FREE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2005

Volume 4, Issue 130

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO
12 15 17 19 44
Meganumber: 18
Jackpot: $12 Million

FANTASY 5
24 32 36 38 39

DAILY 3
Daytime: 7 8 7
Evening: 0 1 4

DAILY DERBY
1st: 04 Big Ben
2nd: 02 Lucky Star
3rd: 05 California Classic
RACE TIME: 1:48.92

NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

"I'm Absolutely Positive": In late 2004, two men who had been convicted of rape based on confident identifications by the victims (Wilton Dedge of Florida and Dennis Brown of Louisiana) were exonerated after having served 22 and 19 years, respectively, before DNA evidence showed that the crimes were almost certainly committed by others. In the trials, Dedge's accuser had stuck to her recollection even after six alibi witnesses had come forward, and Brown's accuser said she observed her rapist's face up close for 20 minutes and was certain Brown was the man.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today the 103rd day of 2005. There are 262 days left in the year.

On April 13, 1970, Apollo 13, four-fifths of the way to the moon, was crippled when a tank containing liquid oxygen burst. (The astronauts managed to return safely.)
In 1964, Sidney Poitier became the first black performer in a leading role to win an Academy Award, for "Lilies of the Field."
In 1965, 16-year-old Lawrence Wallace Bradford Jr. was appointed by New York Republican Jacob Javits to be the first black page of the U.S. Senate.
In 1986, Pope John Paul II visited a Rome synagogue in the first recorded papal visit of its kind.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

Have you noticed since everyone has a Camcorder these days no one talks about seeing UFOs like they used to?

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Union checking out of Sheraton

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

PICO BLVD. — A local union at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel has agreed to withdraw, after it was found to be illegally organized.

The National Labor Relations Board on March 31 filed a complaint against Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 11 (HERE) for coercing workers into unionization. The Sheraton was found to be unlawfully assisting and supporting the union, according to the complaint.

At issue was the way labor organizers built consensus among workers. At the Sheraton, HERE used what's called a card-check process, where they had an extended time period to gather support from a majority of workers.

But seven workers from the Sheraton filed a complaint in December 2003, alleging hotel employees were coerced into unionizing and that a majority actually didn't want to be organized. They had signed a petition stating they no longer wanted union representation. But, apparently, their votes counted toward unionizing anyway, resulting in a

See **HERE**, page 5

Trial set for two murder suspects

Girlfriend of victim released from prison this year

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

LAX COURTHOUSE — Two Santa Monica men charged with the murder of an ex-convict last year will begin their trial next month, court officials said.

Luke David Yeron, 20, and Anthony Gregory Alfaro, 18, were charged with the homicide of Gabriel Becerrada, 38, who was shot multiple times at 1:20 a.m. on Sunday, March 7, 2004, on the third floor of a public housing unit near Ashland Avenue and Lincoln Boulevard in southern Santa Monica.

Becerrada had been recently released from state prison and was on parole when police found his body outside an apartment door. He had been in and out of jail for drugs, guns, burglary and robbery since 1986, according to the California Department of Corrections.

Sandra Alfaro, 35, Becerrada's girlfriend and mother of Anthony Alfaro, was arrested by Santa Monica police within days of the murder, along with her son and

See **MURDER TRIAL**, page 6

Going postal



Seth Kotok/Special to the Daily Press

Santa Monica resident David Fine picks up income tax forms at the post office on Fifth Street on Tuesday. This week, people have been lining up in front of the post office early in the morning and in the evening, waiting to pick up their proper paperwork, according to Carlos Antonia Jr., the lobby director of the Santa Monica post office. Tax forms also are available at the city's library branches on Montana Avenue and Main Street.

Kuehl pushes to curb the short arm of the law

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

SACRAMENTO — California State Sen. Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica) has recently authored legislation that, if approved, will give parents the opportunity to speak to their children before police can regarding off-campus incidents.

State Bill No. 660 requires that before making an elementary school student available to police for interrogation on campus, principals must ask permission from the parent and allow the parent to be present for the questioning. In the case of a high school student, the student must be told that he may choose to have a parent or member off school staff present.

Representatives with Sen. Kuehl's office said the bill is designed to strengthen student and parent rights. Currently, the law doesn't require school officials to notify parents that their child is being interrogated by police. The only time parents must be notified is when the student is removed from campus.

Many parents believe they already have the right to be notified and to be present if their child is being questioned by law enforcement and are surprised when they find out that that's not the case, according to Sen. Kuehl's office. If a police officer comes to a child's home, the parent has the ability to turn the officer away without speaking to the

See **QUESTIONING KIDS**, page 6

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Avoid a power play, Gem

Santa Monica Daily Press



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

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★ Confirm that a plan is solid and without any loopholes. You make a hard drive to the finish line and have every reason to succeed. Don't let any details drop to the wayside. Your thoroughness nearly guarantees a victory celebration. Trust that. Tonight: Flex plans with a pal.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★ Know that what others say or do is not written in stone. Someone you've counted on could upset you greatly. You discover that everyone has his or her own issues and agendas. Flex if you can. Tonight: Be discreet with money.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★★ How you decide to deal with others and events today could be very different from the way associates do. You are also likely to hear what you "should" do. Be willing to listen. Be willing to understand others' logic. Feel free to do what you think is best. Tonight: Avoid a power play, if possible.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★ Sometimes you cannot win for losing. The key to avoiding this type of experience is to be flexible, especially today. Listen to what someone says, but don't feel you must go along. Remember, you don't have to please everyone. Tonight: Get some extra R and R.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Your wild streak could emerge, causing you more of a problem than you realize. Understand what you need to do in order to make a situation work. You could be dealing with a difficult person. Don't hesitate to use your Leo charm. Tonight: Where the crowds are.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★ Investigate and get to the bottom of a problem. You are rarely pushy, but your need for efficiency runs high. You cannot compromise this personality trait and be comfortable. Avoid making health decisions right now. Tonight: Know that you are a role model.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ What you say could be misconstrued. Be very careful when choosing your words and deciding what is necessary to say and do. In fact, the more remote and spiritual you can be, the better off you will be. Tonight: Take the high road.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★ You might want to dump decision-making in someone else's hands. Money matters are prone to constant change right now. Getting someone else's feedback could be important. Understand that you could be prone to wishful thinking. Tonight: Not everything is as it seems.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★ You might be far more difficult than you realize. Be adventurous without making waves. Others will appreciate how you handle yourself. You also might want to allow others to call the shots. Tonight: Go along with someone else's suggestions.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ Decide what you want from a situation that impacts your daily life. Somehow, you might not understand everything that someone shares with you. Verify information, especially regarding your finances. Tonight: Easy does it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ You know much more than you realize. If you are questioning someone's apparent reversal, know that you have the answer, whether you realize it or not. Detach. Be creative. Imagine what it might be like to be this person. Tonight: Incorporate more fun into your life.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★ The fact that you are exhausted by another's constant changeability is not surprising. The real question is how to deal with this person in a different way so that you don't feel bogged down. Know that you can do it. Tonight: Mosey on home.

CIRCULATION VERIFICATION COUNCIL AUDIT PENDING

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LOCAL

The bottle stops here

By Daily Press staff

A recent undercover sting showed that an overwhelming majority of Santa Monica liquor stores refused to sell alcohol to minors.

Over the last month, the Santa Monica Police Department and the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control conducted compliance checks among 59 businesses licensed to sell alcoholic beverages in the city. Of the 59 businesses checked, 47 or 80 percent, refused to sell alcohol to underage buyers who were working with the SMPD.

The 12 businesses who did sell to the underage buyers were issued citations for failing to comply with the state's alcohol laws and were referred to the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. Penalties vary but include fines and license suspension or revocation.

"Our police department followed standard procedures for conducting compliance checks," said SMPD Chief James T. Butts, Jr. "As law enforcement officers, we conduct compliance checks because they have been shown to be an effective strategy in reducing underage drinking. By themselves, compliance checks will not eliminate youth access to alcohol. But when combined with a comprehensive community approach, they can help keep alcohol out of the hands of kids."

For more information on Santa Monica Against Underage Drinking (SMAUD), or the SMPD's compliance check program, go to www.smaud.org <http://-www.smaud.org/>.

The SMPD also has announced that on April 17 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., SMAUD will host the "Battle of the Teen Bands" on the Third Street Promenade to kick-off the first alcohol-free event. Five teen bands will compete for prizes donated by local businesses such as West L.A. Music, Activision and Hear Music. Event supporters include Jamba Juice, Rockstar Energy Drink, Star Bucks, El Cholo Mexican Restaurants, Gotham Hall, the Bayside District and the Santa Monica Police Officers Association.

The event is the result of joint efforts of the SMPD and SMAUD coalition to keep teens safe and sober. The program is funded by a grant from the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Community Trials Initiative.

The SMAUD plan seeks to reduce teen access to alcohol by enforcing underage drinking laws, promoting alcohol-free events and developing policies to keep teens safe and sober.

The program is in cooperation with the state of California, Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, Office of Traffic Safety, Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency and Prevention, and the U.S. Department of Justice.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Free tax return advice available

By Daily Press staff

With just three days left to file your federal and state income tax returns, many are scrambling to figure out how to fill out the proper paperwork.

"For the fourth year in a row, my office is proud to provide free federal and state income tax preparation through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program," said John Chiang, chair of the State Board of Equalization. "Many of the individuals we assisted last year filed electronic returns for the first time and applied for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), because my office was available to help.

"Taxpayers can file their tax returns electronically through my office without paying burdensome tax preparation fees," he added. "Those individuals who file electronically generally receive their refunds in half the time of those who file paper returns, saving excessive interest and other charges taxpayers would incur by using more costly filing services."

See **BRIEFS**, page 7

CORRECTION — In the Feb. 16 and March 12-13 2005 editions of the Santa Monica Daily Press, Santa Monica Police Detective Michael Bambrick was erroneously referred to as having broken the thumb and other bones in the hand of a suspect in 1997 while handcuffing him during an arrest for suspicion of driving under the influence.

SURF REPORT

Anticipate some wind issues on Wednesday, and possibly Thursday. In addition, wind swell is expected to increase. Winds are expected to recuperate late in the week.
Wednesday is looking a lot like Tuesday with similar strength of light SW ground swell and some NW wind swell. Go get 'em.

Today the water is:

55°

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	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
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SUNDAY	5:05	-0.5	4:36	1.3	11:18	4.2	10:50	5.9
MONDAY	5:49	-0.4	5:00	1.9	12:09	3.6	11:19	5.6
TUESDAY	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
WEDNESDAY	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
THURSDAY	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
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The Q Line

It appears that all is quiet this week here in this city by the sea. So, this week, the Q-Line question is: **"What's on your mind? What is the biggest issue facing Santa Monica and how should it be handled?"**

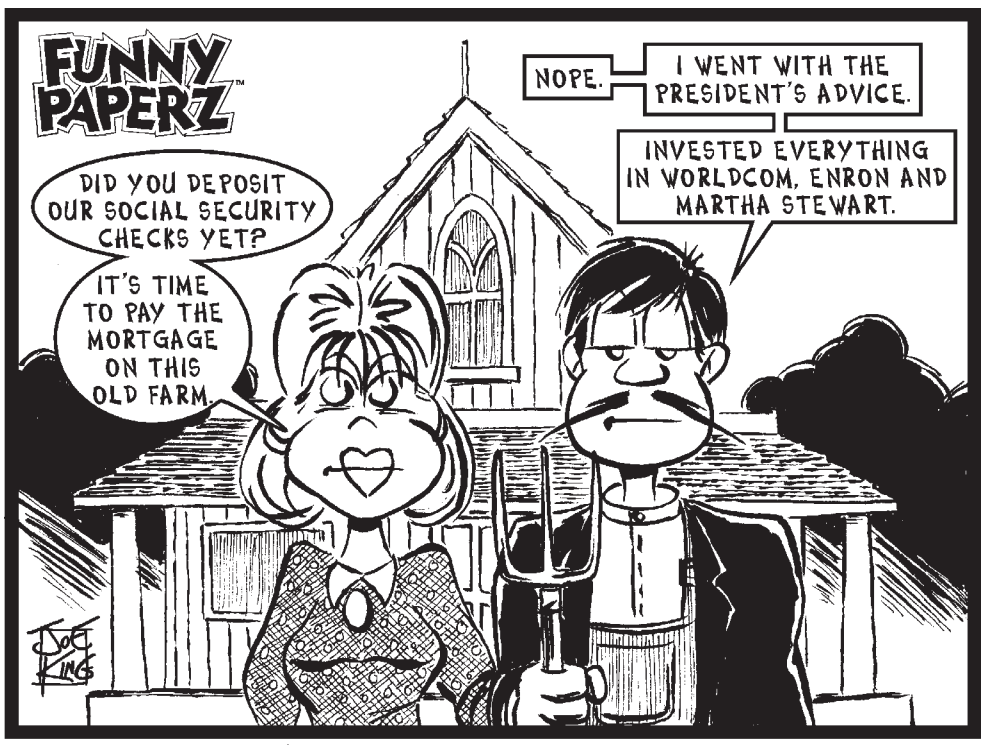
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OPINION



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Desirous of getting sex shop shut

Editor:

(Editor's note: This letter was sent to the Santa Monica City Council.)

I live across the street from the new sex shop on Lincoln Boulevard and Cedar Street with the large signs for "Secret Desires." I strongly believe that this new tenant is in violation of the city of Santa Monica's zoning ordinance for adult businesses. Specifically, this adult business is less than 500 feet from numerous schools.

On a personal note, I have three beautiful children that just yesterday walked over to Joslyn Park near this property. This is not what children should have to walk by when they want to go play in the park. Children should be able to play in the park and in their own neighborhood without seeing that type of adult business. A curtain was opened and what I saw was not appropriate for young children.

Very soon, my eldest son will walk to Santa Monica High School and will have to walk by this establishment that has a huge sign posted "No One Under 18 Allowed without ID." Would you want your son or daughter to be exposed to that adult business on their way to school? He is a sweet boy who does not need to learn about the adult business industry at such a young age.

Adult businesses should be located in areas where children are not exposed to them. I strongly urge the City Council to revoke their business license and keep our children safe and healthy.

I teach each of my children that we are all part of a greater society and each one of us has a strong obligation and responsibility to take care of each other. It begins with each of us to make this world a better place. Please assist us in creating a lovely, safe environment for our next generation.

Dr. Lisette Bauersachs
Santa Monica



Break commandments, not the Constitution



INCITES
BY ED SILVERSTEIN

Editor's note: *Ed Silverstein is on vacation. This column originally was published in the Santa Monica Daily Press in September of 2003.*

The controversy, in which Justice Roy Moore, a Chief Justice for the Alabama State Court, refused to remove a monument depicting the Ten Commandments from the courthouse, had initially left me torn. I thought, "What's the big deal?" The Ten Commandments serve as a basis for much of our law. I mean, with the exception of politicians, who can argue with "thou shalt not bear false witness." (For those of you working for Fox News, The Wall Street Journal editorial page and the Washington Times, that means you can't keep blaming Clinton for Bush's mistakes.) And I don't know anyone who has a problem with the "steal and kill" shalt nots.

But wait a minute, that's only three, what about the other seven?

There was something about honoring thy mother and father. That's all well and good, but if God expects me to shell out an extra $20,000 a year so my parents can stay in nursing homes that have no mice and serve hot food, then we've got a problem. Another thing — do we really have to send birthday cards to parents that were abusive or incestuous? What about if your father kills your mother, are you still supposed to honor him? And my grandmother wants to know where she fits into all this.

Look, I can live with the parent stuff. And I can even get down with that long one about not coveting thy neighbor's house (I live in a condo so I'm exempt); thy neighbor's wife (which is OK, but I reserve the right to change my mind if Michael Douglas moves in next door); thy neighbor's ass (too easy); thy neighbor's maidservant (does that include nannies?); and thy neighbor's ox (who the hell has an ox?). Also, since this passage implies that thy neighbor is a man, I figure anything owned by a woman is fair game, in which case I might covet thy neighbor's ass. Sorry, I couldn't resist.

And isn't it a little redundant for God to ban coveting thy neighbor's wife when you've already been told, "Thou shalt not commit adultery?" Which, by the way, is more bad news for politicians, but surprisingly good news for gays. By the grace of the Pope, George Bush and small-minded people everywhere, gays can't get married. Hence, technically, they can't commit adultery. Further, there is nothing in the Commandments (and thanks to the Supreme Court, U.S. law) that prohibits same sex relations. Come to think of it, adultery isn't even against the law.

But that's only makes six commandments. What are the other four?

I looked them up. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me." Well, I don't have any God before him or any God after him. I am agnostic so I really don't have any God, with the possible exception of Steven Speilberg. Oh jeez, I think I just blew number three, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." And while I'm at it, I might as well confess that I am also guilty of violating commandment four because I'm writing this on the Sabbath. At least I think it's the Sabbath. It's Sunday, which technically isn't my Sabbath, well technically I don't really have a Sabbath, but if I did it would have been yesterday. Of course, I worked all day yesterday, too, so I'm screwed any way you look at it. Well at least I'm OK with the second commandment that is something about no graven images. Hmm, just to be sure I better rub my lucky rabbit foot.

So let's review. Through the course of my life I have broken at least seven of the Ten Commandments (and it could be eight if Douglas does move in next door). In fact, I was able to violate the first four commandments in the space of one paragraph. And I did all of this without ruffling the feathers of even a single criminal statute. That's because the commandments have almost nothing to do with the law — they have to do with religion. What's more, they don't even represent the beliefs of the majority of the world's population.

Now maybe I'm mistaken, but despite the Patriot Act, there is a little document that goes by the name of the Constitution. And I'm pretty sure, unless the Bush Administration has edited out the offending passages, that there is some pretty clear language about the separation of church and state.

So should a monument that has very little to do with the law, that is offensive to any number of people and that spits in the face of the U.S. Constitution be represented in a court of law, or for that matter in any government facility? Absolutely not.

But there is an even more important question. Is any judge who puts God's law over the law of the land capable of imparting impartial judgment? No. And any judge who thinks otherwise should suffer the same fate as the Alabama Ten Commandment Monument. They should be placed somewhere out of the public view.

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

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Santa Monica Daily Press

HERE not to stay: Union is bowing out

HERE, from page 1

majority even though only a minority of employees agreed to a union, according to the NLRB.

However, the NLRB's Los Angeles regional office in February of 2004 sided with HERE by ruling that the union had a majority and employees weren't coerced. The ruling was later appealed by the National Right to Work Foundation, which represented the seven workers.

In September of 2004, the Washington, D.C. office of the NLRB agreed that a majority hadn't backed unionization. The NLRB issued a formal complaint in December of 2004 stating HERE "has been restraining and coercing employees" by representing them for the last 18-plus months without consent from the majority.

"We basically got reversed," said Anne Pomerantz, deputy regional attorney for the NLRB's LA office. "The case came to us as an unlawful labor negotiations violation and it was found that the employer unlawfully recognized a minority union."

Union officials were preparing to fight the charges at an April 4 trial, but the case was settled just days before it was scheduled to be heard.

"Despite HERE union officials' claims of innocence, their decision to settle suggests that union officials recognize that they may not enjoy the support of a majority of workers," said Stefan Gleason, vice president of the National Right to Work Foundation, a conservative nonprofit group that provides legal aid to workers and fights union abuses throughout the country.

Kurt Petersen, organizing director for HERE, said the union didn't want to drag the workers through more years of bureaucracy and it does have a majority at the hotel.

"The motivation for settling was that we wanted to move forward," he said.

Meanwhile, management at the Sheraton had already agreed in a settlement with the NLRB to nullify the union contract. The settlement was on hold pending the outcome of the April trial.

And while the hotel's management views the ruling as a victory, so do union officials, who believe workers have better working conditions as a result of their efforts.

"We are not going away from the Four Points," Petersen said. "The union is still at the Four Points because the workers are still there."

Petersen claims that the union contract is in place at the Sheraton and workers now receive far better benefits including a half-hour paid lunch break, a $1.50 an hour wage increase, reduced workloads and family health care coverage for those who work more than 20 hours a week.

However, Pomerantz said under the settlement agreement, the contract is void.

"(HERE) has agreed that the union will not be the collective bargaining unit for those employees and by (the settlement's) terms, that contract can't be good anymore," she said.

Petersen said the NLRB's ruling is political, spurred by big business interests who want to decimate unions throughout the country.

"The NLRB is an anti-worker organization and it's only gotten worse under George Bush," Petersen said, while acknowledging that the LA office of the NLRB sided with him. But the board's political make-up in Washington D.C. is becoming more conservative and the National Right to Work Foundation is funded by right-wing organizations, he said.

"They want to keep people in poverty. They're out to hurt workers ... they don't care about workers," Petersen said. "They wanted to take away all of their benefits. That should tell you something about these people."

Opponents of the card-check process say it's unfair to workers, who can be approached by organizers and lobbied individually. They claim pacts are formed and often include unlawful prearrangements over employment terms and conditions, including health care, wages or union dues.

"(The settlement) is a victory, but it's a small victory," said Justin Hakes, an attorney for the National Right to Work Foundation. "It's a step in the right direction ... we have dozens of these cases and there are thousands of employees suffering from these types of abuses."

Some Sheraton employees have said they felt harassed into signing union authorization cards and they were turned off by aggressive organizing tactics, adding the promises of better wages and reduced workloads didn't hold. Plus, they said they didn't want to pay the $37 monthly dues. Some told stories of relatives who had bad experiences with unions.

Many of the workers who agreed to unionize likely did so because of the benefits associated with it — like paid lunch hours, increased salaries and reduced workload. The labor agreement called for average wage increases of 20 percent, free health benefits for full- and part-time employees, a pension plan, reduced workloads and paid lunch breaks, among other benefits and protections for Sheraton workers, labor organizers have said.

The Sheraton would've become Santa Monica's third large hotel to be unionized, following the Viceroy and Fairmont Miramar. Organizers have pledged to unionize all of Santa Monica's major luxury hotels, including Loews, the Doubletree Guest Suites, Le Merigot, Casa Del Mar, Shutters on the Beach, the Radisson Huntley Hotel and the Holiday Inn Santa Monica Pier.



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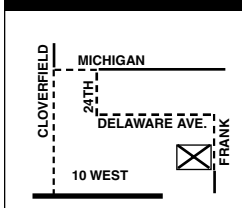
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LOCAL

Public housing murder raises security concerns

MURDER TRIAL, from page 1

Yeron, his friend.

Sandra Alfaro was charged as an accessory to the murder. She has since been credited for an 11-month prison stay and was released on Jan. 31, 2005, after pleading no contest to the accessory charge.

Yeron and Anthony Alfaro remain in police custody and each face one count of first-degree murder, lying in wait and armed with a firearm. Their trial is scheduled to begin on May 11. Although he was a minor at the time of the alleged murder, Anthony Alfaro will be tried as an adult. He also has been accused of discharging the gun, an additional felony, according to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.

Yeron is not known to have a criminal record as an adult within Los Angeles County or in the California Department of Corrections. It is not known if Anthony Alfaro has a juvenile criminal record.

Sandra Alfaro has a criminal history that goes back to 1991, when she was convicted of petty theft. In 1996, she was convicted of welfare fraud. In 1999, she was convicted of petty theft, according to court documents. In 2001, she was convicted of reckless driving.

Some residents living in neighborhoods near the public housing units have questioned why tenants with criminal records would be allowed to occupy the city's public housing.

Joan Ling, executive director of the Community Corporation of Santa Monica — the non-profit group which supports 1,200 Santa Monica public housing units and the landlord of Alfaro's apartment — said prospective tenant candidates aren't screened for criminal records.

"If you do a criminal check and find out someone has committed a felony and has paid a debt to society, are you going to tell that person for the rest of his life he can't get housing?"

Ling said it also may be illegal to discriminate against ex-convicts, referring to such legislation as Megan's Law, which she said prohibits landlords to screen out known sex offenders.

"As long as they meet the household size and income requirements, you have to treat them like any other applicant," Ling said.

According to Ling, Sandra Alfaro is no longer a resident at the public housing unit on the 800 block of Ashland Avenue. She said if Sandra Alfaro were to re-apply for public housing, she would be considered within the criteria of any other candidate.

Bill 660 is just latest effort to raise parental awareness

QUESTIONING KIDS, from page 1

child. Under current law, however, a principal can pull a child from the classroom to meet with an officer at the officer's request. The child is not free to leave, and no notification of the parents is required.

"It's very scary for a student to be questioned by the police," Sen. Kuehl said. "Certainly, in elementary school it seems totally reasonable that the school be required to contact a student's parents to give them an opportunity to be with the student while he or she is being questioned."

Information provided by the California PTA — representatives of which asked Sen. Kuehl to draft the bill — said that if the interrogation of a child is necessary, the bill would help ensure the child is questioned in a manner that is appropriate to his or her age. The PTA indicates that it's important to reduce trauma in all phases of a child's life, including trauma caused by actions pursued through the court system.

Representatives from Sen. Kuehl's office said the state legislature has been trying to increase parental involvement in this area since 1989, when the first bill was proposed and was not passed. Nine years later, in 1998, Assembly Bill No. 2501 attempted to address the same issue. It was passed in the legislature, but was vetoed by Gov. Pete Wilson.

Representatives from Sen. Kuehl's office said State Bill 660 is similar to California State Assembly Bill No. 1012 proposed by Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg during the 2003 and 2004 legislative sessions. The bill passed by a wide bipartisan margin in both houses, but was vetoed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who opposed the bill because law enforcement was against it. Sen. Kuehl said the issue will be returning to the legislature until it is adequately addressed.

Tam Ma, with Sen. Kuehl's office, said State Bill No. 660 contains exceptions for circumstances that would not require parental notification — such as emergency situations that may be life threatening, or if parents are suspected to be child abusers — issues she said the previous bill did not address.

"Folks had concerns of the ability of law enforcement to have timely investigations," Ma said. "If you have to wait and call parents, the thought was kids will change their story.

"With this proposal, the school has to make a reasonable attempt to contact parents within an hour after the incident, or questioning can begin."

Representatives from Sen. Kuehl's office said State Bill No. 660 is designed so school districts statewide will have a uniform policy. They said the bill is modeled after policies crafted by the Santa-Monica Malibu.

Laurel Schmidt, with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, confirmed State Bill No. 660 is based, in part, off of the school district's policy regarding on-campus questioning which has been effective since September 2002. The policy indicates school administrators must notify parents of the police request for an interrogation and act on the student's behalf throughout the questioning process, including informing the student of his or her right against self-incrimination.

The bill will be up for discussion during the state senate's next education committee hearing on April 26.

STATE

Berkeley bytes back against data dippers

BY MICHELLE LOCKE
Associated Press Writer

BERKELEY — University of California, Berkeley, experts will lead a consortium of colleges in a far-reaching effort to keep the nation's computer data safe from cyberattack.

The announcement Monday by the National Science Foundation comes after a flurry of security breaches — two of them at UC Berkeley — that have dramatized the vulnerability of a society that increasingly entrusts its secrets to computers.

The idea is to look at ways to build more secure systems before a disaster along the lines of an "electronic Pearl Harbor," said S. Shankar Sastry, the UC Berkeley professor who will be principal investigator and director of the new center.

"If one thinks about the possibilities, they're really quite frightening," he said.

The new center, called TRUST, or the Team for Research in Ubiquitous Secure Technology, is expected to receive nearly $19 million over five years, with the possibility of a 5-year extension after that. TRUST is one of two NSF Science and Technology Centers to be funded this year. The second, centered at the University of Kansas, will study how the balance of mass in the polar ice sheets may affect sea level.

Berkeley will be joined by Carnegie Mellon University, Cornell University, Mills College, San Jose State University, Smith College, Stanford University and Vanderbilt University. A number of businesses also will be affiliated with the project, including Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, IBM, Sun Microsystems and Symantec.

"It's an extremely strong group, and it's going to be very exciting working with them," Fred Schneider, professor of computer science at Cornell University and chief scientist at TRUST, said in a release announcing the project.

TRUST researchers will be looking at developing technology that will help organizations — public and private — build secure information systems. Beyond thwarting cyberthieves, they will also look at ways to keep systems running even when being struck, a concept known as "degrading gracefully under attack," said Sastry, who is a professor of electrical engineering and computer sciences.

Since the best systems don't work if humans don't know or care enough to use them, researchers will also be working with experts in economics, public policy, social science and human-computer interface to look at things like making security easier to use. Currently, it takes some effort to install security safeguards, a problem for a country baffled by its VCRs.

The human element was involved in both of Berkeley's security gaffes.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

VITA appointments are available through April 15 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at Chiang's Los Angeles office at 660 South Figueroa St., Suite 2050. To schedule an appointment, call (213) 239-8506.

Alternatively, VITA and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) sites are also located at many neighborhood community centers, senior citizen centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations. To locate the nearest VITA or TCE site, call (800) 829-1040.

Taxpayers should bring all of their tax records which include: Form W-2 wage and earning statements from all employers; Form 1099s for interest, dividends and non-employee compensation; a copy of last year's federal and state returns, if available; and other relevant information about income and expenses.Taxpayers should have all the required social security numbers for their dependents, any amounts paid for day care, and their bank routing numbers for direct deposit of their expected refund.

For more information, call (213) 239-8506.

Free copies of tax returns offered

By Daily Press staff

Staples in Santa Monica is providing free copies of your 2004 tax return.

In an age when more people are filing taxes electronically, you still need to keep a hard copy of the return.

"We have all become so comfortable storing and sending data electronically that many people are not keeping hard copies of important documents," said John Burke, senior vice president of business services at Staples. "Nothing is easier to access and more reliable than a paper copy of your taxes."

According to the Internal Revenue Service, 39.2 million 2004 tax returns had been filed electronically as of March 19. That's up 2.1 million from last year. Taxpayers who require an exact copy of a previously filed tax return must file a Form 4506 and pay the IRS a $39 fee.

Experts recommend keeping a file of tax returns and any records reported in the return including worksheets, payroll records, receipts, year-end interest statements and canceled checks for at least three years.

Documents that aren't vital to record keeping should be shredded to protect against identity theft.

To make it easy for last-minute filers to get a free copy of their tax returns, mobile Staples copy and print centers will be set up at select post offices across the country on April 15.

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STATE

Investors roll dice on Vegas loan company

BY DON THOMPSON
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Federal and California authorities are probing a Las Vegas company that promises 24 percent annual returns by investing in payday loan and check-cashing companies that in turn charge customers hefty interest.

Par Three Financial Inc. and its operators apparently aren't licensed to lend money or sell securities or other investments — but say they don't have to be under federal law.

The company uses current investors to recruit new investors with a $200 referral fee and a monthly percentage of whatever new investment money they bring in. It also has advertised for investors in newspapers including the San Francisco Chronicle and Seattle Times, and at online classified ad sites.

Company officials told private fraud investigator Barry Minkow they have raised millions of dollars from more than 100 investors in states including California, Florida, Kansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and Washington, with a minimum investment of $10,000.

Minkow is a convicted felon himself who has since co-founded the for-profit Fraud Discovery Institute in San Diego. He and other experts said Par Three's promised return rates seem unreasonably high, a frequent sign of an unsustainable Ponzi scheme in which money from new investors is used to pay previous investors.

In a year-end newsletter, company Vice President J.W. Long tells investors that revenue gains neared 35 percent in 2004 and are projected to top 40 percent this year.

He included a letter from "the chairman of our trade association — Financial Service Centers of America or FiSCA. You will probably see articles in the newspapers referencing this organization and our industry in general. I hope that this message from (FiSCA chairman) Gary Dachis will shed more light on our ever-expanding industry."

Yet FiSCA, the largest national organization representing the check cashing industry, has no listing of Par Three as a member, nor Long, nor any of five others known to be affiliated with the firm.

"I don't know them from a hole in the wall. Obviously, what he's trying to do is drum up investors," said Bob DeChillo, who handles FiSCA's membership roll as director of business development. "He could have gotten that (letter) out of magazines. ... He could have taken a piece off our Web site."

Community Financial Services Association of America spokesman Steven Schlein also said he had never heard of Par Three. His organization represents payday advance companies.

The firm's Las Vegas headquarters is actually that of KeyState Corporate Management, which lists Par Three as one of 35 businesses with headquarters in the same office suite in a nondescript building a short distance from the Las Vegas Strip.

Financial experts, including Bert Goldberg, founder and executive director of The International Factoring Association, and president of Distinctive Solutions, which provides computer software to factors, said he had never heard of any company lending money to check-cashing and payday loan companies, let alone Par Three. Factors generally lend money at high interest to businesses, secured by the firms' accounts receivable.

Par Three does not disclose on its Web site or to its investors which payday loan or check-cashing companies are its customers.

Ron Hammers, the company's vice president and general counsel, declined to provide financial details, references from customers, nor say how many clients Par Three has, though he said it aids more than 75 cash-advance stores, most of them long-term customers.

Par Three's password-protected Web site says the company makes loans, but as "notes" that are collected within nine months. That, the Web site asserts, means the company isn't selling regulated securities.

Florida regulators have warned that such nine-month notes have been used by operators of Ponzi schemes to avoid full disclosures that are required of securities dealers. Moreover, they said most such transactions still require licensing.

The federal Securities and Exchange Commission, Federal Bureau of Investigation and California Department of Corporations wouldn't comment, but Corporations spokeswoman Susie Wong said "if there are any California investors, they should contact our department."

Par Three acknowledges on its Web site that lending money at the rate it charges would be illegal, but says it is engaging in "accounts receivable purchase agreements," not loans.

"What we do is above board — it's legal," Hammers said in an interview with The Associated Press Friday.

Hammers said the company was formed in 1997 and incorporated in 1998, but is little known because "we don't advertise (for clients) — a lot of it is basically word of mouth." He said the company has few investors, using mostly its own money.

"We loan our money out at a high rate to check cashing and payday stores across the country," Hammers said. "They pay us a nice rate of return and we're able to pass that along to our factors."

Payday or cash-advance companies have often been accused of predatory lending, offering small advances on paychecks with interest rates often as high as 400 percent.

See **PAR THREE**, page 9

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STATE

Poll: Taxes too complicated

BY WILL LESTER
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Most Americans think federal income taxes are too complicated, but they're not eager to simplify tax preparation by getting rid of some deductions and tax credits, according to an AP-Ipsos poll.

Forty-five percent of those polled support eliminating them, while 51 percent oppose that approach.

Millions of Americans are scrambling to meet the April 15 tax deadline. Many acknowledge they dread preparing the tax forms.

"Anybody who says they don't mind their taxes is lying," said businessman William Long of Ferris, Texas. "I definitely put them off until the last minute, even when money is coming back. I just don't want to deal with them."

Seven in 10 said their federal taxes are too complicated, according to a poll conducted for The Associated Press by Ipsos-Public Affairs. The survey found 49 percent would prefer a trip to the dentist while 48 percent would rather prepare their taxes.

Nearly a third of the 133 million income tax returns expected this year will arrive at the Internal Revenue Service during the last two to three weeks before the April 15 deadline, IRS spokesman Eric Smith said. He anticipated that almost 9 million will file extensions so they can file late returns and 2 million to 3 million are expected to miss the due date.

"If there's a deadline, some people will do almost anything to avoid it," Smith said.

About a fourth of those responsible for their family's tax preparations said they had yet to start their returns or only began preparing them the week before they were asked, according to the poll taken last week.

Simplifying the tax system is the goal of a federal panel created by President Bush that will collect information over the next few months and is expected to offer recommendations by midsummer.

Some proposals that might be considered include:

■ Reducing income tax rates while imposing a national sales tax.

■ Instituting a flat tax that would have everyone pay the same rate regardless of what they earn.

Most people don't like the flat tax idea, with 57 percent of those surveyed saying people with higher incomes should pay a higher tax rate. Only 40 percent thought tax rates should be the same for everyone.

People who make $75,000 or more a year were most likely to support that plan, but they were about evenly split. Other income groups opposed it.

By a 3-to-1 margin, Democrats favored the wealthier paying a higher rate, while Republicans were more likely to favor taxing everyone at the same rate.

"There are the fortunate few who are making their living on other people's hard work, they can afford to give more back to the government," said Phil Rosenfeld, a computer consultant from Miami who leans Democratic.

Kim Howard-Johnson, a San Diego homemaker who leans Republican, said she would like to see the tax rates the same for all income levels.

"I think it should be changed," she said. "That's the fairest thing to do. It would provide an incentive for people to make more money."

The AP-Ipsos poll of 1,001 adults was taken from April 4-6 and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Former convict helps to tackle fraud scams

PAR THREE, from page 8

"I don't think you'll find anyone who's unhappy with our services," Hammers said. "We do exactly what we say we'll do, we pay exactly what we say we'll pay."

Investors reported they have been receiving their monthly interest checks and referral fees without problems. But one elderly West Coast man with more than $200,000 invested approached Minkow in January after seeing him interviewed on television. The investor since has had difficulty getting his money back from Par Three.

"The business model is untenable," Minkow said. "That nine-month note technique was used in Florida to the point that the entire Florida banking commission is warning against it." Moreover, Minkow was concerned Par Three placed classified advertisements in newspapers to find investors: "Why is that significant? Because I did that at ZZZZ Best when I was desperate to raise money."

Minkow spent seven years in federal prison for defrauding investors through his ZZZZ Best carpet cleaning company by raising new money to pay off the accumulating debt of the business he started in high school.

Federal investigators credit him with helping break up several alleged scams in the last year, including what they call one of one of the largest Ponzi schemes in U.S. history: Orange County-based Financial Advisory Consultants allegedly swindled investors out of more than $814 million.

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SPECIAL REPORT

ARE YOU READY FOR THE BIG ONE?
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BY FABIAN E. PADILLA
PRESIDENT, SAFE GAS SERVICES

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• That the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is now requiring communities in Southern California to prepare a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan? A Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is a new requirement from FEMA, which must be satisfied for jurisdiction to remain eligible for hazard mitigation funds and public assistance following disasters. Communities like Santa Monica have recently completed their mitigation plan and are requiring Earthquake Activated Gas Shut-off Valves as part of the plan.

• Los Angeles City Ordinance 174478 already mandates the installation of an activated gas shut-off valve on all new buildings built after 09-01-95. When pulling a building permit on work valued at $10,000 or more. Prior to entering an agreement for sale of residential or commercial property and prior to the close of escrow. Any alteration of your gas service or system will also require that you install one. Yes, if you repair your roof, add on, remodel, upgrade or change title to or sell property you must have an earthquake valve installed.

• The City of West Hollywood has also adopted a similar mandate. More and more cities are implementing the Earthquake Activated Gas Shut-off valve mandate. It is expected that soon the ordinace will become a statewide mandate, like water heater strapping and the installation of smoke detectors

• The last major earthquake in Southern California was the Northridge Quake in 1994. Experts say we are due for another major Quake.

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Real Estate

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Getting ready to sell the home is mostly cosmetic



BUYING AND SELLING
BY THOMAS KHAMMAR & BRENT PARSONS

Some 5 million existing homes are sold each year, and while each transaction is different every owner wants the same thing: The best possible deal with the least amount of hassle and aggravation.

Unfortunately, home selling has become a more complex business than it used to be. New seller disclosure statements, longer and more mysterious form agreements, and a range of environmental concerns have all emerged in the past decade.

More importantly, the home-selling process has changed. Buyer brokerage, where realtors represent home buyers, is now common nationwide, and good buyer-brokers want the best for their clients.

The result is that while almost 100,000 existing homes are sold each week, the process is not as easy for sellers as it was five or 10 years ago. Surviving in today's real estate world requires experience and training in such fields as real estate marketing, financing, negotiation and closing — the very expertise available from local realtors.

Are you ready?

The home-selling process typically starts several months before a property is made available for sale. It's necessary to look at a home through the eyes of a prospective buyer and determine what needs to be cleaned, painted, repaired and tossed out.

Ask yourself: If you were buying this home what would you want to see? The goal is to show a home which looks good, maximizes space and attracts as many buyers — and as much demand — as possible.

While part of the "getting ready" phase relates to repairs, painting and other home improvements, this is also a good time to ask why you really want to sell.

Selling a home is an important matter and there should be a good reason to sell — perhaps a job change to a new community or the need for more space. Your reason for selling can impact the negotiating process so it's important to discuss your needs and wants in private with the realtor who lists your home.

When should you sell?

The marketplace tends to be more active in the summer because parents want to enroll children in classes at the beginning of the school year, which is usually August. The summer also is typically when most homes are likely to be available.

Generally speaking, markets tend to have some balance between buyers and sellers year-round. In a given community, for example, there may be fewer buyers in late December, but there are also likely to be fewer homes available for purchase. So, home prices tend to rise or fall because of general demand patterns rather than the time of the year.

Owners are encouraged to sell when the property is ready for sale, there is a need or desire to sell, and the services of a local realtor have been retained.

How do you improve your home's value?

The general rule in real estate is that buyers seek the least expensive home in the best neighborhood they can afford. In terms of improvements, this means you want a home that fits in the neighborhood but is not over-improved. For example, if most homes in your neighborhood have three bedrooms, two baths and 2,500 square feet of finished space, a property with five bedrooms, more baths and far more space would likely be priced much higher and likely be more difficult to sell.

Improvements should be made so that the property shows well, is consistent with the neighborhood and does not involve capital investments, the cost of which cannot be recovered from the sale. Furthermore, improvements should reflect community preferences.

Cosmetic improvements — paint, wallpaper and landscaping — help a home "show" better and often are good investments. Mechanical repairs — to ensure that all systems and appliances are in good working condition — are required to get a top price.

Ideally, you want to be sure that your property is competitive with other homes available in the community. Realtors, who see numerous homes, can provide suggestions that are consistent with your marketplace.

(To contact Brent Parsons or Thomas Khammar, call (310) 943-7656 or e-mail to thomas1@georgechungrealtors.com or brent1@georgechungrealtors.com. Or visit www.thepowerhouseteam.net.)

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

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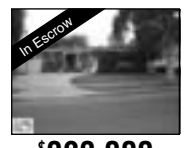
Residential

No Picture Available

$575,000

2555 COOLIDGE AVE , LOS ANGELES 90064

Pleasant 2 bedroom, 1 bathroom home. Hardwood floors throughout the house. Charming breakfast area in kitchen, dining area connected to the livin groom. Convenient Laundry hook-ups in kitchen area. Spacious private backyard decorated with an arched entry. One (1) car attached garage.



$929,000

3259 ROSEWOOD AVE , LOS ANGELES 90066

Completely remodeled home; new roof in Apr/2000, 200amp, copper plumbing from street to all fixtures, 100gal water heater, central heating, all new maple cabinets,granite counters, laundry rm in the garage w/mop sink; hardwood floors; family rm; living room w/wood burning fire place; Dining Room; wired internet to bedrm,living rm & office;Rm addition done in 2000. To view this or any home call Thomas or Brent today 310-943-7656.

No Picture Available

$1,199,000

11901 WESTMINSTER PL , LOS ANGELES 90066

Beautiful 2 story Mar Vista Hill Home with a view on a cul de sac. Newly Renovated, Updated Kitchen, New Carpet, Newly Painted throughout the houseSpacious Family Room, Living Room w/ Wood burning Fireplace and entry to the Dining Room. Sun Deck off 2nd Story, Swimming Pool on ground level. 2 car attached garage. Rebuilt In 1978 (except Living room floor, add on in 1986 Master Bedroom upstairs.



$925,000

3457 ROSEWOOD AVE , LOS ANGELES 90066

Lovely 2 story, contemporary home located on a quite Mar Vista street which features living room with brick, gas burning fire place, formal dining room with pass through window to kitchen, kitchen with built-ins and plenty of cabinet space.



$659,000

3650 TULLER AVE , LOS ANGELES 90034

Open design, marbled foyer with high ceilings and modern glass blcoks. Large living room w/ dimmable recessed lighting, custom made home theater center and mini bar. New kitchen with Italian tiles, stainless steel stove and professional oven. 4 sliding doors throughout the house. Brand new central A/C and heating. Internet ready rooms. New copper plumbing w/ very strong water pressure. Dual U-shaped driveway with large front yard. The outside needs TLC, but the inside is a must see.



$587,000

2614 Chariton Street

This is a very traditional 3bedroom 1 bath home in one of the hottest areas of Culver City. Have you ever visited the HELMS BAKERY? Well now you can walk to it. Take a look at this beautiful home that has a BONUS ill. Converted garage with 2 bedrooms. Electric has been updated but with a good size lot is in need of your own Tender Loving Care. To view this or any home call Thomas or Brent today. 310-943-7656.

No Picture Available

699,000

3509 GREENWOOD AVE , LOS ANGELES 90066

3 Bedroom, 1 Bath . Single Family Home.
Call for more details.

No Picture Available

749,500

2740 FEDERAL AVE , LOS ANGELES 90064

3 Bedroom, 2 Bath . Single Family Home.
Call for more details.

INVESTMENT PROPERTIES



$925,000

1748 18th St. Santa Monica

Great investment property in Santa Monica! 4-Unit building with 1 bed/1 bath units. All units rented with strong cash flow. Possible view of city with new development 6,700 sq. ft. lot. Has potential for possible Condo development. Drive by ONLY!

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- ❖ High Tea at the Fairmont Miramar Hotel

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- ❖ lunch for two at Juliano's Raw
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By the numbers: Stats show trends on upswing



DAYS ON THE MARKET

BY JODI SUMMERS

The California Association of Realtors regularly publishes some interesting statistics. Allow us to share some with you.

■ Statewide, the 10 cities and communities with the greatest median home price increases in 2004 compared with the same period a year ago were: Adelanto, 72.6 percent; Hesperia, 63.2 percent; Inglewood, 55.9 percent; Port Hueneme, 52.7 percent; Hercules, 49.3 percent; West Sacramento, 49.1 percent; Bellflower, 48.9 percent; San Bernardino, 48 percent; Victorville, 46.9 percent; and Los Banos, 46.4 percent.

■ The median price of an existing, single-family detached home in California during February 2005 was $471,620, a 20.4 percent increase over the $391,550 median for February 2004, according to the association realtors.

■ In the luxury home category, Los Angeles values rose 17.5 percent, or $256,000, for 2004. The average luxury home in Los Angeles is $1.72 million.

■ The Unsold Inventory Index for existing, single-family detached homes in February 2005 was 3.9 months, compared with 1.8 months for the same period a year ago. The index indicates the number of months needed to deplete the supply of homes on the market at the current sales rate.

■ Thirty-year fixed mortgage interest rates averaged 5.63 percent during February 2005, compared with 5.64 percent in February 2004, according to Freddie Mac. Adjustable mortgage interest rates averaged 4.16 percent in February 2005 compared with 3.55 percent in February 2004.

■ The median number of days it took to sell a single-family home was 40 days in February 2005, compared with 26 days (revised) for the same period a year ago.

■ California households had a median household income of $53,240 in fourth-quarter 2004, which was $56,070 short of the $109,320 qualifying income needed to purchase a median-priced home in the state.

■ The minimum household income needed to purchase a median-priced home at $474,480 in California in December was $110,530, based on an average effective mortgage interest rate of 5.76 percent and assuming a 20 percent down payment. This figure was up from $94,070 in December 2003, when the median price of a home was $401,720 and the prevailing interest rate was 5.82 percent.

■ By contrast, the minimum household income needed to purchase a median-priced home at $188,900 in the United States in December 2004 was $44,000.

■ The percentage of households in California able to afford a median-priced home was at 19 percent at the end of 2004. That's down 4 percentage points from a year ago.

■ Nationally, there were 6.68 million existing-home sales in 2004. Sales were up 9.4 percent from 6.1 million in 2003.

■ Nationally in 2004, the median price was $184,100, up 8.3 percent from a median of $170,000 in 2003. This is the strongest annual increase since 1980 when the median price rose 11.7 percent.

■ By the end of 2004, a first-time buyer earning the national median income of $56,300 and with cash to make a 10 percent downpayment will be unable to qualify for a home priced at the national median, the Fannie Mae Foundation reports. By 2007, repeat buyers earning the national median won't be able to buy a median-priced home. Why? Rising home price appreciation of 4.8 percent per year will eclipse income gains of 3.4 percent per year.

■ Poverty rates increased in 41 states and the District of Columbia between 2000 and 2003, according to the Coalition on Human Needs. States with the highest percentage of people in poverty: Louisiana (20.3 percent); Mississippi (19.9); and New Mexico (18.6).

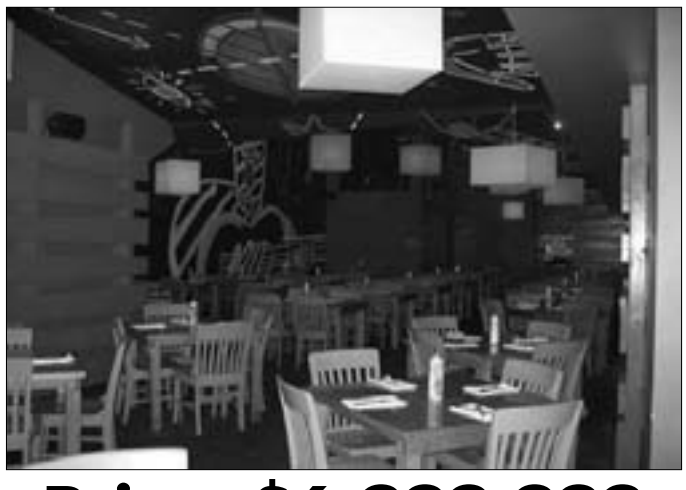
■ Contrary to arguments frequently made by local planning boards, apartment development doesn't overburden public schools and municipal education budgets, a survey by the National Association of Home Builders has found. The survey showed an average of 37 school-aged children per 100 multi-family households compared with an average of 62 children per 100 single-family households.

Los Angeles-based C.A.R. is a state trade organization with more than 160,000 members.

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

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Bitch! Whine! Complain!

Check Out the Question of the Week on Page 3 and let us hear what you have to say

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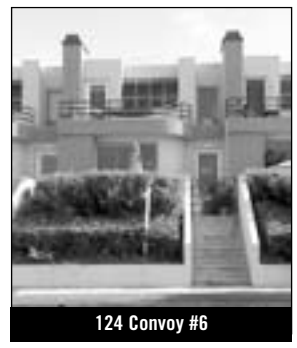


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Offered at: $1,695,000
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124 Convoy #6

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Tarzana Ranch House

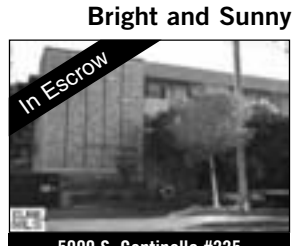


6126 Melvin Ave., Tarzana

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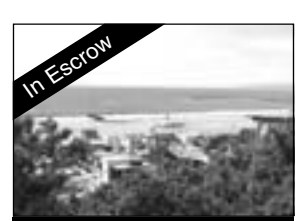


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Hold that thought: A delay in possession can spell trouble



IN YOUR SPACE

BY CHRISTINA S. PORTER

Landlord and tenants beware: In most leases there is what's known as a "delay in possession" clause. That clause allows the landlord to not deliver the premises on the date specified in the lease. A delay in possession could happen for many reasons, a few of which are:

■ Delay in the construction of the tenant Improvements.

■ Strike, earthquake and fire.

■ The existing tenant's new space is not ready as planned so they cannot move out.

A tenant forced into a delay in possession could be facing potentially catastrophic consequences, a few of them are:

■ A tenant might be forced to "holdover" in their existing space, which could cost them between from 150 percent to 200 percent of the rent they are paying now.

■ Some leases don't allow for holding over and if a tenant is forced to stay, they will actually be in default.

■ Lost business income.

■ The cost of storing inventory.

■ The payment of additional brokers fees and moving costs to find temporary space.

■ Loss of opportunity to lease other spaces available at the time.

A delay in possession can be a problem for a landlord as well. Most building owners invest their money in commercial real estate as an investment and know the difficulty involved in securing a quality tenant, not to mention the amount of money and time spent in marketing and brokerage fees to do so. A landlord's inability to hand over the property on the date promised creates a serious risk of losing that tenant. Unfortunately, there are events that cannot be controlled by either side. Hence, the delay in possession clause.

Although most landlords know the lease they are going to use pretty well, I suggest that both tenants and landlords review the delay in possession clause carefully to make sure that if a delay does occur they will be able to mitigate any consequences that arise.

A few things to consider:

■ If the building is vacant and there are not going to be any tenant improvements performed, or paid for by the landlord then your chances of a delay in possession from the landlord's side are minimal.

■ If there is a tenant in the space, it's important to find out when their lease terminates and if they have secured new space. Look at the provisions of the delay in possession clause as if they won't be out on time. Discuss with your attorney how you might adjust it to fit your needs specifically. The lease I generally work with allows for 60 days of delayed possession at the end of which the tenant is given a 10-day window to provide the landlord written notice of his intention to cancel the lease. Although the lease stipulates that you will not be monetarily obligated during the 70-day period, most people can't wait that long to start looking for another space.

■ A landlord should consider the proposed lessee's time constraints and adjust his time frame accordingly, allowing as much contingency time as possible to complete any tenant improvements. The best way to avoid responsibility for any delay in possession is to give as much responsibility for the tenant improvements to the tenant.

(Contact Christina S. Porter at (310) 806- 6104)

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE PROPERTIES LEASED

Location	Type	Date Leased	Sq. Ft.	Price
1411 5th St	Office	4/5/2005	1,600	$2.95/mg
520 Broadway	Office	4/6/2005	1,847	$2.85-$3.15/fs
520 Broadway	Office	4/6/2005	3,669	$2.85-$3.15/fs
520 Broadway	Office	4/6/2005	3,283	$2.85-$3.15/fs
520 Broadway	Office	4/6/2005	1,145	$2.85-$3.15/fs
2120 Colorado Ave	Office	4/6/2005	2,185	$2.90/fs
2450 Colorado Ave	Office	4/6/2005	5,787	$1.80/fs
3000 W Olympic Blvd	Office	4/8/2005	4,700	$3.50/mg
330 Wilshire Blvd	Office	4/8/2005	3,566	$2.25/nnn
720 Wilshire Blvd	Office	4/7/2005	2,725	$2.50/fs

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Sensory underload: Border cameras on blink

By The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Hundreds of sensors and cameras designed to detect undocumented immigrants along U.S. borders were not working last year, and some were not even installed, according to an audit report.

Federal inspectors visited three Arizona sites last year — Nogales, Naco and Tucson — and found none of the remote surveillance systems was fully operational.

Arizona was dubbed the weakest portion of the Southwest border by top Homeland Security Department officials last month.

The federal government reportedly paid private companies $200 million for the high-tech equipment.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials said Monday that the contracts with the companies under investigation expired in September.

Mario Villarreal, a Customs spokesman in Washington, said about 80 percent of the agency's cameras are functioning.

Jack Lebo, a spokesman with the General Services Administration's inspector general, said the agency is following up on the issues raised in the December audit, which charged that the government paid for "shoddy work" or "for work that was incomplete or never delivered."

Agents along the Arizona border have reported problems with the surveillance equipment, saying that the cameras often do not cover all of the state's 389-mile border with Mexico.

Some members of Congress, including representatives from Arizona, have sought more advanced technology, including ground radar.

In the GSA report, auditors said International Microwave Corp. was paid $20 million between 1998 and 2003 for work at certain sites.

The report said that little work had been completed by last June when inspectors visited the three Arizona border locations plus Carrizo Springs and Laredo, Texas; Detroit; Buffalo, N.Y.; and Blaine, Wash.

In Naco, auditors said they found equipment in storage and camera poles lying in the desert next to a Border Patrol station while in Nogales, the equipment had been delivered but installation was still in progress last summer.

Cop out: Local police reluctant to enforce strict immigration laws

BY JACQUES BILLEAUD
Associated Press Writer

PHOENIX — Many local police agencies in Arizona, the busiest illegal entry point on the nation's porous southern border, don't want the added responsibility some Arizona lawmakers want to give them to enforce federal immigration laws.

They say it's already the responsibility of the federal government and that such a massive undertaking would detract from their traditional roles in protecting communities from crime.

But some Arizona lawmakers say the federal government isn't doing enough about the thousands of people who sneak across the border each year.

A proposal in the Arizona Legislature would authorize state and local police agencies to investigate and apprehend illegal immigrants. It also would let local police transport migrants to detention centers across state lines.

The law does not draw a distinction between criminal migrants and otherwise law-abiding migrants.

More than any other state in recent years, Arizona has been dogged by a heavy flow of illegal immigrants after the government tightened enforcement in El Paso, Texas, and San Diego during the mid-1990s.

Even though immigrants provide the American economy with cheap labor, Arizona and other border states shoulder huge health care and education costs for illegal workers and their families. Frustrated lawmakers in Arizona have proposed several bills this year aimed at confronting illegal immigration.

Nearly a month ago, Gov. Janet Napolitano signed a bill into law that gives local police the power to arrest migrant smugglers but doesn't provide additional money to do it.

Proponents of the latest proposal say police departments need to get rid of "sanctuary policies" that, in some cases, discourage or prohibit officers from inquiring about a person's immigration status.

"If you are going to deal with the illegals — especially the violent alien problem — in America today, local law enforcement must be engaged," said Republican state Rep. Russell Pearce, sponsor of the proposal, which cleared its first committee hearing in a 9-5 vote Monday.

Opponents say local officers already have the authority to arrest illegal immigrants who commit crimes, that police agencies can't afford the new responsibilities and that the proposal could lead to racial profiling of Latinos.

Many police agencies don't inquire about the immigration status of people charged with misdemeanors and nonviolent crimes, said Eric Edwards, a lobbyist representing the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police and Phoenix Police Department.

The question is raised and federal immigration agents are called when migrants are suspected of violence or felony violations, Edwards said.

Enforcing federal immigration law also would make it harder for officers to maintain trust and investigate violent crime in immigrant communities, because fewer migrants would cooperate for fear of being sent back home, opponents said.

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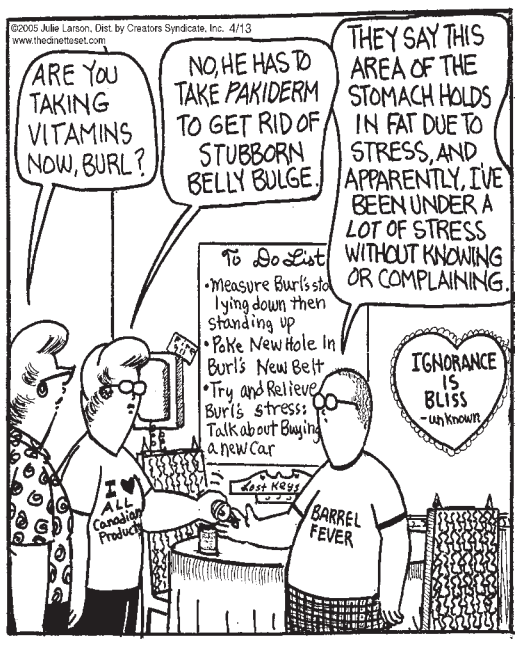
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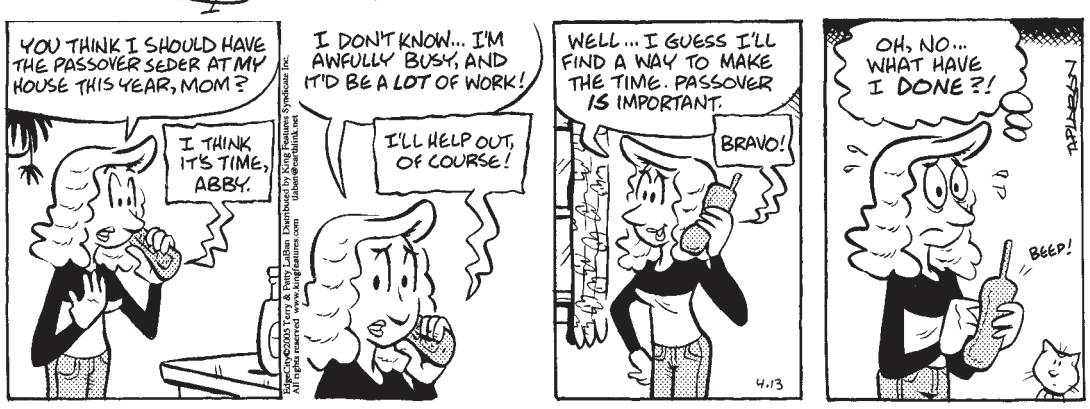
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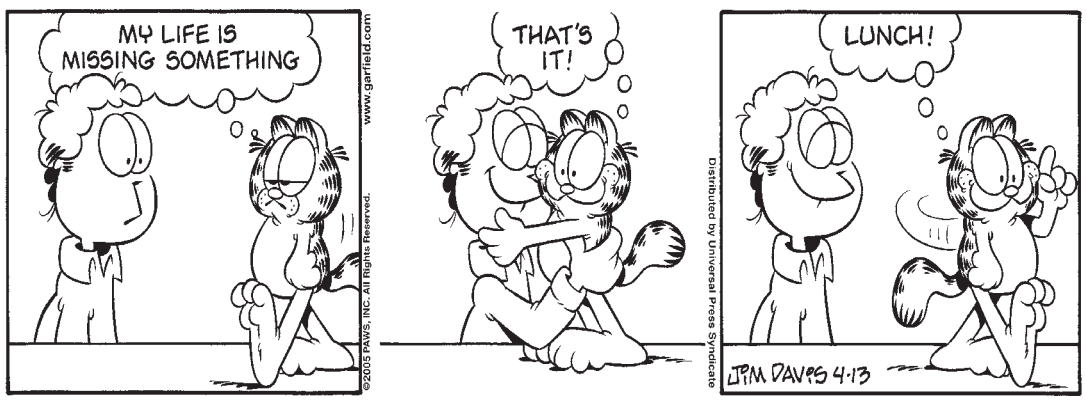
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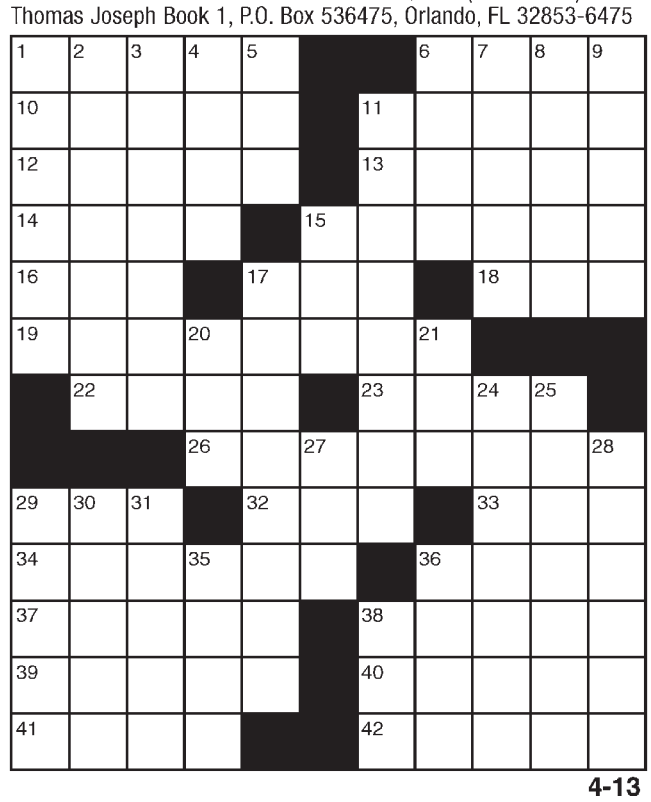
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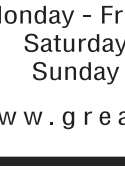
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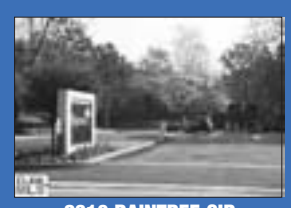
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