

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

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DAILY 3

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Evening: 9 7 9

DAILY DERBY

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2nd: 09 Winning Spirit
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RACE TIME: 1:41.94

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

After several incidents of teacher-student sex in Florida, it was almost a relief in January that Perry, Fla., teacher Natalie Whalen, 58, was accused only of biting a student (who had tried to take a CD player from her desk) or that, in February, Orlando high school chemistry teacher Perry Pieski, 42, was accused only of teaching his class how to make a bomb. But the crisis returned in March when a man revealed in a divorce deposition that not only had he had trysts with his son's Boynton Beach elementary school music teacher, Carol Flannigan, but so had the son.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 124th day of 2005.
There are 241 days left in the year.

On May 4, 1945, during World War II, German forces in the Netherlands, Denmark and northwest Germany agreed to surrender.

In 1927, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was founded.

In 1961, a group of "Freedom Riders" left Washington for New Orleans to challenge racial segregation in interstate buses and bus terminals.

In 1970, Ohio National Guardsmen opened fire on anti-war protesters at Kent State University, killing four students and wounding nine others.

In 1980, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, president of Yugoslavia, died three days before his 88th birthday.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

"When your work speaks for itself, don't interrupt."

HENRY J. KAISER
AMERICAN INDUSTRIALIST (1882-1967)

INDEX

Horoscopes

Private time tonight, Taurus 2

Surf Report

Water temperature: 60° 3

Opinion

The disgrace of Internet porn 4

State

San Francisco is top dog 7

National

A finger in frozen custard 9

Comics

Laugh it up 17

Classifieds

Ad space odyssey 18-19

Parents press on for education



BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

SACRAMENTO — Thousands of parents demanding more money for public education were met with deaf ears last week when they marched onto the steps of the Capitol.

About 100 Santa Monicans joined up with thousands of California parents in Sacramento to demand Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger make the failing public school system a top state priority.

Gov. Schwarzenegger, however, didn't meet with the state's public education advocates, according to the rally's organizers.

The two-day rally, called "Caravan for Kids," included a pit stop at Gov. Schwarzenegger's office in Los Angeles last Wednesday, followed by the statewide protest on the Capitol steps in Sacramento on Thursday. The event was organized by Santa

David Hume Kennerly/Special to the Daily Press

Maria Rodriguez, president of the Santa Monica-Malibu PTA, speaks in Los Angeles during last week's 'Caravan for Kids' rally.

See EDUCATION, page 6

Woman struck by bus still a 'Jane Doe'

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

The identity is not yet known of a woman who was killed after being struck by a Big Blue Bus last week.

The Los Angeles Department of the Coroner has not yet conducted an autopsy on the Hispanic woman, who is believed to be in her 40s and possibly either a transient or an illegal immigrant, said Lt. Cheryl MacWillie, who works in the coroner's office. Investigators also haven't been able to contact her family, which leaves her identity still unknown.

"We have requested a report from the Santa Monica Police Department," MacWillie said. "We're still trying to get the details."

At about 7:55 a.m. on Friday, April 29, the bus was driving west-

See DEATH, page 7

Court orders apartment building to be razed

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

SUNSET PARK — An apartment building in Santa Monica plagued with code violations has been ordered by the court to be demolished.

Beverly Hills Superior Court Judge Lisa Hart Cole on Monday approved a recommendation by a court-appointed receiver that the apartment building at 2438 Ocean Park Blvd. be razed to the ground.

Judge Cole in January appointed Century City-based attorney David Pasternak to take control of the property and determine whether it could conform to health and safety codes, or if it was in such disrepair that it needed to be demolished. The process is known as a "receivership."

Shortly after, the building's owner, Guillermo Gonzalez, filed an appeal to deny allowing Pasternak to be the court-appointed receiver. Pasternak assumed full control of the property in January. The three-unit building is still being occupied by Gonzalez,



John Wood/Daily Press

Guillermo Gonzalez and his wife, Beatriz Zustovich, still live in the apartment building at 2438 Ocean Park Blvd., which a judge has ordered demolished.

55.

"This is an American dream, to have a house, and now that I have one, they want to take it away from me," Gonzalez said.

In her Monday ruling, Judge Cole allowed the demolition to be delayed until Gonzalez' appeal is

resolved. It's not known how long the appeal process will take. Judge Cole set a status conference for Gonzalez' appeal on Aug. 11.

City Hall for years has been citing Gonzalez after several neigh-

See VIOLATION, page 6

Jacquie Banks

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Santa Monica Daily Press



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



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★ You might start the day at a slow pace, but by midafternoon you are a force to be dealt with. The Moon drops into your sign mid-day. Energy and Lady Luck head in your direction. Aim for what you want. Adapt your thinking and plans, if need be. Tonight: As you like it.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★ Use the morning to complete an important task. You might feel a bit out of sync. Listen to feedback from someone you care about. Recognize that being discreet could be very important. Don't share everything. A partner or associate could be more upset than you realize. Tonight: Private time. Re-center.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Understand what might be happening with others. How you see a changeable situation could be a lot different from the way others do. Gather facts, looking for the best possible direction. Enjoy the many associates that surround you, but avoid putting them into categories. Tonight: Where the action is.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Realize your limits, please. Gather information, but don't make a conclusive decision just yet. You are more in control than you realize. Take charge and be responsible. Others respond to your suggestions. Tonight: Burn the candle at both ends.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Take time to analyze what is happening around you. An associate attempts to be helpful but is stalemated. Use your abilities to come up with unusual solutions. Find an expert; hop on the computer and find new ideas. Tonight: How about some jazz or blues?



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ Others want to chip in. Allow people to do more. Sometimes you feel that you need to do everything. Not so! Just open the door to help. You might be pleased by what comes out. Ease up and relax. Let go of a need to control. Tonight: Where the action is.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ Good intentions could easily fall to the wayside. People distract you. Kick back and allow others to run the show. Why do you always have to lead? The answer is, you don't have to. Follow-through counts. Tonight: Accept an invitation.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ You might want to rethink a situation. Brainstorm with someone you view as a creative source. Allow your imagination to go in a new direction. Listen to others. Concentrate on one project at a time. Don't scatter. Tonight: Get some exercise.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★ Come from a solid point of view. Realize what you expect from others. Your creativity pays off in the afternoon. You'll come up with solutions if you are willing to trust a key person. Listen to what seems like a lecture. Tonight: Kick your heels up.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Use the morning to clear out calls and have meetings. This afternoon, you might want to retreat or hide out. Investigate different ways of handling a security-related issue. You'll come up with unusual ideas. Tonight: Head home.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ Financial matters take precedence. Expenses could get out of control if you aren't careful. Start up talks in the afternoon, when a situation becomes clearer. Discussions add to the quality of your relationships. Tonight: Out and about.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ You are personality-plus. Listen more often to what others say. Your well-being makes a difference. Think before you leap into action. Dealings have an impact on your finances. Do remember that you don't have a money tree in your back yard. Tonight: Your treat.



Santa Monica Daily Press

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Santa Monica to pray

By Daily Press staff

Come spiritually unite with fellow Santa Monicans. Santa Monica will hold its 15th annual observance of the National Day of Prayer at 7 a.m. Thursday, May 5, on the front lawn of Santa Monica City Hall, 1685 Main St. This year’s theme is “God Shed His Grace on Thee,” taken from “America the Beautiful.”

Area pastors and community leaders will offer prayers for the president and other governmental leaders, the armed services, peace officers, legislators, judges, the community and the nation. Topics such as personal renewal and moral awakening, youth, family, business, education, the sick, the imprisoned and persecuted, churches, missionaries and ministry organizations also will be addressed.

Among those slated to take part are Pastors Clarence Crites, Santa Monica Church of the Nazarene; Herman Kemp, Calvary Baptist Church; Keith Magee, Trinity Baptist Church; Jeff McCulty, Good Shepherd Baptist Church; Bill Miles, First Christian Church; Rob Scribner, Lighthouse Church; and George Neos, Yale Street Lighthouse Church. Also leading prayers will be Dorothy Larson of Community Bible Study, Santa Monica Fire Department Captain Mike Lavoie and Santa Monica Police Officer Dennis Lynch.

The Santa Monica National Day of Prayer Youth Choir will lead patriotic and worship songs. The Ronald Reagan Division of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps will present the colors.

An optional light breakfast (suggested donation \$5) will begin at 6:30 a.m. on the City Hall lawn.

For information, call (310) 656-5221.

New Directions named an LA treasure

By Daily Press staff

In celebrating the diversity, strength and excellence of Los Angeles, The Central City Association of Los Angeles honored New Directions with the association’s distinguished “Treasures of Los Angeles Award” at its 11th annual awards luncheon, emceed by Dick Van Dyke.

In recognizing New Directions’ commitment to rehabilitating and empowering homeless veterans in Los Angeles, the association also commended New Directions’ “Therapeutic Community,” which promotes the elimination of anti-social and criminal behavior, development of work ethics, community involvement and good citizenship.

New Directions, Inc., is a long-term drug and alcohol treatment program providing housing, food, clothing, counseling, job training and psychiatric services for more than 800 homeless veterans a year. The agency operates four residential rehabilitation facilities, including the 156-bed Regional Opportunity Center, the 43-bed New Directions North for homeless veterans with co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders, and two homes in Mar Vista for homeless women veterans.

A Mother’s Day filled with music

By Daily Press staff

Music will be in the air on Mother’s Day at Santa Monica College. The SMC Symphony Orchestra will present a special concert Sunday, May 8, that features the winners of the concerto competition for non-pianists, sponsored by SMC and the Music Teachers’ Association of California, West Los Angeles Branch.

Under the baton of SMC music professor James Smith, the orchestra will perform a program that includes several concertos by such composers as Mozart, Brahms and Koussevitsky, as well as Beethoven’s Egmont Overture and Holst’s Jupiter, from The Planets.

The Edgmont Overture will feature guest conductor Fang-Ning Lim, an SMC music student. The featured soloists are all pre-college students: David Manukyan, Isaiah Yu and Judith Yu, all on violin, and Henry Samuels, on bass.

The concert will be held at 4 p.m. in the SMC Concert Hall, 1900 Pico Blvd. Tickets are \$10. Call (310) 434-3000 or (310) 434-4323.

Ranked voting movement still alive

By Daily Press staff

Would you prefer to rank your elected officials when you vote for them? If so, you might want to check out the May 9 meeting of Santa Monica Ranked Voting, a grassroots citizen’s group that advocates for voting systems that allow people to rank their preferences when they vote.

The meeting will be held from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Reed Park card room, located at Seventh Street and Wilshire Boulevard.

Non-residents are welcome to attend.

More information, e-mail amy@smrankedvoting.org, or call (805) 252-6110.

Mothers to reel from Ferris wheel

By Daily Press staff

Mothers can ride the Santa Monica Ferris wheel for free on Mother’s Day. Pacific Park is offering free rides on Sunday, May 8 from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

To enjoy the free ride, a mother merely needs to go to the Pacific Wheel entrance and notify the attraction’s operator and Pacific Park will provide a complimentary ride for the guest.

For more information, call (310) 260-8744 or visit www.pacpark.com.



SURF REPORT

Wednesday is looking better at south-facing breaks as the SW swell that’s filling in now will reach its peak. Look for more consistent chest-high+ sets. NW energy should drop off, leaving west-facing breaks in knee- to waist-high surf.

Today the water is:
60°

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

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	10:02	-0.4	9:27	3.1	1:48	5.1	5:43	3.5
SUNDAY	11:10	-0.4	11:20	2.6	3:24	4.7	6:23	4.0
MONDAY	N/A	N/A	12:05	-0.3	4:57	4.6	6:55	4.4
TUESDAY	12:32	1.8	12:49	-0.1	6:14	4.6	7:25	4.9
WEDNESDAY	1:28	1.1	1:28	0.1	7:17	4.5	7:54	5.4
THURSDAY	2:15	0.4	2:02	0.5	8:12	4.4	8:22	5.8
FRIDAY	2:40	0.6	2:32	0.8	8:40	4.7	8:42	5.4

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A national survey conducted last week asked Americans what they would discuss with President George W. Bush if they had 15 minutes to talk to him. The top issue was Iraq, followed by Social Security and health care.

This week, Q-Line asks, “If you had 15 minutes with President Bush, what

would you ask him, say to him and discuss with him?”

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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Students deserve standing ovation

Editor:

There would be fewer negative articles about our young people on the front pages of our newspapers if we as citizens and parents did a better job of acknowledging the many worthy accomplishments of our young people, in sports, music and in community service.

Last Friday night's Masterworks Series performance by the Santa Monica Chorale and Chamber Orchestra is a case in point. Why wasn't this important event on the front pages of our newspapers? Any high school which chooses and competently performs an ambitious program of living artists, as well as the Mozart Trinity Mass, deserves an "A" for effort.

But here in Santa Monica we had much more than "A" for effort. Our young people provided a concert-grade performance. No high school anywhere in the U.S. or Europe could do better. This was a thoroughly enjoyable and inspiring musical performance.

How rare it is for a music lover to hear a well-disciplined and enthusiastic chorus of approximately 130 singers with an excellent student chamber orchestra fill the concert hall with great music like this.

I was particularly moved by how well our young people conveyed the pathos in Mozart's music for the Agnus Dei. Tears came to my eyes as I heard them sing these verses with a maturity and with the nuances one would only expect from a seasoned adult choir. Under the direction of their dedicated conductor, our high school chorus brought to life the deep, spiritual emotions Mozart wrote into his music.

The students received a standing ovation — with calls for an encore which were from the heart. This was a glorious concert. Surely, events like this one deserve greater attention in our community.

Thank you to the staff, to the community supporters, and most of all, thank you students for your fine performance. This was truly an enjoyable, concert-grade performance. We are very proud of you. Thank you.

Paul DeSantis
Santa Monica

Hold the school bus

Editor:

In response to your article on the 10-point unity plan (SMDP, April 29, page 1):

Before we as a community jump to the conclusion that "institutional racism" was a substantive cause of the recent fight at Santa Monica High School, it would be nice to have a few more facts on the table. Who exactly were the instigators and perpetrators of the fight? What is their family life like? Do they have involved parents? Do they participate in community and school activities? Do they even live in Santa Monica? Have they ever had any previous run-ins with the law? How many hours a night do they spend on homework? How many days of school have they missed in the past year? Do they spend their summers learning and working, or just hangin' out?

Downplaying the overwhelming importance of personal responsibility by parents and students, and instead laying the blame at the doorstep of a public school filled with well-intentioned, hard-working employees who persevere day after day in a high school that is overcrowded with many students from outside the district is wrong headed and likely demoralizing to the staff, which may lead to good people — teachers, administrators, students — leaving Samohi, a very important asset to our fair city. We need to make sure this doesn't happen.

Allen Nelson
Santa Monica

School board member a 'community asset'

Editor:

I am writing this letter to express my unqualified support for Oscar de la Torre. Please be advised that I have known and worked closely with Mr. de la Torre for nearly 10 years. We met for the first time in 1996 at Santa Monica College where he had been instrumental in organizing a pro black and brown unity conference among its students. From that moment forward, Mr. de la Torre and I have collaborated together on numerous occasions with the goal of bringing Mexican and African American people closer together. Our mutual commitment to increasing the cooperation between and improving the futures of our two respective cultures is what has defined, enriched and strengthened our relationship from its beginning.

What has prompted this letter is the false and malicious allegation by representatives of the Santa Monica Police Department that Oscar de la Torre recently engaged in activities designed to exacerbate tensions between the two groups (SMDP, April 23-24, page 1). Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only is Mr. de la Torre fully committed to establishing and sustaining collaborative efforts between black and brown youth, he continues to be one of the most genuine, sincere, ethical and hardworking role models and leaders that the Santa Monica community has ever had. I view his character, organizing efforts, youth intervention skills, organizational and interpersonal skills as nothing short of outstanding.

In the past, Oscar de la Torre and I worked successfully together at Santa Monica High School as resources to at-risk students. We come together periodically to develop worthwhile activities for the Pico Youth & Family Center and only recently chaperoned black and brown young men to the Ninth Annual Meeting of Black Villages in Mexico, where they witnessed firsthand the harmony between indigenous and black villagers. Oscar de la Torre is a creative problem-solver and community asset, who secured my trust, respect and friendship long ago.

Ron Wilkins
Professor, California State University Dominguez Hills, Department of Africana Studies

Internet porn disgust turns into a national disgrace



INCITES

BY ED SILVERSTEIN

The Internet superhighway provides access to a nearly endless array of information and content. But such unlimited access comes with a dark side.

In the past, if you wanted to view pornography you had to go to a store, sneak into the back, make a selection, then hand it to a clerk. At this point Murphy's Law would dictate that your neighbor and her kids would materialize behind you and learn of your keen interest in Asian proctology.

But with the Internet such encounters are a thing of the past, and as a result online pornography is exploding. According to the Toronto Globe and Mail, there are upward of 4 million pornography sites that collectively generate \$57 billion a year.

Pornography creates a raised state of stimulation. On the positive side, this can spice up a marriage or a relationship. But pornography also can be addictive. This can strain a relationship, cause the loss of a job or, in the severest cases, destroy someone's life.

Another issue, according Agent Rick Denny of the FBI's Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement team, is that pornography tends to be desensitizing. In other words, to maintain the level of stimulation requires that the viewer continuously search for harder and harder material.

Thanks to the Internet's privacy and anonymity, this is easily accomplished. Sophisticated purveyors, aware of the psychological process, include links to increasingly harder material. As the process continues, it is easy to be seduced from legal sites to unlawful ones.

These factors have combined to cause a proliferation of illegal material. Such Web sites can range from sadomasochism and torture to rape and even snuff films. Such sights command a higher tariff, making them far more profitable.

But there is one category of illegal site that is particularly appalling. It generates \$3.6 billion in revenues annually, which is more than one-third of the entire box office for all films shown in the United States. And they do all of this, not with superstars but thousands of young victims.

It's estimated that there are more than 100,000 child pornography sites on the Internet, many that are ultra hard-core.

Their exploited victims — adolescents, toddlers and even infants — range in the hundreds of thousands. But there is even greater cause for concern.

Just as we become desensitized to legal sites, eventually even the most perverse material will lose its luster. And a number of people visiting these sites will cross the line from viewing to doing.

Of course, this is not so easy when it comes to rape or torture. These are violent crimes. The victims are more likely to fight, and are able to identify and testify against their attackers. But children are easy prey.

Often the abuser is a trusted relative or friend with ample opportunity. Children rarely fight off an abuser known to them. And they are easily coerced, frightened or embarrassed into not speaking of the abuse.

The FBI is working diligently to shut down child pornography rings. But most of the sites are based in other countries and are not subject to U.S. laws.

But there is a possible solution that is both inexpensive and simple: Set up a small high-tech group that searches for child pornography sites. When a site is located, the IP address would be electronically forwarded to all Internet providers, who in turn would block all access. While this won't stop hardened pedophiles, it would virtually eliminate the thousands of new and casual users and make such sites less profitable. Ultimately, this could save thousands of kids from exploitation and abuse.

Of course, you might think that the Internet industry would be clamoring to embrace such a concept. But that's not the case. AOL never returned my e-mails; Google said they'd get back to me and never did, and Verizon felt that the issue was a slippery slope and they would not want to get involved. Politicians, while sympathetic, weren't much better.

But this is not an issue of censorship. These sites already are illegal. And if a video store were distributing this material, the owners and managers would be subject to prosecution and jail.

It's up to our elected representatives to implement a solution. Democrats would be a better choice because they will resist the impulse to over reach or try to make this a wedge issue.

But regardless of who takes the lead, we must address this problem immediately. Because every face on those sites is the face of a victim, and every day there are new faces. And that is a national disgrace.

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

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?
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COMMENTARY



GUEST COMMENTARY BY ALEX EPSTEIN

Social Security an immoral institution

President Bush last week made his latest move in the fierce debate over Social Security, proposing to save the program with a combination of benefit cuts for middle- and upper-class Americans, and the creation of modest private investment accounts. Democrats opposed his plan, maintaining that the system is basically sound and can be saved with a little tinkering.

Both sides, however, continue to agree on one absolute: Social Security should be saved. While it may have financial problems, they believe, some form of mandatory government-run retirement program is morally necessary.

But is it?

Social Security is commonly portrayed as benefiting most, if not all, Americans by providing them “risk-free” financial security in old age.

This is a fraud.

Under Social Security, lower- and middle-class individuals are forced to pay a significant portion of their income — approximately 12 percent — for the alleged purpose of securing their retirement. That money is not saved or invested, but transferred directly to the program’s current beneficiaries — with the “promise” that when current taxpayers get old, the income of future taxpayers will be transferred to them. Since this scheme creates no wealth, any benefits one person receives in excess of his payments necessarily come at the expense of others.

Under Social Security, every aspect of the government’s “promise” to provide financial security is at the mercy of political whim. The government can change how much of an individual’s money it takes — it has increased the payroll tax 17 times since 1935. The government can spend the money on anything it wants — observe the long-time practice of spending any annual Social Security surplus on other entitlement programs. The government can change when (and therefore if) it chooses to pay benefits and how much they consist of — witness the current proposals to raise the age cutoff or lower future benefits. Under Social Security, whether an individual gets twice as much from others as was taken, or half as much, or nothing at all, is entirely at the discretion of politicians. People cannot count on Social Security for anything — except a massive drain on income.

If Social Security did not exist — if the individual were free to use that 12 percent of income — the ability to better one’s future would be incomparably greater. People could save for retirement with a diversified, long-term, productive investment in stocks or bonds. Or they could reasonably choose not to devote

all 12 percent to retirement. They might choose to work far past the age of 65. They might choose to live more comfortably when young and more modestly in old age. They might choose to invest in their own productivity through additional education or starting a business.

How much, when and in what form one should provide for retirement is highly individual — and is properly left to the individual’s free judgment and action. Social Security deprives the young of this freedom, and thus makes them less able to plan for the future, less able to provide for their retirements, less able to buy homes, less able to enjoy their most vital years, less able to invest in themselves.

And yet Social Security’s advocates continue to push it as moral. Why?

The answer lies in the program’s ideal of “universal coverage” — the idea that, as a recent New York Times editorial preached, “all old people must have the dignity of financial security,” regardless of how irresponsibly they have acted. On this premise, since some would not save adequately on their own, everyone must be forced into some sort of “guaranteed” collective plan — no matter how irrational. Observe that Social Security’s wholesale harm to those who would use their income responsibly is justified in the name of those who would not. The rational and responsible are shackled and throttled for the sake of the irrational and irresponsible.

Those who wish to devote their wealth to saving the irresponsible from the consequences of their own actions should be free to do so through private charity, but to loot the savings of untold millions of innocent, responsible, hard-working young people in the name of such a goal is a monstrous injustice.

Social Security in any form is morally irredeemable. We should be debating, not how to save Social Security, but how to end it — how to phase it out so as to best protect both the rights of those who have paid into it, and those who are forced to pay for it today. This will be a painful task. But it will make possible a world in which Americans enjoy far greater freedom to secure their own futures.

(Alex Epstein is a junior fellow at the Ayn Rand Institute in Irvine. The institute promotes the ideas of Ayn Rand — best-selling author of “Atlas Shrugged” and “The Fountainhead” and originator of the philosophy of objectivism.)

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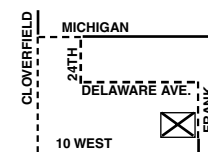
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California schools among the worst in nation

EDUCATION, from page 1

Monica's Community for Excellent Public Schools and the Santa Monica-Malibu PTA, which called on the statewide PTA to join in their effort.

"Caravan for Kids" organizers said they hope their efforts will prompt Gov. Schwarzenegger to make good on a promise made last year to increase public education funding, protect Proposition 98 school money and develop a 10-year plan to restore the greatness California's schools once enjoyed.

Organizers said Carla Niño, president to the California PTA, asked to discuss the educational budget with Gov. Schwarzenegger a month ago. Gov. Schwarzenegger's office called a day before the rallies were scheduled to take place and invited the PTA leadership to meet with his staff. Niño allegedly denied the invitation on the grounds she felt the matter required the direct attention of Gov. Schwarzenegger.

H.D. Palmer, deputy director of the state's department of finance, said Gov.

Schwarzenegger is committed to significant yearly increases to make up for the \$9 billion public education funding gap inherited when he took office.

Palmer said the educational budget Gov. Schwarzenegger is proposing more than covers expected growth of student enrollment.

The \$47 billion education budget will increase \$3 billion, mostly from Prop. 98 money. The added funds will increase per student spending by \$362 for next year, from \$7,012 to \$7,374.

However, local advocacy groups said the proposal is not enough to get California's public schools back where they need to be.

"The governor will meet with leaders who represent far fewer constituents," said Rochelle Fanali, a CEPS member who helped organize the rally. "For the governor to not stand with the California PTA when the education budget is being hotly debated does not seem fair."

A recent report published by the RAND Corp., a Santa Monica-based international think tank, said California's

K-12 school system has fallen from its position as the national leader it was 30 years ago to near the bottom of the rankings, above just Mississippi and Louisiana.

CEPS representatives said after the local school district earlier this month secured an annual \$6 million contribution from the Santa Monica City Council for the next five years — to offset the local impact from the state budget crisis — CEPS members have begun to focus their attention on the statewide educational financing crisis.

"Organizing the statewide effort was probably the most natural thing for us to do, since we've become used to maximizing our resources," Fanali said. "But it's been a little like shoveling snow, since the governor is denying the state's responsibility."

Despite the \$6 million annual subsidy, plus many more millions in other funding each year by City Hall, local school officials have said that four years of educational budget cuts on the state level have cost local schools nearly \$9 million in lost services and personnel, resulting in a

reduction of administrators, staff, faculty and the support for programs. "Caravan for Kids" organizers said the problem is worse for schools without local support.

Maria Rodriguez, president of the Santa Monica-Malibu PTA Council, said her group has done everything it can to drum up local support. She said the PTA has a responsibility to all children in the state of California — many of whom belong to schools that have not had the same level of local support as the Santa Monica-Malibu school system.

Overall, CEPS and local PTA representatives said they are happy with the outcome of the rally, since it has allowed them to meet education advocates statewide, which may help with future organization efforts.

"We're pleased with what we were able to accomplish," said Rebecca Kennerly, a CEPS member and event organizer. "It has been a huge mobilization. There are a number of groups out there that are eager to take local advocacy up to the state, where the root of our education problems lie."

City has never taken home for health violations, attorney says

VIOLATION, from page 1

bors complained the property was overrun with garbage, flammable materials and junk, and that a single upstairs bedroom had some 14 bunkbeds rented out by the week — an allegation that Gonzalez denied.

In 1997, Gonzalez was charged with 85 misdemeanor counts for violations of building, fire, plumbing and electrical codes, and has had ongoing legal problems since then, according to Deputy City Attorney Adam Radinsky, who is handling the case on behalf of Santa

Monica's consumer protection unit. Radinsky said Gonzalez has repeatedly refused court orders to fix a host of code violations, landing him in county jail for nine months in 1998.

Pasternak advised the court in papers he filed that the cost of repairing the property and bringing it up to code was prohibitively high and that the property would be worth more empty than with a repaired building, according to Radinsky.

Making that determination required several inspections, contractor estimates and assessments from real estate agents, according to Pasternak, adding the costs will be paid for by Gonzalez, who likely will either have to sell his property or refinance his mortgage.

Pasternak said Gonzalez and the building's other tenants will be allowed to stay in the building — for now.

Gonzalez, a retired construction worker, has lived in the building for 31 years, which city officials called a "dangerous blight to the community" that has been "the site of chronic criminal activity" as a result of Gonzalez' alleged negligence in dealing with the matter.

In addition to the code violations, Radinsky said there had been 32 calls to police within a one-year period for complaints related to excessive noise and other alleged criminal wrongdoing.

Gonzalez credited a disgruntled neighbor with making the calls.

Gonzalez said the front unit in which he lives has five occupants, he and his common-law wife, Beatriz Zustovich, and their 5-year-old daughter, Stacy.

In addition to Gonzalez and his family, two renters pay between \$50 and \$65 a week to rent bunk beds in a large upstairs bedroom. Another family of three pays \$650 monthly to rent the building's rear unit, Gonzalez said.

Tracy Condon, a spokeswoman for the Rent Control Board, said the building is not under rent control because its owner lives in it and he filed for an exemption in 1980.

Gonzalez said he was emotionally



John Wood/Daily Press

The apartment building at 2438 Ocean Park Blvd. will not be razed until its owner's appeal is resolved by the court.

attached to the property, where he's lived since 1973 and where he raised his first son, who has since moved out. The apartment building was built in 1947.

City Hall has not sought to take control of a property from its owner for more than 15 years and has never done so for health and safety code violations, Radinsky said. However, Radinsky warned it can happen.

Gonzalez insists he has taken care of the code violations and his home is fit for living.

"This house is better than ever," Gonzalez said. "It's a little depressing, because I've been helping the homeless, and now they want to put the homeless and my family on the street."

Gonzalez said he is not sure where he will go if he has to leave his home, but he said he would prefer to be in Santa Monica, which his wife, Beatriz, said will be unlikely.

"It's too expensive here," she said.

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San Francisco picked as top choice to land stem cell headquarters

BY PAUL ELIAS
AP Biotechnology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — An influential panel of the state's newly created stem cell agency endorsed San Francisco on Monday as its top pick to host the agency overseeing California's \$3 billion public investment in stem cell research.

The panel, a subcommittee of the 29-member board that oversees the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, ranked San Diego and Sacramento in a virtual tie for second place as permanent headquarters. The full agency board is expected to formally choose a headquarters Friday at a meeting in Fresno and is not bound by the recommendation made Tuesday.

The institute plans to build at least a 17,000-square-foot office with a maximum of 50 employees who will help dole out nearly \$300 million in research grants annually for 10 years.

No actual stem cell research is planned at the headquarters, but civic boosters said winning it will give the successful city a big dose of scientific and marketing prestige that can be used to lure biotechnology companies to settle nearby.

"Today's announcement is one of the final steps toward cementing the Bay Area's role as the center of biotechnology in the world," said Jim Wunderman, president of the Bay Area Council, a business boosting organization.

San Francisco is expected to win the municipal beauty contest, which began in January when about a dozen California cities from Sacramento to Los Angeles offered everything from free rent and free office furniture to a 24-hour concierge service to land the headquarters.

Committee members said San Francisco's promise to provide the Moscone Center for free and the city's international reputation — it is home to 84 embassies — earned high marks while San Diego's inability to offer anywhere close to the \$900,000 in hotel room savings San Francisco did worked against that Southern California city.

The agency has ambitious plans to host international scientific conferences.

Sacramento scored highest in quality of life categories, but was marked down for lacking a vibrant biotechnology industry.

"I do not think it will be an attractive site for scientists from around the world to travel to," subcommittee member Richard Murphy said of Sacramento. Murphy is chief executive officer of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in San Diego.

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom said the city's bid is worth \$17 million in perks, including 10 years free rent in a new building adjacent to new University of California, San Francisco research labs, directly across the street from the Giants baseball stadium.

San Diego County is also offering a decade's worth of free rent in tony La Jolla, which is also home to UC San Diego. San Diego officials valued their bid at \$12 million.

But San Francisco is expected to win because state officials from the Department of General Services have consistently scored the city's bid highest and tours by the subcommittee of each city's site over the weekend did nothing to supplant San Francisco. San Diego is also hamstrung by a scandal-plagued City Hall. Mayor Dick Murphy is resigning under a cloud effective July 15.

Emeryville, an East Bay suburb of San Francisco, was the other finalist.

The four cities bids' were scored on various community aspects such as location, airport access and proximity to universities and other research institutes by two separate groups since January. San Francisco finished with a final score of 222.75 while Sacramento received 200.5 and San Diego scored 199.8. Emeryville, where the stem cell agency is temporarily located, received 171.7 points.

The committee was asked to tabulate its votes even as the San Francisco mayor and his counterpart Sacramento Mayor Heather Fargo made last-minute stump speeches in Sacramento for their respective cities, prompting a complaint from one member who didn't tour any of the sites under discussion Tuesday. The meeting was also teleconferenced in San Francisco, San Diego, Los Angeles and Fresno.

Last fatal accident for Big Blue Bus was in '02

DEATH, from page 1

bound on Pico Boulevard and had stopped for a red light at Ocean Avenue. When the traffic signal for westbound traffic turned green, the bus waited for a pedestrian to cross Ocean Avenue to the west. After the pedestrian had crossed, the bus made a right turn and struck the woman, who was attempting to cross Ocean Avenue. Apparently, the right rear wheel crushed the woman, who suffered a broken pelvis and head trauma, MacWillie said.

The woman was transported to a UCLA-Westwood Medical Center, where she later died. The driver was released at the scene and is currently taking time off,

said Big Blue Bus spokesman Joe Stitcher. The bus company isn't releasing the name of the driver because the investigation is ongoing.

The last time the Big Blue Bus was involved in an fatal accident was in 2002, when three people died in two separate accidents within a week of each other. In July of 2002, a car pulled out in front of a bus on Manchester Avenue from Sepulveda Westway. Two people died in the accident. The bus was on route No. 3, which goes from the Los Angeles International Airport to Santa Monica.

Then a week later, a 70-year-old homeless man was struck by a Big Blue Bus as he attempted to cross Ocean Avenue at Broadway.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is hosting a public meeting on the future use of excess land at the VA West Los Angeles Healthcare Center. The meeting will be held on May 6, 2005 from 8am-4:30pm at the Wadsworth Theater on the West Los Angeles Campus, located at 11301 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90073.

The purpose of the meeting is to provide information on the development of a business plan that will recommend future uses of the property to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The need for a business plan addressing excess land was identified as part of the VA Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) study.

The meeting agenda will include presentations on CARES utilization data, objectives of the business plan project and timeframes for completion. The agenda will allow for public comment from 12:30pm to 3:30pm.

Written statements can be posted on the CARES Business Plan Studies website <http://www.va.gov/cares> or submitted to: West Los Angeles Study, VA CARES Studies, P.O. Box 1427, Washington Grove, MD 20880-1427.

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Jury starts deliberations in case against inmate hostage-taker

BY MICHELLE ROBERTS
Associated Press Writer

PHOENIX — Jurors began deliberations Tuesday in the case against an inmate who took two guards hostage in a prison watchtower last year.

During closing arguments earlier in the day, the prosecution painted the 15-day standoff as a failed escape attempt, while the inmate, Ricky Wassenaar, argued he and fellow inmate Steven Coy never intended to escape.

“There was not an escape possible,” Wassenaar told jurors. He acted as his own attorney during the trial. The tower “was where I wanted to be.”

Wassenaar, who was serving a 28-year sentence for armed robbery and assault, said he only wanted to be transferred to a facility closer to where his mother lives in Michigan and that he never intended for anyone to be injured in the taking of the tower. Negotiators agreed to get him transferred to another state as part of the deal to end the standoff.

But prosecutor Jeanette Gallagher noted that Wassenaar repeatedly told negotiators that he and Coy had been trying to escape but got stuck in the tower. She said it had been the negotiators who first offered the transfer to another state.

“The defendant is still trying to escape. He is trying to escape accountability for his actions,” she said.

Wassenaar faces 20 counts including attempted murder, kidnapping, sexual

assault, aggravated assault, promoting prison contraband and assault by a prisoner.

During the trial, both guards testified under questioning from Wassenaar.

The female guard, Lois Fraley, said Wassenaar sexually assaulted her within about an hour of the tower takeover. Fraley, who has gone public with her story, sometimes wore her sunglasses and put her head down Tuesday as Gallagher talked about the assault and sexual assault.

Wassenaar, 42, denied he sexually assaulted Fraley, noting that it took her several weeks to come forward with the allegations of the sexual assault. Gallagher said Wassenaar threatened Fraley and she was afraid for her safety and the safety of her 12-year-old daughter.

The prison standoff began Jan. 18, 2004, after Wassenaar and Coy overpowered guards and staff in a prison kitchen using makeshift knives. Using a kitchen guard’s uniform, they tricked guard Jason Auch into letting them into the armed watchtower.

Auch, who was badly injured after being struck in the eye with a metal paddle from the kitchen, was released after a week, but Fraley was held for 15 days. It was one of the longest prison hostage standoffs in U.S. history.

The standoff ended after negotiators cut off electricity to the tower and agreed to transfer Coy and Wassenaar to other states. Coy, who pleaded guilty to kidnapping, assault, sexual assault and other charges, is serving seven life terms in Maine.

STATE BRIEFS

Skinhead threat scares church

By The Associated Press

RANCHO CUCAMONGA — Strangers with shaved heads showed up the past two Sundays during Spanish language Mass at St. Peters and St. Paul Catholic Church, unnerving some parishioners intimidated by the three men they feared were skinheads.

It turned out they were Marines looking for a buddy after their return from war in Iraq.

The trio walked into the church on April 24 and May 1 and sat down, then near the end of services, they walked to the front of the congregation, stood facing parishioners in silence and then walked out of the church, parishioner Aida Nordahl said.

Sheriff’s deputies were called to the church after the men visited the second time.

“They have short Marine haircuts, and someone perceives that they’re skinheads, and that they were intimidating people,” San Bernardino County sheriff’s Sgt. Frank Gonzales said. “It turns out that was not the case, and they were very polite.”

But Nordahl said some members of the church didn’t know the men’s military status and it was an unsettling experience.

The men explained to deputies that they had just returned from Iraq and came to the church looking for a friend, the sheriff’s sergeant said. When they couldn’t find their friend April 24, they returned the following week.

The Rev. Patrick Kirsch explained the situation to parishioners.

“We don’t want to make it more than it is,” he said. “I was reassured by the police that (the men) wouldn’t be back.”

Teenage shooter still at large

By The Associated Press

ALHAMBRA — A teenager suspected in the shooting death of a Gabrielino High School student has managed so far to elude capture, investigators said.

Gabriel Guerrero, 23, and his brother Daniel Guerrero, 19, allegedly killed Ryan Desalla, 17, near the school on April 27. Gabriel Guerrero was arrested and charged with murder, but Los Angeles County sheriff’s deputies are still searching for his brother.

Lt. Joe Hartshorne said it wasn’t clear who fired the fatal shots.

“They were both present, so they’re both responsible,” he said.

Gabriel Guerrero, being held on \$1.1 million bail after arraignment was postponed Monday to May 31, is also charged with possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. He was convicted of armed robbery in 2000, according to the criminal complaint.

Their parents said they believe Gabriel and Daniel Guerrero may have been retaliating for an attack the previous day on a younger brother. The 16-year-old younger brother was beaten by a group of young men wielding golf clubs, their father Gabriel Guerrero said.

Gang-prevention funding cut

By The Associated Press

VENTURA — The Police Department’s successful gang suppression program is losing more than \$300,000 because of state budget cuts.

State grants currently paying for the 6-year-old program targeting at-risk teenagers aren’t expected to be renewed for the fiscal year starting July 1.

The department told the City Council on Monday that there’s now a \$310,000 gap and service reductions are expected.

“If we lose funding, then we would essentially lose an officer,” Lt. Bryan Roberts said. Only a sergeant, corporal and officer will be left to run the program, he said.

The Police Department has partnered with the district attorney’s office, probation department, the Ventura Unified School District and the Boys & Girls Club of Ventura to tackle gang violence.

When the gang suppression program began in 1999, there were 873 gang crimes in the city. That number has dripped to under 200 for the first 10 months of the fiscal year. Sgt. Mark Stadler said.

Three arrested in murder investigation

By The Associated Press

REDLANDS — Three Los Angeles gang members were arrested for a carjacking and home invasion robbery that led to the killing of a man and wounding of his aunt and cousin.

Donald Ray Shorts Jr., 22, was arrested Friday and Michael Lamar Rose, 23, was arrested Saturday, both in Las Vegas, and Jamar Lavon Tucker, 23, was arrested in Los Angeles on Sunday, investigators said.

Shorts and Rose were booked for investigation of the April 22 murder of Gerald Brooks, 28, and attempted murders of his aunt, Peggy Faulkner, 52, and her adult son Michael Denmon, 32.

Tucker was booked for investigation of possession of stolen property.

Investigators said Shorts, Rose and at least one other man carjacked Denmon’s Land Rover in the Los Angeles area and drove with him to his Redlands home. Police said Denmon knew his attackers.

They entered the home at about 2 a.m. and robbed Faulkner and Brooks before shooting them, the investigators said. The gunmen then sped away with Denmon, who was found an hour later in Fullerton with a gunshot to the head.

“It seems obvious to me that at the conclusion of this heinous crime, the suspects believed they had just executed three people,” Redlands police Chief Jim Bueermann said Monday.

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NATIONAL



Anchorage investors market 360-degree camera

BY PAULA DOBBYN

Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A pair of Anchorage angel investors with a bent for science and finance have helped a high-tech company go public on a Canadian stock exchange.

Mead Treadwell and John Wanamaker, with partners, recently invested \$750,000 in Immersive Media Corp., according to documents filed with Canadian securities regulators. Immersive makes a cutting-edge camera that shoots 360-degree images in real-time. The camera was used by the U.S. Capitol Police in President Bush's inauguration motorcade in January, the investors said.

Alaska — a rough-around-the-edges bastion of fishermen, loggers and oil-field roughnecks — seems an unlikely venue for venture capitalists.

"People say you can't do venture capital in Alaska," Wanamaker said. "Well it turns out, you can!"

Immersive, based in Portland, Ore., and Calgary, Alberta, sold its first stock to the general public in March. Its shares are traded on the Canadian venture-capital exchange, a sister organization of the Toronto Stock Exchange.

Treadwell, Wanamaker and some Canadian investors recapitalized Immersive early last year as the company made its first sales of the camera and prepared to go public this year, they said. The fresh money helped take the company's technology from a research project to a commercial product, said Myles McGovern, Immersive's

chief executive.

The company has lost \$8.5 million since its inception, including \$1.7 million in the last six months of last year, according to financial statements filed with Canadian regulators.

The market for Immersive's camera is primarily the law enforcement, security and defense sectors, according to Treadwell, a former Alaska deputy commissioner of environmental conservation. Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the need for high-tech surveillance equipment has apparently skyrocketed.

"The homeland security market has just burgeoned," he said.

The camera, called Dodeca 200, looks like a small soccer ball with lenses all over. The lenses are actually wide-angle video sensors that capture a spherical image of whatever they're looking at.

The cameras can be mounted atop police cars or military vehicles, for example, to capture 360-degree images that can be either transmitted live to people monitoring the pictures on computers elsewhere or stored for later use. People watching the images feel like they're at the spot where the action is happening.

Besides law enforcement, the technology also has applications in the communications, entertainment and video game industries, Wanamaker and Treadwell said, in an interview at their downtown Anchorage office.

Companies that offer mapping services are particularly interested in licensing the data Immersive is gathering

in a slew of U.S. cities, McGovern said.

Imagine planning a trip to Los Angeles and trying to figure out how to navigate the freeway system there, he said. In the not too distant future, the Internet will have Web sites that allow people to enter a proposed route and go on a virtual tour from point A to point B, McGovern said.

Treadwell and Wanamaker have started an investment company, called Venture Ad Astra, that plans to help launch other promising startups. The business name — translated from Latin — means venture to the stars.

Its initial \$750,000 investment for 3 million shares in Immersive is now worth about \$4.5 million.

Wanamaker, the son of a retired Anchorage judge, calls himself a "serial entrepreneur." He says he has built and sold four companies in the aerospace, wireless and electronic security industries.

Treadwell is a former board member of the Alaska Science and Technology Foundation, a state-run seed capital fund dissolved in 2003. He's a commissioner with the U.S. Arctic Research Commission and a senior fellow at Institute of the North, a think tank at Alaska Pacific University.

Treadwell said he's has been an angel investor for more than a decade.

Venture Ad Astra plans to make early stage investments in a variety of companies, particularly ones that focus on imagery and mapping companies.

"In some ways, it's like a mother hen sitting on a bunch of eggs," Treadwell said.

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North Carolina man finds employee's severed finger in pint of frozen custard

By The Associated Press

WILMINGTON, N.C. — State officials are trying to determine how a worker cut off part of his finger and how the severed piece wound up in a customer's ice cream at a shop that was cleared by the state after a similar accident last summer.

Clarence Stowers said he bought a pint of frozen custard at the Kohl's Frozen Custard shop on Sunday and opened it at home. He saw an object in the custard and put it in his mouth, thinking it was a piece of candy, a Wilmington television station reported Monday.

"I thought it was candy because they put candy in your ice cream ... to make it a treat," Stowers told WWAY. Stowers said he spit the object out, but still couldn't identify it. He went to his kitchen, rinsed it off with water — and "just started screaming."

Unlike a recent incident at a Wendy's restaurant in California, no questions about Stowers' honesty have been raised.

Officials of the state departments of agriculture and labor went to the shop to investigate Monday, and the shop's owner confirmed that one of his employees lost part of a finger in an accident with a food-processing machine.

Last July, another Kohl's employee accidentally severed an index finger on the same machine, the Wilmington Star-News reported. The state Department of Labor cleared the restaurant of wrongdoing.

The department has started an investigation of the latest incident, said department spokesman Juan Santos. He said the agency is attempting to determine whether Kohl's was in compliance with state workplace safety rules.

Stowers did not immediately return calls from The Associated Press.

The custard shop owner, Craig Thomas, told WWAY that the employee who lost the finger that Stowers found had dropped a bucket while working with a custard dispensing machine. He was trying to catch the bucket when the accident occurred.

Thomas said that as several employees tried to help the injured worker, a drive-thru window attendant apparently scooped the custard into a pint container before being told what had happened.

The Star-News of Wilmington reported that the finger was cut off at the first knuckle.

Joe Reardon of the state Agriculture Department's food and drug division said state officials closed the shop while the food-processing equipment was sanitized.

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Meet California's real estate tycoons



DAYS ON THE MARKET

BY JODI SUMMERS

California has its fair share of real estate millionaires, not to mention pretty much everyone who owns property with land in Santa Monica.

But when it comes to billionaires — those who've built their fortune developing tremendous amounts of property — California has nine. As you would expect, they are mavericks that conquered the Wild, Wild West. The illustrious list includes:

1. DONALD BREN

The richest man in American real estate is 72-year-old Newport Beach resident Donald Bren. This self-made millionaire with a net worth of \$4.3 billion can best be described as "America's richest landlord," as well as one of real estate's great philanthropists. He is the sixth wealthiest real estate billionaire and the 122nd richest man in the world.

Bren is chairman of The Irvine Co., a privately held real estate investment company best known for the balanced, sustainable, quality communities it has created on the 93,000-acre Irvine Ranch in Orange County. Finished plots sell for more than \$1 million an acre. He also owns 400 office buildings, 35 shopping centers, 80 apartment complexes and two luxury hotels.

2. RED EMMERSON

The second wealthiest real estate titan in California is Archie Aldis (Red) Emmerson — the largest private forest land holder in North America with 1.5 million acres. "Red" learned the timber business from father, who started out with makeshift sawmills in the family's backyard. Redding is his base of operations, and his net worth is \$1.5 billion.

For the last 20 years, Emmerson and his company — Sierra Pacific Industries — quietly grew into the second-largest private landowner in the United States. Assets include 1.52 million acres in Northern California, timberland stretching more than 350 miles from Mount Shasta to Yosemite National Park.

Needless to say, Sierra Pacific is a darling of environmental groups.

3. JOHN SOBRATO

John Sobrato of Sobrato Development Companies calls Atherton home, but he made his fortune in Silicon Valley — one of the priciest real estate markets in the state. Sobrato boasts a portfolio of \$1.5 billion. For more than 40 years, SDC has developed real estate in Silicon Valley properties. They specialize in facilities for high tech and R&D companies. Another self-made man, he began in 1953 with one of the first "tilt-up" buildings in Santa Clara County.

Sobrato owns and manages the buildings it constructs and maintains single-tenant occupancy in more than 120 buildings in Santa Clara County and Alameda County. It amounts to more than 10 million square feet of office and manufacturing space.

4. GEORGE ARGYROS

One-time owner of the Seattle Mariners, George Argyros is another Newport Beach billionaire with a net

worth of \$1.2 billion. Argyros, the grandson of Greek immigrants, began by running a Palm Springs grocery. He graduated to buying and selling corner lots at busy intersections for gas stations. He turned to apartments in 1968. Today, as part of Arnel & Associates, Argyros manages apartments and commercial property in Southern California.

President Bush appointed Argyros to the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp. board in 1990. Then President Bush tapped Argyros to lead GOP fundraising efforts in California in 2000 and appointed him Ambassador to Spain in 2001.

5. CARL BERG

Self-made billionaire Carl Berg was a loan processor before investing in Silicon Valley commercial real estate with John Sobrato in the 1960s. He then struck out on his own, forming Mission West Properties, a real estate investment trust (REIT) in Silicon Valley. Berg owns a controlling stake in the REIT, which focuses on single-tenant research and development, and office properties in Silicon Valley. Mission West now owns and manages more than 100 properties, with major tenants that include Microsoft.

Currently, the Atherton-based businessman boasts a portfolio of \$1.2 billion.

6. EDWARD ROSKI JR.

Finally, a Los Angelino. Ed Roski is the founder of Majestic Realty, the largest commercial builder in Los Angeles, boasting an office, retail and industrial portfolio totaling more than 55 million square feet. He's also active in Las Vegas with a 400-acre business park and 3 million square feet of casinos. The USC grad with a net worth of \$1.1 billion built the Staples Center with Philip Anschutz and is a minority owner of the Lakers and the Kings.

7. ALEXANDER SPANOS

A.G. Spanos Companies are known for building, managing and selling multi-family housing units; constructing master-planned communities and developing land. The Stockton-based firm has built more than 100,000 apartments in 18 states since 1960. He recently developed top-class office space in San Joaquin County. Major projects include Spanos Park, a \$1 billion master-planned community in Stockton. Spanos, owner of the NFL's San Diego Chargers, operates the company with his sons Dean (president and CEO) and Michael Spanos (EVP). Spanos, whose net worth is \$1.1 billion, recently pledged \$200 million to San Diego for a new stadium for their football team.

8. and 9. JOHN ARRILLAGA and RICHARD PEERY

John Arrillaga and Richard Peery are two of Silicon Valley's biggest commercial landlords. In the 1960s, they converted farmland into pricey office space. Peery + Arrillaga, developers normally, only provides facilities to companies that can pay cash. However, if they sense a winner — say Sun Microsystems or Quantum — they give lenient terms and then collect rents as they grow. Peery and Arrillaga are lifelong business partners who avoid debt and the media. Each has net worth of \$1 billion.

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

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Ups and downs of commercial real estate investment



IN YOUR SPACE

BY CHRISTINA S. PORTER

Sale prices for small industrial, as well as research and development buildings, are skyrocketing across the Los Angeles Basin.

The median price for the 82 small buildings that sold in the first quarter of 2005 was \$179 per square foot, up 43 percent over the median for 2004. A buying fever has hit small users throughout the area, fueled by a combination of:

- Lack of available product. Vacancy rates in small buildings are currently very low, at 3.2 percent, down from 3.9 percent a year ago.

- Climbing rental rates. Rates were up 6 percent in 2004, and are projected to climb sharply in future years due to exceptionally low vacancy rates, strong demand and limited construction. Users are hoping to lock in their costs now by buying rather than leasing.

- Still-low interest rates. Small owner-users with good credit have found that they can buy units for just 10

percent down and interest rates near 6 percent. At 6 percent, monthly payments are approximately \$0.97 per square foot, while lease payments on the same property are approximately \$0.95 per square foot.

- High home-equity levels. The recent run-up in home prices is enabling a number of small-business owners to refinance their home to pull out cash to make the down payment and to cover any negative carrying costs that may occur from purchasing a building, and to obtain a tax benefit by doing so.

- Obtaining the advantages of ownership. Ownership enables small business to control their property, including making any renovations they may want.

- Steadily increasing property values. When property values climb as much as they have in recent years, it stimulates a number of buyers "to act now before they climb any higher."

- Lack of alternative investment opportunities. Many small-business owners and investors are still wary of stocks and bonds.

- Movement of the baby boom generation into pre-retirement years. Many small-business owners see buying their own building as a means to save for their retirement, with a property 100 percent occupied by a credit tenant — their own business.

- An expanding economy. A growing number of business owners consider this to be a good time to take on additional risk.

Buyers of these properties typically are entrepreneurs who live in the area and who own a firm with five to 15 employees. These firms are in a wide variety of sectors, including business consulting, engineering, retail, construction, printing, personal services, medical services, insurance, mortgage brokerage, manufacturing, travel and computer services.

Despite very high prices, properties for sale are still hard to find. Current owners have witnessed the run-up in prices, and are reluctant to sell for fear of missing out on even more appreciation. Besides, most investment properties are producing a positive cash flow, and many owners don't know where they would re-invest the money if they were to sell. However, sellers could suddenly emerge if they sense the market is peaking.

The main question on the minds of most observers is how long will this phenomenon last? Our expectation is for a gradual leveling in prices. The Blue Chip Forecast predicts only a moderate increase in inflation and in T-Bill interest rates over the next two years. If this turns out to be accurate, mortgage rates would likely climb to no

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE PROPERTIES LEASED

Location	Type	Date Leased	Sq. Ft.	Price
1422 2nd St	Office	4/26/2005	5,200	\$2.90 NNN
1428 2nd St	Office	4/26/2005	1,428	\$3.00 MG
1411 5th St	Office	4/27/2005	2,100	\$2.95 MG
2951 28th St	Office	4/25/2005	3,460	\$2.65 FSG
725 Arizona Ave	Office	4/25/2005	2,683	\$3.65 FSG
2110 Main St	Office	4/28/2005	2,350	\$2.75 NNN
2434 Main St	Office	4/28/2005-	3,742	\$2.65 NNN
233 Wilshire Blvd	Office	4/26/2005	2,428	\$3.25 FSG
401 Wilshire Blvd	Office	4/25/2005	8,816	\$3.55 FSG

more than 7 percent. Should interest rates climb substantially above 7 percent, then leasing would be cheaper on an immediate-cash-flow basis, and owner-user demand would likely fall. Demand from users of this space has been growing by 1.2 million square foot per year on average from 1999 to now, for growth in occupied space of 1.7 percent per year.

Our expectation is that demand will be very strong for at least the next two years, driven by a large and rapidly growing economy, as well as strong growth among small businesses.

Despite very high sale prices, construction activity of small industrial and research and development buildings remains restrained. One million square feet is currently under construction, which, when complete, will expand the base by 1.4 percent. This will roughly equal growth in demand over the next six to nine months, and vacancy rates are projected to remain near current low levels. Construction is limited in many areas due to lack and expense of vacant land, difficult entitlement issues and intense competition from residential developers.

As a result of the projected low vacancy rates and strong demand, rental rates appear likely to climb very sharply. We anticipate that they will grow by approximately 10 percent per year over the next two years. Assuming that the recent ramp-up in sale prices will level, this would diminish some of the current discrepancies between sale prices and rental rates.

(The above is an excerpt from NAI Capital's spring 2005 Market Perspective, and is for informational purposes only and not meant to be taken as advice. Christina S. Porter is in the business of leasing and selling office and industrial buildings. She can be reached at (310) 806-6104 or at cporter@naicapital.com.)



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INTERNATIONAL



Iran 'determined' to pursue enrichment

BY CHARLES J. HANLEY

AP Special Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS — With the world watching its every nuclear step, Iran declared Tuesday that it is determined to pursue all legal areas of nuclear technology, including uranium enrichment.

Addressing a U.N. conference on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said his government is "eager" to provide guarantees that its nuclear-fuel program will serve only peaceful purposes, as sought in talks with European governments.

Washington contends Iran's uranium enrichment program is aimed at building nuclear weapons, and President Bush has proposed banning such technology to all but those countries that already have it. Enriched uranium also can be used to generate electricity, which Iran says is its only aim.

"It is unacceptable that some intend to limit the access to nuclear technology to an exclusive club of technologically advanced states under the pretext of nonproliferation," Kharrazi said.

He also told delegates from more than 180 nations that the United States and other nuclear-weapons states should make legally binding assurances to non-nuclear states like Iran that they will not be subject to nuclear attack.

In Tehran, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said Tuesday the government would resume some nuclear activities that have been suspended during talks with European governments to resolve the dispute.

On Monday, opening day of a monthlong conference reviewing the workings of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, U.S. delegation chief Stephen G. Rademaker demanded that Iran shut down and dismantle its enrichment equipment.

"The treaty is facing the most serious challenge in its history," the assistant secretary of state told delegates.

Because of the Iran dispute, treaty members still had not agreed on a complete agenda as of Tuesday morning. Conference organizers reported the Iranians were resisting a reference in the document to "relevant developments" — diplomatic code, in this case, for Iran's nuclear program. Organizers hope to have agreement before the nuts-and-bolts work of committees begins next week.

Under the 35-year-old Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, states without nuclear arms pledge not to pursue

them in exchange for a commitment by five nuclear powers — the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China — to move toward nuclear disarmament. Three other nuclear states — Israel, India and Pakistan — remain outside the treaty.

The treaty is reviewed every five years at conferences whose consensus positions give valuable political support to nonproliferation initiatives. At the 2000 meeting, the nuclear powers committed to "13 practical steps" toward disarmament, but critics complain the Bush administration — by rejecting the nuclear test-ban treaty, for example — has come up short.

"We are greatly disappointed" by "unsatisfactory progress" toward disarmament by the big powers, said New Zealand's Marian Hobbs, speaking for a coalition of disarmament-minded states.

Rademaker said, however, the Bush administration is "proud to have played a leading role in reducing nuclear arsenals," via the 2002 Moscow Treaty, for example, under which the United States and Russia are to cut back deployed warheads by two-thirds, to between 1,700 and 2,200 each, by 2012.

That agreement has been criticized for not requiring destruction of excess warheads taken off deployment or providing a transparent timetable and open verification of reductions.

Rademaker sought to focus attention instead on Iran, saying, "We dare not look the other way."

The Iran question hinges on the treaty's Article IV, which guarantees nonweapons states the right to peaceful nuclear technology, including uranium enrichment equipment to produce fuel for nuclear power plants.

That same technology, with further enrichment, can produce material for nuclear bombs. Tehran denies that is the purpose of its long-secret uranium-enrichment program, but in his keynote address Annan said states like Iran "must not insist" on possessing such sensitive technology.

Following Annan to the U.N. podium, Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, renewed his call for a moratorium on new fuel-cycle facilities while international controls are negotiated.

ElBaradei has proposed putting nuclear fuel production under multilateral control by regional or international bodies. Rademaker reaffirmed President Bush's proposal for an outright ban on nuclear fuel technology, except in the United States and a dozen other countries

that have it.

The Tehran government is negotiating on and off with Germany, France and Britain about shutting down its enrichment operations in return for economic incentives.

Tehran has proposed establishment of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East, a move that would require Israel to give up its nuclear arsenal.

North Korea pulled out of the treaty in 2003 and said in February it has already built nuclear weapons. The review conference is not expected to focus heavily on this first treaty defector, in order not to complicate efforts to draw Pyongyang back into the treaty fold through now stalled six-nation talks.

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Iraqi government sworn in amid violence

BY THOMAS WAGNER

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari pledged to unite Iraq's rival ethnic and religious factions and fight terrorism as the nation's first democratically elected government was sworn in Tuesday amid escalating violence.

"You all know the heavy legacy inherited by this government. We are afflicted by corruption, lack of services, unemployment and mass graves," al-Jaafari told lawmakers after taking the oath of office before the National Assembly. "I would like to tell the widows and orphans ... your sacrifices have not gone in vain."

Al-Jaafari and members of his Cabinet walked to a podium and pledged to defend Iraq and its people as Iraqis faced a surge of violence that has killed nearly 170 people in six days.

Five ministries remained in temporary hands and two deputy prime minister's slots were unfilled as al-Jaafari struggled to bring the disaffected Sunni minority into key posts while balancing the demands of other groups.

Al-Jaafari particularly wanted the defense minister's job filled by a Sunni Arab as a way to draw the formerly dominant minority into the fight against an insurgency that is thought to be based primarily among Sunnis.

He will act as defense minister until consensus can be reached on a new one. Former Pentagon favorite Ahmad Chalabi, the Shiite deputy prime minister, was given temporary responsibility for the key oil ministry.

More than two years after U.S.-led forces drove Saddam Hussein from power, violence persisted unabated Tuesday, including a gunbattle in Ramadi that killed

12 suspected militants and three other people.

Investigators concluded two missing Marine fighter jets likely collided over southern Iraq as the body of one pilot was found, a senior U.S. defense official said Tuesday at the Pentagon. U.S. officials in Baghdad said the search for the planes was continuing.

The American military said U.S.-led forces recovered a letter that appeared to be addressed to Jordanian-born militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi complaining about low morale among his followers and the incompetence of leaders in his terror network.

Bryan Whitman, a spokesman for the Pentagon, said the letter was believed to be authentic.

"The letter gives the indication that his (Zarqawi's) influence and effectiveness are deteriorating," he said. "It describes low morale and weak and incompetent leadership."

Al-Jaafari had promised to form a government that would win over the Sunnis, but members of his Shiite-dominated alliance rejected candidates with ties to Saddam Hussein's brutal regime.

After months of wrangling following historic Jan. 30 elections, al-Jaafari negotiated a Cabinet that includes 15 Shiite Arab ministers, seven Kurds, four Sunnis and one Christian. Two of four deputy prime ministers were also sworn in Tuesday, a Shiite and a Kurd.

President Jalal Talabani wished the new Cabinet well in its historic task: "To achieve a unified democratic Iraq."

Underscoring lingering divisions, however, many lawmakers stayed away from the ceremony, which took place in a half-empty hall inside Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone.



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- d) All of the above. (*Ah, yeah.*)

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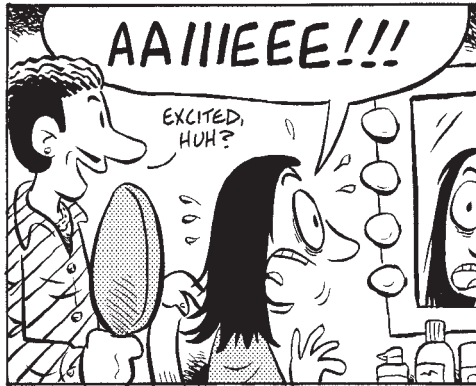
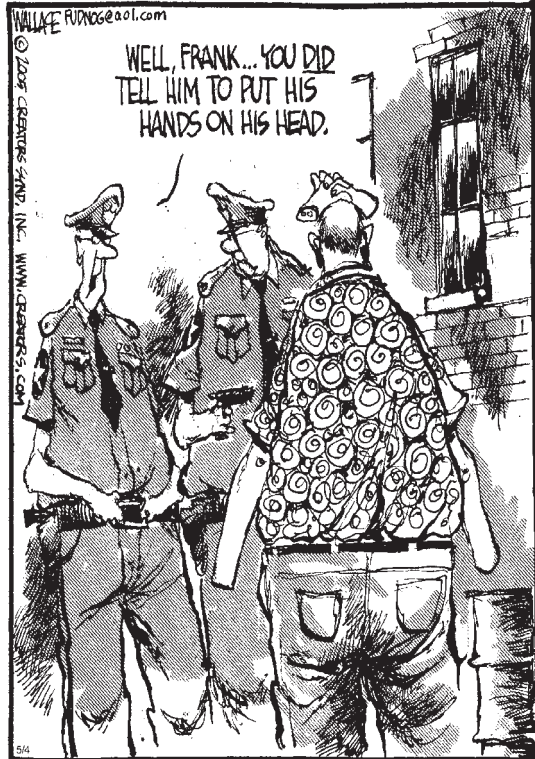


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2nd - \$100,000.00 @ 7.75%
\$645.00 Per Month

Total \$2,395.00 Per Month
*Not Including Tax & Insurance

\$650,000.00
1st - \$520,000.00 @ 5.25%
\$2,275.00 Per Month

2nd - \$130,000.00 @ 7.75%
\$834.00 Per Month

Total \$3,114.00 Per Month
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3 year/1 arm 4.625%**

1 year/1 arm 4.25%

6 mos./6 mo. arm 4.25%

1 mo./1 mo. arm 1.0%***

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