

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

FANTASY 5

9, 10, 29, 30, 31

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 5, 4, 0

Evening picks: 8, 8, 7

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 07, Eureka

2nd Place: 01, Gold Rush

3rd Place: 10, Solid Gold

Race Time: 1:49.41



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

■ Todd Lorin Nelson, a 13-year employee of the Miami-Dade (Fla.) county clerk's office, was summoned for jury duty in April 2003, reported to the courtroom, and was quickly dismissed. However, according to police, he repeatedly called his boss over the next few months to say that he had been selected as a juror for a big case but couldn't talk about it (all the while drawing his \$35,000 government salary), and it was not until October that the boss finally investigated, resulting in Nelson's arrest.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Love is the crocodile on the river of desire."

— Bhartrihari (ca. 625)



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Car meets bus



The typically busy intersection of Olympic and Lincoln boulevards was blocked off by police during rush hour Thursday after an MTA bus collided with a sedan (see inset), driven by Julie Blumberg of Silver Lake. Blumberg, who was traveling south on Lincoln Boulevard, said the bus struck the side of her car and pushed it into the middle of the intersection. The bus had many passengers, but no one was seriously injured, police said.

John Wood/Daily Press

Samohi will pick its idol

By Daily Press staff

SAMOH — Look out, William Hung. Judges at Santa Monica High School will pick the next "Samohi Idol" this evening from among 10 finalists.

Modeled after the popular television program "American Idol," the Samohi Idol competition is down to the last finalists. Those performers will take the stage in Barnum Hall this evening at 7 p.m. Tickets cost \$10, with proceeds benefiting the class of 2004.

A panel of three judges — a Samohi advisor and two teachers — will then narrow down the field to three. A winner will be picked by the audience, and sent to sing at a Fox Studios industry party this

See IDOL, page 6



Del Pastrana/Daily Press

Santa Monica High School students rehearse in Barnum Hall to be the next 'Samohi Idol.'

Oly High students look for graduation venue

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Dozens of Santa Monica seniors who are graduating or are close to graduating are looking for a place to party this June.

Students at Olympic High School — Santa Monica's alternative high school — have found

themselves without a venue for their annual senior celebration, when students are recognized for their achievements.

For the past two years, a local hotel has sponsored the event, but this year the venue is booked. So in an 11th hour attempt, Olympic senior Jacqueline Franco has taken it upon herself to find a place

where she and her classmates can celebrate with their families.

Franco, who will pursue a career as an interior designer, has sent out a dozen query letters to area hotels, hoping to find a sponsor for the June event. Olympic officials are planning the event to be the week of June 7, depending on availabilities.

"Because I'm not a 'regular' student, I want something special to celebrate," said Franco, 18, who transferred from Santa Monica High School last year. She added that she'll walk the line during the graduation ceremonies at Samohi on June 17, but she wants to make

See GRADUATION, page 6

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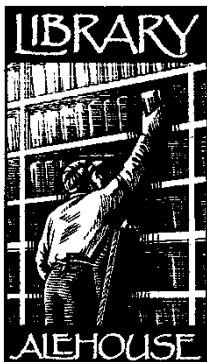
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Happy 2nd B-Day Will Jenkins



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

The stars show the kind of day you'll have:

★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★-Average
★★-So-so ★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ You finally get to clear the air and grind out a problem. Expect a touch more chaos in the process, but know that someone close is well-intended. Watch a tendency to go to extremes; the end result might not be pleasant. Tonight: Change plans if need be.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Share more of what has been worrying you. Others prove to be unusually receptive, which delights and surprises you. With conversation and understanding, you feel much better. Express yourself and allow more humor in. Clear the air of tension, please. Tonight: Plunge into the weekend.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ You might feel a lot better about a domestic matter than you have in a while. You gain a great deal of clarity and understanding. Someone has as much to share as you do. Let the good feelings transform what has been difficult. Tonight: Curb the socializing, and head home.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ You might wish for more, but you cannot express what it is. Discuss your feelings with someone who could be quite helpful. Your instincts are right-on about a work-related matter. Gain greater insight. Be willing to adapt to new ideas and technology. Tonight: Relax with your pals.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Indulge yourself. Start planning a vacation or special weekend. You find that planning comes easily. Ask friends along if you want to really let go. A loved one could express jealousy. The results could be unpleasant. Careful. Tonight: Whirl into the weekend; have bubbly with a special friend.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Clear out what has been an albatross. An associate or friend supports you. The end results will be obvious to everyone. Express your thoughts without worry. Tonight: Deal with uproar on the home front only when you are ready.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ You could be delighted by a partner or a group of people. You can start planning for something you have wanted for a while. Keep your own counsel, as someone might be in "bully" mode later in the day. Tonight: Do what is good for you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Consider another's revelation your gain. You might not have to work so hard to prove your point. Refuse to get into saying "I told you so." A meeting helps direct your energy as well as that of others. Network away. Tonight: The more, the merrier.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ You could be on overload with all that is dropped on your plate. Handle what you must with an eye to the weekend. You finally find that someone key is ready to talk. Jump on this opportunity, as this person could change his or her mind. Tonight: Out and about. Flex with others.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Your ability to read between the lines comes through. You might be ready to confront what has been a difficult situation. Revise your thinking, if appropriate. Note a tendency to be a bit judgmental. Tonight: Take off ASAP.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Investigate what might be going on with a financial partnership, especially if you are the other half! You gain professionally as a result. How you speak to someone might have a lot to do with his or her willingness to share. Tonight: Opt for one-on-one rather than with the gang.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Others finally open up. Building security proves to be primary. Use your finances carefully, even though you could feel freed up, to a degree. For now, don't overindulge or spend. A boss might be a wee bit too demanding. Tonight: With others.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Red Cross wants you to be prepared

By Daily Press staff

With disasters like earthquakes and terrorist threats on the minds of many Southern Californians, the Santa Monica Red Cross has offered some tips to be prepared for the unexpected.

What you can do to prepare:

Finding out what can happen is the first step. Once you have determined the events possible and the potentials in your community, it is important that you discuss them with your family or household. Develop a disaster plan together.

1. Create an emergency communications plan.
2. Establish a meeting place.
3. Assemble a disaster supplies kit.
4. Check on the school emergency plan of any school-age children you may have.

If disaster strikes:

- Remain calm, and be patient.
- Follow the advice of local officials.
- Listen to your radio or television for news and instructions.
- If the disaster occurs near you, check for injuries. Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people.

■ If the disaster occurs near your home and you are there, check for damages using a flashlight. Do not light matches or candles, or turn on electrical switches. Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards. Sniff for gas leaks starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows and get everyone outside quickly.

- Shut off any other damaged utilities.
- Confine or secure your pets.
- Call your family contact — do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.

■ Check on your neighbors, especially those living alone, elderly or disabled. The Santa Monica Red Cross has several free terrorism/disaster preparedness brochures, as well as inexpensive disaster kits available for the home and office.

For more information, call Tom Viscount at the Santa Monica Red Cross at (310) 394-3773.

Unifying for cheaper energy

By Daily Press staff

With temperatures rising and energy bills doing the same, Santa Monica residents may be able to look forward to more cost-friendly utilities in the future.

The city of Santa Monica and electricAmerica, one of the nation's leading energy service providers, announced this week that they will prepare a report to help the city determine the feasibility of implementing a "Community Choice Aggregation" plan.

The plan would analyze the historical electric consumption information of a city's anticipated customer portfolio in order to plan future wholesale power purchases.

The city would still use local electric utilities for transmitting and distributing energy, but it would have the option of contracting out the functions of buying power at wholesale and retail rates.

In essence, City Hall could combine its energy load with industrial, commercial and residential customers within municipal boundaries to make energy cheaper for everyone.

Made possible by the passage of Assembly Bill 117 in September 2002, "Community Choice Aggregation" seems to be gaining momentum in California as more cities and counties look for ways to reduce energy costs for their constituents, increase administrative control over state energy efficiency and conservation funds and deliver more environmentally friendly sources of power.

"We believe that Community Choice Aggregation can provide environmental, monetary and other benefits to the city of Santa Monica and its constituents," said Susan Munves, the city's Energy and Green Building Program administrator. "We are excited to begin investigating the viability of such a plan and are fortunate to be working with our energy service provider, electricAmerica, to help us determine how to best move forward."

surf report

Look for a mix of slowly fading SW swell and NW wind/ground swell today. The good summer breaks in Northern LA through the north half of the South Bay see waist- to shoulder-high surf, along with some occasionally bigger sets at top breaks. South Bay breaks will be in the waist- to chest-high range with a few shoulder high sets at the standouts. Expect light winds in the morning with NW winds 10-15 knots through the afternoon.

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

Today the water is:

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	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	8:45	-0.3	7:04	2.8	12:45	5.4	4:22	3.0
SUNDAY	10:16	-0.3	9:28	3.1	1:57	5.0	6:09	3.4
MONDAY	11:34	-0.4	11:30	2.7	3:36	4.8	6:55	3.8
TUESDAY	NA	NA	12:33	-0.5	5:11	4.8	7:27	4.2
WEDNESDAY	12:41	2.1	1:18	-0.5	6:24	4.9	7:56	4.6
THURSDAY	1:32	1.4	1:55	-0.4	7:21	5.0	8:22	4.9
FRIDAY	2:15	0.9	2:27	-0.2	8:09	4.9	8:47	5.2

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The Q-Line

There has been a lot of speculation recently that terrorists will once again attack the United States. And it's supposed to happen relatively soon. Before the presidential election, some predict. As we witnessed in Spain several weeks ago, the devastating attack on the train dramatically changed the outcome of that country's elections.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know,

"If we have another terrorist attack, will it change your view on the politics of Washington and possibly change your vote in the presidential elections?"

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



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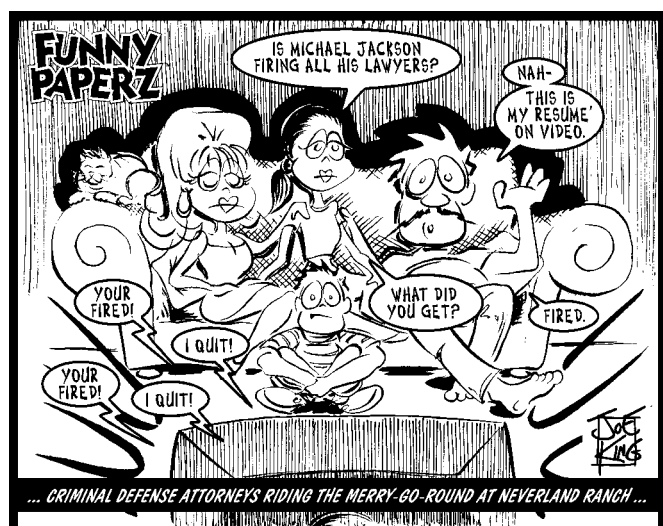
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OPINION

LETTERS



Member: AAEC & NCS & SCCS

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What wrong with you, Santa Monica?

Editor:

Since a significant number of Californians regularly involve themselves in Alaskan environmental issues, I feel it is my duty to weigh in on Santa Monica's passing of an outdoor smoking ban at the pier, beaches and local bus stops. First, as an American and an individual, I have to ask, "are the majority of people in Santa Monica and all of The People's Republic of Southern California for that matter, really card carrying collective social fascists? Or is it just the individuals you elect to public office?"

The mayor and supporting city council members say the new law is needed to protect the environment. Huh? From what, the toxic effects of cotton, the primary content of cigarette filters? Or are they possibly concerned about the leaching effect a decomposing cigar butt in the sand will have on overall water quality in the Pacific Ocean? And oh yeah, I suppose it is plausible that all of that cigar, pipe and cigarette smoke might be contributing to the greenhouse effect and global warming right? Give me a break.

No, the real issue here doesn't have anything to do with the health effects of second-hand smoke or the environment. The real issue for Santa Monica is when are you people going to wake up from your chai tea and yoga hangovers and stop allowing government to control, tax, monitor and dictate every aspect of your increasingly freedom restricted lives?

Do you, as voters and constituents of these unabashed social engineers, ever stop to consider what happens every time you relinquish and give up individual freedoms and liberties in the name of the supposed collective good? No matter how these issues are presented and argued, or how well intentioned the individuals and special interests pushing these invasive social agendas may be, these types of laws and ordinances are an affront to personal choice, responsibility and freedom — the very ideals and principles upon which this country was founded. Principles which Santa Monica's elected officials just might need to be reminded of during the next election.

Gary Patton
Douglas, Alaska

YOUR OPINION MATTERS!



Please send letters to:

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The campaign ride to November election promises to be bumpy



**MY
WRITE**
By Bill Bauer

This fall's municipal elections should provide a varied roster of candidates for office, important issues to vote on and plenty of pulse-pounding excitement.

Sources tell me that all four City Council incumbents will seek reelection in November. Councilmen Michael Feinstein, Richard Bloom and Ken Genser were all backed by the powerful Santa Monica's for Renters' Rights organization four years ago. SMRR should support both Bloom for his second full term and Genser who will be going for his fifth term.

Word is that Councilman Herb Katz will run for a second term. He was previously on City Council from 1984 to 1992. Katz is the only non-SMRR up for reelection.

The big question is whether Feinstein will get SMRR's endorsement for a third term. Last year, he was accused by fellow Green Party members of misappropriating a contribution and diversion of funds. Although no charges were filed and Green party representatives even withdrew a small claims court lawsuit against the councilman, his ethics are an issue.

If SMRR determines that Feinstein is a liability, he will be tossed aside at their annual congress which will probably be held in July. With or without SMRR, you can bet the family Oldsmobile that he'll run anyway.

Speculation is that Abby Arnold and Josefina Aranda, who both ran in 2002, will seek SMRR endorsements. Current school board member, Maria Leon Vasquez, also is on SMRR's list of potential council candidates.

All three Santa Monica Community College District trustees — Graham Pope, Margaret Quinones and Annette Shamey — are expected to run for reelection.

Jose Escarce is expected to run for a second term on the Santa Monica/Malibu Unified School District Board of Education. Maria Leon Vasquez also will seek reelection if she doesn't run for City Council. School board member Mike Jordan has announced he'll not seek a second term.

Two seats on Rent Control Board will be open.

As usual, SMRR has a fat list of well-known activists to draw from while non-SMRR ranks are thin, indeed. But, with angry school supporters and the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce expected to be major players, new faces will turn up and mount strong challenges in what

promises to be a contentious election.

What's a city election without a trumped-up rent control issue on the ballot? The Rent Control Board is studying an amendment to the city charter that specifies the annual rent increase (general adjustment) formula should be based on "75 percent of the previous year's Consumer Price Index for Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County with a cap of 7 percent." This differs from the present formula, which is based on apartment maintenance and operating cost increases.

A historical comparison of the two formulas indicates annual rent increases based on the CPI would have been higher, on average, than with the present formula. And if this makes the ballot, SMRR will hysterically implore renters to vote for it or "lose your rent controlled apartment."

Another hot issue is the Community for Excellent Public Schools initiative which would change the city charter, mandating the city of Santa Monica annually give 4 percent of designated general fund revenues, or \$6 million, to the school district. Additional monies would be due when city revenues grow by more than 3.5 percent with a cap of 8 percent. CEPS campaigners are expected to submit petitions next week to qualify the measure for November's election.

Without no counter proposal in the works, the CEPS initiative will be on the ballot. If it passes, approximately \$12 million in new annual revenue will have been generated locally for the schools within a year — including last fall's \$225 per parcel tax increase.

The advantage of CEPS' proposal is that it guarantees a reliable and never-ending revenue stream for the district. The city's contribution would be unrestricted. However, there's no mechanism to assure spending will not continue to outpace income.

The city could find new revenue sources — an increase in the hotel bed tax has been mentioned — and/or cut services to fund its obligation. Various municipal employee unions, including the Police Officers and Firefighters Associations, fear passage will mean a loss of jobs and therefore, oppose the measure. Parents, school supporters and the Chamber of Commerce are supporting the charter amendment.

The SMRR leadership is seriously divided on the issue. Some SMRR leaders have been actively pushing it while others, including most City Council persons, are firmly against it. Insiders predict the measure could fracture and weaken the powerful organization.

Tighten your seat belts. We're all in for a bumpy ride.

(Bill Bauer is a longtime Santa Monica resident and a freelance writer).

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

OPINION



A Mother's Day tale with the finest ingredients added

PISTACHIO PERSPECTIVE

By
Susan Ann Connor



With Mother's Day only a week away, I thought it would be appropriate to pass along this timely tale.

Once upon a time there was a cook and a chef, who took turns being the cook and the chef ... they didn't know the difference, anyway. They were the finest ingredient collaborators in the land.

One fine day in May at the sudden behest of the monarch, they were called to the local palace. They thought perhaps they were summoned to sweeten up the menu with a decadent flourless chocolate mousse cake (their specialty) for the festivities that evening. The announcement was to be made that the prince and his princess were with child. But when the cook and chef arrived, they were surprised to be ushered into the family therapy room instead of the kitchen, and greeted by the king (a widower), who was beside himself, because his son (the prince) was beside himself, because his wife (the new princess) was beside herself, for she had never been a mother before and was afraid she would be a half-baked one.

"What would it take," she cried, "what 7 ingredients do I need to be a great mother?"

The cook and chef excused themselves to the kitchen and immediately got to work on the unusual recipe request. Their reputation was on the line.

"This is a tall order," said the cook to the chef, munching on a snickerdoodle.

"Yeah, mmmmm hmmm ... ummm ... yeah, geez ..." the chef agreed. They both pulled out their thinking caps and quickly put them on.

After some time, nearly fried, the chef threw off his cap, tossed his spatula in the air, and screamed, "I know. I'll ring up my mom. She'll know."

"Brilliant, simply brilliant," the cook smirked with pride at the genius of his partner, pounding his wooden spoon on the bread board. For the cook, like the chef, knew moms know everything.

But before he could ring her up, a messenger appeared at the scullery door with a fax papyrus. The cook and chef knocked noodles staring at this fax papyrus. "Gulp," you could hear from their innards. They were mystified. Talk about mother's intuition ... the chef's mom had miraculously known what her son needed and sent this sublime recipe before he even made an inquiry.

Ingredients:

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One charged motor ... to keep her running A parrot (or two) ... so she doesn't have to repeat herself.

Two 12-pound weights ... for strong arms to hold and hug their hurts away.

Several eyes ... in the back of her head.

One thermal cooler ... to minimize spoilage.

Two tall oak trees in the backyard ... to reflect her supportive nature.

One giant can of brains ... to think things through.

One bottomless pit of wit ... for obvious reasons.

A broken record ... that says, "everything is going to be OK, honey."

One big dog ... to remain fearless

One hula hoop ... to remember she was once a child.

One computer ... for patience and understanding.

One dancing partner ... to retain balance and rhythm.

One gigantic window ... to bring sunshine into her children's lives.

A pinch of irreverence ... 'cause it's fun, and ya need it.

Directions:

Get the biggest container you can find.

You may have to use the Grand Canyon. Combine all these ingredients, making sure not to miss a drop of anything. Some are extremely rare and will not be found on ordinary shelves. You may even have to travel to far-away places. If you have the good fortune of acquiring all of these treasures, keep the finished product close to your heart, for she is one of a kind, and to date has never been duplicated.

It goes without saying the cook and the chef were overwhelmed with the succulent recipe. To celebrate, the two whipped up their decadent flourless chocolate mousse cake posthaste, and gave it, along with the mom recipe, to the princess, who not only became a great mother to two beautiful children, but a great chef (and cook) herself. And ta da ... everyone lived happily ever after. Lalalala ...

(Susan Ann Connor can be reached at pastachiocolumn@aol.com. She wishes all mothers a Happy Mother's Day, especially her own immeasurably loving mother).

Back Pain?

West L.A., CA – According to a recently released back pain relief report, most back pain sufferers have no idea how to eliminate their pain. Some use heat, others ice. From sleeping on the floor, to pillows underneath the legs, back pain relief techniques vary. But thanks to a free report, local back pain sufferers finally know exactly what to do. To get a copy of the free "Back Pain Relief Report".

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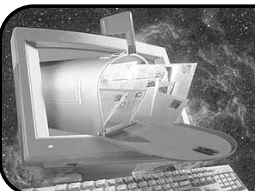
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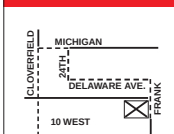


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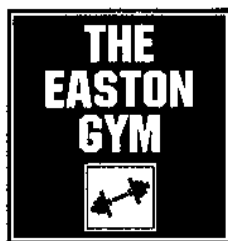


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LOCAL

Time running out for City Hall, school district

FUNDS, from page 1

by voters, the charter amendment would force City Hall to give the schools 4 percent of a portion of the general fund — which is funded by sales and utility taxes, and other revenues — and upping that by one percentage point if the fund grows by more than 3.5 percent. In the current year, the designated portion equals about \$150 million, and 4 percent of that is \$6 million.

At least two alternatives have been discussed by officials.

Deasy said the school district has submitted a proposal to City Hall, but declined to give any details or comment on how it differs from the other two options.

McCarthy on Tuesday outlined many of the details of a possible agreement to the City Council. Under her plan, City Hall would agree to pay the school district at least \$6 million a year, with an annual adjustment based on inflation and other, unspecified "triggers" that could equal an additional \$1 million or more each year.

City Hall already gives the district \$3 million a year and the past two years, has found an additional \$2.25 million in one-time funds to help the struggling schools. In order to bump up the "base" funding from \$3 million to \$6 million, City Hall

would likely have to raise the hotel bed tax, a proposal expected to appear on the November ballot.

Deasy, who was accompanied by members of the school board and the district's director of finance, said he's hoping to find a long-term solution as possible.

"While I think it's good energy invested at the time of creation, constantly recreating it is something, actually, I'm not interested in doing," Deasy said.

Details still have to be worked out, and then presented to CEPS members. There's no guarantee the compromise Deasy and McCarthy reach will be accepted. CEPS co-chair Shari Davis reminded everyone at the meeting that CEPS has spent "months and months and months analyzing and crafting and looking at the measure."

While the talks continue, details of any possible settlement between the schools and City Hall have given McCarthy plenty to think about, she joked.

"A development today is that I have a quote of the day," McCarthy told a group of about 25 people gathered for the school liaison committee meeting. "Our finance director told me today that I was over analyzing things, and when the finance director tells you you're over analyzing things, it's time to step back a little."

Samohi 'idol' will perform at entertainment industry party

IDOL, from page 1

summer, said Dana Danesi, an English teacher overseeing the competition.

"It's been really fun," Danesi said. "They did it last year for the first time and it went really well, it was a huge success."

A total of 25 Samohi students auditioned to become the school's second idol. The finalists include Levi Booker, Jessie Clemens, Rachael Gross, Kyndacee Harris, Ari Holland, Salomae Kpohanu, Mai Anh Perches, Raquel Rodriguez, Paulina Sekulski and Maytal Warshaw, said Simon Hanna, a representative for the class of 2004.

Holland, 16, a sophomore, plans to

sing "Journey to the Past" from the film "Anastasia." If she's picked by judges as one of the final three, she said she'll sing Shania Twain's "Man, I Feel Like A Woman."

"I love to sing, it's just something that I'm really good at — or that's what my friends tell me," said Holland, who hopes to study performing arts at NYU after high school. "It sounded like something to do and I said, 'That's cool' — but I didn't really know about the end prize, so I was like, 'Cool' ... I try to do as much involved with singing as I can."

— John Wood

'Underdogs' look forward to celebrating graduation together

GRADUATION, from page 1

sure Olympic's senior celebration tradition lives on.

At Olympic, students study at their own pace. The student body depends on what day it is, as many students come and go quickly. When students earn enough credits, they graduate individually by ringing a bell in the hallway while classmates cheer them on.

Olympic Principal Suzanne Toyryla started the senior celebration when she came to the school in 1997. Since then, the senior celebration has been held off campus.

"It's when students get acknowledged and receive scholarships," said Marcia

Gheight, a staffer at Olympic. "It's just special for them because these students have always been the underdogs."

Olympic students — who range in age from 15 to 20 years old — have had a rough go of it in their short lives. About 30 percent of the students are on probation. More than 20 percent of the population are special education students. Half of the students work to support their family. Some are pregnant, some of their parents have died. Others come from abusive and broken homes.

There are 22 students who have graduated this year at Olympic so far, but those just a class or two away will be honored as well.

**SANTA MONICA SUMMER GUIDE
COMING TO NEWSTANDS IN MID JUNE 2004**

Entertainment

Music Scene



John Oates

John Oates makes first solo appearance in LA at Roxy

Release of his first solo live concert DVD also debuted

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

After three decades of being the "other half" in the most popular duo in musical history, John Oates has ventured out on his own. And he's picked Los Angeles to debut his first solo live concert DVD, as well as perform alone.

Oates in 2002 made his first CD without his longtime partner, Daryl Hall. For 30 years, the two musicians have continuously produced hit after hit, making them household names since the 1970s.

"I feel I am in a unique position, in that people really don't know what to expect from me musically and yet my name is so familiar to them," Oates said. "It's cool that after all this time, I can do whatever I want without being restricted by anyone's expectations."

Oates' first solo project, "Phunk Shui," as well as the release of a new DVD, "Live at the Historic Wheeler Opera House," will be highlighted in a live performance by Oates at the Roxy in Hollywood next Tuesday, May 4.

The DVD is a recording of a sold-out concert in December at the opera house in Aspen, Colo., where Oates lives with his wife, Aimee, and his son, Tanner. The DVD captures an evening of stories and songs accompanied by "Little Blue," an Aspen-based band that Oates regularly performs with. And what may be surprising for those not familiar with Oates as a solo artist, is that the guy can really sing and has quite a sense of humor. He proves that on the DVD — Oates is at his best sharing music and humorous insights with the audience.

"When they see the DVD they'll see the more personal side of the songs," Oates said. "There are anecdotes and funny stories about how they were written and the context they were written in."

In addition to live concert footage, there are three never before released music videos, one of which stars Paris Hilton as the "It Girl" and another "Color

of Love," filmed on a Hollywood rooftop. Viewers also can see the making of "Phunk Shui," which is a behind-the-scenes look at the people and spirit that went into the creation of the album. And like any respectable ski bum, Oates has included a segment on Telemark skiing set in the breathtaking scenery of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado.

The collection of songs on the CD are a blend of '70s inspired funk and acoustic soul. Perhaps the most remarkable part of his latest journey is that Oates put his CD together in less than a month.

"The whole thing came together for me one night in my studio when I discovered an old demo tape, on it were four songs I had totally forgotten about that just blew me away," Oates said. "But the most amazing thing about them was the fact that they seemed to mesh seamlessly with the new songs that I had been writing."

"I assembled the material in a random order, burned a CD and suddenly, I had an album."

The songs are a well-crafted collection of sure to be pop classics, many written in collaboration with writers such as Keith Follese, Jed Leiber, Arthur Baker and Steve Postell. And the band is just as killer: Steve Holley on drums; Tom "T-Bone" Wolk on bass; Lieber on keyboards and Oates on guitar.

The sound is a blend of funk and acoustic soul.

"I knew that these songs needed to be played," he said. "I wanted a band feel to this project. I wanted to get back to sitting in a studio playing live and catching a vibe with great musicians. The most important thing for me was rediscover-

ing the spontaneity and joy in the recording process."

And while he spent much of his musical career with Hall & Oates as the supporting singer, Oates comes out amazingly strong in his latest endeavor.

"... I did almost all of the vocals myself," he said. "I enjoy working out and layering background arrangements. On the lead vocals, I was very conscious of delivering and doing justice to the lyrics. It's kind of an 'old school' approach but to me it's all about making the listener believe that the singer believes."

Oates' schedule is hectic these days as he tours around the country promoting the DVD. He also is finishing a new CD with Daryl Hall, which is expected to be released this fall. A single from the untitled album is expected to be released in August. Oates describes the music as soul classics in their style with a modern twist.

Hall & Oates also is performing with the Average White Band and Michael McDonald from the Doobie Brothers in a tour called the "Rock and Soul Review," which Oates describes as their own version of Lollapalooza. The tour should hit the LA area and portions of California this fall. They are scheduled to perform at the Universal Amphitheater on Oct. 15.

Hall & Oates have released two albums since 1996 — "Marigold Sky" and "Do It For Love," which garnered a No. 1 single last year.

Oates will perform solo at the Roxy on May 4. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available by calling (310) 278-9457 or at Ticketmaster. Tickets are \$20.

Theatre

'Sueno' plays like dream, a long and sordid one

BY HEATHER RICH
Daily Press Staff Writer



"Sueno" means dream in Spanish. In the new play of the same name currently running at the Morgan-Wixson Theatre, writer Jose Rivera tries to separate our dreams from our waking lives and vice-versa.

The result is entertaining, intense and humorous at times.

The first act finds Basilio, the king of Spain, overwrought with anxiety over the arrival of his son, as astrologers have predicted he will be a tyrannical monarch with little concern for his people. When the queen dies in childbirth, the child's fate is sealed. Segismundo is sent to a tower and locked away from the outside world — his only human contact is a man named Clotaldo who is actually first counsel to the king. Enter Rosaura, a fiery young woman who is out for revenge against the man who dishonored her, much as her mother was dishonored years before. Armed with her

absent father's sword, she travels toward Basilio's kingdom with her clownish friend, Clarin. Waiting in the wings to overtake the throne are Astolfo and Estrella, two cousins and relatives of the king who wish to be married and placed in power, since the King has no living heir. So they thought.

The play, directed by Bill Wilday, is based on the Spanish classic, "Life is a Dream" by Pedro Calderon de la Barca. It has been sparingly updated, with contemporary language interrupting some of the most dramatic and intense scenes. Although it makes for a good laugh, it constantly changes the tone of the material, going from humor to drama and back again. Much like, well, a dream might do.

The performances are what really hold this play together. Gabriela Garcia Medina gives beautiful strength and depth as Rosaura — you don't doubt her will or conviction for a single second. Manfred Hoffer as Clarin provides steady, well-timed humor with wonderful expressions and perfect body language. King Basilio, played by Hadrian Cortez, is compelling as our arrogant, tortured royalty. Eddie Martinez and Valerie McCann adopting the roles of Astolfo and Estrella have exquisite timing and chemistry on stage together. Carlos Linares puts in a stellar performance as Clotaldo, a character you can't really like but are forced to respect. The role of Segismundo is hyper-performed by Robert Kimmel. He is too intense in an already intense role, almost like he's forcing it. The script wanders and the show is quite long,

running almost a full two and a half hours.

If you really enjoy classical theatre, this show should not be missed. Sueno is playing at the Morgan-Wixson Theatre located at 2627 Pico Blvd. every weekend through May 22. Fridays and Saturdays the show begins at 8 p.m. with a Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. Don't worry about getting a good seat, the Morgan-Wixson is a beautiful large space and there is not a bad seat in the house. General admission is \$15; seniors are \$12 and students with valid identification pay \$10. For more information, call (310) 828-7519.



Brother, can you spare a flea?

BY HEATHER RICH
Special to the Daily Press

Board up the windows and lock the doors. The plague is back and has hit downtown Santa Monica. I am not talking about

the homeless problem.

"One Flea Spare," written by Naomi Wallace and performed by the Sight Unseen Theatre Group, finds us in plague-ridden London in the 16th Century. A tense, unhappy, aristocratic married couple are within days of freedom from being quarantined in their home when two refugees sneak into their home, forcing them to all be quarantined another 28 days together.

This is not a happy play. You can feel the horror of the time and almost smell the disease of our characters, physical and emotional. There are moments of real laughter, though they are few and far between. The script centers around the four principal characters stuck in their home, with occasional comic relief from a "guard" who makes sure nobody leaves the house but any precious items worth a shilling are swiftly removed.

The performances are dramatic, haunting, interesting, frustrating and entirely compelling. The accents are spot on — the actors all provide convincing, strong performances with depth and conviction. Other than some mumbled dialogue, it was hard to find anything lacking. This is real drama performed by dedicated actors. It was an impressive performance and script.

"One Flea Spare" is playing at the Other Space at the Santa Monica Playhouse located at 1211 4th St. in downtown Santa Monica. Tickets are \$15 with \$12 rates for students and seniors. The show begins at 8 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights and closes May 8.



ENTERTAINMENT

Critics doubtful 'Godsend' will bring in the 'Di Nero'

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Nobody but the man himself knows for sure what Robert De Niro was thinking when he signed on for the god-awful "Godsend," but my guess is it was something along the lines of "Hey, it's a paycheck." He's De Niro, after all. He survived "The Adventures of Rocky & Bullwinkle," he'll survive this. Or perhaps Bobby D was busy buying up real estate in Tribeca and didn't bother to read the entire script. In all fairness, the first 30 minutes or so have the makings of a decent psychological thriller, but in the second act the film falls apart like a marriage made in Vegas. In 2001, Britain's Nick Hamm directed an entertaining European cult flick called "The Hole" with youngsters Keira Knightley and Thora Birch, but in this his first U.S. film he struggles to maintain control over a convoluted story and veteran cast making dubious choices.

Greg Kinnear and Rebecca Romijn-Stamos are Paul and



Jessie Duncan, a loving couple whose lives are shattered when their 8-year-old son Adam (Cameron Bright) is killed in a car accident. Enter De Niro as Dr. Richard Wells, a former college professor of Jessie's who offers to bring Adam back

using a highly experimental and illegal cloning procedure. The Duncans unwisely agree because they're desperate, heartbroken and clearly never saw "Pet Semetary," which makes a hell of a case against reincarnating precocious little tykes. Dead kids, film history has taught us, should remain dead. Once the new model Adam passes the age at which his predecessor expired, he begins to have nightmares involving an angry doppelganger who encourages him to behave badly. There's an outlandish twist, of course — ever since "The Sixth Sense" curveballs are mandatory in this genre — and Paul discovers Wells is a mad scientist. In one of the film's most laughably bad moments — and there are several — De Niro, alone in his car after having just whacked Kinnear upside the head in a church, pounds on the steering wheel and cries "Why? Why didn't he listen to me?" A better question would have been, "Why? Why am I in this stinker?"

(Rated PG-13 for violence including frightening images, a scene of sexuality and some thematic material. Running time: 100 minutes)

'Mean Girls' actors come up short on the screen

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Ubiquitous teen queen Lindsay Lohan stars as a girl raised in the African bush who discovers that life in an American high school is fraught with far more peril than anything she ever encountered in the jungle. Penned by Saturday Night Live's Tina Fey, "Mean Girls" plays out much like the "Weekend Update" segments Fey co-hosts with Jimmy Fallon — there's some funny stuff up front, but as things move along, the laughs are harder and harder to come by. The cast is awash with not-ready-for-

prime-time-players who are apparently not ready for big movies either. As the sad-sack math teacher who serves as the film's moral compass, Fey doesn't come correct with the acerbic wit she employs to great effect on SNL's mock newscasts. Tim Meadows was awfully good in the underrated "The Ladies Man," but his talents don't jibe with this she-stuff. (The more feminine Fallon might have been a better option). Ana Gasteyer and Amy Poehler are capable TV sketch comedians, but neither possesses an appreciable big screen presence. Lohan is typically pleasing as the fish out of water under attack by mini-skirt-wearing land sharks, but you get the sense she's on cruise control here. This, no doubt, is a result of her having played an almost identical role in the recent

"Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen."

The spotlight shines on Rachel McAdams, who is wickedly entertaining as Regina George, the school's manipulative queen bee and foil to good-girl Cady Heron (Lohan). Though "The Hot Chick" was an abomination, the handful of moviegoers who saw it will remember McAdams. She's got "it," and as the movie's baddest bad girl she flaunts it for all its worth. Lacey Chabert (Claudia from the late Fox drama "Party of Five") and newcomer Amanda Seyfried complete The Plastics, the superficial A-list girl clique whose leadership Cady and Regina tussle over.

(Rated PG-13 for sexual content, language and some teen partying. Running time: 93 minutes)

Rebecca Romijn-Stamos gets familiar with her 'Godsend' role and her co-stars

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

There was nary a mention of the "D word" — divorce — when Rebecca Romijn-Stamos sat with a group of showbiz scribes to discuss her new movies, "The Punisher" and "Godsend." Those not living under a rock are surely aware by now that the leggy model turned actress recently split with John Stamos, her husband of six years and a man who is destined to toil forever in the shadow of the mighty Olsen twins.

OK, so we didn't ask Rebecca for her thoughts about a future without a hyphenated surname because, frankly, we didn't know at the time that her marriage was kaput. And even if we *had* known, it really isn't any of our business. Movies, though, are our business, so let's get down to it ...

QUESTION: "Godsend" is as good an argument against cloning as anything the religious right could dream up. What are your feelings on the controversial science?

REBECCA ROMIJN-STAMOS: In the right hands, and used for the right purposes, cloning could be good. We had a doctor consulting on this movie who is working on cloning organs. He's close to perfecting that, the only thing he can't do is the liver for some reason. That's pretty amazing.

Q: Given that the film was shot in only a month, how were you, Greg Kinnear and young Cameron Bright able to develop a family chemistry?

RRS: Nick (Hamm, the director) had us spend some time alone, going to the park and hanging out. We didn't have time to go back to our trailers between takes, so we would play games and make up songs and throw stuff at each other. On weekends, we'd go to the movies together.

Q: We're assuming you didn't throw stuff at co-star Robert DeNiro, though.

RRS: He's great. Super mellow and low-key. He also

came up for rehearsals before we started shooting and, you know, it's always uncomfortable whenever you're just getting to know each other — him included.

Q: What was it like working with Thomas Jane on "The Punisher?"

RRS: I wasn't extremely familiar with his work going in, but I knew that he was really good. I had no preconceptions about what he was going to be doing with his character, and I couldn't believe it when I got up there. He'd already been working on it for a month, and that character is such a weirdo that Thomas was in a really weird place by the time I got up there. I was, like, who is this person? But he really raised the bar for all of us. I thought he was awesome.

Q: "The Punisher" is the first R-rated comic book movie, a genre that traditionally caters to a PG-13 audience. Was going "R" a bold move or a bad gamble?

RRS: I was in shock. Even I wasn't prepared for all the violence, but it's punk rock. It's fun, and unapologetically macho. They went for the R-rating because that's what the Punisher does — he punishes. If they'd gone for a PG or PG-13 rating, it would have pissed off a huge fan base.

Q: You're now part of two successful comic book film franchises. Did you immerse yourself in the source material prior to making those movies?

RRS: Not really. I wasn't familiar with "The Punisher" at all, and I hadn't really been familiar with the "X-Men" when I started on those either.

Q: You were featured in a recent issue of Premiere Magazine dressed as some of the most iconic women in film history. That must have been an enjoyable gig, huh?

RRS: It was so fun, especially Sandy from "Grease." We had this amazing make-up artist who really knew how to contour my face to look like those actresses' faces. Once he started making my cheeks look like Olivia Newton John's, I started getting teary-eyed. It was the best half-hour of my life. They put on that song — you know, "You're The One That I Want" from the end of (the movie) — and I did the whole dance and sang at the top of my lungs

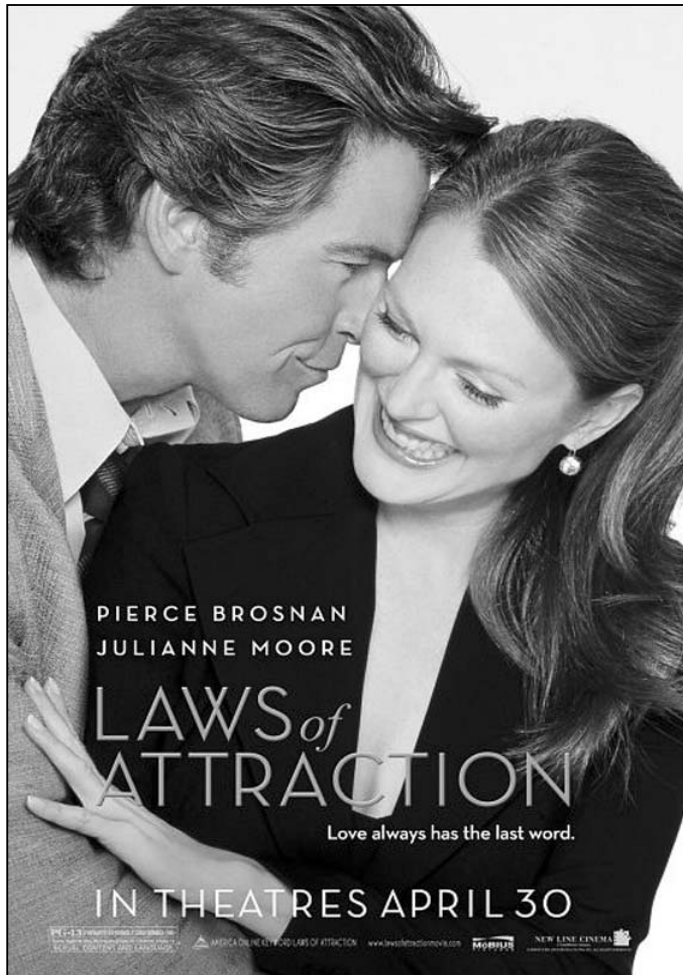


Rebecca Romijn-Stamos

ENTERTAINMENT



Mistrial declared in 'Laws of Attraction'



BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

The intriguing pairing of Julianne Moore and the ageless Pierce Brosnan unfortunately does not pan out in this predictable flick about two top-notch divorce attorneys who are adept at ending other people's relationships, but not very good at maintaining their own. Audrey Woods is a brilliant, obsessively organized litigator who graduated at the top of her class at Yale and has never lost a case. Daniel Rafferty's a disheveled drifter with an equally impressive courtroom record, though his methods are decidedly more unorthodox. As you might expect, these two opposites attract, but what Moore and Brosnan fail to do, despite commendable efforts, is engage us. Blame the disconnect on a prosaic screenplay which offers little in the way of convincing conflict — the cornerstone of any successful battle-of-the-sexes comedy — and gives character development such short-shrift that even a prodigious talent like Moore struggles to locate Audrey's arc. Even if the roles were better written, both Moore and Brosnan would be woefully miscast. Despite all her supposed smarts, the romance-challenged Audrey Woods may as well be Elle Woods, and Moore simply isn't the "Legally Blonde" sort. And cast-

ing the perpetually polished Brosnan as a rumpled tramp is akin to giving Ashton Kutcher a license to kill in a Bond movie. Come to think of it, with Ashton and Reese Witherspoon on board, "Laws of Attraction" might have worked out.

From the moment he meets her at a trial, Daniel sees something in Audrey that stirs his passion. Guess it's the red hair and freckles, because it sure as hell isn't her frosty demeanor, which doesn't melt away until audience interest has long been on ice. Daniel, of course, has the devil-may-care attitude that Hollywood is certain uptight career women secretly long for, and after a too-convenient chance meeting in a picturesque Irish hamlet, and a few too many shots of whisky, our disagreeing duo winds up married. News of their union somehow garners mention on page six of the New York Post (huh?), and the couple must pretend to be happily hitched in order to avoid career embarrassment. This dubious scenario becomes downright absurd when husband and wife again square off in court, in the mother of all conflicts of interest, representing opposing parties in a high-stakes divorce. Right then and there the verdict is in: This one's a mistrial.

(Rated PG-13 for sexual content and language. Running time: 90 minutes)



"Get A Life ... A Nightlife, That Is"

BY MAUREEN TOBIN & THOMAS YOUNG
Special to the Daily Press



Cuisine

"I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope and that enables you to laugh at life's realities."

— Theodore Geisel/Dr. Seuss

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"One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating."

— Luciano Pavarotti

That said, we take you to the pinnacle, the high point of your dining affairs at **Via Veneto Ristorante** in Santa Monica. Imagine a rustic Italian trattoria, but envision it being oh-so swanky with a space at once lavish, yet warm and intimate, with muted lighting so everyone looks good. If you are a connoisseur, a buongustaio (epicure), you will praise yourself for knowing about Via Veneto. Here, food becomes an elevated art. The highest accolades go to owners Marco Cialini, Fabrizio Bianconi, Warren Cucurullo and Duran Duran, who have an abundance of charisma and magnetism, as well as the brainpower of a super computer.

We had one of the two alcove window seats, which are great for discreet people watching and holding hands. You will want to study the menu and let your waiter discuss the specials, which are as prolific as the regular bill of fare. Our waiter, Pulcione, knew the ins and outs of every menu item. Each dish has the owners' own passionate signature. We started with "Pasta E Fagioli Romans," a traditional bean soup — Roman style. It's so smooth and tasty. For our first courses, we had sea scallops and scampi grilled, served on a skewer along with grilled baby calamari. Chef Ruben Vasquez is clearly an artist. Then we had an exquisite treat — the ravioli. Pumpkin-filled with a butter and sage sauce, lobster and zucchini filled ravioli, and asparagus and ricotta filled ravioli. These ravioli are some of the most sensational food we have ever eaten. You know how some raviolis can be heavy? These are paper thin, exquisite. Put a bite on your tongue and it will melt. It's amazing how the chef can get the skins so fine, so thin. All other raviolis will be compared to these forevermore. For the main course — langostini, baby lobsters or deep sea lobsters, grilled in a lemon oil sauce. Each bite was bliss. And the prime cut New York steak peppercorn, simply grilled in a peppercorn sauce was

perfect. When you come to Via Veneto, you will want to try many courses. This is not a place for a quick bite. Stay awhile, let the beauty of the space and the food take over. One of the desserts, the panacotta, or gluttony, is so silky smooth and light that it slides right down. Also a ricotta cheese tart — how can it possibly be so light? Close your eyes and visualize food so superb that each bite is a delicacy. Indeed, Via Veneto is a rare treat. Squisito (exquisite).

3009 Main St. (310) 399-1843

...

There is more to **Mo's Place** in Playa del Rey than that 8-ball on the roof that meets the eye. Mo's is a treasure trove of fantastic food and the best, most affable sports bar around. Mo Krant is a class-act gentleman dedicated not only to this wonderful venue for almost a decade, but to his family, the community and charity.

Upon first walking into Mo's, you probably notice the 10 TV monitors, four pool tables and a large, open bar. Then you stop short, somewhat in awe, as your eyes focus on the tables where people are dining on marvelous looking food. This isn't just any commonplace sports bar. The clientele is upscale and professional. Mo is inherently proud of this place and the menu with its hamburgers, steaks, fish, sandwiches, daily specials and super Italian Thursdays. The salads are enormous, served in a troth and the Chinese chicken salad is the best in L.A. Mo insists that nearly everything is fresh, that the portions are hearty and that the prices are reasonable. He is resolute that everyone must have a good time. That's easy. Simply take a look at his staff. From bartenders, servers, cooks, etc., every one of them has been with Mo for years and they love working for him — a true testament to the man. The huge breakfasts on Saturday and Sunday are known as the best in town. All pay-per-view Saturday college games are on — the ones you can't see elsewhere. On Sundays, there is always a sporting event being shown. Mo is there every day, making sure everything is up to his very high standards. He is surely the Wolfgang Puck of the sports bar world. His other passion is charity. Mo co-sponsors Rod's Day, a three-day community event to help raise money for children's cancer treatments for the John Wayne Cancer Center. Thus far, he has helped raise over \$1 million. He also finds time to coach little league and a zillion other things. Mo's Place is a great find, not only as a sports bar, but for the food, service, and happy feeling Mo creates. 203 Culver Blvd., (310) 822-6422.

(E-mail your comments or suggestions to smdp4nightlife@yahoo.com, and keep having fun).

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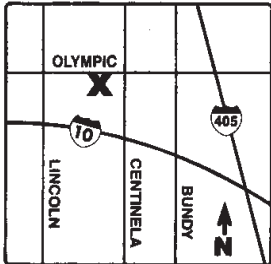
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Santa Monica Daily Press



STATE

Fire threat grows in San Bernardino forest

BY TIM MOLLOY
Associated Press Writer

LAKE ARROWHEAD — Five suspected arson fires this week rekindled fears among residents and forest officials already working feverishly to avoid a repeat of last fall's deadly wildfires near this mountain resort.

They have good reason to worry: The risk is even greater this year.

Bark beetles preying on drought-weakened pine trees have devastated hundreds of thousands of trees in the sprawling San Bernardino National Forest, killing nearly half the trees in some areas.

That has left huge sections of the forest ripe for another catastrophic blaze.

"What we are seeing is the death of a forest," said Jack Blackwell, forester of the Forest Service's Pacific Southwestern region. "If these drought conditions keep up, the entire forest is at risk of dying off, and of course this is a huge risk for fires."

Before last year's blazes, at least 40 percent of trees were dead on pockets of land that comprised more than one-third of the 670,000-acre forest, putting them at the highest risk of fire, said Forest Service spokesman Rick Alexander.

If combined, those areas would be larger than New York City.

Only 7 percent of those dead trees were destroyed last fall, when two huge fires blackened more than 160,000 acres, destroyed about 1,100 homes and killed six people.

In the past six months, even more trees have died from drought and bark beetle infestation, adding more fuel for another blaze. Pockets of dead trees now stretch from the well-populated resort communities of Big Bear and Lake Arrowhead in the north to Idyllwild in the south.

The situation has set off a furious effort to cut firebreaks and remove as many trees as possible before Southern California's fire danger peaks in September. But the process is slow-going and expensive.

"We're still behind, and we're trying to catch up," Alexander said.

Much of the wood is worthless because of the infestation, and timber companies run up heavy expenses shipping it to the nearest mill more than 200 miles away. In some cases, timber has been burned or dumped in landfills.

The Forest Service is also dousing healthy trees in camping areas with insecticide and conducting prescribed burns like one that went out of control at Big Bear Lake last month and turned into a 350-acre forest fire. The miscue outraged already nervous residents.

Forest dwellers were also unnerved Monday when the suspected arson fires struck areas west of Lake Arrowhead. The blazes were quickly contained after being confined to grassy areas. No arrests have been made.

The forest's problems began with 19th century logging that cleared the way for new trees to grow almost on top of each other. In some populated areas, covenants barred removal of trees from private property because residents liked the privacy and beauty of being surrounded by firs,

cedars and pines.

In recent years, however, the trees have attracted bark beetles, which have thrived throughout the West as the result of drought that weakened trees, and warming temperatures that allowed more reproduction of the insects.

Tens of millions of trees across the region have been killed.

Last December, the federal government passed the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, which allows more timber and brush to be cut and cleared with less environmental scrutiny.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is distributing \$150 million to tribes, local governments and others for tree removal and other fire prevention efforts in Southern California. The Forest Service is providing another \$50 million.

In addition, the Forest Service has been given \$40 million on top of its normal budget of \$4.5 million for fire prevention and fuel reduction in Southern California.

Forest officials said the funding is a good start but not enough to remove all the dead trees in the San Bernardino forest. Officials are removing what they can, with nervous homeowners rushing to join the effort.

Idyllwild resident Betty Miller and her neighbors have removed numerous trees in the past few months. But she has had to wait for a contractor to cut back an oak overhanging their home.

"He's so busy, we're on a waiting list," she said. "It's totally unbelievable the amount of trees they're cutting down. Properties that you couldn't even see, now it's thinned out. Some properties have had all the trees taken off."

Some observers contend the firebreaks aren't the best way to protect communities.

Tom Bonnicksen, a professor at Texas A&M University and visiting scholar for the Forestry Foundation, a nonprofit group supported by the timber industry, said there should be only strategic firebreaks and more logging deeper in the forest.

The area also needs a mill that likely won't be built until the Forest Service agrees to 10-year logging contracts that provide enough time for a company to recoup its investments, Bonnicksen said.

"Even if we remove the dead trees, we still have a very serious problem," he said. "The entire forest is at risk whether it has dead trees in it or not."

Blackwell said the Forest Service favors shorter-term contracts because the forest might not be able to sustain logging beyond that. Environmental groups have also expressed concerns about giving the timber industry a long-term foothold.

Before last year's fires, Big Bear Lake resident Gloria Wilson and her husband spent months trying to get permission to remove a hollowed-out tree they feared would fall. But when she called the fire department about a dead tree a few weeks ago, it was removed immediately, along with several others.

"The next week we were out of town and a neighbor told me they were taking one down in a snowstorm," Wilson said. "It says they're on top of things."

STATE



Nearly half the nation lives in high smog regions

BY JEREMIAH MARQUEZ
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — More than half of the nation's population lives in counties blanketed by hazardous levels of smog, many of which are located in California, according to an American Lung Association report released Thursday.

The annual study says about 159 million Americans, or 55 percent of the country, reside in 441 counties threatened by air that is heavily polluted with ozone or tiny particles of soot, known as particulate matter.

The Golden State, with its clogged freeways and sunny climate, retains its notoriety for poor air quality holding a majority of the top 10 worst-polluted counties. The Los Angeles metropolitan region placed at the top for most ozone pollution for the fifth consecutive year.

The Houston and Knoxville, Tenn., areas ranked fifth and ninth, respectively.

The results were based on Environmental Protection Agency data collected over several years, said Cathy Renna, a spokeswoman for the ALA. The EPA released its own report earlier this month on counties that fell

below federal standards for ozone levels but did not include a review of particulate pollution. A study on longterm ozone trends will be released by the EPA next month.

Janice Nolen, director of national policy for ALA, said strides have been made to cut pollution, particularly ozone contamination, but many people remain at risk for smog-related illnesses like asthma, cardiovascular disease and lung inflammation.

"We still have a serious air pollution problem across the country. It's cleaner ... but it's not clean enough," Nolen said.

Ozone pollution occurs when hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides — released when fossil fuels burn or chemicals evaporate — combine with heat and sunlight.

Particle pollutants can come from fireplaces, automobiles and agriculture. They can lodge deep in the lungs, contributing to heart problems and sometimes leading to death over longer periods of exposure.

Industry representatives counter that cleaner burning engines are helping reduce smog.

Some experts claim the ALA paints a misleading picture by using measurements from only a few monitoring

stations to derive conclusions about large areas. The group exaggerates the scope of the problem, one researcher said.

"You wouldn't realize we have made such incredible progress in reducing pollution from this report," said Joel Schwartz, a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

According to the report, San Bernardino ranked number one among counties nationwide in ozone pollution. Riverside County had the nation's worst annual and short-term particulate matter pollution.

Overall, 34 of California's 58 counties failed one or more of three clean air tests in the study.

The report follows a U.S. Supreme Court ruling Wednesday that clean air regulators overstepped their authority with antismog regulations forcing private fleets to use clean fuel and produce low emissions.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District, which oversees four Southern California counties, enacted the rules to bring the region's air quality in line with federal requirements.

A lower court will decide whether officials can apply tough antismog rules to public vehicle fleets.

Nature bulks up Alaska's biggest sea lion

BY RACHEL D'ORO
Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Woody, a resident Steller sea lion at the Alaska SeaLife Center, is packing on the blubber, topping the scales Wednesday at 2,017 pounds — an 800-pound gain since December.

And though the 11-year-old male is nearly twice the average size, the bulking up is normal, according to biologists at the Seward marine research center and public aquarium. It is nature's way of preparing territorial Steller males to defend their mating grounds in the wild.

Woody is one of only two captive Steller sea lions in the United States that has not been neutered. The other is at the Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration in Connecticut, officials at the Alaska center said.

"This is the first opportunity for scientists in general to monitor this physiological period of maturation and development," said Don Calkins, manager of the center's Steller sea lion program.

Researchers say the changes observed in Woody should provide another layer of understanding about Steller sea lions. The species' population has declined almost 80 percent in western Alaska waters in the last few decades. Possible reasons include pollution, commercial fishing and subsistence harvesting. The current population in the region is now about 40,000, compared with 235,000 in the 1970s.

Males begin producing sperm by age 3 or 4, but they're not large enough to defend their territories until much later.

"The fittest males — a combination of aggression and

bulk — tend to choose territories that can accommodate the most females," Calkins said. "Females seem to select areas that are most advantageous for pupping."

This is the second season Woody has packed on the pounds. Last year he gained about 600 pounds and his testosterone levels were three times the concentration from the previous year, said Dennis Christen, mammal curator at the center. Scientists don't have a reading yet for Woody's current testosterone levels.

The sea lion is now gaining about 10 pounds a day, even though his high-protein diet has not changed. His daily 35-pound ration consists of salmon, pollock, herring, sole and octopus.

"What's interesting, in my opinion, is how dramatic and fast these changes have happened," Christen said.

In the wild, males rarely venture from their rookeries, but quit eating altogether for as many as six weeks to mate whenever a females enter their territories, according to scientists.

A similar pattern was seen in Woody. Even though he didn't get a chance to mate, he lost his voracious appetite, skipping meals some days or eating just a fraction of the food set out for him.

By the end of last summer, he had lost all but 50 of the 600 pounds he had gained, Christen said. He expects the same pattern this year.

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NATIONAL

N.M. plans to take advantage of renewable energy

BY DAN SHINGLER
Associated Press Writer

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Renewable energy is no longer just the darling of environmentalists.

Solar, wind and other clean power have become a magnet for suited capitalists looking to cash in on the next great wave of investment — the green wave.

And it could fuel New Mexico's next job and economic development engine.

"I want our state to be one of the nation's leading suppliers of clean energy — wind, solar, biomass and zero-emission coal," Gov. Bill Richardson said this month at the Western Governors Association's North American Energy Summit in Albuquerque.

Richardson, a former U.S. energy secretary, says the time is right for New Mexico to capitalize on renewable energy, just as it has in the past on oil, natural gas and nuclear technologies.

"It's a very good moment for renewable energy, given a variety of factors coming together at the same time," said Dan Reicher, president of New Energy Capital in Wellesley Hills, Mass.

He calls New Mexico "the Saudi Arabia of renewable energy" because of its vast wind and solar resources.

Reicher and other industry watchers point to factors making renewable energy sources more popular than they've been since the Carter administration — gasoline and natural gas price spikes, strict rules requiring a certain percentage of electricity from renewable sources, public awareness of the environment, technology advances and government subsidies.

New Mexico is banking on those trends and is positioning itself to take advantage of growth in renewable energy.

Richardson wants to create a market for the clean energy New Mexico can produce. And he wants to make the state an attractive place for companies to do research and development as well as manufacture generation equipment and produce power.

On the demand side, Richardson said he has been working closely with his "new best friend," California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, to create a larger market for renewable energy in California, the hungry Goliath of energy consumption in the West.

Such talk piques the interest of even big utility companies like Public Service Company of New Mexico.

"I want our state to be one of the nation's leading suppliers of clean energy — wind, solar, biomass and zero-emission coal."

— **BILL RICHARDSON**
New Mexico Governor

"That's (California) where I do believe there is a market," said PNM chief executive officer Jeff Sterba.

Sterba said that if California adopts a stringent standard for itself, it will create opportunities for states such as New Mexico and companies such as PNM to sell clean power.

PNM already has contracts to buy all the energy produced by a 200-megawatt wind farm in eastern New Mexico and plans to resell most of it to other companies that need renewable power.

New Mexico already has enacted some measures and will put others in place, such as tax cuts on personal income, high-wage job tax credits and employee training funds.

Next year, Richardson said he will ask the Legislature to approve more manufacturing tax credits for companies that produce items such as solar panels or wind turbines in New Mexico.

The initiatives appear to be paying off.

Richardson announced Spire Corp., a solar panel manufacturing company in Bedford, Mass., will begin manufacturing solar panels near Taos next year. The factory is expected to employ 30 people.

New Mexico has long been involved in solar research and has the brain power necessary to help jump-start a renewable energy industry, Reicher said.

"From a human resource perspective, the state is well equipped," he said.

Sandia National Laboratories has been doing solar energy research since the 1970s. A large solar tower, surrounded by a glimmering array of mirrors focused upon it, has been catching the sun's rays since President Carter first tried to overhaul America's energy policies more than 25 years ago.

But the commodity the industry may need most is not as free as sunlight or wind. It's money.

Renewable energy no longer sits on the sidelines in attracting investors.

"The three largest pension funds in the U.S. — two in California and one in New York — are looking to make investments in clean energy," Reicher said. "Citigroup, the largest bank in the U.S., they've identified this as a new investment target."

California Treasurer Phil Angelides has begun what he

calls the "Green Wave" initiative for that state's investments. As part of it, the California Public Employee's Retirement System and the California State Teacher's Retirement System will invest \$1.5 billion in clean energy technologies and environmentally responsible companies.

New Mexico hopes to get some of that investment, said Ned Farquhar, Richardson's energy and environment policy director.

Some of New Mexico's own money could be used to help capitalize renewable energy ventures, said state investment officer Gary Bland.

He said his office has committed about \$140 million to 17 venture capital firms and refers potential renewable projects to them for consideration.

One of those venture capital firms, Murphree Venture Partners, has invested more than \$500,000 in Meso Fuels, an Albuquerque company working in hydrogen fuel cells.

Bland said any investment in renewable energy must meet the criteria as other investments — the potential rewards must outweigh the risks so the state can avoid losing money.

But he said he is also well aware of the importance Richardson has placed on renewables and their value to the state in creating jobs.

"For every new job you create in that industry, because it's an entirely new industry you create five throw-off positions to support that," Bland said. "Clearly the manufacturing is important, but there's construction, there's maintenance and there's facility servicing too."

PNM began marketing wind power last year through a program known as Sky Blue, which asks customers to pay a premium to have up to 10 percent of their total energy supplied by wind power.

"So far, we've had a tremendous response to date in terms of participation," said Daniel Drennan, PNM's product developer for Sky Blue. "We currently have 100 businesses and 4,100 residential customers participating and that's just about twice what we thought we'd get by now."

There are still hurdles to overcome, some of them significant, Sterba said.

The western electrical grid, which transmits power between states, needs substantial upgrades for New Mexico to ship clean power to states such as California.

"We have virtually no additional transfer capacity to get electricity from New Mexico to California," Sterba said. "... Clearly, an additional line has to be built across the Colorado River to get into California."

Federal subsidies that last year helped make wind power and other clean energies more affordable have lapsed.

Some worry the nation will turn back from developing clean energies as it did in the 1980s.

Benjamin Luce, chairman of the Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy and a member of Richardson's Solar Task Force, said the country could have made strides 20 years ago on renewable energy.

"So we shouldn't necessarily be patting ourselves on the back so much that it's just now possible," he said.

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by José Rivera

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NATIONAL



University students step into funding void

BY DAN D'AMBROSIO
Associated Press Writer

DENVER — Student leaders at the University of Colorado will vote Thursday on whether to boost student fees to pay for a new law school, improvements to the business school and a new learning center with cutting-edge technology.

It's the kind of thing state government has traditionally paid for. But coming off a 15 percent tuition increase and a \$45 million cut in state aid, university administrators are looking for new ways to pay the \$71.3 million required for the projects.

Experts say the such fees are a stark reminder of just how short states are falling in providing funding to public universities.

University of Connecticut students recently voted to cover \$5 million of a \$47 million Student Union renovation with a \$26 annual fee. San Diego State University students agreed to each pay a \$32 annual fee to pay for a new \$9.1 million swimming complex.

Carl Krueger, an analyst with the Denver-based Education Commission of the States, said the plan before the CU Student Union appears to be the largest yet.

"It's something that comes as kind of a shock," he said.

The law school could lose its accreditation if it doesn't move out of its current outdated quarters. The school has to report its plans to the American Bar Association in June, said Ron Stump, vice chancellor for student affairs.

"We want to tell them there's going to be a new building," Stump said.

He said the business school is losing enrollment because of its building: "They're crammed in there. Enrollment has outgrown the building."

The student fee would be increased by \$100 each year for four years to reach a total of \$400 annually, but wouldn't go into effect until after the law school is built and occupied. The fee would remain in place for 20 years to retire the construction bond.

"This is an extremely difficult decision for us. It's no small issue and no small fee increase," said Sergio Gonzalez, one of three students in charge of the 18-member student council that will vote on the fee.

He said the idea was first broached by the school administration and some students. He said law students have already imposed a fee on themselves of \$1,000 yearly to help pay for a new building.

Gonzalez understands the precedent the fee would set.

"A lot of legislators are concerned about the fee, that it's confirming a road to privatization of public universities, with less support for higher education," Gonzalez said. "There's a feeling among legislators that we're letting the state off the hook for something they should be funding."

Krueger agreed.

"Higher education in Colorado is in dire straits right now, and it's nice to see students stepping up to the plate to help, but I wish the state could pitch in, too," Krueger said.

State Rep. David Schultheis, R-Colorado Springs, recently sponsored a bill that would have loosened restrictions on how student fees can be used. The measure was defeated.

Still, he said he opposes the student plan and would prefer to see the university raise tuition to pay for buildings.

"More and more what we find happening is schools trying to deal with budget issues looking toward student fees to supplement their general funds," Schultheis said. "We're blurring the lines between student activity fees and general college budgets."

Schultheis and others, however, said they understand rapidly rising tuition at state universities is undermining another principle of public education.

"In the last five or 10 years, students and their families have had to shoulder a greater burden of actually paying for higher education," Krueger said. "It's a problem among low-income kids. They can't afford to go to college very often these days."

At San Diego State, officials said the swimming complex plan had been going nowhere.

"We've been talking about the swimming center for years and haven't been able to raise the donors, so the students said they would do it," said Joe Vasquez, associate vice president of business enterprises.

Mesa Verde National Park weighs cell phone tower

By The Associated Press

DURANGO, Colo. — The government is considering an application to erect a cellular telephone tower at Mesa Verde National Park, one of the nation's premier archaeological preserves.

The application is the first for the park in southwestern Colorado, said Patty Trap, Mesa Verde's chief of planning.

"This is a learning process for us because we want to be sure that we handle the application (properly) to meet the laws and policies, and to make sure the applicant has been treated fairly," said Trap, who refused to identify the applicant.

The 52,000-acre park is home to ruins and cliff dwellings used by the Anasazi people 700 years ago. It is one of the top tourist attractions in the Four Corners region.

At least 15 National Park Service sites have already allowed communications companies to put up cell towers. Yellowstone National Park alone has five, including one near Old Faithful that has been criticized as an eyesore.

Mark Pearson, director of the San Juan Citizens Alliance, panned the idea of cell phones at Mesa Verde.

"I would be dubious about the real compelling need for cell phone use at a national park," Pearson said Tuesday. "It seems people could check their cell phone at the park. They should be on vacation. They shouldn't need to use their phone."

Trap said the park service will have to make sure any tower complies with federal environmental policy the National Historic Preservation Act.

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NATIONAL

Warming already showing effects in the West

(Editor's note: This is the first installment in a series of articles examining global warming).

BY ANGIE WAGNER
Associated Press Writer

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — Just outside this mountain town, where the acres of ponderosa pine trees turn into a Christmas green blur, Tom Whitham eyes the weary, struggling forest.

Death is everywhere. Their limbs bare and bark brittle, the trees quickly turn this forest into an aching reminder of the devastation of drought and a massive bark beetle infestation.

Whitham pulls his pickup truck over and gestures to the dead trees — 75 percent in this area alone.

Forget talk of global warming and speculation of what it might do in 50 years, or 100. Here and across the West, climate change already is happening. Temperatures are warmer, ocean levels are rising, the snowpack is dwindling and melting earlier, flowers bloom earlier, mountain glaciers are disappearing and a six-year drought is killing trees by the millions.

Most scientists agree humans are to blame for at least part of that warming trend, but to what degree?

"That's the \$64,000 question," said Whitham, a regents' professor of biology at Northern Arizona University. "If we aren't causing it, we're certainly contributing to it. Humans can take a drought and make it even worse."

The West is unique in that it depends so heavily on the snowpack for its water — three-fourths of the water in streams comes from melting snow. Over the past 35 years, temperatures throughout the region have inched up between 1 degree and 3 degrees, causing the snow to melt as much as three weeks earlier, said Kelly Redmond, regional climatologist for the Western Regional Climate Center in Reno, Nev.

Lilacs and honeysuckle bloom up to 10 days earlier. Warmer temperatures lead to a huge surge in woody plants that thrive in warm, wet conditions. Glaciers are retreating, roads are buckling in Alaska and shifting some supports on the 800-mile trans-Alaska oil pipeline. Already-dry reservoirs are called upon to water fields and quench thirst for longer and longer periods after the seasonal snowpack is gone.

"The West has become habitated because of the ability to store and have a reliable water supply," said Martin Hoerling, research meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Diagnostics

"That's the \$64,000 question. If we aren't causing it, we're certainly contributing to it. Humans can take a drought and make it even worse."

— TOM WHITHAM
Northern Arizona University,
Regents' professor of biology

Center in Boulder, Colo. "Simply the temperature effect is going to put a much greater strain on water availability."

An earlier spring would allow Western farmers a longer growing season, but less water and warmer temperatures would mean crops may not have the moisture to last until late summer, said Anthony Fisher, professor and chairman of the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of California, Berkeley.

Bennie Hodges, secretary-manager of the Pershing County Water Conservation District in rural Nevada, said the drought has forced him to allot farmers such a meager amount of water that they can only farm a fraction of their land.

The county's reservoir is only at 17 percent capacity.

"We're in tough shape here. Is it global warming? I don't know," Hodges said. "When you're in the desert, the wet and dry cycles come and go. I ask myself many times, 'Are we having global warming?' What do we do? We just try to get through."

Many scientists blame greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and ozone for causing global warming because the pollutants tend to trap the sun's heat in the atmosphere. But some contend the warming is just natural climate variability and humans have nothing to do with it.

Environmentalists preach conservation, especially with an uncertain snowpack and peak runoff occurring earlier. If that continues, "you would have a real problem that the current reservoir systems aren't designed to deal with," said Daniel Lashof, science director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's Climate Center.

"It's sort of like a cancer," he said. "We still have an opportunity to avoid the most severe consequences, but we have to act now."

Mike Wagner saw it coming. He predicted a beetle outbreak years ago in northern Arizona when he saw how abundant older trees were in overcrowded forests. When the drought began, the beetles were ready.

By 2002, trees weakened by drought were unable to fend off the beetles, and they were soon overcome. Tens of millions of trees across the West have been

killed at a rate never seen before.

"Absolutely unprecedented," said Wagner, a regents' professor of forest entomology at NAU. "We've never had these conditions before, never had that combination."

Scientists expect another devastating beetle outbreak this year.

Warmer temperatures only help the beetles reproduce more quickly, leading to more tree mortality. Some types of beetles that used to propagate two generations in a year now can produce three.

"This is all due to temperature," said Barbara Bentz, a research entomologist with the U.S. Forest Service who is studying bark beetles. "Two or three degrees is enough to do it."

Outside Cody, Wyo., an entire forest has been killed by the drought and beetles.

"It used to be a nice spruce forest," said Kurt Allen, a Forest Service entomologist. "It's gone now. You're not going to get those conditions back for 200 or 300 years. We're really not going to have what a lot of people would consider a forest."

Already, warmer temperatures have allowed the mountain pine beetle to be more successful in attacking high elevation pines, Bentz said.

"What we're seeing is consistent with what we expect to happen under global warming," said Evan Mills, scientist at the Energy Department's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. "We will expect more beetle infestation, more drought, more wildfires."

Not everyone subscribes to the global warming theory. Frontiers of Freedom, a Washington, D.C., public policy group, doesn't believe humans have anything to do with the gradual warming of the Earth.

"These things happen. That's just the way nature has always been," said George Landrith, president of Frontiers of Freedom. "Variability has always existed. There's nothing new about that."

Landrith dismisses global warming as politically motivated.

"It's about making energy scarce and expensive," he said.

Jeff Kueter, executive director of the George C. Marshall Institute, another

public policy group, said more research needs to be done because there is too much uncertainty about global warming and the role humans play in it.

"We don't buy into alarmists' speculation of what's going to happen in the future," he said. "There's so much we don't know about how the climate system operates."

In a meadow near Crested Butte, Colo., wildflowers of purple, red, white and blue pop out under three electric heaters. Tourists flock to these lush meadows — dubbed the wildflower capital of Colorado — but John Harte is looking at the world 50 years from now, when it could be 4 degrees warmer.

For 14 years, Harte, an environmental science professor at the University of California-Berkeley, has artificially heated wildflowers and documented what warmer temperatures can do to them.

He has seen firsthand the Rocky Mountain snow melt earlier, felt the temperature warm, the soil dry and watched his wildflowers bloom earlier.

"We're projecting, from these experiments, there's going to be a tremendous decline in the abundance of the flowers," he said. "You think of meadows strewn with gorgeous flowers. Many of those flowering plants are going to be decimated."

Scientists say continued warming across the West will mean a smaller snowpack that could affect ecosystems that depend on stream flows and water temperature. Soils and vegetation will be drier, increasing fire risk and prolonging the fire season. Plants and trees will be able to grow at higher elevations, threatening ski resorts. Sea levels will continue to rise, putting beaches and cities at risk.

In Flagstaff, home to the world's largest contiguous ponderosa pine forest, Tom Whitham wonders how much more devastation the drought and beetles will cause, and to what extent humans will contribute to it.

"The thing that would make me really sad is if this were human caused," he said, glancing at the bare trees towering over his pickup truck. "If you lose a 200-year-old forest, you can't get it back."

Bentz predicts warmer temperatures will allow bark beetles to move into regions where they have never been before, such as the jack pine in eastern Canada. As they kill more trees, the bark beetles could potentially wipe out an entire tree species.

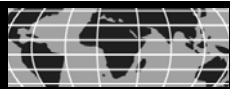
Such is life in the new climate-changing West. Forests are forever changed, spring comes earlier, drought persists and pesky beetles are rampant.

"Global warming is here," Mills said. "It's happening. We're seeing it."

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WORLD BRIEFLY

N. Korea's nuke stand-off to bring low-level meetings

By The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — The six nations negotiating the North Korean nuclear standoff will hold low-level meetings on May 12 in Beijing to lay the groundwork for the next round of talks, South Korea and China said Thursday.

The apparent breakthrough comes as the United States reportedly prepares to upgrade its estimate of North Korea's nuclear arsenal to at least eight atomic weapons, from its long-standing estimate of "possibly two."

The report, disputed by Seoul, is being prepared by U.S. intelligence officials to account for strides North Korea has made since last year, when it restarted its nuclear reactor and plutonium reprocessing facility in Yongbyon, the Washington Post reported Wednesday, citing unnamed officials involved in the estimate overhaul.

In Seoul, South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuck quoted U.S. authorities as saying that the Washington Post report was "groundless."

Lee said that the six nations involved in resolving the dispute — the United States, China, the two Koreas, Russia and Japan — are scheduled to begin working level talks May 12 in the Chinese capital.

Space crew to return to Earth

By The Associated Press

KOSTANAI, Kazakhstan — An American-Russian crew prepared Thursday to return to Earth in a Russian Soyuz spacecraft as they end their six-month mission on the International Space Station.

The snug Soyuz TMA-3 capsule is scheduled to carry American astronaut Michael Foale and Russian cosmonaut Alexander Kaleri, home Friday. European Space Agency astronaut Andre Kuipers of the Netherlands will also be returning after a nine-day mission on the station.

This will be the third time an American astronaut comes back to Earth aboard a Russian craft since the U.S. manned space program grounded its shuttle fleet following the February 2003 Columbia disaster.

The Soyuz spacecraft's bell-shaped descent module, which is designed for controlled landing and recovery, is expected to touch ground in the uninhabited steppe in north-central Kazakhstan at 4:12 a.m. Moscow time Friday.

9/11: Bush's PR nightmare

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush, meeting privately with the Sept. 11 commission, faces the same challenge as he does on the campaign trail: convincing Americans that he responded appropriately to an intelligence system that CIA Director George Tenet said was "blinking red" with warnings of a terrorist strike.

Bush, who describes himself as a wartime president who has made the nation safer, and Vice President Dick Cheney were meeting for several hours Thursday in the Oval Office with 10 members of the independent commission investigating the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks that killed some 3,000 people in New York City, Washington and Pennsylvania.

When the doors close behind them, the nation's top two elected officials were to be quizzed about why, for instance, the Bush administration didn't make terrorism a more urgent priority, especially after an Aug. 6, 2001, presidential daily brief that, among other things, warned of "patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings."

The Bush administration has said it did make terrorism a top priority, and that there was nothing in the memo that specified the type, time or place of an attack on America.

Feds canning spam e-mails

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal authorities say they managed to pierce the murky underworld of Internet spam e-mails, filing the first criminal charges under the government's new "can spam" legislation.

Court documents in the landmark case in Detroit describe a nearly inscrutable puzzle of corporate identities, bank accounts and electronic storefronts in one alleged spam operation.

Officials at the Federal Trade Commission, who planned to announce the arrests in Washington on Thursday, told U.S. postal investigators they had received more than 10,000 complaints about unwanted e-mails sent by the defendants.

Court records identified the defendants as Daniel J. Lin, James J. Lin, Mark M. Sadek and Christopher Chung of West Bloomfield, Mich., near Detroit.

They were accused of disguising their identities in hundreds of thousands of sales pitches for fraudulent weight-loss products and delivering e-mails by bouncing messages through unprotected relay computers on the Internet.

Authorities said their company sold a weight-loss patch under the corporate names AIT Herbal, Avatar Nutrition, Phoenix Avatar and others.

Kerry says Bush 'lax' on chemical plant security

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrat John Kerry wants chemical plants to assess their risks of a catastrophic attack and to use less dangerous alternatives whenever possible, saying President Bush has been lax on the industry.

Kerry's plan, which he was expected to outline in a speech Thursday in Philadelphia, closely mirrors legislation he co-sponsored in early 2003 with Sen. Jon Corzine, D-N.J., and other Democrats. It stalled in the Senate over opposition from Republicans, who said it sought to inappropriately micromanage the nation's \$450 billion chemical industry.

Kerry was to say that President Bush — who has emphasized voluntary efforts by chemical plants to improve security — has accommodated the industry because of campaign contributions from executives.

The Bush campaign responded that Congress is already considering many of the proposals Kerry cited.

"John Kerry is calling for measures that the president has advocated and is contained in legislation already before the Senate," said campaign spokesman Steve Schmidt. He accused Kerry of "playing politics with homeland security."

Sandy Berger offers written advice for 'a Democratic president'

BY GEORGE GEDDA

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Sandy Berger, a top Clinton-era National Security Council aide, has written a long essay on President Bush's foreign policy. It's friendly — but only for the first few paragraphs.

He begins by praising a Bush speech last fall in which the president "rightly argued" that the lack of political freedom in Muslim countries drives people toward "shadowy, violent alternatives."

Berger also notes, though, that Bush "fairly criticized" past administrations for having been too tolerant of authoritarian Arab regimes.

From then on, Berger has almost nothing good to say about Bush's foreign policy. Perhaps that's not surprising, given Berger's Democratic pedigree.

"The administration's high-handed style and its gratuitous unilateralism have embittered even those most likely to embrace American values and invited opposition even from those with most to gain from American successes," Berger writes.

"Although the United States has never enjoyed greater power than it does today, it has rarely possessed so little influence. We can compel, but far too often we cannot persuade."

Berger's 6,500-word essay, "A Foreign Policy for a Democratic President," appears in the May-June issue of "Foreign Affairs" magazine.

Berger, 58, served as Clinton's No. 2 official at the National Security Council before being promoted to No. 1. He is touted by some as a possible secretary of state should Sen. John Kerry be elected president.

There are other names out there, including Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and former U.N. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke.

The world clearly was a quieter place during the Clinton years compared to now. What passed for a crisis in those days was the 1999 U.S.-led air war over Yugoslavia. The number of American casualties: 0.

Foreign policy issues normally are

reduced to sound bites in presidential campaigns. Berger's essay fleshes out some of the gaps, although it is unclear whether Kerry, the Democrats' presumptive nominee, subscribes to all of Berger's thoughts.

Berger says the Bush administration is not responding adequately to terrorism and other dangers the country faces.

Where the administration "has gone badly wrong is in applying its 'with us or against us' philosophy to friends as well as foes," he writes. "Put simply, our natural allies are much more likely to be persuaded by the power of American arguments than by the argument of American power."

He suggests that the administration's failure to win the support of allies such as France, Germany and Turkey for its Iraq policy "vastly increased the human, financial, and strategic costs of the war and has threatened the success of the occupation."

Leaders in Germany and South Korea have won elections based on anti-American platforms, he notes. Both countries, he says, "owe their existence to the sacrifice of American blood."

Berger also comments on the relationship between Secretary of State Colin Powell and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, saying they are the embodiment of a "clash of civilizations" within the administration — a phenomenon, he observes, that is not unknown in the Democratic Party.

Powell sides with "liberal internationalists in both parties who believe that our strength is usually greatest when we work in concert with allies in the defense of shared values and interests," Berger says.

On the other side are those "who seem to believe that the United States should go it alone — or not go it at all." Berger clearly is aligned with the former view.

Without forswearing unilateral use of military power, Berger says a Democratic administration "will have no more urgent task than to restore America's global moral and political authority, so that when we decide to act we can persuade others to join us."

He suggests that the United States strike a strategic bargain with European and other allies, promising to act in concert with them "as a first, not last, resort."

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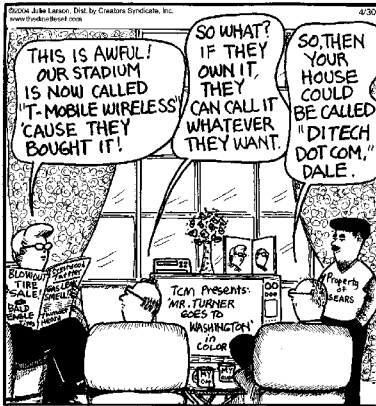
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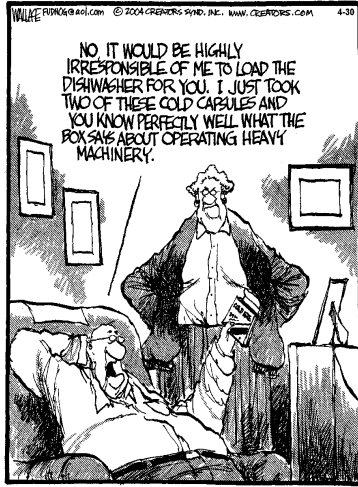
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JOB NAME & LOCATION

DATE Theatre Arts Renovation; Santa Monica College (SMC) - SM

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5/27/04

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