

FREE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2002

Volume 1, Issue 140

Santa Monica Daily Press

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Parents' negligence breeds delinquents

Parents aren't paying attention; pushing their kids toward crime

BY ANTONIA BOGDANOVICH

Special to the Daily Press

When a juvenile judge recently threw a 16-year-old girl from an affluent Westside family into a boot-camp program after pleading guilty for petty theft, the girl's mother argued she didn't want her child mingling with gang-bangers.

"You think your child, if put in a probation camp, would be put in one area because she comes from the Westside and these gang members would be in another area because they're from east LA or downtown?" asked Pam Davis, a Santa Monica Superior Juvenile Court judge.

Despite her mother's protests, the teenager wanted to go through the rigorous camp because she thought it would help her. Davis said she was one of the best graduates in the program.

Davis, 41, sees parents and their troubled teens on the road to crime from her small, informal Santa Monica courtroom day in and day out. Because there's only so much she can do within the confines of the judicial system, Davis wonders how bad it has to get before

parents wake up and realize their neglect will breed delinquents and criminals.

Since her time on the bench, Davis has noticed a disturbing trend — parents aren't paying attention to their kids, which has led to an increase in crime on the Westside.

"Kids want limits, but the problem is they're not raised that way," Davis said, adding parents' unavailability to their children is an underlying factor in why they end up in her courtroom. "Values are just not instilled in young people. Parents are preoccupied in their own lives and that's frustrating."

'One joint' can lead to much more

Since Davis arrived in 1998, the court was hearing five to 10 cases a day. Now it hears at least 60 cases a day. The most frequently seen cases are school truancy and possession of marijuana and alcohol.

David Searcy, Santa Monica's supervising juvenile judge, thinks parents are too lenient with their kids. He agrees that violations like possession of controlled substances usually lead to far worse crimes in the future.

"It affects the kid when one parent bad mouths the other. Or, when I hear parents say, 'It's only one joint, how bad can that be?'" Searcy said. "I believe that from what we see,

See DELINQUENTS, page 5

Employees not entitled to their jobs, judge rules

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER

Daily Press Staff Writer

Employers don't need a reason to fire their workers, a judge ruled this week.

Patrick Almanza learned that when he sued his former employer, The Art Institute of Los Angeles, for wrongfully firing him and causing him undue stress.

"Things were really looking up," Almanza said. "I had just got engaged and I recently had just got another raise at work, I was looking forward to a bright future with The Art Institute."

But Chris Case-Andersen, the director of community

relations for the art school, told the court Monday that Almanza, a computer technician who made \$31,000 a year, was an "at-will" employee, which allowed the institution to fire him without cause.

Andersen pointed out that the fine print on Almanza's 1998 employment application allowed the college to fire him without giving him a reason.

Santa Monica Small Claims Judge Pro Tem Michael B. Moore ruled the law is on the institute's side. If it classified Almanza as an "at-will" employee, then it can fire him at any time.

"Even if everything was going fine, they are well

within their rights to terminate employment without giving notice," Moore said.

Almanza said in the four years he worked at the Santa Monica-based institute he had received multiple raises, two promotions and several good performance reviews.

He said shortly after being hired, his supervisor was let go and Almanza assumed many extra duties to pick up the slack.

"I was never even reprimanded," he said.

But Andersen painted another picture of Almanza's work history.

She said while he had been a good employee, Almanza

See FIRED, page 3

Coloring the wheel



Dana Wyatt/Special to the Daily Press

After six years and 1.9 million riders, Pacific Park's Ferris wheel receives a "spruce up for spring." The 10-week project will include a four-person crew working 1,280 hours; 3,500 sheets of sandpaper and 260 gallons of white, two-part epoxy paint that must be applied by hand. Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier opened on May 25, 1996, with the Pacific Wheel as its anchor attraction.

Judge says stenographer is as good as her word

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER

Daily Press Staff Writer

The written word is only as good as the one spoken, a judge ruled this week.

Stenographer Vikki Grounds sued Paula Sue Desley in Santa Monica Small Claims Court this week after Desley refused to pay her for transcribing 10 micro-cassette tapes from a recorder hidden in a purse.

The conversations needed to be

written and notarized for a separate court case in which Desley was attempting to get a restraining order against an ex-boyfriend who allegedly threatened her.

Desley secretly carried the tape recorder around with her until she had racked up enough evidence against her unsuspecting boyfriend. She took the tapes to Grounds, who agreed to do the transcribing for \$200.

See STENOGRAPHER, page 3

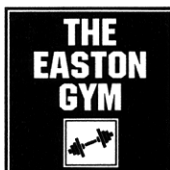
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Santa Monica's Daily Calendar

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Community Yoga Classes offered to students of all levels. \$6, Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 3:30 p.m. Saturday 2 p.m., Santa Monica Yoga, 1640 Ocean Park Blvd., (310) 396-4040.

Puppetolio! hosted by Santa Monica Puppet & Magic Center will be held today at 1:00 p.m. Shows are always followed by a demonstration, Q & A, and a tour of the Puppet Museum and workshop. The program is for all ages, 3 and up. All seats: \$6.50. The Center is located at 1255 2nd Street in Santa Monica, adjacent to the Third Street Promenade. Reservations/Information: (310) 656-0483 or www.puppetmagic.com.

Shiatsu Massage School of California is hosting Kung Fu classes for advanced students from 4:15 to 5:15 every Wednesday. Suggested donation per class is \$4.00. Free class for first-time visitors. Instructed by: Master Luu Truong. 2309 Main St., (310) 396-4877.

Lamaze Childbirth - Lamaze natural childbirth classes will be offered at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center on Wednesdays, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Classroom B at the medical center, 1250 16th St. in Santa Monica. \$135 Call (310) 319-4947 for reservations.

Want to be on the A-List?
Send your calendar items to:

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Today at the Movies!

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♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ A jolting dream might color your day more than you realize. Grab an opportunity without hesitating. Others easily respond to your thoughts and ideas. Let others contribute more to your day-to-day life. Curb your tendency to act. Tonight: First sort through invitations, then decide.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★ You might literally need to hold the fort down while others scatter their energy left and right. Don't hold it against someone that he or she has a very bad case of spring fever. Your graciousness will ultimately be returned. Relax with work. Tonight: Do something just for you. Indulge a little.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Where others toss obstacles in the path of amour, you head right on out and lasso in another. Allow your imagination and desire to speak. Consider calling it an early day at work. Better activities lie ahead. Respond to a child or loved one. Tonight: Play as if there is no tomorrow.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Your perspective could change if you place yourself in another's shoes, but be careful what you become involved in. Another's great suggestion could become your disaster. Claim responsibility for what happens. Tonight: Close to home.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Don't hesitate to speak of feelings. Unexpected developments surround a partnership. You could choose to maximize a mix-up in order to clear the air on a deeper level. Meetings prove to be a social occasion on the highest level. Tonight: Out and about.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ A purchase appears on the horizon, and, actually, you could be quite delighted by it. You usually prove to be thrifty, but on this occasion, you might not be. Think about a boss (could be a parent) and what might please him or her. Go out of your way for this person. Tonight: Your treat.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Your personality could challenge another. Learn how to make this person more at ease so you can relate with greater flow. Understand how this person might feel. Your allure draws many; you're like a firefly. Tonight: What is it that you want?

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★ Take your time with a group or a couple of people who might be frustrating you. In fact, you might want to use time to chill them out. Your instincts lead you, both financially and emotionally. Don't deny your sixth sense. Tonight: A little mystery goes a long way.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Follow what is going on in meetings. You could find that someone wants to do something special for you, be it professional or emotional. Carefully discuss your objectives with the full assumption of realizing them. Tonight: Where the gang is.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★ You need to take responsibility at work. Consider alternatives to another's response. You might want to deal with an associate as if he or she could be fragile or touchy. Schedule a check-up or another needed appointment soon. Tonight: In the limelight.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Your ability to detach allows you to care about another on a deeper, more spiritual level. Others admire your trait of caring in a way that contains understanding and insight. Do your research and seek out information on your own. Tonight: Take a midweek break.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ One-on-one relating gives you a great deal of insight and understanding. Think in terms of gains and new information, even if you're dealing with an old source or established partnership. Your creativity draws another to you. Tonight: Snuggle in.

QUOTE of the DAY

“To generalize is to be an idiot.”

— William Blake (1757-1827)

Santa Monica Daily Press

Published Monday through Saturday
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LOCAL



Despite good reviews, employee gets the ax

FIRE, from page 1

had yelled at his new supervisor with his co-workers present. After he was told to install computer equipment in one of the computer labs, his supervisor had problems with the work. When she confronted him about it, Andersen said he yelled at his boss and told her he didn't respect her.

The next day, Andersen said Almanza didn't show up to work. Two days later, the dean suspended Almanza from work without pay while the yelling incident was investigated. When the claims were substantiated by several other employees,

"Even if everything was going fine, they are well within their rights to terminate employment without giving notice."

— MICHAEL MOORE
Judge Pro Tem

Andersen said Almanza was fired for insubordination.

When Almanza tried to file a claim for

workers compensation, The Art Institute fought him. The company has to partially pay for any unemployment money

Almanza would receive.

"If a worker is fired for unacceptable behavior we pursue the appeals process," Andersen said.

Although Almanza has won twice in court to receive the compensation, the institute continues to appeal the decisions. Almanza has not been able to find a new computer technician job, and is working for minimum wage to pay his bills.

Judge Moore said he couldn't help him get his job back or award him any money.

"You have not shown any legal argument under the law proving any action the court can take," Moore said.

California power officials say blackouts unlikely

BY JENNIFER COLEMAN
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Californians can expect a blackout-free summer, but should plan to continue their energy conservation efforts, managers of the state's

power grid said Tuesday.

The state's power outlook is a long way from last year's, when the grid officials called 30 Stage 3 emergencies and ordered seven outages, said Jim Detmers, vice president of operations at the California Independent System Operator. A Stage 3

emergency means grid operators have less than 1.5 percent operating reserve and are close to ordering blackouts.

"Last year at this time, we were suffering from an extreme shortage of resources throughout California," he said.

The state has added 4,300 megawatts of new generation since January 2001, said officials with the ISO, which manages most of the state's power grid.

One megawatt is approximately enough energy for 750 homes.

Still, 62 power plants have been canceled or deferred in recent months as some energy companies' stocks and credit ratings sank following energy giant Enron's bankruptcy. That could lead to tighter energy supplies in the future, Detmers said.

"We are very concerned about that because of the trend that it indicates," he said. The state needs an additional 1,500 megawatts to keep up with its growth each year.

The ISO expects that energy from hydroelectric sources, about 10,000 megawatts, will be near normal this sum-

mer, Detmers said. A lack of water in the Northwest significantly impaired last year's hydroelectric supplies.

And energy from alternative and renewable facilities, known as "qualifying facilities," are expected to be at above-normal levels, he said.

Last year, many of those suppliers stopped operating after the state's three major utilities stopped paying them. The loss of that energy contributed to two days of statewide rolling blackouts in March.

The blackouts prompted the state to implement an extensive conservation campaign, which will run again this year. State regulators ordered a large rate increase — 19 percent on average — last spring, further inspiring Californians to cut their power use.

The result, the California Energy Commission reported, was that hundreds of thousands of Californians took advantage of dozens of rebate programs for everything from insulation to light bulbs as they tried to cut their energy use and tame utility bills.

Judge orders woman to pay stenographer \$150

STENOGRAPHER, from page 1

However, Grounds found several pieces of the conversation inaudible, and could not transcribe it.

"The recorder was hidden in her purse and people would walk in and out of rooms," Grounds said. "Sometimes car alarms and sirens were going off in the background. It was really tough to catch everything."

Grounds said she also was dismayed at how she perceived Desley instigating her boyfriend.

"I was shocked listening to the tape because she was always doing things to make him angry and inciting him," she said.

After Grounds finished the job, she met with Desley to discuss the transcripts and make minor corrections.

"Many of the things she says he said I didn't hear at all," Grounds said. "I'm not going to put something down that I didn't hear."

Desley refused to pay Grounds because

the transcripts were incomplete. Desley testified that another stenographer picked up the conversations and was able to provide a complete transcript, Desley said.

Desley offered to play the tapes for the court, to prove the conversations were audible, but Judge Pro Tem Michael B. Moore declined.

"You can hear the conversations clearly where she says it's intelligible," Desley said.

Moore ruled in Grounds' favor because Desley did not give the stenographer enough of a chance to correct her work. He ordered Desley to pay \$150 to Grounds, noting that even \$200 is a small amount for how much work Desley wanted done.

"(Grounds) is a professional and she has been doing this job for a while, so I have to believe these tapes were difficult to understand," he said. "She already had cut you a good deal and I do believe she did a lot of work."

Desley said she will appeal Moore's decision.

The Q Line

Last week, the city won its bid to close the 50-year-old Boathouse restaurant on the Santa Monica Pier to make way for Bubba Gump Shrimp, a movie-themed chain restaurant. Some suggest that the Boathouse needed to be replaced with something that would liven up the pier. However, others think the move is another example of Santa Monica selling out to the highest bidder, drawing it closer to a "chain gang" town.

This week, Q-line wants to know, **"If you had to choose from any merchant in the land to occupy the pier, whom would it be and why?"**

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OPINION LETTERS

Parents refuse responsibility

Editor:

Without doubt, as the mother of "Lala" Deanna Maran, the 15-year-old Samohi teen attacked and murdered Nov. 17 of last year, again find myself troubled to read disturbing evidence that the principals involved, adults and juveniles alike, are missing, still, personal acknowledgment of responsibility. Responsibility, guilt and blame for events leading to my most horrible night, began long ago within the private structure, education and confines of the Bernstein-Sarkissian homes.

It is ironic that a professional improver of sight, ophthalmologist Dr. Matthew Bernstein, (re: Los Angeles Times, California section, April 23,) was blindly unaware of 15 years of his own daughter's troubled, guideless development. Maybe he, and the mother Angel(ique) Bernstein, should research a very "prestigious," graduate school of parenting to bring light to his daughter's eyes and mind, to find her way "out of the (deep dark) woods." It seems being charged with a felony criminal terrorist threat through the Internet two months ago that this child needs more than improved sight!

As for attorney Harland W. Braun's comment concerning if the incident had occurred in South Central L.A. — poor Mr. Braun wouldn't have been retained as counsel and the suspect(s) would be in a juvenile detention center somewhere without possibly money for bail, or the luxury of retaining counsel such as his.

Harriet Maran
Santa Monica

Police presence needed from above

Editor:

In re: a letter to the editor written by Santa Monica citizen Hank Rosenfeld ("Operation Something," Santa Monica Daily Press, Monday, April 15, 2002, Volume 1, Issue 132, page 4). I direct this to Mr. Rosenfeld:

Have you ever been the victim of a crime and said, "Where the hell were the police." Maybe you don't live in the Pico neighborhood and by the tone of your scornful "I'm under siege by the police" tone, I assume you don't. Well, night after night the good citizens of the Pico neighborhood don't have time to concern themselves about your neighborhood's stolen potted plants because they are too busy wondering if the next exchange of gunfire by rival gangs will result in them or their children not waking up in the morning. So with Mr. Rosenfeld's permission, instead of the SMPD helicopter patrolling the Pico neighborhood, we will ask that the brave police officers working in HIS neighborhood take its place. Then maybe he will show his understanding of the SMPD's use of a modern effective tool to apprehend and prevent criminals from preying on innocent people, by not calling it "Operation Police State."

Unselfishly supportive of the police,

D. Leone
Santa Monica

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.

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LOCAL



Juvenile criminals stem from low self-esteem

DELINQUENTS, from page 1

many parents let the kids have a lot more freedom, because they want to be the good guy."

For many teenagers who end up in the "system," they started their downward spiral by failing classes and ditching school. Then they turn to drugs, which inevitably leads to criminal charges that land them face to face with judges like Davis.

"Maybe a teacher told them, 'there's no way you're going to pass this class, your going to fail,'" Davis said. "And I think maybe the kids internalize that and begin to see themselves as failures."

Most bench officers who work in the court will oversee the kids' grades and attendance in school.

"If you look at the prisons, most criminals, the ones that commit heavy duty crimes, they started out by ditching school," Davis said. "It was way back then that they became failures in school."

Those messages can breed low self-esteem which leads many kids to stealing, drugs and alcohol or joining gangs.

The spiral can end in tragedy like the case of Deanna Maran, a Santa Monica High School sophomore who was killed at a party last November in Westwood after her altercation with another 15-year-old got out of hand.

The 15-year-old's half sister, Katrina Sarkissian, 17, reportedly stabbed Maran while dozens of onlookers watched the girls fight. According to teenagers at the party, the 15-year-old, Sarkissian and a Santa Monica High School senior pinned Maran down, beat her and then stabbed her. The incident started after Maran told the 15-year-old to stop destroying property at the house.

Sarkissian died the next day while in police custody from an overdose. Her sister was charged with battery, a misdemeanor. She'll likely walk away from the charge this week when she faces a juvenile judge in Inglewood.

What's perplexing to Maran's mother, Harriet Maran, is how parents can raise such violent individuals. The girls involved in the murder are from upscale Brentwood families and attended multiple private schools. (See letter to editor, page 4.)

Harriet Maran hasn't heard from the parents of the girls accused of playing a role in her daughter's murder, or the parents of the 15-year-old boy who hosted the party.

Court intervention takes place of parental role

The teenagers who appear in Davis' court for traffic and misdemeanor charges range from poor to affluent families. Although she expects parents to be involved, more often than not, she says they don't.

And if the parents won't step in and intervene in the child's life, inevitably the court will.

"Kids don't have consequences; they have to be accountable for their actions and I think that's where we come in," Davis said. "A lot of times 16 or 17 year olds, when you try and make them accountable from a court like this, where we're not holding detention in a youth authority over their head," Davis explains, "they're like 'whatever.'"

One place Davis sends troubled

teenagers is "A-SAP," a parent-teen counseling program at Santa Monica High School.

"Society usually considers growing up in a family of privilege, a privilege," said Susie Spain, an addiction specialist who works at A-SAP. "Self esteem has nothing to do with whether you're rich or poor."

"If you look at the prisons, most criminals, the ones that commit heavy duty crimes, they started out by ditching school."

— PAM DAVIS
Santa Monica juvenile judge

The Informal Juvenile Court, developed in 1985, acts as a point of early intervention and focuses on rehabilitation. It's part of what Davis calls a "tag team approach," where law enforcement, courts, parents and schools work together for the benefit of the kids.

Consequences range from community service, AA meetings and parent-teen counseling to the LA County Sheriff's Vital Intervention Directional Alternatives program, which is the most stringent of programs assigned.

It's designed to breakdown teens' negative behavior and rebuild them into socially acceptable citizens.

It's an intense boot-camp training for seven consecutive Saturdays. But there is a pay-off — the last part of the program involves field trips to museums, hikes and admission to Lakers games.

"If you ask most kids who complete (the program) they say what they liked the most was the discipline, the working out and the tough rules," Davis said.

Sgt. Mike Griffin, the program's supervisor, said most teens in the program come from parents who don't participate in their child's life.

"In fact, most of the time the parents would have been (in the program) when they were little, Griffin said, "but the program wasn't in place. We're hoping they're getting as much out of the program as the kids are and sometimes more."

The police in Culver City have a similar program, said Lt. Steve Williams.

"We show kids that there are people out there who care about them," he said. "Kids respond to listening to what they have to say."

"More common than not the kids in our program come from single families ... and yes, some do resent the fact that parents aren't around," he added.

Statistics have shown that if a family works together, the child gets cleaned up a lot quicker.

"We believe that an addiction problem in a child is a family problem, not a child problem," A-SAP's Spain said. "Like in the movie 'Traffic,' it's about the family, it's not just about the girl."



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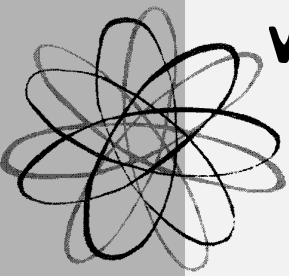
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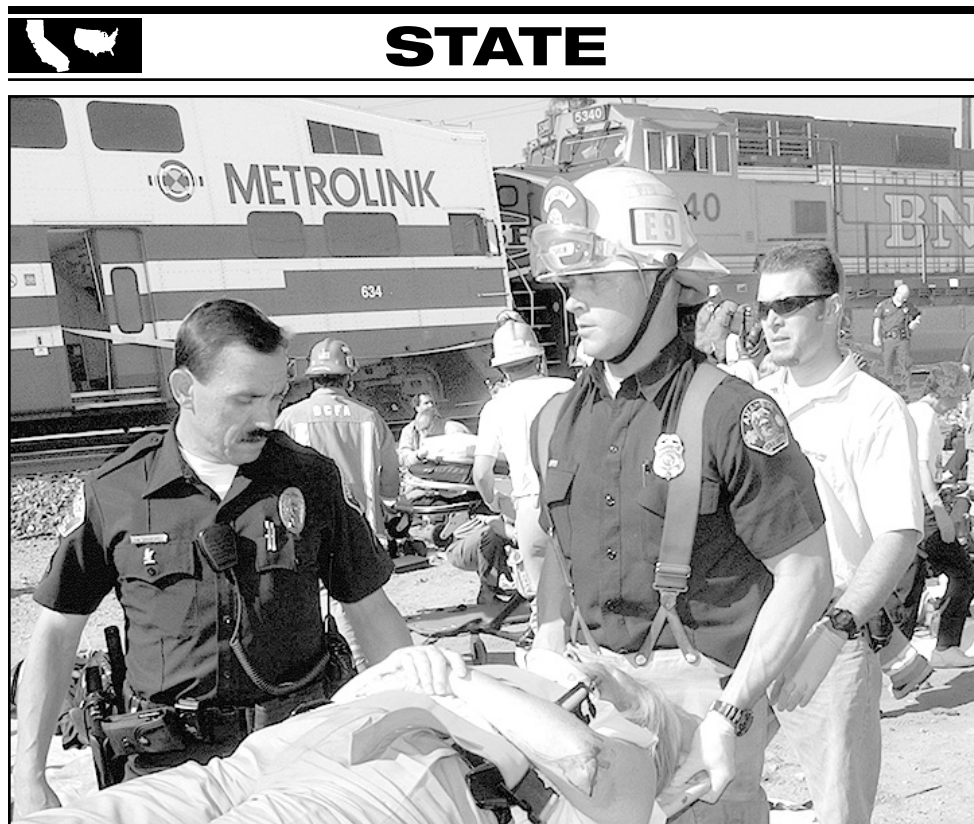
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John Hayes/Associated Press
A rescue worker transports a victim to a waiting ambulance after a collision between a commuter train and a freight train on Tuesday in Placentia, Calif. The northbound freight train hit the southbound Metrolink train at 8:10 a.m. south of Los Angeles, buckling and derailing two cars packed with passengers, authorities and witnesses said.

Trains collide in Placentia

BY EUGENE TONG
Associated Press Writer

PLACENTIA — Jackie Bisesi, pumping gas outside a Circle K, first heard a long horn blast.

She turned to see a blue and white Metrolink train stopped in the intersection of Richfield Road. A freight train was rumbling right toward it.

"It's going to hit!" She shouted. "It's going to hit!"

Inside the lead car of the crowded commuter train, Jim Fleming wondered why they weren't moving. Just then, an engineer burst through a door shouting "Everybody get down! Get down!"

Fleming feared a terrorist had planted a bomb.

Brian Scharr, pastor at Yorba Linda Friends Church, was talking to his wife on the cell phone while waiting in his car for the trains to pass.

Those two trains, he told her, look like they might hit each other.

"I hope those guys are on separate tracks," Scharr told her.

They weren't. And at 8:10 Tuesday morning, a red and yellow Burlington Northern Santa Fe engine, pulling a line of rail cars a mile long, slammed into a passenger train carrying rush-hour commuters from Riverside to Santa Juan Capistrano. The Metrolink engine was in the rear, so the passenger cars took the worst of the blow.

To Scharr, the collision was "deafening, like a whole bunch of plates crashing." To Bisesi, across the street, the impact "sounded like a bomb and felt like an earthquake." Inside, the crash was wrenching and violent, driving the Metrolink train back at least 100 feet.

Fleming was tossed on top of an 80-year-old man sitting across from him. Picking himself up, he saw "bodies everywhere."

Kim Bailey was thrown forward on her knees, her face pressed into a seat. All she saw was darkness. Other passengers smashed ribs into tables or landed face-first in the aisle. Bones cracked and necks twisted. Smoke filled the front car.

A passenger in an upper compartment of the double decker train was thrown into the wall, leaving him bruised and bloody.

"The ground opened up right next to me," he told a television reporter later. "...There were some people who were just covered in blood."

Mark Brown, running from his automobile, saw passengers clambering out the windows of the buckled cars. He forced his way into one of the cars and froze.

"It was utter chaos inside," he said. "When you walked in and saw that carnage, you had to stop and catch your breath."

Stunned passengers clutched their heads. Others didn't move. Some punched 911 on their cell phones.

Scharr, just outside the train, saw dazed passengers trying to gather their briefcases, lunches and cell phones. He told them to forget their stuff, just get out.

He helped a pregnant woman from the train, then knelt with her on the hard-packed earth and prayed.

Five minutes after the crash, the scene inside the train was strangely calm, said paramedic Jim Shook, one of the first to enter the Metrolink wreckage.

Firefighters and paramedics yelled for the mobile passengers to get outside. Quickly surveying the injuries, they directed healthy passengers and civilian rescuers to apply pressure to wounds or help comfort or calm those who needed it.

The injured were carried out on yellow backboards. Firefighters arranged the injured on tarps in the dirt patch that separates the railroad tracks from Orangethorpe Avenue. Colored tags were attached to wrists, grading the injuries from critical to minor, before the most seriously injured were sent by ambulance or bus to area hospitals.

By 11:30, only reporters, investigators and the curious remained. But the scene was far from quiet.

The hazard lights still glowed red at the Richfield Road crossing and the railroad warning bell, which had rung constantly since 8:10 a.m., continued to clang.

NATIONAL



Man arrested for sex assaults; DNA links him to other attacks

BY SARAH COOKE
Associated Press Writer

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — An Air Force airman was arrested Tuesday in a string of six sexual assaults in this college town last summer and has also come under suspicion in a slaying and a series of rapes in Philadelphia, police said.

Senior Airman Troy Graves, 29, was jailed on \$1 million bail after turning himself in. He listed a Fort Collins address, but has been stationed since 2000 about 40 miles away at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyo., where he did maintenance work on intercontinental ballistic missiles, the Air Force said.

Graves was held for investigation of sexual assault and burglary pending a court hearing Friday. He has not been formally charged and public defender Kathryn Hay declined to comment.

Police refused to say how they connected Graves to the crimes and declined comment on broadcast reports that authorities received anonymous letters detailing the crimes and traced them back to Graves. Larimer County Judge Edward Stirman issued a gag order in the case.

A month after Graves arrived at the Wyoming base he was reprimanded after

being accused of illegally entering the dormitory room of a female airman, Air Force Capt. Stacy Vaughn said.

In the actual attacks, an intruder entered apartments through unlocked doors or windows in the early morning, blindfolded his victims and forced them to perform a sex act. All six assaults involved women in their 20s living in apartments near the Colorado State University campus.

Last year, Fort Collins police said DNA evidence connected the same man to all six attacks.

In Philadelphia, the Center City Rapist struck in the well-to-do Rittenhouse Square neighborhood from 1997 to 1999. Police connected six Philadelphia crimes — including the strangling of University of Pennsylvania student Shannon Schieber — through DNA but were never able to identify a suspect.

Worried that the five-year statute of limitations on rape was about to run out, Philadelphia's district attorney filed charges in December against a suspect who was identified only by his DNA.

On Tuesday, Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham said that she was waiting for a DNA analysis from Colorado authorities.

'Sopranos' actor pleads guilty to petty larceny in muggings

BY SAMUEL MAULL
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — Robert Iler, who plays the rebellious, pot-smoking son of a mob boss on HBO's "The Sopranos," pleaded guilty Tuesday to mugging two youths and stealing \$40.

Iler, 17, admitted to misdemeanor petty larceny in return for a sentence of three years' probation. Iler was granted youthful offender status, and his record will be sealed.

A co-defendant, Alban Selimaj, 17, entered the same plea.

The two were originally charged with

second-degree robbery for the incident last July 4. A conviction on that charge carried a penalty of up to 15 years in prison.

Iler told the judge he and Selimaj spotted two youths walking toward them and decided to "hassle" the pair. Iler was arrested a few blocks away.

Iler's lawyer, Robert Morvillo, said the plea deals were "fair and just."

After the plea, Iler's manager, Jeff Mitchell, read a statement in which the actor apologized "for all the grief and trouble everybody went through."

Iler portrays the troubled Anthony "A.J." Soprano Jr. on the HBO television hit about gangland life, "The Sopranos."

Wal-Mart testing out used-car businesses in Houston area

BY PEGGY HARRIS
Associated Press Writer

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The world's largest retailer is taking a test drive in the used-car business.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is planning to lease property adjacent to five of its stores in the Houston area to a Connecticut-based car sales company for six months, Wal-Mart spokesman Jay Allen said Tuesday.

Allen said Wal-Mart and Asbury Automotive Inc. will then evaluate the program and decide where to go from there. Wal-Mart's only involvement will be to lease the property and help Asbury Automotive develop the program, he said.

By early May, Houston shoppers could be able to bank, get their hair done, buy

groceries, new clothes and a car, gas up and go — all from the same location.

The Bentonville-based Wal-Mart and Asbury Automotive will announce later which five Wal-Mart locations in Texas will be the first to open the Price 1 Auto Stores. The store name refers to the "no haggle" set price for each vehicle, Allen said.

Each lot will have an assortment of 60 to 100 foreign and domestic cars, pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles. Allen would not say why Wal-Mart chose the Houston market for the new venture.

Advertising would be minimal and consist of posters in area stores, Allen said. "The whole idea is with Wal-Mart's traffic, you don't need to do much advertising," he said.

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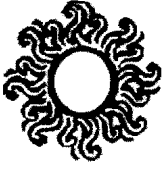
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SPORTS

Williamson wins NBA's Sixth Man Award

BY LARRY LAGE
AP Sports Writer

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. — Corliss Williamson went from not coming off the bench at all, to winning the NBA's Sixth Man Award.

"I felt pretty bad not playing the first two games, but things definitely turned around," the Detroit Pistons' rugged forward said Tuesday.

Williamson averaged 13.6 points and 4.2 rebounds in just 21.8 minutes a game this season, leading the league's highest-scoring bench to 50 wins and the Pistons' first Central Division championship since 1990.

"I think without a doubt, from Day 1, this guy deserved this award," team president Joe Dumars said Tuesday. "Corliss was a huge part of what we accomplished this year. He's been as professional as you can get."

Especially when coach Rick Carlisle didn't find a place for him in the rotation when the season began.

"I'm very happy for Corliss," Carlisle said. "He showed great wherewithal to go through my two-game banishment earlier in the year."

Williamson received 56 of 125 votes from a panel of sports writers and broadcasters. Sacramento's Bobby Jackson was second with 30, followed by Quentin Richardson of the Los Angeles Clippers with 20.

Williamson, who signed a six-year contract worth \$32.5 million last summer, has found a home with the Pistons after being traded twice in a matter of months.

After five seasons in Sacramento, which drafted him with the 13th pick in 1995, Williamson was traded to Toronto before the 2000-01 season, then dealt to Detroit during the season.

Williamson scored 14 points and grabbed six rebounds Sunday against Toronto in Game 1 of the opening-round series. If Williamson is motivated to show

the Raptors what they're missing, he's keeping that to himself.

"I'm not going to tell you about that now," he said. "Maybe when the series is over."

Williamson never dreamed about winning the NBA's Sixth Man Award because he was always a star player.

He was voted the 1992 Gatorade National Player of the Year following his senior season at Russellville (Ark.) High School, and was named the Most Outstanding Player of the 1994 Final Four after leading Arkansas to the NCAA title as the player known as "Big Nasty."

But just because he hasn't aimed for the award first given to Philadelphia's Bobby Jones in 1983, it doesn't mean he's not proud of being the best off the bench.

"It's not a bad thing at all," he said. "I always wanted to be the best at whatever I do. ... I'm not one to get caught up whether I'm starting or not. I just want to play."

Being a reserve has been an adjustment for Williamson, because he admits that he's not patient — on or off the court.

"I don't like to be caught up in traffic," he said. "And I don't like to wait on my wife when she's getting ready."

Michelle Williamson, his wife of 18 months, can attest to that.

"If I'm taking too long getting ready, he'll let me know it," she said with a smile. "He'll stand behind me jingling his keys, or he'll just pace back and forth."

Dumars said Williamson gives hope to those who bemoan me-first athletes.

"We hear so much about professional athletes that complain and have bad attitudes, and he could've complained and had a bad attitude, but never did," Dumars said. "He hung in there. For him to win this award speaks highly of him."

Williamson dedicated his award to his mother's mom, Flora Mitchell, and his father's dad, Lewis Williamson. They both passed away within the past year.



National Basketball Association playoff schedule

By The Associated Press

FIRST ROUND — Best-of-5
(Eastern standard time)

Saturday, April 20

Indiana 89, New Jersey 83
Sacramento 89, Utah 86
Sacramento leads series 1-0
San Antonio 110, Seattle 89
Charlotte 80, Orlando 79 Sunday, April 21
Boston 92, Philadelphia 82
Boston leads series 1-0
Dallas 101, Minnesota 94
Dallas leads series 1-0
L.A. Lakers 95, Portland 87
L.A. Lakers lead series 1-0
Detroit 85, Toronto 63
Detroit leads series 1-0

Monday, April 22

New Jersey 95, Indiana 79, series tied 1-1
Seattle 98, San Antonio 90, series tied 1-1

Tuesday, April 23

Orlando 111, Charlotte 103, OT
series tied 1-1.
Utah at Sacramento, 10:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 24

Toronto at Detroit, 7 p.m.
Minnesota at Dallas, 9:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 25

Philadelphia at Boston, 8 p.m.
Portland at L.A. Lakers, 10:30 p.m.

Friday, April 26

New Jersey at Indiana, 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 27

Charlotte at Orlando, 12:30 p.m.
Sacramento at Utah, 3 p.m.
San Antonio at Seattle, 5:30 p.m.
Detroit at Toronto, 8:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 28

Boston at Philadelphia, 12:30 p.m.
Dallas at Minnesota, 3 p.m.
L.A. Lakers at Portland, 5:30 p.m.

Monday, April 29

Detroit at Toronto, TBA, if necessary
Sacramento at Utah, TBA, if necessary

Tuesday, April 30

Charlotte at Orlando, TBA
New Jersey at Indiana, TBA
Dallas at Minnesota, TBA, if necessary

Wednesday, May 1

Boston at Philadelphia, TBA, if necessary
San Antonio at Seattle, TBA
L.A. Lakers at Portland, TBA, if necessary

Thursday, May 2

Indiana at New Jersey, TBA, if necessary
Toronto at Detroit, TBA, if necessary
Minnesota at Dallas, TBA, if necessary
Utah at Sacramento, TBA, if necessary

Friday, May 3

Philadelphia at Boston, TBA, if necessary
Orlando at Charlotte, TBA, if necessary
Seattle at San Antonio, TBA, if necessary
Portland at L.A. Lakers, TBA, if necessary

INTERNATIONAL



Bin Laden field commander talks and American interrogators listen

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Osama bin Laden's top field commander is talking.

Trouble is, his American interrogators don't know whether to believe him.

Abu Zubaydah already has given information that led to last week's alert to financial institutions in the northeastern United States, U.S. officials say. He has also claimed that al-Qaida knows how to build a "dirty bomb" designed to spread radioactivity over a wide area.

Neither piece of information surprised American authorities. U.S. intelligence already had obtained similar nonspecific threats to banks, and bin Laden's quest for weapons of mass destruction is well-known.

But because the information came from Abu Zubaydah, the interrogators took note. Officials describe the Saudi-born Palestinian as the connection between bin Laden and many of al-Qaida's operational cells.

A better source may be his notebook, found when he was captured in a joint Pakistani-U.S. raid March 28 in Faisalabad, Pakistan. A defense official said it contains information that could indicate more terrorist attacks are in the works, but its import isn't fully clear.

Context is crucial, the official

said. "Are these his ideas, his plans, his musings?"

Abu Zubaydah should have no idea that his words led to last week's alert. He is recovering in an undisclosed location from gunshot wounds received during his capture, and standard interrogation technique is to keep subjects uninformed, allowing questioners to tell them anything they want about events in the outside world.

Officials say the terrorist leader, who speaks English, has plenty of reasons to lie. They are well aware he could be manipulating them to cause panic.

Bush administration spokesman Ari Fleischer, asked if Abu Zubaydah's claims are to be believed, said Tuesday, "Those are judgments that intelligence experts make based on not only what he says, but on other pieces of information that will corroborate information."

The CIA, FBI and military can put his claims to other al-Qaida prisoners, check them against existing intelligence or subtly feed them back to Abu Zubaydah at some later time to see how he responds.

But officials acknowledge he's smart and experienced enough to know many of the mind games that comprise a modern interrogation.

Pakistani officials have said that Abu Zubaydah has denied involvement in the Sept. 11 attacks.

Defense and intelligence officials said al-Qaida terrorist training

manuals uncovered in Afghanistan advise operatives to say nothing to interrogators — or else to spread disinformation.

U.S. techniques to elicit information from prisoners include gaining the subject's trust, flattering him, disorienting him with a battery of questions and playing on his fears and desires, experts said. CIA officials declined to discuss interrogative techniques but said the agency does not condone torture.

In 1988, CIA operative Dick Stolz told the Senate that the agency counted the following techniques as coercive but falling short of the definition of torture: forcing the subject to stand at attention or sit on an uncomfortable stool for long periods of time, depriving him of sleep and sound, enforcing isolation and causing climate changes.

Also known as Zayn al-Abidin Muhammad Husayn, Abu Zubaydah, 31, ran the Afghan camp where many of the Sept. 11 hijackers trained, and is alleged to have overseen several other al-Qaida terrorist operations, including the plot to blow up Los Angeles International Airport in late 1999, U.S. officials say.

FBI, CIA and military officials are taking part in the interrogations of al-Qaida prisoners, officials have said. At least one other key al-Qaida figure — Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, a training camp commander who is probably a step below Abu Zubaydah in the net-

Casualty of war



Elizabeth Dalziel/Associated Press

A house that had been partially left standing where painted pictures of Palestinian fighters stood is demolished after being deemed unsafe in the West Bank refugee camp of Jenin on Tuesday. Palestinians and Arab leaders have accused Israel of a massacre of civilians in the camp, but Israel says the deaths and destruction resulted from gun battles between its soldiers and Palestinian gunmen.

work's hierarchy — has given information to interrogators that has led to warnings concerning possible

plots to bomb the U.S. Embassy in Yemen and the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet headquarters in Bahrain.

Nearly 100 arrests in security raids at D.C.-area airports

BY TED BRIDIS
Associated Press Writer

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Authorities arrested close to 100 workers Tuesday at airports serving the nation's capital on charges they lied to obtain security badges that gave them broad access to sensitive areas.

Those arrested included construction workers, janitors, food workers and at least two baggage screeners.

"These individuals are charged with gaining access to secure areas of our airports by lying on security applications, using false or fictitious Social Security numbers or committing various immigration frauds," said Attorney General John Ashcroft.

The arrests were part of a continuing crackdown to increase security at airports across the nation following the Sept. 11 attacks. U.S. Attorney Paul McNulty described raids as an "anti-terrorism initiative" but said

authorities have "no evidence at this point of any connection of these individuals to any terrorist organizations."

Federal officials said that by day's end, or perhaps Wednesday, they expected to have arrested at least 138 employees in a sweep called "Fly Trap" at Washington Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

At least one employee arrested already had been deported from the United States but illegally returned and obtained an airport job, authorities said. They said those arrested included at least one baggage screener each at Reagan and Dulles airports.

Ten other arrests — also on charges of immigration violations and falsified employment applications — occurred at Baltimore-Washington International Airport. Seven people there had failed to disclose prior felony convictions, prosecutors said.

Reagan National airport is closest to the Pentagon,

struck Sept. 11 by American Airlines Flight 77, which took off from Dulles with five hijackers aboard. That crash killed 189 people on the plane and inside the military headquarters building in Washington's Virginia suburbs.

Ashcroft said the arrests, which followed sealed indictments issued last week by a federal grand jury, "should be a wake-up call for every airport in America." People arrested face up to five years in prison and fines up to \$250,000, and immigrants who were caught without proper documentation could be deported.

McNulty also said authorities learned during the preceding weeks that some of those arrested Tuesday improperly had access to sensitive airport areas. Authorities did not monitor or restrict their movements in any way for fear of undermining the investigation, he said.

Although the arrests targeted mostly construction workers, janitors and food workers, who normally don't go near airplanes, Justice officials defended the arrests as necessary.

Fed up with seedy image, Tijuana sets out to gain respect

BY JULIE WATSON
Associated Press Writer

TIJUANA, Mexico — In many ways, Tijuana is a public relations nightmare: Its name is associated with Mexico's deadliest drug cartel, and its more popular tourist attractions are its cheap booze and prostitutes.

Then there's police corruption. And an unflattering pop song. Not to mention the unfortunate matter of Tijuana's diabolical area code.

Now Tijuana is taking things into its own hands. It has formed a "Comite de Imagen" — an Image Committee of city officials, business owners and community

leaders — to change the world's view of Mexico's most notorious border city.

Step one: share the pain. City officials are looking into a sister-city partnership with a fellow sufferer — Medellin, the Colombian city whose name is also often linked to the words "drug cartel." City officials think that by teaming up, the two can help each other improve their reputations.

"The world has stigmatized us, although this has nothing to do with reality," Medellin city administrator Jorge Velez said during a recent visit to Tijuana.

Tijuana would say the same. It would rather be known as the world's biggest producer of TV sets (up to 8 million a year) than for the prostitutes and 25-cent

tequila shots offered blocks from the U.S.-Mexico border crossing.

Bars, casinos and brothels filled downtown. Though gambling was outlawed in 1935, Tijuana's wild reputation has lived on.

Now the Image Committee is talking up big plans to clean up streets, revamp the gritty mariachi plaza, landscape unsightly areas, and build public housing to rid Tijuana of the thousands of shacks cascading down its dirt hills.

It wants world-class sculptures to adorn the city of 1.2 million, and an international marathon. The airport will feature giant posters of great Tijuana natives like boxer Erick "The Terrible" Morales, and of Rita Hayworth, who got her show business start

here dancing in her parents' nightclub.

The city also has asked officials to stop using the term "Tijuana cartel" when referring to the Arellano Felix drug gang. Although Tijuana-based, the gang's two leaders hadn't been seen here for years, and now one is dead and the other is under arrest.

But the PR disasters keep coming.

In September there was the embarrassment of being given a new area code, 666. Fearful of satanic connotations, the city protested and the code was changed to 664.

Tijuana is home to more than one-third of the country's assembly-for-export plants, or maquiladoras. Tijuana musicians invented Nortec, a music style popular the world over.

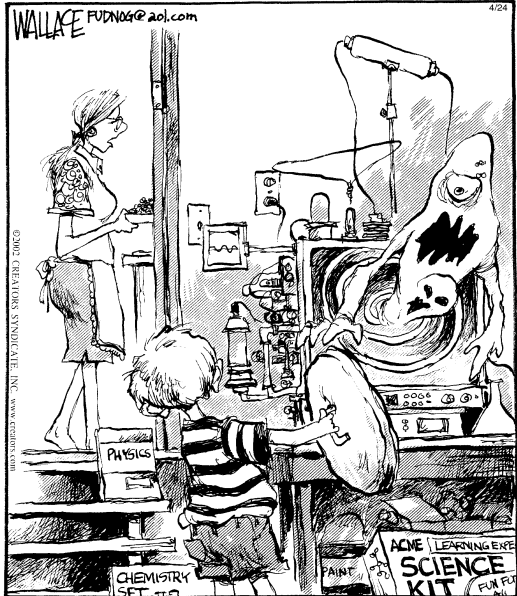


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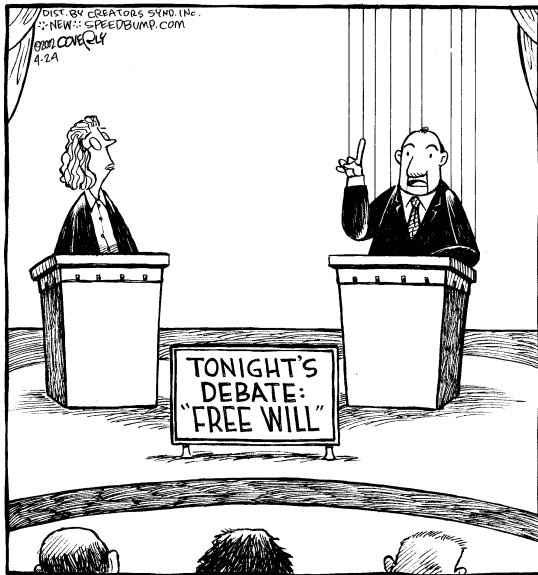
by TERRY & PATTY LABAN



Reality Check® By Dave Whammond



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CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Physics bit
- 5 Gabby one
- 11 Roof ornament
- 12 Llama's cousin
- 13 Door word
- 14 Joined the game
- 15 Carnival site
- 16 Seats for the flock
- 17 Like Thor and Odin
- 19 Sphere
- 22 Grating
- 24 Singer Tucker
- 26 Music's Paul
- 27 Tale teller
- 28 High-stepping aid
- 30 Boulder
- 31 Brood watcher
- 32 Stellar hunter
- 34 Linen source
- 35 Football's Marino
- 38 Depended
- 41 Fast food request
- 42 Exaggerate
- 43 Sign
- 44 Places faith in
- 45 Mexican coin

DOWN

- 1 State
- 2 Head for the hanger
- 3 Very light paper
- 4 Convened
- 5 Is wide open
- 6 Plain wrong
- 7 Relaxing resorts
- 8 Howl
- 9 Blackjack half
- 10 Wander (about)
- 16 Be a snoop
- 18 Lustrous gem
- 19 Feature of St. Basil's in Moscow

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Yesterday's answer

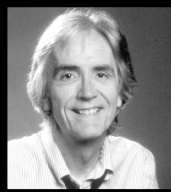
- 20 Actor O'Neal
- 21 Unadorned
- 22 Fool-hardy
- 23 Pot start
- 25 Choir member
- 29 Sword-making city
- 30 News hour
- 33 Dangerous gas
- 34 Some evergreens
- 36 Matures
- 37 Words to Nanette
- 38 Burgle
- 39 Time of preparation
- 40 Permit
- 41 Pinnacle

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4-24

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-3168! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Butt-baring figurines, a tradition in Spain

Last Christmas season, to demonstrate "fertilization" of the earth, the Copia art emporium in Napa, Calif., exhibited 35 squatting, butt-baring figurines by Spanish artist Antoni Miralda (including nuns, angels, Santa Claus and the pope). A Copia spokesperson said placing such defecating statuettes in Nativity scenes is a traditional activity in the Catalonia region of Spain.

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Announcements

COME SUPPORT Daybreak Designs, a grass-roots business venture for women in transition. Quality-handmade-items perfect for birthdays, Mother's Day, Graduations or just for yourself will be sold at Daybreak Shelter on May 3rd 1pm-5pm and May 4th 9:30am-3:00pm 1610 7th St. Corner of 7th and Colorado. Contact 310-450-0650.

PRO SE of Neighborhood Project need's volunteer's for events that honor our heros. (310)899-3888 pro.se@adelphia.net

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BACK PAGE

ODDS & ENDS

'Binturong' found curled up

By The Associated Press

ROCHESTER, Pa. — An exotic pet owner will lose his Southeast Asian, wolverine-like pet and could face a fine, officials said.

Brad Wilfong's pet was found snoozing on the front porch of a woman's home after the animal got loose Sunday. The 45-pound, razor-toothed animal, called a binturong, was found curled up and snoozing in front of a woman's front door Sunday. Animal control officials said when it woke up, it was ready for a fight.

Only zoos, circuses and educational reserves can own such an animal under the federal Dangerous Wild Animals Act of 1976.

"We were under the impression we were allowed to own it," Wilfong told officials. He said he bought the exotic animal from an animal preserve.

They'll get you one way or another

By The Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Dead or alive, you can still get a ticket from the Bloomington Police Department.

About two months after Jose Casas-Ruiz, 23, died in a single-car accident, he was ticketed for driving under the influence, having no valid license, improper lane usage and failure to wear a properly adjusted seat belt, said officer Verne Hughart, an accident reconstructionist.

A coroner's jury in March ruled Casas-Ruiz's death

was accidental but avoidable because he was legally drunk at the time of the Jan. 20 accident.

Although a dead person cannot be prosecuted, the police department requires that the tickets be written, said Sgt. Michael King, who heads Bloomington's traffic division.

"They are just held into evidence in case it ever goes into a civil trial. It's nothing intended to be mean or to write out tickets just because," Hughart said.

Duct tape is universal, even at the prom

By The Associated Press

SOLDIERS GROVE, Wis. — Although Shaelyn Benson and David Daniels didn't spend much money on their prom outfits, they still attracted plenty of attention.

The Wisconsin high school students crafted their Renaissance-style formals out of duct tape and say they only spent about \$20 each.

The outfits were a hit at the North Crawford High School prom and at a pre-prom dinner Saturday.

"Everyone wanted pictures," Benson said. "I think I was the most photographed person there."

The couple hopes to win a Stuck at the Prom contest sponsored by Duck Brand Duct Tape. First prize includes a \$2,500 scholarship for each winner, and another \$2,500.

Benson said she created her dress over an old red prom dress that she cut apart and used as backing so her outfit would have some flexibility and movement.

For detail, she cut out designs on the bodice in

maroon colored duct tape. She also sewed in a zipper so she could easily get in and out of the dress. For her flowers, she carried a long-stemmed rose, also made out of duct tape.

Daniels wore black with maroon trim.

"We spent about 20 hours on my costume," he said, admitting that his mother did much of the work.

Eldorado is history

By The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — They'll be no more Eldorados.

The last of a commemorative series of Cadillac Eldorados have rolled off a local General Motors Corp. assembly line, company officials said Monday.

The last Eldorado of the 1,596-car Collector Series 2002 line, which was built to mark the end of the Eldorado's production, was completed at the Lansing Craft Centre.

The 2002 collector series is available in Alpine White and Aztec Red, two of the Eldorado's original colors. The cars were limited to reflect the original 532 Eldorados, which were built in 1953.

The early Eldorados featured the tail fin, which was one of the most famous designs in American automobile history. GM said the fin was inspired by the Lockheed P-38 Lightning Aircraft.

The last Eldorado made at the Lansing plant will be donated to the Cadillac Museum. A private collector plans to purchase the second to last car.

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