

FREE

FRIDAY, MAY 28, 2004

Volume 3, Issue 170

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

FANTASY 5

2 11 12 14 35

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 6 8 4

Evening picks: 5 7 9

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 03 Hot Shot

2nd Place: 07 Eureka

3rd Place: 02 Lucky Star

Race Time: 1:48.75



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

In November, Jacky Bibby, 52, of Whiskey Flats, Texas (near Fort Worth), first sat in a bathtub with 81 live rattlesnakes and then extended his own Guinness Book record by stuffing the tails of nine of them into his mouth. Protocol required that he band the tails together at the rattles and hold them in his mouth for 10 seconds while leaning forward. (The Associated Press reported that Bibby's day job is "marketing" for a drug treatment center.) (Also, in December, Brian Moffitt of Winnipeg, Manitoba, extended his Guinness Book record of 702 body piercings by inserting 900 surgical needles into his leg at the same time.)



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Remember, if you smoke after sex you're doing it too fast."

— Woody Allen



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Budget hole? Living wage left out of city plans

Councilmen upset it's not in proposed budget

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — It was overlooked by city staffers in preparing next year's budget, but an \$11.50 hourly base wage for City Hall workers may still become reality.

Several members of the City Council said they were interested in including a so-called living wage as part of the budget for the 2004-2005 fiscal year, which starts July 1. The proposed wage hike also would apply to contractors hired by City Hall.

But it could cost City Hall more than \$1 million and require cuts from somewhere else. City leaders have pored over numbers for the past two months, finding

\$2 million in savings through cuts, as well as generating new revenue sources to shore up next year's projected \$4 million shortfall. A balanced budget is expected to be passed in June.

"There is one aspect of this budget I truly was disappointed in," City Councilman Kevin McKeown said during budget sessions Tuesday. "How can we go forward as a community that has taken to heart ending working poverty and not ourselves be paying a living wage on these jobs?"

Paying city workers at least \$11.50 an hour would cost City Hall \$370,000, officials estimate. They also estimate it would cost City Hall between \$750,000 and \$1 million in increased costs if contractors were forced to pay their employees the living wage.

"Truly, budgeting is a matter of

See WAGE, page 4

First offense



Alejandro Cesar Cantarero II/Daily Press

A vendor enjoys a smoke on the Santa Monica Pier Thursday, the first day of a new law making it illegal to smoke on the beach, on the pier or at bus stops. Violators can be fined \$750 or more, though officials will issue warnings for the first 90 days.

Teacher turns the page on Iraqi conflict



Photo courtesy of Bruce Smith

Rich Robinson called upon neighbors, businesses, fellow SMC professors and students in his book drive for troops. Together, the boxed books weigh two tons and measure 15' by 3' by 4.5'.

He's collected more than 8,000 books for Marines overseas

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

SMC — For Rich Robinson, it's not about whether the fighting in Iraq is right or wrong.

The 64-year-old geology professor at Santa Monica College has knocked on neighbors' doors, hit up businesses, students and fellow teachers. His message is simple. He wants books.

Robinson has collected more than 8,000 paperbacks to send overseas to Marines.

"They're fiction," said Robinson, an Army/ROTC graduate who's taught at SMC for 34 years. "Techno thrillers, the Clancys — all that kind of stuff. Murder mysteries, romance novels. Just good, relaxing stuff."

Robinson said he worked day and night for a month collecting books. The outpouring of support has been overwhelming, added Robinson, who sent personal thank you notes to every named donor. To the larger donors, Robinson sent bottles of champagne.

"People just really opened up their hearts to the Marines," Robinson said. "Everybody kept saying, 'This is such a great thing you're doing.' I never did it for fame, glory, recognition ... I think if we all had one wish, it would be that we have them come home quickly and safely."

As a former military man, Robinson said he has an affinity for the armed forces. "If we're going to fight a war, we should win it," he said. However, that isn't the point of the book drive.

"These brave men and women are caught in the middle and they

See BOOKS, page 4

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Taurus, out on the town



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)

★★★★ Others push and pull for what they want. Maintain your schedule and clear out what you must. You'll greet the weekend with a bigger smile. Extremes encourage you to deal with others carefully. Tonight: Let a friend choose.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ Your spontaneity might force an adjustment on another's part. You seem destined to use your imagination and creativity. What feels perfect for you might be difficult for an associate. Find a way to make everyone happy. Tonight: Out on the town.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Play an issue low-key in order to avoid a confrontation. You might want to work from home, if possible. You'll get a lot more done and avoid a conflict. Extend a special invitation to friends for dinner. Tonight: At your place.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ You might need to regroup and head in a new direction. You hear news that could startle you and cause a reorganization of your day. Done in the spirit of helping others and being efficient, it just happens. A meeting proves to be important at the end of the day. Tonight: Hang out.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★ You might not like what you have to do, but you will get it done. Taking charge and handling a project might be the only way to get the job done. Schedule a meeting or a more social event for late this afternoon. Smile your way into the weekend. Tonight: To the wee hours.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ Your smile might not make the difference you would like with a family member or close associate. Still, your mood cannot be diminished. Reach out for someone at a distance or an expert, or make plans to take off in the near future. Tonight: Celebrate the weekend in.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ Slow down and don't worry about what others say or do. You might not feel up to snuff and might take someone personally. Review a personal matter or something you might be worrying about with a trusted friend. Tonight: Nap and then decide.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Aim for what you want through a consensus of others, networking and making your point understood. Though at first some disagree, trust that they will come around. Invite others to join you for a long, late lunch. Tonight: You are the action.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★ Your mood could impact your work. You might need to control yourself so this doesn't happen. Work with others calmly, and you'll get the kind of results you want. You gain an associate's respect. Tonight: A force to be dealt with.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Get facts and don't allow your imagination to run wild. However, once you get the facts, you are likely to smile by the afternoon. Use your imagination to spice up your personal life. Think "fun." Tonight: Let your hair down.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ Deal with one person at a time, and you'll get past a problem. Your personal touch makes a difference. Use it, and work with others. Presenting your ideas might be less important than being a good listener. Tonight: Head on home.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Let others take control. Don't try to talk others — especially those in positions of power — out of their ideas. Go with the flow. Make it a point to be thoughtful and go that extra step with those you come into contact with. Tonight: Accept an invitation to let your hair down.

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LOCAL

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Artistic students propped up by governor

By Daily Press staff

Four local high school students will get a nod next week from the governor for their achievements in the arts. They also will go to an elite arts program for a month this summer to hone their skills.

Richard J. Riordan, Secretary of Education will present the Governor's proclamation, which declares June 4, 2004 as California Arts Scholars Day. He will be joined by celebrity presenters, to honor Santa Monica students Dondi Aguirre (visual arts), Maya Seidler (theater), Max Vernon (creative writing), Ryan Allen (music instrumental), and Salea Hayes (music vocal), among others.

Honored for accomplishments in animation, creative writing, dance, film/video, music, theater and visual arts, the young Californians were selected for their artistic talent by a distinguished panel of judges, which included practicing professionals. They will participate in local ceremonies throughout the state, where each will be awarded a Governor's Arts Scholar Medallion.

"California State Summer School for the Arts challenges talented young artists to pursue their dreams and reach their full potential," said Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. "These students will take California's arts and entertainment to new heights in the years ahead."

The governor's award recognizes students who have been selected to attend, or who are on the waiting list for the month-long California State Summer School for the Arts program whose moniker is "InnerSpark." Chosen from 1,255 applicants statewide, the 180 southland scholars represent nearly 80 public and private secondary schools throughout Los Angeles County.

InnerSpark will be held this year at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia from July 10 through Aug. 7, where the high school students will explore their creative potential. Working and living together in a community setting and being taught by distinguished practicing professionals, the students will nurture their talent and realize their dreams.

"One of the most important goals of the arts scholars program is to honor and train the most talented young artists in California," said Susan Dolgen, chair of the CSSSA board of trustees. "Scholarships have historically been awarded and approximately 50 percent of the students receive financial assistance."

InnerSpark is a pre-professional training program for California high school students aspiring to careers in the arts and entertainment industries. The program was established 18 years ago by the state legislature and signed into law by Gov. George Deukmejian in 1986. Scholarships are available to California residents.

"In InnerSpark's 18-year history, it has empowered 7,561 talented, motivated students to hone their skills in an intensive multidisciplinary educational environment," said Robert M. Jaffe, director of the CSSSA state agency in Sacramento. "The arts are a critical part of California life. By encouraging artists of diverse talent, InnerSpark supports young men and women who will become tomorrow's leaders in an increasingly important part of California's economic landscape."

InnerSpark is funded through a partnership between the public and private sectors. Contributions from such companies as Union Bank of California are instrumental in the educational program.

"The arts build appreciation for our differences as well as our similarities and unite our community," says Richard Hartnack, vice chairman for the community banking and investment services for Union Bank of California. "InnerSpark provides the opportunity to recognize talented high school students who need the support of educators and corporate leaders to motivate them to continue their education and training."

Do you have community news?

Submit news releases

Email to: sack@smdp.com or fax 310.576.9913



We'll see a mix of NW wind swell and building SSW swell today. Northern LA breaks see knee- to waist-high surf at the better S/combo breaks in the morning. The SSW'er builds through the late afternoon with waist- to chest-high surf at the better exposed breaks by sundown. South Bay spots see the wind swell for mostly below waist-high surf. Look for light winds in the morning with building W winds 8-15 knots on tap by the afternoon.

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	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
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SUNDAY	7:12	0.0	5:02	3.0	2:57	3.1	11:51	4.9
MONDAY	8:06	0.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TUESDAY	9:03	0.3	8:26	3.3	12:4	14.5	5:13	3.5
WEDNESDAY	9:57	0.4	10:28	3.0	1:53	4.1	5:36	3.8
THURSDAY	10:45	0.5	11:42	2.3	3:24	3.9	5:56	4.2
FRIDAY	11:28	0.6	N/A	N/A	4:52	3.7	6:19	4.6

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The QLine

City Hall has been putting a new emphasis on code enforcement in recent months. New pushes for compliance include the regulation of signs in front of businesses and hedge heights around homes. Although both these issues have safety concerns associated with them, they also deal with the beautification of Santa Monica, which is an important issue in a city with a large focus on tourism. But many people are arguing that City Hall is going too far with its code enforcement

and needs to refocus its efforts.

So this week's Q-line question is: **Do you agree with the emphasis City Hall is putting on code enforcement? Why or why not?**

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That argument didn't hold with City

“Although they’re both valid community desires and needs, we had not asked for \$3 million for the school district to be budgeted,” he added. “We had said bring the living wage ordinance before the budget process happens, so it could inform us. And instead we got more for schools and nothing for the living wage, and neither of them is exactly what we asked for.”

There are 16 job types at City Hall that currently garner less than \$11.50 an hour, city documents show. They include lifeguards, police cadets, maintenance workers, library employees and crossing

"I'm definitely interested in looking at it. I think it's been a priority for several years and the question is how we can accommodate it into the budget, given the constraints that we have," said Mayor Richard Bloom, adding later, "It's unlikely that we could find, realistically, places to cut."

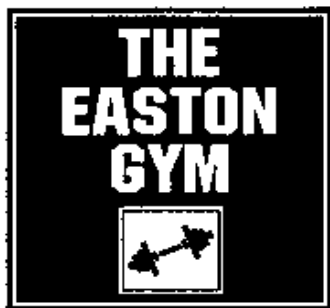


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STATE



Federal appeals court backs assisted suicide law

BY DAVID KRAVETS
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal appeals court ordered the Bush administration not to meddle with a state's assisted suicide law, ruling Wednesday that doctors in Oregon may prescribe lethal doses of medication to terminally ill patients.

Ruling on the nation's only law that allows doctors to assist in hastening the death of a patient, the court said U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft cannot sanction or hold Oregon doctors criminally liable for prescribing overdoses, as the state's voter-approved Death With Dignity Act allows.

"The attorney general's unilateral attempt to regulate general medical practices historically entrusted to state lawmakers interferes with the democratic debate about physician assisted suicide and far exceeds the scope of his authority under federal law," wrote Judge Richard Tallman in the 2-1 opinion by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The case is a classic states' rights battle. Oregon has defended its assisted suicide law against attacks from the Justice Department, which concluded that suicide is not a "legitimate medical purpose."

Oregon maintained it had the power to declare for itself what types of medical procedures are allowed.

In dissent, Judge J. Clifford Wallace said the courts should give "substantial deference" to the attorney general's findings in the absence of a clear congressional policy.

The latest legal wrangling stems from April 2002, when a federal judge in Portland, Ore., blocked the Justice Department from threatening to punish doctors, for example by stripping them of their federal licenses to dispense medication.

In a sharp rebuke to Ashcroft, U.S. District Judge Robert Jones ruled that the Controlled Substances Act — the federal law declaring what drugs doctors may prescribe — does not give the federal government the power to say what is a legitimate medical practice.

Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers brought the challenge after Ashcroft first declared the federal government had such power on Nov. 6, 2001, and the Justice Department made the same argument to the San Francisco-based appeals court.

Oregon voters first approved the act in 1994 and overwhelmingly affirmed it again three years later when it was returned to the ballot following a failed legal challenge that stalled its implementation.

The law allows terminally ill patients with less than six months to live to request a lethal dose of drugs after two doctors confirm the diagnosis and determine the patient to be mentally competent to make the request.

Since 1998, at least 171 people have used the law to end their lives, according to state records. Most of them suffered from cancer.

"Certainly it's a good ruling if you believe in this cause," said Kevin Neely, a Myers spokesman. "From our perspective, this is a clear defense not just of the Death With Dignity Act but a clear defense of the state's authority to regulate its own medical practices."

Justice Department spokesman Charles Miller said the government was reviewing

the court's decision, and was not prepared to comment on whether it would appeal to the Supreme Court or ask the 9th Circuit to reconsider. "No determination has been made to what the government's next step will be," Miller said.

The decision is unlikely to immediately open the floodgates for similar legislation in other states. While Congress failed to pass measures banning assisted suicide in 1998 and 2000, the states have been unreceptive to the idea.

Hawaii lawmakers in March shelved a proposal. And in Vermont, the only other known state to recently grapple with it, lawmakers balked last week.

Scott Swenson, executive director of the Death With Dignity National Center, was optimistic the decision might get the attention of statehouse lawmakers. But, he noted, the moral questions the law raise make it a difficult sell that won't happen overnight.

"This isn't something that is going to rush out in 20 states tomorrow," he said. "The onus is for us to secure a couple more states to prove it can work."

Barbara Coombs Lee, the president of Portland-based Compassion in Dying who co-wrote the law, said assisted suicide "improves care and greatly eases suffering of terminally ill people."

Ashcroft's directive, which reversed a 1998 opinion by former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, also banned any lethal prescriptions on grounds they did not qualify as medication under the federal Controlled Substances Act.

Oregon argued that regulating and licensing doctors generally has been the sole responsibility of the states, which license doctors to practice medicine. Oregon also said that Congress intended only to prevent illegal drug trafficking by doctors under the Controlled Substances Act, and that it left decisions about medical practice up to the states. The appeals court agreed.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, called on Ashcroft "to finally accept 'no' for an answer and attend to the many more pressing challenges confronting the Department of Justice."

It was the second time the circuit court had grappled with assisted suicide.

In a 1996 Washington state case, the 9th Circuit ruled that assisted suicide was permitted because there was a constitutional right to die. That decision meant Washington state could not prosecute doctors who aided their patients' deaths.

But the following year, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed, saying states could prosecute doctors who assist in suicides — a move some interpreted as signaling that the justices were freeing the states to decide for themselves whether assisted suicide should be allowed.

Washington state has abandoned its assisted suicide law.

The court also ruled against the federal government in another case involving efforts to nullify state rules governing medical practice. In 2002, the court ruled for doctors in California who were threatened with federal sanctions — including losing their licenses to prescribe medication — if they recommended medical marijuana to their patients. The court said then that doctors had a First Amendment right to discuss marijuana use with their patients.

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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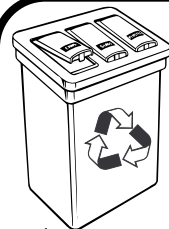
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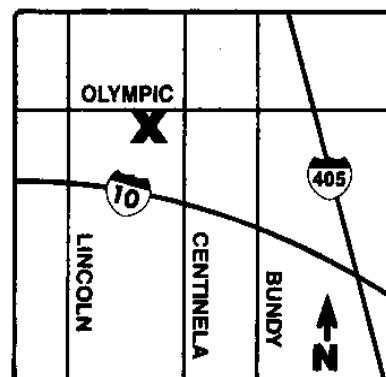
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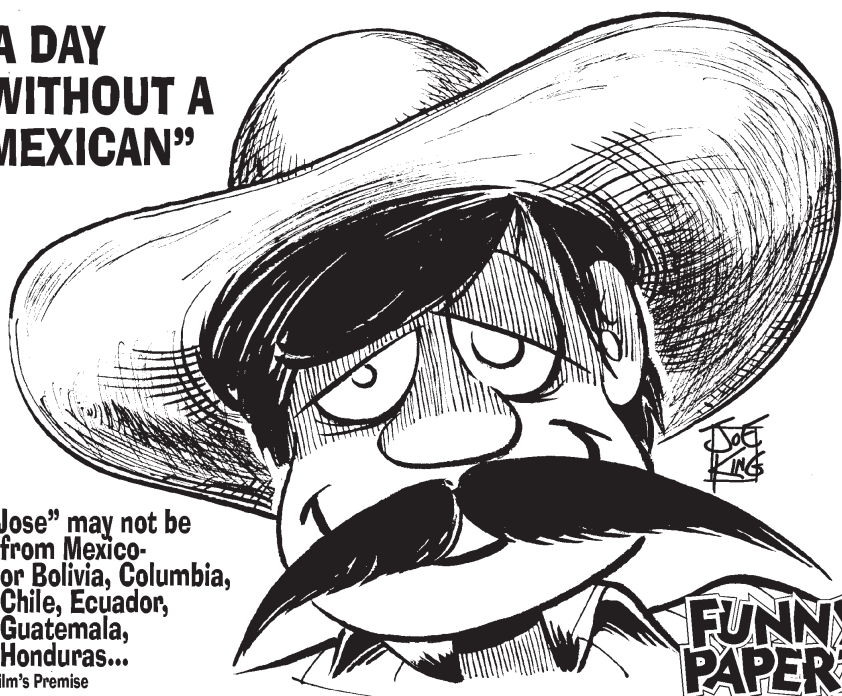


OPINION

**"A DAY
WITHOUT A
MEXICAN"**

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Oceans are in trouble

Editor:

As Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's decision concerning the recommendation of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy draws close, I would like to advocate a strong stance in favor of the preservation of our oceans. It is true that the commission's report comes to some laudable conclusions, many corroborated by the report of the PEW Oceans Commission, an independent commission of fisherman, civil servants, and oceanographic specialists. This is admirable. But it is also clear that the policy proposed by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy does have specific shortcomings that should be addressed by the Governor when the opportunity to do so publicly should arise.

While the PEW Commission specifically recommends identifying and protecting critical habitats for coastal ecosystems and redirecting government programs and subsidies to programs clean and benign for our oceans, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy is somewhat deficient in this regard. In point of fact, the sole source of funds for the commission's policy would come from the revenues of outer-continental shelf (OCS) activities, mainly oil and gas exploration drilling. Such a plan would not only allow for the very activities that are currently decimating our coastal resources, but would undercut the commission's inclination to uphold its own standards.

All the research shows that if we don't act now to protect our oceans, the damage done may prove irreversible. I would like to urge Gov. Schwarzenegger to embrace the commission's report conditionally and demand on our behalf stronger protections for our oceans.

Sam Schreiber
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) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

**SANTA MONICA
SUMMER GUIDE 2004
COMING SOON TO MAILBOXES IN JUNE**

'Clean sweep' the only answer to SM woes



MY WRITE

BY BILL BAUER

Recent news reports disclosing that City Hall's newest homeless ordinances aren't having much of an impact on homeless-related problems aren't a surprise. Regulations to limit the number of "guests" at food handouts in public parks and prohibitions against camping in posted doorways on downtown private property are a sham.

Out-of-town "halo-polishers" call their daily food handouts to hundreds of transients "family reunions." They feed in smaller groups to skirt the law. County health and food handling requirements are ignored because of lack of enforcement.

Although hundreds of Third Street Promenade merchants have posted trespassing notices, vagrants sprawl in building entrances at night. Numerous citations have been written, but according to the City Attorney's Office, only 45 cases have been prosecuted. And to what, if any, penalty?

In the meantime, City Hall does all it can to attract more transients, enable them and insure they're not harassed or inconvenienced. In spite of tight budgets, funding of the "continuum of care," known in homeless circles as the "continuum of misery," continues unabated. On top of \$2.1 million in direct city funds budgeted for 10 service providers in the present (and upcoming) fiscal year, City Hall generously handed millions more to just one agency, the Ocean Park Community Center, to expand services.

Last August, City Council approved \$7.4 million in "housing" dollars for OPCC to purchase and renovate property at 1751 Cloverfield Blvd. to move and expand their existing 30-bed shelter. In addition, the City Council recently approved moving expenses and unanimously OK'd building a nearly 11,000-square-foot modular building on Olympic Boulevard near Fifth Street for a new, bigger OPCC drop-in center including public showers and lockers.

Although the actual cost of the new center has been "buried" in the expansion budget for the Big Blue Bus yards, the value of the packages has to be in the \$2 million-plus range. Bottom line: The City Council hands one nonprofit, non-city affiliated provider over \$10 million to service, maintain and enable transients from everywhere but Santa Monica. Remember, these are the same people who, until

recently, were saying "no" to our schools.

I'm not opposed to proven, lifestyle changing programs that help people truly in need whose support system has collapsed. But here, it's clearly gone beyond lending a hand. It's become the great social giveaway, no strings attached — and ignore the consequences.

It's clear that City Hall has no desire to reduce homeless-related impacts on the community. It's no accident that funding continues to increase, services expand and those who criticize are castigated and villainized. Elected politicians and their lackeys on city staff are doing all they can to thwart laws and policies that would reduce negative impacts from our growing "army of anti-social vagrants."

Unfortunately, the pro-transient mindset extends beyond City Hall.

A couple of years ago, Grant Elementary School students were sent home with PTA-sponsored flyers advising parents to tell children it was OK to cheer up "homeless" strangers by approaching them on the street and asking, "Hello. How is your day going?" The same message was reprinted in the official city magazine, the Seascope, and distributed citywide a few months later.

City Hall's policy is to publicize the (few) homeless success stories and downplay negatives. It's why crimes perpetrated by transients are underreported in the press. Local reporters tell me it's why "transient" is no longer posted on the "arrest listings for press" page on the police Web site.

There must be some reason why our politicians are so dogmatically in love with the mentally ill, parolees and criminals, the seriously physically sick, alcoholics and drug addicts. They must see the presence of so many undesirables is a threat to public health and safety — but they care more about them than us.

If they really think their misguided compassion is good for residents, they need to be retired and quickly. And, encouraging vulnerable children to approach strangers on the street is particularly dangerous, irresponsible and beyond stupidity.

The buck stops at the dais. There are four councilmen up for reelection — all of them have served multiple terms. They have no intention of changing course on this issue.

There's only one way to change City Hall's homeless agenda and that's with a good housecleaning. It's time to get out the brooms and sweep.

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



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OPINION



GUEST COMMENTARY | BY JIM JAFFE

School board needs a lesson in accountability

With regard to your recent articles on the funding agreement between the City Council and the local school board, I am hopeful that the negotiated revenue stream from the city of Santa Monica, along with the two parcel taxes, will help maintain or improve services to students, staff and the community. But I am troubled that the district administration appears to be — on the one hand — extremely organized and focused when it comes to passing a parcel tax or negotiating more money from the city. But — on the other hand — schools superintendent John Deasy shows no sense of urgency when it comes to correcting seriously flawed management and budgetary practices. Careful examination of the district's recent decision-making history leaves many questions unanswered. For instance:

■ During the current contract negotiations with its two employee unions, the district has made a proposal to correct an anomaly in the health benefits language that has cost the district \$2 million over the past four years. Why did it take so long for the district's negotiators and lawyers to recognize the need to correct this inequity?

■ Since all personnel matters require the approval of the school board at a public meeting, why was the Malibu High School principal given a 5 percent pay raise two years ago in secret? And why is the salary paid to the director of special education higher than the salary rate listed on the current management salary schedule?

■ Recently, much has been reported publicly about the pending reassignment of the Olympic High School principal. But the reassignment last July of McKinley's former principal to a Samohi student advisor position at her administrator pay, happened without a word at a school board meeting. Why the inconsistency in board procedures and what's the status of her employment for next year?

■ When the deputy superintendent/chief of staff position was approved in June of 2001 at a cost of \$500,000 over three years, the school board promised to reevaluate the need for this new position when it was up for renewal. When will the future of this position be discussed at a board meeting?

■ Last Aug. 21, the superintendent pulled from board consideration a recommendation to approve an elementary assistant principal and three teachers on special assignment as program facilitators. Since this item was never brought back for board consideration, why were these four individuals' employment and pay status changed as if the proposal had been approved?

■ For over a year, the superintendent — and hopefully the board — has been aware of the growing discontent among

teachers and parents at one of the district's largest schools over their principal's lack of experience and leadership skills. Has the superintendent ruled out reassigning this administrator to a vacant position at Samohi where Dr. Ilene Straus could mentor her colleague?

■ Two years ago, the health benefits technician position was cut and her specialized responsibilities were assigned to the director of business and fiscal. This move has left the maintenance of employee and retiree health plan paperwork in disarray. Will the superintendent fulfill his promise to recommend reinstatement of this vital position?

■ About five years ago, the district's Web site, www.smmusd.org, was created to disseminate timely and accurate information to staff, parents, and the community. But today, most of the individual department sites have gone one or two years without being updated. Who's responsible for correcting this embarrassment?

■ Presenting the itemized comparative budget report (volumes one and two, and summary) to the board at a public meeting for discussion and approval had been a long standing district practice. Why was it stopped two years ago?

■ On April 1, the board and the MET Charter petitioners agreed to extend the time for the board's final decision in order for legal council to review the proposed MOU/contract language. On May 6, the superintendent announced the parties had agreed to a second extension.

Which administrator or legal firm failed to inform the board that their decision to grant or deny the petition could only be extended up to 30 days? (See EdCode, section 47605.)

■ Three of the 8.5 teachers allotted to SMASH have recently resigned. What board staffing policy will the district administration follow when filling vacant teacher positions at SMASH and other district schools?

■ Every board agenda since March 11, has listed "Brown Act review (date to be determined)" as a future agenda item. What's taking so long to review the board's Brown Act policy?

Clearly, a pattern of poor managerial and business practices has caused a loss of time, money, confidence and trust. Measure "S" provides for the expenditure of funds "to protect the taxpayers' investment." A thorough independent evaluation of the district's organizational structure, procedures, and practices should be one of the board's highest priorities. To every reader that agrees with me, please let the board know by e-mailing them at www.brd@smmusd.org.

(Jim Jaffe is a retired SMMUSD teacher and a longtime Santa Monica resident).

Last minute plans for the long weekend

PISTACHIO PERSPECTIVE

SUSAN ANN CONOR



Tick tock, tick tock. Summer is almost here. The heat is on. The days are longer, the sun is stronger and aren't you glad you live in Santa Monica?

In less than 72 hours, it will officially be felicitous to wear white. This dinosaur rule is outmoded for most style conscious folks, but it is possible if you are living on the East Coast, that you might have to adjust your ears to the fashion police siren if you dare wear this pristine color prior to the last Monday in May. However, in the tan state of California, white is might, and we will bedeck ourselves with anything we dog-gone please, regardless of the season.

Now some would argue that our sunny season actually begins June 21 at the solstice, but we who love summertime will not be denied, and stretch it as long as we are able. Therefore, we prefer to start with Memorial Day, and close it out with Labor Day, or thereabouts.

My friends and I, being summer lovers, have made a habit of launching summer by doing something fun or novel on Memorial Day Weekend. At our monthly dinner last week, we discussed our individual adventures and upcoming revelries. And alas, everyone had plans but Maggie. She just hadn't gotten around to it. And now she thought, "it's too late." She'd have to stay home — boo hoo — with nothing to do. At which point we all piped in, filling her to the brim with recommendations as to how she might enjoy herself in the "sleepy" beach town of Santa Monica on Memorial Day Weekend.

For starters, we reminded her, and each other, that this holiday was established to commemorate all who had given their lives in battle for America. Whatever we each do, it should be fun but also should honor in some way those for whom this day was created. So given that, here were some of our suggestions for Maggie:

1) Memorize the preamble. Recite the

Constitution while you are at it.

2) Write a check to your favorite charity in memory of someone who died fighting for peace.

3) Release any aggressions by swatting (or hammering) some balls at the batting cages, or learn to fence.

4) Go off your low carb diet. Ahhh, just for a couple of days. Drink orange juice or something.

5) Go on a picnic. Bring a Betsy Ross Toss' Salad. If you don't have the recipe, make it up.

6) Take a ride on the ferris wheel and sing happy birthday to Clint Eastwood while you're up there. Wear white.

7) See how many words you can get out of the letters in Memorial Day.

8) Read and reread the moving letter written by Nick Berg's dad found in last Sunday's L.A. Times opinion section.

9) Close your eyes. Pretend you are in a room full of kangaroos and jump along with them. You ask why, and I ask why not?

10) Place flowers on the grave(s) of a familiar or unfamiliar person who lost their life serving our country. (Memorial Day was originally called Decoration Day because the women set aside a day to decorate the graves of the soldiers lost during the Civil War. Both the north and the south claim to have inaugurated the idea. Go figure).

11) Sneak in a prayer for peace. (During WW II Churchill and his advisor, Tudor Pole, initiated for the British to collectively take "a silent minute" of prayer as Big Ben was striking 9 p.m. After the war, Nazi records were found suggesting that the Brits had "a secret weapon connected to Big Ben." The Nazis never uncovered what it was).

12) Go to the movies. See Shrek 2 to laugh out loud, or Troy if you can bear yet another war movie.

13) Look at old scrapbooks of your parents, grandparents and loved ones. Sing "Thanks for the Memories."

Go, Maggie, go! Lalalala ...

(Susan Ann Connor can be reached at pastachiocolumn@aol.com She dedicates this week's column to her father and three uncles, all veterans, and especially to her uncle Tom, who died while in battle. She knows him only through old scrapbooks).

Bitch! Whine! Complain!

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

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WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK

REVIEW Q&A **DAY AFTER TOMORROW**
BADASSSSS!

WHAT'S PLAYING

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 yesteryear. 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 comedic 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 unhinges 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?"

John Corbett: ‘A man of God’ on screen

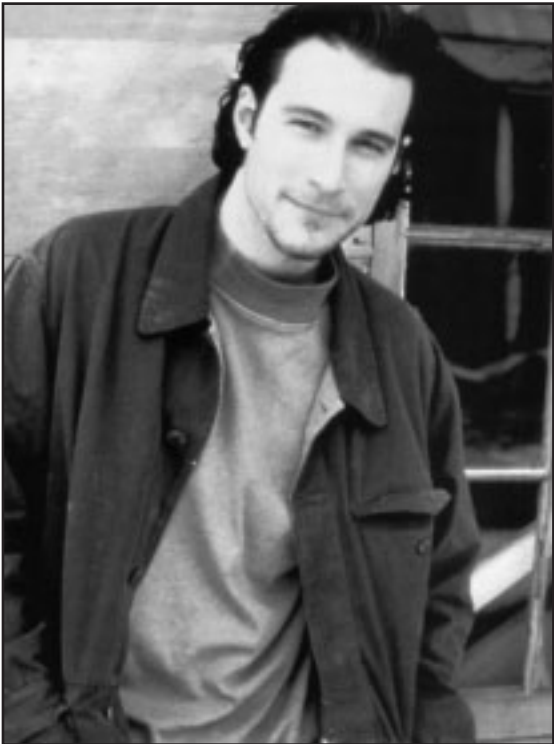
BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Up until a few years ago, John Corbett was known primarily as the deejay from “Northern Exposure.” Then came a recurring role as Sarah Jessica Parker’s beau on HBO’s celebrated series “Sex and the City,” and the lead opposite Nia Vardalos in the box office record-smashing chick flick, “My Big Fat Greek Wedding,” and the laid-back 43-year-old Wheeling, W. Va., native morphed into Hollywood’s sexiest gentle giant (he’s 6’5”). In the romantic comedy “Raising Helen,” which opens today, Corbett plays a dashing Lutheran minister who woos Kate Hudson.

QUESTION: You play a little ice hockey in “Raising Helen.” Do you have NHL potential?

JOHN CORBETT: I’d never skated before, so they set me up for lessons for, like, two months. Man, I could skate all over the place. Then they cut the whole (scene). I was fighting guys, skating, defending the goal, and I think they used one shot of me lifting my helmet up and waving to Helen. But now I can skate, so it’s cool.

Q: What do you think of the movie?
JC: I think the movie has a nice balance of some laughs and some tears. I saw the final cut yesterday for the second time, and I cried in it, like, two times. That’s sort of weird because I will cry once usually at a movie, but then when I see



JOHN CORBETT

it again and know what’s coming, I won’t cry.
Q: This role will certainly reinforce the “nice guy” label you’ve been given. Were you appre-

hensive about playing not only another swell dude, but a minister to boot?

JC: Whenever I read a critique of my work, people always wonder when I’m gonna play a villain or something, so I was nervous to play a priest. As an actor to have to say lines like “I know I’m sexy — I’m a sexy man of God,” that’s f---ing hard to say. It’s hard to say and be believable, and not want to bust out laughing, or just turn to the camera and say “Please don’t make me say this out loud.”

Q: “A sexy man of God” is pretty cornball. How’d you manage to pull it off?

JC: That was the hardest thing to say. Somebody should give me an Oscar just for saying that line. To say it all day long, and to try and mean it, man, it’s a weird thing. It’s easier to learn how to ice skate.

Q: Speaking of weird, “Sex and the City” is reportedly going into syndication on squeaky-clean TBS of all places. How bizarre is that?

JC: Very bizarre. I don’t get it. I don’t know how it’s going to work, you know. So much of that show is R-rated. I actually wouldn’t go in and do any (overdubs). I said the “F-word” a few times on the show, and they wanted me to come in and put in some “fricks” or whatever else, and I said no, man, I’m not doing it. I think some of the people behind the scenes at TBS are mad that I wouldn’t come in.

Nature unleashed in ‘Day After Tomorrow’

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Like he did with his 1996 summer blockbuster “Independence Day,” filmmaker Roland Emmerich proves to be a master of eye-popping disaster in “The Day After Tomorrow.” Though its hampered by specious science, overbearing “God and country” bluster and several galumphing human interest stories, this \$100

million-plus global warming warning is filled with enough edge-of-the-seat action, hilarious moments (not all intentional) and dandy performances to make it worth the price of admission.
Dennis Quaid makes for a fine hero as Jack Hall, a rugged climatologist who discovers that global warming has triggered a sudden, catastrophic climate shift and that the next Ice Age is fast approaching. Of course nobody, save a

reclusive Scottish scientist played by Ian Holm (“The Lord of the Rings” trilogy), pays attention until it’s too late. Indie fave Jake Gyllenhaal is up to snuff as Hall’s brainiac kid, Sam, the leader of a gutsy group struggling to survive the deep freeze inside a New York public library. Shameless hokiness abounds — Sam’s got a crush on a classmate and has to literally fight off wolves to win her over; a homeless guy nearly loses his dog;

a determined doctor (Seal Ward) must save a little kid from cancer and the big chill — but these toilsome plot devices cannot diminish the power of the awesome special effects that showcase the fury of Mother Nature unleashed.

(Rated PG-13 for intense situations of peril. Running time: 124 minutes.)

It’s a turbulent joy ride on the ‘Soul Plane’



BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Music video director Jessy Terrero makes an impressive feature film debut with a hip-hop-pin’ comedy about an airline tailor-made for bruthas and sistas. Snoop Dogg, Method Man, Mo’Nique and Tom Arnold take to the friendly skies aboard Flight 0-69, the maiden voyage of NWA Airlines. The soundtrack kicks, the Cristal flows and crass comedy is in full effect in this urbanized take on the “Airplane” spoofs. As the one-of-a-kind carrier’s founder, Nashawn Wade, newcomer Kevin Hart scores plenty of laughs, and Sexy Sofia Vergara exorcizes the demons of last year’s horrendous, “Chasing Papi,” playing a smokin’ hot flight attendant.

The “pimp purple” and chrome-colored plane is tripped-out with hydraulic shocks, Jacuzzi, a dance club with deejay, even a wise-cracking bathroom attendant (D.L. Hughley). It’s a nonstop par-tay for everyone aboard, from those in first class to the ones in low class. As Captain Mack (Snoop Dogg) guides the plane precariously toward New York, the passengers and crew bust out the crude humor and let it fly. There are numerous duds littered among the belly laughs, but that’s to be expected in a film that flaunts its Ludacris-ness like bling-bling. “Soul Plane” begs not to be taken seriously, and those who oblige will most surely enjoy the ride.

(Rated R for strong sexual content, language and some drug use.)

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Dubious message for women in 'Raising Helen'

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

The dubious message "Raising Helen" aims to deliver to all career-minded, fun-loving single gals is this: Your lives are unfulfilled and will remain that way until you forsake the rat race, land yourself a good man (a minister, perhaps?) and settle down to raise a brood of adorable mop-pets. To get Manhattan modeling-agent-to-be Helen Harris (Kate Hudson) from Point A to Point ZZZZZZZ in a hurry, schmaltz-meister Garry Marshall ("The Princess Diaries," "Pretty Woman") kills off her suburbanite sister and brother-in-law, leaving our Goldie-locked wild child to raise their three kids. The contrived set-up opens the door for Marshall to trot out virtually every hackneyed convention this

threadbare genre has to offer, making sure his one-dimensional characters' emotional crises are unambiguous and neatly resolved. In the wake of a recent spate of similar slush — "Jersey Girl" and "Uptown Girls" come to mind — I offer this: Give it a rest, please.

Helen is a curious choice to have been willed the kids — 15-year-old Audrey (Hayden Panettiere); 10-year-old Henry (Spencer Breslin) and 5-year-old Sarah (Abigail Breslin) — given that (a) she's living on an executive assistant's salary in Manhattan, (b) she's practically a kid herself and (c) the other surviving sister, Jenny (Joan Cusack), is a willing supermom with a loving hubby and big old house. Ah, but Helen and her deceased sis had some sort of deep connection rooted, inexplicably, in Devo's electro-pop hit "Whip It," so — reason be damned — the



kids are hers! Besides, though she can act circles around Hudson, Joan Cusack can't open a movie. Even with the clunkers "How To Lose A Guy in 10 Days," "Le Divorce" and "Alex & Emma" on her limited resume, the studios have yet to figure out that the reason Hudson was so good as the rock-star-lovin' sweetheart in "Almost Famous" is that she was playing herself.

Meanwhile back at Point ZZZZZZZ, Helen has uprooted the kids from their provincial Jersey town and moved them to the mean streets of Queens. Although she's lost her job at the agency, she enrolls her charges in an expensive private school run by a laid-back, handsome Lutheran pastor played by the perpetually laid-back and handsome John Corbett. Sparks fly, tears flow, kids ham it up at the zoo, Hector Elizondo appears. Beyond that, I don't think I'll be spoiling any big surprises by informing that there are no big surprises: Everything this by-the-numbers tear-jerker requires happens, conveniently does happen. And in the end, a domesticated Helen is as happy as Garry Marshall always wanted her to be.

(Rated PG-13 for thematic issues involving teens. Running time: 119 minutes.)

Movie goers not saved from another teen flick

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

In "Saved!" an uneven high school comedy from tyro writer-director Brian Dannelly, the Mean Girls and Teenage Drama Queens have found Jesus. This cheeky indictment of religious fundamentalism is at times engaging, but suffers from an almost fanatical aversion to subtlety. In taking on the "villains" — in this case, zealots at an exclusive Christian

prep school — Dannelly and co-writer Michael Urban consistently go for the knockout blow when a jab would have been more effective, leaving the impression that the filmmakers are as narrow of ken and self-righteous as the Bible-thumpers they so lustily vilify. Nonetheless, as polemics go, this one is pretty damn (or damned, maybe?) funny, and may even inspire teens to engage in some healthy theological debate.

When good girl Mary (the talented Jena Malone) discovers her boyfriend is gay, she attempts to cure him of his terri-

ble affliction by sleeping with him, only to wind up pregnant and on the outs with the "in" crowd. Pop princess Mandy Moore delivers an over-the-top, yet curiously appealing performance as Hilary Faye, the leader of American Eagle Christian High's god squad — a queen bee-atch who uses faith primarily as a means of controlling her dominion. Shunned by Hilary Faye and her minions, Mary takes up with the outcasts: Chain-smoking ribald rebel, Cassandra (Eva Amurri) and Hilary Faye's cooler-than-school wheelchair-bound brother, Roland

(Macaulay Culkin). Amurri shows off her noble pedigree (she's Susan Sarandon's kid) in a star-making turn, and Culkin resurrects his career with his best role since "Home Alone." Patrick Fugit ("Almost Famous"), on the other hand, fails to register as the school's skate-punk heart-throb. Martin Donovan and Mary-Louise Parker also star.

(Rated PG-13 for strong thematic issues involving teens - sexual content, pregnancy, smoking and language. Running time: 92 minutes.)

'Badasssss' a successful risk for filmmaker

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Here's a film that really lives up to its name. Mario Van Peebles wrote, directed and stars in this dynamite biopic about his pioneering filmmaker father, Melvin, and the X-rated 1971 movie — "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song" — that

galvanized black America and spawned soul cinema. Like his father's movie, "Badasssss!" was made outside the studio system and has the raw look and feel that marked the coolest flicks the blaxploitation era had to offer. Playing his old man, Van Peebles delivers what may very well be the best performance of his career, and gets stellar support from an eclectic cast that includes the venerable Ossie Davis, Joy Bryant ("Antwone Fisher"), Saul Rubinek, David Alan Grier and Rainn

Wilson (the bizarre mortician-trainee from "Six Feet Under").

On the heels of a successful comedy, "Watermelon Man," Melvin Van Peebles was faced with a decision: Accept a three-picture deal from Columbia Pictures to churn out innocuous mainstream fare, or turn his back on the studio (and the white establishment) to make a revolutionary film featuring an empowered black hero who sticks it to The Man. MVP, as the elder Van Peebles is known, chose the lat-

ter and ultimately — at great personal risk — produced what was then the most successful independent film ever. With his deft retelling of this fascinating true story, Mario Van Peebles serves notice that the apple didn't fall far from the tree.

(Rated R for pervasive language and some strong sexuality/nudity. Running time: 108 minutes.)

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Kristine Johnson Fountain of Joy

The Kristine Johnson Fountain of Joy is
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respite for those seeking faith, peace and hope
amongst the challenges of the world.

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Re: Kristine Johnson Fountain of Joy

NATIONAL

Stewards of U.S. nuclear
stockpile plan new test

BY KEN RITTER
Associated Press Writer

NEVADA TEST SITE, Nev. — At ground zero for the nation's nuclear testing, the stewards of the atomic stockpile stopped creating mushroom clouds and craters more than a decade ago.

Now they devise complex underground experiments using radar, laser and X-ray imaging to explore the finer points of how plutonium performs in an explosion.

Scientists call the experiments "subcritical" because they don't set off thermonuclear blasts like those that rocked the Nevada desert northwest of Las Vegas from 1951 to 1992.

"When you had the nuclear test, what was the proof? It exploded," said James Danneskiold, a spokesman for Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, where plutonium triggers for bombs are produced.

"Now, you have to ask the necessary questions to show that the weapon still functions as it was designed," Danneskiold said, "that it's safe, reliable, and will work when needed."

The experiments subject plutonium "pits" like those at the core of nuclear weapons to stresses that scientists say only high explosives can produce. They don't detonate the radioactive element, but collect data about how it would explode.

Contamination is a risk. Darwin Morgan, spokesman for the National Nuclear Security Administration, the agency that oversees the site, said no plutonium detonations have occurred and no radioactivity has been released during 20 previous subcritical tests.

Remoteness was a factor when the Nevada Test Site was established in 1950 by President Harry Truman. The site encompasses 1,375 square miles, nearly the size of Rhode Island, and is surrounded on three sides by the 4,562-square-mile Nellis Air Force Base bombing range. Combined, the federal reservation is larger than the state of Connecticut.

A short distance from the underground test laboratory is the Frenchman Flat dry lake bed, where the first of 1,021 Nevada nuclear weapons tests was conducted. After 14 atmospheric and five underground tests, Frenchman Flat remains strewn with structures built in the 1950s to measure the effects of primitive nuclear blasts.

Steel reinforcement bars from a crumbled concrete dome curl like hair blown back. Rusting pens mark where pigs dressed in Army uniforms were subjected to shock, heat and radiation waves. Warped wooden benches sit on a knoll where VIPs watched detonations from only nine miles away.

Before boarding a steel cage elevator for the 75-second descent down a mine shaft to the lab, Ghazar Papazian, Los Alamos project director at the test site, characterized the safety zones of the laboratory as a "nested bottle concept."

"If the first cork leaks, the second can contain it. If the second leaks, the third can contain it," he said, pointing to escape routes on a three-dimensional mock-up of one mile of underground tunnels.

At the underground lab, a vault 300 feet deep is filled with concrete where the 20 kiloton Ledoux underground nuclear test was conducted in September 1990. The bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in World War II measured 16 kilotons.

Other sealed vaults entomb most of the 20 previous subcritical experiments, and quarter-inch steel doors can be closed to seal tunnel sections like compartments in a submarine. Rubber-soled shoes squeak on painted gray cement floors.

"Armando," an upcoming test, is the third in a series. Its predecessors, "Mario" and "Rocco" in August and September 2002, were conducted in six-foot diameter wells drilled 35 feet deep beneath the tunnel floor of one finger of the complex.

The upcoming detonation 963 feet underground will involve high explosives inside a steel sphere that would fit in the back of a pickup truck. Cameras, lasers and a special high-intensity X-ray focusing 2 million volts of electricity will beam through the sphere to measure temperature, pressure and velocity, and any microwaves the plutonium gives off.

The tunnels will be cleared of workers, while diagnostic equipment shielded in tractor-trailer sized containers collect data. After the test, the area will be swept for radiation before anyone returns.

"Armando" is designed to answer questions about how plutonium ages and whether weapons triggers produced by milling or casting processes perform the same, Papazian said.

Production of weapons-grade plutonium was suspended in 1989 at a mill in Rocky Flats, near Denver. A cast process at Los Alamos, N.M., is expected to resume producing 10 plutonium pits a year by 2007, Danneskiold said.

Tests also seek to determine "if things designed for 20 to 30 years can last for 40 to 60 years," Papazian said.

Experiments can cost up to \$40 million each, compared with \$90 million apiece for full-fledged underground nuclear tests. Papazian said he did not know what "Armando" would cost.

Test site officials call the program "stockpile stewardship" — essential to the U.S. policy of nuclear deterrence. Critics call it unnecessary.

"They're still doing bomb testing," complained Peggy Maze Johnson, director of Citizen Alert, a Nevada anti-nuclear advocacy group.

The number of U.S. warheads is classified. The Natural Resources Defense Council, which has monitored nuclear issues since 1970, estimates the United States has about 10,400 warheads — about half the nuclear weapons in the world.

Morgan said nuclear tests are strictly defined by international treaty.

"We do experiments," he said. "There's no sustained nuclear reaction."

The work has taken on new emphasis with the Bush administration seeking to cut the lead time needed to resume full-scale underground nuclear testing from in half, to 18 months. The United States has observed a nuclear testing moratorium since 1992, but has not ratified the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

SANTA MONICA SUMMER GUIDE 2004

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Prisoners are being forced to pay for their stay

BY JULIA SILVERMAN

Associated Press Writer

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. — First, Sheriff Tim Evinger eliminated ketchup, salt, coffee and pepper at the jail, a move he says saved an instant \$30,000 a year in runaway beverage and condiment costs.

Now, Evinger has decided to start charging inmates \$60 a day to help cover the costs of their stay behind bars.

"My constituents expect me to use whatever means I have to keep the jail open to its full extent," the sheriff said.

It is an idea that first surfaced about 15 years ago in Alabama, and has since spread rapidly across the country, to about one-third of the county jails in the United States.

In some places, inmates are charged for their stay while they are still behind bars; other places bill them after they get out.

But increasingly, prison researchers dismiss such "pay-to-stay" plans as political grandstanding, citing the difficulty and expense of actually collecting anything from inmates and the ethics of such practices.

"If you go after people who owe you money on room and board or whatever, you will end up paying more money for the bill collector than you can ever collect for these people," said Ken Kerle, editor of American Jails magazine. "Holding inmates is a government responsibility, whether government likes it or not."

In Minnesota, Olmstead County suspended its pay-to-stay program after spending \$13,000 over four months to administer it, and collecting just \$7,261; the county is

now revamping its program. In Clayton County, Iowa, jail administrators estimate that 150 inmates have outstanding bills.

Pay-to-stay programs have had their success stories. Missouri raked in \$384,000 from inmates so far this year, according to Scott Holste, a spokesman for the state attorney general's office.

But such successes often ride on the backs of a few wealthy criminals. Missouri, for example, collected \$178,000 this year from George Ramsey, who is in prison for life for killing his mother. Ramsey, who has been behind bars since the mid-1980s, was finally forced to pay up this year.

Pay-to-stay programs have also been hit with court challenges. In Cincinnati, county officials had to refund about \$1 million to inmates in 2003 after a judge said pay-to-stay could violate inmates' rights by charging them before they are proved guilty.

And in a Broward County, Fla., lawsuit filed in the mid-1990s, lawyers for inmates charged that pay-to-stay policies discriminated against the poor. A Florida appeals court ruled against the prisoners.

"Typically, the poorest of the poor are the ones we lock in our jails, and the government is seizing their families' money as well," said Norm Frink, the attorney for the Florida inmates. "The penalty for a criminal act is the loss of one's freedom. You are already paying with your liberty."

In Klamath Falls, where pay-to-stay began on April 15, Evinger sees it as a way to cover security, utilities, medical care, food and transportation at his 144-inmate jail, which has seen some of its funding frozen at 1999

levels because of budget cuts.

He estimated that the jail could raise \$25,000 a year and that the program would cost \$10,000 to administer.

Pay-to-stay at the Klamath County jail does not kick in until the inmates get out. They are asked whether they can afford to pay in full, would like to go on a payment plan, or are unable or refuse to pay for their stay.

Those who choose options C or D are taken to small-claims court, where a judge can dismiss the case by finding that the inmate has no ability to pay. If a judge finds otherwise, however, the inmate's taxes and wages will be attached.

"I will have the ability to forgive some debt to someone who has really turned their life around," Evinger said. "We don't want to take food out of families' mouths."

Sam King, 44, who is serving time in Klamath County for assault, said most of his fellow inmates have lined up against the idea.

"The taxpayers are already paying for us to be here," King said. "Why should we have to pay on top of that? It's a crock. How do you get blood out of a turnip? These guys don't have any money."

But 42-year-old George Booth, who is in for violating his probation on a drug offense, said he plans to go on the \$20-a-month payment schedule when his time is up.

"I messed up my probation," Booth said. "Who is responsible for myself? I am. Who pays your rent on the outside? Does the sheriff come around and pay your rent? I pay taxes, and I think we shouldn't be pumping so much money into correctional facilities. We should put it back into the elementary school system."

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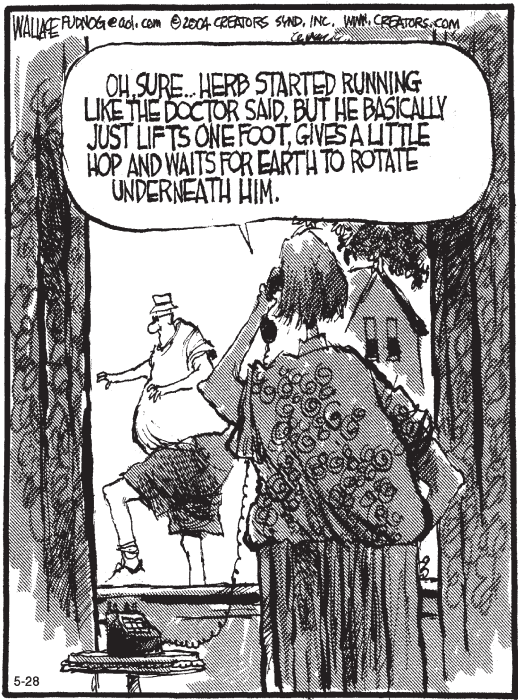
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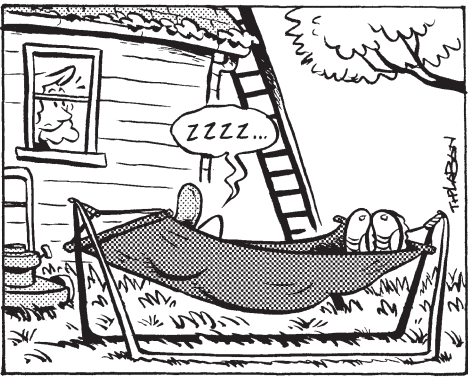
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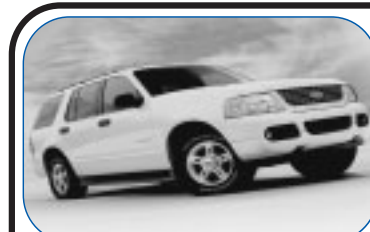
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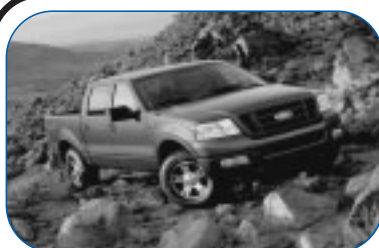
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