

FREE

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Local crime 'down' in an up year, chief says

Statistics make it look like crime is rising, but it's at an all-time low

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Even though crime in the city increased slightly last year, Santa Monica's police chief isn't sounding the alarm bells.

The Santa Monica Police Department released its annual report last week, which showed that crime in 2001 rose 4.6 percent over the previous year.

"We are disturbed that it has come up, but historically,

it's insignificant," said Santa Monica Police Chief James T. Butts Jr. "It's an increase off of a 38-year low."

Crime throughout the city peaked in 1993, after rising steadily since the 1960s. Last year's 4,909 incidents are more reflective of statistics in 1964, Butts said.

Back then, there were fewer residents, fewer tourists, fewer businesses, less foot and vehicle traffic, and no concentrated areas where people congregate like today's Third Street Promenade.

By the end of 1991, there were more than 10,000 crime-related incidents every year. At the end of the decade, crime had decreased about 57 percent, Butts said. Today, crime is still down 55 percent since 1993.

"We are competing against our success at this point,"

Butts said.

Burglaries saw the largest increase last year — up 19 percent, from 602 in 2000 to 720 last year. But again, those statistics are very low when put into historical context. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were close to 3,000 burglaries in Santa Monica each year.

"When I came to Santa Monica there were 2,600 burglaries," Butts said. "It's incredible to have this burglary rate for the amount of people and cars in this town."

And while robberies also increased — 16 percent — they're significantly lower than the amount Santa Monica experienced in the early 1990s when there were

See CRIME, page 4

Timber!



Franklin Smith/Special to the Daily Press
A white truck driven by an unidentified driver jumped the curb and took out a tree on Santa Monica Boulevard and 17th Street on Sunday.

Possible serial armed robber arrested

By Daily Press staff

A 20-year-old man police said is linked to more than 20 armed robberies on L.A.'s westside was arrested last week.

Detectives from the Santa Monica Police Department, who were investigating the robberies, contacted their counterparts in the western divisions of the Los Angeles Police Department and discovered simi-

larities in robberies committed in both areas.

In the process of further investigation, the suspect's license number came up as a possible lead in the case.

Krsnadasa Perez was taken into custody Thursday after police staked out his car, which they found parked within L.A. city limits.

Police discovered a handgun and "additional evidence" when they searched Perez's car, according to a press release.

Model wins suit against Lush landlord

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

A GQ model who injured himself walking into a glass door at a Santa Monica nightclub was awarded \$2,500 last week after he sued the club's landlord for providing an unsafe work environment.

Tim Herzog was hired by GQ Magazine on March 28, 2001 to participate in an informal fashion show at Lush Nightclub and Restaurant, 2020 Wilshire Blvd. He then was to "walk around and be seen" afterward.

But Herzog, who is also an actor, was injured after the fashion show when he walked into the glass door, splitting open his scalp. He said the dim lighting made the unmarked door invisible.

"It was this huge plate glass door," Herzog said. "And when you look through the doorway, you can't tell if anything is there."

Friends rushed Herzog to the emergency room, where the gash above his forehead was treated and bandaged. The incident did not leave any permanent visible scars.

He sued the building's owner for \$5,000 to reimburse him for medical bills and lost wages because he had to cancel two engagements later that month.

The building is owned by the Ken Auerback Family Trust. Representatives from the trust argued that neither the landlord nor the club's owner hired Herzog, who was technically an independent contractor hired by GQ.

Bates said the door in question leads to a kitchen and is used only by staff to enter and leave the club. The door is marked with a sign indicating is it for employees only, he said, and Herzog should not have been using it.

"As owners of the building, I don't know why we

See LUSH, page 4

City to spend \$10,000 on flaw in new parking garage

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

The city will have to spend about \$10,000 to fix a design flaw at the entrance to its newest parking structure.

Deep potholes have formed along the driveway motorists use to enter the parking structure, located at 1136 4th St. The driveway consists of two narrow lanes of concrete, wide enough for a car tire,

with grass growing between them.

However, cars do not stay on the path and have created deep ruts where the grass once grew. At first the city tried to fill in the pot holes with gravel, but cars peeled out under the loose rocks creating even more pot holes.

Now the city plans to pay a contractor \$10,000 to install interlocking paving stones.

"It looked very nice with the grass, it

just didn't hold up," said Oscar Delgado, the city's parking coordinator. "The paving stones will stay with the flavor of the aesthetics but be a lot more durable."

Motorists who use the garage regularly were happy the potholes were going to be fixed.

"Everyone falls off that ditch out there," said Yolanda Vaquez, who parks in the structure daily and has complained to the city about the potholes.

"It's ruining everybody's tires.

"In order for people to reach the key card, they have to drive in the middle of the two lanes," she added. "It's a very frustrating design flaw."

Natalie Linthorst has been parking in the structure for the past six weeks and has watched as the pot holes have grown progressively worse each day.

"It's pretty nasty," she said.

See PARKING, page 4

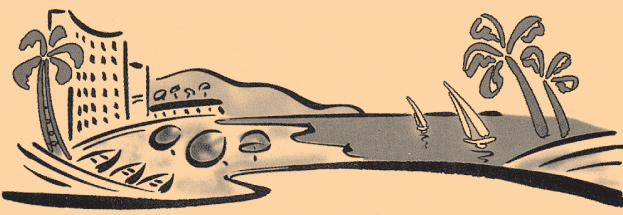
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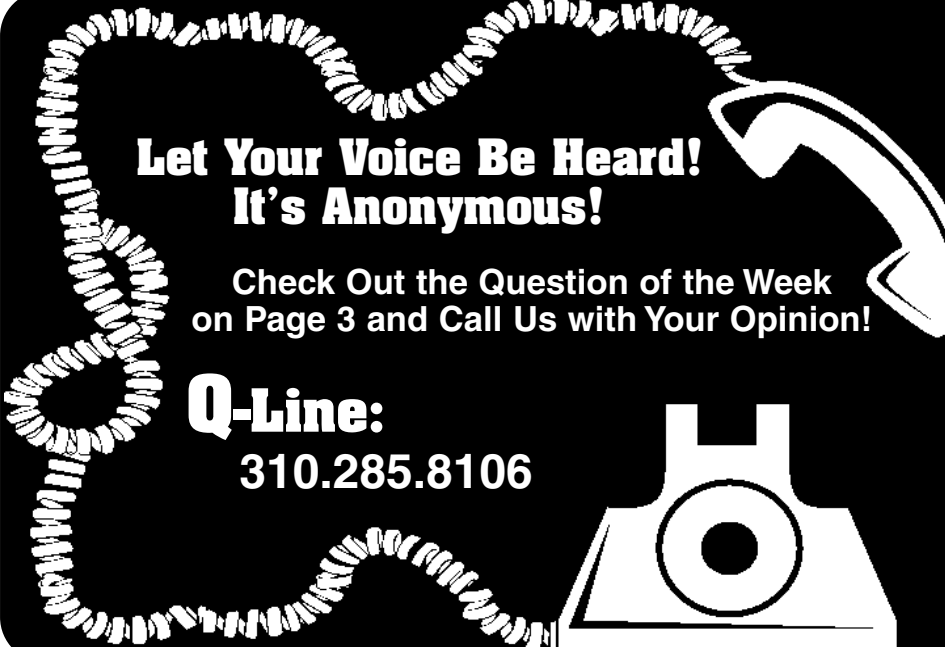
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**Check Out the Question of the Week
on Page 3 and Call Us with Your Opinion!**

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★ Your somber, serious attitude impacts many around you. Express what is on your mind and stop holding so much in. By gaining another perspective, you clear out a problem or, at least, have an attitude adjustment. Don't make any major decisions. Tonight: Do something just for yourself.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Aim for what you want. Establish stronger boundaries financially. Be willing to say "no" to someone and eye your long-term personal objectives. Money and security are inevitably intertwined. Few understand the importance of your security. Tonight: Don't forget a meeting. Be where people are.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Your serious manner could be difficult for someone to tolerate. This person might not "get" how much he or she is a player here. You could be unusually tired. Consider what might be going on with a boss. Listen to authority and follow through if you know what is good for you. Tonight: In the limelight.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Once you detach and get an overall view, your tune changes. Your perspective develops once you pull back. Don't let personal issues flow into your work or interactions right now. Stay on top of work. Seek out experts. Tonight: Rent a movie.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ A friend offers yet another option. You might want to relate with associates on a one-on-one level. Don't feel like you have to deal with everyone simultaneously. Results count. Others respond to your attention and nurturing. Tonight: Go for more of what you want.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ Listen to others. How you let another know you're not pleased could be more important than you realize. Hold your feelings back and think about what would be the most effective way of letting this person know what you think. You can wait a day or so. Tonight: Say "yes" for now.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Work is your highest priority. As a result, you might need to change direction or make different choices. If you need to cancel plans, do so. Someone who often proves to be a resource could cut you off in a most unexpected way. Tonight: Work as late as need be.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Stay light and easy, but don't think you can melt away someone's resistance. Claim responsibility here, as your recent behavior makes such a difference to someone. Lighten up about what is going on, and help another relax. Tonight: Play away.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★ Someone might be considerably sterner than you had anticipated. Loosen up and worry less about what is happening here, because this person has been going through a lot. You might think you know, but you don't. Focus on your home and security. Tonight: Mosey on home.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★ Work takes a lot more out of you than you might be willing to admit. If you don't like what is going on, consider changing your work or your patterns at work. Speak carefully to those around you. Your uptightness could flow into your communication. Tonight: Let go and enjoy.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ The planets encourage you not to take a risk. Step back and be more sure of yourself when dealing with others. Sometimes you feel insecure without a reason. A child or new friend could be testy or withholding. Tonight: Indulge another; he or she needs it!

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Turn on the personality when dealing with others, especially as many might be having a difficult day. Your gentle coaxing and understanding could help another move off his or her position. You also might be a bit tighter than you think. Tonight: Do what you want, now!

QUOTE of the DAY

**"I never travel without my diary.
One should always have something to read."**
— Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

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LOCAL



Cooper, Samohi baseball team extend winning streak

BY JESSE HALEY
Special to the Daily Press

Santa Monica High School's varsity men's baseball team extended its winning streak to five games Friday night, beating South Torrance 5-4 in the team's second consecutive victory over the Spartans.

On its home turf in Santa Monica, the Vikings struggled early and trailed 4-1 until mid-game.

However, Viking players found their bats in the fifth inning, when James Cooper hit his sixth home run in six games, tying the state record for home

runs in consecutive games by a high school player.

Cooper's three-run shot tied the game 4-4 going into the sixth inning.

Santa Monica pitcher Sonny Redondo held the Spartans scoreless in the final three innings, while pinch-hitter Jake Glick's RBI single in the bottom of the eighth drove in Danny Cassanova for the winning run.

Samohi goes into tonight's home game against first place Peninsula High with an 8-3-1 record in Bay League play.

On Wednesday at South Torrance, the Vikings beat the Spartans 5-1 as pitcher Rocky Collis threw a complete game.

LOCAL BRIEFS

Free lectures offered on mental health topics

By Daily Press staff

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month and tonight begins a series of weekly free lectures meant to heighten community awareness of the subject.

The lectures will take place Tuesday nights at Step Up on Second, 1328 2nd St., and will be presented by Dr. Michael DiPaolo, a psychologist.

Tonight's lecture, which runs from 7-9 p.m., is titled "Inside 'A Beautiful Mind' — Understanding Schizophrenia."

On May 14, the lecture will cover bi-polar disorder, while the May 21 topic will discuss the best treatment options for people with serious mental illnesses. The May 28 lecture will cover options for family members and how they can promote their loved ones' recovery.

All lectures take place from 7-9 p.m. A \$10 donation is suggested and seating is limited. For more information, call Karen Pery at 310-394-6889, ext. 25.

The facility will hold open houses May 14 from 12-3 p.m., and again on May 28 at the same time.

Mail carrier food drive announced

By Daily Press staff

Residents of Santa Monica and surrounding westside communities will be receiving notes in their mailboxes on May 11 about a food drive by mail carriers.

The notes will detail instructions on how people can leave food for carriers to pick up along their routes for the National Association of Letter Carriers Food Drive.

Food collected will be donated to the Westside Food Bank, which provides more than 3 million pounds of food annually to 65 social service agencies on L.A.'s westside.



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

Not much was left of a guesthouse located on Franklin Street.

Cause of fire that torched guesthouse unknown

By Daily Press staff

Fire destroyed a small, unoccupied guesthouse Saturday morning.

The Santa Monica Fire Department was called to the 1700 block of Franklin Street at about 5:45 a.m. Saturday when thirty-foot high flames shot out of the roof of the building, knocking down an overhead electrical line.

The blaze completely destroyed the building and cut power to the main building, which was untouched by the fire.

Nearby apartment complexes also were not damaged by smoke or fire, though electricity was not restored to the

main house until Sunday evening.

Inside the charred building, the walls and most of the ceiling were destroyed or missing entirely. Plastic trash bins and children's toys were strewn about, melted and deformed. And even by Friday morning, the smell of smoke and freshly burned building materials hung in the air.

A total of 27 firefighters from and a paramedic unit responded to the incident and the fire was officially ruled out by 6:01 a.m.

Fire department investigators have not determined the cause of the blaze. And fire officials did not have an estimate for the value of the guest house.

The Q Line

Plenty of coastal cities throughout southern California allow dogs on their beaches, with strict regulations.

But not in Santa Monica, which leaves pet owners with few options of where they can take their dogs for exercise.

This week's Q-Line wants to know:

"Do you think Santa Monica needs a dog-friendly beach area?"

Call (310) 285-8106 with your response. We'll print them in Friday's paper. Please limit your comments to a minute or less; it might help to think first about the wording of your response.

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Santa Monica's Daily Calendar

GET OUT!

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.

Write Away will be held today at the Ocean Park Library. Share your existing work and write new pieces in a supportive, constructive weekly meeting. 12 p.m. To 2 p.m., Ocean Park Library 2601 Main Street. For more information call (323) 293-1099.

The Santa Monica College Music Department presents SMC Jazz Vocalists with the Jon Mayer Trio. Admission is free! Today @ 11:15

Want to be on the A-List?
 Send your calendar items to
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RAIN
 1:00 - 3:20 - 5:40 - 8:00 - 10:15

DOGTOWN AND Z-BOYS
 12:15 - 2:40 - 5:05 - 7:30 - 9:55

LANDMARK'S NuWILSHIRE THEATRE
 1314 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica

THE CAT'S MEOW [PG-13] Dolby SR
 1:30 - 4:15 - 7:00 - 9:30

KISSING JESSICA STEIN [R]
 2:15 - 4:45 - 7:15 - 9:45

LOCAL

New sign to alert public to parking garage presence

PARKING, from page 1

The work will begin in about a week and take two or three days to finish, Delgado said. Each side of the entrance will be closed alternately, so cars will still be able to use the parking structure.

Construction on the new \$5 million, 294-space structure ended last July.

Not many people know about the subterranean garage because a senior housing complex sits above it. The city has recently installed a new sign on the outside alerting people that there is public parking available.



Andrew H Fixmer/Daily Press
 A car leaves the pothole-ridden garage entrance.

City now has less than half the robberies it had in 90s

CRIME, from page 1

more than 700 such crimes annually.

"We still have less than half the robberies than we did in the '90s," Butts said, adding that many of the robberies were "strong arm," meaning criminals used physical force on their victims.

He also said the city experiences many incidents of transients robbing other transients.

Also to blame for the increase last year were a rash of serial robberies at businesses across the westside, including several hold-ups at fast food restaurants between March and May committed by two Hispanic males. They were subsequently caught. There also were bank robberies last year that nudged up the statistics.

"From time to time, you will have a pattern of serial robbers," Butts said. "In some ways, they are easier to catch because they are prolific and keep doing it until they get caught."

The serial robberies also make it appear to citizens and business owners that crime is on the rise because they happen in a short time span.

"It does create a general unease and anxiety," Butts said.

The decline in crime over the past decade is attributable to Butts' approach

of community-based police representation on the streets.

"If we network with our community and the community feels comfortable reporting crime then it works," Butts said.

He also believes that technological advances have allowed more apprehensions of criminals by providing additional information to officers in the field, as well as added analysis of crime trends.

The Santa Monica Police Department also has undergone substantial re-organization, including adding new sections such as the youth services division, that try to reduce criminal-prone populations.

When crime trends are researched, law enforcement officials look at birth rates of males to determine demographically when they will be living in an area at the ages between 16 and 32 years old. Males in this age range commit the most crimes, Butts said. The SMPD's youth services division tracks this information and focuses on prevention.

Narcotics officers were successful last year in nabbing several drug dealers in the city. The narcotics unit also conducted a three-month investigation that netted 3.5 kilos of cocaine, 2.5 pounds of methamphetamine, two arrests and \$24,000 in cash. The unit made another noteworthy seizure — 30 gallons of the date rape drug called GHB and \$40,000.

Model was hired by nightclub

LUSH, from page 1

are responsible for the (club's) actions," said Bruce Bates, Auerback Trust vice president. "They are clearly held liable in their lease for things like this."

Herzog said he was unfamiliar with the club and was trying to enter any back rooms where people might be located.

"There were multiple doors and I was trying to go other areas of the club," Herzog said. "My job was to be seen and I was trying to do that."

Judge Pro Tem Richard Shcolnek of the Santa Monica Small Claims Court ruled Thursday that the liability for not marking the glass door should be split

equally between the club's owner and the landlord. He awarded Herzog \$2,500, which will be paid solely by the landlord.

If Bates had been able to produce a copy of the lease that specified the club was liable for the interior of the building, Shcolnek said he would have been able to dismiss the case against the landlord.

Herzog said he had not decided whether he would file another lawsuit seeking the other half of the money from the club's owner.

"I did this more out of principal than anything else," he said. "I don't know if I'll sue the club, but I think my point has been made."

STATE



L.A. instructors furious over new dress code

BY ROBERT JABLON
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Lissa Washington wears Egyptian silk. She wears a pantsuit with an Indian elephant print. She wears sandals without stockings. Her sixth-graders can look at her ethnic clothing while they learn about ancient civilizations.

But administrators at Mount Vernon Middle School want to rein in her fashion statement. Teachers have been told they must sign a "commitment letter" that includes a dress code: slacks and ties or school polo shirts for men, hosiery for women when they wear dresses. No pierced tongues, jeans or athletic shoes.

Washington won't sign. And the dress code, she says, is symbolic of the way teachers have been insulted instead of consulted about reforming one of the district's worst-performing schools.

"They're looking at us as though we are children," she said.

There is precious little scientific research into whether a teacher's dress actually influences student learning. And nobody claims that you need a tie to be a good instructor.

But as public schools around the country struggle to improve, some have tinkered with classroom style. Many school require students to wear uniforms. Now the argument is that instructors should be role models for their students.

Most codes have vague references to dressing neatly and professionally. Those that are more specific often meet with resistance.

A no-blue jeans policy enacted by the Havana Community Unified School District in Havana, Ill., two years ago was quickly dropped after the teachers' union threatened to file a grievance.

Charles Waggoner, district superintendent, wishes the policy was still in force. Jeans should be worn only when necessary, he says, such as on field trips to orchards and pig farms in the rural area.

"If you come in a Motley Crue T-shirt and sandals and blue jeans, they're not going to see you as the professional you are," he says.

The Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second largest, doesn't have an overall teacher dress code. But individual campuses can adopt one. Fewer than 15 of 947 schools have one, however.

Mount Vernon's is one of the most specific. The school serves a poor, heavily immigrant inner-city neighborhood, where English often is an acquired language. It is one of 10 low-performing schools facing state takeover unless student test scores improve.

The 10 schools are requiring staff to sign letters committing themselves to making improvements. The forms at Mount Vernon and two other schools include the dress code.

About half of the 90 instructors have signed. Some of the holdouts staged a protest rally last week.

Those who don't sign by June 30 will be transferred to other campuses, "not as a punishment, but because they do not choose to commit to the school," Principal Scott Schmerleson said.

The holdouts don't oppose dressing neatly and showing commitment to the job, he added; they just hate being ordered around.

On the other hand, many parents and children at the school, which is 80 percent Hispanic, come from countries where teachers wear jackets and ties.

"I think they (students) give the teacher more respect," he said.

"Students observe their teachers on a daily basis and they can tell you what they have on. Children take great pride in what their teachers are wearing," said Theodore Alexander, an associate superintendent who oversees the school.

But the code appalls Wayne Johnson, president of the California Teachers Association, which represents 330,000 teachers.

"If you come in a Motley Crue T-shirt and sandals and blue jeans, they're not going to see you as the professional you are."

— CHARLES WAGGONER
District superintendent

"What have we got, an educational Taliban here? Are they gonna require burkas soon?" he said. "I taught for 27 years. If a teacher is clean and neat, that's all that matters. If they're wearing a sweat-shirt and jogging shoes, kids don't care."

Teacher dress codes can be "window dressing" for troubled schools that really need smaller class sizes, new textbooks and repairs to crumbling buildings, said Melinda Anderson of the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union at 2.7 million members.

"If you have a Brooks Bros. suit but you're giving McDonald's service at school, that's not what parents want," agreed John Perez, president of United Teachers Los Angeles, the union for 47,000 district employees.

David Brouillard, an eighth-grade English teacher at Mount Vernon who favors tennis shoes, jeans and an Oxford shirt, won't sign the commitment letter.

"It is a dirty job if you're doing it right," he said of teaching. "I can't afford, with my present salary to be buying new suits and dry cleaning. I'm on my knees at their desks. I'm getting chalk on me, paint. I need something a little easier to wash."

Brouillard, 34, said he wears the kind of blue-collar clothes that his own teachers wore in the Seattle-area town where he grew up.

"There were a few teachers who wore ties and we thought they were kind of square. We couldn't identify," he said. "Bill Gates became a millionaire wearing Hawaiian shirts. Dress is no determination of success."

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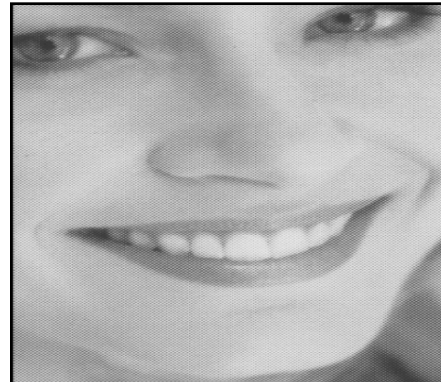
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STATE

Late wife's confession to be heard in murder case

By The Associated Press

STOCKTON — The confession of a woman who said she killed her husband with horse tranquilizers will be used as evidence in the case of a college student also accused of the killing.

During a 45-minute court hearing Monday, Stockton Superior Court Judge Bernard Garber decided to allow confession tapes made by Laren Sims to law enforcement officials as evidence in the preliminary hearing of California State University, Sacramento college student Sarah Dutra.

In the confession, Sims names 21-year-old Dutra as her accomplice. Dutra is accused of helping Sims kill her husband, Sacramento lawyer Larry McNabney, with horse tranquilizers in September. Dutra was a legal secretary in McNabney's law firm.

Garber also sealed Sims' confession tapes and placed a gag order on all legal counsel and law enforcement officials, said Leanne Kozak, a spokeswoman for the courthouse.

Sims, 36, was awaiting extradition to California, where she faced murder charges, when she was found hanged in her Brooksville, Fla., jail cell in March. She died the next day at a local hospital. Sims gave what police say was a confession implicating Dutra immediately after her arrest, about two weeks before her death.

Dutra pleaded innocent last month to murder charges with special circumstances for financial gain. The district attorney's office will decide whether or not to pursue the death penalty after the preliminary hearing on June 24, Kozak said.

On Monday, San Joaquin County

District Attorney Tom Testa told the court that without the confession, he has a circumstantial case and will need to call 50 to 60 witnesses, Kozak said.

Dutra's defense attorney, Kevin Clymo, has said that Dutra is a "sweet, innocent baby," who was lured into the scheme by Sims.

Lester Fleming, a San Joaquin County prosecutor, has said Sims' death ended any chance that authorities would negotiate a plea with Dutra.

Known in California and Nevada by her married name of Elisa McNabney, Sims also left a seven-page suicide note in which she told her attorney, Tom Hogan, that she and Dutra had killed McNabney.

"Of course I should spend the rest of my life in prison," Sims wrote. "Sarah should too."

After a nationwide hunt, Sims was arrested in March in Destin, Fla., on probation violation charges. In a written statement, Sims told authorities that she and Dutra gave McNabney the poison at Los Angeles horse show, then took him to his Lodi-area home, where he died the next day.

In another letter written to her daughter on the day of her arrest, 17-year-old Haylei Jordan, Sims said she felt regret for killing McNabney and indicated that she wanted to kill herself.

San Joaquin County Sheriff Baxter Dunn said that in Sims' confession letter, she wrote that she and Dutra put McNabney's body in a garage refrigerator for more than three months. Sims said she alone then buried his body in a nearby vineyard.

Dutra was then arrested in San Joaquin County, where she also gave police a statement, said Baxter.

California sees drop in gray whale death rate

BY JESSICA BRICE

Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — After a rise in recent years in the number of gray whales found dead along the California coast, scientists say the trend now is reversing.

Last year, only five gray whales floated ashore, down from 58 the previous year, according to wildlife biologist Joe Cordaro of the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Forty-seven whales were found dead in the state in 1999, and 30 were found in 1998. During a regular year, state officials find around 10 of the estimated 700 to 1,000 that die offshore annually. The fisheries service does not have an accurate count of the total number of whales that died offshore in 1998 to 2000.

While the rise initially appeared alarming, many scientists now believe it may just have been the natural process of keeping the gray whale population in check, Cordaro said Monday.

"There are two theories out there that are plausible, and they are both food related," he said. "Either way, they were starving."

The consensus among marine scientists is that the number of whales in the environment exceeded the amount of food available. Whether that was a result of a drop in the food supply or an increase in the whale population is up for debate.

Scientists were unable to conduct autopsies on most of the dead whales they found to determine the cause of death, but Cordaro said it was obvious many of the whales suffered from malnutrition because they lacked normal fatty layers.

The gray whale population — estimated at 26,000 in 1998 — feeds on crustaceans called amphipods and other bottom dwellers. Each year the whales make the trek from Alaska, where they spend the summer months, down to the breeding lagoons of Baja California in Mexico, and then back again.

Some scientists believe the unusual weather that hit the Pacific Ocean during the 1998 storm El Nino could have killed off some of the crustaceans in Alaska that gray whales eat.

Others say the gray whale population, which came off the endangered species list in 1994, may have hit maximum capacity and exhausted the food supply.

If that's the case, Cordaro said, Californians can expect higher death rates in years to come.

Four whales have been found in California so far this year. Whales washed ashore in Humboldt County, San Mateo County and Ventura County, while another was discovered floating offshore near Los Angeles.

NATIONAL



Mailboxes left open



Larry Fisher/Quad City Times

Rural Route letter carrier Richard Miner delivers mail in Scott County, Iowa, on Monday near where a pipe bomb was found Friday in a mail box. Rural mail customers were advised to leave their mail boxes open Monday or carriers would not deliver mail. Fifteen pipe bombs left in mailboxes in Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska were nearly identical and clearly came from the same source, the FBI said Monday as letter carriers across the region cautiously resumed deliveries. Six people were injured Friday by pipebombs left in mailboxes.

Mideast issues the same for Bush as for Nixon

BY NANCY BENAC
Associated Press Writer

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — “Your help to Israel is seen as hostile to the Arab world,” the Saudi foreign minister told Richard Nixon in 1973. Some things don’t change.

Documents released by the National Archives on Monday show Nixon wrestling with many of the problems that are on the front burner for President Bush today, including terrorism, tensions between India and Pakistan, and perceptions that U.S. policy in the Middle East is favorable to Israel.

Nixon denied a tilt toward Israel in his meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Omar Saqqaf and other Arab leaders. “I am not now, nor have I ever been, nor will I ever be affected by domestic politics in my search for peace,” he said.

The struggle against terrorism was evident back then.

In a December 1972 telegram that could have been written today, the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv warned: “Terrorists have initiative to strike anywhere in world at any time and only well-organized and constantly alert anti-terrorist measures can stop them.”

The telegram was written three months after Palestinian commandoes kidnapped members of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich, Germany, and 11 Israelis were killed.

Nixon, like Bush now, pledged to put pressure not only on terrorists but those who help them.

“Any nation that harbors or gives sanctuary to any of these international outlaws we will cut off all economic support,” he told aide Alexander Haig in a 1972 phone call.

Trouble between India and Pakistan threatened grander U.S. schemes, then and now. Nixon saw the two great nations of the Asian subcontinent as allies against Soviet expansionism; Bush wants both on

his side in the war against terror.

Now, the Bush administration is working to contain Pakistani ambitions in Kashmir. In 1971-72, Nixon was furious with India for what he saw as its meddling in the Pakistani province that eventually gained independence as Bangladesh.

He was convinced India’s ambitions extended to all of Pakistan. “It was not right for India to destroy Pakistan,” he told Arab ambassadors in October 1973. “Today Pakistan still survives.”

In the more than 107,000 pages of Nixon-era documents made public for the first time, another day in the long, tangled effort to broker peace in the Middle East is laid out as Nixon and his advisers worry about how to prod Israel and its Arab neighbors toward a settlement.

In his conversation with the Arab leaders, Nixon tries to assure them that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger can be fair even though he is Jewish.

“Some of my Arab friends, I know, have asked how they can trust Dr. Kissinger,” Nixon tells them. “But I can say that above all he wants a fair and a just peace.”

The meeting happened just weeks before Egypt and Syria fought Israel in the Yom Kippur War.

Three decades later, the Bush administration is trying to counter similar criticism that its peace efforts favor Israel.

In 1972 meetings with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, Nixon and Kissinger acknowledged that U.S. forces on the Japanese island of Okinawa had been armed with nuclear weapons, but insisted that was in the past.

“We have moved all nuclear weapons off Okinawa,” Kissinger says. “They have already left.”

The United States had removed the weapons from Okinawa by 1972. The fact of a nuclear presence on Okinawa was only made public in 1997, when documents were declassified.

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SPORTS

Lakers find different ways to win in the playoffs

BY JOHN NADEL

AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Lakers are winning every way imaginable during the first 20-1 streak in NBA postseason history, from a last-second 3-point-er to a 39-point blowout.

They used another method against San Antonio in the opener of the Western Conference semifinals: tag-teaming their injured superstars.

Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant both took time off for treatment during the Lakers' 86-80 victory Sunday — Bryant leaving as O'Neal returned early in the fourth quarter — but they made significant contributions in crunch time, showing no ill effects from their injuries.

"We're a tag-team, man — Superman and Spiderman tag-teaming each other," Bryant said with a smile Monday.

O'Neal is known for Superman tattoo on his left biceps.

Bryant said he likes Spiderman, and saw the movie at its premiere.

"We just kind of let our experience carry us through to a win yesterday," Bryant said. "There's a confidence we should have, all the experiences we've been through."

Losers of only one postseason game since beating Indiana 117-111 in Game 6 of the 2000 NBA Finals, the Lakers extended their Staples Center winning streak to 18 despite playing what coach Phil Jackson called the worst first half a playoff team of his has ever played.

That encompasses 195 games, 145 victories.

"Our execution was horrible," guard Derek Fisher said. "Yesterday was the per-

fect opportunity for them to get a game."

Forward Samaki Walker said he believes Game 2 on Tuesday night is crucial for the Spurs.

"If you go down 0-2, you find yourself in the same situation as last year," he said. "You've got to be thinking *deja vu*."

Walker should know, having been a member of the San Antonio team the Lakers swept in the conference finals last year, winning the four games by a total of 89 points capped by blowouts of 39 and 29 points.

One difference is the first two games last year were played at the Alamodome. Games 3 and 4 will be played there this time — on Friday and Sunday.

Walker also said he doesn't think the Spurs truly believe they can beat the Lakers, no matter what they say.

"I believe they're saying that; deep down inside, no," Walker said. "Why should they? I think they think they can win a game, they're a great team. ...

"We find a way to win. A lot of that is coaching. When Shaq and Kobe went out, we were able to get some things done. When those guys came back, we went on to win. When things happen like that so many times, you've got to figure you're going to win."

The Lakers, who outscored the opposition by 12.8 points per game in the playoffs last year, have won their four postseason games this year by an average of 5.5 points including a 92-91 victory at Portland when Robert Horry made a 3-pointer with 2.1 seconds left.

"We really have to forget about last year and what we did," Bryant said. "It's a new year, it's going to be a different path we take."

The Spurs hope to impede that path starting Tuesday night.

"So long as the guys here think we can (win), we'll go out and do our best and try to win the series," said Tim Duncan, who shot 9-of-30 in the opener. "We watched the film and there were so many mistakes we made, particularly myself."

"Defensively, we do something different down the stretch, things are different. We clean up those mistakes, we feel we have as good a chance as any."

Neither Bryant, who bruised his right knee in a collision with San Antonio's Bruce Bowen, nor O'Neal, who required three stitches to close a cut he sustained in the third quarter on his right index finger,

took part in Monday's practice.

Jackson said both will play in Game 2.

While O'Neal wasn't available for comment, Bryant said he would definitely play.

"I feel all right, the swelling in my knee is pretty much under control," he said, adding he planned to ice his knee continuously Monday and Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said it's unlikely David Robinson, sidelined due to a nerve problem in his lower back from a herniated disc that affects his right leg, will return Tuesday.

"But we're fairly optimistic for (Game 3) Friday if he keeps progressing," Popovich said.



National Basketball Association playoff schedule

By The Associated Press

CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS — EDT (Best-of-7)

Saturday, May 4

Sacramento 108, Dallas 91, Sacramento leads series 1-0

Sunday, May 5

New Jersey 99, Charlotte 93, New Jersey leads series 1-0

Detroit 96, Boston 84, Detroit leads series 1-0

L.A. Lakers 86, San Antonio 80, L.A. Lakers lead series 1-0

Monday, May 6

Dallas 110, Sacramento 102, Series tied 1-1

Tuesday, May 7

Charlotte at New Jersey, 8 p.m.

San Antonio at L.A. Lakers, 10:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 8

Boston at Detroit, 8 p.m.

Thursday, May 9

New Jersey at Charlotte, 7 p.m.

Sacramento at Dallas, 9:30 p.m.

Friday, May 10

Detroit at Boston, 7 p.m.

L.A. Lakers at San Antonio, 9:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 11

Sacramento at Dallas, 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 12

New Jersey at Charlotte, 12:30 p.m.

Detroit at Boston, 3 p.m.

L.A. Lakers at San Antonio, 5:30 p.m.

Monday, May 13

Dallas at Sacramento, 9 p.m., if necessary

Tuesday, May 14

Boston at Detroit, 8 p.m., if necessary

San Antonio at L.A. Lakers, TBA, if necessary

Wednesday, May 15

Charlotte at New Jersey, TBA, if necessary

Sacramento at Dallas, TBA, if necessary

Thursday, May 16

Detroit at Boston, TBA, if necessary

L.A. Lakers at San Antonio, TBA, if necessary

Friday, May 17

New Jersey at Charlotte, 8 p.m., if necessary

Saturday, May 18

Dallas at Sacramento, TBA, if necessary

San Antonio at L.A. Lakers, TBA, if necessary

Sunday, May 19

Charlotte at New Jersey, TBA, if necessary

Boston at Detroit, TBA, if necessary



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- Wilshire Boulevard, between 22nd-23rd Streets
- 14th and Santa Monica Boulevard
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- Colorado Boulevard and 3rd Street
- Santa Monica Courthouse
- Arizona Avenue and Second Street
- Arizona Avenue and Fifth Street
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- Broadway and 10th Street
- Colorado Avenue and Second Street
- Santa Monica Boulevard and Lincoln Boulevard
- Lincoln Boulevard and Broadway Avenue
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- Montana Avenue and Euclid Street
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INTERNATIONAL



Sharon, Bush expected to discuss Palestinian authority

BY STEVE WEIZMAN

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — President Bush said Monday he shared Israel's disappointment with Yasser Arafat as he prepared for talks at the White House with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

"He has disappointed me," Bush said of the Palestinian leader as he toured a school in Southfield, Mich. "He must lead. He must show the world that he believes in peace."

The president declined to preview his White House meeting with the prime minister. "I am going to have a private conversation with Ariel Sharon and I'd rather that my conversation, what I'm going to tell him and discuss with him ... he'll be the first to know about it," Bush said.

But Bush said Israel's resistance to meeting with Arafat is an expression of disappointment in his ability to lead.

"After all, right before we had a security agreement done, a shipload of ammunition showed up that can probably be aimed at the Israeli citizens. So there is a high level of disappointment," Bush said of the abortive attempt to smuggle 50 tons of Iranian arms to the Palestinians.

Still, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said Bush's view is that Sharon must negotiate with Arafat because he is the head of the Palestinian Authority.

"The president's focus is going to be on peace," Fleischer said Monday. "The ingredients are there for progress to be made. It just requires time and patience."

Traveling with Sharon from Israel on Sunday, Israeli Education Minister Limor Livnat told reporters Israel was trying to convince the United States and the international community that there could be no viable peace with the Palestinians until they replace Arafat.

"With a corrupt regime like this, whose word cannot be trusted, we cannot make agreements," she said. "We need to be able to keep talking, but with another Palestinian leadership."

Sharon planned to meet with Secretary of State Colin Powell at his hotel and then with Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld at the Pentagon on Monday, then



Pavel Wolberg/Associated Press

An Israeli soldier holds a rifle atop an armored vehicle overlooking the Church of the Nativity, not seen, in the West Bank town of Bethlehem on Monday. A white cross in the back is raised over a Christian home.

hold separate talks Tuesday with Bush and national security adviser Condoleezza Rice.

The prime ministers was reported to be depositing documents with the Bush administration purporting to link Arafat directly to terror attacks on Israel. Powell, before his meeting with Sharon, said he had not seen such documents. The Palestinians dismiss such papers as forgeries.

Israeli and U.S. officials say the two sides will seek to define the framework for a proposed international peace conference. A Sharon adviser, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the prime minister would also put forward suggestions on ways to revamp the Palestinian security, legal and administrative systems.

One dispute between Israel and the Palestinians looked as if it might be on its way to being resolved Sunday night, as Palestinian officials reported an agreement with the Israelis to end the monthlong standoff at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

However, an Israeli official said there had been progress but no agreement.

Powell, meanwhile, said: "We're close; one or two points need to be resolved."

On a busy day, Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister, called on Powell, as well. Afterward he said his government could not endorse the U.S. proposal for a Mideast peace conference.

"It's not a bad idea," Saud said. But he said his government needs to know more about what would transpire at the meeting.

Powell said the meeting would focus on three things: an end to violence, an economic revitalization of Palestinian areas and a political map for the future. "It is crucial that they each have hope: both economic hope and political hope," Powell said of the warring factions in the Middle East.

Rice said it's not Washington's role to dictate to Palestinians who should lead them.

"The White House position is that we're not going to try to choose the leadership for the Palestinian people," she said Sunday.

Rice said the Bush administration "will talk to the Israelis about what makes sense for Israeli security and for the establishment of a Palestinian state down the road."

Sharon is under pressure from hawks in his government, such as Livnat, who reject Palestinian statehood.

"I am opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state," she said. "It will be nothing but a hotbed of terrorism. That has always been my position and it's not going to change during this flight."

Bush has endorsed a Palestinian state alongside Israel, something Powell echoed on Sunday.

"Do you go to an interim state, a provisional state?"

Powell said on NBC's "Meet the Press," speaking of possible prospects for peace. "Or do you just have phases that go to the final state solution that we're looking for?"

But he agreed with the Israelis on the need for Palestinian reforms.

Also in Washington now is King Abdullah II of Jordan who was slated to see Powell, Vice President Dick Cheney and Rumsfeld on Monday.

On Wednesday, the king will visit Bush at the White House. Sharon, meanwhile, will meet with Jewish leaders in New York before heading home.

Venezuela faces uncertain future following coup attempt

BY JARED KOTLER

Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela — The lawmaker burst onto the floor of Congress, anger in his eyes and a goopy stain on his suit. He'd been pelted with eggs on the street, he said, by supporters of populist President Hugo Chavez.

Nonsense, a Chavez loyalist shot back: "He threw it at himself."

A Venezuelan TV crew later inspected the street outside Congress, showing footage of eggshell fragments near where the protesters had stood. "The evidence is there to see," the reporter said earnestly.

Four years after Chavez won a landslide election promising a revolution in Venezuelan politics and society, there is no longer any middle ground in this deeply divided country. Not in politics, anyway. Not even when

it comes to who threw an egg at a congressman — a question that became the subject of rancorous debate and serious media coverage.

Despite calls for unity, Venezuela's polarization has not subsided in the weeks since Chavez, a left-leaning populist, was briefly ousted by the military following bloody street fighting in Caracas.

Seventeen people were shot to death during a massive opposition demonstration April 11, sparking three days of chaos in which Chavez was removed and then reinstated after an interim junta headed by a businessman assumed quasi-dictatorial powers, annulling the constitution and dissolving Congress and the Supreme Court.

The turmoil demonstrated that Chavez was vulnerable, but it also showed his opponents' shortcomings.

"We have an elected president, but not necessarily a

democratic one, and an unimpressive opposition, without leaders or plans for the country. This is our tragic situation," said political analyst Luis Vicente Leon.

The dramatic events also revealed serious strains within the military, one of Chavez' principal bastions of support. With some units apparently refusing orders to confront demonstrators, many here believe Venezuela — the world's third-largest oil exporting nation — was on the verge of civil war.

"We are either going to have to find common ground or we will kill each other," Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel told a congressional inquiry into the coup Friday.

The panel, which began questioning government officials and alleged coup conspirators last week, has been a bitterly partisan affair — drawing the demonstrators accused of throwing eggs.

France celebrates far-right rout but worries over future

BY MORT ROSENBLUM

AP Special Correspondent

PARIS — At the Place de la Republique, where a determined crowd celebrated under cold drizzle, a young French-African whooped with joy at Jacques Chirac's re-election. Then he paused to reflect.

"I guess nothing will change, really, but still..." mused Ali Ouedi, from the Comoros Islands, "we beat that (unprintable)."

Across France, a jubilant nation saw Chirac's unprecedented 82 percent win over Jean-Marie Le Pen of the far-right National Front as a referendum and an affirmation of faith rather than a presidential victory.

The daily Liberation caught the mood

in a three-letter headline over a rearview photo of Le Pen: "OUF." That means, "Phew."

France has seldom seen an election like this, whipsawing from mass boredom to high drama in the two weeks between the first and second rounds. The morning after, many felt the nation had changed.

"This electroshock revived young people who had given up on politics," said Sonia Lecler, 55, a nurse in Grenoble, a university city that backed the defeated Socialist candidate, Lionel Jospin, in the primary round.

Take 26-year-old Jean-Philippe Cugnetti. He manages a ranch in Wyoming and voted only because he happened to be home on vacation. Now, he said, he will order an absentee ballot for

every election.

"We saw a republican revival, a real referendum on our society," Cugnetti said. "All of those people voted less for Chirac than they did against Le Pen."

In Grenoble, 60,000 of the 400,000 inhabitants jammed the streets on May 1 to brand Le Pen a xenophobic fascist who threatened French values.

But now in Grenoble, as in Paris and everywhere else in France, the question is, what happens next? National Assembly elections follow in June, and many expect the center-right to play to extreme sentiments.

Eric Iorio, the National Front's election strategy director, predicted as many as 20 winners in the 577 constituencies. "We will be the center-right's worst night-

mare," he said.

In the meantime, the Socialists and other leftist parties are already meeting to plot their revival before legislative elections.

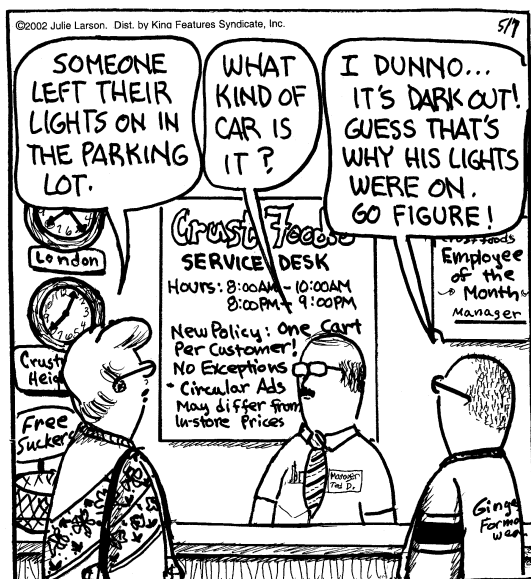
The numbers show Le Pen's movement is hardly dead. He polled 17 percent in the first round, in which those Frenchmen who bothered to cast ballots divided votes among 16 candidates. Chirac scored only 20 percent.

On Sunday, with a much higher turnout and nearly all defeated candidates backing Chirac, Le Pen reached 18 percent. Although well below the 40 percent minimum he boasted he would obtain, that was substantial.

And for all the national relief, the response to Chirac was tepid.

COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson

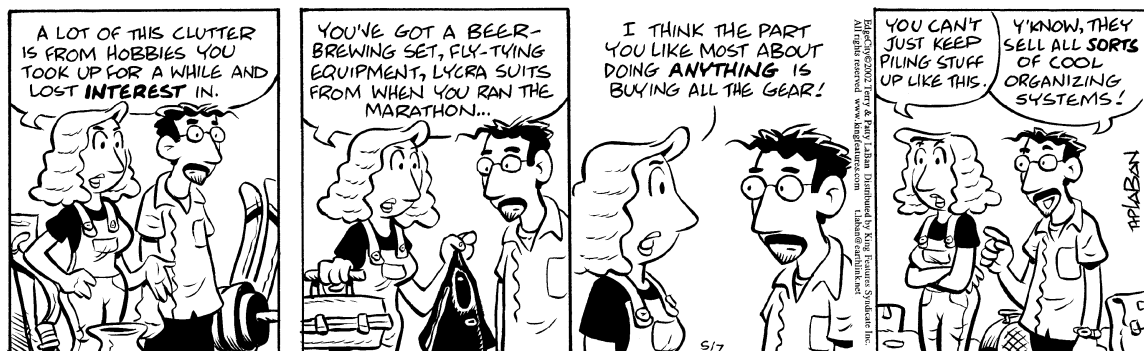


Natural Selection® By Russ Wallace



edge city

by TERRY & PATTY LABAN



Reality Check® By Dave Whammond



Speed Bump® By Dave Coverly



CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Bed on a boat
6 Characteristic
11 Love, Italian-style
12 Dorian Gray's creator
13 Nadine Gordimer book
15 Enzyme suffix
16 Decimal base
17 Rep.'s counterpart
18 Castle protectors
20 Wore
23 Swiss sound
27 Farm beasts
28 Adore
29 They're inherited
31 Referred to
32 Show place?
34 In the style of
37 Fury
38 Free
41 Nadine Gordimer book
44 Cost
45 Shakespeare's Athenian

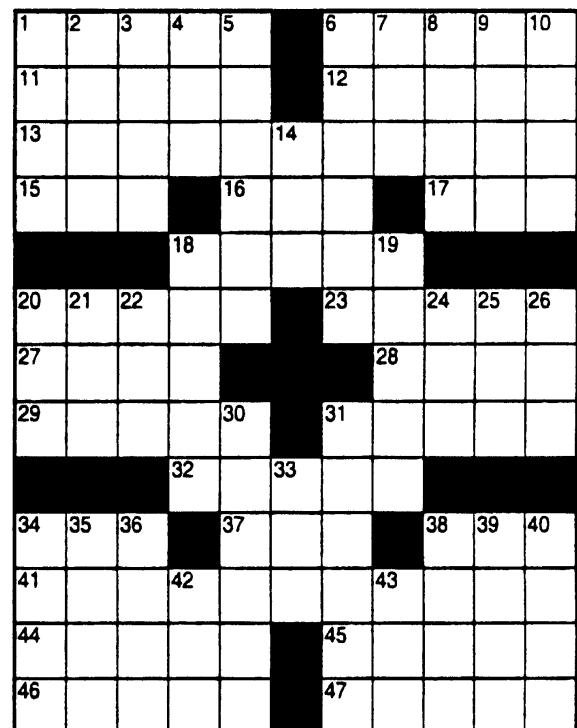
46 Benches
47 Theater bit

DOWN

1 Mexican region
2 Flightless birds
3 Part
4 Attempt
5 "El Cid" star
6 Score
7 Southern resort
8 European range
9 At rest
10 Youth
14 Vegetable
18 Impressionist painter
19 Unbroken
20 Be greedy
21 Chopping tool
22 Lair
24 Morse unit
25 Time before
26 Guided
30 Polishes
31 Wave tops
33 Tax org.
34 Guitar boosters
35 Orpheus played one
36 Atlas section
38 European capital
39 Press
40 Force unit
42 Fall mo.
43 Nervous spasm

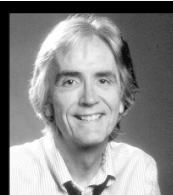


Yesterday's answer



STUMPED?

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Coded, anti-rape jeans designed in Croatia

Other Recent Inventions: Vladimir Markov's "anti-rape" jeans, with a locked, coded steel top button designed to discourage attackers who haven't time to figure out how to open it (Croatia).

- College-student inventors' pulsating vest composed of eight cellular phones' vibrating units sewn in to touch acupuncture-friendly parts of the abdomen (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore).

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BACK PAGE

Health secretary practices what he preaches, teaches

BY LAURAN NEERGAARD

AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON — When Tommy Thompson's employees head for a smoking break, they watch out for the boss — he's been known to take away cigarettes. Go to lunch with him and you'll get fruit for dessert. Don't challenge him to a race — this 60-year-old runs a 9-minute mile.

The nation's health secretaries always preach healthy habits. But call this one Mr. Prevention: Thompson has made his mantra the lifesaving benefits of a little exercise and good nutrition, and is taking his own advice to slim down.

Preventable obesity, Type 2 diabetes and tobacco-caused illnesses cost the nation \$270 billion a year in medical bills and lost productivity — more than Medicare's entire annual budget, the Health and Human Services secretary laments.

Worse, 35 people an hour die from diseases related to inactivity or poor nutrition alone.

"What ridiculous reasons to die,"

Thompson sighs. And the statistics show "how out of whack our health care system is in America. We wait until people get sick before providing care."

To help, Thompson is using his job as a bully pulpit. In an interview, he cites as inspiration former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop's groundbreaking anti-smoking fight.

Thompson has pulled athletes before TV cameras to tell kids that playing outside is more fun than video games. He plans to push big employers to offer workers exercise time and facilities, to ask insurance companies to fund major anti-fat ad campaigns, and to start a \$20 million project challenging five communities to cut their residents' obesity and diabetes.

He's mulling more creative approaches like a tax credit for getting fit, although it's far from clear how to prove such a claim.

And, partly prompted by fear, Thompson is teaching healthier living by example. His diabetic father died of a heart attack at age 61. His employees at

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention made Thompson realize he was at similar risk — overweight, sedentary, and on medication for a cholesterol level that reached a dangerous 338.

Then a new federal study showed merely walking 30 minutes a day and a modest diet cut in half the odds of getting diabetes — and Thompson was persuaded. Since January, he's lost nine pounds, down to 200, aims to lose nine more, and his cholesterol is a healthy 183.

But it will take more than the bully pulpit to change Americans' bad habits, say public health experts who are lobbying Congress to give HHS enough money to really prevent lifestyle-caused disease.

"Right now if we spend \$1, 1 cent goes for prevention, 99 cents for providing health care when you're sick," says Dr. Mohammad Akhter of the American Public Health Association. "That needs to change — you just cannot get something for nothing."

At the top of Akhter's wish list: \$60

million to increase the number of CDC nutrition and physical activity programs from eight to 24, a down payment on expanding into every state. Such local programs can help school boards decide to reinstate scarce school physical education classes or help restaurants heed calls to cut fattening portions, he says.

The statistics are dismal:

—More than 38 million Americans are obese.

—Nearly 7 in 10 don't get enough exercise; 40 percent get none. More than a third of high school students don't have regular physical activity, and a fourth of children watch TV four hours or more a day.

—Seventy percent don't eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

—Excess weight and inactivity dramatically increase your chances of getting Type 2 diabetes, a deadly disease that also causes heart disease, blindness and other disabilities. Some 17 million Americans have diabetes, mostly the Type 2 form, and 16 million more have "pre-diabetes," sure to become ill if they don't diet and exercise.

Ground zero encounter leads to love and marriage

BY VERENA DOBNIK

Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — It all started with a Christmas Day massage at ground zero.

Now, Dawna LoPiccolo, who soothed exhausted firefighter John Mraz amid the debris of the Sept. 11 terror attacks, is planning their wedding.

"I met John in a 20-by-12 wood shack at ground zero. He was the last man I massaged that day," said LoPiccolo, a massage therapist who had volunteered to help rescue workers after the attacks.

LoPiccolo, the single mother of a 2-year-old girl, and Mraz, the widowed father of a 7-year-old boy, want to exchange vows under the cross-shaped metal beams pulled from the debris.

After volunteering her massages for months wherever they were needed in the devastated city, she asked to go to ground zero again in December.

As LoPiccolo walked past the debris on Christmas Day, she recalled, she saw Mraz "sitting there, taking a break from raking through the rubble."

Having lost 25 firefighter friends, he was in a lineup

of rescue workers waiting for a massage. "It was cold, and I rubbed his shoulders, his hands. I said, 'Don't worry, sweetie.'"

Then, before returning to work, "he gave me this hug that knocked my socks off!"

He scribbled on her hardhat, "It was worth the wait," and signed it "John, Engine 248."

The 42-year-old firefighter, who lost his wife of 19 years last May, said he "wasn't out looking for anybody." But he couldn't forget the woman who had warmed his aching muscles on that winter day.

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