

FREE

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2002

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Flying saucers



Franklin Smith/Special to the Daily Press
A frequent street performer on the Promenade doesn't miss a beat when it comes to dishing it out.

Dine center court this summer

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Visitors to the Promenade will soon be dining center court.

To help showcase restaurants throughout the downtown area, a new staging area will be set up on the Third Street Promenade's center court so chefs can cook up their specialties.

The plan will give downtown restaurants access to the busy shopping corridor. Some city officials believe too many restaurants have been pushed off the Promenade because of high rents, forcing them to move where rents are lower.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for restaurants to showcase their foods right in the heart of the Promenade," said Kathleen Rawson, executive director of the Bayside District Corporation, which unanimously approved the idea last week.

Rawson hopes to have center court dining in place by this summer, but she said there are still many bureaucratic steps to be taken and health department permits granted before it becomes a reality.

The center court will be roped off from 10 a.m. to

8 p.m., and could be split into two sections, depending on demand.

"It's really government at its best. There would be more exposure of restaurants without interruption to people who use the area."

— KATHLEEN RAWSON
Bayside District Corporation executive director

Demand from restaurants also would determine how long each restaurant is allowed to occupy the space, but Rawson believes restaurants would change about every week.

See DINING, page 3

Santa Monica landlord ordered by judge to return security deposit

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

A Santa Monica landlord has been ordered to pay \$1,350 to a tenant for not itemizing damages to the apartment before seizing the security deposit.

Michael Freidgeim took his landlord, Sunnie Han, to Santa Monica Small Claims Court this week to collect his \$1,300 securi-

ty deposit which was not returned to him after living in the same apartment at 1328 Euclid Street for eight years.

Han claimed an old mattress and a refrigerator were left in the apartment, as well as pictures hanging on the walls, and pots and pans were left in the kitchen cabinets. She said the apartment had to be repainted and a wet bar had to be removed at her expense.

But that proved to be inconsequential.

California law requires landlords must provide a list of damages that are deducted from a tenant's security deposit within 30 days after moving out.

Freidgeim had moved out on July 15 and he had not received an invoice from Han until Sept. 12.

"No written list was given (on time), at least I have no evidence of it before me," said Judge Pro Tem Jeffery Clark. "The landlord failed to fulfill her legal requirements."

Han had counter-sued Freidgeim for \$825 — one month's worth of back rent. She said Freidgeim had not given the necessary 30-day notice required by state law that he was moving out.

Freidgeim produced a June 9 letter to Han in which he informed her he was moving out of the apartment on July 15, but the letter did not have a date posted on it and had not been sent by certified mail.

"He makes up this letter," Han said. "Cross my heart, I've never seen it."

See LANDLORD, page 3

Police not responsible for local man's death

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

A grand jury on Wednesday found no wrongdoing on the part of law enforcement in the death of a Santa Monica man during an attempted arrest.

William Wheeler Jr., 41, fatally shot himself in the head March 27 as he faced a blockade of police and Nebraska State Patrol SWAT team officers, authorities said. He was suspected of killing his ex-girlfriend and stabbing her mother to death the day before.

Shortly after 6 p.m. on March 26, Santa Monica Police were notified by the Los Angeles Police Department of the murder of Anna Catherine Hughes, 66, of Westchester, who was found dead in her home at about

2:50 p.m. Hughes reportedly was Wheeler's mother-in-law.

Several hours later, Santa Monica police officers went to Wheeler and his estranged wife's home on the 2300 block of Ocean Park Boulevard, where they found the body of a 37-year-old woman. Neighbors later identified her as Maureen Hughes, Wheeler's wife.

Santa Monica police knew Wheeler had relatives in Kimball and alerted law enforcement there to be on the lookout for a blue Honda Civic with California plates, which apparently was Wheeler's ex-girlfriend's car.

When Kimball police located the car in front of his father's residence, they contacted the local county sheriff's office and the Nebraska State Patrol.

Nebraska authorities kept the residence under surveillance for two hours while obtaining a search warrant. At about 6 a.m., (MST) SWAT teams approached the home when Wheeler attempted to flee. Wheeler was stopped by officers eight blocks away.

"No crime was committed that resulted in or contributed to Wheeler's death," the grand jury said through special prosecutor Tom Sonntag, the former Cheyenne County attorney.

Nebraska law requires a grand jury investigation whenever a suspect dies in custody or when being pursued by law enforcement officers.

(The Associated Press contributed to this report.)

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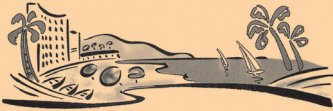
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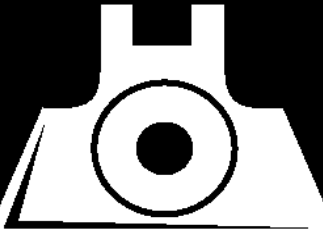
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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ You're on your own, for the most part. Zero in on what you want, and you'll greet success. Others turn to you for answers, as you have a most authoritative tone or attitude. Don't make major changes yet. Wait until you get more feedback. Tonight: Have a late dinner.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ Your mood becomes contagious. Share more of your ideas through the electronic medium. Pick up the phone. Others respond enthusiastically to your energy. Right now you can do no wrong. Think: What would you like to do? Tonight: Where your favorite music plays.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Deal with those in your office on a personal level, and don't push another too far. Understand how to make another feel important. Worry less about losing control, especially with a key associate. Allow yourself to trust more often and to relax. Tonight: Get together with a buddy.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ Be smart and defer to others. You won't be able to convince another of the logic of your thinking. You would be better off, under the circumstances, to let others play their cards. What you hear could be different from what you anticipated. Tonight: Accept an invitation.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ All work and no play could have you feeling down. Do something, ultimately, for yourself. Take your time making a decision that might be more important than you realize. Ease up and put the brake on your hectic pace. Schedule something you want to do. Tonight: Put your feet up.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ Allow your imagination to come out more often when dealing with things in your daily life. Sometimes you make hard judgments on yourself. Don't. You are far more appealing than you're aware of. Let another know how you feel. Tonight: Do only what you think is fun.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ Deal with others on a basic level. You might not be comfortable with someone close to you. Handle a personal matter directly, rather than letting it fester. Once you relax, you wonder why you worried at all. Let your sense of humor dominate. Tonight: Romp away.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ Speak your mind loud and clear. Others might not act like they are listening. Question more directly what is going on with those who are part of your life. Express extra interest and caring. Take time for those special people. Tonight: Out and about.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★ Finances could get out of control. Be sensitive to another's wishes. Your lifestyle might need taming. Be realistic with yourself about what you can and cannot do. Curb a tendency to be possessive or demanding. You'll be a lot happier. Tonight: Your treat.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Carefully listen to another who means a lot to you. Your personality sometimes overwhelms others. Pull back in order to help another reveal his or her personality. Be ready to overindulge someone close to you. Tonight: Go with the flow.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ Take your time while you can. Before you know it, you'll have your hands full. Think of another's feelings more sensitively. Right now, walk in another's shoes. Think about what he or she might experience. This increased empathy can make a difference. Tonight: Nap and then decide.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Realize the difference you can make. If you haven't noticed, the planets light up a green light in your path. While you are on a roll, don't start something you cannot complete today. Network and touch base with those in the know. Tonight: Be where the crowds are.



QUOTE of the DAY

**“A sensor is a man who knows
more than he thinks you ought to.”**

— Granville Hicks (1901-1982)

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LOCAL



Restaurants will be given access to outdoor mall

DINING, from page 1

"It's really government at its best," Rawson said. "There would be more exposure of restaurants without interruption to people who use the area."

But Mayor Mike Feinstein believes one group could be greatly affected — a small cadre of young people who gather daily in the center court to play hacky sack and hang out.

Many business owners have said they find the group irritating and they briefly discussed the prospect of banning all ball play on the Promenade in an effort to get rid of them.

"It's some peoples' response to the congregation and concentration of activities in the center court," Feinstein said. "It's a synergistic approach, a conjoining of the restaurant and center court issues."

Rawson said the primary goal of creating center court dining is to give restaurants more exposure, but eliminating an

area where kids congregate also was a factor in the decision.

"It certainly has been discussed as a benefit to break up some of the center court activity with a non-legislative approach, which this is," she said.

Many downtown restaurants have expressed interest in the idea, Rawson said. Some of them are restaurants that operate booths at the Wednesday Farmer's Market. However, the market doesn't allow food to be prepared and it doesn't have a sitting area.

"I think for restaurants like ours it would be a good idea, especially if there is a way to then drive traffic to the restaurants themselves," said Carolynn Bartosh, a manager of Border Grill. "It sounds like a great way to boost sales at an off-site place, but we want people to come to the main restaurant, too."

Bartosh said center court dining may be a good way for restaurants to rebound

from the drop-off in sales stemming from massive downtown road construction during the past year.

"We could always use more businesses, and the road construction has made a negative impact on people wanting to come to Santa Monica," she said. "We hope the mayor will join forces with us in encouraging people to come here and stay here."

Outdoor dining may help maintain the character of the Promenade as a place for shopping, dining and entertainment, supporters say. City officials think there is a need to maintain an appropriate balance of all three characteristics as a priority for the newly created "Promenade Uses Taskforce," which will have its first meeting May 22.

"Independent of other center court issues, to have the live process of food preparation and eating on the street is

something that many famous cities have around the world," Feinstein said. "It can be seen as a real positive for the vitality of the street and the sensuality of the street to the extent that one likes the food being created."

He warned that creating a satellite outdoor dining area for restaurants off the Promenade will not solve what some believe is an imbalance on the retail-dominated outdoor mall.

"This is not a complete solution because we are displacing upon the public structure the responsibility for part of the failure of the market to provide a balanced and local commercial mix (of retail and restaurants) along with rents that are affordable," Feinstein said.

"It's good as far as it goes but by itself it really can't and shouldn't be the only answer," he added.

Landlord sued by renter; sued by city in another case

LANDLORD, from page 1

But state law was again on Freidgeim's side. Tenants may send letters and official documents to the same address they use to send their rent payments. If those letters are returned or not picked up, they are still considered legally delivered.

"All these years, I sent the rent to the same address," Freidgeim said. "She never had any problems finding those."

Santa Monica-based renter attorney Andrew Zanger said tenants often have to take their landlords to small claims court to get their security deposits back. He said there is penalties up to \$600 if landlords do not provide their itemized list on time.

"Most of these cases are at the small claims level because they are below \$5,000," Zanger said. "It's incredibly common that landlords try to keep the security deposit."

If you want to know what your rights are as a tenant, Zanger said the best way is to call an attorney. He also said the state department on consumer rights publishes a free book that outlines tenants' rights and the responsibilities of landlords.

Freidgeim came to court prepared. He had saved every letter sent to Han, and many of those letters were sent by certified mail — a postal service where the

sender is given an official receipt the letter was sent.

"Most of these cases are at the small claims level because they are below \$5,000. It's incredibly common that landlords try to keep the security deposit."

— ANDREW ZANGER
Renter attorney

Han is being sued by the city's Rent Control Board for allegedly violating clauses of the "Incentive Housing Program," which requires landlords to provide a few units to low-income tenants. The city sued Han for being in violation of the program at the same Euclid Street apartment complex Freidgeim lived at. Both sides are currently trying to settle the matter out of court.

Music saved in SM schools

By Daily Press staff

Facing severe state budget cuts, the local school district is getting some help from VH1 to boost its musical programs.

Adelphia Communications and VH1 "Save the Music Foundation" announced Wednesday that they will join forces with local arts organization P.S. Arts to support music education in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District.

The program was officially kicked off on Wednesday at John Muir Elementary School on Sixth Street. The three partners will work together at the community level to conduct awareness campaigns, fundraising events, hold a comprehensive instrument drive and other activities that will help restore music programs at the

elementary level.

Adelphia and VH1 will provide instruments while P.S. Arts and the school district will provide the musical instruction.

Since VH1 "Save the Music" was created in 1997, more than \$17 million worth of musical instruments have been donated to 750 public schools in 75 cities. The 10-year goal is to bring music participation to at least 1 million kids.

VH1's foundation, now in its fifth year, is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of education in America's public schools by restoring music education programs in cities across the country.

P.S. Arts is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring arts education to public schools.

The Q Line

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

so this week, Q-Line wants to know how you'd handle it. **"If you ran the show here, how would you make Santa Monica better?"**

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Santa Monica's Daily Calendar



GET OUT!

SMC's widely praised Synapse Dance Theatre - known for fusing various media with movement - will present "Poetry in Motion, Music in Motion," an experimental and eclectic concert. The program will be performed today, Thursday, May 2, at 11 a.m. Located at the SMC Studio Stage, 1900 Pico Blvd. Tickets are \$7 and may be purchased by calling (310) 434-3000.

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

Want to be on the A-List?
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Santa Monica Daily Press

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LOCAL

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Street performers asked to gather

By Daily Press staff

All street entertainers, artists and free speech tablers have been asked to attend a meeting May 9 that will focus on the future of such activities on the Third Street Promenade and the Santa Monica Pier.

The meeting is being organized by Steele Smith, the artist liaison for the Bayside District. The gathering is scheduled for 5 p.m. at the Ken Edwards Center on Fourth Street between Broadway Avenue and Colorado Avenue.

The entire meeting will focus on discussing all aspects regarding the information and structure of a Promenade and pier group that consists of street entertainers, artists and free speech tablers.

Senior Day's 10th annual begins

By Daily Press staff

Today is senior day on the Third Street Promenade.

The activities begin at 9 a.m. with registration at the center court, followed by a 10 a.m. movie at AMC Santa Monica theaters (limited to the first 400 seniors). At noon, there will be a hot lasagna luncheon for seniors 60 years and older, and music and dancing to live music at 12:30 p.m.

The event is the 10th annual and is free to seniors.

High school senior rewarded

By Daily Press staff

Maria D. Muria, a graduating senior at the Santa Monica High School, has been awarded the Hugh B. Sweeny Student Achievement Award by the Achievement Foundation, Inc.

Muria received the award for her above-average academic and extracurricular activities. She was selected from more than 100 applicants from around the country.

The Hugh B. Sweeny Student Achievement Award is named after Hugh B. Sweeny who served junior achievement for more than 32 years, including many years as national program director.

The \$5,000 award is presented by the Achievement Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to developing a better understanding of the free enterprise system by young people.



CrimeWatch

Man arrested for stealing bottle of soda

■ A man was arrested on April 21 for stealing a can of soda at a local restaurant.

On Sunday April 21, at about 3 p.m., a guy walked into Bay Cities Deli on the 1500 block of Lincoln Boulevard, took a bottle of soda from the refrigerator, stuck it in his coat pocket and attempted to leave the store. An employee who witnessed the act stopped the suspect from leaving. The man with the soda began to fight, so a second employee joined the fray. When Santa Monica Police arrived, the employees had the suspect in custody.

Police arrested Michael Welch, 22, for attempting to steal a soda worth \$1.59.

■ Two convenient store owners were robbed at gunpoint this month.

At about 8 p.m. on Monday, April 15, an owner of the MiniMart on the 600 block of Marine Street stood outside the store while he watched two men get out of a black car and enter the store. Inside, the two men showed hand guns to the other owner behind the counter. One of the suspects demanded money from the register, while the other walked outside, showed his gun to the owner standing there, and told him to get in the store and stay there. The owners handed over about \$200, and the two suspects took off on foot. The black car was no longer there.

The first suspect is described as a black male, 21-24 years old, 5' 8" to 5' 10" with a thin build and wearing a black hooded sweatshirt and black pants.

The second suspect is described as a black male, 18-21 years old, 5' 5" with a thin build and also wearing a black hooded sweatshirt and dark pants.

■ A man wearing a bright Hawaiian shirt robbed Poncho's Tacos this month.

On Wednesday April 17 at 2:35 p.m. a man wearing a red, black and white floral print Hawaiian shirt walked into Pancho's Tacos on the 2900 block of Lincoln Boulevard. The man approached the employee behind the counter, flashed a hand gun and demanded the money from the register. The employee handed over the cash, and the man took off west on Pier Avenue.

The suspect is described as an 18-year-old black male, 5'2", 130 pounds, with a disfigured right eye.

■ A man was robbed at gunpoint this month while he was sitting in his car at a red light.

At 10:45 a.m. on Wednesday, April 17, a man driving down Pico Boulevard stopped for a red light at 33rd Street. While sitting at the light, a man walked up to his window, showed him a handgun and demanded his money. The suspect grabbed the cash out of the man's hand and ran west on Pico Boulevard.

The suspect is described as a black male, 20 years old, 6'0", 155 pounds, wearing a dark jogging outfit.

STATE



CALIFORNIA BRIEFS

Palisades woman disappears, along with the money

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The former business manager of Valley Presbyterian Hospital has disappeared after being charged with embezzling \$748,564.

Svetlana Bashkinov, 34, of Pacific Palisades posted \$20,000 bail April 9, then failed to show up for her Superior Court arraignment on Monday, authorities said. A warrant was issued for her arrest.

Defense attorney Keith Davidson didn't return telephone messages.

Bashkinov was the hospital business office director overseeing \$90 million in annual billings. Investigators said she took funds designated for refund checks and deposited the money in accounts she maintained at several credit unions.

"You had a trusted employee who stole from the company," police Detective Dan Moran said.

Bashkinov was charged with grand theft by embezzlement and, if convicted, could face up to five years in prison and substantial fines, Ryder said.

Skateboard park on private property found illegal

By The Associated Press

MORENO VALLEY — The City Council said a youth minister's private skateboard park on his 10-acre property is an illegal outdoor recreation activity in violation of various municipal codes governing residential property.

After hearing more than 10 hours of testimony on three occasions, the council voted Tuesday night to whittle down a long list of alleged code violations skate park owners Marv and Karen Schuler would be required to correct at their property known as The Ranch.

City code compliance officers say the gathering of as many as 200 young people at a time poses safety concerns because of homemade skateboard ramps and other structures.

"My life has become a living hell," neighbor Era Preston told the council at one point, referring to the noisy skateboard crowds.

Matthew Allen countered by telling the council that The Ranch serves a critical need for Moreno Valley youth. The Schulers believe they are providing a youth ministry on private property that does not require city approval.

"Are we allowed to have people come over to skate and to worship and to have a private party?" Schuler attorney Charles Ware asked the council. The lawyer asked for a conditional use permit to keep the ministry and skate park in operation.

City code compliance officers say the gathering of as many as 200 young people at a time poses safety concerns because of homemade skateboard ramps and other structures.

'Cold' murder cases to be reopened

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Sheriff's Department is hiring 12 former homicide analysts to revisit 1,700 unsolved murders, so-called cold cases that have languished more than 20 years.

The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved \$1.5 million to review all the cases, which could take three years to examine. Capt. Frank Merriman said DNA evidence and firearms analysis will be key to examining the cases previously thought to be unsolvable.

The department has been conducting a limited probe into old cases for the past 18 months using six former investigators to review 1,389 homicide cases. Those reviews led to the filing of 28 felony murder charges, said Marvin Dixon, the department's chief of administrative services.

Many of the breaks in the cases were attributed to DNA analysis, Dixon said.

Bail agents released from charges

By The Associated Press

ALHAMBRA — A judge ruled two bail agents didn't commit a crime when they held a woman, her daughter and another man for 24 hours while searching for the woman's bail-jumping husband.

Although the actions of Donald Webber and Brian Walsh were "outlandish, they were not illegal" as the prosecutor suggested, Superior Court Judge Frederick K. Rotenburg said Tuesday. He also dismissed charges that Webber raped the woman.

Deputy District Attorney Philip C. Wojdak said he was disappointed.

Jose Cabrera, also known as Rogelio Cruz, and his wife were arrested 18 months ago in San Bernardino County for investigation of transportation and possession of cocaine and heroin. Cabrera was released on \$100,000 bail and the woman pleaded guilty and was awaiting sentencing.

Cabrera failed to show up for a court appearance and a judge issued an arrest warrant and submitted a forfeiture notice to the bail bond agent.

Webber and Walsh, bail agents employed by an insurance company retained by bail bondsmen, went to a house in Alhambra on Feb. 15, 2001, in search of Cabrera, and found his wife, her daughter and her brother.

Defense attorneys and prosecutors agreed that Walsh and Webber had the right to detain the woman and revoke her parole, because she was out on bail and the men caught her flushing plastic bags of rock cocaine down the toilet.

But the prosecutor said the men overstepped their authority and the limits of the law by keeping the woman in custody until Cabrera was captured a day later. Wojdak also said they broke the law when they forced the woman to help them find Cabrera.

Prosecutors charged the men with kidnapping for ransom and Webber faced the additional rape charge.



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STATE □ NATIONAL

Vice principle placed on leave for underwear check

By The Associated Press

POWAY, Calif. — A school official was placed on leave Wednesday amid accusations that she lifted girls' skirts — in front of male students and adults — to make sure they weren't wearing thong underwear at a dance.

Rita Wilson, assistant principal at Rancho Bernardo High School since 1997, was told Wednesday afternoon that she had been being placed on administrative leave while officials complete an investigation, school district officials said.

Students complained that they were told to line up outside the high school gym before entering Friday's dance so Wilson could check their underwear. Those wearing thongs were turned away.

"They just lifted the skirt over my head," Stephanie Olson, an 11th grader at the school, said. "I didn't know what was going on."

The vice principal and a female counselor checked underwear in front of male students, teachers and two police officers outside the school.

"Everyone saw everything," said Kim Teal, whose 15-year-old daughter attended the dance but was not checked. "It was a big peep show."

Wilson could not be reached for comment Wednesday. She did not return messages left at the school and her home number was unlisted.

School officials continued to interview

students and staff to determine what happened at the casual MORP dance, which stands for prom spelled backward. About 725 students attended in costume.

Don Phillips, superintendent of the Poway Unified School District, sought to mollify parents calling for Wilson's removal, saying the inquiry has the highest-possible priority.

"They just lifted the skirt over my head."

— **STEPHANIE OLSON**
Student

"As a parent myself, I certainly understand the concern these allegations have raised," Phillips said in a statement. If the allegations are true, he said, Wilson's actions "were clearly outside our school district's policies and procedures."

Officials at the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union were planning to meet with several parents and students who complained about the skirt-lifting incident, said legal director Jordan Budd.

"It's really quite astounding that a school administrator would believe it to be appropriate to require every girl who attended a dance to partially disrobe in public on the off chance one might subsequently engage in misconduct," Budd said.

Space shuttle replacement could take off like planes

BY MARCIA DUNN
AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — The replacement for NASA's aging space shuttles may take off like a plane, be propelled by booster rockets that fly back to Earth and, in one of the more radical moves, eliminate pilots.

The reusable space plane, equipped with crew escape and automatic landing systems, would be far safer than the shuttle, officials said Tuesday in unveiling 15 design concepts. It also would be much cheaper to operate, they promised.

The goal is to have it flying by 2012, right around the time the space shuttles should be retiring.

"It's a little bit smaller vehicle so it may not be quite as impressive and loud and energetic maybe as when the shuttle takes off," said Dennis Smith, manager of NASA's \$4.8 billion Space Launch Initiative program. "But it has some pretty neat attributes to it."

For instance, the booster rockets could peel away, turn around and fly back to the launch site. The shuttle's two boosters parachute into the ocean and are retrieved by ships.

NASA would use slightly different types of its new spaceship to transport astronauts and equipment to the international space station. The commercial industry would use the same system to launch satellites, with military involvement likely as well.

Among NASA's main objectives: to lower the cost of delivering payloads to orbit from \$10,000 a pound on the shuttle

to \$1,000 a pound or less, and reduce the risk of a deadly catastrophe from the current 1-in-almost-500 to 1-in-10,000.

The space shuttle lacks a viable crew escape system for launch, something that is crucial if NASA hopes to achieve its desired safety margin, Smith said.

"It's very aggressive, there's no question about it," he said.

Smith said ejection seats are being considered along with flyaway crew modules. Kennedy Space Center likely would serve as the launch site, although that is not a requirement. Both vertical and horizontal liftoffs are being considered.

The spaceship might be able to double as a space station lifeboat. Pilots may not be needed to take up space station crews, Smith noted.

Over the past year, NASA whittled down the list of ideas from thousands to 15 represented by three industry teams: Boeing of Seal Beach, Calif.; Lockheed Martin Corp. of Denver; and a combined Orbital Sciences Corp. of Dulles, Va., and Northrop Grumman of El Segundo, Calif.

The concepts rely on two-stage rockets, with engines fueled by kerosene, hydrogen or a combination.

NASA plans to settle on two concepts next year. Full-scale development of one of the ships would begin in 2006, with the first flight hopefully in 2012. In case of delays, NASA plans to keep the shuttles flying until 2020.

"We went to the moon in nine years and we developed the shuttle in eight years," Smith said. "Here we are 10 years away and really it comes down to a commitment to get behind the new system."

NATIONAL



Ed Bailey/Associated Press

Erik Lindbergh, grandson of Charles Lindbergh takes off for Le Bourget airport in Paris from Republic Airport in Farmingdale, N.Y., on Wednesday. The flight re-creation is part of the 75th anniversary celebration of his grandfather's flight.

Lindbergh's grandson takes off for Paris in quest to repeat 1927 solo flight

BY FRANK ELTMAN
Associated Press Writer

FARMINGDALE, N.Y. — Seventy-five years after Charles Lindbergh took off in chilly morning mist for his historic first solo crossing of the Atlantic Ocean, his grandson lifted off in sunshine to duplicate the flight.

"I've dreamed for years of retracing my roots and flying across the Atlantic," Erik Lindbergh said in a statement read to reporters before he took off for Paris Wednesday.

"My journey is more of a celebration than a re-creation of my grandfather's achievement."

Lindbergh, 37, took off at 12:15 p.m. His flight was expected to take 16 hours and 16 minutes, said Peter Diamandis, founder and chairman of the X Prize Foundation, one of the flight's sponsors. The flight that earned Charles Lindbergh the nickname Lucky Lindy took 33 1/2 hours.

Erik Lindbergh's Lancair Columbia 300, dubbed the New Spirit of St. Louis, is made of a glass and carbon composite, and was built in Bend, Ore., for \$289,000. Its average cruising speed is 184 mph, compared with the 108 mph of the original Spirit of St. Louis, built for \$10,580.

The single-engine plane uses a Global Positioning System navigation device to give its precise location. Charles Lindbergh used deduced reckoning — "which is basically holding a compass and guessing at the wind," his grandson has said.

The new plane also was equipped to send and receive e-mail messages.

Wednesday's takeoff was at central Long Island's Republic Airport, a stand-in for Roosevelt Field about 15 miles away, which Charles Lindbergh used on his historic flight of May 20-21, 1927. Roosevelt Field is now the site of a shopping center.

Dorothy Guelpa watched the original takeoff when she was 6 years old.

"The plane was parked I guess 150 feet from where I was standing," said the 81-

year-old retiree from Amityville. "He (Charles Lindbergh) stood right beside the door, then hopped in, started the engines ... and then he took off just clearing the trees."

The risks of crossing the Atlantic now are less than the elder Lindbergh faced in 1927, event organizers concede, but the challenge of the journey in a single-engine plane is still equivalent to a climber's ascent of Mount Everest.

**"My journey is more
of a celebration
than a re-creation of
my grandfather's
achievement."**

— CHARLES LINDBERGH
Pilot

Erik Lindbergh, a commercial pilot and artist from the Seattle area, had already re-created the first two legs of his grandfather's journey: from San Diego to St. Louis, and St. Louis to Farmingdale. San Diego is where the original Spirit of St. Louis was built.

His flight was intended to raise awareness of rheumatoid arthritis, which disabled him for 15 years.

Organizers also hoped the journey would promote the X Prize Foundation, a St. Louis-based nonprofit group that is offering \$10 million to the first private group that can build and launch a manned spacecraft into space, then repeat the feat within two weeks.

The competition is modeled after the Orteig Prize, the \$25,000 bounty won by Charles Lindbergh for making the New York-to-Paris trip. He died in 1974.

Lindbergh's flight can be tracked online at the X Prize Web site.

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SPORTS

Baseball brownout: home runs down 18 percent

BY RONALD BLUM
AP Sports Writer

Home runs disappeared in April, along with managers and fans.

Reversing the power boom of recent years, major league baseball experienced a brownout in the first month of the season, with home runs dropping 18.4 percent, from 2.34 per game to 1.91.

Just two years ago, baseball's bashers set an April record with an average of 2.54 homers per game, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, the sport's statistician.

“Maybe homers are down because it has been cooler.”

— ELLIS BURKS
Cleveland Indians

“The ball's not juiced,” Boston's Nomar Garciaparra said sarcastically.

Baseball's power surge two years ago sent top officials scrambling to commission scientific tests, which showed the ball hadn't changed significantly.

“Maybe homers are down because it has been cooler,” Cleveland's Ellis Burks said Wednesday. “It could be the weather. Or it could just be baseball. There are a lot of things you can't explain in this game.”

It's not just batters who think home runs drop with the temperature

“It seems like it's been colder this season,” San Francisco pitcher Kirk Rueter said. “That might have something to do

with it.”

Sandy Alderson, executive vice president of baseball operations in the commissioner's office, thinks enforcement of the proper strike zone, as it's defined in the rule book, may be a factor.

“We are seeing the low pitch called more consistently as a strike, as it should be,” he said. “If pitchers are going there more frequently, it may be more difficult to lift the ball and get it out of the ballpark. I certainly don't think it has anything to do with the balls or other equipment, the bats.”

April's biggest disappearance involved managers, with a record four teams — Colorado, Detroit, Kansas City and Milwaukee — changing dugout bosses. In addition, average attendance dropped 5.5 percent, from 27,750 to 26,217, with 20 of the 30 teams showing losses.

On the field, scoring dropped — but a lot less steeply than home runs. There was an average of 9.25 runs per game, down 4.7 percent from the 9.61 through the first month last year. And the major league batting average dropped only slightly, from .260 to .258.

Boston outfielder Johnny Damon likes the trend of fewer homers.

“It's definitely a better game. There's a little more strategy,” he said.

Strikeouts were down 6 percent, from 13.61 per game to 12.84, and walks increased 1.8 percent, from 6.78 to 6.90.

The average time of a nine-inning game was 2 hours, 54 minutes, exactly the same as the first month of last season. It was 2:59 in the first week but dropped to 2:51 in the fourth week.



National Basketball Association playoff schedule

By The Associated Press

FIRST ROUND-Best-of-5 (All times EDT.)
Saturday, April 20
Indiana 89, New Jersey 83 Sacramento 89, Utah 86 San Antonio 110, Seattle 89 Charlotte 80, Orlando 79
Sunday, April 21
Boston 92, Philadelphia 82 Boston leads series 1-0 Dallas 101, Minnesota 94 Dallas leads series 1-0 L.A. Lakers 95, Portland 87, L.A. Lakers lead series 1-0 Detroit 85, Toronto 63 Detroit leads series 1-0
Monday, April 22
New Jersey 95, Indiana 79 series tied 1-1 Seattle 98, San Antonio 90 series tied 1-1
Tuesday, April 23
Orlando 111, Charlotte 103, OT series tied 1-1 Utah 93, Sacramento 86 series tied 1-1
Wednesday, April 24
Detroit 96, Toronto 91 Detroit leads series 2-0 Dallas 122, Minnesota 110, Dallas leads series 2-0
Thursday, April 25
Boston 93, Philadelphia 85 Boston leads series 2-0 L.A. Lakers 103, Portland 96, Lakers leads series 2-0

Friday, April 26
New Jersey 85, Indiana 84 New Jersey leads series 2-1
Saturday, April 27
Charlotte 110, Orlando 100, OT Charlotte leads series 2-1 Sacramento 90, Utah 87 Sacramento leads series 2-1 San Antonio 102, Seattle 75 San Antonio leads series 2-1 Toronto 94, Detroit 84 Detroit leads series 2-1
Sunday, April 28
Philadelphia 108, Boston 103 Boston leads series 2-1 Dallas 115, Minnesota 102 Dallas wins series 3-0 L.A. Lakers 92, Portland 91 L.A. Lakers win series 3-0
Monday, April 29
Detroit 83, Toronto 89 Series tied 2-2 Sacramento 91, Utah 86, Sacramento wins series 3-1
Tuesday, April 30
Charlotte 102, Orlando 85 Charlotte wins series 3-1 Indiana 97, New Jersey 74, series tied 2-2
Wednesday, May 1
Boston at Philadelphia, 8 p.m. San Antonio at Seattle, 10:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 2
Indiana at New Jersey, 7 p.m. Toronto at Detroit, 8:30 p.m.
Friday, May 3
Philadelphia at Boston, TBA, if necessary Seattle at San Antonio, TBA, if necessary



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INTERNATIONAL



China's president-in-waiting meets with Bush

BY GEORGE GEDDA

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — President Bush told Chinese Vice President Hu Jintao on Wednesday that he is confident the countries can resolve their differences over Taiwan and human rights, the White House said.

After their 30-minute meeting, press secretary Ari Fleischer said Bush told Hu he was pleased with the state of U.S. relations with China. The two leaders discussed the war on terrorism, agricultural issues, Taiwan, missile proliferation, trade and human rights.

Hu is widely expected to become Communist Party secretary general later this year and president next year. He is something of a mystery man, rarely straying beyond the party line, and the administration has been hoping his visit here will produce insights into his thinking.

Hu left the White House without comment, waving to reporters as he took off in his motorcade. Before meeting with Bush, Hu spoke with Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other U.S. officials.

Fleischer said Bush "expressed his belief that the United States and China can work well together on a wide range of issues. He noted there may be some disagreements, but he believed they could be addressed productively." Bush and Hu had met in Beijing in February.

Before the meeting, Fleischer said the president was expected to reaffirm that the administration seeks "a peaceful resolution of any differences between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan and that we do not wish to see provocation on either side of the Taiwan



Joe Marquette/Associated Press

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, left, escorts Chinese Vice President Hu Jintao into the Pentagon for a meeting on Wednesday in Washington.

Strait." He listed religious freedom and human rights as other areas of disagreement with China.

Cheney, on crutches because of a foot injury, greeted Hu in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. Both men smiled warmly and shook hands.

At their luncheon, the main issues were economic development, Taiwan, nonproliferation and the war on terror. They were joined by Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, Commerce Secretary Donald Evans and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao.

Hu raised the Taiwan issue with Secretary of State Colin Powell during a working dinner at the State Department Tuesday evening. Powell reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to a one-China policy, department spokesman Richard Boucher said. Powell also reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to protection of human rights in China.

Bush is viewed as more pro-Taiwan than President Clinton. China reacted angrily in March when the Bush administration decided to grant a visa to Taiwan's defense chief Tang Yiau-ming so he could attend a conference in Florida. He met there with Powell's top aide for East Asia, James Kelly.

The Bush administration also has taken steps to increase transfers of U.S. military equipment to Taiwan.

In Taipei, Joseph Wu, deputy secretary general to Taiwan's president, told reporters the government does not believe Hu's visit represents a threat to Taiwan's security.

During Hu's travels around Washington, groups opposed to Chinese control of Tibet demonstrated against him. Hu once served as China's top official in the region.

The International Campaign for Tibet said that during Hu's four-year tenure in Tibet, the number of Tibetan political prisoners numbered in the hundreds.

The group says that the Tibetan issue should be resolved through negotiations between Chinese officials, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile.

Demonstrators rally all over the world marking May Day

BY TONY CZUCZKA

Associated Press Writer

BERLIN — Demonstrators rallied against the right in Germany and France, merchants boarded up stores to guard against attacks by anti-capitalist demonstrators and riot police turned out in force as Europeans marked a tense May Day on Wednesday.

Police in Berlin used tear gas to quell overnight clashes with anarchists who threw rocks, set street fires and looted a supermarket, the worst violence on the eve of May Day for years. An estimated 5,000 police turned several parts of the German capital into restricted zones, including a main thoroughfare through the landmark Brandenburg Gate.

Scores of anarchist protesters were detained in several cities overnight, and police said two people were injured seriously in Berlin. May Day in the German capital has regularly degenerated into street battles between police and anarchists over the past 15 years.

In France, as many as 500,000 people

demonstrated nationwide against extreme-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, the largest turnout so far against the ultra-nationalist politician since he qualified for this Sunday's presidential runoff.

Earlier, Le Pen led several thousand supporters through central Paris. They chanted "Le Pen, president" and waved tricolor flags and signs that read, "I'm proud to be French."

Some 700 supporters of a far-right fringe party marched through a Berlin suburb, escorted by nearly 2,000 police who kept them apart from heckling counter-demonstrators shouting "Nazis out!" At least one marcher was detained by police for making the banned stiff-arm Nazi salute.

"We're demonstrating because we love our country," declared far-right marcher Wolfgang Kuehl, 34.

At Berlin's city hall, labor leaders rallied a crowd of about 10,000 behind Germany's first industrial strike in seven years, due to start next week.

In Moscow, at least 140,000 trade union supporters holding up pictures of President Vladimir Putin rallied down-

town. The Communists marked the occasion separately, drawing mostly elderly people who carried red carnations and proudly displayed World War II medals on their lapels.

In Greece and Turkey, protesters proclaimed solidarity with the Palestinians in their bloody struggle with Israel.

"A thousand greetings to the Palestinian resistance," read a slogan at a rally in Istanbul, Turkey. In Athens, about 6,000 people marched to the U.S. and Israeli embassies to protest Israel's military incursion into Palestinian areas.

In the economically struggling former Yugoslav republic of Croatia, workers marched through the capital, Zagreb, to protest government plans to trim labor rights. Polish officials laid flowers at a monument in the city of Poznan to workers killed in 1956 anti-communist protests, but the capital, Warsaw, was calm as many people left for the countryside for a five-day weekend.

Workers in Macedonia handed out platefuls of hearty cooked brown beans in the capital, Skopje, as they demonstrated

for an end to poverty. The country has the highest jobless rate in the Balkans.

In London, more than 100 noisy demonstrators on bicycles blocked intersections in the busy Oxford Street shopping area. Some of them, representing a variety of groups from environmentalists to anti-capitalists, went to the U.S. Embassy bearing a banner reading "Capitalism doesn't work."

Cuba's communist authorities called out more than 1 million citizens for a May Day march to protest Latin American criticism of its human rights record. President Fidel Castro was to head the annual workers march in the Havana.

In Asia, police clashed with protesters in at least three nations while elsewhere, workers demonstrated peacefully for better working conditions and higher pay.

In the Philippines, thousands of demonstrators were met on the streets by riot police amid coup rumors and terrorist threats. Police said they thwarted two possible terrorist attacks, including one that might have targeted President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

In France, Le Pen's success signals an end to voter apathy

BY JOCELYN GECKER

Associated Press Writer

PARIS — Phones are ringing off the hooks at voter registration centers across France. Teachers and students are skipping class to attend street protests. Celebrities, philosophers, religious leaders and human rights groups share the spotlight to talk politics.

While most French say they are fearful of Jean-Marie Le Pen's ultra-right policies, analysts say his stunning electoral success has a silver lining for French democracy: It has energized voters in what had looked to be a sleepy race for the presidency.

"This election has been transformed into a vote to save democracy," said Marianne Benamou, a university professor who canceled classes to march alongside 40,000 others at an anti-Le Pen rally this week.

The fiercely anti-immigration Le Pen has been the object of daily nationwide protests since he stunned France in the presidential primary April 21 and qualified

for Sunday's runoff against conservative President Jacques Chirac.

France's best-known sports stars, intellectuals and politicians of all stripes have endorsed Chirac.

Some 100 celebrities on Tuesday — including filmmaker Constantin Costa-Gavras and actress Laetitia Casta — gathered in front of the Pompidou Center, Paris' modern art museum, to urge voters to block Le Pen at the polls.

High-school students have been a driving force behind massive street rallies, declaring that though they didn't have the right to vote, they will make their voices heard.

"We need to demonstrate — and the people need to hear us," said 17-year-old protester Helene Daveau, who said teachers at her Paris high school authorized students to skip classes to attend protests.

Protests came to a head Wednesday during May Day marches. By late afternoon, up to a million people were marching peacefully in cities across France, by far the climax of a snowballing series of anti-Le Pen protests.

Analysts say Le Pen's upset victory served as shock treatment to a complacent electorate.

"Suddenly people are realizing that you don't play with democracy — and that there is a point to voting," said Florence Faucher, a research director at the Center for the Study of French Political Life.

Boredom was the reigning sentiment in France ahead of elections. One daily newspaper, France Soir, ran a banner headline before the primary asking: "When Are You Going to Wake Us Up?"

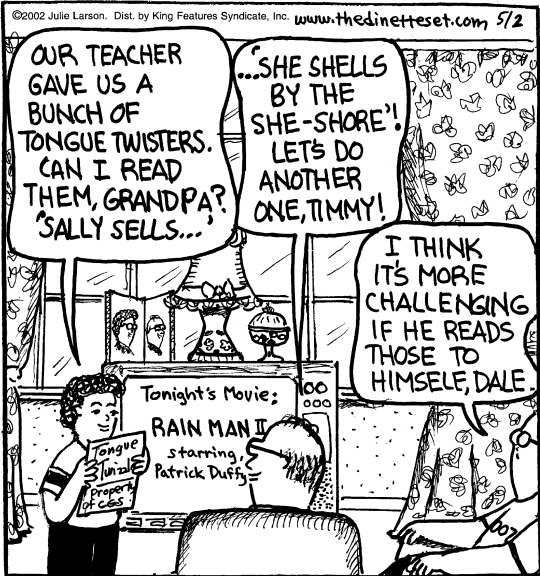
All polls had indicated that the runoff would pit Chirac against Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin — a repeat of the 1995 election.

It came as little surprise that nationwide abstention rates set a record. Some 28 percent — or more than 12 million people — didn't bother to vote in the first round. Since then, voter registration centers nationwide have been inundated with last-minute applications for absentee ballots. The runoff falls in the middle of two national holidays, and many people take vacations.



COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson

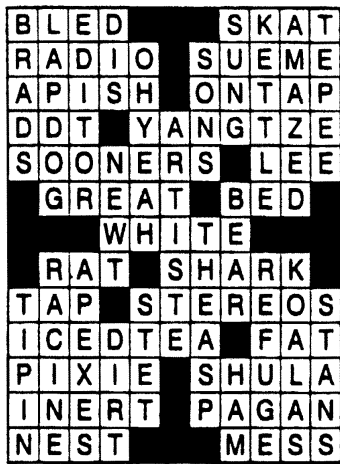


Natural Selection® By Russ Wallace



CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Relaxing resorts
 - 5 Prods
 - 10 Leslie Caron film
 - 11 Minimal beachwear
 - 12 Sign
 - 13 Tooth coat
 - 14 Loading dock cry
 - 16 "Get moving!"
 - 20 Adam and Alan
 - 23 Had dinner
 - 24 Makes headway
 - 25 Tussle
 - 27 Small bill
 - 28 Relieve
 - 29 "Stop trying!"
 - 32 Come to a close
 - 36 "Turn Me Loose" singer
 - 39 Misplace
 - 40 Spies
 - 41 Metal sources
 - 42 Avoid
 - 43 Final, e.g.
- DOWN
- 3 One of the Baldwins
 - 4 Registers
 - 5 Locker art
 - 6 Giraffe's cousin
 - 7 Kipling book
 - 8 Compass pt.
 - 9 Part of RSVP
 - 11 Early software versions
 - 15 Taverns
 - 17 Like lemons
 - 18 Idaho neighbor
 - 19 Basketball's Sanchez
 - 20 Eager
 - 21 Indian princess
 - 22 Ukraine capital
 - 25 Meal starter
 - 26 Cockpit colleague
 - 28 Kenton and Laurel
 - 30 Patrick of the NBA
 - 31 Furious
 - 33 Rent
 - 34 Exploits
 - 35 Nuisance
 - 36 Craze
 - 37 Before today
 - 38 Dreamer's spot



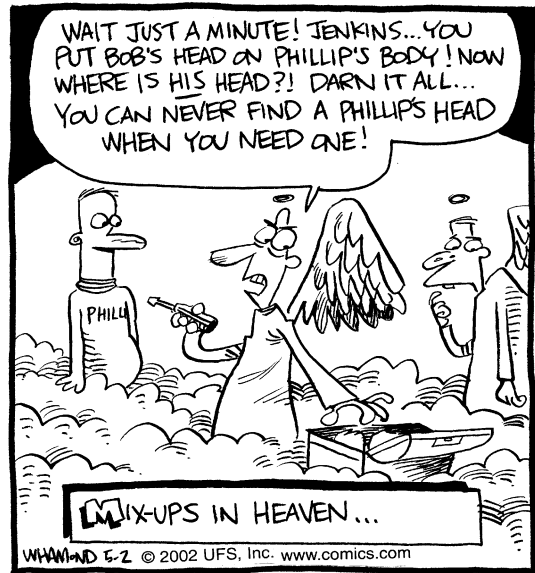
Yesterday's answer

edge city

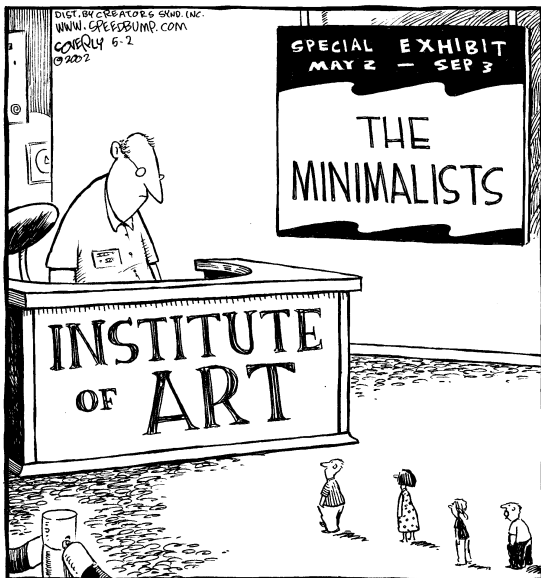
by TERRY & PATTY LABAN



Reality Check® By Dave Whammond



Speed Bump® By Dave Coverly

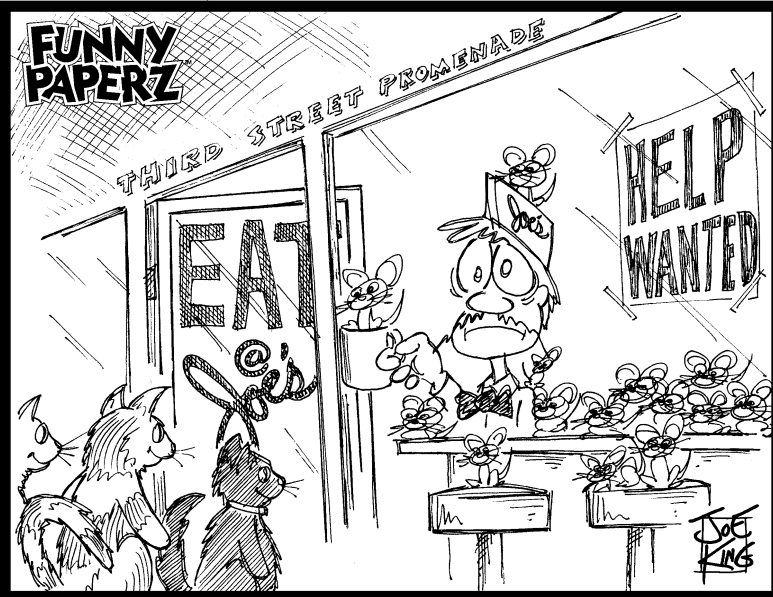


NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

Sacrificed horses' blood symbol for peace, prosperity

• In recent months, two different Hindu cults in India have begun to embrace ancient sacrifice rituals, one using horses and the other using the "Nara bali" practice of human sacrifice. In the village of Juna Padia, Assam, 150 priests participate in ceremonies to slaughter 10 horses and collect their deified blood for, they say, peace and prosperity.

• In the state of Orissa, because of a paucity of human volunteers to sacrifice, the Kamakhya Temple cult uses human-size effigies made of flour, which its leaders insist are just as powerful in impressing divine forces.



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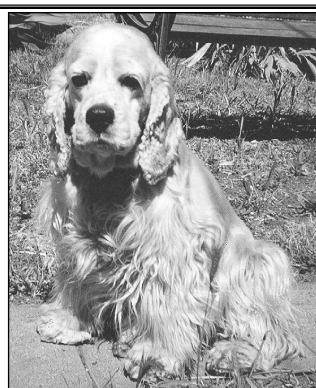
SANTA MONICA \$695.00 Studio, R/S, carpets, utilities included. Westside Rentals. 395-RENT.

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Guest Houses

CALLING ALL Kato Kaelin's! Find a sweet guest house in the Daily Press.

Houses For Rent

SANTA MONICA \$1150.00 2 bdrm townhouse. R/S, patio, large closets, W/D hook-ups, near SMC, parking included. Westside Rentals, 395-RENT.

WEST LA \$750.00 1 bdrm, pet ok, R/S, carpets, yard. Westside Rentals 395-RENT.

SANTA MONICA \$1750 1 bedroom, 1 bath. Hardwood floors, deck, front lawns, new appliances, lovely. 607 Ashland near Main/beach. (310)399-4170.

SANTA MONICA \$975.00 1 bdrm duplex, pet ok, carpets, quiet neighborhood, parking. Westside Rentals, 395-RENT.

VENICE BEACH Large house, 4 bdrm, beautifully restored. Walk street, hardwood floors, furniture available. (310)581-5128.

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BEVERLY HILLS \$500.00 Private bedroom, carpets, A/C, pl, laundry. Westside Rentals, 395-RENT.

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Announcements

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

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

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BACK PAGE

ODDS & ENDS

Robbers work to steal

By The Associated Press

MONROE, Wash. — Not satisfied with the amount of money they found in a Starbucks safe, two robbers allegedly went to work filling coffee orders and pocketing the proceeds.

The pair served at least 18 unsuspecting customers over a half-hour period early Tuesday morning and fled with an undisclosed amount of cash, Cmdr. Rick Dunn said.

The holdup early Tuesday began before opening time, when a woman was allowed to use the shop's restroom, Dunn said. After her accomplice also entered, the two approached the manager with guns, demanded that the safe be opened and took the money.

The man then donned a Starbucks apron and he and the woman ordered an employee to assist them at the drive-up window, where they filled orders from 18 to 25 customers before fleeing.

The other two employees were confined to a back room.

Police in this town located about 25 miles northeast of Seattle have appealed for information from early morning drive-in customers and Starbucks is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the robbers.

Get paid to play

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Sloth is paying off.

People who spend too much time playing video

games have new hope for gainful employment as Nintendo of America announced plans Tuesday to pay 50 people about \$100 a day to play computer games all summer long.

For gamers, the program "is sure to be the best summer job ever," said Peter MacDougall, Nintendo's executive vice president.

From July to August, members of the "Nintendo Street Team" will earn their pay by showcasing the Nintendo GameCube and handheld Game Boy systems at concerts, malls and fairs.

Candidates must be at least 18-years-old and must fill out an application and create a two-minute video explaining why they deserve the job.

Applications must be in between May 13 and June 14, and can be found on the company's Web site.

City needs citizen enforcement

By The Associated Press

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — Westchester County wants its law-abiding citizens to write warning notes for people who illegally park in spaces reserved for the handicapped.

As part of a campaign to keep such parking spaces available to those who need them, "ticket pads" will be distributed at supermarkets, libraries and other public places, County Executive Andrew Spano said Tuesday.

Residents who see an ineligible car in a handicapped space, or see a non-disabled person misusing an eligible car, can use the pads to leave a note reminding the motorist that it's inconsiderate and illegal, Spano said.

No penalty is attached.

"They're not summonses, they're notifications," he said at a news conference.

Spano said motorists who get a note rather than a real ticket can consider themselves lucky, since a ticket in White Plains costs \$130 including a \$30 surcharge recently imposed by the state.

Traffic stop nets \$300k from trunk

By The Associated Press

SOMERSET, Pa. — A Canadian man caught speeding on the Pennsylvania Turnpike didn't get a ticket, but it may have cost him \$307,000.

A judge denied a request on Monday by Dien By Phung, 43, for state police to return the money, which troopers seized from the trunk of his car during an April 4 traffic stop.

Phung was pulled over for going 75 mph, 20 mph faster than the speed limit, police said. He appeared to be nervous, told troopers inconsistent stories and allowed them to search his car.

They found the money stuffed in two duffel bags in the trunk and Phung couldn't explain whose money it was or why he had it, state police said.

Troopers seized the money after a drug dog indicated it had been around drugs.

Phung was let go with a warning, but without the cash. Authorities said they are holding the money as potential evidence in a possible drug investigation.

His attorney, Matthew Zatko, said Phung was taking the money to make a cash deposit to buy a nail salon in Pittsburgh.

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