

FREE

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Rodent infestation hits Promenade restaurants

Nearby city construction projects may have disturbed mouse habitat, owners say

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Five downtown restaurants have been closed by the health department in the last two weeks because they were infested with mice.

Restaurant owners, however, blamed the problem on nearby city construction projects, which they said have disturbed the rodents' habitat.

Los Angeles County Department of Health inspectors first found mice in Bravo Cucina, 1319 3rd St. Promenade, on April 17 during an unannounced visit.

They then checked next door at George's Bistro, 1321 3rd St. Promenade, on April 18 and Johnny Rockets, 1322 3rd St. Promenade, on April 19, and again found mice present.

"Because there are so many in a close proximity, we began conducting inspections at the surrounding restaurants," said Terrance Powell, a

health department official. "That's when we began to find the rodent problems."

Mice were also found at the Carousel Cafe, 1601 Ocean Front Walk, on April 17.

The restaurants were closed for a mandatory 48 hours while the owners addressed the problem. They were allowed to re-open only after they had been re-inspected.

On April 25, Johnny Rockets was closed again for mice infestation after a surprise visit from another health inspector. The restaurant remained closed Monday with a sign in the window saying the store was having its plumbing fixed.

On April 26, inspectors found mice in Yankee Doodles, 1410 3rd St. Promenade, and closed that restaurant as well.

Until the recent problems with mice, all Promenade restaurants had received "A" ratings by the health department during inspections of their facilities over the past four years.

"I've never seen anything like this," said George Rifold, owner of George's Bistro. "And I've been on the Promenade for 12 years."

"But it's only in the past few months that I've

See MICE, page 3

Suspended pro-union hotel worker re-instated

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

A hotel worker active in efforts to unionize her workplace got her job back last week after being suspended for disturbing guests while distributing fliers to co-workers.

The Doubletree Guest Suites Hotel, 1707 4th St., re-instated Elba Hernandez last Friday after suspending her indefinitely April 19 while the hotel investigated her distribution of fliers that complained of unfair workplace practices.

Hernandez's suspension sparked an uprising among local living wage activists and clergy members. On April 23, clergy and community activists staged a sit-in and a prayer session at the Doubletree's restaurant.

The following day, clergy members organized 100 people to call the hotel's manager, Francois Khaury, and urge him to re-instate Hernandez.

Then, bishops from four of the largest Protestant denominations in Los Angeles County and the Muslim Public Affairs Council wrote letters on April 25 to the hotel demanding Hernandez be allowed to return to work the next day.

"It is a milestone in the campaign, from our

perspective," said Rev. Alexia Salvatierra, a clergy organizer. "It is so very hard for workers to speak up."

"Hopefully what happened to Elba will make them stronger and give them more confidence."

One living wage activist said Doubletree management wants labor peace.

"Maybe they are starting to realize they can have that peace if they respect their worker's rights to unionize," said Abby Arnold.

However, hotel officials said the efforts by local clergy were not the reason Hernandez was re-instated. The hotel administration followed company policies and suspended Hernandez while they investigated the claim, Khaury said.

"I don't think it was the pressure," he said. "It's in our policies how to deal with these situations. Once she was cleared, she could return to work."

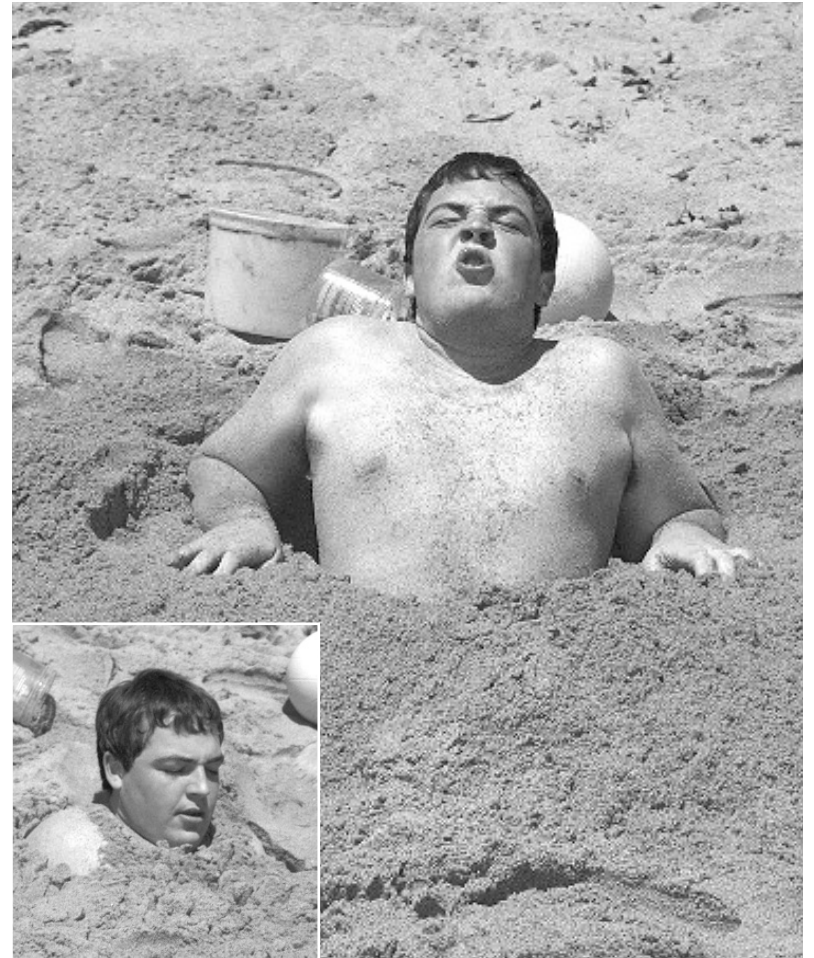
Hernandez said she got her job back entirely because of the clergy's efforts.

"This is an important victory for us," she said in a prepared statement. "Hotel management has been disrespecting our right to organize for months."

"Together with the Santa Monica clergy, we

See UNION, page 5

The great escape



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Trevor Wingett, of Glendale, tries to escape from the sand at Zuma Beach in Malibu on Sunday. His friends timed him to see how long it would take to break free. It was about a minute.

Ice cream truck cited for loud music

By The Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — Some neighborhood activists here are playing hardball with Mister Softee.

Ice cream trucks that dish out loud music like "Turkey in the Straw" along with the soft serves just aren't welcome in parts of Connecticut's capital.

"I can't stand it anymore," said Hyacinth Yennie, a South End community activist who has helped lead the charge against Mister Softee. "Every night, it's the same songs, over and over. It drives you crazy."

Officers have issued four citations for noise ordinance violations over the last two months to Mister Softee owner Felix Rios.

But Rios and his lawyer, Ron Johnson, aren't going to melt in the face of legal action.

"The way the city's noise ordinance is written is unconstitutional," Johnson said last week. "The music coming from an ice cream truck is a time-honored tradition."

Some residents said they just want the sound turned down, but others want it shut off altogether.

"You can't even have a conversation in your house once that truck comes down the street," said Wilbur Troutman.

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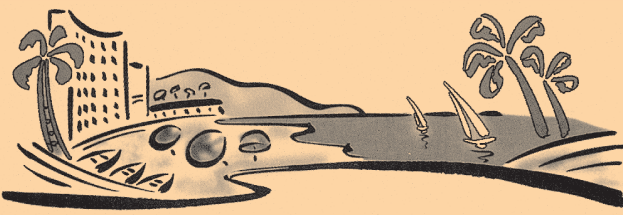
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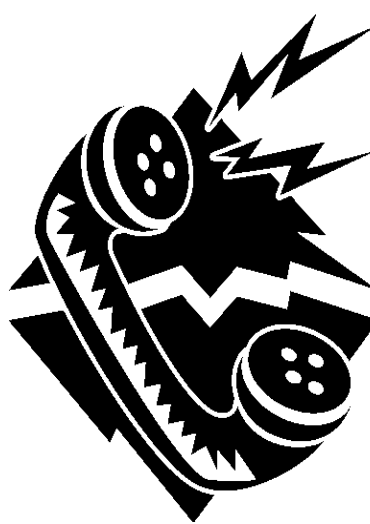
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♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Reach out for others. Start up a more-than-needed chat. Not everything is as it seems to be. In fact, with some perspective, a little research and some discussion, your view changes. Take charge of this project. Tonight: Willingly put in the extra hours.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Laugh, as you suddenly see the fog lift on a money matter. Discuss money with another who understands you and your long-term desires. Do nothing halfway right now. Unexpected news heads your way. Deal with those in authority. Tonight: Hop on the Internet.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ Mercury moves into your sign, empowering you. You feel better than you have in a while. You verbalize your feelings far more clearly at this point. Others who have been challenging you ease up. Schedule important discussions in the late afternoon. Tonight: Togetherness works.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Head in to work and try to cut some of the inner conversations you are having. Be more nurturing to those around you. Listen more to a beloved friend. Let this person run with the ball for now. You don't need to interfere. Tonight: The only answer is "yes."

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ A friend whispers in your ear. You'll hear important pieces of information more often in the next few weeks. Use your creativity when dealing with others. Don't take an opposite point of view, but also don't agree unless you're sure. Tonight: Run errands on the way home.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ A boss makes more inquiries and surprises you. Just because he or she has assumed a low profile for a while doesn't mean this will continue. In fact, you could find your associates to be unusually verbal. Deal with your family and home life with more imagination. Tonight: Play away.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ You hear news from someone at a distance. Don't listen to this person, especially if he or she is known for indulging in gossip. Evaluate news and verify facts. Deal with work quietly, perhaps with the door closed. Success will greet you. Tonight: Get into a project with a loved one.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ A partner finally expresses his or her opinions. What works for this person could surprise you. Not everything is as simple as you would like it to be. Keep moving forward, dealing with facts. Schedule a discussion later in the day, when you're more relaxed. Tonight: Chat over dinner.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ Your smile and positive ways finally bring the results you want. Nothing happens quite as you thought, but you adapt well. Financial matters play into your decisions. Think in terms of gains and new directions. Tonight: Pay bills first.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ What you hear could have you rethinking a key day-to-day matter. Not everything occurs as you would like. Use your instincts with a money matter. You get a second wind as the day gets older. Flow with the moment. Tonight: Keep smiling.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Your friends gather around you. A child or loved one finally chooses to loosen up. You have reason to smile from ear to ear. Discuss your feelings, as well. You could be surprised by what goes on. Carefully consider your options over the next few days. Tonight: Take some time for yourself.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ A boss pushes, and you have no choice but to respond. Another gives you feedback that could involve your family and home. Listen, but don't take anything for certain until you have the check or a written agreement. Tonight: Celebrate.

QUOTE of the DAY

**"The Arabs are backward people
who eat nothing but camel dung."**
— Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

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LOCAL



Five downtown eateries closed after rodents found

MICE, from page 1

noticed this problem.”

Rifold said the city’s construction projects on the transit mall and the installation of new water mains downtown brought the mice. He said the city should take responsibility for the restaurants’ problems.

“Basically, the problem with a mice infestation is that they defecate and urinate where they eat. And, of course, they don’t wash their hands.”

— **TERRANCE POWELL**
L.A. County Health Department

“Once [mouse] habitat is disturbed they head to the dumpsters or anywhere they can find food,” he said. “We have done everything we possibly can and we will continue to do everything we possibly can, but the city has to do its part here.”

Other owners, who requested anonymity, agreed with Rifold, saying the construction is to blame.

The health department has dispatched an extra inspector to the area for additional inspections and to assist in the department’s investigation into where the mice problem is coming from.

Investigators are looking at sanitation in

the alleys, the effectiveness of trash pick-up and whether garbage bins and trash cans are being maintained.

“Ultimately, the responsibility for vermin remains with the operator” of the restaurant, said Powell. “However, the city in this case, whether it’s a common pest problem or a trend, would want to be involved.”

The health department has notified Santa Monica of its investigation, Powell said. City administrators did not return phone calls seeking comment Monday.

“Basically, the problem with a mice infestation is that they defecate and urinate where they eat,” Powell said. “And, of course, they don’t wash their hands.”

One complaint has been that garbage bin lids maintained by the city are either left open or have been removed by vandals, allowing rodents easy access.

Joe Delaney, operations manager of the Santa Monica’s Solid Waste Department, said all the dumpsters have lids, but people leave them open or dump their garbage next to the bin.

The department has received recent reports of rodent problems in one of the downtown parking structures, but the city’s exterminators had been called in to deal with the problem. Delaney said there were no other reported rodent problems.

“When we dump our bins, there are never any rodents at the bottom of them,” he said.

The city empties its dumpsters, which are mostly located in the parking structures, seven days a week at 6 a.m. and twice on Fridays and Saturdays, he said. If there is a problem, the health department hasn’t told him of it, Delaney said.

A list of SM restaurants closed by mice

The Los Angeles County Department of Health posts the results of every restaurant inspection on their Web Site, www.lapublichealth.org/eh. Visitors can browse all 350,000 restaurants, bakeries and grocery stores in the county, and search by the establishment’s name or address. Enter a zip code, and the Web Site will list the ratings of every restaurant with in that postal region.

Here are the results of the recent closings of Santa Monica’s downtown restaurants:

CAROUSEL CAFE, 1601 OCEAN FRONT WALK, SANTA MONICA

Date Closed: April 17, 2002

Date Reopened: April 21, 2002

Reason for Closure: Prevention of entrance and harborage of vermin infestation

Before Closing: 84, B

GEORGE’S BISTRO, 1321 3RD ST PROMENADE, SANTA MONICA

Date Closed: April 18, 2002

Date Reopened: April 20, 2002

Reason for Closure: Prevention of entrance and harborage of vermin infestation

Before Closing: 99, A

BRAVO CUCINA, 1319 3RD ST PROMENADE, SANTA MONICA

Date Closed: April 17, 2002

Date Reopened: April 19, 2002

Reason for Closure: Prevention of entrance and harborage of vermin infestation

Before Closing: 92, A

JOHNNY ROCKETS, 1322 3RD ST PROMENADE A, SANTA MONICA

Date Closed: April 19, 2002

Date Reopened: April 21, 2002

Closed again: April 25

Re-opened: Still Closed

Reason for Closure: Prevention of entrance and harborage of vermin infestation

Before Closing: 99, A

YANKEE DOODLES, 1410 3RD ST PROMENADE

Date Closed: April 26

Date Reopened: April 28

Reason for closing: Prevention of entrance and harborage of vermin infestation

Before Closing: 93, A

Four public toilets may be removed from downtown

By Daily Press staff

There could be fewer restrooms available downtown if a plan endorsed by a board of downtown businesses is approved by the Santa Monica City Council.

The Bayside District Corporation board of trustees voted unanimously last week to endorse a plan to phase out four of the six public restrooms located in city-owned downtown parking structures.

Many Bayside members believe the restrooms are unsafe and often left in unsanitary conditions by homeless people and transients, who are often the ones using them.

The board was about to launch an ambitious \$2 million remodeling of the restrooms, but a recent \$93 million parking plan adopted by the city will demolish many of those facilities.

Now the board has asked the city council to remove four of the bathrooms so that maintenance and police patrols can be concentrated more effectively and to investigate alternative locations for new public restrooms.

Bayside recommended keeping the restroom in the parking garage at 1440 Fourth Street open since it was recently remodeled.

The other restroom to remain open was

left up to the city council, but many board members believe the restroom at 1321 Second Street, could remain open since it is the most accessible to the Third Street Promenade.

The other public restrooms are located at 1234 Fourth Street, 1320 Fourth Street, 1235 Second Street, and 1431 Second Street.

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

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

They said public restrooms located in Santa Monica Place and private ones in shops along the Promenade, including many of the larger bookstores and the movie theaters, would remain open.

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

The Q Line

While most of us can agree that Santa Monica is one of the best places to live, it’s not without its problems. A recent city survey revealed that residents’ biggest complaints are traffic and the homeless. Those happen to be the same complaints from the previous year. The problems don’t seem to be going away so this week, Q-Line wants to know how

you’d handle it. **“If you ran the show here, how would you make Santa Monica better?”**

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OPINION

LETTERS

Districts limit what owners can do with property

Editor:

A response to your article of 4/22/02, "History repeating itself in Santa Monica."

Make no mistake, when a historical district is formed, individual property owners are giving up their property rights. They add yet another layer of control to their properties. The district member will be forced to submit plans and drawings to a committee of his/her neighbors when they want to change the exterior paint color, add a window or remove a tree or simply add air conditioning. Any exterior alterations go first to the group of neighbors, and then to landmarks commissioners. The district contributors must meet a set of "guidelines" as interpreted by the neighbors first. All of these torturous meetings do not waive the requirements of planning, building and safety, traffic, arbolist and any other department required in remodeling.

I speak with knowledge. I live in the Third Street District. I am appealing the landmark's decision against my proposed two-car garage to the city council. The only reason for this long and costly process is because I am in the Third Street Historical District. My garage would be approved if not for my being in the Third Street District, that's a quote from the planning department on 10/18/2001. The additional cost involved applying to the local neighbors and then the landmarks commission has been enormous, including hiring of experts, retaining an attorney, not to mention the plan re-draws and lots and lots of my time. The appeal process will add additional thousands to the final cost.

If you feel your home should be preserved, request landmark commissioners to designate it as a landmark. Districts are not about preservation of unique properties but control of property by a few active neighbors. NO MORE DISTRICTS. It's a taking of property rights and an addition of more controls by neighbors and government.

The Third Street District has forced out a large number of renters and returned the houses to single family status resulting in many less occupants. And it's stopped one condo building. My neighbors call it "preservation" and "protection." As I see it, it's the "I've got mine" elitist point of view. My generation questioned authority. The supporters of the district embrace it.

If our block were not a district, we would still be a place where people walk their dogs and play with their kids in the front yard, by the very nature of our wonderful Ocean Park community. Its proximity to the beach, Main Street, its modest hill and wonderful air make our community unique. We don't need a district to help us enjoy the outdoors ... and we are not a museum.

Not everyone in the Third Street Historic District is happy with the yoke of control referred to as preservation. I am not alone in my dislike of the district. We were told we could modify our homes in 1990 when they pushed through the district. That has proved to be a false hood in my experience. I've lived in my home for over 15 years. If there were any one thing I could change, it would be removal from the Third Street Historical District.

Shirley Bly
Santa Monica

Put the parking underground

Editor:

The Santa Monica City Council should reconsider underground parking for the civic center. Throughout public testimony, the two most common requests were playing fields and affordable housing. If we remove the surface parking and build underground, more room would be available to expand these areas. Underground parking structures could also be used for shuttling purposes.

We need long-term, sustainable planning for the civic center. This property should be utilized to its fullest potential; underground parking needs to be included.

Joe Weichman
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 □ STATE

Employee credits clergy with getting her job back

UNION, from page 1

have shown that we have the right to organize for better working conditions.”

The Hotel Employee, Restaurant Employee Union Local 814 has launched a public campaign to organize the hotel's workers. They have held rallies at a recent Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School Board meeting and at Santa Monica High School.

The school district leases the land to the Doubletree, located just west of Santa Monica High School. Union organizers have spurred the school district into re-evaluating its lease with the hotel because rents have not increased in the past two years.

They hope the school district will be able to re-negotiate its lease with the hotel, and in the process help settle the long-standing labor dispute. The city has helped unions become established in hotels leased on publicly-owned land.

“Unionization efforts at the Doubletree should be similar to what happened at the Pacific Shore Hotel,” Arnold said. “Because it's on city-owned property, when they went to the city (council) for permission to remodel their units, as part of the deal they settled the labor peace and allowed unionization to move forward.”

Currently, the Pacific Shore Hotel, 1819 Ocean Ave., and The Fairmont Miramar Hotel, 101 Wilshire Blvd., are

the only beachfront resorts with a unionized workforce.

Union officials said there are efforts to organize all the large hotels in Santa Monica, but they would only confirm active efforts at Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel, 1700 Ocean Ave., and at the Doubletree.

“Unionization efforts at the Doubletree should be similar to what happened at the Pacific Shore Hotel.”

— **ABBY ARNOLD**
Living wage activist

Hotel employees have accused the management of large beachfront hotels of threatening workers sympathetic to unions by selectively firing and cutting their hours after the economic slowdown related to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Hotel management would like to wage their own campaign against unionization, but union members want a vote by ballot, which prevents a campaign and the results cannot be challenged.

Woman bakes cakes for cops for more than two decades

By The Associated Press

LANCASTER — Twenty-three years ago, a California Highway Patrol officer stopped to help Winnie Gentry, who was stranded in the fog.

Talk about sweet rewards. For more than two decades, “Miss Winnie” has been thanking police, firefighters and others by personally delivering homemade cakes about once a week.

“I looove giving those cakes,” she said. “You see these guys’ eyes light up, just like the little kids.”

Gentry’s husband of 54 years, James, died about a year ago, so now the 72-year-old is packing up her mixer, her recipes and her pans and heading for her native Ohio to be closer to relatives who live in Dayton.

“She’s really dear to our hearts. Her cakes are a treat, and they’re appreciated,” Los Angeles County sheriff’s Capt. Tom Pigott said. “We’re envious of who ever gets her cakes now.”

Gentry’s white Lincoln sedan carries the license plate CHP CAKE — a gift from the Highway Patrol.

Gentry has no intention of hanging up her bundt cakes, which come in flavors like chocolate and lemon, and ooze frosting.

“You retire, you die,” she said.

Winnie has been living in Lancaster,

about 70 miles north of Los Angeles, for about 25 years — since James retired from a 30-year stint with the Navy.

A two-time cancer survivor herself, Gentry owns a wig and jewelry store called “Winnie’s Place” that often caters to chemotherapy patients who lose hair during treatment.

In the beginning she wanted to show her appreciation because a CHP officer came to her aid after heavy fog stranded her along Highway 101 at night.

Soon, she was baking about 80 cakes a month, serving up gratitude cakes to police officers, firefighters, and public employees in city hall and the district attorney’s office. Even neighborhood kids who got straight A’s on their report cards got cakes.

While househunting in Dayton, Gentry zeroed in on a new recipient for her treats — a neighborhood assistant pastor who works full-time as a state police commander.

“I told him to expect some cakes,” she said.

The only one who doesn’t benefit from Gentry’s generosity is her. She can’t eat cake because she has diabetes.

“The doctor says I can make all the cakes I want as long as I don’t eat them,” she said.

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NATIONAL

Desert Dome



Nati Harnik/Associated Press

Zoo patrons stand in line as they wait to enter the recently opened Desert Dome at Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Neb., earlier this month. The world's largest indoor replica of a desert has become a hit with more than 73,000 people from 11 states walking the Desert Dome's sandy paths during its opening week in late March.

'Suspicious activity' turns US Airways flight around

BY PATRICK WALTERS
Associated Press Writer

PHILADELPHIA — The FBI told passengers on a flight forced to return after takeoff that their plane was rerouted because several passengers of Middle Eastern descent had purchased one-way tickets for cash that day, passengers said Monday.

In Houston, meanwhile, several staff members from the Saudi Arabian Embassy were detained while trying to board a flight at Bush Intercontinental Airport on Sunday. They were released after their identities were confirmed, Houston FBI spokesman Bob Doguim said Monday.

FBI spokeswoman Linda Vizi would not confirm the accounts about Sunday's flight from Philadelphia to Orlando, Fla., but said the suspicious passengers were interviewed and released early Monday without being charged.

"We were able to determine their travel plans were legitimate and their identities were legitimate," Vizi said. "We have checked out the documentation of these individuals, and everything is in order."

Passengers Glenn Mattes, 48, and Jack Clark, 55, said FBI agents also told passengers that two other planes, one in Houston and the other in Baltimore, were grounded because passengers of Middle Eastern descent had bought one-way tickets that day for cash.

Vizi would not comment on that account.

Pete Gulotta, an FBI spokesman in Baltimore, said his office was asked to check the names of seven Middle Eastern men boarding a plane for Dallas at Baltimore-Washington International Sunday morning. After checking, airport officials were told there was no reason to detain the men, Gulotta said.

"There was not any suspicious activity, there was no reason to hold these people

as far as we were concerned," Gulotta said. "All we did was check some names."

Mattes and Clark were among 134 people aboard the US Airways flight from Philadelphia to Orlando, Fla., which the FBI acknowledged was turned around Sunday because some passengers were thought to be engaged in "suspicious activity."

The individuals were taken off the flight without incident and questioned by the FBI, Vizi said late Sunday. Bomb-sniffing dogs found no explosives, she said.

Federal air marshals contacted the FBI about the passengers, Vizi said. US Airways Flight 335 was ordered to return to Philadelphia and landed at 7:05 p.m., less than an hour after takeoff.

It was taken to the old international terminal of Philadelphia International Airport, which is seldom used and is far from the main terminals.

"We landed and we're sitting around almost two hours. Finally, they said the FBI's coming on the plane and that's when the wave of emotion hits everyone," said Clark, of Blue Bell.

Passengers said four or five people had been acting suspiciously.

Clark said that after the suspicious passengers were removed, an FBI agent told the remaining passengers about the Baltimore and Houston flights and said the other planes had been stopped before taking off.

"At that point everyone is clapping and cheering," Clark said.

Most of the remaining passengers went through security screening a second time and were sent to Orlando.

"From an abundance of caution since September 11, we want to make sure that everyone gets to their destination safely," Vizi said Sunday night.

An airline representative referred questions to the FBI.

NATIONAL



Chili conditions close I-80

By The Associated Press

GREEN RIVER, Wyo. — The weather can still turn chilly in southwest Wyoming in late April, but that's not why a snowplow was needed on Interstate 80.

The westbound lanes about 20 miles west of town were closed for about an hour Thursday after a semi truck with a trailer full of Hormel chili rear-ended another semi.

The momentum of the wreck caused the chili cans to smash through the front of the trailer. The cans broke open and soon the pavement was slick with beans and meat, according to the Wyoming

Highway Patrol.

A snowplow had to be called out to clear the mess.

Emergency crews rescued the trapped driver of the chili truck by cutting through the bottom of the cab. The driver was taken to a hospital for evaluation.

Patrol Lt. Dave Gray said the crash happened when the first semi, which was pulling a flatbed trailer with a heavy load of cardboard, crept up a hill at about 20 miles per hour.

The truck with the chili was going much faster and was unable to slow down in time, according to Gray.

'Fargo' cabin goes for \$10k

By The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — A piece of disturbing Minnesota movie history is moving to Wisconsin.

With just seven seconds to spare before bidding closed in an Internet auction, Lindy Martin, 26, bid \$10,000 for a small cabin featured in the movie "Fargo."

Martin said late Saturday that she and her mother, Elsie Martin, are buying it together. They plan to move it to a lot in Barnes, Wis., about an hour east of Duluth.

"We thought it would be a quick way to get a cabin, to buy a fully functional one and just get it done," Lindy Martin said.

The cabin is the setting for the climactic scene in the 1996 Coen brothers'

movie. Kidnappers hide out at the cabin and one of them meets a gruesome end in a wood chipper.

In the movie, the cabin is near Brainerd, in north-central Minnesota. But in real life, it's on Square Lake, about seven miles north of Stillwater, on the eastern edge of the state.

Rich Cummings, who owns the land and plans to build a full-sized home there, was pleased with the outcome and a little nostalgic for the 1958 cabin, which measures 18-by-36 feet and has no running water, indoor plumbing or insulation.

"We had a group of people out there for a party last Sunday, kind of a farewell to it," he said. "We had about 100 people in that little cabin, and it was just a blast."

Kid suspended from middle school for dying his hair blue

By The Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. — The American Civil Liberties Union has gotten involved in the case of a middle-school student who was suspended from school for having blue hair.

Jesse Doyle, a sixth-grader at Norview Middle School, has been told that he cannot return to class until his hair has been "returned to its original color," according to his mother, Kim McConnell.

McConnell said she was especially surprised by the school's action because she has an older son in the Norfolk school system who "has been coloring his hair for two years, and has never had a problem."

Ironically, she said she let Jesse dye his hair "as a reward for getting good grades."

Rebecca K. Glenberg, legal director for the Virginia ACLU, faxed a letter Friday to Norview principal Vivian Hester. The letter explained the ACLU's contention that Doyle's suspension "violates both school policy and the U.S. Constitution," the ACLU said.

The school contends brightly colored hair can be disruptive.

ACLU Virginia executive director Kent Willis said the issue is about more than "one kid's little desire to have blue hair. Ultimately, it's about the right to express yourself."

Teen charged in plot to poison punch at Iowa high school prom

By The Associated Press

VILLISCA, Iowa — A teen-ager has been charged with administering a dangerous substance after he allegedly plotted to poison the punch at the Villisca High School prom.

Robert David Dumler, 15, initially faced a more serious felony charge of terrorism. But Montgomery County Attorney Bruce said Monday that the terrorism charge must involve firing a weapon or the use of an incendiary device.

Dumler was arrested Friday night after reports that he planned to spike the punch at Saturday's dance with a substance that would make people seriously ill or kill them, Police Chief Butch Rulla said.

"This young man was unhappy with

some other students, a couple in particular," Rulla said Sunday. "Fortunately we had a couple of other juveniles he confided in and they came forward."

Rulla said another teen turned over a plastic vial of an unknown liquid that belonged to Dumler. The liquid was being tested.

"He claimed it was just a joke," Rulla said. "But those aren't good jokes."

Dumler was being held in the Southwest Iowa Juvenile Detention Center pending a court appearance June 18.

A woman who answered the phone at Dumler's house refused to comment and said she would pass on a request for comment to the boy's father or lawyer, once one is hired. A juvenile court officer said a lawyer will be appointed.



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SPORTS

Three down, 12 to go for defending champion Lakers

BY JOHN NADEL
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Lakers figure they'll find a way to win. That confidence has helped them accomplish an unprecedented feat in sports — 19 wins in 20 playoff games. The Lakers' latest victory was perhaps the most improbable of the run that started with a 116-111 win over Indiana in the clinching Game 6 of the 2000 NBA Finals. It continued with a 15-1 postseason last spring and the 3-0 beginning to these playoffs. And it came after they showed why many believe they're more vulnerable this time around as they shoot for their third straight championship. Vulnerable? Perhaps. Battle-tested and clutch? No doubt. And that's how the Lakers became the first baseball, football, basketball or hockey team ever to go 19-1 in a span of 20 postseason games. "It took the pressure of the game-ending situation for them to step it up and play the way they should play," coach Phil Jackson said following Sunday's 92-91 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers, giving the Lakers a first-round sweep and a week off before they face San Antonio or Seattle in the second round. After the Blazers took an 89-84 lead on Rasheed Wallace's rebound basket with 39 seconds remaining that left their bench delirious with joy, the Lakers systematically put Portland away with a game-finishing 8-2 run capped by Robert Horry's 3-pointer with 2.1 seconds left.

He got the open shot this time compliments of a Kobe Bryant pass — a play Bryant hasn't always been willing or able to make. Bryant, who flicked the ball to a wide-open Horry in the right corner after being double-teamed as he dribbled toward the basket. Horry's shot was clean. And after a Portland turnover, it was game over. Actually, everything changed for Bryant before last year's playoffs, when he sat out nine games and most of a 10th because of a sprained ankle. That was on the heels of his well-publicized feud with Shaquille O'Neal — now just a distant memory. When Bryant returned with four games left in the regular season, it was apparent he learned during his absence that he could benefit himself and his team more by reading the defense, not just always trying to make the winning play by himself. O'Neal recognized Bryant's growth by proclaiming him the best player in the world during the Lakers' four-game sweep of San Antonio during the Western Conference finals. Horry's game-winner in Portland wouldn't have happened had Bryant not made a 3-pointer of his own with 12.7 seconds to play thanks in part to a screen by O'Neal that freed Bryant near the top of the key. "A beautiful pick, I was wide open," Bryant said. Of Horry's game-winner, Bryant said: "It's hard to describe what it feels like when the ball is floating through the air like that, and you know it's going in. All I was thinking was, cash."



National Basketball Association playoff schedule

By The Associated Press

FIRST ROUND-Best-of-5 (All times EDT.)
Saturday, April 20
Indiana 89, New Jersey 83
Sacramento 89, Utah 86
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 93, Sacramento 86
series tied 1-1
Wednesday, April 24
Detroit 96, Toronto 91
Detroit leads series 2-0
Dallas 122, Minnesota 110,
Dallas leads series 2-0
Thursday, April 25
Boston 93, Philadelphia 85
Boston leads series 2-0
L.A. Lakers 103, Portland 96,
Lakers leads series 2-0
Friday, April 26
New Jersey 85, Indiana 84
New Jersey leads series 2-1

Saturday, April 27

Charlotte 110, Orlando 100, OT
Charlotte leads series 2-1
Sacramento 90, Utah 87
Sacramento leads series 2-1
San Antonio 102, Seattle 75
San Antonio leads series 2-1
Toronto 94, Detroit 84
Detroit leads series 2-1

Sunday, April 28

Philadelphia 108, Boston 103
Boston leads series 2-1
Dallas 115, Minnesota 102
Dallas wins series 3-0
L.A. Lakers 92, Portland 91
L.A. Lakers win series 3-0

Monday, April 29

Detroit 83, Toronto 89
Series tied 2-2
Sacramento at Utah, late

Tuesday, April 30

Charlotte at Orlando, TBA
New Jersey at Indiana, TBA

Wednesday, May 1

Boston at Philadelphia, TBA, if necessary
San Antonio at Seattle, TBA

Thursday, May 2

Indiana at New Jersey, TBA, if necessary
Toronto at Detroit, TBA
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



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Powell expects deal on siege at Bethlehem church

BY BARRY SCHWEID

AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON — An agreement to end Israel's siege of Bethlehem is likely soon, Secretary of State Colin Powell said Monday.

While difficult discussions remain, Powell said at a news conference, all the elements of an accord are in place.

A breakthrough on Bethlehem, following the one Sunday that freed Yasser Arafat from confinement in Ramallah, would give U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East its biggest boost in months.

"I think there is a solution," Powell said, providing no details. U.S. and Israeli officials said privately it probably would be based on Israel's proposal to offer the terror suspects holed up in the Church of the Nativity a choice of exile or trial in Israel.

"I think it will be resolved in the near future," Powell said.

But in evaluating the situation earlier Monday, President Bush's spokesman, Ari Fleischer, cautioned that "nothing in the Middle East is easy."

The liberation of Arafat ends the Palestinian leader's confinement in Ramallah since December and in his battered headquarters in the West Bank city for a month.

"He's free to go whenever and wherever he wants to go," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said.

At the same time, Boucher urged U.N. officials to consider Israel's complaints about the composition of a fact-finding delegation to a Palestinian refugee camp in Jenin. "The United Nations should work with the parties involved, the Israelis and Palestinians, to try to coordinate on this mission," Boucher said.

"We look forward to a thorough and impartial assessment from this team to the secretary-general (Kofi Annan) of the recent events in Jenin," the U.S. official said.

Israel, fearing a smear campaign, has sought to revise composition of the delegation. It has denied allegations that Israeli forces massacred scores of civilians while hunting down terror suspects and blocked the inspection.

Secretary of State Colin Powell has tried to broker a compromise. He told the Senate last week that Assistant Secretary of State William Burns had found no sign of a massacre during a 3 1/2-hour inspection of the camp.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said President Bush was pleased with steps taken to end the

crisis in Ramallah.

"The president is pleased with the action over the weekend and pleased with the initial follow-through, but it's going to have to be closely monitored," Fleischer said.

"Nothing in the Middle East is easy. Nothing stays as hopeful as you'd like it to be for long," he said.

The wanted men at Arafat's headquarters will be placed under American and British monitoring "in very short order," Fleischer said.

National security adviser Condoleezza Rice said the weekend agreement was "one way to help move this process forward." But she said both sides need to do far more to end the violence.

Addressing a foreign policy forum, Rice praised the land-for-peace plan being pushed by Saudi Arabia, even though she said that "every element of it may not be workable" and that many of the details would be subject to negotiation.

She said the fact that Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah was pushing the plan, offering recognition of Israel in exchange for the lands the Arabs lost in the 1967 Mideast war, showed that Saudi Arabia was willing to become "engaged, as Jordan and Egypt have, in bringing peace to the region as a whole."

The deal crystallizing over Bethlehem would give the gunmen sought by Israel a choice of exile or prosecution by Israel, according to a well-placed Israeli diplomat. Two U.S. officials also told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity that a breakthrough may be imminent. They declined to provide details.

Israel would withdraw its troops from the biblical city, as it will from Ramallah, although there is little doubt they would return if terror strikes Israel again.

On this tactic, the Bush administration remained at odds with Israel.

Boucher renewed a three-week-old U.S. demand for a total pullback. And, he said, Israel should refrain from further incursions.

Palestinian officials disputed reports that a deal on the Church of the Nativity would soon be struck. "These are unbased rumors," said Bethlehem Mayor Hanna Nasser, a Palestinian negotiator.

Another, Salah Taameri, said the Palestinians still objected to exile or Israeli trials for the wanted men. "We are sticking to our stand that there will be no exiling of anyone outside his country. We have one position, which

is that the people wanted by Israel should go to Gaza without being detained or placed under Israeli investigation," he said.

Arafat's imminent release from confinement prompted Bush to call on him again to end anti-Israel violence. The president also invited other leaders in the region "to bare their soul" with ideas for permanently resolving the crisis.



Nasser Shiyouhki/Associated Press

Israeli soldiers arrest Palestinian men and youths in the West Bank town of Hebron on Monday. Israeli forces entered Hebron at about 4:30 a.m., with tanks and armored personnel carriers driving in from all directions. Nine Palestinians, including six civilians, were killed by Israeli fire, Palestinian witnesses said.

Senator, Supreme Court justice speak to students

BY JENNIFER PETER

Associated Press Writer

BOSTON — Young Americans have a responsibility to share their experiences in a democracy with citizens living under totalitarian regimes, Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy told Boston students on Monday.

"You have to give them the benefit of your mistakes, your fears, your hopes, your dreams," he said at a forum at Boston Latin Academy.

In a rare appearance with an elected official, Kennedy joined Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., in challenging students to explore American values and stereotypes following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The forum was part of the "Dialogue on Freedom" program, conceived by Justice Kennedy after the terrorist attacks to promote the discussion of American civic values and their compatibility with other cultures.

In conjunction with the American Bar Association, Justice Kennedy is leading classroom discussions around the country, beginning with a January forum with first lady Laura Bush.

During Monday's hour-long discussion with about two dozen seniors, Justice Kennedy presented students with a fictitious country, Quest, where unemployment is high, wages are low and an anti-Western leader is about to take power.

What would they say, Justice Kennedy asked, if a woman citizen of Quest told them that she supported this leader even though he did not support women's rights?

"If she wants to give up her freedom, then that's her decision, but I can't live like that," said Meghan Copson, 18.

But, Justice Kennedy challenged, isn't there some shared moral value indicating that the suppression of women's rights is wrong?

Copson disagreed. "They have their culture and we

have our culture. It's not necessarily wrong."

While Justice Kennedy focused on sharing American values with countries that have not yet endorsed democracy, Sen. Kennedy emphasized the need for continued

vigilance at home.

"Rights are at risk even in a democracy," the senator said. "You can't say that just because you have a democracy, you don't have to do anything."

Ocean trash helps tiny animals invade new environments, study suggests

BY MALCOLM RITTER

AP Science Writer

Bottles, cigarette lighters and other floating trash in the world's oceans often carry tiny animals, posing a threat of delivering invasive species that could disrupt natural environments, especially in the Antarctic, a study says.

David Barnes of the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge, England, examined about 200 items of debris that washed onshore on each of 30 islands from the Arctic to the Antarctic. Across the locations, some 20 percent to 80 percent of this flotsam was man-made, chiefly plastic, he said.

The highest proportions were found in the Antarctic, which largely lacks natural debris like tree parts or volcanic rock.

"In many places plastic represents more than 50 percent of all material

washing up on shores," Barnes said.

Nylon line, fuel drums, fishing buoys and even milk crates were among the items his survey found.

In tropical areas, up to half the overall debris he examined was colonized by such creatures as coral-like bryozoans, barnacles, worms and mollusks, he reports in the April 25 issue of the journal *Nature*.

In these areas, Barnes noted, natural debris has long served as rafts for such creatures, and the rubbish adds to the potential for spreading invasive species.

None of the debris he found at Antarctic sites held animal life, probably because such creatures can't survive in the cold, he said.

But that natural barrier to incoming life might weaken with future global warming, letting new animals enter an environment that has been isolated, Barnes said. That could cause great harm to native life, he said.

Jim McClintock, a professor of polar and marine biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, agreed that Barnes had pointed out a potential threat to Antarctic life, but stressed that it's a future one.

"It's not going to happen tomorrow," McClintock said.

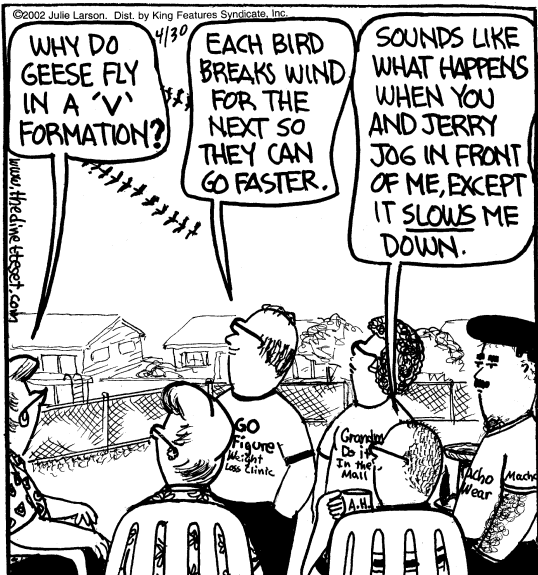
More generally, Barnes' work underlines the importance of marine trash as a vehicle — or "vector" — for spreading invasive species, said James Carlton, professor of marine sciences at Williams College and director of the maritime studies program at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut.

"We've known about the possible role of plastics before," Carlton said. "But what he's pointing out is that this is a seriously understudied vector ... He's got an interesting and compelling data set there that makes us want to run out and see what's going on."

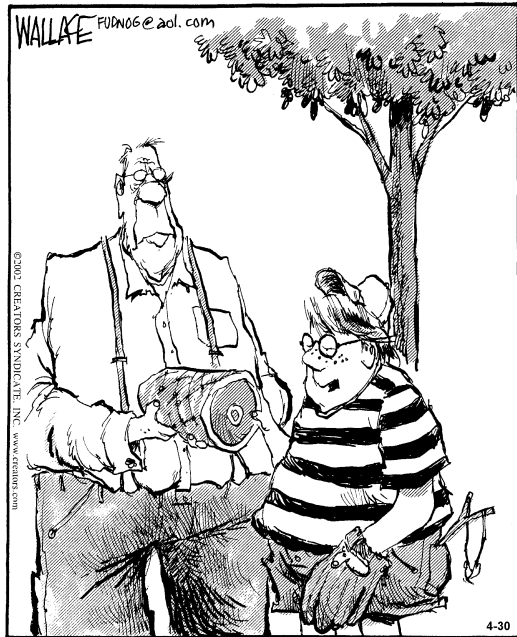


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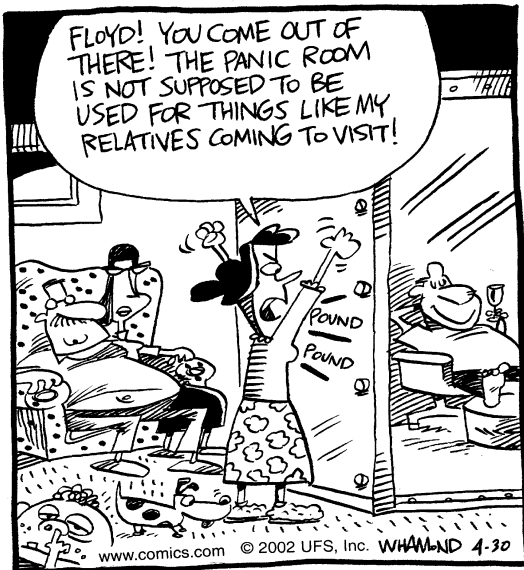


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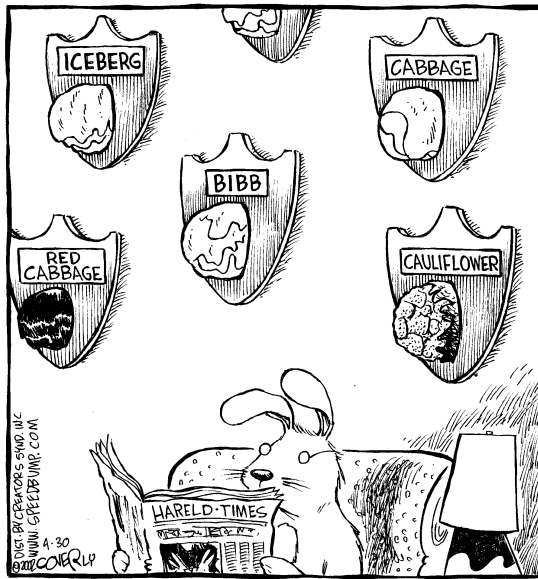
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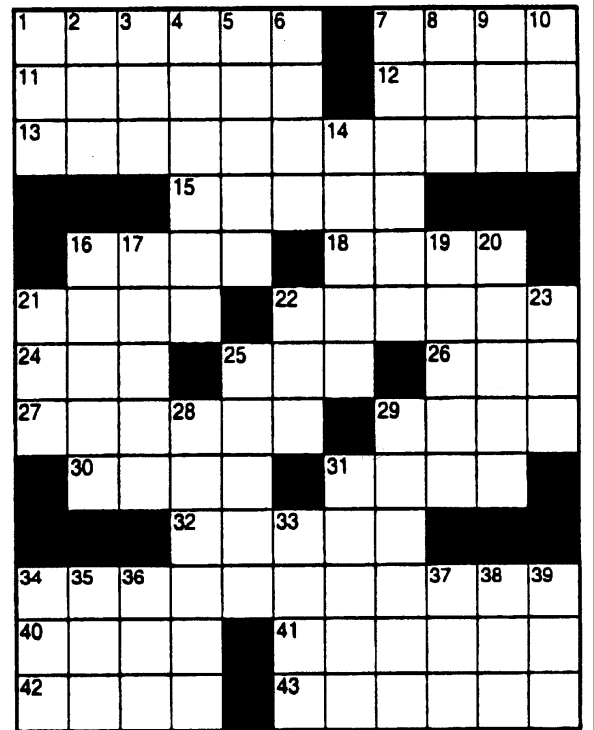
CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Accelerated
 - 7 Bryant of the NBA
 - 11 "Twelfth Night" count
 - 12 Matinee star
 - 13 Reporter's asset
 - 15 Exhausted
 - 16 Guitarist Atkins
 - 18 Oodles
 - 21 Sow's mate
 - 22 Kind of pin or match
 - 24 Billboards, e.g.
 - 25 Stan Getz's instrument
 - 26 Born, in social pages
 - 27 Earned
 - 29 Succotash half
 - 30 Elevator part
 - 31 Cow's home
 - 32 Airline worker
 - 34 Start one's return
 - 40 Singer Guthrie
 - 41 Like some streets
- DOWN**
- 1 Heir, at times
 - 2 Paid player
 - 3 Double-curve
 - 4 Deliberate loser
 - 5 Not qualified
 - 6 Needy
 - 7 In a way
 - 8 Lyric poem
 - 9 Gift topper
 - 10 Golf's Ernie
 - 14 Take it easy
 - 42 Diver Louganis
 - 43 Peaceful

J	I	L	T	S		P	A	N	G	S
I	D	A	H	O		U	B	O	A	T
M	O	D	E	L		L	E	A	V	E
		S	E	L		H	E	M		
B	E	A	T	S	O	U	T			
L	I	L	I		S	P	H	E	R	E
E	R	E	C	T		S	E	D	E	R
D	E	C	K	E		S	N	A	G	
		S	E	E		S	T	A	R	S
G	A	B			T	R	I	O		
A	L	I	B	I		G	N	A	T	S
I	S	L	A	M		M	E	D	I	A
N	O	L	T	E		A	S	S	E	T

Yesterday's answer

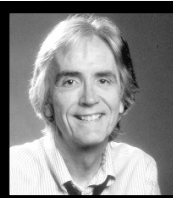
- 16 Wrote in Java
- 17 Must
- 19 Opera singer
- 20 Harsh
- 21 Outlaw
- 22 Blue
- 23 Longing
- 25 Letter stroke
- 28 One in authority
- 29 Writer Willa
- 31 Carried
- 33 Writer Anita
- 34 Crone
- 35 Blunder
- 36 Pub order
- 37 Have debts
- 38 Chess piece
- 39 Pupil's place



4-30

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

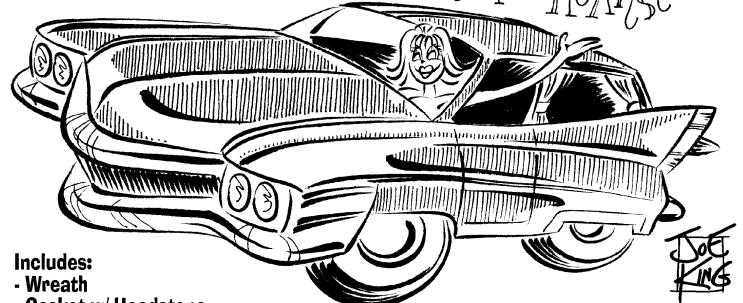
by Chuck Shepard

Author writes 9-11 Pentagon attack staged

- Thierry Meyssan's book "The Frightening Fraud" became a best seller in France with its thesis that the U.S. government staged the attack on the Pentagon on Sept. 11.
- Two people commandeered a Krispy Kreme truck with its back door open and led police on a chase that created a 15-mile-long trail of scattered doughnuts (Slidell, La.).
- A nursing home complained that the unionizing vote by its workers should be overturned since someone put a series of voodoo signs around the workplace, thus frightening the home's large Haitian-American work force (Miami).
- The annual April Fool's ice cream flavor this year at the Wahlburger restaurant was vanilla diced with hamburger sandwiches (bun, lettuce, meat); last year, french fries were used (Avon, N.Y.).



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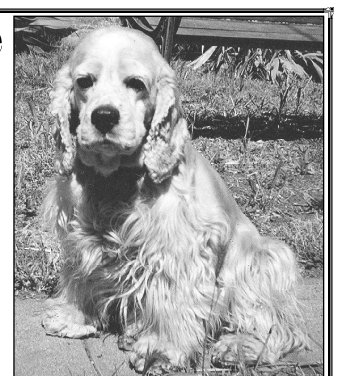
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BACK PAGE

Vietnam's version of Starbucks popular among 'in crowds'

BY TINI TRAN
Associated Press Writer

HANOI, Vietnam — The decor is unadulterated kitsch — glittering Christmas lights, Crayola-colored chairs, a pop music soundtrack — and undeniably trendy.

For the stream of customers crowding into Trung Nguyen cafes across Vietnam, it's a potent combination of ca-phe sua, a strong espresso served over a syrup of condensed milk, and coffee chic.

Capitalizing on an emerging, affluent middle-class and the simple attractions of aromatic coffee, 31-year-old entrepreneur Dang Le Nguyen Vu has successfully launched Vietnam's first nationwide franchise.

Call it Starbucks, Vietnam-style.

Over the past four years, the Trung Nguyen chain has grown to more than 400 outlets in all of Vietnam's provinces — from the busy streets of Ho Chi Minh City

to the rural outpost of Sapa on the northern border.

"I want to have the Vietnamese brand name of Trung Nguyen well known in the world. Our coffee is good. There's no reason we can't do it," Vu said.

Bold words, but Vu has already bucked the odds by successfully operating in a communist country that still favors state-owned enterprises over private business.

Trung Nguyen's wildfire growth in Vietnam, the world's second-largest coffee exporter, is testament to Vu's vision — not to mention the notable absence of a certain coffee giant.

Although Seattle-based Starbucks has made sizable headway in the region — in Japan, Thailand and China, among others — it still has no presence in Vietnam. High tariffs on imported roasted coffee ensured the dominance of the local coffee industry and an opportunity for an enterprising medical student.

In 1996, Vu "was in love with economics and business more than medicine so I started a small operation."

With three friends, he opened a small cafe in their Central Highland hometown of Buon Ma Thuot — famed for its potent coffee. The story could have ended there but what made Trung Nguyen different was Vu's decision to introduce franchising in 1998.

For a one-time charge and a pledge to buy discounted coffee only from him, a franchisee gained the right to put up the distinctive brown and cream sign with the coffee cup.

In return, Vu got name brand advertising and the visible saturation necessary to start a buzz.

The name sells, said Pham Thi Truc Giang, who runs one of the largest Trung Nguyen franchises in Hanoi. Her two-story, 400-seat cafe is packed with 600 to 800 customers daily. Weekends bring in

even more, with motorbikes parked three to four deep on the sidewalk.

"I think Trung Nguyen came along at the right time. If people didn't have money to spend, then we wouldn't do so well," she said.

Trung Nguyen's distinctive, upmarket style is a sharp contrast to the streetside tea stalls and murky cafes that abound in Vietnam, attracting a range of clientele from office workers to college students. Its success parallels a growing middle-class with more money to spend and more leisure time to linger.

But for Vu, domestic dominance is only the beginning. He is already casting his eye about the region. Last year, he signed franchise agreements in Singapore, Tokyo and Shanghai.

In December, he visited America for the first time as part of a delegation scoping out business opportunities in the wake of a U.S.-Vietnam trade pact passed last year.

Meditation community in Vedic City prints its own money

BY DAVID PITT
Associated Press Writer

VEDIC CITY, Iowa — If Walt Disney World can make Disney Dollars and Club Med can print its own currency, then this Iowa town founded by practitioners of Transcendental Meditation figured it, too, could make its own money.

The Raam Mudra, as the colorful notes are called, began circulating last month in this city incorporated last year by 125 followers of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the Beatles' guru and founder of the TM movement.

The currency has achieved a little consciousness-raising

about Vedic City. It has not created the wider monetary harmony some had hoped for.

The idea in creating the money was to promote the city — a collection of onion-dome buildings set amid farmland about 100 miles from Des Moines — and its plans for a theme park devoted to world peace and the magic tricks of the late illusionist and TM practitioner Doug Henning.

The currency originally was intended to be used in Vedic City only, but thousands of meditators also live in Fairfield, a town of 8,700 people two miles away, and began to circulate the Raam. Vedic City Mayor Bob Wynne asked businesses throughout Jefferson County to

consider using the new currency.

Only Maharishi University of Management, which operates in Fairfield with more than 700 students, and a few businesses run by meditators accept the bills. Local banks, county officials and other merchants have balked.

County supervisors passed a resolution requiring homeowners to pay their property taxes in dollars, just in case anyone got the idea of using Raam.

Rogers Badgett, Vedic City mayor pro tem, said the colorful bills could prove to be collector's items.

"We're excited about the excitement it's creating," he said. "We've had calls from all across the country from people who want to buy it or see it."

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