

FREE

SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2003

Volume 2, Issue 159

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

00000

FANTASY 5
02, 03, 21, 29, 30

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 3, 4, 2
Evening picks: 0, 6, 1

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 08, Gorgeous George
2nd Place: 05, California Classic

3rd Place: 06, Whirl Win

Race Time: 1:44.90



NEWS OF THE WEIRD
by Chuck Shepard

■ Door-to-door salesman Gerald L. Thompson, 19, was arrested in a neighborhood near St. Augustine, Fla., in February after he had become exasperated that no one was buying his magazine subscriptions; allegedly, he forcibly prevented one homeowner from closing the front door, then screamed obscenities, pounded on the door, and refused to stop ringing the doorbell.

■ Robert M. Suszynski, 47, was arrested in Rochester, N.H., in February after he allegedly slugged a neighbor with a baseball bat because he got tired of listening to the guy tell how much pain he was in from a recent fire.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I married beneath me.
All women do."

— Nancy, Lady Astor



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Local fire chief to hang up his hat

Ettore Berardinelli has been with the department since 1972

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

When Santa Monica's fire chief retires in July, he'll be stepping away from a 31-year love affair with fighting fires.

Chief Ettore Berardinelli, who has held every rank in the department since he started as a firefighter in 1972, will end his six-year term as chief July 24.

But Berardinelli, also known as "Gore," says he won't be bored in retirement.

That's because he plays as hard as he works. And for decades Berardinelli has commuted an hour each way from his Newbury Park home to work 14-hour days.

"The mission that we provide is so important that sometimes your life becomes secondary to the mission," said Berardinelli, whose dedication has earned him the respect of City Hall officials and local residents. "And I say

See CHIEF, page 5



Photo courtesy

Now and then: Fire chief Ettore Berardinelli has been with the SMFD since 1972. After working his way through every rank in the department, he will retire in July.

Fundraiser faces federal mail fraud charge

Man who allegedly cheated SM school being pursued by the state too

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

Celebrity fundraiser Aaron Tonken was charged with mail fraud Friday, following a civil lawsuit filed against him in March.

The criminal charge, filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, alleges that Tonken, 37, regularly lied to donors and used charity money to buy luxury items and repay personal loans.

If convicted, Tonken faces a maximum of five years in jail.

This isn't the first time Tonken has faced this type of charge.

In March, the state attorney accused Tonken and his associates of allegedly defrauding clients like

former President Bill Clinton and other celebrities, as well as a Santa Monica private school, out of more than \$1.7 million.

That lawsuit, which is currently making its way through the court system, alleges Tonken deposited donations intended for charity into his own bank account and then refused to explain his actions, said Sonja Berndt, the prosecutor on the case. The suit seeks a permanent injunction barring Tonken

from fundraising as well as an unspecified amount of money in punitive damages.

Friday's federal complaint alleges that Tonken, who helped produce several charitable fundraisers featuring the casts of "The Practice" and "Ally McBeal," collected hundreds of thousands of dollars to put on a charitable fundraiser in honor of

See FRAUD, page 6

Ridin' the rail



John Wood/Daily Press

A skater performs a "50/50 grind" off the end of a rail at the Venice skatepark earlier this week.

SF spends most on booze and books

JUSTIN PRITCHARD
Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — San Franciscans and their neighbors spend more on booze, food, books and just about everything else than residents of major metro areas including Los Angeles and New York, according to a new federal report.

Not that they're libertine literati forsaking all else for a higher, and better-read life.

San Francisco Bay area residents have more to squander because they earn more than residents of other cities. What's more, the value of their world-famous postcard views is perhaps matched only by the crushing cost of living.

Perhaps that's what drove them to drink.

Households in this city and nine surrounding Bay Area counties spent more than twice the national average on alcohol in one year — \$360 compared to \$744. Boozy New York City and environs ranked sec-

See SPENDING, page 6

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HOROSCOPE

Be aware today, Sagittarius



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

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

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Saturday, May 17, 2003:

Your year flows around your domestic life. You could add to your home, get a new home or perhaps change the makeup of your family in some way. Expansion appears to be your theme. Center on your self-expression and creativity in the fall, when your libido energies will start to flow for more than a year. Your career continues to develop in a beneficial manner. You will get something you have wanted for a long time. If you are single, you'll question if you want to keep that status. And you'll have good reason to. If you are attached, your relationship flows. Together you make a decision that adds to your bond. Relate more with each other on a one-on-one level. SAGITTARIUS plays a key role in your year.

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Take off as soon as you can or want. You might find that a dream could be driving you in a new direction. Why not? Make an effort to find a key friend or to join your friends. Make plans to meet halfway if a pal lives at a distance. Flow with the moment. Tonight: Make the next step. Do something different.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Deal with someone on a close level. Relax and share more of who you are with a loved one or a friend. Make a call or reach out for a parent or boss. You need to take a stronger role with this person. Let him or her know how important he or she is. Tonight: Add some romance to a relationship.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Others massively seek you out. You opt to toss plans in the air. Is there any reason not to? Be spontaneous and adapt to others' needs. You might decide to take off at the drop of a hat, being the spontaneous Twin. Go with the moment. Tonight: Say "yes" to another's request.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Take it easy and don't push yourself beyond your limits. Understand what ails another by trying to walk in his or her shoes. Evaluate and follow through on a health decision, like making doctors' appointments or starting an exercise program. Tonight: Do for someone else.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Be more playful and understanding of others' peccadilloes. Adjust to another's desires and plans. Though the Lion likes it his or her way, sometimes you need to give way to others. Express your willingness. Be the love that you are. Tonight: Have a good time.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Tension builds. Evaluate and rethink your long-term goals involving a child or family member. You might want to make an investment in property. Nothing has to be done today, but a domestic transformation will knock on your door. Tonight: Adapt your plans.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ You're able to make a difference when it counts. Touch base with those who might have floated away or whom you haven't spoken to in a while. Play catch-up with a loved one or an old flame. You need to reconnect on a deeper level. Tonight: Meet pals at a favorite spot.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ You want to juggle finances so that others feel more comfortable. You also decide that an addition to your home could make a big difference. Some decide to do some painting or remodeling. Others consider rearranging. Tonight: Order in.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Feel your feelings, but be careful how you unleash your frustration or possibly your anger. Pick and choose your words. Also demonstrate your feelings through actions. Your personality attracts others. Be more aware. Tonight: What is it you really want?

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Slow down and take a look at what you're doing with your weekends. Is this what would make you happy? You might change your mind about what you want. Redesign your free time so it works for you. Start a new hobby if you want to be more physical. Tonight: Do your thing.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Your get-up-and-go could push someone to the wayside. Attempt to be more sensitive to those around you. Bring friends together, whether it is for a party or spontaneous get-together. You are where the action is. Plans rapidly change. Tonight: Listen to a friend.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Reach out for an older family member. You gain through a happy get-together. A loved one listens to your problems and is more than willing to pitch in. You might want to revamp plans in order to help someone else as well. Follow your instincts. Tonight: A must show.

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1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite #202 • Santa Monica, CA 90401

PUBLISHER	Ross Furukawa ross@smdp.com	CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE	Paula Christensen paula@smdp.com
EDITOR	Carolyn Sackariason sack@smdp.com	ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE	William Pattnosh william@smdp.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR	Jason Auslander jason@smdp.com	ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE	Rob Piubeni rob@smdp.com
STAFF WRITER	John Wood wood@smdp.com	ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE	Keri Aroesty keri@smdp.com
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Del Pastrana del@smdp.com	CIRCULATION MANAGER	Robert Deamicis Rob@smdp.com
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT	Alex Cantarero alex@smdp.com	CIRCULATION	Kiutzu Cruz kiutzu@smdp.com
CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE	Mitch Troy mitch@smdp.com	SPECIAL PROJECTS	Dave Danforth dave@smdp.com
CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE	Angela Downen angela@smdp.com	STAFF MASCOT	Maya Furukawa ross@smdp.com

LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

SMC awards student-athletes of the year

By Daily Press staff

Sixteen Santa Monica College students — one from each of the campus' inter-collegiate teams — will be honored Thursday, May 22 as 2002-03 Student Athletes of the Year.

Awards will be presented at 7:30 a.m. in the SMC Pavilion, 1900 Pico Blvd.

The students, selected by coaches, are honored for their academic and athletic achievements. The honorees and their coaches are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ WOMEN'S BASKETBALL:
Jacquana Young (Lydia Strong, coach) | ■ FOOTBALL:
Daryl Adams (Robert Taylor, coach) |
| ■ MEN'S BASKETBALL:
Morgan Smith (John McMullen, coach) | ■ WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY:
Estella Vinat (Eric Barron, coach) |
| ■ WOMEN'S SWIMMING:
Emily Hope (Mike Santo, coach) | ■ MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY:
Jose Villela (Tommie Smith, coach) |
| ■ MEN'S SWIMMING:
Shai Nachshol (Mike Santo, coach) | ■ WOMEN'S SOCCER:
Bridgette Vargas (Jason Kirkwood, coach) |
| ■ WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD:
Marissiko Wheaton (Eric Barron, coach) | ■ WOMEN'S SOFTBALL:
Alina Guerrero (Shellie Beringhele, coach) |
| ■ MEN'S TRACK & FIELD:
Joseph Villela (Tommie Smith, coach) | ■ WOMEN'S WATER POLO:
Cameron Bryant (Mike Santo, coach) |
| ■ WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL:
Susan Young (Wendy Dreher, coach) | ■ MEN'S WATER POLO:
Gene Broussard (Gary O'Brien, coach) |
| ■ MEN'S VOLLEYBALL:
Fahdel Bouaziz (Mark Lee, coach) | ■ WOMEN'S TENNIS:
Kristyn Houchen (Richard Goldenson, coach) |

Hundreds to participate in water quality monitoring event

By Daily Press staff

On May 17th, hundreds of volunteers, scientists, waiters, seniors and students will gather to take samples of California's coastal rivers, streams and the Pacific Ocean as part of Snapshot Day 2003.

The samples collected will be used to develop the first "snapshot" of water quality along the entire California coastline.

"This is a monumental event," said Dennis Dickerson, executive officer of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. "Snapshot Day 2003 will provide information needed to better understand and eliminate threats to the state's magnificent coastline. It will also provide an opportunity for individuals to learn about the importance of water quality and what they can do to protect our bays, beaches and estuaries and the plants and animals that live there."

The 2003 event relies on volunteers to go to specified locations along the coast and adjacent waterways to perform a few simple tasks, including making site observations and recording water temperatures.

Those who are interested will be instructed on how perform more specialized tasks, such as measuring for pH, turbidity and dissolved oxygen in water.

Snapshot Day events will be held Saturday, May 17 from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Several monitoring sites have been selected, including Ballona Creek, Ballona Wetlands, Malibu Creek, Topanga Creek, Los Angeles River and various coastal sites. More than 100 locations will be monitored in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. For information on this event, visit www.coastforyou.org or call Santa Monica BayKeeper at (310)305-9645, ext. 3.

surf report

Look for a mixture of SW swell and building NW wind swell. Northern L.A. spots see 2-foot-to-3-foot surf at many exposed spots and some shoulder high sets at best SW/combo breaks by the afternoon. South Bay spots see mainly wind swell with surf in the 2-foot-to-3-foot range with best breaks getting some sets to shoulder height.

Today the
water is:

60°

Sunrise: 5:53 a.m.
Sunset: 7:57 p.m.

	LOW TIDE				HIGH TIDE			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	5:10	-1.6	4:21	1.9	11:42	3.9	10:39	6.6
SUNDAY	6:04	-1.5	5:07	2.3	(12:48)	3.6	11:26	6.2
MONDAY	7:02	-1.2	6:02	2.7	N/A	N/A	2:05	3.5
TUESDAY	8:07	-0.8	7:22	3.0	12:19	5.6	3:30	3.6
WEDNESDAY	9:15	-0.4	9:13	3.0	1:23	5.0	4:46	3.8
THURSDAY	10:20	-0.1	10:57	2.6	2:43	4.5	5:40	4.1
FRIDAY	11:16	0.2	N/A	N/A	4:12	4.1	6:20	4.5

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OPINION

LETTERS

School district should stick to 'three Rs'

Editor:

I would like to suggest a few things concerning the up-coming ballot issue, Measure S.

First of all let me ask the bookkeepers for the school district, what happened to the money we gave you people in the past? It seems to me to be poor budgeting that needs to be addressed first. It seems we the people of Santa Monica are being asked to pour more money into a deep bottomless hole.

Well think again.

I have a few suggestions on how to tighten your belt and cut fat. First, discontinue the worthless and non-productive bussing program. Why should we in Santa Monica have to foot the bill for another area's child? So that should give you some extra money saved.

Secondly, discontinue the bilingual classes. This is not a foreign country. We are Americans here and we speak English. Teach classes in English. Immerse in English if that is the way to do it.

Thirdly, do away with condom classes. That is something best left to the parents who understand their child a lot better than a school district even will. And lastly, cut out women issues classes.

Stick to the three Rs — reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic.

Dane Swanson
Santa Monica

Allow all to leave their mark

Editor:

I want to thank you for your coverage of the budget cut crisis at Santa Monica College.

What a terrific little school this is. Serving about 36,000 students, its enrollment is about equivalent to Cal State Northridge. It is just about the number one feeder school to the prestigious four-year institutions here in southern California — UCLA, USC, the entire Cal State system and others because of transferable curriculum as well as an extremely competent staff of instructors and administrators.

But as you pointed out in earlier articles about this school, feeding the four-year colleges and universities is only a portion of its responsibilities.

It is responsible to serve the community by providing classes and training that ultimately support the community. Things like vocational training for our citizens for whom higher level degrees are not an option. Eliminate this training and what do we say to these people whose membership in the community is the same if not more of a contribution as those who come from out of town, out of state or out of country to take advantage of the quality education offered at SMC?

What do we tell them? Thank you for your support but you are just not as important to us, or more clearly, not as prestigious, as others. For these vocational students we say, "You may staff our work force but we won't train you to manage?" Or we say, "Look to the military for secure employment, then we will wave the flag of freedom and cheer you as military heroes?"

No.

Out-of-state tuition is a money-maker for the community college system. International students are a big money-maker for SMC, as all the money from these

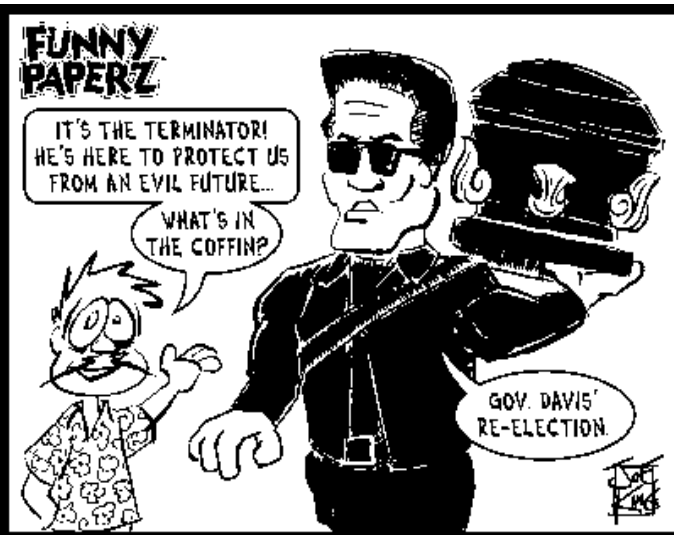
students stays at SMC. So vocational programs are out because Ms. Robertson believes that eliminating the smaller population of these programs is more fair and less damaging. To whom, dear?

Are these students "collateral damage" in the war against SMC's elite academic standing? Ms. Robertson must remember that Santa Monica College belongs to the COMMUNITY. It is not her school. Despite her intelligence and ambition, humility is a necessary quality here, curtailing lofty dreams of leaving her mark on the Earth.

It is her responsibility as a very important employee of SMC, to enable ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY to leave their mark on the Earth. This, in my opinion, is the most noble goal and the most important mark she can leave on the Earth.

Inclusion of all? Or reestablishment of the class system in academia? This is how Ms. Robertson's legacy will be written.

Toni Arinsberg
Los Angeles



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

The popularity of the fastest-growing beverage



MODERN TIMES

By Lloyd Garver

As we head toward summer and people are getting more and more thirsty, I want to talk about the popularity of the fastest-growing beverage in today's modern world.

This miracle drink has 0 calories, 0 sodium, 0 fat and 0 carbohydrates, so no wonder it's becoming increasingly popular. The drink is called water — bottled water.

The stuff that used to be for the rich and pretentious is now being lapped up like, well, water. And I'm not talking about flavored water or bubbly water. I'm talking about Americans spending billions of dollars to drink something that they could get out of their taps.

Everyone who has seen "Erin Brockovich" knows that not all water is safe (and that not everybody should wear a push-up bra). However, assuming that

the water in your area is not poisonous, why buy the bottled stuff?

There is the assumption by the consumer and the impression by the advertiser that somehow bottled water is healthier for us than regular water or other drinks. Considering that the most popular bottled waters are sold by Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Nestle, it's hard to think of them as health foods.

The various brands try to appear as healthy as possible. Descriptions on their bottles include, "spring water," "pure spring water," "natural spring water," "mountain spring," "natural artesian water," "crystal fresh," "naturally filtered" and "purified drinking water."

And at least one boasts my favorite label slogan — "arsenic free." Is this bottle just telling me that it contains no arsenic or is it also implying that those without this disclaimer may be loaded with arsenic? I mean, Krispy Kreme doesn't label its donut boxes, "Plutonium free."

There is a huge range in price and snobbishness among bottled waters. In case you haven't gotten your copy of "Beverage Digest" lately, let me remind

you that no less of an authority than its editor and publisher, John D. Sicher, says they are all basically the same and "all hydrate equally well."

The most popular brand of water is Pepsi Cola's Aquafina. And the most amazing thing to me is that this water actually costs more than Pepsi!

So, it's conceivable that the following exchange could take place: "Want some water?"

"No, I don't want to spend that much. I'll just have a Pepsi."

Evidently when it comes to water, the higher the price, the more people buy.

People are very proprietary about their favorite brands, claiming that theirs tastes best and helps keep them in good shape. Bottled waters can cause all kinds of arguments — and not only about taste or health.

My neighbor was recently buying some Evian in the grocery store when another customer chided him for not buying American products at this time. Then the angry patriot drove away in his Porsche.

When it comes to water, I don't have a very discriminating taste. Yesterday, I bought eight different brands of water —

varying in price from 34 cents to about \$2.

I conducted a blind taste test and even included tap water. They all tasted pretty much the same to me. Maybe I should have had a sip of wine in between each taste to cleanse my palette.

I know that some people — maybe even most people — are better than I am at distinguishing the different brands, but is all this clear liquid worth the hype and money? If you tell me that your favorite brand tastes better than all the rest and makes you feel healthier than the others, I believe you.

But I can't help thinking that those in the bottled water business are laughing at us consumers and thinking that we're suckers — especially when you consider the word you get when you spell Evian backwards.

(Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier." He has also read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSnews.com's Opinion page and can be reached at smdp@lloydgarvermoderntimes.com.)

LOCAL



Fire chief retiring from 'greatest job in the world'

CHIEF, from page 1
that enthusiastically."

A COLLAGE OF FIRES

Berardinelli said if he could do it all over again, he would. He'd still become a paratrooper in the Army reserves. He'd still marry his wife Connie, who he's been with for 23 years. And he'd still leave his job as a pattern-maker in a Los Angeles factory to join the Santa Monica Fire Department.

There's just one thing Berardinelli said he wishes he'd done differently — kept a diary.

He would have written in it after the fire that gutted Cheerio Restaurant in the 1980s, the Carmel Hotel fire in 1972, the Stafford Street fire of 1976 or the more recent Sea Castle fire. He would have recorded his thoughts on New Year's Day, 1979, after a fire ripped through Thrifty Drug store.

"It's like combat," said Berardinelli, adding that he sometimes misses the front lines since moving over to the administrative side in 1982. "Only you're fighting a force of nature rather than a person."

There were plenty of victories — no Santa Monica firefighter has died in the line of duty since 1946 — but there were also difficult times, especially during Berardinelli's 10 years as a paramedic.

Some things stick out in his memory. Like the woman whose arms were ground off in a car accident but still she didn't complain and showed nothing but bravery.

Or the baby that died in the middle of the night as Berardinelli struggled to bring it back to life. And the way the baby's parents, after their baby had died, thanked him.

"It's really like a collage," Berardinelli said. "There are some things that stick in my mind that didn't have happy endings."

BORN TO LEAD

Colleagues describe Berardinelli as a born leader.

Berardinelli said he admires people "that stick to it and do the right thing." His philosophy on leadership is as straightforward as his passion for the job.

"To be a leader you have to understand how to be a follower," he said. "Never ask somebody to do something you wouldn't do yourself."

Berardinelli said he strives for open communication in his department of 90 firefighters, which responds to an average of 30 calls a day, and said he always tries to explain the reasons behind his orders.

Beyond that, a good fire chief must maintain his credibility and have strong management skills, he said.

But more important than anything else is a love for the service.

"This is a special job," Berardinelli said. "You've got these big old trucks. You've got these people that love to meet us. It's the greatest job in the world."

"It's just incredible that you get to come to work every day and your sole mission is to help people in their most critical moments."

NO REST IN SIGHT

If some see retirement as an opportunity to rest and relax, Berardinelli sees it as a chance to catch up on a number of hobbies

that have been pushed aside to fight fires.

Berardinelli, whose father was a local carpenter and who has built several homes himself, said he will start by spending some time in his woodshop at home.

He wants to fix up the 1956 Chevy he bought when he was 16 that he still owns. He wants to go on road trips. And he may start videotaping the football games at Newbury High School again, something he did for years so the players could have highlight reels when they graduated.

"This is probably one of the best fire chief jobs in the country. It's kind of sad to be saying good-bye to it, but there's so much more to life that's got to be done."

— ETTORE BERARDINELLI
Santa Monica Fire Department Chief

"There's a value in working with your hands," he said. "And seeing what you've done at the end of the day."

He also hopes to spend more time with his 19-year-old daughter Katy, a student in San Luis Obispo, his 32-year-old son J.R., a Beverly Hills firefighter, and his 28-year-old son Jonathon, a fighter pilot for the Air Force.

And at just 55 this July 9, Berardinelli has seven grandchildren he's itching to play with too.

THE NEXT CHIEF

The city has just opened the recruiting period for a new fire chief, a job that pays between \$113,000 and \$140,000 a year.

Though no applications have yet come in, city officials said they expect candidates from all over the state to participate in the process, which typically includes a written problem, a presentation and an interview.

Two internal candidates have also voiced an interest in picking up in the department where Berardinelli will leave off.

One is Jim Hone, the assistant fire chief and fire marshal. During his 30-year career as a firefighter, Hone has developed an expertise in disaster response that has landed him in the aftermath of both the World Trade Center and the Oklahoma City bombings.

The other applicant currently working at the department under Berardinelli is William Kolberg, deputy chief for the last six years. Kolberg started with the department in 1975.

The city closes its application period on June 20. In the meantime, Berardinelli has offered to stay on longer if he's needed.

"This is probably one of the best fire chief jobs in the country," he said. "It's kind of sad to be saying good-bye to it, but there's so much more to life that's got to be done."

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LOCAL STATE



School still out \$500,000

FRAUD, from page 1

singer Diana Ross that never took place.

According to the affidavit, Tonken allegedly regularly overstated the amount of money that had been raised, understated the cost of producing the event and promised that celebrities had agreed to appear at the events when they had not.

Tonken is scheduled to appear in court June 10 to answer the federal criminal complaint.

Among the victims named in the state's lawsuit is the Westside Waldorf School, a private school on Fourth Street in Santa Monica.

School officials said they were forced into an economic crisis two years ago after Tonken arranged for a major donation from the Cynthia Gershman Foundation that never fully came through.

Though Waldorf is not named in the federal complaint, Joseph Zwicker, the assistant U.S. attorney prosecuting the case, said the FBI's investigation into that complaint is ongoing.

"We're going to be looking at all the transactions to which Mr. Tonken played a part," he said. "And all the times that he used funds for one thing that were meant for another."

George Bird, Tonken's lawyer, said his client was bad at keeping his records straight but never criminal in his behavior.

"He put his heart and soul into these fundraisers, never with the intent to defraud anyone," Bird said Friday. "Aaron will want to take care of this matter and put it behind him. He will take responsibility for his actions."

Waldorf parents, teachers and administrators are unsure.

They say Tonken brought two donors to the school in January 2001 — Cynthia Gershman, a trustee of the Cynthia Gershman Foundation who signed a pledge to Waldorf for \$650,000, and Loren Arbus, who agreed to put on four annual fundraisers for the school.

Waldorf then paid Tonken \$25,000 for consultation services and began expansion and relocation plans for the private

school, whose lease expires on July 1.

When Gershman's first \$120,000 check came through, everything seemed to be going well and officials hired more teachers and brought in an administrator at \$80,000 a year to find a new home for the school and oversee its move, school officials said.

Tonken's reliability came into question shortly thereafter when the first annual fundraiser failed to generate any revenue.

**"Aaron will want to take
care of this matter and
put it behind him."**

— GEORGE BIRD
Tonken's attorney

Waldorf put up \$65,000 as a "good faith" deposit which Tonken was supposed to return after the event, along with any additional revenue generated by the fundraiser. But officials said Tonken lagged on returning their deposit — and vendors from the event came after the school, saying they had not been paid for their services by Tonken or Arbus.

Jeffrey Graham, former board president and co-chair of Waldorf's finance committee, said Tonken eventually returned the school's \$65,000 by depositing money into its bank account from a third party.

But no extra revenue was ever brought in by the event, he said. And shortly after the event fell apart, Gershman withdrew her "irrevocable pledge," sending the school into a further economic tailspin. Graham said Gershman didn't provide any reason for the change of heart.

With the money suddenly gone, the school laid off temporary workers, cut back on services, asked vendors for grace periods and sought loans to avoid bankruptcy.

Officials estimated that recovery from the ordeal will take roughly three years for the 165-student private school, which costs about \$11,000 a year to attend.

SF residents spend twice as much on alcohol, books

SPENDING, from page 1

and, but even in a place where the cost of cocktails can make the head spin, the average was a distant \$450.

"San Francisco is San Francisco," said Jeremy Bonnie, 30, as he finished a beer early Friday afternoon with two friends at Harrington's Pub. "People have a right to drink as much as they want, as long as they don't bother anybody else."

The comparisons come from a Bureau of Labor Statistics survey of 7,500 households — or "consumer units" — and about 30,000 interviews. Though the report was released this week, the profiles of Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. were based on data from 2000 and 2001.

In the Bay Area, that means both dot-com debauchery and the subsequent hangover.

Perhaps at first they were spending freely on investment advice books for all that cash — and later on newspapers for the help-wanted sections. Whatever the case, residents here spent nearly twice the national average on reading materials —

\$144 compared to \$66.

"I think it's great a great combination," said Paul Yamazaki, a buyer for the iconic City Lights Booksellers. "We're blessed by having three great bars within stumbling distance."

The New York-based authors of the report offered another take.

"After they drink, they go home and read," joked Michael Dolfman, whose office compiled the comparisons. "I guess the stresses of living in San Francisco have their bearing."

The Bay Area average annual spending spree of \$56,100 was possible because residents made a before-tax average income of \$70,200, according to the data. The U.S. average expenditures were \$38,800 on a pretax income of \$46,100.

The other cities had their bragging rights as well: sartorial New Yorkers spent the most on clothing (\$3,000); smoky Bostonians spent the most on tobacco (\$369); cleanly Chicagoans spent the most on housekeeping supplies (\$590); and party-hearty Washingtonians spend the most on entertainment (\$3,033).

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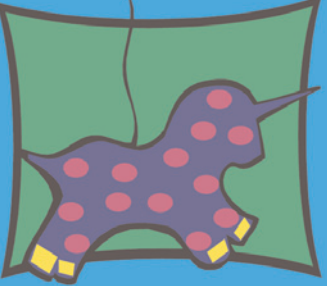
The Venice Art Walk returns on **Sunday, May 18**, and as walks go, this one's tough to beat. Tours of private studios (more than 60 artists invite you in), one-time exhibitions, a 350-piece silent art auction, architectural tours, great food and music—everything you'd expect from a place like Venice.

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NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF PROPOSED FY 2003-04 ONE-YEAR ACTION PLAN ALLOCATING FEDERAL CDBG AND HOME FUNDS

Notice is hereby given that the City of Santa Monica has developed the Proposed FY 2003-04 One-Year Action Plan. The One-Year Action Plan is submitted annually to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It delineates the City's specific projects and activities for one-year use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds in order to meet the City's overall housing and community development needs as specified in the Consolidated Plan (FY 2000-05) adopted by City Council and submitted to HUD in June 2000. The City is seeking community comments on the Proposed One-Year Action Plan.

Copies of the Proposed FY 2003-04 One-Year Action Plan and the Proposed Draft Community Development Plan FY 2003-06 are now available to the public for a 30-day community review period ending June 17, 2003. Any comments received before June 6, 2003 will be transmitted to the City Council. To obtain a copy of the Proposed FY 2002-03 One-Year Action Plan or the Proposed Draft Community Development Plan FY 2003-06, please contact the Human Services Division, 1685 Main Street, Room 212, Santa Monica, CA 90401, telephone (310) 458-8701. Please send your written comments to the above address by June 17, 2003.

F:\HSD\SHARE\CDBG HUD\Ads\Ad NOA FY 2003-04 Action Plan.doc

STATE

L.A. requires companies to disclose slavery profits

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The City Council voted Friday to require every company doing business with the city to report whether it earned profits from slavery.

The 10-0 vote doesn't require reparations to be made but supporters said it was an important symbol for descendants of American slaves.

"It does us no harm but in fact it reclaims the history ... that has been lost," Councilman Nate Holden, who is black, said before the vote.

He compared it to votes the council in previous years had taken restricting companies doing business with apartheid South Africa, the Southeast Asian nation of Myanmar, also known as Burma, or those supporting the Arab boycott of Israel.

However, the new law doesn't bar companies that made profits from slavery from city contracts.

"We're not here today to ask companies to go out of business," Holden said. "We're here to say let us know who you are."

Councilwoman Jan Perry, who also is black, said she had a personal interest in the motion.

"When I was a teenager, I had an uncle who was still alive, although he was well over 100 years old, who had been a slave and had been a freed man and still had his papers."

"He was the living embodiment of the stain upon our own American history and so it touches me on a very personal level," she said.

The vote makes Los Angeles the second U.S. city to require such disclosure. Chicago passed a similar law last fall but

no businesses have yet reported any history of profits from slavery.

Three years ago, California passed a state law requiring insurance companies to disclose whether they sold policies on slaves. Since then, eight companies have reported such policies and provided the names of 614 insured slaves.

"We're not here today to ask companies to go out of business. We're here to say let us know who you are."

— NATE HOLDEN
City Councilman

The city law requires a company doing business with the city to sign an affidavit stating whether it or its predecessors ever profited from slavery. Companies also would have to disclose any records they found of such profits.

The ordinance is most likely to affect insurers who provided policies for slaves, and railroads and developers that have histories stretching back to slavery times. It would be difficult to enforce, however, since there are no provisions for investigation or enforcement.

Supporters said they hoped the law would encourage companies that profited from slaves to voluntarily contribute money to benefit their descendants, such as creating scholarships for black students or providing funds for inner-city communities.

LAPD progressing with post-Rampart scandal reform

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A federal monitor said the Police Department is making progress on reforms but a budget shortfall and lack of resources could mean a 2006 deadline may not be met, a report showed.

Federal monitor Michael Cherkasky said in a report released Thursday the LAPD and city are "intent on working toward timely compliance," with improvements. However, the city must provide support now to the department or else face the financial consequences in the future, he said.

"Failure to provide timely resources or failure to maintain a high level of commitment could prevent timely compliance and be, in the long term, expensive to the city," stated the report.

Cherkasky was appointed last year to monitor reforms following the Rampart scandal. The Department of Justice later

alleged in a consent decree that the LAPD routinely violated civil rights. The 107-page report was given to U.S. District Judge Gary Feess.

Cherkasky said the department should be in "substantial compliance" with federal regulations for two years before a June 2006 deadline to meet those requirements. He said there remain areas of serious concern, including backlogs on audits, inadequate supervision of gang units and slow investigation of complaints of police misconduct.

Gerald Chaleff, the LAPD executive in charge of the reforms, said Thursday he is confident the department will meet the deadline.

"Overall, I believe the monitor's report states what we've said before, that we are making steady progress toward compliance," he said. "And I'm confident that we will achieve compliance by the deadline."

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page 2



NATIONAL



Dollar's dip aids U.S. manufacturers making foreign travel pricier

BY DAVE CARPENTER
AP Business Writer

CHICAGO — Frequent traveler Dali Wiederhoft still loves Paris in the springtime. But the dollar's decline has added a new element of financial pain to her visits — one that American tourists vacationing abroad this summer may feel sharply.

After tallying up her expenses from a business gathering last week at the Hotel InterContinental in the French capital, the Minneapolis businesswoman joked: "Next year we're going to meet at McDonald's."

Travel pains aside, economists say there are more U.S. winners than losers from the decline of the dollar. U.S. manufacturers in particular are benefiting from the greenback's descent against the euro and other currencies, getting a competitive boost for their products overseas that translates to higher sales figures and improved earnings for many.

"It is a real price advantage for us," acknowledged George Rolby, president of Sunnen Products Co., a St. Louis-based machine tool manufacturer.

For that reason, there's no fretting by the government or economists about a phenomenon that might sound to the layman like evidence of fiscal frailty in what has long been the world's premier currency.

A four-year high for the euro against the dollar, which has tumbled about 10 percent since the start of the year? No problem. The trend may work against American travelers, European exporters and consumers of now-pricier French wine, Italian shoes, German cars and Canadian lumber, but experts say it is benign for the U.S. economic recovery.

"It's really taking a lot of pressure off manufacturing, which has been the hardest-hit sector of the economy," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Economy.com. "They're making more profits, and ultimately that's what's needed to get businesses hiring again and growing."

Even during the boom of the late 1990s,

a strong dollar squeezed exporters' profit margins, making their goods more expensive than those of foreign competitors.

"I certainly hope, selfishly, that we are in for a lengthy period of a relatively weak dollar," Robert Lutz, chairman of GM North America, told reporters earlier this year. A strong dollar, he said, "may be good for the country in many, many, many ways, but I'll tell you, it's not good for industrial America."

In quarterly earnings results issued over the past month, multinational corporations have reported dramatic gains from the currency exchanges.

International sales at Wm. Wrigley Jr. Co. jumped 17 percent in the first quarter due mostly to positive currency comparisons, which boosted the chewing gum maker's sales by \$40 million.

The sagging dollar meant the difference between a positive quarter and a negative one at Sara Lee Corp. The food and consumer goods giant reported 5 percent higher income and 4 percent more revenue for the first three months of 2003 than a year earlier; both would have been lower without the benefits of the battered buck.

Eastman Kodak Co., too, had a \$12 million profit which would have been a loss without the effects of a lower dollar.

The story was similar at Altria, Bausch & Lomb, Baxter International, Caterpillar, Deere, Kellogg, Kimberly-Clark, McDonald's, Procter & Gamble, Weyerhaeuser and others.

On the flip side, the global economic slowdown limits demand for many products, inflation is a risk and the economy could be set back if the feeble dollar cools foreign investors' interest in leaving their money in U.S. stocks.

But at the moment, there may be no more concrete impact than the one felt by U.S. travelers to Europe.

Wiederhoft's latest business trip to Paris cost her nearly double what she paid on similar trips not long ago, she said, and forced her to compromise in her choices of lodging, dining and entertaining clients.

Woman dies during cop raid

BY TOM HAYS
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — A 57-year-old woman died of an apparent heart attack Friday after police detonated a flash grenade and handcuffed her during a raid on the wrong apartment.

Alberta Spruill, a longtime city employee, was pronounced dead about an hour after a dozen heavily armed officers broke into her home at dawn.

"We're deeply saddened," said Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly. "It's a tragedy. This should not have happened."

An informant said that Spruill's sixth-floor Harlem apartment was being used by an armed drug dealer to stash cocaine and heroin, police officials said.

After obtaining a search warrant, officers forced open the woman's door and tossed in a flash grenade, which creates a distraction by producing a loud noise and a blinding flash of light. Kelly said the grenade was used because it was believed

there may have been guns and a dog in the apartment.

The officers grabbed Spruill, who was dressed for work, handcuffed her and put her in a chair. Then police realized the inside of the apartment did not match the informant's description.

The officers apologized to Spruill, who told them she had a heart condition and began to have difficulty breathing, Kelly said.

An ambulance was summoned and Spruill went into cardiac arrest on the way to the hospital. An autopsy was scheduled for Saturday.

A lieutenant who supervised the raid was put on administrative duty as police officials investigated how the wrong apartment was raided, and whether they used the flash grenade properly, Kelly said.

Spruill worked in a personnel office of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and had been on the city payroll 29 years.

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INTERNATIONAL

Draft to lift sanctions against Iraq revised but Russia and China balk

BY EDITH M. LEDERER
Associated Press Writer

UNITED NATIONS — Stepping up the pressure for a vote next week, the United States presented a revised resolution to the U.N. Security Council to immediately lift sanctions against Iraq, but Russia and China signaled Friday they still want major changes.

Russian Foreign Minister Yuri Fedotov told the Interfax news agency after meeting China's Deputy Foreign Minister Yang Wenchang that both countries "believe that provisions in this draft resolution require serious amendments."

Secretary of State Colin Powell fared better on a trip to Germany, where Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said it "makes no sense" to keep punitive sanctions on the backs of the Iraqi people.

Powell said in Berlin that getting a consensus on a resolution should be possible "within the next several days or a week."

Despite his concerns, Russia's Fedotov also remained hopeful that a compromise can be found, saying only a compromise "may restore unity in the U.N. Security Council," Interfax reported.

On Thursday, Powell briefly raised the possibility of suspending the sanctions as Russia and France have urged, but later backtracked and said the United States wants them lifted immediately.

The new U.S. draft makes more than 25 changes to address council members' concerns about postwar Iraq, said Richard Grenell, spokesman for U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte.

"There are some things that are positive. But the most sensitive issues are still here and we have not gone through them."

— **FAYSSAL MEKDDAD**
Syria's deputy U.N. Ambassador

"We think we've moved significantly," Grenell said.

The revised draft does not significantly change two key concerns of many council members — the limited role of the United Nations in postwar Iraq and the powerful role of the United States and Britain as occupying powers.

The United States handed the nine-page draft to council experts on Thursday. The experts agreed to meet again on Friday.

Russia's Fedotov appeared to be referring to the revised draft in his comments Friday, though he didn't make any direct reference to the changes made.

"There are some things that are positive," Syria's deputy U.N. Ambassador Fayssal Mekdad said Thursday, "but the most sensitive issues are still here and we have not gone through them."

The United States faces resistance from four key countries which opposed the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq — France, Russia, China and Germany. All favor a stronger U.N. role in postwar Iraq.

Reflecting the view of many nations, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Karsheed Kasuri, whose country

currently holds the Security Council presidency, said greater U.N. involvement would make conditions more transparent.

Pakistan and other countries are ready to help coalition forces, but only if the United Nations plays a bigger role in forming a new government, he said in Washington.

Russia and France have called for sanctions to be suspended because under Security Council resolutions, U.N. weapons inspectors must certify that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have been eliminated. Since the end of the war, the United States has barred U.N. inspectors from returning, deploying its own teams instead.

The Bush administration would like to lift sanctions immediately, but agreeing to a suspension might be the price it has to pay to get the resolution adopted quickly.

The revised resolution beefs up language used to describe what a new U.N. coordinator for Iraq will do, using words such as promote, encourage, and coordinate instead of support. But it does not increase the U.N.'s role in forming a new Iraqi government.

According to the new text, the United States and Britain would still be authorized to run the country for a year, with automatic extensions, and to control a development fund where money from oil sales would be deposited.

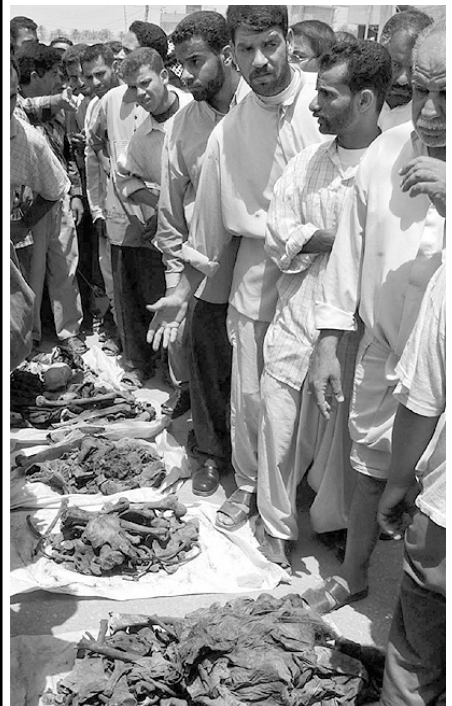
The resolution would lift the embargoes imposed after Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and phase out over four months the U.N. oil-for-food humanitarian program, which was designed to help ordinary Iraqis cope with sanctions.

Council approval would end U.N. control over the country's vast oil wealth and allow the United States and its allies to use the money to pay for the country's reconstruction.

Several council members had expressed concern about a provision in the original draft banning lawsuits involving the country's oil and natural gas. U.S. officials said that was necessary to hold off creditors owed US\$400 billion by Iraq from claiming oil or tankers as payment.

The revised draft makes clear that the United States and its allies are not making any decisions about Iraq's debt.

Grisly scene



Vahid Salemi/Associated Press
Iraqi Shiite men look at skeletons discovered in a mass grave close to the shrine of Imam Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, in the holy city of Karbala on Friday. The remains are believed to be those of people killed during the 1991 Shiite uprising against Saddam Hussein's regime.

Czech Republic pays U.S. multi-millionaire \$354M

By The Associated Press

PRAGUE, Czech Republic — The Czech Republic has paid \$354 million to U.S. business magnate Ronald Lauder, after a court ruled that the European nation is liable for losses his company suffered here.

A Stockholm-based appeals court on Thursday upheld the verdict of an international arbitration court from March.

"The Czech Republic has paid this astronomical sum," Prime Minister Vladimir Spidla told reporters.

The arbitration panel ruled that the Czech government must pay Lauder's Central European Media Enterprises, CME, for failure to protect its investment in the broadcaster TV Nova.

Lauder helped establish the popular television station in the Czech Republic in 1994, along with Vladimir Zeleny, who became the television's general manager.

But in 1999, Lauder and Zeleny parted ways and Lauder sued both the government and Zeleny, claiming the government had allowed his former partner to violate legal contracts by hiring away TV Nova's most talented staff and starting his own network under the same name.

Zeleny was dismissed as Nova's general director by its owners on Wednesday, "to prevent possible damage to the television from groups that tend to link it with the lost arbitration," said the organization's spokesman, Petr Kostka.

The Council for Radio and Television Broadcast, the country's key broadcasting regulator that also has been blamed in the affair, was fired by the Czech parliament last month.

Explosions in Casablanca leave several dead, hurt

By The Associated Press

RABAT, Morocco — Four car bombs exploded in the coastal city of Casablanca Friday, leaving several people dead or wounded, Moroccan security officials said.

A U.S. official said the blasts occurred near a synagogue. "No U.S. government facility was targeted," U.S. State Department spokesman Joanne Moore said in Washington.

Moroccan security officials said there were burnt-out vehicles at the four sites near consulates and restaurants in the center of the city, Morocco's economic center.

It was not immediately clear who was behind the attacks in Morocco.

But U.S. counterterrorism officials in Washington had warned Friday of a coordinated effort by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network to strike lightly defended targets worldwide, citing the bombings earlier this week in Saudi Arabia as well as threats in Africa and Asia.

U.S. and British authorities had warned of threats in East Africa, particularly Kenya, and in southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia. U.S. officials also received an unconfirmed report that a possible terrorist attack may occur in the western Saudi city of Jiddah.

Al-Qaida has suffered serious blows in recent months, including the capture of alleged Sept. 11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. But senior al-Qaida leaders were thought to be hiding in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, U.S. officials said.

DID YOU KNOW?: Gerald Ford was the first president to have an attempted assassination by a woman. He was also the first president to have two women try to assassinate him.

SPORTS

L.A. Lakers likely to make changes before next season

BY JOHN NADEL
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — Phil Jackson is feeling good about his own health, as well as the future of the Los Angeles Lakers.

Jackson found it easier to deal with defeat than he otherwise might have after the Lakers' loss to the San Antonio Spurs in Game 6 of the Western Conference semifinals. And, he looks forward to coaching an improved Lakers team next season.

"I think I would have been a little more defeatist at another time," Jackson said following the Lakers' 110-82 loss to the Spurs that ended their three-year run as NBA champions. "I have to feel better about my own personal health and the direction I'm going. We've had a great run."

Jackson's self-described most difficult season as a coach ended Thursday night — five days after he underwent an angioplasty to unblock an artery to his heart.

Jackson is perhaps the most successful coach in NBA history, having won a record 162 postseason games and coached nine championship teams in 13 years. His nine titles tie him with former Boston coach Red Auerbach for the most ever.

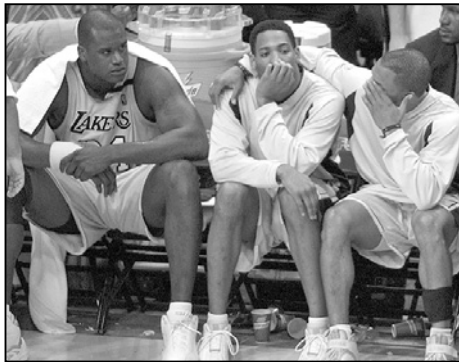
The 57-year-old Jackson said he intends to return next year and fulfill the final year of the five-year, \$30 million deal he signed with the Lakers in June 1999.

He'll probably be working with several new players. What's uncertain is whether general manager Mitch Kupchak will deem it necessary to make major changes or minor adjustments.

Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant are two of the NBA's best players, but realistically, few of their teammates this season could make the roster of the deep and talented Sacramento Kings, for example.

Karl Malone and Scottie Pippen, nearing the end of their Hall of Fame careers, are among those who have been mentioned as possible additions, along with Juwan Howard and P.J. Brown.

There's a good possibility that Robert Horry and Brian Shaw, key members of the supporting cast since Jackson became coach of the Lakers won't return.



Ric Francis/Associated Press

Los Angeles Lakers' Robert Horry, center, is consoled by teammate Derek Fisher, right, as they and Shaquille O'Neal sit on the bench during the closing minutes of Game 6 in the Western Conference semifinal series against the San Antonio Spurs on Thursday in Los Angeles. The Spurs won 110-82.

"Sometimes losing clarifies your position," Jackson said. "It makes it clear what you need to do. It's not an appropriate time to talk about that right now."

Perhaps not, but Jackson added: "We haven't provided ourselves with the best overall personnel we needed for this basketball club. That bore itself out when we had some injuries."

"We have a nucleus that I'm excited about. I'm excited about replacing players who are going to be moving on. I'm very optimistic and the fans should be very optimistic."

O'Neal and Bryant are under contract for next season, as are Rick Fox, Devean George, Derek Fisher, Slava Medvedenko and Kareem Rush.

Fox tore a tendon in his left foot April 27 in the Lakers' first-round victory over Minnesota and probably won't be available when next season begins.

The 37-year-old Shaw will be a free agent, as will Mark Madsen, Samaki Walker and Tracy Murray.

The Lakers hold a \$5.3 million option for the 32-year-old Horry and an option for Jannero Pargo, as well.

Bryant said he didn't want to address the situation, either.

"That's a call for Mitch," Bryant said. "I can't think that way. I can't even form those words, because I've been through too many battles with these guys. We have good-enough players to advance."

A playoff hero on several occasions in his career, Horry struggled this postseason, shooting 30-of-94, including a woe-

ful 2-of-38 from 3-point range in 12 games.

Since Jackson became their coach, the Lakers have played 71 playoff games — almost the equivalent of a full season. It's taken its toll.

"The last three years, we only had 45 days off before we had to get back to work," O'Neal said. "So now the guys who are injured, including myself, can take some extra days to get healthy and in better shape."

"We'll regroup, get some free agents, get some new guys, get some new blood and then hopefully start a new run next year."

O'Neal was second-guessed throughout the season for waiting to undergo surgery on his arthritic right big toe until Sept. 11 — one day short of three months after the Lakers beat New Jersey to complete a sweep of the NBA Finals.

He didn't play his first game until Nov. 24. By that time, the Lakers were 3-9.

They were 11-19 following a loss to Sacramento on Christmas Day, but won 39 of their final 52 games to finish 50-32, fifth in the Western Conference.

Jackson missed three games after having a kidney stone removed in late February. Then came the angioplasty, which he said gave him a new lease on life.

The Lakers had won 13 straight playoff series under Jackson, and Jackson-coached teams had won a record 25 in a row before losing in the Western Conference semifinals.

Those streaks are history. "Nothing lasts forever," O'Neal said.

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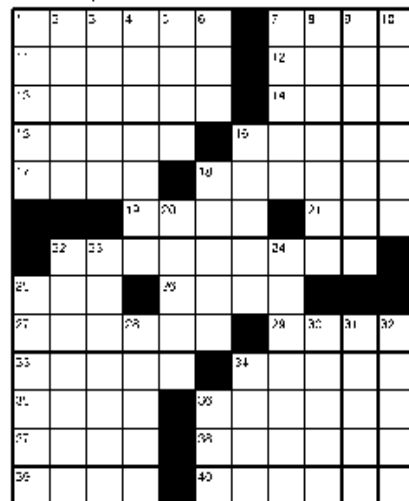
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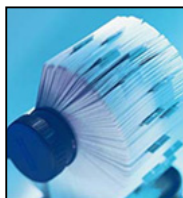
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BACK PAGE

Bantus study American life as they prepare for resettlement

BY MATTHEW ROSENBERG

Associated Press Writer

NAIROBI, Kenya — Ali Abdi Omar had a question: at the airport, would he have to go through the same X-ray machine as his luggage?

A few fellow students giggled, but most eagerly awaited the teacher's answer — they genuinely didn't know.

In a cramped classroom at the Nairobi offices of the International Organization of Migration, a group of Somali Bantu refugees spent Thursday learning how to get through an airport and on to the plane that in a few days will take them from a desperate life in Africa to a fresh start in the United States.

They are also studying the skills they need for American life: how to use a toilet and an alarm clock. How to navigate a grocery store. And how to survive the phenomenon called winter.

The 74 Bantu scheduled to leave Nairobi on Tuesday and Wednesday are the first of more than 12,000 the United States pledged to resettle in 1999.

The resettlement process was delayed by new U.S. security measures implemented following the Sept. 11 attacks but is now back on track, said Pindie Stephen an IOM official.

For the Bantu, the promise of a new life means an escape from a future of destitution and discrimination.

The Bantu's ancestors were brought to Somalia in the 19th century as slaves. Slavery no longer exists but routine discrimination is common.

The largely rural Bantu were forced by the Italian colonial government to abandon their farms and work as forced labor.

The forced labor didn't end with independence — other Somalis simply replaced the Europeans as taskmasters.

When former dictator Siad Barre was ousted in 1991 the despised Bantu were attacked, raped and murdered.

As the country descended into chaos and heavily armed militias drawn along clan lines turned Somalia into a patchwork of battling fiefdoms, thousands of the Bantu fled, most making their way on foot to the border with neighboring Kenya.

Preparations for the move began in the Kakuma refugee camp in northwestern Kenya with literacy classes and lessons about how to find a job, shop for food and use modern appliances like stoves, toilets and alarm clocks.

Nearly all have spent most of the last decade in sprawling refugee camps, dependent on meager food rations and living in wooden huts.

Some non-Bantu Somali refugees — there are more than 100,000 in Kenya's camps — have been repatriated; but it is too dangerous for the Bantu to return.

So far the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has approved 1,400 for the move America. The remaining Bantu are expected to be approved in the next year or two.

Preparations for the move began in the Kakuma refugee camp in northwestern Kenya with literacy classes and lessons about how to find a job, shop for food and use modern appliances like stoves, toilets and alarm clocks.

IOM officials say the Bantu have responded well to

the classes. Still, it is a lot of information to digest.

At the center in Nairobi where the 74 Bantu are staying until they leave, stories circulate of the group that got stumped by a doorknob and stuck in a room, and of the woman startled by the flick of a light switch.

Nearly all are relatively ignorant of life in the United States — and none had ever heard of Disney World.

Asked if they knew about discrimination in America against black people and Muslims — the Bantu are both — all appeared confused.

The Bantu are all going to different U.S. cities. A case-worker will be assigned to each family and help them make the transition.

Job prospects are a serious concern. Omar said he had worked on American cars before and hoped to be a mechanic when he gets to Springfield, Ma., the town where he will live.

The emigrants received their final briefing Thursday from IOM trainers, who explained the airport, the plane and what to do when they arrive in the United States.

There was a lecture on how to eat airplane food; some oohing and ahing at the image of an airplane projected on the wall and a demonstration on how to use a seat belt and life jacket.

The talk of airplane safety features prompted one female student to ask "is the plane going to drop into the ocean?"

Lily Sanya, the teacher, assured her it wouldn't.

The students seemed most concerned about the weather — "I hear the cold in America can stop a man's heart from beating," Omar said.

Once again, Sanya assured them they had nothing to worry about. "You are arriving in the hot part of the year ... it will give you time to get used to the seasons," she said.

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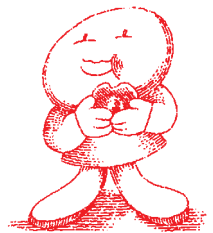
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