

FREE

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Santa Monica Daily Press

The city's only daily newspaper.

Hangin' out



Seth Kotok/Special to the Daily Press
Xiaodong Mu and Wei Shi hang around the beach Thursday while on vacation. They are students at the University of Arkansas.

Minorities at top of Santa Monica school suspensions

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Santa Monica schools suspend Hispanic and black students more than any other group.

Last year Hispanic students accounted for nearly half of all suspensions at Santa Monica High School, despite that they make up less than one-third of the total high school population, according to data released by the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District's Student Service's Department.

Black students, who make up only 11 percent of the high school's student body, accounted for 21 percent of the suspensions.

At Lincoln Middle School, black students make up only 8 percent of the student body but the same students were suspended 28 percent of the time.

And the school's Hispanic students were suspended 22 percent of the time even though they only account for 15 percent of the student population.

At John Adams Middle School, the student population is 44 percent Hispanic, but the same children constituted 60 percent of the school's suspensions. Black students were suspended 23 percent of the time, even though they are only 12 percent of the student body.

"We are concerned about the data," said school superintendent John Deasy. "It tells a story and we need to pay attention to what is happening."

"I do not believe the district is involved in racial profiling, yet we can do a significantly better job at approaching discipline issues with our non-anglo students," he said. "I expect individual schools to use this

information to craft a portion of their school improvement plans to deal with this issue."

Suspensions are used as a last resort after students have repeated or serious disciplinary infractions, school administrators said.

Fighting was the primary cause of suspensions at the all the schools.

At the high school there were 98 incidences, while disobedience and possessing controlled substances were a close second with 85 and 64 incidences, respectively.

There were seven sexual assaults, 14 robberies and 11 incidences of students bringing weapons to the high school last year.

"We need to work harder to create environments where kids don't feel the need to act

See SUSPENSION, page 4

SoCal beaches ranked worst water quality in state

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Some of Southern California's most popular beaches had the filthiest waters this past year, despite an overall improvement in bacteria levels at beaches statewide, according to a study released Thursday.

The environmental group Heal the Bay, which grades beaches weekly by the amount of indicator bacteria in the surf, gave 42 out of 394 beaches a "D" or "F" grade.

The grades were based on daily and weekly water sampling by county health agencies and sewage treatment facilities. The beaches were graded on a 28-day rolling average based on the risk of ocean users becoming ill.

An "F" warns people who visit those beaches they face a higher risk of contacting such illnesses as

stomach flu, ear infections, upper respiratory infections and skin rashes than do swimmers at cleaner beaches.

The good news was that 275, or 70 percent, of the beaches received A's.

"This past year was one of the driest on record, leading to some excellent grades," said Heal the Bay executive director Mark Gold. "Rain tends to sharply increase bacteria levels."

The study also showed that pollution increased drastically during rainy weather when storm runoff and sewage spills can send toxins into the ocean.

"While water quality was generally safer this year than in previous years, we need to remember that this is due to weather, not

See BEACHES, page 5

City ignores threat, wants review of downtown projects

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Despite objections from the state and the threat of a lawsuit, city officials plan to make development downtown a more public process.

The city council narrowly agreed this week to pursue making a significant change to how development projects are approved downtown, sending the vast majority before the planning commission and architectural review board for public approval.

Right now, downtown buildings smaller than 29,000 square feet only need approval from the city's building department.

But putting those same projects before the public would make the building's design, appearance and size more subjective.

Developers and market-rate housing advocates have threatened to sue the city over such a move. The state's department of housing and community development has raised some concerns about the proposal, even though it has approved the city's future housing goals.

Councilman Herb Katz, a local architect, voted against the idea.

"I have large concerns with the whole approach," he said. "I don't believe everybody has to have input on every project."

"That would be micro-managing."

Many officials are frustrated with developers who purposely make their projects small to avoid the public review process.

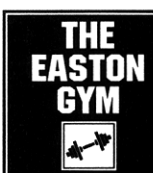
"I have large concerns with the whole approach. I don't believe everybody has to have input on every project. That would be micro-managing."

— HERB KATZ
Santa Monica councilman

"Building under a threshold just to avoid a public process is anti-community," said Mayor Mike Feinstein.

Santa Monica land use attorney Chris Harding said the ordinance would make building apartments in downtown more expensive, discouraging developers. He claims it would create

See COUNCIL, page 4



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

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

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★ Confusion surrounds the best ideas. Note how another might want to indulge you even more. Make plans to get together later on. Work with others on a one-on-one level. Let your feelings flow, and you'll cruise through work and personal matters. Tonight: Make nice with your favorite person.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Others clearly have their own plans. You can choose to go along for the ride or make your own way. Deal with work efficiently. Touch base with a boss, and you'll gain as a result. Another clearly feels the same way as you do. Tonight: Accept a party invitation.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★ Dig into work, especially if confusion surrounds a major decision. Think in terms of success and making a difference. Stay on top of personal matters. Deal with a monetary indulgence and make a decision logically, not emotionally. Tonight: Get some errands done.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★★ Your imagination mixed with an innate ingenuity makes you a star when dealing with an emotional matter. Listen carefully to a child or loved one who cares enormously about you. Your efforts come back in multiples. Tonight: Play and play some more. After all, this is a long weekend.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★ Family matters gain in importance. You might need to discuss a personal matter with a close partner or loved one. Play it low-key. Your sharing will mean a lot to someone. Choose your words with care, and someone responds. Tonight: Rest up. You will need all the energy you can muster up this weekend.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Use your innate skills to clear out work. Confusion could cause a problem for many, but not for you. Aim for greater communication and clarity among those you work with. Groups and meetings work better than you anticipated. Tonight: At a favorite spot, with favorite people.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ You're able to make a difference with a child or a bewildered associate. Avoid any financial risks, but take an emotional leap. Know that anything could be possible if you just relax. Work provides opportunities for gain and acknowledgment. Tonight: Treat another.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ You still might not be seeing an emotional matter clearly. Carefully consider options involving someone. If you listen to a detached observer, you'll get a glimpse of what might be going on with a domestic or personal matter. Tonight: Out, celebrating Memorial Day weekend.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★ Sit back and listen. If you don't need to give an opinion, all the better, because confusion surrounds conversations. Relate to someone by listening to his or her sharing. Develop a different perspective because of this key associate. Tonight: Agree to another's request.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★★ Knowing your immediate goals for today, as well as the near future, could help give you direction during confusion. Be careful with financial commitments right now. You might be getting yourself into more than you can handle. Tonight: Where the gang is.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★ Recognize another's limits when dealing with a work-related matter. Someone could be confused by how you state your case. Loosen up with others. Remember, some of your associates could be a bit flaky, as they are thinking about summer. Tonight: Leader of the gang.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Take off early, as you might want to get a head start on this weekend's events. Last-minute details in your day-to-day life could slow your exit. Handle as much as you can before splitting. Another appreciates your efficiency. Tonight: Take off.

QUOTE of the DAY

“Enjoy yourself. If you can't enjoy yourself, enjoy somebody else.”
—Jack Schaefer

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LOCAL



The Q-Line

Not everyone agrees that renaming the Santa Monica Library after Dr. Martin Luther King is a great idea. Here are your responses to this week's Q-Line question: "If you had your way, what should the library be called?"

■ "As a long time Santa Monica property owner, I think it's absolutely ridiculous to even consider naming our new library after King. What did he ever do for Santa Monica? He was never here as far as I know. Why can't it just be the Santa Monica Public Library like always?"

■ "I love Dr. Martin Luther King. I think he was a great leader and I believe it would be a great idea to name the library after him. But I also wonder why they never name libraries after women? We have Caesar Chavez Day but we don't have anything like Dolores Huerta Day or any other prominent women leaders. I think it would be cool if there were a library named after a woman. I'm all for it being named after Martin Luther King but it would be nice if they could think of a woman's name once in a while."

■ "I think the Santa Monica Public Library should be named after an American Indian such as Crazy Horse, Sacagawea, Geronimo, etc. It's time that we started acknowledging American Indians and their culture. We have plenty of things named after African American leaders. We even have a national holiday for Dr. King. It's way past time that we started acknowledging our American Indian past and future."

■ "I believe the City of Santa Monica's main library on Sixth Street should be called the Santa Monica City Library and nothing else."

■ "Keep the name Santa Monica Library. That would make it easier for visi-

tor's to know where to look it up in the phone book. Dr. King already has a boulevard named after him nearby."

■ "Call it the Ray Bradbury Library, or at least after somebody who has written a book or has something to do with a library. Otherwise, I like the Santa Monica Public Library."

■ "Call it the Homeless Library. After they build the cafe and the outdoor area all the homeless that are usually in the library and out front will be there. Maybe some of the people who use the library will not want to go in there anymore."

■ "I'm not sure, but we need a name for the library. Dr. King is too controversial because I don't think he's ever done anything here in Santa Monica. That's not a good suggestion. I think it should be named after Christina Reed. She was a City Council lady a few years back. She did a lot for the city. But really, just call it the Santa Monica Library."

■ "I wonder whose hair brain scheme this is to name the library after Dr. Martin Luther King? I think the library should be named after someone from Santa Monica who has done a lot for the city. This City Council seems to come up with some real nut ideas."

■ "Our library should stay the Santa Monica Public Library. Each year we have a national holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Leave the library alone."

■ "I have lived in Santa Monica for 65

See Q-LINE, page 4

NEWS BRIEFS

Mayor chosen to lead Promenade task force

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica Mayor Mike Feinstein will lead the group investigating what will be the best mix of businesses along the Third Street Promenade.

Members of a task force created by the city council to find the appropriate balance between retail shops and restaurants along the city's busiest commercial core chose on Wednesday Feinstein to chair their discussions and meetings.

Merryl Ruddel, a part-owner of several Promenade buildings, was chosen as the task force's vice-chair.

"We all seemed to be very open with our desires to create a good tenant mix on the Promenade," said Bill Tucker, a Promenade landlord and task force member. "We all want to be cognizant of how our decisions will affect the surroundings and how the surrounding area affects the Promenade."

Late last year the city council enacted a moratorium on converting any spaces now occupied by restaurants into retail stores. Elected officials fear the ambiance of the Promenade was being lost as restaurants began to disappear from the outdoor shopping mall.

The task force was created to determine why restaurants are leaving and to deliver a series of recommendations to the city council on how to curb future eateries from abandoning their locations.

The task force asked city planning director Suzanne Frick to find a consultant with a background in pedestrian orientated, outdoor malls — and who also has a background in urban planning.

The group also agreed to several public meetings that will likely be held at the Ken Edwards Center on June 6 at 4:15 p.m., June 24 at 3 p.m., July 25 at 3 p.m. and Aug. 8, at a time yet to be determined. More meetings will be announced in the future.

Venice Canal won't be dredged

By The Associated Press

In a victory for environmentalists, a judge extended an order halting dredging of the 95-year-old Grand Canal in Venice.

Environmentalists want to keep the sloshy crab habitat in a semi-natural state.

Superior Court Judge James Robertson II in San Francisco ruled this week that the California Coastal Commission didn't consider more environmentally friendly alternatives when it granted the city a permit to dredge and upgrade the lagoon.

The ruling confirmed an earlier temporary injunction that blocked the city from making the canal more like the nearby Venice Canals with their concrete floors and city-maintained waterways.

The Wetlands Action Network sparred with city officials and the Coastal Commission over whether the beautification project would be detrimental to fiddler crabs and green herons.

The judge urged both sides to meet and discuss whether the city can alter the plan to the group's satisfaction. Jan Chatten-Brown, attorney for the network, said she will ask the city to abandon nearly all of its plan, except a canal cleanup and installing storm drains to filter debris.

City officials contested the temporary original injunction handed down in January and Monday's decision, said Leah Wyman, a spokeswoman for City Councilwoman Ruth Galanter.



Today surf drops off, losing a foot to a fading southwest swell. Northwest exposures offer inconsistent waist-high sets but most LA County breaks will look pretty flat.

Saturday and Sunday breaks stay small in the knee-to-waist range. Best places to paddle out will be Sunset or Surfrider, on

a nine-footer — if you've got one. Pollution at Paradise Cove makes surfing in that area not a good idea. Current swell forecasts for next week show minimal activity, but swell angles may shift in favor of SoCal's beaches soon.

(Information compiled by Jesse Haley.)

Location	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Water Quality
County Line	2-3'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	A
Zuma	2-3'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	A
Surfrider	1-3'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	1-2'/Fair	A
Topanga	1-3'/Fair	1-2'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	B
Breakwater	2-3'/Fair	1-2'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	A
El Porto	2-3'/Fair	2-3'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	A



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LOCAL

The Q Line

Q-LINE, from page 3

years plus. The library has been called the Santa Monica Public Library for well over 100 years. I see no reason to change that. It would be like changing the name of Santa Monica High School, or the city of Santa Monica. To me it all seems ridiculous."

■ "I'm voting against naming the library after Dr. Martin Luther King. He was certainly a wonderful, influential person in our society but I think it would be better to name the library after someone locally or just keep it the Santa Monica Public Library."

■ "I think it's ridiculous to rename the library. Dr. King has thousands of things named after him all over the country along with George Washington, John F. Kennedy, and Abraham Lincoln. Leave it just the way it is. The Santa Monica Public Library. Everybody would be happy with that."

■ "I have lived here for over 40 years in Santa Monica. It should stay the Santa Monica Main Library."

■ "The library should be called the Santa Monica Public Library because that is what it will be. Naming it after anyone would be as inappropriate as renaming City Hall. In any case, the new library will be a lasting memorial to our present council, and their addiction to the reckless spending of large amounts of public money on unnecessary projects. Isn't that enough?"

■ "I would not be interested in changing the name of the Santa Monica Public Library. I see no good reason for it. I'm sorry they changed the name of Lincoln Park. Let's leave the names where they are."

■ "The new Santa Monica Library is a city library. It is for the citizens of this community. Hence, it should be called the Santa Monica Public Library. I don't think there is any question about that. Also, I feel the library is just fine the way it is. I don't know why we are spending millions to tear it down and do a new one. It amazing, nothing is broken. What a waste of funds."

■ "The Santa Monica Public Library should be named after someone who served the community, such as Ilona Katz."

■ "The library is for the public, and therefore should be called the Santa Monica Public Library."

■ "Erasmus was a scholar promoting international education during the Renaissance. Libraries are for education."

■ "The new library should be called the Santa Monica Library. This library has nothing to do with Dr. King although he must have been a fine man."

■ "I'd like to say that I'd just love to have our library remain, the Santa Monica Public Library. It has been just that for many, many years. Although we are getting a new library so to speak, I believe it still speaks highly, exactly, and precisely of what we are. Santa Monica, and we're proud of it and we should keep it that way."

■ "I do not want it to be renamed after Dr. Martin Luther King. This is not Martin Luther King's city. This is Santa Monica. I think it should stay the way it is."

■ "I think a good name for the new library should be the Santa Monica Public Library. Primarily because if you name it after Dr. Martin Luther King, it's really nice and it makes the black people feel better and all that, but not even they can tell what the hell it is if everything is named after Dr. Martin Luther King. It's a public library and people should know that because it's named that."

■ "The name should stay the same. It's a public building and it's already got a nice name and renaming it after a public figure head that may or may not be appreciated by certain members of the public would have the effect of alienating certain members of the public. It's supposed to be a public library. I don't think it should be used as a way to raise money or promote certain figure heads. The name should stay the same."

■ "Naming the library after Dr. Martin Luther King is ridiculous and absolutely inappropriate. I won't visit the library if it's named after MLK and neither will my friends."

■ "You could have John F. Kennedy as the name of our library, or Ronald Reagan, Malcom X, John Wayne, Mother Theresa, or Martin Luther King. These are all great individuals who mean something to our society. However, Santa Monica Public Library, a name that has been known for decades and addresses our city. Why not leave a good name alone?"

■ "I don't see any reason to name the Santa Monica Library after Martin Luther King or anyone else. I don't know what he's got to do with libraries and there plenty of streets and other things named after him. We have a wonderful community and a wonderful library and the name ought to be the Santa Monica Public Library. Period."

■ "I think the library should be called the Santa Monica Public Library."

■ "The library should be called the Santa Monica Public Library. Martin Luther King may have done wonderful things in his lifetime but he is not a representative of Santa Monica and certainly has nothing to do with a library. It belongs to all people in this community and by calling it the Santa Monica Public Library you are keeping it as a city institution."

■ "It should be called the Carnegie Library after Andrew Carnegie who built over 2,500 libraries in the United States and Canada."

■ "Melvin Duey. One of the greatest figures in library history. He said to get the right book into the hands of the right person at the right time."

■ "I believe we should pick a name for the library from a group. When other people make comments against a civil rights leader who has tremendously helped black people come through a whole lot, we don't deserve to hear their comments when they don't have an understanding of what black people went through with slavery. The library name should be picked from a pool of names and an organization will appreciate the enhancement of blacks. It seems that everyone is realizing that everyone is equal and each race has its own unique qualities."

Student suspensions down throughout school district

SUSPENSION, from page 1

negatively," said Samohi co-principal Mark Kelly. "We need to give them a place where they can act positively and (so) we no longer have to be put into a position to administer consequences."

Over the past three years, data reveals that Hispanic students were increasingly punished at the high school with suspensions — more than any other ethnic group in the high school.

Three years ago 123 Hispanic students were suspended, but by 2001 that figure had ballooned almost 16 percent to 146 students.

White children, which constitute 49 percent of the high school's population, accounted for 30 percent of the suspensions. Asians, who make up 7 percent of the student body have 2 percent of the suspensions.

At John Adams Middle school, white children constitute nearly 40 percent of the student body but were suspended only 15 percent of the time. And at Lincoln Middle School, white students were suspended 47 percent of the time, while they make up 69 percent of the total student body.

Though the school district does not have an official zero tolerance policy, students are automatically suspended and possibly expelled for bringing a loaded gun to school, brandishing a knife, selling illegal drugs or committing a sexual assault or battery.

School administrators said more outreach is being made to students to let them know what is acceptable behavior on school grounds. But disciplinary actions are outlined clearly in the educational code.

"Each school looks at their own suspension rates," said Laurel Schmidt, the district's director of pupil services. "Discipline is a subset of having safe schools."

"We want to have a safe environment where everyone can go," she added. "We want an orderly environment where learning can grow."

A community activist who works close-

ly with Hispanic high school students said they are well aware that their group constitutes the largest segment of suspensions.

"Many times certain youth are under a microscope or they feel like they are under a microscope," said Oscar de la Torre, a youth activist and former Samohi counselor.

"Generally speaking, the administration at the high school works extra hard to be fair in how they apply policies across the board," he said. "I think they attempt to be fair, but as in every system there are flaws and room for improvement."

"I think they attempt to be fair, but as in every system there are flaws and room for improvement."

— OSCAR DE LA TORRE
Youth activist

"The data reveals a strong need to assess if institutionalized racism is the culprit in the disparities," he added.

Schmidt said Los Angeles County Office of Education lawyers have held workshops with school administrators on how to discipline students. The training goes beyond instructing them on policy — administrators participate in role-playing and must be able to explain the disciplinary action.

The report shows that suspensions are at a three-year low. During the 1999-2000 school year, 353 — or 10.9 percent of the student population — were suspended, compared to 317, or 9.9 percent in 1998-1999 and 311, or 9.6 percent, in 2000-2001.

The school district does not keep the same detailed information on suspension rates at its elementary schools as it does at the middle and high schools.

City wants more public input on downtown development

COUNCIL, from page 1

a sense of uncertainty whether they could get planning commission approval.

"This proposed measure, if enacted, will undermine the key component of the city's housing production strategy, which has been to provide procedural incentives for new housing in the city's downtown," Harding wrote in a letter to the city council. "These incentives are largely responsible for the city's recent success in providing new housing."

The state has asked the city to submit any changes Santa Monica makes to its development policies that could possibly prevent housing from being built. The city

is contesting whether the state has the right to review local policies.

Harding has argued to the state that the city would be violating California regulations if it made building housing downtown more difficult.

Santa Monica already has an ordinance that requires more public review for proposed developments in every neighborhood except downtown. The council wants to extend the existing ordinance to encompass all of the city.

The city also is proposing to conduct a study on how the changes would negatively affect housing before the new regulations are approved.



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OPINION □ LOCAL

SM Pier faces disaster

Southern California faces a substantial risk of a disaster approaching the magnitude of the Sept. 11 World Trade Center calamity — not by terrorists, but by the negligence and lack of foresight of public officials.

If the wooden Santa Monica Pier ignites, as many as 6,000 people could be trapped in the flames, because there is no way to evacuate them from the ocean end. If the fire breaks out west of the Boathouse restaurant, the only escape would be to get over a 3 1/2-foot fence and jump 20 to 25 feet onto the sand or into the ocean. Most people could not do that.

The pier could burn rapidly. A restaurant kitchen or automobile could catch fire and ignite the flammable pier. There

and 5,000 to 6,000 men, women and children west of the Boathouse, at mid-pier. Yet there is no emergency exit at the end of the pier.

There is a 10-12 foot almost vertical ladder to a boat landing at the end of the pier. Seniors, the handicapped, most women and small children could not climb down that ladder. There is a hoist to lower small boats from the pier to the water. In any case, it would take many hours to evacuate athletic individuals down that one ladder, or others with the hoist.

With roaring flames advancing, panic would ensue and people would be trampled trying to get to the ladder or the boat hoist.

The lower deck of the pier is 15 to 22 feet above the water, depending on the tide. Some could climb over a 3 1/2 foot fence and survive a jump into the ocean or a 20-foot drop onto the sand. The eld-

erly, the handicapped, the obese, many women, non-swimmers and children would perish.

Laws and fire department regulations require emergency exits for apartment houses, office buildings, theaters and other places of public assembly. Why not for the pier? Why hasn't the fire department required an emergency exit?

Disasters occur because government officials and corporate executives lack foresight, or when they foresee a potential catastrophe, are unwilling to take preventive action.

I urge the city or the Pier Restoration Corp. to build a stairway to the boat landing as an emergency exit in case of fire, explosion, earthquake or another gun battle.

For a first-hand appreciation of this death trap, visit the end of the pier and look down at the water and think about how you would like to jump, or drop your children, 15 to 22 feet into the cold, deep, dark, restless ocean.

(Edwin B. Stegman, an attorney, resides in Santa Monica.)

Guest Commentary By Edwin B. Stegman

could be an electrical fire. Arson is always a threat. The pier is a potential fire trap.

In 1924, the Venice Pier burned up completely. In 1929, the Ocean Park Pier burned down into the water, and in 1988, 500 feet of the Redondo Beach Pier was destroyed by fire.

On July 4 2000, at 1 a.m., there was an all night gun fight between police and a felon at the Arcade on the pier. About 100 people were trapped at the end of the pier within range of the gunfire until 7 a.m.

Harbor Patrol, Los Angeles County Fire Department, lifeguard, sheriff and Coast Guard boats were nearby and available for rescue, yet the 100 people were not evacuated. They were trapped there for six hours because there were no stairs down to a boat landing at the ocean end of the pier. There was no way to get people to the boats.

The widely publicized Independence Day incident should have alerted the fire department to the problem, but it didn't. The department failed to act. Perhaps, like the Santa Monica Police Department, it is underfunded and understaffed.

According to SMPD Lt. Gary Gallinot, at times there are as many as 12,000 people on the Santa Monica Pier

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 530 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 200, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

Surfrider Beach ranked poor

BEACHES, from page 1

necessarily a pollution decrease," Gold said.

Arroyo Quemada beach in Santa Barbara County and Doheny State Beach in Orange County topped the group's list of 10 "Beach Bumpers."

The others, in order, were: San Diego's Visitor Information Center and Pacific Beach Point; Baby Beach in Orange County; Hobie & Kiddie Beaches in Channel Islands Harbor in Ventura County; East Beach in Santa Barbara County; Campbell Cove State Beach in Sonoma County; Shelter Island in San Diego Bay; Surfrider Beach in Malibu.

Surfrider has been on the most-polluted list annually since Heal the Bay began issuing its report cards 12 years ago.

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STATE

Coalition calls for federal investigation into 'anti-music fan' radio industry

BY SIMON AVERY
AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES — Charging that commercial radio has become "anti-artist, anti-competitive and anti-music fan," a diverse coalition of music interests plans to call for a federal investigation into the practices of the deregulated radio industry.

The group of musicians, songwriters, record labels, retailers and unions intends to submit a letter on Friday to the Federal Communications Commission and Congress asking for tougher payola laws.

The coalition also wants an investigation into the rapid consolidation of radio ownership and an examination of the impact of vertical ownership in broadcasting, concert promotion and live performance venues.

The letter — drafted by the Recording Industry Association of America, the Recording Academy and other major trade groups — claims that payola has resurfaced in a new form since it was outlawed.

Payola rules introduced 40 years ago made it illegal for radio stations to take money in return for playing a song without disclosing the practice to listeners.

Today, however, some promoters pay radio stations annual fees. The promoters say the payments are not for playing specific songs. But the coalition claims the stations tend to play mostly records suggested by its independent promoters, unfairly keeping scores of talented and diverse artists off the public airwaves.

"Artists must pay small fortunes in so-called independent promotion fees for the chance to be heard on the radio," said Tom Lee, international president of the American Federation of Musicians, one of the signatories of the letter.

But a lot of talent cannot afford to pay, he said.

"The effect is ruinous for artists, consumers and the growth of American music and culture," Lee said.

Record companies have said that the practice costs them between \$150 million

and \$300 million a year.

"It's been 40 years, and it's important for the government to take a fresh look at the issue and clarify the law as it applies to current market conditions," said Amy Weiss, spokeswoman for the RIAA.

"It's been 40 years, and it's important for the government to take a fresh look at the issue and clarify the law as it applies to current market conditions."

— AMY WEISS
Spokeswoman for the RIAA

In its letter, the coalition contends that since deregulation of the industry in 1996, a few chains of powerful radio stations have come to wield an unhealthy amount of control over the industry.

The group specifically targets Clear Channel Communications, the largest owner of radio stations and biggest live concert promoter firm in the country.

The coalition wants the FCC to investigate whether an artist's decision not to play in a Clear Channel venue, or not to use a Clear Channel promotion company, results in Clear Channel removing the performer from its play list.

Pam Taylor, spokeswoman for Clear Channel Radio, said she had not seen a copy of the coalition's letter and could not comment.

Clear Channel, of San Antonio, Texas, and three other radio station groups — Chancellor, Infinity and Capstar — serve 63 percent of the 41 million listeners of Top 40 music nationwide, according to the coalition's submission.

Illegal immigrants captured after swimming ashore in CA

By The Associated Press

NEWPORT BEACH — Ten illegal immigrants from China were captured Thursday after they swam ashore naked using life vests and a makeshift raft, police said.

An off-duty lifeguard spotted the men coming ashore about 3:30 a.m. and called authorities.

The men in their 20s and 30s appeared to be in good physical condition. They told police they had come from China, taking two boats and spending as much as a month at sea before they were dropped off close to shore.

Some of the immigrants wore life

vests, one had a ship's flotation ring, and others were holding ropes attached to a small foam raft, Newport Beach police Sgt. Steve Shulman said.

After reaching the beach, they got dressed in clothes they had kept in plastic bags. They also had cigarettes, crackers and drinks.

Some wore baseball caps and tennis shoes while others had brought full suits and ties.

One man was detained at the scene but the others scattered, forcing police and deputies to conduct an hours-long search with the aid of a helicopter. The other men were captured by 8 a.m. as far as five miles from the beach.

NATIONAL



Prosecutor says FBI agent switched to protect gangsters

BY DENISE LAVOIE
Associated Press Writer

BOSTON — John J. Connolly Jr. was once known as the FBI agent who snagged gangster James “Whitey” Bulger to help in the FBI’s war against the mafia.

Somewhere along the way, Connolly allowed himself to be corrupted by his prized informant and began protecting the thugs he was supposed to be investigating, a prosecutor told jurors in closing arguments of Connolly’s racketeering trial Thursday.

Prosecutor John Durham outlined the allegations against Connolly, which range from taking bribes to tipping Bulger’s gang about informants who were later killed. The jury was to begin deliberations in the case on Friday.

Connolly, 61, never took the stand. He pleaded innocent to racketeering and obstruction of justice charges and previously denied taking bribes. He also has said that everything he did was cleared by his superiors at the FBI, who used information provided by Bulger and Stephen “The Rifleman” Flemmi to take down the New England mafia.

His attorney, Tracy Miner, told jurors Thursday that Connolly was being targeted because the FBI needed a scapegoat after it was revealed during 1998 hearings that it had mishandled its top criminal informants, including Bulger.

“The government ... needed a scapegoat for its problems, and who better than the informants’ handler,” Miner said.

In his closing, Durham pointed to an FBI training video featuring Connolly, shown by the defense, as proof Connolly knew the agency rules. He didn’t follow them, Durham said, because he had

switched allegiances. “He was playing for another team,” Durham said.

The trial’s most distressing testimony involved leaks by Connolly to Bulger and Flemmi in which Connolly identified three men who were giving information to the FBI about Bulger’s Winter Hill Gang, Durham said.

The three men were later killed by members of the gang, members testified.

Durham went over in detail testimony from Kevin Weeks, Bulger’s right-hand man, who said that on Dec. 23, 1994, Connolly told him to warn Bulger, Flemmi and mafia boss Frank “Cadillac Frank” Salemme that indictments would be coming down against them soon. Bulger disappeared soon after and is still a fugitive.

Connolly has denied tipping the men off to the indictment.

Weeks also testified that he delivered \$5,000 in cash from Bulger to Connolly. John Martorano, a confessed hitman for the Winter Hill Gang, testified that Bulger gave Connolly a two-carat diamond ring.

“Your common sense tells you when you accept a thing of value when you are an FBI agent, you know you are compromised,” Durham said.

Durham called Martorano’s testimony, in which he admitted to at least 20 murders, “clearly chilling.”

He asked jurors to carefully consider testimony from Martorano, Weeks and Salemme. He acknowledged that all three were notorious criminals, but said each knew details they could not have known without getting them from a source in the FBI: Connolly.

A congressional committee also has been investigating the Boston FBI’s handling of mob informants in the 1960s.

Abercrombie criticized for thong underwear for children

By The Associated Press

NEW ALBANY, Ohio — Abercrombie & Fitch, frequently criticized for its sexually suggestive catalog, is under attack for selling children’s thong underwear with the words “eye candy” and “wink wink” printed on the front.

The group behind the latest protest against the company says its members are being told the underwear has been pulled from shelves. The company says that isn’t true.

“I spoke to them and they told me they pulled it,” Randy Sharp, a spokesman for the American Family Association in Tupelo, Miss., said Thursday.

Members of OneMillionMoms.com and OneMillionDads.com, a project of the association, were asked to send e-mails to the company on Tuesday to protest the sale of the underwear. Sharp said 7,000 e-mails were sent within two hours and members then began to call the company.

Lorenzo Demiranda, a spokesman for Abercrombie in New York, said he had no information that the stores had pulled the thongs from their shelves.

American Decency Association, a non-profit Christian organization, said it sent an e-mail to its supporters informing them of the retailer’s latest marketing campaign, and called for a boycott of the company’s merchandise.

Abercrombie & Fitch, based in this

suburb of Columbus, has defended the sale of the underwear, designed for girls age 10 and older. The underwear was part of the spring and summer line.

“The underwear for young girls was created with the intent to be lighthearted and cute,” the company said in a statement Wednesday. “Any misrepresentation of that is purely in the eye of the beholder.”

Sharp disagreed.

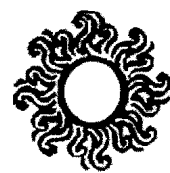
“They’re using perversion to put money in their pockets and that is wrong,” he said.

It is the latest controversy involving the company.

A&F removed a line of T-shirts from its stores last month after receiving complaints from Asian-Americans. One shirt depicted two slant-eyed men in conical hats and the slogan “Wong Brothers Laundry Service — Two Wongs Can Make it White.”

Its quarterly catalog has come under fire from women’s organizations, politicians and family groups because of young, barely clad models in sexually suggestive poses and some of its stories, which have included an interview with a porn star.

Abercrombie & Fitch recalled a 1998 catalog after anti-drunken driving groups objected to a two-page article called “Drinking 101” that gave directions for “creative drinking.”



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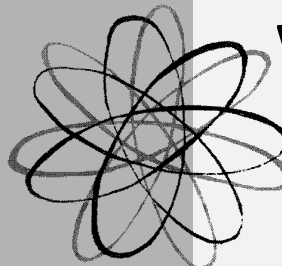
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SPORTS

Never a dull moment in Western Conference finals

BY GREG BEACHAM

AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — First there was a mysterious illness, leading to wild rumors of a food-poisoning plot. Next came angry accusations of cheating, followed by harsh criticism of the refereeing.

It was just another normal playoff week for the Los Angeles Lakers — and the Sacramento Kings enjoyed the entertainment as much as everybody else.

The Kings did their best to keep a low profile as they prepared for Game 3 of the Western Conference finals on Friday night. The series is tied 1-1.

Sacramento knows that although the two-time champions would never admit it, they play mind games nearly as well as they play basketball. In fact, their charisma and swagger is as much a part of their success as the triangle offense.

"That's their style," Kings coach Rick Adelman said. "We see them several times a year, every year, so we know all about it. It happens on the court, and it happens off the court, too."

"It might be designed to throw the other team off its game, I don't know. They're something else, that's for sure."

Conspiracy theories abounded in the days leading up to two weekend games at Staples Center. The Lakers are attempting to move closer to their third straight title despite a host of real and imagined obstacles.

If their strange, successful recent history is any indication, that's just the way the confident Lakers like it. On a team led by media-savvy Phil Jackson, Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant, the Lakers always make good copy to bide time until the next championship parade.

Before the series, the Lakers declared themselves underdogs to the top-seeded Kings while launching several preemptive strikes against Sacramento center Vlade Divac and his penchant for flopping on defense. Those complaints only increased in volume after their loss in Game 2.

"I think it's trickled down for that team, the mind-game thing," Sacramento's Scot Pollard said. "They all

think they're Zen masters now, and they try to psych the other guys out. It's just their style."

The series is tied after a tumultuous weekend in Sacramento, where Bryant scored 30 points in Los Angeles' victory in Game 1, then played through apparent food poisoning to score 22 in Game 2.

Bryant felt much better when he returned to practice Thursday, and he's expected to start when Sacramento goes for its fifth straight road victory of the postseason. All-Star Peja Stojakovic, the Kings' second-leading scorer, won't be back from his ankle injury, however.

The Lakers haven't lost consecutive playoff games since the 2000 conference finals, when Portland rallied from a 3-1 series deficit to force the Lakers into a come-from-behind victory in Game 7. That sparked them to their first title.

"I think it shows a lot of character on our part that we bounce back after a loss," Bryant said. "A lot of credit goes to our coaching staff, because they make the right adjustments."

After running wind sprints at practice, Bryant and his

teammates shot down some Los Angeles fans' fanciful notions of a food-poisoning conspiracy at the Lakers' hotel in Sacramento, where Bryant ate the room service cheeseburger that may have caused his illness.

"We're not going to accuse them of poisoning anyone," Lakers forward Rick Fox said. "We're not going to poison anyone. We're going to beat them fair and square."

After practice Thursday, O'Neal, the self-described "last true center left," continued his nonstop criticism of Divac. O'Neal was called for three offensive fouls in Game 2, and Jackson blamed the officials' calls partially on the intense atmosphere at Arco Arena.

"At least I'll be one of the guys who have rings by heart and desire, pure," O'Neal said. "It would be a shame if (Divac) were to be the first center to get one (by flopping)."

According to the Kings, O'Neal's comments are nothing compared to the unprintable words he says to them on the court. Pollard, Divac and Bobby Jackson all were told off by Shaq during the first two games.



National Basketball Association playoff schedule

By The Associated Press

CONFERENCE FINALS — EDT (Best-of-7)

Saturday, May 18

L.A. Lakers 106, Sacramento 99, Lakers lead series 1-0

Sunday, May 19

New Jersey 104, Boston 97, New Jersey leads series 1-0

Monday, May 20

Sacramento 96, L.A. Lakers 90, Series tied 1-1

Tuesday, May 21

Boston 93, New Jersey 86, Series tied 1-1

Friday, May 24

Sacramento at L.A. Lakers, 9 p.m.

Saturday, May 25

New Jersey at Boston, 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 26

Sacramento at L.A. Lakers, 5:30 p.m.

Monday, May 27

New Jersey at Boston, 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 28

L.A. Lakers at Sacramento, 9 p.m., if necessary

Wednesday, May 29

Boston at New Jersey, 9 p.m., if necessary

Friday, May 31

New Jersey at Boston, TBA, if necessary

Sacramento at L.A. Lakers, TBA, if necessary

Sunday, June 2

Boston at New Jersey, TBA, if necessary

L.A. Lakers at Sacramento, TBA, if necessary

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NATIONAL □ INTERNATIONAL



Bomb sets fire to tanker truck at Israeli fuel depot

BY YOAV APPEL

Associated Press Writer

TEL AVIV, Israel — A bomb attached to a tanker truck exploded Thursday at a huge fuel depot near densely populated Tel Aviv — part of what experts said is a relentless new campaign by Palestinian militants to carry out a large-scale terror attack.

Early Friday, an attacker tried to enter a night club in south Tel Aviv, but security guards shot him, police said. Israel Radio said the assailant was killed. Tel Aviv police spokeswoman Shlomit Hertzberg said it was not clear whether he was carrying a bomb.

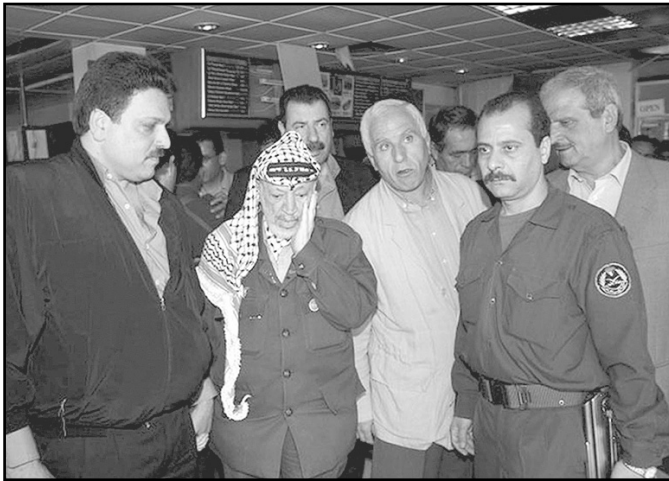
Witnesses said a car outside the club, called Studio 49, was damaged, apparently by an explosion. Hertzberg said the attacker arrived at the club by car.

The blast at the fuel dump caused no injuries, but set security officials on edge. Along with dozens of suicide bombings aimed at killing Israeli civilians, Palestinian militant groups are looking for a huge target of Sept. 11 proportions, experts said.

"The terror organizations moved today to a new phase of attacks," said Ehud Yatom, a former security official. He told Israel Radio the attempted attack at Israel's biggest fuel depot was similar to the attack on the World Trade Center, where airborne terrorists used thousands of pounds of jet fuel as a huge bomb.

Also this week, Israeli security officials released details of a thwarted plan to set off a ton of explosives under Tel Aviv's tallest office building complex.

On Wednesday night, a suicide bomber killed himself and two Israelis in Rishon Letzion, nine miles south of the fuel depot. A militia affiliated with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement claimed responsibility,



Hussein Hussein/Palestinian Authority

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, center, and unidentified officials tour a commercial area damaged last month during the Israeli incursion in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Thursday. Five members of the Palestinian Central Elections Committee resigned after Arafat failed to set a date for new elections, despite repeated promises, an official close to the panel said Thursday.

while the Palestinian Authority denounced the bombing, saying it would give Israel an excuse to retaliate.

In Gaza, a Palestinian laborer was shot and killed by Israeli forces, Palestinians said. It happened near the town of Rafah on the Gaza-Egypt border, scene of almost daily clashes. The Israeli military said soldiers fired at a Palestinian who threw a grenade at them.

In a political development Thursday, five members of

a Palestinians' Central Elections Committee submitted their resignations to Arafat after he failed to set a date for new elections, an official close to the panel said. There was no comment from Arafat's office.

Arafat has been under heavy pressure from Israel, the United States, Europe and his own people to reform his corruption-ridden regime, call elections and streamline his security forces. Israeli and U.S. leaders insist Arafat must work to prevent terror attacks by Palestinian militants.

The Thursday morning blast at the depot ignited diesel fuel spilling from the truck and left the cabin a melted wreck, but the flames were extinguished before they could spread to nearby tanks containing millions of gallons of fuel. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

The fuel depot, next to residential areas and near sensitive Israeli intelligence installations, contains huge above-ground fuel tanks. Residents and environmentalists have long worried the depot might blow up accidentally or be the target of terror attacks.

"A huge disaster has been averted," said Yossi Sedbon, the Tel Aviv police chief. "It was a miracle."

Israel TV showed a map with concentric circles starting at the Pi Giliot depot, predicting widespread destruction throughout the Tel Aviv area if the depot exploded.

Shlomi Sarig, acting manager of the depot, said there had been warnings of a possible attack, and security had been increased. However, security guards who checked the truck at the entrance failed to spot the bomb attached to its chassis.

Hours after the attack, Israel Radio reported that a nearby city, Ramat Hasharon, issued an order closing the depot until further notice. The depot's land is under the city's jurisdiction.

Bush opposes special commission to investigate warnings

BY TOM RAUM

Associated Press Writer

BERLIN — President Bush wants congressional intelligence committee members, not a special commission, to investigate how the government dealt with terror warnings before Sept. 11, saying the lawmakers know the importance of keeping the nation's secrets.

The Senate and House intelligence committees "understand the obligations of upholding our secrets and our sources and methods of collecting intelligence," Bush said Thursday. "Therefore, I think that's the best place for Congress to take a good look at the events leading up to Sept. 11."

Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., and others, including Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., have called for a special commission to conduct the investigation, along with the intelligence committees, which have already begun their own joint inquiry. McCain said Thursday he hoped the Senate would vote on the special commission shortly after next week's Memorial Day recess.

During a news conference with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder on the first stop of a four-nation European trip, Bush also expressed reservations about releasing a memo he received last August that carried a warning that Islamic extremists might try to hijack an airliner.

"We're still at war," the president said. "We've still got threats to the homeland that we've got to deal with, and it's very important for us not to hamper our ability to wage that war." He said it is important to act in a manner that does not jeopardize intelligence-gathering.



Doug Mills/Associated Press

President Bush walks past members of the Russian Honor Guard during his welcoming ceremony at the Vnukovo Airport in Moscow, Russia on Thursday. Bush is in Russia for a two-day visit to meet with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, and to sign a treaty slashing the two countries' strategic nuclear arsenals to about one-third of present levels.

Recent revelations about advance intelligence that terrorists might hijack an airplane have not shaken Bush's faith in the CIA and FBI. He said he still has "great confidence" in both.

But new information about how the FBI handled possible warnings fueled more controversy Thursday.

The FBI has requested an internal investigation into an agent's allegations that the agency's headquarters hampered the pre-Sept. 11 terrorism investigation of Zacarias Moussaoui, officials said.

Moussaoui is a suspected terrorist and is the only person charged with the attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center, ravaged the Pentagon and killed more than 3,000 people.

Agent Coleen Rowley, who works as a lawyer in the Minnesota office that arrested Moussaoui last August, made the allegations in a letter Tuesday to FBI Director Robert Mueller and members of the Senate Intelligence Committee, officials said.

House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., said Thursday he hopes Bush can be persuaded an independent commission "is the right thing to do."

"We will do nothing but gain from having an independent commission ... get the facts out on the table for the American people so that we can all do better the next time something like this happens," Gephardt said at a news conference. "This is a bipartisan idea."

Bush's remarks came a day after Vice President Dick Cheney said a new series of public terror warnings was based on increased threats and was not a political strategy to deflect criticism of the administration's handling of pre-Sept. 11 intelligence.

A senior White House official said Thursday that the White House, within days of the Sept. 11 attacks, asked the FBI and other intelligence agencies for threats by al-Qaida that should have been reported but had not been.

Oklahoma spends welfare money for marriage workshops

BY RON JENKINS

Associated Press Writer

OKLAHOMA CITY — Anna Walker used to leave the house in a huff and go for a drive whenever she got into an argument with her husband. But then the couple got some counseling through an unusual state-run program.

Now they yell less and talk more.

Oklahoma is one of only five states using federal welfare money to try to keep couples together. And Oklahoma's program is by far the largest.

The marriage workshops, which started

a couple of months ago and are free and open to anyone, are aimed at what some might consider a surprising problem in this Bible Belt state: Oklahoma has the second-highest divorce rate in the nation, behind Arkansas.

State leaders hope that by reducing broken homes and single-parent households, they can solve a host of other social problems.

Oklahoma set aside \$10 million in federal welfare money to pay for the program.

The landmark 1996 federal welfare law included promoting marriage as one of its principal goals, but most states have paid

little attention to the issue — partly because there is little evidence as to what works, and partly because many officials are uncomfortable involving government so deeply into people's personal lives.

Congress is set to renew the law this year, with much debate expected on government's role in encouraging marriage. The Bush administration wants to spend up to \$300 million to push marriage more aggressively, arguing that children raised by married parents fare better.

Gov. Frank Keating said it is a good use of the federal money, especially with

Oklahoma is facing a \$350 million budget deficit this year.

"We have a lot of dysfunctional families. We have violence and drug abuse and out-of-wedlock births. If we could focus on holding families together, encouraging them not to divorce, then we would spend less taxpayer money on these problems," he said. "That's one of the reasons why we're poor."

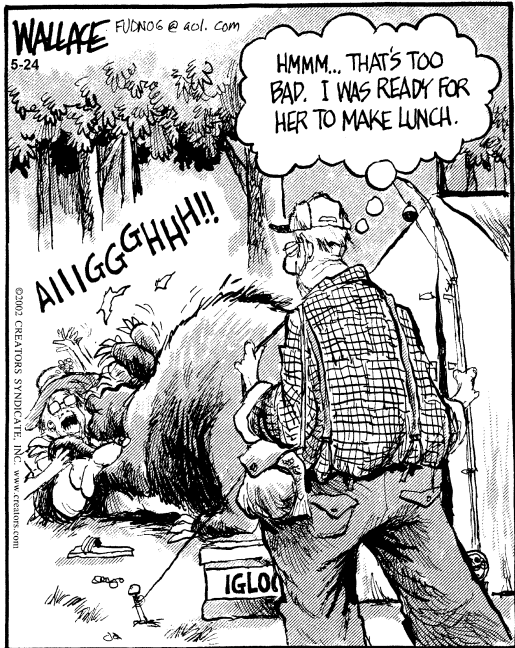
Oklahoma has 6.7 divorces per 1,000 residents per year, compared with a national rate of 4.6, according to a 1994 government study cited by the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. Oklahoma ranks 43rd in per capita income, at \$23,517 in 2000.

COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson

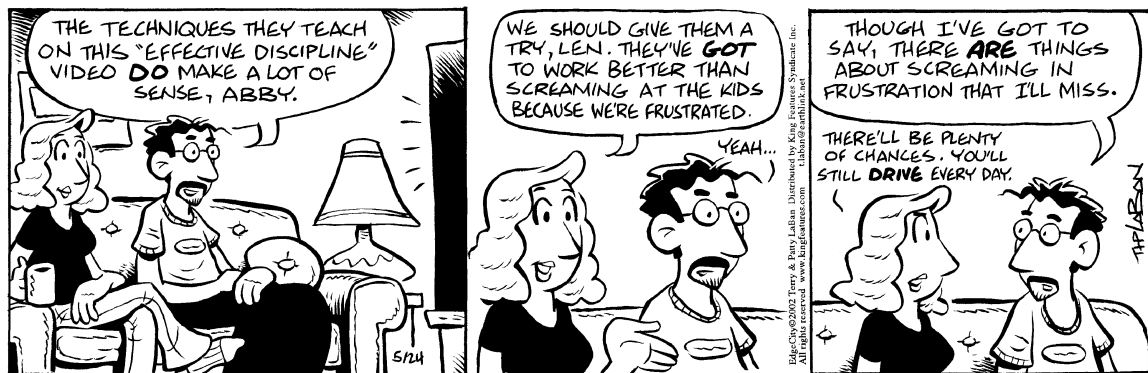


Natural Selection® By Russ Wallace



Ed and Millie's 50th anniversary camping trip.

edge city by TERRY & PATTY LABAN



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CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 It has a blade
 - 6 Jacket part
 - 11 Wear down
 - 12 Demonstrate
 - 13 Earth tone
 - 14 Hog havens
 - 15 "The Old Curiosity shop" girl
 - 17 Taverns
 - 18 Shreds
 - 20 League division
 - 22 Slalom maneuver
 - 23 Bellerophon rode him
 - 26 Island greeting
 - 28 Methuselah's father
 - 29 Mars
 - 31 Winter woe
 - 32 Finished
 - 33 Asian chief
 - 34 Coin in the Trevi fountain
 - 36 Ashcroft's predecessor
 - 38 Conductor Previn
 - 40 Sri —

- 43 Losing propositions
- 44 Skirt
- 45 Get naked
- 46 Inept ones

DOWN

- 1 Fly catcher
- 2 Fury
- 3 Meeting concerns
- 4 Advantages
- 5 Film unit
- 6 CDs' fore-runners
- 7 Craftsman
- 8 They may lead to duels
- 9 Flat
- 10 Minus
- 16 Rebel leader
- 18 Abacus part
- 19 Land in the sea
- 21 Epochs
- 23 Show nervousness
- 24 Home of the Bruins
- 25 Eschew
- 27 Danish cheese
- 30 Stray

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Yesterday's answer

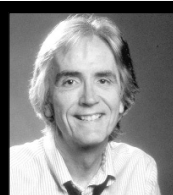
- 33 Rascal
- 34 Young fellows
- 35 "What's — for me?"
- 37 Verve
- 39 Sixth sense
- 41 Poke fun at
- 42 Spots on TV

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43						44			
45						46			

5-24

STUMPED?

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Dog's instincts gets kid suspended

In Ottawa, Ontario, Christopher Laurin, 15, was suspended from school for two days in March and ordered to drug counseling when a police dog perked up while sniffing Laurin's locker, even though no traces of drugs of any kind were found in any of Laurin's belongings. The police claim that its dogs can detect lingering smells on clothing, but Laurin's parents were incredulous that their son could be disciplined for having something that didn't exist (and merely on the "say-so" of a dog).

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BACK PAGE

ODDS & ENDS

Robber picks wrong car to get away

By The Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio — A suspected bank robber whose getaway driver took off without him jumped into the next car he saw — an unmarked police car.

Eric D. Davis of Detroit jumped into the car, waved a gun and told officer Anthony Duncan and city employee Ray O'Rourke to drive, police said.

Duncan, who was not in uniform, and O'Rourke looked at each other for a moment, then the officer jumped into the back seat and took the gun away.

"I just reacted," Duncan said. "I knew the gun was loaded. Just thank God things turned out the way it did."

Davis, 31, was charged with aggravated robbery and kidnapping, police said.

Pilot takes off, lands 190 times in a day

By The Associated Press

LAKEWOOD, N.J. — A pilot has apparently smashed a world record by doing a whole lot of taking off and landing.

Robert Magniccari, a professional traffic reporter and advertising banner pilot from Rockaway, N.Y., completed 190 takeoffs and landings in a 24-hour period at two New Jersey airports.

Magniccari broke the previous record of 157 when he landed his Cessna 172 at Lakewood Airport around 5 a.m. Tuesday. He made his final landing about four hours later.

"I feel great, I just feel great," Magniccari told the Asbury Park Press. "I got knocked around (by winds) a lot (Monday) afternoon, but I didn't care."

It was not immediately known if Magniccari's record had been confirmed by officials with the Guinness Book of World Records.

Magniccari, with the help of instructor pilots Paul Jancsy and David Anfora of Island Air Services, flew between Lakewood Airport and Robert J. Miller Airpark in Berkeley.

Agitated nude models form union

By The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Several dozen models who pose in the nude for art students have formed a union and are agitating for higher wages and improved benefits.

The fledgling Philadelphia Models Guild also wants a place to change other than in the bathroom, a place to hang street clothes and a screen for privacy in the classroom.

Cushioned floor pads wouldn't hurt, either.

"By uniting together, we could become regarded more as professionals and not as unskilled people off the street," said model Tomas Dura, a flamenco dancer.

Most professional artists' models in the Philadelphia area make between \$9.50 and \$12 an hour. The models guild wants an hourly wage of \$15, with some benefits, said Claire Hankins, one of the leaders of the group.

The models say they not only feel underpaid, but unappreciated. Littell said she was once asked to get on the floor of an unswept classroom filthy with charcoal.

"A comfortable model produces a comfortable pose, which produces a comfortable artist and a better painting," said Jym Paris, an opera singer and actor who has been modeling for 10 years.

Cash goes up in flames

By The Associated Press

MOUNT VERNON, N.Y. — A man who apparently hid \$20,000 in cash in his girlfriend's oven lost nearly half of it when it caught fire from the pilot light.

"We are trying to determine if there is a criminal ele-

ment to this," said police detective Capt. Robert Kelly.

The Monday apartment blaze was quickly extinguished and police recovered \$10,780 when firefighters called them to report what was burning.

"We found out it was U.S. currency that was burning," said Fire Chief Ed Bruno. "A lot of it."

The money was in denominations ranging from tens to hundreds.

Star accused of kicking airplane seat

By The Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — A jury has rejected claims that home-improvement celebrity Bob Vila repeatedly kicked a woman's seat during a flight more than four years ago.

The woman, Carol Berger, said a possibly drunk Vila kicked the seat while she tried to sleep during a November 1997 United Airlines flight from Denver to Eugene. She sought as much as \$250,000 in damages for injuries to her lower back and mental anguish.

Vila, star of the TV series "Home Again," denied the accusation, saying he had no memories of Berger or a disagreement.

"These accusations are not trivial," he said on the witness stand Wednesday in U.S. District Court. "My character is out there. This is something that is absolutely unacceptable to me. Neither I nor my companion have any recollections of an incident taking place."

Asked whether he had tried to recall the flight, Vila said, "You better believe it. This has been going on for four years. You end up losing a lot of sleep over it."

Asked whether he had kicked Berger's seat, Vila said, "I have never kicked anybody. I have never struck anybody. I have never hit anybody in my life."

The eight-member jury deliberated for more than three hours. Vila, 55, then hustled out of the courthouse, chased by reporters.

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