

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

FANTASY 5

2 12 21 23 33

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 3 1 8

Evening picks: 3 6 4

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 07 Eureka

2nd Place: 02 Lucky Star

3rd Place: 05 California Classic

Race Time: 1:48.70

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

■ In April, Luftee Abdul Waalee, 48, was sentenced to three years in prison for trying to pass a fake U.S. Treasury check for \$25 million at a credit union in Pittsburgh. According to the prosecutor, Waalee is a member of the "Moors" black separatist group that supposedly believes that each American is endowed with a secret government account worth around \$600,000, based on a theory that when the U.S. went off the gold standard in 1933, it began backing its currency not with a precious metal but with the prospective labor of its citizens. (Because the Moors are smarter than everyone else, only they know about these secret accounts and can thus buy and sell them.)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"In love there are two evils:
war and peace."

— Horace (65-8a.c.)

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Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

(Left) Firefighters ready themselves, preparing to shut off a gas leak on Arizona Avenue.

(Right) Santa Monica Fire Department Battalion Chief Kent Koble controls the scene of a gas leak on Arizona Avenue Thursday from the back of a Suburban. Koble served as the incident commander at the scene.

Gas leak causes scare

By Daily Press staff

ARIZONA AVENUE — A massive gas leak on Thursday forced the evacuation of an office building here and some stores. Authorities closed off the street to traffic and pedestrians.

At about 12:10 p.m., the Santa Monica Fire Department responded to a leak in the alley between the Third Street Promenade and Fourth Street, just north of Arizona Avenue.

It took gas company officials more than a hour to contain the leak, which was spewing 40 to 50 pounds per square inch of natural gas into the air. To compare the size of the

leak, residential gas lines generate between one and two pounds per square inch, said SMFD Battalion Chief Kent Koble, who was the incident commander at the scene.

Authorities believe a UPS truck might have backed over the 1-inch gas line, which is located in the alley. Because the rupture occurred at the base of the line, gas company officials had to jackhammer part of the concrete to the valve, Koble said.

People in the offices at 301-311 Arizona Ave. were evacuated for about an hour, as well as some stores on the Promenade. The Santa Monica Police Department also responded to the scene.

Crash victims denied access to accident report

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

SM COURTHOUSE

Victims of the fatal July 16 Farmers' Market crash won't gain access to an extensive accident report prepared by the California Highway Patrol for at least another month, a judge ruled Thursday.

With criminal charges pending against Russell Weller, 87, lawyers for the victims also have been unable to interview him in an effort to build a case against him. Weller, who was driving west on Arizona Avenue, hit the gas pedal instead of the brake and sped through the outdoor market. Ten

people were killed, and dozens of others were injured.

A temporary order will expire next month that so far has kept Weller and the report off limits to lawyers handling the civil cases. Santa Monica Superior Court Judge Valerie Baker said she will consider granting the lawyers access before evidence is lost or becomes stale. Weller's health has deteriorated rapidly since the crash, his lawyers said.

Lawyers for the victims said they want to review the report because it reportedly includes an interview with Weller and key witnesses to the accident. But prosecutors pledged to fight

See TRIAL, page 5

Landlords accused of harassing tenant

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

MID CITY — Prosecutors this week filed a complaint against three local men who are accused of working collaboratively in an "outrageous" attempt to frighten a disabled woman into moving out of her rent-controlled Santa Monica apartment.

L.T. Belton, Marshall Burnett and Dan Kolodziejki face penalties for allegedly harassing Susan White, who has rented her apartment at 2710 Arizona Ave. for 23 years.

White pays \$422 a month for her one-bedroom apartment. Hers was the only occupied unit when Burnett bought the building in January. Prosecutors allege Burnett and Kolodziejki, both realtors, hired Belton to live in the building as a manager for the sole purpose of intimidating White into moving.



John Wood/Daily Press

Susan White has lived in her apartment on Arizona Avenue for 23 years. Prosecutors allege her new landlords went to great lengths to frighten her into moving.

"This is one of the most outrageous cases we've ever seen," said Deputy City Attorney Adam Radinsky, who added Belton allegedly threatened to burn down White's apartment, repeatedly insulted her, abused her cats and flooded her kitchen. "It shows the incredible lengths some people will go to for the

See TENANTS, page 5

Forecast projects 20 million more Californians by 2050

By The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — California will have 20 million more residents by the middle of the century, according to population projections by the state Department of Finance.

The new data indicate that by 2050, the Golden State's population will be 54.4 million — up from the 34 million in 2000.

The long range projections of state demographer Mary Heim, released Wednesday, incorporated information from the 2000 census and other data, including birth and death records, county building plans and migration patterns into and out of the state.

"The purpose of our projections is to say: This is where we're headed," Heim said. "We don't mean for them to be self-fulfilling, but to show the track we're on. If people don't like

the direction, it becomes a matter of deciding how to change it."

The state's ethnic makeup is set to continue changing dramatically over the next half century, Heim said. Hispanics are projected to make up the majority of the state by around 2038. By 2050, Hispanics will account for 54 percent of all Californians, whites will make up 23 percent, Asians 12 percent and blacks 6 percent, according to the calculations. American Indians and multiracial people will account for 2 percent each.

The projections indicate changes in county populations, too. Los Angeles will stay the most populous county in the state, with more than 11 million people by 2050. But Riverside County is projected to overtake Orange and become the third most populous county behind Los Angeles and San Diego, according to the forecast.

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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

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

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

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Speak your mind at work. Your lively side emerges when you spurt out something you didn't mean to. Others respond positively. Brainstorm and relax. Being at home could help you release some tension. Tonight: Hang out close to your turf.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Know what you want to spend before you cruise into this weekend. You might discover that joining friends is slightly more costly. Whatever you do, you'll enjoy yourself. A friend becomes flaky. Do what pleases you. Tonight: Could romance be knocking on your door?

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Use the daylight hours to your benefit. You find that good news will come forward if you keep conversations rolling. You might wind up spending more than you are aware of. Check out an investment carefully. Tonight: Let your hair down.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Clean up your desk and, if possible, do quiet work. In fact, you will need some downtime during the daylight hours. Expect a big splash and change of direction by late afternoon. Your energy peaks to a new level. Tonight: Accept the center stage.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Use the daylight hours to the max. Success and you become twins at this time of the day. Assume a lower profile as the day gets older, when you might have some very strong words for another. Do not risk financially. Tonight: Vanish.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ You move from one point of view or responsibility to another with unusual ease. A boss recognizes the quality of your work. Accept the compliment, but ask for that pay raise if you feel the moment is right. Network your way out the door. Tonight: Where the party is.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Your ability to see the big picture tosses you in a position you would prefer not to be in. You cannot always handle the responsibilities that are heading your way because others don't see them. Prepare to work late and steer a project to the end. Tonight: Join friends late.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Work with a partner. Make plans to either take off this weekend or sometime in the near future. Another perspective can help you zero in on a money question and resolve it. Break past traditional thinking. Seek other opinions. Tonight: Follow the music.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Call upon your people skills, even if you find a child or loved one argumentative. Work with associates, perhaps giving them more of what they want. Your ability to read through problems lands you in a position of responsibility. Tonight: Chat over dinner with a special friend.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Clear out paperwork, return calls and handle everything you must. Your efficiency comes into play. Network this afternoon or take a long lunch. Express your interest in others. If you can, leave the office early. Tonight: Out and about.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ You might have difficulty settling in and getting more of what you want done. A case of spring fever could be overwhelming. What becomes obvious is that you must finish your work. Count on working late. Tonight: Head home.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Your mind is on a family member or a real estate investment. Make needed inquiries and get the information you need and want. Use the afternoon and weekend to toss an idea around, trying to decide if it is workable. Tonight: Have fun.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Hang with the artists in Venice

By Daily Press staff

It's all about the arts this weekend in Venice.

On Saturday and Sunday, more than 400 emerging and established Southern California artists will donate original works of art for the Venice Art Walk's art auction or will open the doors of their working studios to the public for tours.

In honor of its 25th anniversary, world-renowned sculptor and Venice resident Robert Graham has donated a wall sculpture to be raffled at the Venice Art Walk to help raise funds for the Venice Family Clinic. The official 25th anniversary Venice Art Walk poster features an image by renowned Venice artist Laddie John Dill. The artwork for the 2004 Venice Art Walk T-shirt is by guerrilla artist Robbie Conal.

All events start or take place at Westminster School, 1010 Abbot Kinney Blvd., in Venice. Free parking and continuous shuttle buses will be available for the public all day on Sunday at two nearby lots located at Coeur d'Alene School at 810 Coeur d'Alene Ave. in Venice and at the Walgrove Elementary School at 1630 Walgrove Ave. in Mar Vista.

The Venice Art Walk raises funds for the Venice Family Clinic, the largest free clinic in the United States, and supports its work in providing medical care to uninsured individuals and families in Los Angeles County who would otherwise have no access to health care.

Highlights of the weekend are:

SATURDAY

Noon to 4 p.m.

"On the Fringe" Self-Driving Art and Architecture Tours: Westside art studios and architecturally distinctive homes will be open for self-driving art tours. Docents will be on hand at each location to discuss the art and artists featured. The cost for the tours and the art auction reception is \$50. A combined admission to both the tours on Saturday and the Venice Art Walk studio tours on Sunday is \$75.

Palms On the Fringe Tour: Located in the Palms district of Venice, this portion of the tour includes the following artists:

■ Ned Evans — One of Venice Beach's best-loved surfer-painters, Evans strives to capture a magical, elusive quality of light and color.

■ Charles Christopher Hill — Lyrical and subtle abstract geometries and an intimate dialogue with delicate surfaces have made Hill a perennial star.

■ Hugette Caland — The artist designed her breezy Modern Mediterranean palace that complements her abstract paintings and a unique collection of fine arts and artifacts.

■ Peter Lodato — In this hidden treasure of a studio, Lodato uses contrasting surface qualities and dynamic color combinations.

■ Andy Moses — Exploring the infinite variations of the white surface, Moses culls terrestrial and cosmic landscapes.

Venice Canals On the Fringe Tour: The tour of artists' homes located near the his-

See BRIEFS, page 6

CORRECTION — In the May 19 edition, the page 1 story relating to City Hall's budget contained errors. The proposed budget for the coming fiscal year does not suggest the city attorney's office, which has cut three positions in the last three years, add six workers. Instead, staffers have suggested the finance department add six workers, who will move over from the Big Blue Bus offices to create more efficiencies. Also, \$430,000 more is projected to increase in business license fees, but finance officials say that's due to anticipated economic growth, not fee increases. Lastly, the new skate park will be at Memorial Park, located at 14th Street and Olympic Boulevard.

The other page 1 story about Bike to Work Day indicated that the celebration at the Ken Edwards Center on Wednesday was open to the public when in fact it was for city employees. The SMDP apologizes for any confusion or inconvenience it caused.



Look for SW swell to mix with NW wind swell today. For Northern L.A. that means surf in the 3-4' range at many breaks and some bigger sets at best breaks. Spots in the north half of the South bay also pick up some SW swell with chest- to shoulder-high sets and occasional head-high waves at best breaks. Breaks in the south half of the south bay pick up mainly NW wind swell for waist high and below waves. A negative .4 low tide right around sunrise has many spots on the drained out/inconsistent side early, with improving conditions on the tide push. Winds are light onshore (S to SW) to light and variable in the morning and build 8-12 knots out of the SW to W for the afternoon.

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

Today the water is:

69°

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	2:07	0.5	1:42	0.8	8:00	4.1	8:05	5.5
SUNDAY	2:45	0.1	2:10	1.1	8:47	3.9	8:29	5.7
MONDAY	3:20	-0.3	2:36	1.5	9:30	3.8	8:52	5.8
TUESDAY	3:54	-0.5	3:00	1.8	10:11	3.6	9:16	5.8
WEDNESDAY	4:27	-0.5	3:23	2.1	10:53	3.5	9:41	5.7
THURSDAY	5:02	-0.5	3:47	2.3	11:37	3.3	10:09	5.6
FRIDAY	5:41	-0.4	4:11	2.5	12:28	3.2	10:39	5.4

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Louisiana Rep. Derrick Shepherd has filed a bill that, if passed, would outlaw low-riding pants. He said he did it because he was tired of catching glimpses of boxer shorts and G-strings over the lowered belt lines of young adults.

The law would punish anyone caught wearing the pants with a fine of as much as \$500 or as many as six months in jail, or both.

The bill would be tacked onto the state's obscenity law, which restricts sexual activity in public places and the sale of sexually explicit items.

Los Angeles could arguably be considered the mecca of people who wear low-riding pants, commonly seen on just about every young person in Santa Monica.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Is the government going too far in regulating us?"

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

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OPINION

LETTERS



Responsive government?

Editor:

Local business attorney David Pisarra's column (SMDP, May 18, page 5) contains an overt mischaracterization of the record of City Council member Ken Genser. This gross attempt to distort the public record is both shocking and appalling. Mr. Pisarra states that Genser, who joined the council in 1998, has, "sixteen years of council meetings where he listened to the complaints of the homeowners. Sixteen years where he sat and heard the business community bewail the over-regulation. Sixteen years of hearing the schools complain they don't have enough money." While I do not dispute Genser's attendance as noted, the public record contains not one scintilla of evidence that he has ever truly listened to anyone's complaints, actually heard anyone's concerns, or ever solved anyone's problem. Mr. Pisarra owes Genser a public apology for his blatant distortions of fact.

BOB ABERNETHY
Santa Monica

Duh

Editor:

Regarding Tony Street's letter (SMDP, May 19, page 4). Tony wrote about his scanning all letters where we in Santa Monica offered our opinions, "ad nauseum" and after this experience, his sage advice was "stop whining and vote these people (the City Council) out."

Come on, Tony, did you figure that out all by yourself? Now why didn't any of us bumpkins here in good old Santa Monica think of that?

MARILYN BRENNAN
Santa Monica

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) 376-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

City Hall needs to bring spending down to Earth



I have some ideas how Santa Monica can save money next fiscal year, make ends meet and serve the needs of residents for a change.

City Hall could save big bucks if it rolled up the red carpet for the homeless. In spite of nearly \$100 million spent over the last 20 years, City Manager Susan McCarthy admitted in a Daily Press profile (May 10, page 1) that, "... We haven't been able, with all our resources, to resolve it (the homeless problem)."

Has it dawned on City Hall that no matter how much we commit, things just get worse? It's time to cut our losses.

I'd start by slashing the \$2 million City Hall annually gives to 10 agencies offering 22 programs that are mostly ineffective at reducing the impacts of 1,500 to 2,000 transients on our streets daily. I'd encourage aggressive enforcement and prosecution of those violating food hand-out ordinances, trespassing laws, panhandling and other regulations governing anti-social behavior.

According to city statistics, about one-third of police resources and 18 percent of paramedic/fire emergency costs are generated by transients. Lowering these could save tens of millions of dollars annually that now disappears down a black hole.

Then there's the Bayside District Corp., a city affiliated, nonprofit organization governed for the most part by wealthy Bayside landlords and property owners. The city handed the BDC \$608,700 last year to promote business downtown.

The success of the Third Street Promenade has made many property owners and landlords wealthy. So why is the city giving them even more money? The BDC, like many city boards and commissions, is primarily an advisory body to the City Council, which really makes the rules.

Last year, the Bayside's board of directors twice requested an increase in homeless services spending. It seems they're working at cross purposes because it's the drunks, screamers, mentally ill, panhandlers and social misfits that make the Promenade so unattractive. Instead of addressing these issues, the BDC's executive director, Kathleen Rawson, campaigns for more "state-of-the-art" movie theaters to bring even more people, traffic and parking problems into already congested downtown.

gested downtown.

The city gave the Pico Youth and Family Center (through Public Health Foundation Enterprises) an interim \$203,987, covering nine months during the 2003/2004 fiscal year. With ongoing organizational problems and controversy, and despite a blistering critique of the nonprofit's operations and leadership, city staff still recommended refunding the troubled youth services operation. Projected annual cost of the grant next year: \$272,000. Couldn't this money be spent a lot wiser on less volatile resources with a similar purpose?

City Hall gives "officially recognized" neighborhood groups annual subsidies of up to \$4,000 each. Last year, four groups took the handouts. Some of the original neighborhood organizations are defunct. Others have lost touch with their constituency. One is too self-involved to concern itself with neighborhood issues. And, one has become a platform for a political activist and his crew who are mostly interested in personal agendas.

If these groups can't stand on their own, City Hall should stop propping them up. My suggestion: Give the money to the Santa Monica Police Department's mounted patrol.

There's no better public relations tool than a peace officer astride a horse. They're also a terrific resource for crowd control and crime fighting. The City Council perpetrated a cruel trick last year when they told mounted officers to raise part of their budget on their own. There's something unsettling about policemen fundraising by selling T-shirts in a city as wealthy as Santa Monica.

Let's end all the traffic jamming projects this year. Politicians will tell you improvements such as the downtown transit mall, Wilshire Boulevard traffic islands, curb bump outs, roundabouts, street lane reductions and all the rest of their steer manure is paid by county, state or federal sources. City Hall still spends millions of our dollars on proposals, design studies, inspections, construction oversight and public relations to convince us these are good ideas.

Traffic is even more congested, and everyone's stress level is through the roof. Their "get 'em out of cars and on the bus" agenda isn't working. Let's take the money earmarked for "traffic calming" and spend it on a horse stable for the SMPD Mounted Unit and on "free" parks and recreational resources for our kids.

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

ALL OPINIONS ARE EQUAL AT THE DAILY PRESS...

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LOCAL



Weller's car insurance capped out at \$500K

TRIAL, from page 1

the release of the report, which they claim is confidential as part of the ongoing criminal case against Weller, who faces 10 counts of manslaughter.

Tim Walker, Weller's Long Beach-based civil defense attorney, said he had no objection to sharing the document with other lawyers.

"The plaintiffs in the civil litigation are entitled to have a copy of the California Highway Patrol report, and I hope they have an opportunity to get it," he said.

About a dozen civil lawsuits have been filed against Weller and Santa Monica City Hall by victims of the accident. Lawyers said City Hall is being targeted because it didn't erect protective barriers at both ends of the market.

"They failed to put up barriers," attorney John Wolf said. "They failed to put up barriers on Arizona Avenue — the same ones they put up on Third Street."

Whether or not lawyers can pin liability on City Hall likely will become the most contested part of the case as the assets of Weller, a retired grocer who lives with his wife in a small house north of Montana Avenue, will be quickly exhausted. Walker told the court Thursday that Weller's car insurance policy provided for \$250,000 per person, with a maximum of \$500,000 per accident.

Potential penalties faced in harassment case uncertain

TENANTS, from page 1

sake of a quick dollar.

"The owner and his partner installed a so-called manager ... for the purpose of harassing her and scaring her into leaving," Radinsky added.

While most of City Hall's claims name only Belton, prosecutors allege he acted as an agent for Kolodziejewski and Burnett. The realtors also are accused of not responding to White's complaints of harassment and not making requested repairs.

Burnett, who bought the four-unit building for \$840,000, said Belton was merely a tenant in the building and denied any claims of harassment. Kolodziejewski, who works with Burnett, was unavailable for comment, as was Belton.

Burnett characterized the situation as a tenant dispute and added that White had her run of the place until Belton moved into the building in January.

"I try not to be a social referee," said Burnett, 39, of Ocean Park. "It's like a 'He said, she said' — and I feel like I'm caught in the middle of it."

Burnett went on to say that he was in the process of making the repairs White requested, but that he was hamstrung by delays in City Hall.

"It's quite a complicated story," Burnett added. "I'm very kind of curious as to what the city — what their agenda is ... I've lived in Santa Monica my whole life. I understand rent control laws. I understand you inherit some of these tenants. It's foolish to battle with them because the city will always take

Civil cases stemming from the market crash are considered related, and all are being handled by Judge Baker at the Santa Monica Courthouse.

Fourteen lawyers were in court on the matter Thursday, including Deputy District Attorney Ann Rundle and Jim Bianco, one of Weller's criminal defense lawyers, as well as attorneys for City Hall and the Bayside District Corp., the nonprofit organization that manages downtown. Bayside also has been sued for liability.

In asking for access to the report, lawyers for the victims argued too much time had already passed since the deadly accident.

"It seems to me that we're getting caught up with labels. I want a traffic accident report, that's all I want," said attorney Steven Archer, referring to the CHP report. "I can't see that that's a conflict all of a sudden."

Another issue expected to be dealt with by Judge Baker at the hearing next month is whether Weller can be pursued for punitive damages. Attorney Arnoldo Casillas said he wants to keep that option open, even though Weller's assets are few. Casillas represents the families of 3-year-old Cindy Valladeres and 35-year-old Gloria Gonzalez, both of whom died in the crash.

"We allege he did it intentionally, after driving through the barrier," Casillas said after the Thursday hearing. "That he did it maliciously."

the tenant's side."

The amount of money in fines the three men could face is unclear.

"The acts go into the hundreds, in terms of individual acts of harassment, and it will be up to the court to determine how they are counted," Radinsky said, adding the three men will be pursued for emotional and medical damages, as well as punitive damages, which are based on the defendants' net worth and level of malice. Each violation of City Hall's tenant harassment ordinance, a misdemeanor, is punishable by \$1,000.

White was not at home Thursday afternoon. The other three units in the freshly painted building seemed vacant, though it appeared as though workmen had done repairs in them recently. Burnett said Belton, who rented his unit on a month-to-month basis, hadn't told him he intended to vacate the unit and added that he hadn't been by the building in several days.

City Hall's suit alleges the men wanted White to move out so they could rent her unit at market rate or sell the building for a greater profit.

Burnett said he had originally intended to rent out the units, but that he wasn't sure he would still do that. Asked if he was fixing up the building in order to put it back on the market, he said, "I'm not a developer. When I buy a property, I typically try to make it more presentable, more amenable. Good tenant housing in Santa Monica is hard to find these days, because of rent control. I'm curious what Susan's grievances are."

Back Pain?

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

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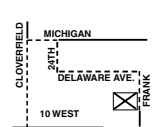
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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

toric Venice Canals includes:

■ Kate Savage — The artist employs a delicate and complicated process involving painting with milk on rice paper. Her home reflects this intricate Zen approach.

■ Edith Beaucage and Glenn Irani — The couple inhabit a beautiful residence designed by architect Irani and adorned with abstract gouaches.

■ Tony and Karen Barone — No vision of Venice Beach is truly complete without these heroes of the fashionably transgressive.

■ Whitney Sander — The architect's space is crisscrossed by cantilevered lines and employs industrial materials with a sensibility that borders on the Baroque.

4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Art Auction Preview Reception: The Venice Art Walk silent art auction preview reception features an opportunity to meet participating artists and a preview of more than 400 pieces of original art for viewing or bidding. This event is open to tour ticket holders, participating artists and Venice Art Walk volunteers.

SUNDAY:

Noon to 5 p.m.

Venice Art Walk Day — The Venice Art Walk will include self-guided tours of more than 60 private working studios and homes of notable Venice artists and private collectors including:

Larry Albright, Kwaku Alston, Bill Attaway, Pamela Barish, Sandy Bleifer, Michael Braden, Michele Bradley, Larry Bell, Christine Burrill, Richard D'Amore, Woods Davy, Design Bureau, Laddie John Dill, David Eddington, Jean Edelstein, Doug Edge, Fred Eversley, Mollie Favour, Linda Fenster, Steve Fleitz, David Frank, David Gale, Desy Safan-Gerard, Betty Gold, Nicola Goode, Lynn Hanson, Harrison Houle, Kenny Harris, Jim Hubbard, George Ketterl, E.F. Kitchen, Kristin Jai Klosterman, Aaron Kramer, LA Louver Gallery, Marion Lane, Marianne Magne, Carolyn Mendoza, Brad Miller, Gregory AJ Miller, Robin Mitchell, Robin Murez, John Okulick, Gary Palmer, Swinda Reichelt, John Rose, David Schoffman, Barbara Schwan, Sudad Shahin, David Skinner, Ruth Snyder, Michael Sokolis, Judy Stabile, Rabbia Sukkarieh, Carol Surface, Galya Pillin Tarmu and Jennifer Wolf.

Tickets for the Venice Art Walk studio tour on Sunday are \$50 per person.

A Food Faire will offer gourmet cuisine from such Westside restaurants as Joe's, Amuse Café, The Lobster and others. An al fresco cocktail garden on Abbot Kinney will feature Kirin beer, wine and El Tesoro Platinum Tequila. The Phil Norman Tentet will perform live jazz throughout the afternoon. A "Deals and Steals" silent auction will offer more than 200 items such as vacation getaways, Hollywood Bowl box seats and other opportunities. Attendees also may participate in the raffle drawing for a Mercedes Benz and/or Robert Graham sculpture. Tickets can be purchased at the art auction or by using a printed order form.

Family-style entertainment events throughout the day at Westminster School will include a silent art auction, featuring more than 400 works of original art by emerging and established Southern California artists. A cartoon gallery will feature original works by nationally known cartoonists and original animation cells. A children's arts area will provide hands-on activity and entertainment. In addition, best-selling children's author Laura Neumerhoff will read from one of her books at 1 p.m.

The Sunday events at Westminster School, except for the artists' studio tour, are free and open to the public. All proceeds from the art auction, silent auction and food and beverage sales will support the Venice Family Clinic.

Fun with a conscience

By Daily Press Staff

The Alcohol and Drug Council-High Gain Project is planning a day of family fun on the Santa Monica Pier Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m. The event's theme, "Be A Friend For Life," is designed to remind local residents of the risks and consequences of driving under the influence.

"Statistics show that alcohol was involved in 41 percent of fatal crashes and in 6 percent of all crashes in 2003," said Jayne Wise, executive director of the council. "An alarming but true statistic. While our theme is a serious and important one, we always try to make this annual community event as much fun as possible."

The event will feature live music, fingerprinting ID for kids, face painting, clowns and a treasure chest.

For more information, visit www.adcwa.com or call 310-451-5881.

Bitch!
Whine!
Complain!

The Q Line

Check Out the Question of the Week on Page 3 and let us hear what you have to say

STATE BRIEFS

Diver dies from embolism

By The Associated Press

VENTURA — A diver off Santa Cruz Island ascended to the surface too quickly and died.

Joseph Longo, 42, of Westlake Village drowned Tuesday morning from an air embolism caused by a rapid ascent, said Craig Stevens, a senior deputy medical examiner at the coroner's office.

"We're of the belief that for whatever reason, he activated the buoyancy compensator," Stevens said. "We don't know why he activated that to bring him to the surface."

An air embolism is one of the most serious risks for divers.

While diving, gas bubbles can enter the circulatory system through small ruptured veins in the lungs. These bubbles expand during ascent and can pass through the heart to obstruct blood flow in the arteries of the brain or heart.

Longo and another passenger chartered the 65-foot boat Truth out of Santa Barbara Harbor for a one-day dive trip off the Channel Islands. Longo was an experienced diver.

"He was someone I've known personally for years," said Chris Callahan-Dudley, manager of Truth Aquatics, the diving firm that manages the Truth. "It came as a shock to everybody."

Radioactivity detected in groundwater

By The Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY — High-level radioactivity has been detected for the first time in groundwater at Rocketdyne's Santa Susana Field Laboratory.

Nuclear reactors were tested at the site beginning in the late 1940s.

Groundwater samples taken in March show tritium at 80,000 picocuries per liter, or four times the national drinking water limit. The contamination was caused by nuclear research conducted at the lab.

"We have not seen levels of tritium at these concentrations before," said Mike Lopez, cleanup project manager for the Department of Energy.

Federal officials said Wednesday, however, that the groundwater contamination does not pose a risk to the public or neighbors of the facility near the border of Ventura and Los Angeles counties.

Critics of the field lab, now owned by Boeing Corp., and federal cleanup efforts questioned why the radioactive material was only showing up now after a 15-year cleanup effort.

"They have told us over and over and over again that they have no radioactivity showing up above a trip level at the site," said Dan Hirsch of the watchdog group Committee to Bridge the Gap. "(The public) should be concerned about what else may be there that Boeing and the Department of Energy hasn't found yet."

Teenager lied about sexual assault

By The Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY — Another Ventura County teenager admitted lying about a sexual assault two months ago.

"This is an extreme waste of our resources and the resources that are called upon to bare these type of problems," police Sgt. Joe May said Wednesday.

The 13-year-old Simi Valley girl told police in March that a masked man hit her on the head, knocking her unconscious, as she walked in an alley behind a shopping mall. When she woke up an hour later, she told police, she believed she had been sexually assaulted. Three days later, she told her parents, then police about the attack.

Investigators said Wednesday she was arrested for allegedly filing a false police report after admitting she made up the story in an effort to persuade her parents to move back to their old San Fernando Valley neighborhood. The family recently moved to Simi Valley and she didn't like it.

Last week, a 17-year-old Royal High School student told police she had lied about being kidnapped by two men and being almost sexually assaulted by a third man. Investigators said she was trying to get attention from her parents.

Earlier this month, a 15-year-old Royal student and a 14-year-old Sinaloa Junior High School student admitted making up similar stories. The 15-year-old told police she wanted attention from her boyfriend; the 14-year-old said she didn't want to go home to her parents because she was getting bad grades.

There was no indication the four cases were related or that the girls knew each other.

"This is highly, highly unusual to have three, let alone four," he said.

Filing a false police report is a misdemeanor. Because the girls are minors, their cases will be handled by the Juvenile Justice Center.

Golf course manager arrested for theft

By The Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS — The former assistant manager of Los Robles Greens Golf Course was arrested on theft counts in a scam that may have cost the city up to \$250,000.

James Smith was arrested Wednesday, his 35th birthday, at his Simi Valley home on five counts of petty theft, Detective Hal Sullivan said.

Last year, sheriff's detectives searched the city-owned golf course after a five-month investigation into a possible embezzlement scam. The golf course was managed by Camarillo-based Daily Corp.

As part of the probe, a video camera was installed in the golf shop for four weeks.

"You can see James Smith taking money from the register," Sullivan said.

While audits showed suspected thefts going back to 1999 and continuing over a 40-month period, the video camera captured just a small piece of time, the detective said.



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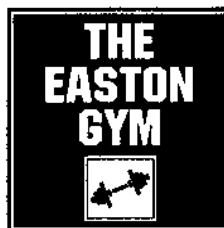
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WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK

REVIEW
THEATER
Q&A

SHREK 2
MAMA MIA [PAGE 9]
ANTONIO BANDERAS



WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK

SHREK 2

There are oodles of gut-busting gags for all ages in a sequel that not only does its predecessor proud, but ranks among the funniest animated features ever.

TROY

A spirited throwback to the sprawling war epics of yesterday. Brad Pitt's muscular performance as Achilles is nearly unassailable.

BREAKIN' ALL THE RULES

A mediocre WB sitcom disguised as a big screen sex farce; wastes decent talent on pablum that relies far too heavily on unlikely coincidence and lots of mistaken identity.

COFFEE AND CIGARETTES

A thoughtful collection of eleven deadpan comic vignettes from indie icon Jim Jarmusch. A black and white gallimaufry of talent and abstraction.

VAN HELSING

The most extortionate B-movie ever produced; a ghoulish goulash of CGI overkill peppered with stilted dialogue and a host of historical inconsistencies.

NEW YORK MINUTE

Girls, boys and — no doubt — dirty old men are invited to Mary-Kate and Ashley's big screen sexual awakening and, ugh, is it ever unseemly.

GODSEND

Director Nick Hamm struggles to maintain control over a convoluted story and veteran cast making dubious choices.

LAWS OF ATTRACTION

Offers little in the way of convincing conflict. The script gives character development such short-shrift that even a prodigious talent like Moore struggles to locate her arc.

MEAN GIRLS

Some funny stuff up front, but as things move along, the laughs are harder and harder to come by.

13 GOING ON 30

Has its moments, but is hampered by several conspicuous shortcomings, not the least of which is that it replaces one dubious lifestyle fantasy with another that is just as chancy.

MAN ON FIRE

A by-the-numbers revenge thriller that benefits from strong performances by Denzel Washington, Christopher Walken and Dakota Fanning.

I'M NOT SCARED

Director Gabriele Salvatores enchants and unnerves us in this gorgeous, disturbing reflection on the loss of innocence.

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

Emile Hirsch and Elisha Cuthbert bring a genuine vulnerability to their roles and, despite a paucity of previous comedy experience, prove to be quite adept at delivering the laughs.

DOGVILLE

Undeniably engaging, even as the cinematic techniques the director employs leave us feeling oddly detached as the story unfolds.

THE UNITED STATES OF LELAND

An incoherent, fetishistic film, which invites viewers to question the why of juvenile violence when all they really should be asking is "why bother?"

As sequels go, 'Shrek' proves a winner

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

The biggest challenge writer-director Andrew Adamson faced in creating a sequel to his Oscar-winning animated feature, "Shrek," was figuring out what comes AFTER a fairy tale wedding. Adamson admits he'd painted himself into a corner by allowing Shrek and Princess Fiona to marry at the end of the first film, presumably to live happily ever after. Movies, even comedies, need conflict like Hummers need gasoline. So Adamson brought in the in-laws to stir things up, resulting in a sequel that not only does its predecessor proud, but ranks among the funniest animated features ever. John Cleese ("A Fish Called Wanda") and Julie Andrews ("Mary Poppins") give voice to Fiona's folks — the King and Queen of the Beverly Hills-esque enclave, Far, Far Away — and are joined by fellow newcomers Antonio Banderas (Puss In Boots), Jennifer Saunders (Fairy Godmother) and Rupert Everett (Prince Charming). Returning are Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz and Eddie Murphy, hilarious again as that loquacious pain of an ass, Donkey.

Having dispatched a dragon and the evil Lord Farquaad, Shrek (Myers) wants nothing more than to while away the days with Fiona (Diaz) at his cottage in the swamp. But his new bride insists on taking her husband home to meet the parents. With Donkey in tow, the couple journeys to Far, Far Away where they receive a chilly reception from the King, whose marital plans for his daughter did not involve an ogre. In cahoots with the absolutely fabulous Fairy Godmother, the King enlists famed assassin Puss In Boots to eliminate Shrek, unwittingly providing everyone's favorite green monster with a feisty, furry new ally. There are oodles of gut-busting gags for all ages in "Shrek 2," and it seems more than half come courtesy of Murphy and Banderas — superbly cast as the cute little kitty who fancies himself Zorro. As in the first film, puns and pop cultural references abound — Romeo Drive is lined with fashionable shops such as Abercrombie & Witch, Old Knavery and Farbucks — while a host of classic fairy tales get the spoof treatment.

Employing new technology that lights CGI more naturally, the animators were able to create incredibly lifelike characters right down to the movement of Puss In Boots' hair. The soundtrack

is fittingly upbeat and surprisingly progressive, thanks to the involvement of music supervisor Chris Douridas, long-time host of public radio staple, "Morning Becomes Eclectic."

(Rated PG for some crude humor, a brief substance reference and some suggestive content. Running time: 105 minutes)



Antonio Banderas: Maturity comes to the sequels

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

While he's not known for being a comedian, make no mistake, Antonio Banderas is a very funny guy. To wit: We first met 14 years ago in a hotel in Philadelphia where he was shooting his second American feature, and I was a bellman working my way through college. Our paths crossed again last week, this time at a swanky Beverly Hills auberge, and while Banderas has since become one of this country's biggest movie stars I've yet to pay off my student loans. "Yes, but at least you're no longer carrying luggage," he said, a grin slicing across his famously handsome face. Then he added, "Although they may be hiring here at the hotel if you need some extra money."

See? He's HILARIOUS! And that keen sense of humor is put to great use in "Shrek 2," in which Banderas gives voice to Puss-in-Boots, a lion-hearted kitty short in stature but not confidence. The animated sequel, which also features the vocal stylings of Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz and John Cleese, opens today.

QUESTION: You play, literal-

ly, the coolest cat in "Shrek 2." What is it about Puss-in-Boots that makes him such a fun character?

ANTONIO BANDERAS: I think the key word is contrast. He's this little cat, but instead of providing him a voice to fit his size, they went totally in the opposite direction. And that contrast is the source of the comedy.

Q: It's Puss-in-Boots versus El Mariachi — who wins?

AB: Even if I feel it, I would never tell you which one was my favorite.

Q: No, I meant in a fight, who would win?

AB: Oh, who would win a fight? I think Puss-in-Boots.

Q: And against Zorro?

AB: Puss-in-Boots. All he has to do is make that adorable face (laughs).

Q: It is a dangerously cute face. Have you ever tried a similar maneuver?

AB: I try, but it doesn't work the same way (laughs). The cat is able to stop an army with one look, but me ...

Q: Perhaps men should try it on angry women.

AB: Sure, but it doesn't work. Trust me.

Q: Does your wife (actress Melanie Griffith) have a favorite film of yours?

AB: She loves "Evita," and she loves also the Pedro Almodovar years. "Zorro" is one of her favorites, and she was also attached very much to the story of "Original Sin." I suppose that's because Melanie is also a very romantic person, and is drawn to a story about an impossible relationship.

Q: Which films of hers do you enjoy most?

AB: I admired Melanie before I loved her. Of course, "Working Girl" was great, but the first movie I remember seeing Melanie in was "Something Wild." She was wearing a dark wig, and I thought she was like that.

Q: You dug her as a brunette?

AB: Yes, that's why I put a wig on her when I directed "Crazy in Alabama." The first impression I had of her was with black hair, and I remember that her eyes and her face stood out in a much more dramatic way than when she was blonde.

Q: You've worked with actors such as Tom Hanks and Brad Pitt back when they were on the cusp

of superstardom. Is that sort of A-list potential something easily recognized?

AB: Yes. There's a bunch of elements that go into that level of fame, and first and foremost, you have to be appealing to an audience. And that is something you or born with or not. Those guys, they were born with it.

Q: You lived in Philadelphia for a few months in the early 1990s. What did you think of the place?

AB: I love the city. I love the history of the city, and the spirit of the place and their heart. I remember we participated in some demonstrations and AIDS marches, and everyone in Philadelphia was behind it. I really love the place.

Q: You're doing a sequel to "Zorro." What can we expect this time?

AB: A more mature movie. There is not so much the winks to the teens, it is a movie more for me and you. It goes a little bit more into the mature relationship side, without losing the comedy and the adventure that is the essence of the first movie.



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ENTERTAINMENT



SUMMER IS STARTING TO SIZZLE AT THE MOVIES

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

With "Troy" and "Shrek 2" already in theaters, the summer movie season has officially begun. Here's a look at some of the sunny season's most anticipated releases:

THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW
(Release date: May 28)
Indie kid Jake Gyllenhaal ("Donnie Darko," "The Good Girl") teams with Dennis Quaid in a global warming disaster flick from "Independence Day." Director Roland Emmerich.

HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN
(June 4)
In a move that's sure to change the direction of the series, director Alfonso Cuarón ("Y tu mamá también") replaces Chris Columbus in the third installment of this franchise, based on the wildly popular books by J.K. Rowling.

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK
(June 11)
The sequel to "Pitch Black" stars Vin Diesel and promises to be a special effects bonanza. Diesel's looking to rebound after dismal box office performance of his last film, "A Man Apart."

THE STEPFORD WIVES
(June 11)
This comedic reimagining of the 1975 thriller about a town full of creepy, perpetually happy women stars Nicole Kidman and Matthew Broderick. Remains to be seen whether rumors of trouble both on the set and in post-production hurt the finished product.

THE TERMINAL
(June 18)
Tom Hanks stars as a homeless immigrant who sets up camp in an airport terminal and falls in love with Catherine Zeta-Jones. Steven Spielberg directs.

DODGEBALL: A TRUE UNDERDOG STORY
(June 18)
A sci-fi thriller with Will Smith as a cop investigating robots that kill.

In his feature debut, writer-director Rawson Marshall Thurber — the man behind the "Terry Tate, Office Linebacker" TV ad campaign — scores a dream cast that includes Ben Stiller and Vince Vaughn.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS
(June 18)
Another remake, another all-star ensemble cast. This take on the Jules Verne classic features Jackie Chan, Steve Coogan, John Cleese, Kathy Bates and the Wilson brothers — Owen and Luke.

DE-LOVELY
(June 25)
Irwin Winkler directs Kevin Kline and Ashley Judd in a musical about the life of composer Cole Porter.

WHITE CHICKS
(June 25)
FBI agents Marlon and Shawn Wayans go undercover in whiteface to protect a pair of hotel heiresses modeled after the Hilton sisters. No word on whether there's a sex tape involved.

SPIDER-MAN 2
(July 2)
The webbed box office wonder is back.

BEFORE SUNSET
(July 2)
Richard Linklater's follow-up to his 1995 sleeper hit, "Before Sunrise," reunites Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy for yet another romantic interlude in France. Worth the price of admission just to catch up with Delpy.

KING ARTHUR
(July 9)
Antoine Fuqua ("Training Day") directs. Jerry Bruckheimer produces. Expect explosive action and some steamy lovin' between sexy leads Keira Knightley and Clive Owen.

ANCHORMAN
(July 9)
Will Ferrell stars as San Diego's No. 1 newscaster in a comedy from first-time director and former SNL scribe, Adam McKay. Here's where we find out if Ferrell really is as good as advertised in "Elf."

I, ROBOT
(July 16)
A sci-fi thriller with Will Smith as a cop investigating robots that kill.

Bridget Moynahan and Bruce Greenwood co-star. Scripted by "A Beautiful Mind" scribe Akiva Goldsman.

THE BOURNE SUPREMACY
(July 23)
Matt Damon is on the run again in the sequel to "The Bourne Identity."

CATWOMAN
(July 23)
Comic book purists are outraged over rumored trespasses against the source material. Catwoman doesn't even live in Gotham anymore! Halle Berry dons the catsuit, with Sharon Stone and Benjamin Bratt supporting.

THE VILLAGE
(July 30)
This M. Night Shyamalan 19th Century thriller stars Joaquin Phoenix, William Hurt, Adrien Brody, and Sigourney Weaver.

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
(July 30)
Remake boasts a stellar cast that includes Denzel Washington, Liev Schreiber and Meryl Streep. Jonathan Demme hasn't had a box office hit since 1993's "Philadelphia," a film that also starred Washington.

COLLATERAL
(August 6)
A summer flick with Oscar buzz. Tom Cruise plays a bad guy opposite Mark Ruffalo and Jada Pinkett Smith. Michael Mann ("The Insider") directs a screenplay by Frank Darabont ("The Shawshank Redemption").

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
(August 13)
It worked for Freddy and Jason so ...

THE PRINCESS DIARIES 2: ROYAL ENGAGEMENT
(August 13)
An arranged marriage doesn't sit well with the princess, played by rising star Anne Hathaway.

WE DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE
(August 13)
Won the Grand Jury Prize (Drama) at Sundance. With Ruffalo, Naomi Watts and Peter Krause ("Six Feet Under").

Mamma Mia! will have you dancing in your seat

Theater

BY HEATHER RICH
Daily Press Staff Writer

This is not a local gig, but it sure is worth the drive.

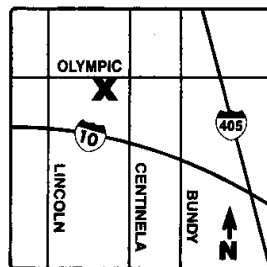
I have to say that Mamma Mia! is the best musical I have been to in, well — 28 years. Incidentally, I am 28. This show literally had the audience dancing in the aisles. There's music, dancing, laughs and some intrigue. We find a young woman about to be married, desperate to know who her father is. Sophie has it narrowed down to three lucky gents who spent time with her funky, vivacious mom some 20 years ago. So she does what any lovesick young girl would do — she invites them

to her Greek Island home for the wedding, under the pretense that the invitations were sent by her mother, Donna. However, she neglects to inform her dear mother that the men were even invited. High comedy ensues with delicious musical numbers thrown in. Let's face it, the plot is pretty predictable but I guarantee you that you won't care. If you ever enjoyed the music of ABBA, even if you never did, the show is pure entertainment. I never wanted it to end. The vocals are dead on, the characters well cast. Mamma Mia! is playing at the Pantages Theater through June 12. Tickets can be purchased by calling Ticketmaster at (213) 365-3500 and are priced between \$27 and \$82. For group tickets, contact the Pantages box office.

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Governor's reform plan targets boards, commissions

BY TOM CHORNEAU

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Choice appointments to state boards and commissions that demand little time but pay big bucks have emerged as a key target of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's pending overhaul of the state bureaucracy, officials said Wednesday.

Long considered coveted, soft-landing places for former legislators, top administration officials and party leaders, the jobs at the state's Medical Assistance Commission, Integrated Waste Management Board and Unemployment Appeals Board are among 14 boards and commissions that pay salaries from \$90,000 to more than \$100,000 a year and require less than full-time attention.

Although administration officials would not confirm any specific plans, they acknowledged the proposed bureaucratic overhaul includes recommendations for merging, reorganizing or even eliminating a large number of the state's 60 boards and commissions — including those held dear by the state's most powerful.

"As we look at various boards and commissions, we ask, 'Does this enhance or minimize accountability?'" said George Passantino, a consultant from the Reason Foundation, a Republican-oriented think tank helping oversee Schwarzenegger's California Performance Review.

"And a case can be made that some boards and commission actually reduce accountability," he said.

Calling state bureaucracy a "mastodon frozen in time," Schwarzenegger vowed to "blow up boxes" during his January State of the State speech. Toward that end,

he established the Performance Review program and brought together a team of nearly 300 state employees and consultants to undertake the task.

Officials say the 2,000-page proposal has been delivered to Schwarzenegger and is awaiting his approval but release of the plan is not expected before the end of June.

Expectations are that Schwarzenegger will call for the consolidation of dozens of departments and the elimination of hundreds — if not thousands — of jobs. While many aspects of the proposal are sure to attract opposition from groups vested in the status quo, none might provide a bigger political hurdle than the elimination of highly paid commissions.

Currently, the medical commission includes Lynn Schenk and Nancy McFadden, who served as top advisers to former Gov. Gray Davis. Former legislators Teresa Hughes, an assemblywoman and senator from Inglewood, and Thomas Calderon, an assemblyman from Montebello, are also on the commission.

The Integrated Waste Management Board includes Cheryl Peace, wife of Steve Peace, a former legislator and Davis' finance director; and Carl Washington, a former assemblyman from Los Angeles. The unemployment board includes Steve Maviglio, a former Davis spokesman, and Virginia Strom-Martin, a former assemblywoman from Sonoma County.

Schwarzenegger, too, has used commission posts to help a fellow Republican — nominating former U.S. treasurer and unsuccessful U.S. Senate candidate Rosario Marin for the waste board.

The ambition to eliminate such jobs has been around for many years, most

recently championed by Assemblyman Tony Strickland, R-Moorpark, who has authored bills the past three years to either abolish boards and commissions or reduce members' pay.

"When we are facing the budget crisis that California does, these boards should be the first thing on the chopping block," Strickland said. "These are not jobs that provide public service; this is all about political patronage."

Strickland said there are 60 board and commissions that combined cost taxpayers about \$360 million. He acknowledged that many of the boards provide important public service and should be retained — but many others are not needed.

His most recent bill would have limited the pay for boards and commissions to a modest per diem of \$100 per day. His bill died this year with almost no support from Democrats, although Strickland said his own party has also benefited from the

patronage jobs.

The issue comes forward as attention is increasingly focused on the governor's reorganization project. On Thursday, officials helping direct the project will gather for a four-hour public presentation in Sacramento highlighting broad elements of the plan, said Carl DeMaio, president of the Performance Institute, a nonprofit group that is among many advising Schwarzenegger on the issue.

"The California Performance Review is the most historic and comprehensive reform ever undertaken in California," DeMaio said, who has seen the reform document. "Everywhere they have turned over rocks and everywhere they are finding waste, duplication, fragmentation and lack of accountability."

Included in the event is Billy Hamilton, deputy state comptroller of Texas who is also serving as co-executive director of the California review team.

West's 2004 wildfire season taking a burn for the worst

BY SHANNON DININNY

Associated Press Writer

Months ago, national fire managers predicted the 2004 wildfire season would be a bad one. Now, they're changing their forecast: It's going to be worse.

With unseasonably warm temperatures in March and April, the potential loss of heavy air tankers for safety reasons and a years-long drought continuing, Western states and the federal government are grimly facing the possibility of another devastating fire season.

"Things are much worse than they were in February," said Rick Ochoa, national fire weather program manager for the Bureau of Land Management.

Years of drought have left states across the West vulnerable to extreme fire conditions. About a dozen Western states face the possibility of an above-average fire season, including pockets of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and Alaska. The greatest threat lies in the Pacific Northwest, the Northern Rockies of Idaho and Montana, and the Southwest, including Southern California, where conditions are the driest.

The Northwest had escaped the early dire predictions thanks to snow blanketing the Cascades. But it now faces dangerous conditions following a warm spring that melted the snowpack a month earlier than usual.

In Washington, the state Department of Natural Resources already has fought 70 small fires this year, up from the usual 20, and forests are as dry as they typically are in late July or early August.

In Oregon, snowpack in the Cascades fell from 120 percent of average in early March to just 53 percent of average on May 1.

"It really is huge," said Paul Werth, fire weather program manager for the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center in Portland. "There's really the potential for a large number of huge fires — long duration fires."

Firefighters in the small, heavily forested community of LaPine, Ore., where a 21,000-acre fire burned to the edge of town last year, already are preparing for a long summer. They've put out four small fires so far this year, and the conditions aren't good, Fire Chief Jim Court said.

"Typically, the light fuels — short grasses and brush — will go up easily," Court said. But the so-called "thousand-hour" fuels, such as 6-to-8-inch logs and dead growth, also ignited, leading the district and state to suspend all burning several weeks ahead of schedule.

"We need to prepare ourselves for an extreme fire season — as bad as last year or worse," Court said.

Predictions for the Southwest were already bad, and low humidity and hot, dry winds in recent weeks have added to the danger. Early fires already are scorching Southern California, where fire danger usually is highest in the fall when Santa Ana winds blow through.

Wildfires early this month blackened thousands of acres across Southern California and destroyed 28 homes.

The entire state of Arizona and at least the western half of New Mexico are facing above normal and even critical fire danger, according to Chuck Maxwell, fire meteorologist for the Southwest Coordination Center that serves Arizona, New Mexico and West Texas.

Already, the number of acres burned in central Arizona is more than double the number burned last year at this point in the season, despite a decline in the number of fire starts.

"We have triple-digit temperatures, double-digit wind speeds, single-digit humidity — not a very good recipe for a fire season," said Kirk Rowdabaugh, deputy state forester for Arizona.

The possible loss of 33 large air tankers won't help. The U.S. Forest Service grounded the tankers May 10 amid safety concerns after two planes broke up in midair in 2002, killing five people. The tankers can drop up to 3,000 gallons of fire-retardant on forest fires.

"Those air tankers were critical for initial attack. They buy time for your fire crews," said Dan Ware, spokesman for the New Mexico State Forestry Division.

To prepare for the loss, New Mexico has repositioned crews and equipment around the state so they can respond to fires faster. The state also reached an agreement with the National Guard to keep two helicopters on standby, Ware said.



INTERNATIONAL



American troops raid Ahmad Chalabi's home

BY SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — U.S. soldiers and Iraqi police raided the home of America's one-time ally Ahmad Chalabi on Thursday, seizing documents and computers. U.S. officials, meanwhile, disputed Iraqi claims that American aircraft bombed a wedding party near Syria's border, killing more than 40 people.

The raid and airstrike came amid rising public anger over the U.S. occupation, which an increasing number of Iraqis consider oppressive. The Americans plan to install an interim Iraqi government June 30 and formally end the occupation but retain significant military forces and influence over Iraqi affairs.

In the search of Chalabi's home in Baghdad's Mansour district, U.S. soldiers surrounded the compound and armed Americans in civilian clothes and flak jackets were seen milling about.

A Chalabi aide, Haidar Musawi, said a U.S.-Iraqi force arrived about 10:30 a.m., while Chalabi, a member of the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council, was inside. They told Chalabi's aides they wanted to search for wanted officials in Chalabi's party, the Iraqi National Congress.

A senior coalition official said on condition of anonymity that an Iraqi judge issued warrants "for up to 15 people" on allegations of fraud, kidnapping and "associated matters." Several people were arrested, and Chalabi was not a suspect, he said.

Iraqi police were seen loading boxes into vehicles, and neighbors said some members of Chalabi's entourage were taken away. Police took documents and a computer, according to an American witness. A portrait of Chalabi hanging on the wall had a bullet hole in the forehead.

Chalabi said police burst into his bedroom carrying pistols.

"I am America's best friend in Iraq," Chalabi told a news conference. "If the (coalition) finds it necessary to direct an armed attack against my home, you can see the state of relations between the (coalition) and the Iraqi people."

Musawi also said U.S. forces searched INC offices. Three security guards were arrested, though they were not linked to any allegations.

U.S. officials declined to comment on the raid. Privately, however, American authorities have said Chalabi is interfering with a U.S. investigation into allegations that Saddam Hussein's regime skimmed billions of dollars in oil revenues during the U.N.-run oil-for-food program.

Also, Chalabi complained recently about U.S. plans to retain control of Iraqi security forces and maintain widespread influence over political institutions after the transfer of power from the U.S.-led coalition to an Iraqi interim administration.

"It's a provocative operation, designed to force Dr. Chalabi to change his political stance," said Chalabi aide Qaisar Wotwot.

For years, Chalabi's INC received money from the Pentagon, in part for intelligence passed along by exiles

about Saddam's purported weapons of mass destruction.

Chalabi has been criticized since large stockpiles of such weapons were never found.

U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz confirmed earlier this week, during testimony before Congress, that Washington has ended those payments of \$340,000 a month to Chalabi's organization.

The CIA has not been paying the INC for intelligence and has long been suspicious of information provided by the group.

Chalabi, a former banker and longtime Iraqi exile, was convicted of fraud in absentia in Jordan in 1992 in a banking scandal and sentenced to 22 years in jail. He has repeatedly denied the charges.

Another source of Chalabi's tension with the coalition could be his calls for closer relations with Iran. Washington and Tehran have been at odds since Islamic revolutionaries ousted Iran's U.S.-backed shah in 1979 and held Americans hostage for more than a year.

Later Thursday, U.S. military officials said a pre-dawn attack Wednesday near the Syrian border targeted a suspected safehouse for foreign fighters from Syria.

The desolate, desert region is populated only by shepherds but is popular with smugglers, and the U.S. military suspects militants use it as an entry route. About 15 miles from the Syrian border, the area is under constant American surveillance.

Iraqi police and witnesses said the attack killed dozens of innocent people, many of them women and children. Some said the bride and groom also were killed.

People who said they were guests said the wedding party was in full swing when U.S. fighter jets roared overhead and U.S. vehicles started shining their highbeams.

Worried, the hosts ended the party; men stayed in the wedding tent, and women and children went inside the house nearby, the witnesses said.

About five hours later, the first shell hit the tent. Panicked, women clutching their children ran out of the house, they said.

Lt. Col. Ziyad al-Jbouri, deputy police chief of Ramadi, the provincial capital about 250 miles to the east, said the attack happened about 2:45 a.m. He said between 42 and 45 people were killed, including 15 children and 10 women.

Salah al-Ani, a doctor at a Ramadi hospital, put the death toll at 45.

A shepherd who attended the wedding, Madhi Nawaf, said his daughter and at least one of his grandchildren were killed.

"Mothers died with their children in their arms. One of them was my daughter. I found her a few steps from the house, her two-year old son Raad in her arm. Her one-year-old son, Ra'ed, was lying nearby, his head missing," he said.

"Where are the foreign fighters they claim were hiding there?" asked Nawaf. "Everything they said is a lie."

U.S. military officials disputed those accounts.

"Ten miles from Syrian border and 80 miles from nearest city and a wedding party? Don't be naive," said Marine

Maj. Gen. James N. Mattis in Fallujah. "Plus they had 30 males of military age with them. How many people go to the middle of the desert to have a wedding party?"

Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said the attack was launched after U.S. forces received "specific intelligence" about foreign fighters slipping into the country.

"We sent a ground force in to the location," he told Associated Press Television News. "They were shot at. We returned fire."

U.S. soldiers recovered satellite communications gear, foreign passports and a large amount of Iraqi cash at the site, he said.

Kimmitt said the incident will be investigated even though the military remains convinced it attacked a legitimate target.

"This operation is not something that fell out of the sky," he said. "We had significant intelligence ... This is one of the routes we have watched for a long time as a place where foreign fighters and smugglers go."

Military officials in Washington refused to say whether anyone from a wedding party was killed.

Iraqis interviewed by APTN said revelers fired volleys of gunfire into the air in a traditional wedding celebration before the attack. American troops have sometimes mistaken celebratory gunfire for hostile fire.

The footage showed a truck containing bloodied bodies, many wrapped in blankets and piled atop one other, after it arrived in Ramadi. Several were children. The body of a girl who appeared to be younger than 5 lay in a white sheet, her legs riddled with wounds and her dress soaked in blood.

Two Iraqis said to have been killed in the attack were buried Thursday in Baghdad. One of them was the wedding singer, mourners said.

"At about 3 a.m., we were sleeping and the planes started firing," said one mourner, who gave his name only as Bassem. "They fired more than 40 missiles ... I was running ... There are no fighters. These are lies."

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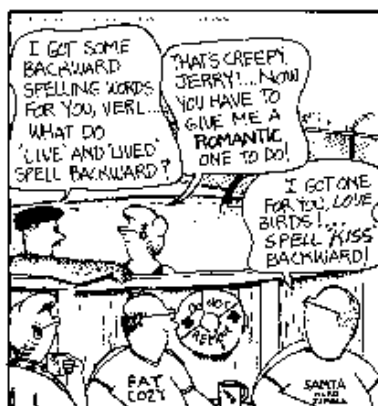
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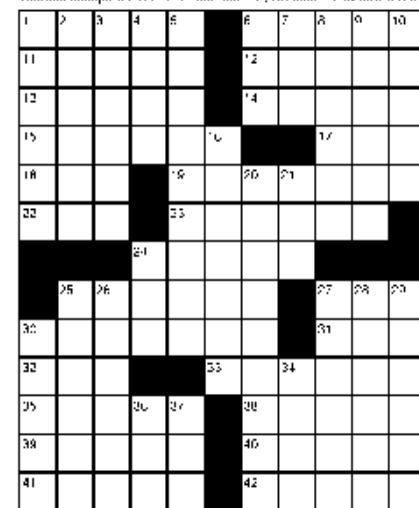
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- 16 News-stand offerings
- 20 Rapid declines
- 21 Layer at times
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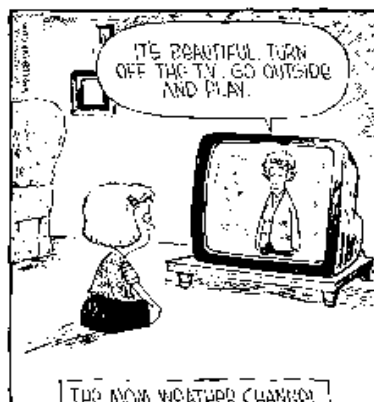
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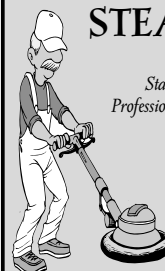
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Bid date: Tuesday, May 25, 2004 @ 2:00 pm
SUBBIDS DUE no later than Monday, May 24, 2004 @ 12:00 noon

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Bid date: Wednesday, May 26, 2004 @ 2:00 pm
SUBBIDS DUE no later than Tuesday, May 25, 2004 @ 12:00 noon

Plans/Specs are available for review in Turner offices 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday

Firms interested in bidding should contact

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555 West Fifth Street, 37th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90013
Attention: Saad Daghestani
213 891-3115 FAX 213 486-9837

For technical questions please contact

Liberal Arts: Catherine Wong - 213 891-3063 cwong@tcco.com

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Announcements

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STK#432413
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STK#432635
Ford Focus Zx3 3DR

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from the parts dept.**

**2-wheel alignment
& Tire Inspection**
\$39.95

Check and adjust camber and toe. Check tread depth and condition all four tires. Additional parts and labor may be required on some vehicles. See Service Advisor for details.

Must mention this ad at time of write up. Taxes extra.
Expires 6/30/04

**Minor Service
for only \$39.95**

Oil Change & Oil Filter Replacement, Lube Hinges, Latches & Applicable Chassis Parts, Silicone Protection of Window Weather Strips, Check Fluid Levels & Top Off to Factory Specifications, Inspect Cooling System, Hoses & Belts, Check Running Lights for Proper Operation, Check Suspension System, Inspect Exhaust System for Corrosion, Inspect & Rotate Tires, Adjust Pressures, Multi-Point Inspection Report Card

Must mention this ad at time of write up.
Excludes diesels & HD "E" & "F" series vehicles/OP code PMinor.
Expires 6/30/04

If you purchased elsewhere ... you probably paid

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