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Pico residents walk to end area's violence



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press
Father Mike Guitterez of St. Anne's Catholic Church leads walkers through the Pico neighborhood Saturday evening.

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

When Lucille Powell walked through her Pico neighborhood Saturday night, she did so not only to reclaim it but also to remember her son who was a victim of senseless violence.

Powell's son, Kenneth, was killed in Culver City 12 years ago during a drive-by shooting. He wasn't in a gang, but the friends he was visiting were.

That's why Powell joined about 20 others from The First A.M.E. Church by the Sea, St. Anne's Catholic Church and various community members to walk in a procession through the Pico neighborhood to help suppress violence there.

"(The violence) should never have been allowed to get to this level," she said.

The eight-square block area — which runs north of the Santa Monica Freeway to Santa Monica Boulevard, south to Pico Boulevard and east from Lincoln Boulevard to Centinela Boulevard — has historically been the center of Santa Monica's violent crime and drug dealing.

The neighborhood also has been engulfed in a turf war between two rival gangs — the Graveyard Crips and the Santa Monica 17th Street gang. The tension appears to be not only racially motivated between the two groups — one black, the other Latino — but also territorial.

So it was symbolic that Rev. Ronald Williams, from

the predominantly black congregation of the First A.M.E. church, and Father Mike Guitterez of St. Anne's — a renowned Hispanic leader — joined hands to help end the area's violence.

"Peace becomes possible when fellowship is forged face-to-face, like we did it tonight."

— KEVIN MCKEOWN
Santa Monica Mayor Pro Tem

The two leaders will bring groups of their congregations together on a weekly basis to randomly walk through the Pico neighborhood. They hope the walks will help reconnect their churches with the community, as well as help suppress the violence.

As the group walked along some of the cracked and upturned sidewalks of the neighborhood, many residents waved from their front lawns and windows. A few even joined in.

See WALK, page 4

SM city council to host 'meeting of the minds'

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Despite that cash-strapped Santa Monica is delaying major improvements throughout the city, officials are still moving forward with planning for a completely revamped downtown.

City council members have called a special meeting Tuesday to bring together the Civic Center working group, the Promenade uses taskforce and the Santa Monica Place planning committee to coordinate their plans.

All three groups have been examining their respective business districts in the city in an effort to improve them.

Instead of having each group work independently and report to the city council at different times, council members hope all three bodies can connect each group's goals into one vision.

"All of this is connected to each other," said Mayor Mike Feinstein. "What one group does will inevitably affect what the other groups are doing."

The Santa Monica Place planning group has finished studying how to better connect the enclosed mall into the downtown.

While the focus of the group's work was how to end congestion in the mall's parking garages and make the mall more pedestrian-friendly, the group also may suggest possibly extending The Third Street Promenade through the mall — connecting it with the Civic Center.

The plan could have far-reaching effects on how downtown Santa Monica is developed in the future — to the point that it could alter plans for where the future

Expo light rail line will go, Feinstein said.

Promenade business owners, civic leaders and residents have been asked to determine a proper balance between retail stores and restaurants along the city's outdoor mall.

Some city officials are concerned too many restaurants are leaving the Promenade, invariably altering its

character. In January, the city council temporarily banned converting any more space occupied by a restaurant into a retail store.

At the same time, the city is moving forward with a civic center proposal that would remodel the area to

See MEETING, page 4

Surfer improving after surgery for shark wounds; tells of vicious attack

By The Associated Press

STINSON BEACH — A surfer who was attacked by a shark at Stinson Beach was recovering over the weekend and talking about the toothy beast that nearly took him down for good.

Speaking from his hospital bed Saturday, Lee Fontan, 24, of Bolinas, said he's just glad to be alive. He spent much of the weekend watching World Cup soccer games on television and reflecting on the attack.

"I saw the jaws of death ... right in front of my face," he said. "I can't believe he didn't bite my hand off."

Fontan was in critical condition

following the attack, but was upgraded to fair condition by Sunday. He received 100 stitches during a one-and-a-half hour operation on his leg and shoulder.

Fontan was attacked Friday about 300 feet off Stinson Beach, 20 miles northwest of San Francisco. He was plucked from his surfboard by a shark that witnesses said was about 15 feet long.

Fontan told the San Francisco Chronicle that he never saw the shark coming until it was too late.

"It grabbed me ... just like a freshwater bass will grab a frog," Fontan said. Witnesses said the shark lifted

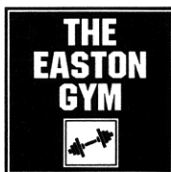
Fontan high out of the water in its jaws.

He plans to resume surfing once he fully recovers.

Another shark attack occurred Friday when a shark bit the foot of a teen-ager swimming about 200 feet off Florida's St. George Island, police said.

The 16-year-old boy underwent three hours of surgery after attack and was recovering well, said Jay Abbott, chief of St. George Island Fire and Rescue.

The boy was vacationing on the island with his family. He was released from a Panama City hospital Saturday, but his name was not released.



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★★-So-so ★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★ Take a deep breath before walking into work. You could be a bit exhausted or dragging, making your thinking process a bit slow. Knowing this fact, postpone major decisions. Indulge a family member or yourself. Take some time off. Tonight: Get a good night's sleep.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ A meeting could cause financial discomfort on some level. You might want to review what is happening here. Your ability to reach out for others comes through. Others respond to your request. Jump on an opportunity. Tonight: Zoom in on what you want.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★ Don't drag your feet. Keep your eye on the long term, both professionally and emotionally. Your thoughts take you in a new direction if you allow yourself to flow. Don't always be so hard on yourself. Share more of your inner thoughts. Tonight: Work late.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ Your optimism takes you in a new direction if you flow with the moment. Be positive about news that comes forward, even if you might be slightly uptight about what you hear. Allow more happiness in your life. Follow through on a great idea. Tonight: Relax to a good movie.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Visualize more of what you want and need from others, and encourage others to do the same. Learn to create more of what you want from life. Your instincts are right on about a neighbor or someone in your day-to-day environment. Tonight: Play away.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Others present different options. You see one option as much better for you. Let an associate know where you're coming from, as well as what you think would work. Don't let a difficult responsibility weigh you down, or you could start thinking negatively. Tonight: Go along with plans.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ Another might drop a lot of work on you. Your strongest asset is your ability to remain positive no matter what goes down. News from another could be disconcerting. First, get past your immediate reaction. Tonight: Get some exercise.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★★ Join your imagination and your uncanny insight, and you simply cannot do anything wrong. You can act on the spur of the moment and know you're landing right where you need to be. Interpersonal relationships flourish. Tonight: Go for what you want — OK?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★ Security must play a greater role in your decision-making process right now. You might find that someone simply doesn't agree. You could make this a big deal if you want to. A partner delights you with wonderful news that could impact your finances. Tonight: Togetherness works.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★★ Your phone rings. Someone knocks at the door. You might wonder about the onslaught of activity around you. Consider what might be going on with a close associate. This person might blow your mind with what he or she offers. Tonight: Surround yourself with like minds.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★ Dig into work and get your job done. Finances could weigh on your mind. Don't allow someone to distract you from your main objective. A co-worker might want more than just a professional relationship. Be careful. Tonight: Pick up a new summer item.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★ Visualize more of what you desire in an important relationship. Even if you aren't involved in a relationship, start thinking in terms of what you want. Don't let fatigue or a sinking feeling dominate your thoughts. Tonight: Beam in what you want.

QUOTE of the DAY

"If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything."

— Mark Twain (1835-1910)

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LOCAL



Local student crushes cancer with soda can tabs

Middle school does its part in war on breast cancer

BY MELISSA PRICE
Special to the Daily Press

Alec Richker is known around Lincoln Middle School as "The Breast Cancer Kid." The 11-year-old spurred on his classmates to collect more than 4,200 red tab tops from cans of Hansen's Natural Sodas in an effort to find a cure for cancer.

For each tab, Hansen Natural Corporation donated 10 cents to breast cancer research at the City of Hope National Medical Center and Beckman Research Institute. Hansen donated a total of \$50,000.

Richker's aunt, Lori Plager, was diagnosed with breast cancer four years ago.

"I didn't know what it was until my aunt had it," Richker said, adding that she went through grueling chemotherapy. "She lost all of her hair. It was pretty frightening."

Richker started gathering the tabs on a small scale after he noticed the label on the soda can.

"I noticed that a can said 'save lives, save tabs' and thought 'That's kinda cool,'" he said.

He stuffed tabs in his pocket, tossed them in his lunchbox and brought them home.

Richker then approached Lincoln Middle School Principal Ilene Straus to



Alec Richker

find a way for more students to become involved. She challenged him to come back with a plan and she would help him launch it throughout the school.

He placed folders in more than 40 fifth-period classes so students could deposit their tabs after lunch. He canvassed the playground and cafeteria during lunch and recess to gather the tabs from students.

"A lot of people would have their tabs

ready and waiting for me to come by," he said.

Richker had plenty of help from his schoolmates, teachers and family.

"If I couldn't get to the cafeteria,

"I noticed that a can said 'save lives, save tabs' and thought 'That's kinda cool.'"

— ALEC RICHKER

everyone would leave their tabs on the tables and Joe the janitor would collect them for me," he said.

A school staffer challenged two other students to turn in 10 tabs each day. They became two of Richker's biggest supporters.

"They carried around big buckets and would come up to people and say 'fork over your tabs,'" Richker said. His 8-year-old brother Aidan counted the tabs he brought home from school each day.

Straus said she was impressed with Richker because he was organized and had a plan in mind. But even more, Richker came up with the idea on his own, she added.

As the school's principal, Straus and her staffers try to teach students the value of community. But it can be difficult because

most of the students are adolescents.

"It's really important for kids to know that the world isn't about them," she said. "This was great because it was student initiated."

Richker's aunt, Lori Plager, helped him prepare a speech he delivered over the school's public address system.

"I just said that one person could make a difference and told them how many women died of breast cancer every year," he said. "It was effective because it was novel and a lot of people listened."

Due to the overwhelming response to the program, Hansens decided to double the amount it will donate to \$100,000 in its next campaign.

Richker already is gearing up for the next school year.

"I'll have to tell people about it again because people have kinda forgot," he said.

Richker wants to place collection folders on the recycling cans so students will remember to take the tabs off their cans before they recycle them. To thank Richker for his work, Hansens is providing the school with motivational speaker Gale Webb, who will kick-off breast cancer awareness month in October. Webb also will give a much anticipated skateboarding demonstration.

The aspiring poet also has eyes on a school council seat next year.

Plager is now in remission. When asked why he sacrificed his time to collect the thousands of tabs, Richker said, "I just wanted to do something, you know?"



Today looks like there will be a boatload of different swells in the water. Southeast and northwest swells are building, making wave heights in most areas hovering between three and four feet by the afternoon. Breaks exposed to two or more of these swells should have four- to five-foot surf with possibly bigger sets. Conditions will be fair and waves will be waist to head high.

Saturday and Sunday breaks remain big, with Monday's surf tapering off a foot with waist to shoulder high waves in good conditions.

(Information compiled by Jesse Haley)

Location	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Water Quality
County Line	3-6/fair	3-6/fair	3-5/fair	3-4/fair	A
Zuma	3-6/fair	3-5/fair	3-5/fair	3-5/fair	A
Surfrider	3-5/fair	3-5/fair	3-4/fair	2-4/fair	A
Topanga	3-5/fair	3-5/fair	3-5/fair	3-5/fair	A
Breakwater	3-6/fair	3-6/fair	3-5/fair	3-5/fair	A
El Porto	3-5/fair	3-5/fair	3-5/fair	3-4/fair	A



There has been talk amongst some elected officials that Santa Monica may have too many establishments that serve alcohol. Some have even suggested that the government regulate how many bars and restaurants should be located in different areas of the city.

But the city's planning department has placed the issue at the bottom of its list of priorities for next year.

This week Q-Line wants to know, **"Does Santa Monica have a drinking problem? If so, should the city government intervene?"**

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

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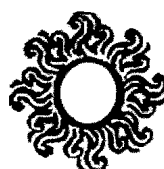
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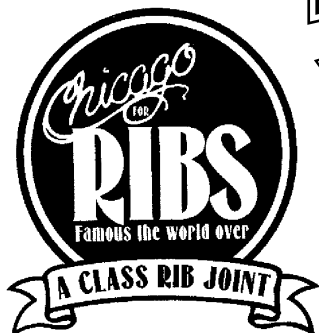
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LOCAL

Plane makes emergency landing on Interstate 10

Pilot was on his way to Santa Monica Airport

By The Associated Press

ALHAMBRA — A small plane made an emergency landing in the car pool lane of Interstate 10 in this suburb six miles east of Los Angeles on Sunday.

The single-engine Cessna managed to avoid cars as it came down, and there were no immediate reports of injuries, said California Highway Patrol Officer John Seumanutafa.

The pilot, who was en route to Santa Monica from Palm Springs, radioed an

emergency call to the highway patrol as he was going down at 5:42 p.m., Seumanutafa said.

"There are no reports of injuries. There was no impact with any other vehicles," the officer said.

Police have closed one eastbound lane of the highway, but all lanes westbound remain open, Seumanutafa said.

The Federal Aviation Administration has given the CHP permission to begin removing the plane from the landing site, he added.

CHP dispatched four patrol cars to the scene. One fire truck from the Alhambra Fire Department was also at the site.

Peace walks will continue

WALK, from page 1

"It felt good to do this," said Doug Willis, a 25-year Pico resident. "We talked to people; several people asked what we were doing and came along."

"Many of us live in this community and take great pride in where we live, and we need to make that presence known."

At the corner of 17th Street and Delaware, the site of many shootings, the group paused to join hands and say a prayer for peace. Their voices echoed off the surrounding homes, where many residents pulled back their blinds to watch the commotion.

Joining arms, Williams and Guitterez led the procession down the cul-de-sac on 20th Street — where two teen-agers were recently caught in the crossfire of a gang-related incident — before heading back to the church.

On the corner of 21st Street and Delaware Street, a young man approached Powell and asked her what the group was doing. When she told him, he responded by saying he had been struck by a bullet after he was caught in the middle of a shooting a few years ago.

She urged the young man to join the group and walk with them. But he declined and told her to catch up with the group.

"It's for people like him that we

walked," Powell said. "I definitely think this will work. I have faith this will work."

While the event was organized by the two churches, the object wasn't to proselytize or preach. It was to make their presence felt.

"(The violence) should never have been allowed to get to this level."

— LUCILLE POWELL
Pico resident

"The church is present; it has been present to what is going on," said Guitterez. "We are here for a purpose and bringing the community together like this is part of the gospel message."

Mayor Mike Feinstein and Mayor Pro Tem Kevin McKeown, along with a few potential city council candidates and Santa Monica High School's newly elected student body president marched as well.

"Peace becomes possible when fellowship is forged face-to-face, like we did it tonight," McKeown said.

City council to coordinate downtown planning groups

MEETING, from page 1

include a town square, a garden walk with botanical and sculpture gardens, plenty of open space and bicycle paths, as well as a child development facility and a revamped City Hall.

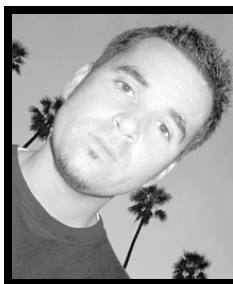
The civic center, located on Main Street between Colorado Avenue and Pico Boulevard, serves as an integral part

of town because of its proximity to downtown, Santa Monica Place, Palisades Park, the Santa Monica Pier, the Ocean Park neighborhood and Main Street.

The city purchased the 11-acre site from the RAND Corporation in 2000 for \$53 million with the intention of completely overhauling the civic center area so it would better connect to downtown Santa Monica.

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LOCAL



The FunHog

By Dan Dunn

'The screamer' proves not to be a good neighbor

*The telephone is ringing
I say, "Hi, it's me. Who is it there on the line?"*

A voice says, "Hi, hello, how are you. Well, I guess I'm doin' fine"

He says, "It's three a.m., there's too much noise. Don't you people ever wanna go to bed? Just 'cause you feel so good, do you have to drive me out of my head?"

— The Rolling Stones, "Get Off of My Cloud."

Be forewarned: I write angry when I'm tired, and I'm writing this at a most ungodly hour when damn near everyone else, save convenient store clerks and speed freaks, is fast asleep under the covers, dreaming about Russell Crowe ... and yeah, I mean the guys too!

(The Crowe thing reminds me of something I learned once from a Kentucky woman drinking something called a sloe gin fizz: There are two final stages to a sexual relationship, the part where you wish/imagine your partner is somebody much better looking and glamorous than they are, and the final-final part where you wish/imagine YOU are somebody much better looking and glamorous.)

So I should be asleep, but I'm wide awake. Partly because I still put stock in such old-fashioned journalistic principles as meeting deadlines, and partly because I'm trying to finish the latest draft of the "Fun Things To Do With Mud" script to give to the dry cleaner-cum-producer known as Fong (see last week's column, but try to keep up — I can't carry this relationship on my own).

But mostly I'm wide awake due to the strident late-night vocal stylings of my new neighbor, who henceforth will spitefully be referred to as The Screamer, and performs with a percussion accompaniment best described as headboard bongos. Just as I write this, she hit a note higher than any I've heard since my friend Dennis had that bicycle seat incident on Moab's Slick Rock trail. That was followed by a scream that sounded for all the world like the remixed screech of a mis-adjusted fanbelt combined with that sound a modem makes when it hits connection pay dirt.

To make things worse, I've seen The Screamer — bumped into her in the hall the other night when she got home from work. So I wound up welcoming The Screamer to the neighborhood and giving her a quick-run-down of the amenities — as if occasionally being able to find street parking within five blocks of the building qualifies as an amenity — and I may have made a joke or two about the steep penalty for being late with the rent ... geez, I gotta get some new material.

Truth is, I don't know what in the world I actually said to the gal because the entire time we were talking what I was really listening to was the little voice in my head — the one I call Cyrano de Brainiac, who feeds smooth lines to my

subconscious ... carefully crafted lines that damn near always net me a game of mattress hockey. I think some of the words asked if her necklace was hand-made, because it sure looked much like some tribal crafts I'd seen in Bora Bora that time Sting hosted the mountain climbing party ... stuff like that.

But alas, not even Cyrano could put that puck in play. And this has everything to do with what was said at The End of my conversation with The Screamer. The End part I remember quite well. It went like this:

Me: "So, maybe after you get settled in and all, I could officially welcome you to the neighborhood by buying you a drink. There's a great little place up the street called The Some Young Moon Saloon. You can't beat the Anchor Steam on tap."

Her: "That sounds great ..."

... she lied. At least, I think she was lying. She had to be, 'cuz chicks don't drink Anchor Steam. Too heavy for them. Still, I like to throw that out like a test reel — see if they bite regardless. If they do, I'm "in" like a Moby record at a gay bar (not the best analogy, but again, I'm writing tired and angry). But you get the point — chick says yes to an Anchor Steam at a place named after a dead Chinese dictator, and she's digging the FunHog something proper. Unless, or course ...

Her: "do you mind if my boyfriend comes along?"

You're absolutely right I do! What do I look like, the damn Welcome Wagon?

Me: Boyfriend? No ... I mean, sure, bring him along ... but I've gotta get going now ... something's ... wrong ... with ... the ... parking. I'll, um, call you about that beer sometime.

Than I ran back into the apartment, a lonely, defeated man. But I got over it. Until that night, that is.

That night I discovered that not only is The Screamer's boyfriend inconveniently (at least as far as I was concerned) still alive, he's apparently packing more package than a U.S. Marine squadron in Kabul. Either that, or he's doing things most men haven't even considered yet. It's the only explanation for the sound he makes her make. Now, by the way, it's suddenly silent after a three-minute refrain that sounded like maybe 300 cats fighting in a giant sack.

So maybe it's worth rethinking, especially with the JCPA status. I'll just befriend Marine Boy and after all, I live next door. Before I'm through, he'll think that TV show "Fifth Wheel" is Dating Game, 2002.

Failing that, I'll just hook maybe six or seven digital mikes to my wall, download these sounds to my laptop and lay down a few rap lyrics. Nothing like a great soundtrack for a movie about having fun with mud.

(Dan Dunn, a Santa Monica resident, writes for Warner Bros. Online. For more FunHog fun, check out www.thefunhog.com.)



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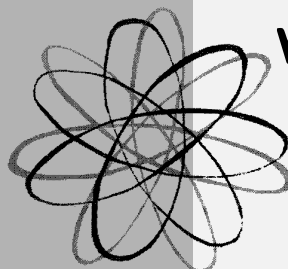
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STATE

Assembly bill seeks to raise state's smoking age to 21

BY ANDREW BRIDGES

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — A lawmaker planned to unveil a bill Monday that would raise California's smoking age from 18 to 21, making it the highest in the nation.

The bill would make it illegal for anyone under 21 to purchase tobacco products, including cigarettes, in the state. All 50 states set a minimum age of at least 18 following a 1992 directive from Congress. In three states — Alabama, Alaska and Utah — the legal age is 19.

State Assemblyman Paul Koretz, D-West Hollywood, said the goal is to cut smoking rates among kids in their teens, the age when most smokers pick up the habit.

More than 400,000 deaths each year in the U.S. are attributable to tobacco-related causes, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The American Lung Association estimates about 90 percent of all smokers

begin smoking before the age of 21.

"Our highest calling is to do things that save lives and the best way to prevent smoking deaths is to prevent people from becoming addicted to tobacco in the first place. My bill is the best way to do that," Koretz said.

The move follows a February vote by the California Medical Association to push for the change in state law.

Dr. Leonard Klay, a Santa Rosa obstetrician and gynecologist who introduced the measure at the association's annual meeting, said a higher smoking age, along with peer pressure and the taxes that make cigarettes unaffordable for many teens, should cut smoking rates.

"If you're smoking by age 21, it's very difficult to quit," said Klay, 64, who smoked for more than dozen years after beginning at age 19.

The American Lung Association initially was cool to the medical group's proposal, saying it preferred to concentrate on enforcing current tobacco-related laws.

On Friday, however, Paul Knepprath, a lobbyist for the American Lung Association of California, said the group would support the proposed legislation, despite what he called a lack of evidence that a hike in the minimum age would reduce youth smoking.

Anti-smoking activists fear the bill could derail other tobacco-related legislative efforts, including continued pushes to boost taxes on cigarettes.

Gov. Gray Davis has proposed tacking 50 cents on each pack of cigarettes to help close an expected \$23.6 billion budget shortfall. The Lung Association and others are pushing to add an additional 15 cents on top of that to go to anti-smoking efforts.

Brendan McCormick, a spokesman for Philip Morris USA, the nation's largest tobacco company, said the company believes a better approach to curbing youth smoking is enforcement of existing laws, but that it would remain neutral on the bill.

"We will be guided by whatever society says the minimum age should be for tobacco products," McCormick said.

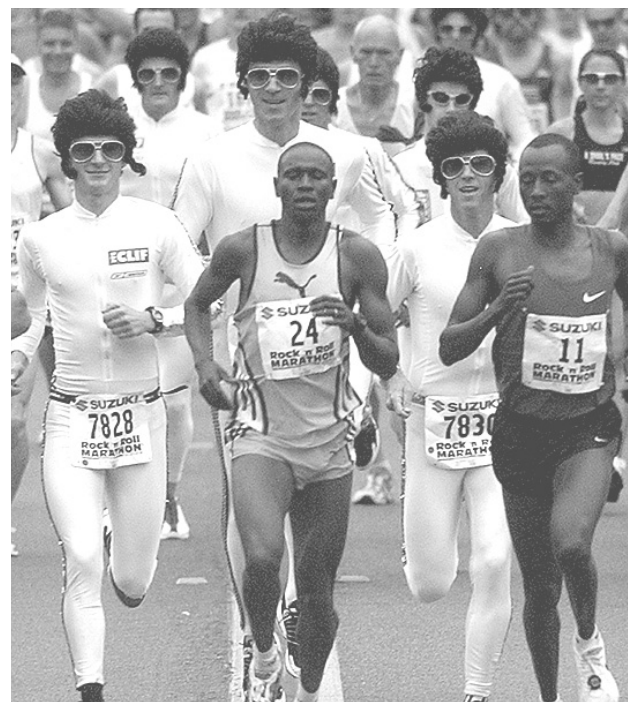
University of Southern California student Rob Mariano, 21, said he didn't think tighter access would prevent young people from smoking.

"They can try all they want, but kids are going to find ways to get cigarettes," said Mariano, who began smoking at 14. Mariano said he bought cigarettes from stores that didn't ask for identification or had older friends buy them.

Because the deadline for introducing new bills has passed, Koretz planned to amend an existing tobacco-related bill to seek the change in state law.

That bill, AB 1453, would also ban ashtrays where it is illegal to smoke, require them in designated smoking areas and restrict the distribution of free tobacco samples. It has been stalled in the state Senate for the past year.

Run me tender



Denis Poroy/Associated Press

Runners dressed as Elvis get off the starting line with Joseph Kibor (24) and John Gwako (11), both of Kenya, at the beginning of the Rock 'N' Roll Marathon in San Diego on Sunday. Over 20,000 runners took part in the annual race with a Rock 'N' Roll theme.

BY STEVE LAWRENCE

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO

The Legislature's version of the Energizer Bunny — the long-running hearings on the Oracle contract — continue this week with the state's budget chief facing questions about the potentially costly deal.

Tim Gage, Gov. Gray Davis' director of finance, will be grilled Tuesday about why the state didn't verify Oracle Corp.'s claims of big savings before it signed the \$95 million, no-bid agreement.

"Tim Gage said, 'Sometimes we don't make

the rules' and OK'd the deal," said Assemblyman Dean Florez, chairman of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. "We're interested in figuring out that if we don't make the rules, who does?"

The contract was supposed to save California up to \$111 million through volume purchasing and maintenance of database software. But the state auditor says the deal could end up costing up to \$41 million more than if the state had kept its previous software supply arrangements.

Oracle, a Redwood Shores-based company, is sharply critical of the audi-

tor's analysis and defends the contract as a great deal for the state.

The committee has already taken 67 hours of testimony on the Oracle deal and other state contracts and plans up to five more hearings, two this week and three the next.

Florez, D-Shafter, told Assembly Speaker Herb Wesson last week that he plans to wrap up the hearings on June 13.

But Republicans say the panel should be ready to hold even more hearings.

"We believe it more important to provide taxpayers and all interested parties (with) an inquiry

that is thorough, fair and objective rather than one that is incomplete, partisan and biased due to an unnecessary deadline," six GOP members of the committee said in a letter to Florez and Wesson.

Florez says the June 13 date isn't a firm deadline but that the committee needs to finish its work sometime soon to allow Attorney General Bill Lockyer to complete his investigation of the contract.

"Sure (the Republicans) would like this to go on through next year, but we are an oversight committee, not the AG's office," he said.

Nathan Barankin, a spokesman for Attorney General Bill Lockyer, said that completion of the committee's work would remove "some impediments" for the attorney general.

"It's inevitable that anytime there are overlapping investigations occurring that you can run into scheduling conflicts while you're trying to interview relevant individuals," he said.

On Wednesday the committee is scheduled to hear from State Auditor Elaine Howel and one of her predecessors, Kurt Sjoberg, who did an analysis for Oracle that supported the company's position.

"It's the battle of the auditors, past and present," Florez said.

Oracle representatives complained angrily before the Sjoberg appearance was announced that their testimony kept getting put off and that Florez didn't plan to let them really present their side of the story.

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NATIONAL



Families share prayers at ground zero final memorial

BY DEEPTI HAJELA
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — Hundreds of relatives of people lost on Sept. 11 joined hands at the site of the World Trade Center on Sunday as those hit hardest by terrorism sought solace at an interfaith memorial ceremony marking the end of the recovery effort.

Family members hoisted pictures of their loved ones above their heads as the ceremony began with bagpipers playing "Amazing Grace." Then, a woman sang "God Bless America" amid the muffled sobs of relatives.

Among those at the site was William Healey, whose niece Renee Newell, was a passenger on American Airlines Flight 11, the airliner that was flown into the World Trade Center's north tower.

"My niece is here forever," Healey said, speaking before the ceremony. "It doesn't seem like it's the last day to me."

The ceremony included the lighting of four candles: one for peace and three to honor rescue workers, the families and the more than 2,800 people who died there.

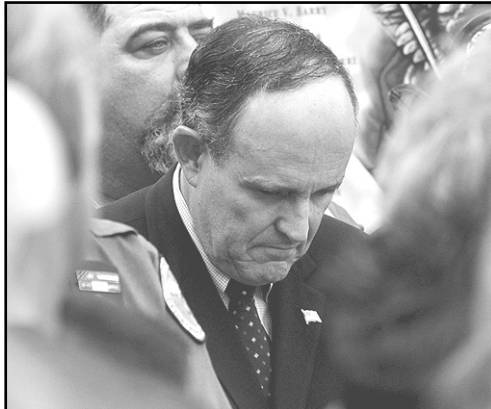
"You will never be forgotten. Your memory will live on forever," said one woman, as a candle was lit. Afterward, nine white doves were released that circled ground zero before soaring out of sight.

Jennifer Nilsen, 33, who lost her husband Troy Nilsen, said the ceremony added a touch of dignity to the grim work at ground zero. The remains of her husband, who worked for Cantor Fitzgerald, have not been identified.

"It's real important you know, saying goodbye to my husband, which I never wanted to do," she said. "I'm glad this was done today."

About 1,100 victims have been identified and nearly 20,000 body parts were recovered during the excavation of the 16-acre site, which ended after more than eight months of round-the-clock work.

"Most of these families haven't even found the remains of their loved ones,"



Stephen Chernin/Associated Press
Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani bows his head during prayer at the interfaith service held at the site of the World Trade Center disaster on Sunday. Victims' families, ground zero workers and New York City uniformed services attended the memorial.

said Dennis McKeon, director of the St. Clare's Church WTC Outreach program, which organized Sunday's ceremony. "Starting next week, this is going to be a construction site, so this is their last chance to say goodbye."

On Thursday, thousands of people attended a service organized by the city to mark the end of the cleanup at the site and to honor the rescue workers. An empty, flag-draped stretcher symbolizing the victims whose remains have not been recovered was carried out of the pit, followed by the trade center's last steel beam, draped in black cloth and a flag.

Some victims' relatives had criticized Mayor Michael Bloomberg for not holding the service on a weekend, when they said it would be easier for families to attend. Sunday's ceremony was planned for family members who weren't able to be there Thursday.

Among those who did attend on Sunday were former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Sen. Charles Schumer.

The cleanup finished more than three months earlier than expected and, at less than \$750 million, at a fraction of the estimated cost.

Memphis' chief medical examiner tied-up with bomb

BY WOODY BAIRD
Associated Press Writer

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — The city's chief medical examiner was attacked, bound with barbed wire and left with what appeared to be a bomb tied to his body, police said Sunday.

The device did not explode and Medical Examiner O.C. Smith escaped Saturday night's attack with minor injuries. Police said it appeared that it would have been possible for the device to explode.

The device appeared similar to a crude bomb found in March in a stairway of the Shelby County Regional Forensic Center, where Smith and his staff work. The bomb was destroyed by police and no one was injured.

Deputy Police Chief Bob Wright declined to speculate on why Smith was attacked but noted that he has helped in several criminal investigations.

Smith and his staff perform autopsies on the bodies of crime victims and often

provide information used in prosecutions.

Smith was leaving the forensic center when one or more attackers threw a chemical in his face and overpowered him. A security guard found him two and a half hours later, tied up and lying near a parking lot.

The police bomb squad was called to free Smith because of the device bound to his body. Police X-rayed the device and rendered it harmless with an explosive charge.

The X-rays and the remains of the device were sent to a lab in Atlanta run by the U.S. Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Wright said Smith suffered minor cuts, bruises and a chemical burn to his face.

Last June during court hearings on convicted killer Philip Workman's attempt to avoid execution, authorities received an anonymous letter threatening Smith.

Workman was convicted of killing a Memphis police officer in 1981.

The letter accused Smith of lying and referred to Workman as an innocent "LAMB OF GOD."

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SPORTS

L.A. Lakers beat Kings in overtime, move to finals

BY CHRIS SHERIDAN

AP Basketball Writer

SACRAMENTO — The two-time defending NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers were pushed further than they've been pushed in the playoffs in three years — into overtime on the road in Game 7 of the conference finals.

Did they flinch? Not at all.

Shaquille O'Neal and Derek Fisher came through in the clutch for the Lakers on a night when Kobe Bryant didn't make a basket in either the fourth quarter or overtime, sending the Lakers back to the championship round with a 112-106 victory over the Sacramento Kings on Sunday.

Bad shots, bad passes, bad decisions — those were about the only things the Kings did well in an extra session that went the Lakers' way and gave coach Phil Jackson his 27th consecutive playoff series victory.

O'Neal, Bryant and their cohorts have shown they can thrive when the pressure is at its highest, and Sunday's overtime was another example. O'Neal finished with 35 points, 13 rebounds and four blocks, while Bryant had a quiet 30 as he scored only four points in the final 17 minutes — all on free throws.

Bryant's final two from the line gave the Lakers a six-point lead with 6.4 seconds left. The game ended with Webber bobbling an inbounds pass.

Webber hit the first shot of overtime, a 20-footer over O'Neal, but even that didn't instill any faith in the fans.

The crowd went into a collective hush every time Webber got his hands in the ball, wondering whether the big-salary player with the reputation for failing at crunch time would get it done.

Webber missed a jumper with 1:38 left and O'Neal hit a pair from the line for a 108-106 lead. After Bibby missed a jumper, O'Neal got the ball in the low post, spun around Webber and — surprise — missed a dunk.

Hedo Turkoglu ruined that chance by firing a pass at Webber's feet, but the Kings got another break when O'Neal missed again inside. This time, though, Doug Christie had his foot on the 3-point line as he was long on a jumper.

Fisher made two from the line for a 110-106 lead with 14.6 seconds left, and Webber then missed a 3-pointer. Bryant wrapped it up from the line, pumping his fist in defiant delight.

After the game, Bryant went over and hugged Sacramento's Mike Bibby, O'Neal threw a white towel into the stands and Jackson went over to shake hands with Kings coach Rick Adelman.

Evander Holyfield defies age, back in heavyweight picture

BY TIM DAHLBERG

AP Boxing Writer

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Evander Holyfield did his part, in a performance that made him feel young once again. Now he'll go to Memphis to see just what his win over Hasim Rahman really means in the heavyweight picture.

Holyfield made a bid for yet another title fight Saturday night, turning back the clock with some surprising power and quick combinations before Rahman's grotesquely swollen head forced the fight to be stopped in the eighth round.

The official verdict was a split technical decision for the 39-year-old former four-time champion. What he really won, though, was the acknowledgment that perhaps his career isn't quite over yet.

"Don't tell me what God can't do," said Holyfield, a four-time heavyweight champion. "Don't tell me he can't revive a 39-year-old."

Just how revived Holyfield is depends largely on the outcome of Mike Tyson's fight with Lennox Lewis that will decide the two main portions of the heavyweight title.

Holyfield plans to be in Memphis — where he would do well to cheer on Tyson, who would seem far more likely to give him a third fight than would Lewis.

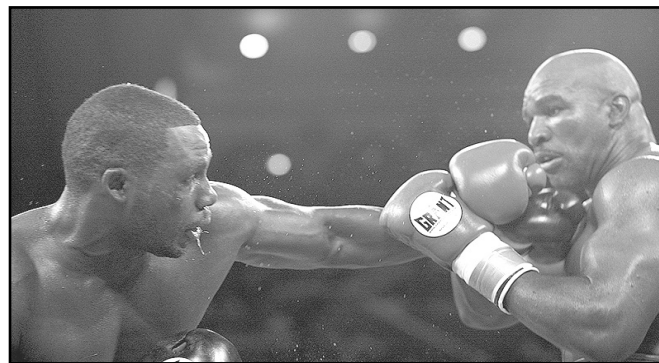
"One of the guys who wins next week might want a big payday," Holyfield said. "I'm willing to fight anyone who wants to fight me."

Holyfield entered his fight with Rahman as somewhat damaged goods, seen as an aging warrior whose reflexes were slowing. But he showed glimpses against Rahman of how good he was in his prime, constantly attacking his fellow former champion and landing the harder shots.

The hardest of those shots came from Holyfield's head — head butts in the fourth and seventh rounds that caused a swelling the size of a baseball to form on the top left forehead of Rahman.

After saying before the fight that he'd retire if unable to defeat Holyfield, Rahman called for a rematch. But it would seem Holyfield would have better opportunities against either the Tyson-Lewis winner or the winner of the WBA title fight next month between John Ruiz and Kirk Johnson.

Holyfield was fighting in a non-title fight for the first



Chris Polk/Associated Press

Hasim Rahman, left, lands a left jab to the chest of Evander Holyfield, right, during the first round of their heavyweight bout in Atlantic City, N.J., on Saturday. Holyfield pounded Rahman for most of eight rounds before winning a technical decision after a head butt caused a large swelling on Rahman's head.

time in 10 bouts, a remarkable string that dated back to his big upset win over Tyson in November 1996.



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INTERNATIONAL



Pakistan to ask Russia for help with India crisis

BY ROBERT H. REID
Associated Press Writer

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — With India's prime minister unwilling to meet with Pakistan's president at a summit in Kazakhstan this week, the Pakistani leader held out the possibility Sunday that Russia could serve as a mediator in the crisis over disputed Kashmir.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said there was "no plan" to meet Pakistan President Gen. Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of a regional summit in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The summit, which both leaders are attending, begins Monday.

India has ruled out such a meeting until it is convinced Musharraf has fulfilled his promise to stop Pakistan-based militants

"I think that President Putin can persuade India to join a dialogue. Pakistan will not start a war."

— GEN. PERVEZ MUSHARRAF
Pakistan President

from crossing into the Indian-controlled part of Kashmir.

With the two sides at an impasse, Russian President Vladimir Putin, who will also attend the Almaty meeting, has offered to mediate the crisis, which threatens to escalate into nuclear war.

During a stopover Sunday in Tajikistan

en route to the summit, Musharraf expressed optimism that Russia, a traditional ally of India, could help — presumably by shuttling between the two sides.

"I think that President Putin can persuade India to join a dialogue," Musharraf told reporters. "Pakistan will not start a war. We support solving the conflict through peaceful means."

Musharraf said he would "meet anywhere and at any level" and wanted one-on-one talks with Vajpayee. But "if he doesn't want to, I will not insist," Musharraf said.

However, Musharraf is under conflicting pressure between the international community to stop cross-border terrorism and from Pakistan's Muslim activists that he stand firmly behind Kashmiri rebels battling Indian rule in the contested Himalayan region.

Vajpayee, who arrived in Almaty on Sunday, is likewise under strong domestic pressure to put an end to what many Indians consider terrorism.

Pakistani officials maintain that Musharraf is cracking down on the militants as he abandoned his Afghan Taliban allies last year and backed the U.S.-led war on terrorism. But the Pakistanis insist that India show flexibility by agreeing to talks on the future of Kashmir.

Without concessions from India, Pakistani officials fear a firestorm from

Islamic activists, including extremists linked to al-Qaida and believed responsible from terrorist attacks on foreigners in Pakistan.

In a bid to gain international support, Pakistan said it will send envoys to the United States and elsewhere to relay Islamabad's stand on the crisis — that it wants to discuss a solution but India won't come to the table.

Some Western diplomats and U.N. officials have left India and Pakistan amid concerns the military standoff, punctuated by daily shelling and gunfire across the border, could escalate into a full-fledged war.

Malaysia on Sunday urged nonessential embassy staff and families of its diplomats to leave — following similar decisions by the United States, Britain, France, Israel, South Korea and the United Nations.

Kuwait advised its nationals Sunday not to travel to India and Pakistan "until the causes of tension and escalation are contained," while Iran said its citizens should avoid unnecessary visits.

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes, in a tearful speech to a military conference in Singapore, said Sunday that India would neither be "impulsive" with Pakistan nor weak in "the war against terrorism, the same terrorism which hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon."

Fernandes repeated India's pledge to avoid first use of nuclear weapons.

"There is no way India will ever use a nuclear weapon other than as a deterrent," Fernandes said. "We stand by our nuclear doctrine."

Pakistan, which has a smaller military, has not ruled out a first nuclear strike, although Musharraf said Saturday "any sane individual" would ensure that any conflict not go nuclear.



Aijaz Rahi/Associated Press

An unidentified woman, center, screams near the body of her sister Shasi Bala, 20, not seen in picture, near Garkhal village 28 kilometers (18 kilometers) north of Jammu, India on Sunday after Bala was allegedly killed by Pakistani motor shelling on the village early Sunday. Dozens of people including Indian and Pakistani soldiers were killed in recent cross border shelling by both countries.

Army arrests 16 in connection to sawmill massacre

BY JO TUCKMAN
Associated Press Writer

SANTIAGO XOCHILTEPEC, Mexico — Army troops and police arrested 16 people in remote southern Mexico after 26 sawmill workers were massacred in a land dispute, state officials said Sunday.

Three mass burials clogged the little graveyard in this village of 640 people on Sunday as Evangelical church members, Jehovah's Witnesses and then Catholics lowered their dead into graves, some dug extra wide in the red clay so that relatives could be buried side by side.

The army and more than 200 state police helped in the arrests after Friday night's shooting about 215 miles southeast of Mexico City, the Oaxaca state attorney general's office said.

"This attack was an act of vengeance by one community toward another" because of a federal ruling that the community of Santiago Xochiltepec owned hundreds of acres claimed by neighboring Santo Domingo Teojomulco, the office's statement said.

Most conflicts in the impoverished region are related in some way to land. Competing Indian cultures have battled over farm and forest land since before the Spanish conquest 500 years ago.

According to survivors, the 26 victims collected their pay Friday after spending a

week working at a sawmill in San Pedro el Alto. They hitched a ride on a dump truck for the several-hour journey along a winding dirt road to their hometown of Xochiltepec.

At a spot called Agua Fria, rocks and tree trunks blocked the road. Gunmen emerged, chased away the driver and then opened fire, killing at least 26 men.

Only the driver, his son and four other people survived, the attorney general's office said.

The newspaper Reforma quoted driver Alberto Antonio Perez as saying, "After stopping the vehicle, the subjects ordered me to get out of there and after advancing a few meters, they began shooting and then everything was confusion."

Survivor Pablito Lopez Cruz, 18, told Televisa from a hospital in Oaxaca that he was protected by the bodies of his slain friends. After the killings, the attackers stripped the dead of their pay, he said.

"This was not a conflict, it was a massacre," said Sergio Santos, 25, who would have been on the truck that was attacked had he not returned home a day early from the sawmill to register a son's birth.

Abdias Hernandez, 66, said there had been repeated clashes with Teojomulco since 1935.

"If we had guns, we'd go and do the same thing to them, but we don't, which is

why we stand here with our arms crossed," Hernandez said. "If the government does nothing, the dispute will continue. There will be more massacres."

People in Xochiltepec say men from neighboring Teojomulco raided their town Jan. 24 and fired hundreds of shots at the village school.

Those in the Teojomulco village of Las Huertas — population 390 — accused Xochiltepec men of a March 1 ambush that killed one person.

"The government has left this to grow and grow, and then this happened. It was brutal" said Onofre Ramirez, a 24-year-old teacher. "This is not an isolated situation.

It is generalized throughout the region."

Hundreds of people have died in decades of clashes related to land conflicts between Zapotec Indian villages such as Xochiltepec, Mixtec Indian districts such as Amoltepec, and Mestizo areas such as Teojomulco.

The federal agrarian reform department has reported some 600 ongoing community disputes over land in Oaxaca, Mexico's most heavily Indian state.

Repeated federal and state campaigns to solve the disputes have failed. Some disputes date to colonial times and others to conflicts between Indian nations before the Spanish arrived in the 16th century.

Fingertip found in rice ball

By The Associated Press

TOKYO — A woman in northern Japan bit into a rice ball she bought at a convenience store and got a gruesome surprise: a fingertip.

The woman spit out a mouthful of her Korean bibimbap-flavored snack after she tasted something unusual and discovered a half-inch slice of human finger, said Takashi Fujii, a spokesman for the convenience store Lawsons.

Police later determined the severed digit

belonged to an employee of food company Nihon Fresh Delica who accidentally cut his finger while making rice balls.

The woman found the chunk of flesh Friday in the northern city of Sendai. She showed it to a doctor, who identified it as a fingertip.

Bibimbap is a spicy Korean mix of rice, vegetables and red pepper paste.

Fujii apologized.

"We'll make sure this sort of thing doesn't happen again," he said.



COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



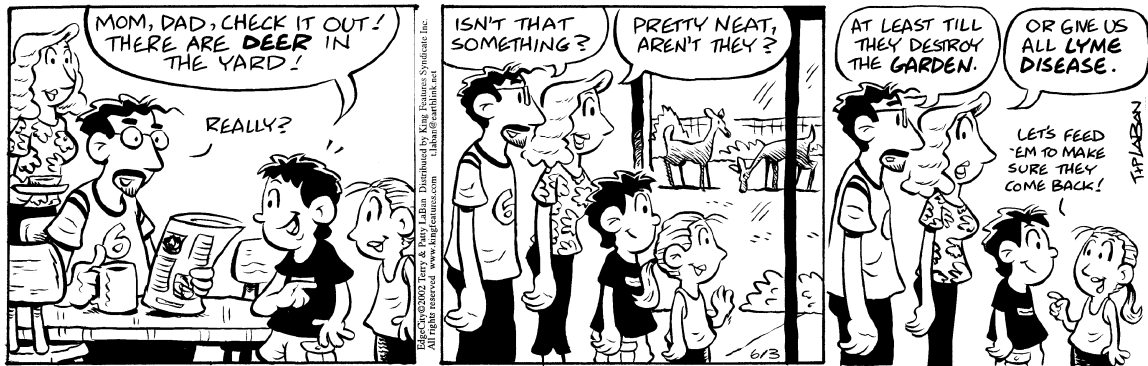
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- ACROSS**
- 1 Appointment
 - 5 — mater
 - 9 One over par
 - 10 Circus barkers
 - 12 Have — to grind
 - 13 17-syllable poem
 - 14 Carson City's state
 - 16 Road goo
 - 17 Conks out
 - 18 Place
 - 21 Switch positions
 - 22 Honolulu's state
 - 23 Peace Prize creator
 - 24 Topeka's state
 - 26 Flying mammal
 - 29 Cash in
 - 30 Comedy set in Korea
 - 31 Radius's place
 - 32 Juneau's state
 - 34 Insinuating
 - 37 Writer Conrad
 - 38 Marsh bird
 - 39 Like neon
 - 40 Give for a time
- DOWN**
- 41 New Jersey team
 - 1 Murdered
 - 2 Century plants
 - 3 Austin's state
 - 4 Looked over
 - 5 Blonde shade
 - 6 Actress Thompson
 - 7 Rum drink
 - 8 Base
 - 9 Monopoly railroad
 - 11 Guaranteed

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Saturday's answer

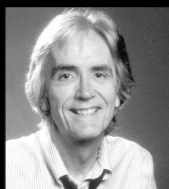
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6-3

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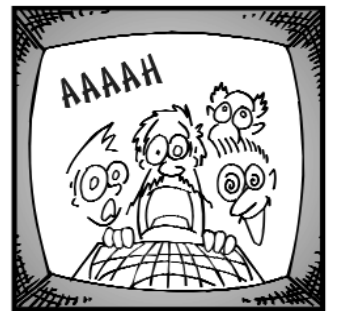
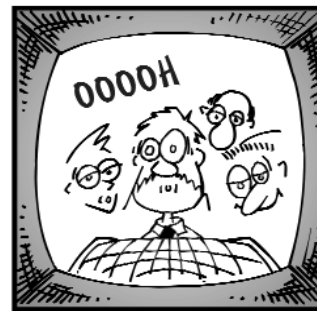


NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Women bare breasts in protest

- Four women bared their chests in downtown Eugene, Ore., in December, protesting society's use of child-unfriendly pesticides (and in favor of legalized hemp).
- "Hundreds" of women bared their chests in Lusaka, Zambia, in January, protesting the allegedly fraudulent election victory of president Levy Mwanawasa.
- In a protest in Helsinki, Finland, in April, "hundreds" of women publicly vowed to refrain from bearing children for four years unless parliament stops authorizing nuclear power plants.



The Children's Internet Protection Act "goes too far." Judge to allow pornography in public libraries. -News Item

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BACK PAGE

Nationwide survey suggests kids ignore sun-safety advice

BY LINDSEY TANNER

AP Medical Writer

CHICAGO — Sun-worshipping kids are still seeking tans — and not using sunscreen — despite warnings about the dangers of skin cancer, a survey of preteens and adolescents found.

Only a third of the 10,079 youngsters surveyed said they routinely used sunscreen during the previous summer, and nearly 10 percent said they had used a tanning bed. Most reported having at least one sunburn during the previous summer, and half with multiple sunburns said it was worth it to get the tan that followed.

Research has shown that severe sunburns in childhood can significantly increase the risk later in life of developing melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer; while the use of tanning beds has been linked to other skin cancers.

Studies have suggested that using sunscreen in childhood could reduce the risk of developing skin cancers other than melanoma in adulthood by as much as 78 percent, the researchers said.

More than 1 million Americans are diagnosed each year with skin cancer, and excess sun exposure is the leading cause. With rates rising nationwide, public health messages from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Cancer Society have urged sun-protection measures for all ages, including using sunscreen and avoiding tanning beds.

However, they appear to have had minimal impact among youngsters, according to the study led by Boston University researcher Alan Geller. Results appear in the June issue of Pediatrics.

Geller said a stronger national effort is needed, akin to anti-smoking campaigns that have been credited with helping to reduce teen smoking.

Alexandra Tomlinson, a fair-skinned 14-year-old in suburban Detroit, said the reason she goes to tanning booths and lays out in the sun without sunscreen is simple: "I just think I look better when I'm tan and not white."

She said she has heard the warnings from her mother and in school, where teachers show pictures of prematurely wrinkled, sun-damaged skin, but the consequences are "too far off to worry about."

"Maybe showing us someone who does have skin cancer" would help, Tomlinson said.

In the study, boys and girls ages 12 to 18 filled out questionnaires in 1999 about "tan-seeking" behaviors during that year and the previous summer. The youngsters were children of participants in a national study of female nurses. Though they were mostly white and middle-class and were not randomly selected, Geller said the results likely can be generalized to other teens.

While girls were much more likely than boys to report sunscreen use — 40 percent versus 26 percent, they also were more likely to have been sunburned at least three times. Girls also were far more likely to have used a tanning salon or tanning bed, 14 percent versus 2 percent for boys.

Dr. Martin Weinstock, a Brown University dermatology professor and head of the American Cancer Society's skin cancer advisory group, said changing the cultural norm will require time and novel methods.

The study was funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health, the CDC and the Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine.

Group offers new guidebook with safety tips on working in skyscrapers

BY STEPHANIE GASKELL

Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — A nonprofit group is urging people to learn about the tall buildings where they live and work, offering a handbook of tips on how to make sure structures are safe.

The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, a group of architects, engineers and city planners, created the guide after the Sept. 11 attacks brought down the World Trade Center's twin towers, killing 2,823 people.

"We're not saying that building codes are somehow deficient or that buildings aren't safe," David Maola, the council's executive director, said

at a safety conference Friday. "But the impact that an informed consumer could have could force the building management to make changes."

The 29-page "Building Safety Assessment Guidebook" advises tenants to ask about evacuation plans, security measures, emergency power systems, ventilation and communication systems. It also urges tenants to find out if there are flammable materials in the building, the council said.

Nearby structures must be considered when assessing the safety of a building, council officials said Friday. Buildings around the World Trade Center were vulnerable because of their proximity to a target, council

chairman Ron Klemencic said.

Klemencic recommended that communication systems be located away from vulnerable areas and urged people to be more aware of their surroundings and to practice fire safety drills.

He stressed, however, that the trade center collapse should not dictate building codes.

"It's not feasible to design every building to deal with that magnitude of an event," he said.

The council created a similar booklet advising building owners and managers on how they can improve safety measures beyond what building codes require.

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