion packs of cigarettes annually. The CDC study is the first to establish a per-pack cost to the nation.

The agency estimated the nation's smoking-related medical costs at \$3.45 per pack, and said job productivity lost because of premature death from smoking amounted to \$3.73 per pack, for a total of \$7.18.

The average cost of a pack of cigarettes in 1999 was \$2.92.

"There's a big difference in the cost to society and what society is getting back in tax," said the CDC's Dr. Terry Pechacek. "We believe society is bearing a burden for the individual behavioral choices of the smokers."

The CDC said it analyzed expenses, both personal and for the health care industry, and used national medical surveys to calculate the costs to the nation.

The agency also reported that smoking results in about 440,000 deaths a year in

the United States, up from the government's previous figure of 430,000, established in the early 1990s. The new study was conducted from 1995 to 1999.

"The fact that nearly half a million Americans lose their lives each year because of smoking-related illnesses is a significant public health tragedy," said Dr. David Fleming, the CDC's acting director.

A spokesman for tobacco giant Brown & Williamson objected that the study presents the figures in a vacuum, without comparing smoking to the financial burdens other people — nonsmokers with diabetes, for example — place on society.

"What does that number mean?" spokesman Mark Smith said. "It doesn't mean anything. It's bordering on meaningless."

Representatives from the nation's two other leading tobacco companies — Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds — did not immediately return calls for comment.

Among other findings:

— Smoking causes an average man to lose more than 13 years of life, and an average woman to lose 14.5 years.

— Smoking during pregnancy causes about 1,000 infant deaths each year.

— Lung cancer causes the most deaths among smokers, following by heart disease and lung disease.

— Men account for about 60 percent of smoking deaths — 264,000 a year, compared with 178,000 deaths among women.

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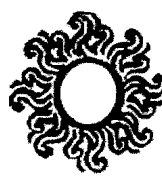
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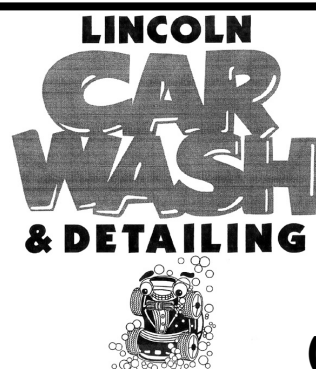
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INTERNATIONAL

Dozens of police arrested in crackdown on corruption

BY ARTURO SALINAS

Associated Press Writer

TIJUANA, Mexico — The police officers were expecting to receive an evaluation of their work.

Instead, soldiers and federal police stormed a meeting Wednesday at a state police academy in the border city of Tecate, ordering dozens of officers — including several chiefs and commanders — to hand over their guns. They then placed them under arrest.

Twenty-one city police from Tijuana and Tecate and 20 state ministerial police were flown to Mexico City overnight, the federal attorney general's office announced.

Deputy Attorney General Jose Jorge Campos said none has yet been formally charged, but he said the case was linked to efforts to stamp out drug trafficking.

The mass arrest was one of President Vicente Fox's biggest corruption crackdowns and came only weeks after Mexican authorities delivered stunning blows to the powerful Arellano Felix gang that operated in the state for nearly two decades.

"The important thing here is that those with responsibility are committed to combating corruption," Baja California Gov. Eugenio Elorduy said.

Elorduy did not specify what charges the officers faced, but local media reported they were accused of protecting drug smugglers.

Among those detained were Tecate Police Chief Jesus Jacobo Aguirre; Tijuana Police operations director Carlos Edmundo Otal Namur; state ministerial police commander Mario Anaya; the state police's Tijuana zone commander, Sergio Riedel; the ministerial police chief for Tecate, Eduardo Sanduval, and former Mexicali police commander Juan Cristobal Aguilar.

Otal is the No. 2 figure in the Tijuana police, responsible for day to day operations. A former federal police intelligence agent, he had undergone training by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, according to his official biography.

State officials had called officers to the state police academy in Tecate to discuss an evaluation of their conduct and their licenses to carry arms, but said they did not know about the arrests until they happened.

The Baja California governor's office said Wednesday that as many as 120 police had been detained, but most were quickly freed.

The arrested officers were quickly loaded onto planes in Tijuana, which lies 65 miles from Tecate near San Diego, and were flown to Mexico City.

The arrests came a day after the U.N. investigator into judicial independence, Param Kumaraswamy, said corruption in the Mexican legal system "continued unabated" despite attempts at reform.

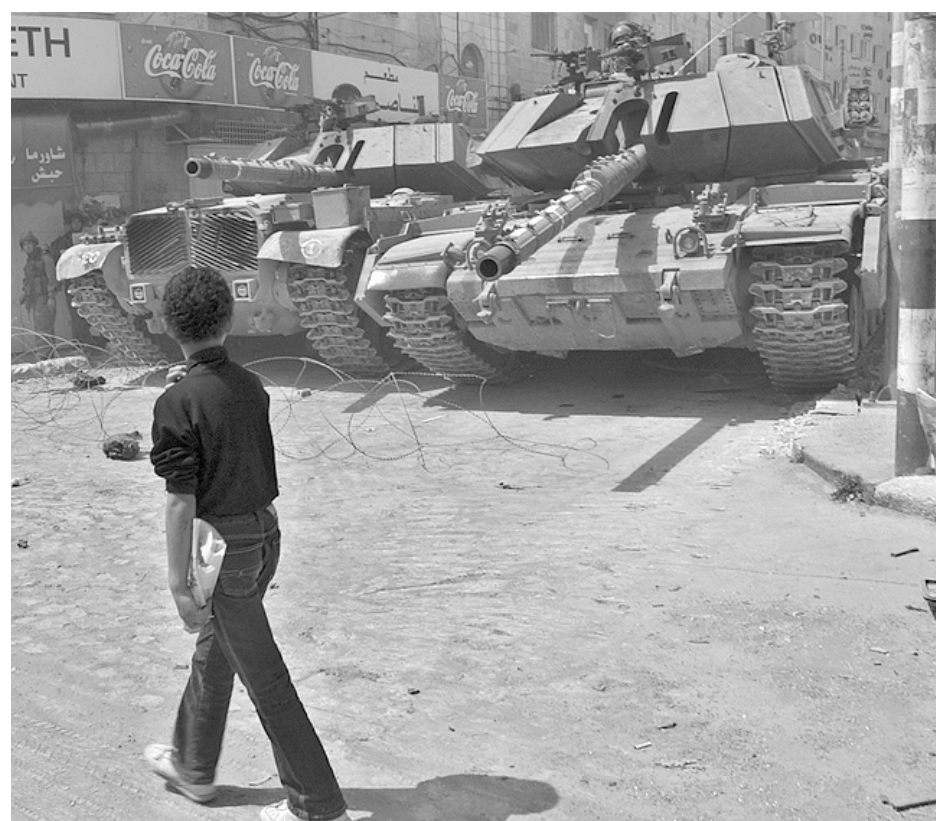
Wednesday's arrests follow a flurry of actions against drug smugglers in Baja California state.

On March 9, Mexican police arrested Benjamin Arellano Felix, the head of the country's longest-running drug organization. His brother, Ramon, who was on the FBI's 10 most-wanted list, was killed by police on Feb. 10.

A few days after Benjamin's detention, officials announced the arrest of Manuel Herrera Barraza, allegedly the principal smuggler for the Arellano Felixes.

The cartel is believed to have infiltrated the government, hiring officials to give safe passage to the tons of cocaine and marijuana they moved into the United States. In September, the former police chief in Mexicali, just east of Tecate, was jailed for allegedly warning the Arellano Felix gang of police operations.

Under the gun



Nasser Nasser/Associated Press

A Palestinian boy passes in front of two Israeli tanks positioned in the center of the besieged West Bank town of Ramallah during a break in curfew Thursday. Israel lifted the curfew on Ramallah Thursday allowing Palestinians to gather food supplies.

INTERNATIONAL



Secretary of State Powell to meet Sharon, Arafat

BY BARRY SCHWEID

AP Diplomatic Writer

JERUSALEM — Secretary of State Colin Powell challenged Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's limited withdrawal of troops from Palestinian areas on Thursday, saying President Bush "wants to see more progress."

On his way to Jerusalem, Powell said the pace of the Israeli pullback from West Bank cities and villages would be part of a "very long conversation" he would have with Sharon on Friday. They spoke by telephone Thursday.

Powell is to meet with Yasser Arafat on Saturday. A senior administration official in Washington said Powell intends to warn the Palestinian leader that the United States is prepared to sever ties with him unless he renounces terrorism.

"The message is: This is it. Last chance," said the official, speaking only on condition of anonymity. The official cautioned that Powell and Bush will not sign off on the message until the meeting draws closer.

During a brief stop in the Jordanian capital of Amman, Powell was asked at a news conference whether the pace of Israel's military withdrawal was an affront to Bush.

"I don't see it as an affront," he said. Still, Powell added, "I think the president has made his position clear: He wants the incursion stopped. He has noted some progress, but he wants to see more progress."

In what appeared to be a gesture ahead of Powell's arrival, Israeli forces withdrew from about two dozen small towns and villages on the West Bank. But troops entered the West Bank towns of Dahariyah and Bir Zeit and the Ein Beit Hilmeh refugee camp. Later, they pulled out of Bir Zeit after detaining about 300 people, mainly students in the university town.

In the Jenin refugee camp, scene of the deadliest fighting during the offensive, three dozen armed men, apparently the last holdouts, surrendered to Israeli troops.

Sharon acknowledged the fighting was causing the United States difficulties, but he refused to call a halt to the incursion.

Powell said King Abdullah II of Jordan had offered his country's help in easing the suffering of Palestinians in the West Bank once a cease-fire is in place.

"People are dying, people are suffering," the king told CNN. He said he offered Powell his kingdom's support in his peace mission, which he called "a make-it or break-it trip."

Abdullah urged Powell to increase pressure on Sharon to withdraw his troops and to accept Arafat as "the legitimate leadership and elected president of the Palestinian people," according to a palace statement issued after the two-hour meeting with Powell.

The king also urged Powell to work toward a detailed peace plan, setting "specific time frames" for a Palestinian state as well as ending the violence and Israeli occupation.

Previewing the difficult talks ahead, Powell said, "I go committed to carry forward the president's vision." He said he would press not only for ending the bloodshed, but for "getting a political track started" that would lead to the creation of a secure Palestinian state.

It is important, Powell said, "to show the Palestinian people that there is hope out there, hope for them to have their own state, living side by side in peace with Israel."

In Washington, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said that while Israel was withdrawing some troops neither side had yet met conditions outlined by Bush to end hostilities.

"The president calls on all the parties to keep working to get them done," Fleischer said.

Earlier Thursday, Powell challenged the idea that strong Israeli military action on the West Bank could enhance security from terror. Mirroring an argument pressed by Arab leaders, Powell depicted the Palestinians as angry and frustrated.

"There will still be people who are willing to resort to violence and terror, people who are willing to use suicide bombs and other kinds of bombs," he said.

The prescription he will offer Sharon and Arafat will include statehood for the



Jamal Nasrallah/Associated Press

Zeid Fayed, Jordanian foreign ministry protocol chief, left, greets U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell upon his arrival at Amman's airport Thursday. Powell later met with Jordan's King Abdullah II, who has been calling for an end to Israeli incursions into the West Bank. Powell was scheduled to arrive in Jerusalem late Thursday.

Palestinians on land held by Israel and U.S. financial assistance to rehabilitate the West Bank from the damage caused by Israeli forces in their drive against terrorists.

Asked whether he was on an impossible mission, Powell snapped: "I don't like wallowing with pessimists. It is necessary for me to go."

Moreover, he added, "I am proud to be going ... to get us on a positive track. It is what I should be doing. It is what secretaries of state do."

The White House, which had earlier declined to criticize Israel's pace of withdrawal, was a little more guarded Thursday. "Here is where we are: Israel has continued the withdrawal that began that the president called for, in some areas. There are additional incursions in other areas," Fleischer said.

Fleischer noted that Bush had urged

Arafat to make public statements denouncing suicide bombing and to renounce violence as a political instrument.

Powell also met with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov to plan the talks Bush will hold in Russia beginning on May 23 with President Vladimir Putin.

They made some headway toward a formal declaration on promised reductions in long-range nuclear warheads to 1,700 to 2,200 over 10 years.

But Ivanov said the disposition of the warheads remained under discussions.

A senior U.S. official said Ivanov had volunteered Russia's help in trying to quiet Israel's border with Lebanon. Ivanov told Powell that Russia was telling the leaders of Syria, Iran and Lebanon to curb Hezbollah guerrillas whose cross-border attacks on Israel could expand the already volatile situation, the official said.

First permanent war crimes tribunal comes into reality

BY EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press Writer

UNITED NATIONS — The world's first permanent war crimes tribunal got the necessary international backing Thursday to come into force on July 1, a milestone hailed by human rights advocates and many nations but strongly opposed by the United States.

A dream ever since the United Nations was established over five decades ago, the court became a reality when its founding treaty received the required 60 ratifications.

At a brief ceremony at U.N. headquarters, over 500 supporters of the tribunal rose in a standing ovation after 10 nations deposited their ratifications, bringing the number of countries now legally bound to cooperate with the International Criminal Court to 66.

"The time is at last coming when humanity no longer has to bear impotent witness to the worst atrocities, because those tempted to commit such crimes will know that justice awaits them," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in a video message from Rome, where the treaty was adopted in 1998. "Let it be a deterrent to the wicked, and a ray of hope for the innocent and helpless."

Those hopes were echoed by France, Sweden, Denmark and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, which represents some 1,000 organizations.

"Too much of history is the story of wars won and peace lost. Today, peace has won and war has lost," said William Pace, who heads the coalition.

"It will be the court where the Saddam Husseins, Pol Pots and Agosto Pinochets of the future are held to account," said Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch, referring to Iraq's president, Cambodia's late Khmer Rouge leader, and the former Chilean dictator.

Even though then-U.S. President Bill Clinton signed the Rome treaty, the U.S. seat in the crowded chamber was empty. The Bush administration boycotted the ceremony, just as it has not attended plenary meetings preparing for the court's operations.

Pierre-Richard Prosper, the U.S. ambassador for war crimes, restated President Bush's opposition to the treaty and refusal to ratify it. The United States fears American citizens would be subject to frivolous or politically motivated prosecutions. It is the only vocal opponent of the court.

"The goal is noble and we agree with the goal of accountability for war crimes. What we disagree with is this precise mechanism for putting this goal in place," Prosper said in a conference call to reporters from Washington.

Two weeks ago, Prosper said the United States was considering "unsigning" the treaty to stress that it will not be bound by its provisions. Although he said Thursday that no decision will be made in the next few weeks, his comments indicated that Bush will withdraw the U.S. signature.

"We don't want to cause confusion or create expecta-

tions that we will be part of this process," Prosper said. "We do believe that if we are not a party to the treaty we are not under the jurisdiction of the treaty."

The court will fill a gap in the international justice system first recognized by the U.N. General Assembly in 1948 after the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials for World War II's German and Japanese war criminals.

At present, the International Court of Justice deals with disputes between states. Tribunals have been created for special situations, like the 1994 Rwanda genocide and war crimes in former Yugoslavia. But no mechanism existed to hold individuals criminally responsible.

In the past 50 years, more than 86 million civilians died in some 250 conflicts around the world, and more than 170 million people were stripped of their rights, property and dignity, according to the Coalition for the Court.

"Most of these victims have been simply forgotten and few perpetrators have been brought to justice," it said.

The court will step in only when countries are unwilling or unable to dispense justice themselves for the most serious crimes committed by individuals: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and eventually crimes of aggression when parties agree to a definition.

It will have jurisdiction only over crimes committed after the treaty enters into force. Cases can come to the court through a state that has ratified the treaty, the U.N. Security Council, or the court's prosecutor, who must get the approval of a three-judge panel.



COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



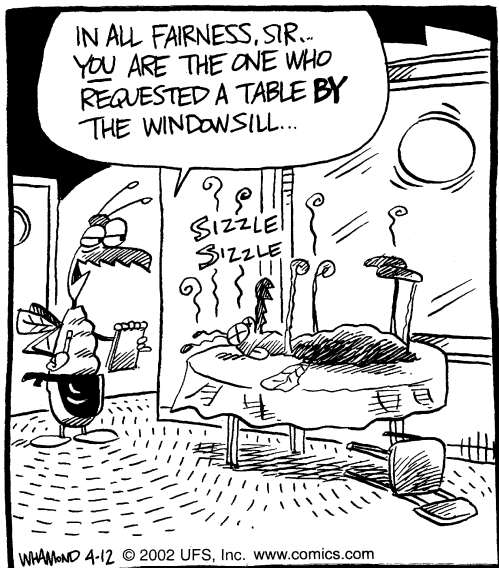
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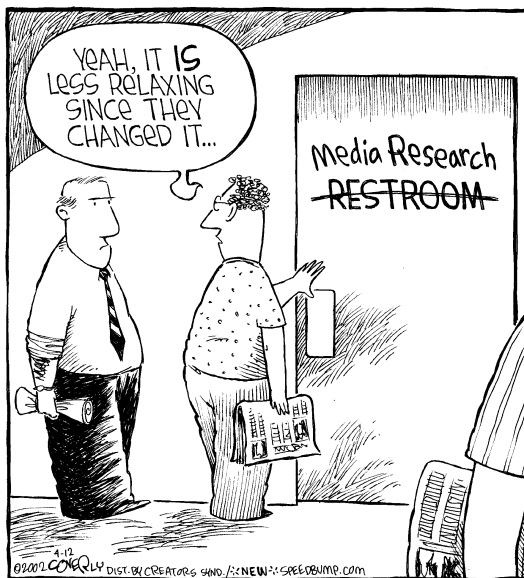
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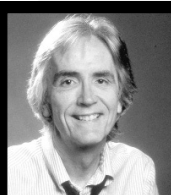
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Police chief accused of engaging in 'diaper parties'

Police Chief Pete Bradley was fired by the city of Woodfin, N.C., in February following a dispute with Mayor Homer Honeycutt, who had been captured on audio tape bragging about how he could fix traffic tickets (though there was no evidence that he actually fixed any), and as part of the mutual mudslinging, a State Bureau of Investigation report from 2000 was leaked, disclosing that Bradley had "engaged in parties where men wore diapers as part of their sexual behavior," according to an Asheville Citizen-Times report.



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For Rent

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BACK PAGE

ODDS & ENDS

Mayor elected despite police record

By The Associated Press

OAK CREEK, Colo. — Newly elected Mayor Kathy Rodeman has been arrested more than a dozen times, admits having tried cocaine and marijuana, and recently wrestled a man to the ground in a bar fight.

Rodeman, whose nickname is Cargo, insists that her past won't get in the way of her ability to govern this town of 800 people 110 miles northwest of Denver.

"I've made my share of mistakes. I'm not perfect," said Rodeman, a 30-year resident. "But I don't judge others. I don't think I'm better than anyone, but I know no one's better than me."

Rodeman's past didn't seem to bother town residents, who gave her 64 percent of the vote last week to defeat incumbent Deb VanGundy.

"They voted for what I believe in, not for my run-ins with cops," said Rodeman.

Rodeman's critics say her criminal past makes it difficult to take her seriously.

"This has just labeled us as the scum bucket of the county," said Calvin Morrow, who lost a bid for mayor a few years ago.

"I don't minimize my behavior but I am not a bad guy," Rodeman said.

That behavior included driving with a suspended license and a conviction for drinking and driving. A drug possession charge in 1999 was later dropped.

Prisoner robs bank, plays Robin Hood

By The Associated Press

MADRID, Spain — A prisoner on day leave robbed \$230,000 from a bank, sent fellow inmates money orders signed Robin Hood, then quietly returned to his

cell, police said.

The 54-year-old prisoner was nabbed Friday when he was out on another furlough, police said Wednesday.

Tipped off by prison authorities — the man's jail-house nickname was Robin Hood — police followed him from Aranjuez outside Madrid to the city's main post office, and moved in when he started filling out money-order forms. The man's name was not released.

Police said he had a long criminal record, mainly for armed robbery, and was on day leave from a sentence for a jewelry store holdup when he robbed a bank on Jan. 14.

After he returned to prison in Aranjuez, 40 inmates received money orders totaling \$7,000.

Fan builds replica of 'Munsters' house

By The Associated Press

WAXAHACHIE, Texas — Sandra McKee has lost count of how much she has spent on memorabilia from the 1960s TV show "The Munsters."

Now she and her husband, Charles, are spending \$250,000 to build a 5,800-square-foot, Victorian-style house to replicate the creepy home shown on the program.

From video clips and photos acquired from "Munsters" collectors around the country, the McKees are painstakingly re-creating the home inhabited on TV by Herman, wife Lily, Grandpa, cousin Marilyn and young son Eddie.

Sandra McKee, 44, owns copies of all 70 episodes of the sitcom, which is about a family of odd, Gothic characters headed by Herman, a lookalike of Frankenstein's monster.

McKee, a retired insurance agent, has made a "Munsters" fan out of her husband, who went along with building the two-story, 5,800-square-foot house.

The frame home has arched windows, 10-foot ceilings and sits on 2 acres.

Charles McKee, a 46-year-old plumber, understands the appeal of "The Munsters."

"It had good, clean humor," he said. "My mother's church thought it was satanic. I told them to go home and watch it. Those people are as far from satanic as could be."

On Sunday, the actor who played Eddie flew in from Las Vegas at the McKees' invitation to inspect the house. "I think it's going to be fabulous," said Butch Patrick, 48, who plans to host a Halloween party there next fall.

Woman jailed for overdue library books

By The Associated Press

HAZLETON, Pa. — A woman was thrown in prison this week after she failed to return three overdue library books.

On Tuesday, a judge sent Theresa Dawn Keller of Tamaqua to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility, where she will remain until she pays the Hazleton Public Library \$120 for the books, jail officials said.

"She does still owe us money; it is a violation of the crimes code," said reference librarian Jane Dougherty, who filed a private criminal complaint against Keller.

The books — "Star Trek," "Triangle" and "Fall of Freddie the Leaf" — were checked out Sept. 14, 2000, and became due Oct. 5, 2000. A bill charging Keller \$40 per book was sent Oct. 26, 2000.

Dougherty said charges are filed against patrons who don't pay a bill or return books after the library sends them a notice. But only those who ignore a court summons to answer the charges are sent to jail.

Through a prison guard, Keller, 24, declined to comment.

SANTA MONICA NIGHT at Dodger Stadium



Santa Monica Night At Dodger Stadium

Get Into The Swing!
Dodgers vs. Chicago Cubs

Saturday, May 4th

7:05 PM

Cost: \$6.00

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Our pre-game activities start at 5:30, and include games for the kids, parade, and First Pitch Ceremony featuring Chief Butts and Chief Bernardelli.

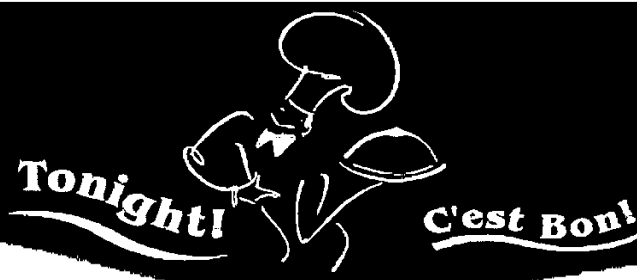
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