FREE

THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 2005

Volume 4, Issue 179

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO
21 24 34 40 45
Meganumber: 26
Jackpot: $44 Million

FANTASY 5
17 19 30 37 39

DAILY 3
Daytime: 5 9 8
Evening: 3 5 1

DAILY DERBY
1st: 08 Gorgeous George
2nd: 02 Lucky Star
3rd: 04 Big Ben
RACE TIME: 1:41.50

NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

TalkToAliens.com began taking orders in March, recording people's messages at $3.99 per minute and beaming them into space, aimed toward the Milky Way by a huge parabolic dish antenna in Connecticut on a relatively accessible FM frequency. And in December, German inventor Juergen Broether introduced his "telephonic angel" system (at about US$2,000), which is a battery-operated, underground loudspeaker that, buried at a gravesite, allows someone to speak into a microphone and have the messages amplified through the dirt to the departed for up to a year on a single battery charge.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 160th day of 2005. There are 205 days left in the year.

On June 9, A.D. 68, the Roman Emperor Nero committed suicide.
In 1954, during the Senate-Army Hearings, Army special counsel Joseph N. Welch asked Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy: "Have you no sense of decency, sir?"
In 1870, author Charles Dickens died in Godshill, England.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Next to the slanderer, we detest the bearer of the slander to our ears."

MARY CATHERWOOD
AMERICAN NOVELIST (1847-1901)

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SM signs on for greener pastures

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Santa Monica was one of 70 cities worldwide last week to commit to municipal guidelines aimed at improving sustainability efforts.

The Urban Environmental Accords were signed by mayors from around the world during the United Nations World Environment Day Conference in San Francisco, in which participating cities pledged to make strides in eco-friendly urban development.

Santa Monica Mayor Pam O'Connor attended the event, along with three city staff members, and signed the accords. Staff members said the city can expect gains in its own sustainability efforts as a result of attending the conference.

The accords are not legally binding, but they do offer 21 ways cities can become "greener."

According to organizers, cities that sign the accords are promising to adopt three new policies each year which provide economic incentives for sustainable growth.

O'Connor said she was glad to attend because cities are picking up where federal governments are failing on environmental grounds.

"It was quite energizing seeing

See **ACCORDS**, page 8

In a bad mooood



Crill Hansen/Special to the Daily Press

PETA's "Unhappy Cows Campaign" arrived in Santa Monica on Tuesday with protesters on the Promenade toting graphic videos and 12-foot panels showing a day in the life of dairy cows.

Of 'principle' concern

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — By hook or by crook, Santa Monica businesses will likely be providing more environmentally conscious products. That much seems clear as the city blazes out of the World Environment Day conference.

On the one hand, city staff members acknowledge the need to provide better incentives for businesses to provide environmentally safe products. At the same time, the "precautionary principle" — defined as actions in which protecting the environment and human health take precedence — may soon be proposed to the City Council. If adopted, more businesses may be encouraged to prove their products are environmentally safe.

The theme of this year's gathering in San Francisco was "Green Cities", with the slogan "Plan for the Planet." The United Nations-backed event started June 1 and culminated with World Environment Day on June 5. More than 70 participating cities worldwide traded ideas on renewable energy, recycling, public transportation, parks and clean air and water.

Brian Johnson, an environ-

See **PRINCIPLE**, page 8

Bowled over: Pasadena is latest LA locale to drop NFL bid

By The Associated Press

PASADENA — Santa Monicans ready for some football may have to be content with watching from afar a little longer, now that this city's bid to lure an NFL team to the Rose Bowl has ended.

The development leaves the Los Angeles Coliseum and a parking lot in Anaheim as the lone remaining candidates interested in landing a team.

Pasadena's city council voted 5-1 to pursue a plan for the Rose Bowl that doesn't involve the NFL. The vote came early Tuesday after nearly seven hours of debate in front of a standing-room only crowd of about 200.

Opponents of the NFL project, including Mayor Bill Bogaard, argued that a proposed $500 million renovation of the Rose Bowl would bring too much traffic, displace park users from the Arroyo Seco and threaten the historic status of the 83-year-old stadium.

The league has been considering the Rose Bowl for three years. The Los Angeles area has been without an NFL team since the Rams left for St. Louis and the Raiders returned to Oakland in 1995.

The council will now pursue a different plan to secure the financial future of the Rose Bowl, which supporters of the NFL plan claim loses $2 million a year. The city partly uses money generated by the golf course adjacent to the stadium to cover those losses.

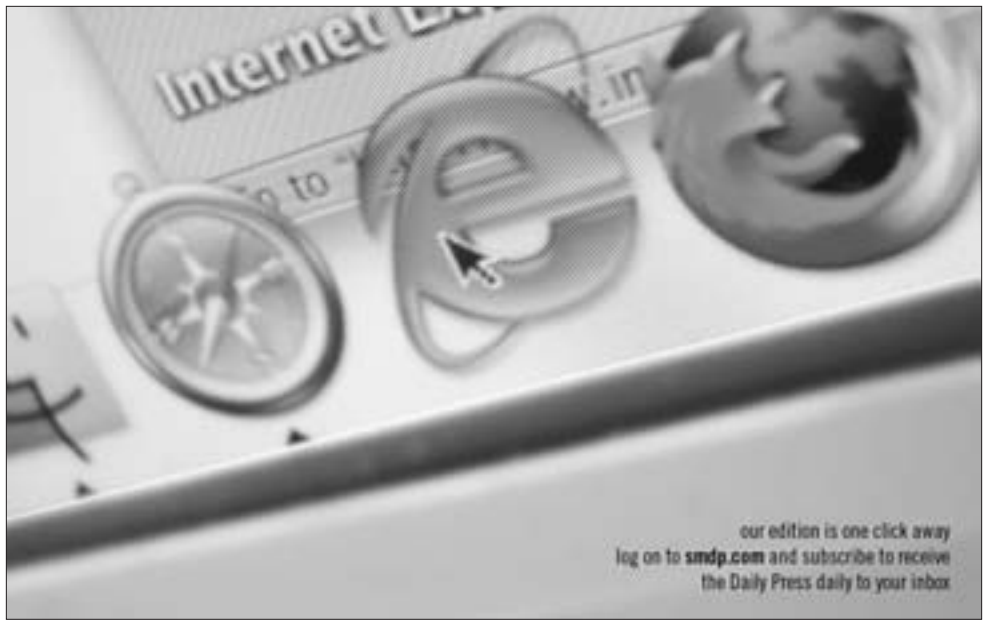
The NFL is also considering the Los Angeles Coliseum and Anaheim, but no decision is expected before the league settles collective bargaining and revenue sharing matters.

In May, Carson dropped out of contention when city officials decided to build a mall on its proposed site.


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HOROSCOPE



Easy does it, Aquarius

Santa Monica Daily Press



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)
★★★ Don't put more weight and responsibility on your shoulders than you can handle. Know that you can ask for help. Sharing a personal matter helps lighten your mood. Let go of a problem. Tonight: Everything falls into place.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★★ Your way of presenting a problem could be a bit stiff or hard. Don't be so critical of yourself, either. What starts out as a tough situation could loosen up if you become less judgmental. Tonight: Swap news with a pal.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★ You feel as if someone is raiding your finances. Could it be you? Perhaps you have overextended yourself financially. Design a more realistic budget with the help of someone you admire and trust, at least with money. Tonight: Look over your budget.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★ No one is harder on you than yourself. Try to loosen up and be more generous in your perspective, like you are with others. You might be the cause of your depression. List your positives. Tonight: Do what you want to do.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★ If you feel down or need to get away, do just that — right now. You might not be in the mood to deal with others, so don't. Close your door. You might need to do some hard thinking. Opt for some much-needed solitude. Tonight: Continue the low profile.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Your determination helps you zero in on what you want. You also might discover that once you have achieved this goal, you don't want it after all. A new friend could be more difficult than you'd anticipated. Tonight: Join a friend.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★ Others make demands, and you have no choice but to produce. You could feel the weight of the world on your shoulders. Resist getting down. Keep yourself even and direct. Others need your leadership. Tonight: Turn in as early as possible.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ You might not be able to get the whole story or the big picture right now. Understand that nothing key is being left out. Don't dwell on the negatives but on what you can do or see. Detach if possible. Tonight: Play a favorite piece of music.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Someone you have counted on through good and bad times might close down or, at best, not be helpful right now. You might want to rethink recent events and interchanges. Clear up this situation as soon as possible. Tonight: Hide out if you want.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★ You have no choice but to go along with someone, as this person is too stubborn to change his or her ideas, plans or decisions. Don't feel as if you are giving up your power. Let those around you reveal their true colors. Tonight: Play it easy.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★ A situation you might not want to discuss dominates your thinking and could impact how you feel. Take your time if you don't feel like a whirlwind of energy. Slow but steady works. Break early if you can. Tonight: Easy does it.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ You might not be as shiny or upbeat as usual. Know when you are dull and tired. Do only what you have to. Understand that even you can have off days. Take your time and don't rush. Tonight: Touch base with a loved one.

CIRCULATION VERIFICATION COUNCIL AUDIT PENDING

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LOCAL

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Fledgling Eagles flying high

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica's Boy Scouts of America are about to receive some new wings to the flock.

On Sunday, June 12, Santa Monica's Boy Scouts of America Troop 2 will confer the rank of Eagle Scout to five of its members. The newest Eagles are: Max Jordan (Santa Monica High School, Class of 2006), Trevor White (Santa Monica High School, Class of '06), Robert Winthrop (Santa Monica High School, Class of '06), Teo Van Runkle (Windward School, Class of '06) and Isaac Yerushalmi (Santa Monica High School, Class of '05).

In their 58-year history, Troop 2 has graduated 241 Eagle Scouts, saved at least 56 lives, and represented the region at national and international events.

New UC Regent an Island onto himself

By Daily Press staff

A Santa Monican is joining the ranks of the UC Regents.

Eddie Island, 61, of Santa Monica, has been appointed to the Regents of the University of California. Prior to his retirement in 1998, Island served as vice president and associate general counsel for McDonnell-Douglas Corporation where he led the law, intellectual property and governmental affairs departments throughout his tenure. Previously, he served as assistant general counsel for the Pacific Enterprises Corporation for 24 years, where he handled issues related to both state and federal regulatory law. Island's experience also includes service as a member and treasurer of the California Science Center Board and chairman of the McDonnell-Douglas Corporation Employees Community Fund. He earned a Juris Doctorate degree from Harvard Law School. This position requires Senate confirmation and there is no salary. Island is registered decline-to-state.

Elks receive exalted accolades

By Daily Press staff

The Santa Monica Elks received a Presidential Plaque for being the Outstanding Lodge in the South Central Coast District. This is based on participating in required and recommended activities and programs. The Santa Monica Elks conducted Americanism programs which includes Memorial Day, Flag Day, Fourth of July, Veterans Day, and programs for veterans; youth activities such as hoop shoot, soccer shoot, drug awareness, scholarships, and a Christmas party for under-privileged children and innovative projects, officials say.

John Sunberg, past district deputy Grand Exalted Ruler, who recently celebrated his 97th birthday, also received a Presidential Plaque.



Congratulations to Dane Swanson, this week's Mystery Photo winner. Dane was the first respondent to identify that this shot was taken of a mural on Main Street's Star Liquor building. Dane has won a gift certificate to Over/Under Sports Bar and Grill. Look for next week's Mystery Photo in Monday's edition.

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SURF REPORT

South-facing breaks are doing best with waist- to chest-high sets. West-facing breaks are seeing peaky sets in the waist-high + range, chest-high + on occasional sets at standout spots. On Thursday, look for the SW to back off to knee to waist, and the NW wind swell is expected to keep some waist- to chest-high energy around west-facing breaks.

Today the water is:

61°

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

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	8:19	-0.8	7:42	2.9	12:30	5.8	3:36	3.8
SUNDAY	9:22	-0.5	9:33	2.7	1:41	5.2	4:35	4.1
MONDAY	10:20	-0.2	11:10	2.1	3:06	4.6	5:23	4.6
TUESDAY	11:13	0.2	12:24	1.4	11:13	0.2	12:24	1.4
WEDNESDAY	12:24	1.4	11:59	0.7	6:00	3.9	6:39	5.5
THURSDAY	**1:22**	**0.6**	**12:41**	**1.1**	**7:13**	**3.8**	**7:13**	**5.9**
FRIDAY	2:18	0.9	1:17	0.9	8:09	3.4	7:45	5.2

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The Q Line

Next week the City Council will consider a proposal that would provide a limited number of parking permits to employees of businesses adjacent to certain residential preferential parking zones.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, **"Do you think preferential parking permits, traditionally only granted to residents of a neighborhood, should be extended to employees who work nearby? Why or why not?"**

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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Columnists need some fresh ideas

Editor:

In regards to Ron Scott Smith's column "A sad day in America as soul fades to black," (Thursday, June 2) poll after poll shows that the majority of the people in the Armed Forces are there because they believe the cause of freedom for the Iraqis is a worthy one. Yet, in his Memorial Day column he shamelessly manipulates the deaths to promote his own personal anti-Bush agenda. That couldn't be more dishonorable to those who gave their lives.

If he really wants to honor those who died, then respect their viewpoint and properly present the cause in which these people heroically, courageously and willingly gave their lives. Week after week, Smith rails against Bush and rails against religion. We've got it. Does he have anything else to say?

If not, let's all agree to save some trees and either cut Smith's column, or at least combine it with Ed Silverstein's "Incites" since they both say the exact same tired things over and over anyway.

Eric Cooper
Santa Monica

Plenty of Americans are in the pits, too

Editor:

I was just reading an article about Brad Pitt's humanitarian efforts in Africa and how many people died that day. They do in America, too.

People need to wake up and look around them. There's poverty in every city, and more so in small towns. Why don't humanitarian-celebrities stay in America and go to places such as Appalachia if they want to do some good? Why do they feel they have to go to other countries? Because it sounds "exotic"? In Appalachia, children starve, families live in trailers or shacks with missing roofs, so when it rains and snows, it rains and snows right in on top of them. People use outhouses or crouch in the bushes.

Regarding how people die, I can't give exact figures because I'm not there to see it, nor count it. I know a lot of senior citizens in Los Angeles who barely exist on $400 a month. They look forward to dying for relief from their lives.

I think celebrities should offer to take care of fellow Americans first, especially the senior citizens, instead of making a Band-Aid effort of trying to save people in foreign countries. Those people could only be helped by totally changing their lives.

I have no doubt that Mr. Pitt is kind, but I think that a lot of celebrities run away from life's sadness (hunger, poverty, unemployment) right here in the USA. What's wrong with helping Americans?

Cheryl Erb
Santa Monica

Sobering thoughts for city officials

To the Editor:

The other day, as I was walking with my son through Palisades Park, my son indicated that he needed to use the restroom. We went to one of the cinderblock and wire-mesh constructions located at the California Avenue end of the park. As I opened the steel door to the cubicle, my son and I both took in the sight of a smelly, absolutely filthy, grime-covered individual seated on the commode, clutching in his hand a can of what looked like very potent brew. This citizen looked to be comatose at this point.

My son looked up at me and said "It's a bum, isn't it dad?" To which I could only reply, somewhat sorrowfully, "Yeah, it's a bum, Chris."

This city desperately needs the proposed "sobering center", as well as an influential, energetic and well-connected "homeless czar" to do some muscular coordinating of available resources, as well as to tap into other potential sources of support. Coordinated resources can be a powerful means to address the chronic social tragedy of markedly disabled and dysfunctional human beings living miserable lives in our midst.

Sterling Walters
Santa Monica

OPINION

Dogs will be dogs: It's the system, stupid

NEWS ON THE EDGE
BY RON SCOTT SMITH



Ron Scott Smith is on vacation. The following column appeared in the SMDP in July of 2002.

It's in the house. And I don't know how to get rid of it.

I had the doors and windows locked, but it crept in and I can't get rid of it.

I hear it when I use the phone, see it when I watch the TV, taste it in the medicine I take for a cold. And I smell it everywhere- nasty fumes left behind as the American cash cow rides off into a hole in the sunset.

Smells like corporate spirit.

Here are some checks I wrote this week. Paid to the order of:

• WorldCom — (phone bill) — biggest bookkeeping deception in history; $3.8 billion fraud; stock shares selling for pennies; 17,000 workers laid off; hits home in lousy service with bogus charges on every bill. Busted.

• Adelphia — (cable bill) — $241 million taken from company funds to pay CEO's personal loans; stocks down 70%; mayor seeks to boot them out of L.A.; hits home in stupid, unwanted pop-up ads appearing every time you change channels, generating all the more revenue to hide away off-shore. Busted.

• Rite Aid — (cold medicine) — overstated income by billions; company computers allegedly thrown into the Susquehanna River, destroying evidence of vast fraud; indicted executive says- "they'll need a Trident sub to find those computers"; hits home when they couldn't find my prescription, either. Busted.

• Martha Stewart — (non-stick frying pan and crock pot) — empire crumbling after it's revealed she sold millions in drug stocks just before they crashed, based on inside advice from her good buddy, the CEO; some sucker somewhere bought those shares from her; hits home when eggs stick to supposed non-stick frying pan. Busted.

• Enron — via So Cal Edison- (electric bill) – Edison residential rates still inflated so as to pay off debts incurred when SCE bought fake electricity from Enron snake oil salesmen; hits home-phony rolling blackouts mean hot days and dark nights during 2001 power outages. Busted.

Every one of those checks was deposited into corporate mega-accounts, every one of whose top cats are facing prison for stealing from you and me in broad daylight. It's now 10 o'clock at night. Do you know where your 401 K plan is?

That color code thing dreamed up by the White House to give us easy visual distinctions between the various levels of terror we're alerted to from day to day- let's get one of those going to rate the level of corporate greed that routinely pillages workforces and smalltime investors all across this land. For instance, say, when Qwest and Dynegy are soon finished cooking their books into ash, and are about to go bankrupt as their leaders take all the money and run — beware — you are now entering code blue or something similarly cool like that White House thing.

The guy who lives there, the President speaks in the angriest tones he can muster, but his heart isn't in this battle. He may be distracted by preparing to fight his own battle over alleged financial shenanigans while wearing his corporate mogul hat in Texas, where he seemed to run every business he had a hand in into the ground. He lashes out about executives being held more accountable for the accuracy of their balance sheets. You go, sir.

He knows, as we all do. It's the system, stupid. Dogs will be dogs, and, if unleashed, will run wild through the halls of unregulated capitalism, chewing up everything in sight.

Now if I can just get them out of the house before I get mauled.

(Ron Scott Smith can be reached at edgeofthewest@aol.com. Read more blasts from the past at www.smdp.com; go to archives, click on most any Thursday edition.)

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 editor@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.



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Business

Ongoing income keeps the golden years golden



MIND YOUR BUSINESS

BY KIRK G. AGUER

Almost every working person in America is, in some way, planning for retirement. Most of us are aware that traditional sources of retirement income, such as Social Security or an employer-sponsored pension, probably will not fully fund our retirement as they did for past generations. More and more it is up to us to prepare financially for our retirement years.

As we build our personal retirement assets, we generally estimate our needs based on the cost of our expected or desired retirement lifestyle, the current outlook for inflation, what we can currently afford to save and our estimated life expectancy.

This seems reasonable, but what if one or more of these factors prove to be other than anticipated and the money doesn't last? People are living longer today, and it's especially necessary to plan for the possibility of a longer life span. What if you run out of retirement savings at age 85 and live 10 or 20 more years?

ANNUITIZATION MAY HELP

Ensuring that retirement savings last long enough is where annuitization comes in. Annuitization, available through insurance contracts called annuities, guarantees the annuity owner income payments for a pre-defined period of time, typically ranging from as short as five years to as long as the lifetime of the owner and his or her spouse. Additionally, many financial advisers consider this an excellent method of building future income because annuities are tax-advantaged investments — that is, their assets grow on a tax-deferred basis during what is called the initial "accumulation phase."

How does an investor fund annuitization? First, assets are invested and built up for a number of years in an annuity, during the accumulation phase. As a hypothetical example, a man who is currently 55 years old places assets into an annuity to begin the accumulation phase. When he turns 75, he will decide for how long he wishes to receive payments and "annuitize" his annuity contract. Thus, he will begin his "income phase" of the contract and start receiving a check every month. If he elects a lifetime payout, he will receive checks for the rest of his life, regardless of how long he lives.

How assets build during the accumulation phase depends on which annuity you purchase.

There are many types of annuities from which to choose. Some annuities (fixed annuities) guarantee a fixed rate of return, while others (variable annuities) offer professionally managed portfolios that usually invest in the stock market. Most variable annuities provide a range of features and benefits, including provisions for your heirs in the event of your death. (Variable annuities are sold by prospectus only. Read the prospectus carefully before investing.)

All offer the advantage of tax deferral on investment earnings which, over the long term, can represent a significant increase in value over investments with earnings subject to annual taxes. As with other investments, diversifying assets can provide a desirable mix of liquidity, stability, lifetime income and opportunity for growth. It is best to talk with an investment professional to learn what choices might suit your individual circumstances.

In the end, one of the greatest advantages of annuitization is that you do not have to know in advance how long you will require income. Therefore, you can rest a little easier knowing that you'll have at least one source of ongoing income throughout your retirement years.

This article does not constitute tax or legal advice. Consult your tax or legal advisor before making any tax- or legally-related investment decisions. This article is published for general informational purposes only and is not an offer or solicitation to sell or buy any securities or commodities. Any particular investment should be analyzed based on its terms and risks as they relate to your individual circumstances and objectives.

Variable annuities are long-term investment vehicles designed for retirement purposes and are subject to market fluctuation, investment risk, and possible loss of principal.

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(Kirk Aguer is a financial advisor with Morgan Stanley in Santa Monica. He can be reached at (310) 319-5220.)



SANTA MONICA BUSINESS BRIEF

Santa Monican gets a fresh promotion

By Daily Press staff

Blaine Eastcott of Santa Monica has achieved the status of Executive Marketing Director for Oxyfresh Worldwide Inc. Eastcott joined Oxyfresh in December of 1999 and earned his promotion to executive last month.

As an Executive Marketing Director, Eastcott will receive a boost in his Oxyfresh bonus checks, which are based on Oxyfresh product sales. Eastcott advanced to executive by broadening his network of Oxyfresh distributors and significantly increasing his product sales.

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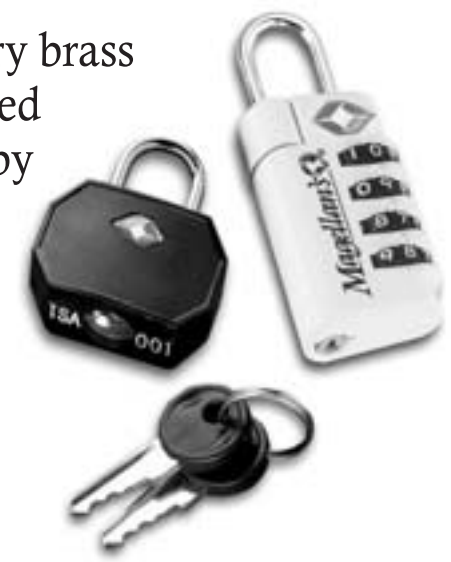
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STATE

National Guard head quits amid controversy

By The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — The commander of the California National Guard resigned Tuesday amid accusations that he failed to meet a Pentagon combat requirement and tried to arrange a flight on a military aircraft for members of a Republican group.

Major Gen. Thomas Eres, who commanded the nation's largest Guard force, told his staff "he takes full responsibility for any administrative mistakes," a spokesman said.

"Because of these allegations, he didn't want to tarnish or slow down the progress the Guard was making," said the spokesman, Lt. Col. Doug Hart. "He says the buck stops here, so he takes full responsibility for any actions that were taken."

Eres resigned after questions were raised by two newspapers about whether he passed a required shooting-skills test before visiting troops in Iraq. Eres also attempted to provide a military flight for a Lincoln Club group — a partisan Republican organization — that wanted to travel last month to North American Aerospace Defense Command center in Colorado.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed as acting adjutant general Brigadier Gen. John Alexander, the Guard's second in command.

Eres, 61, made no mention of the allegations in the resignation letter he submitted to Schwarzenegger Monday night, saying only that "this would be the ideal time to retire from my military service in order to spend more time with my family."

He declined interview requests through Hart, and spent Monday turning over command of the Guard's 22,000 troops, 13 bases and more than 100 armories, as well as completing the retirement process.

Questions about Eres' shooting skills relate to a Pentagon requirement that personnel pass a complex firearms test before traveling to a war zone. Eres was scheduled to meet with California National Guard troops stationed in Iraq in August, a trip that was postponed. He eventually made the trip around Thanksgiving.

The Sacramento bureau for the San Jose Mercury News and Contra Costa Times newspapers obtained interviews and documents indicating Eres did not meet the requirements and that a top aide improperly informed Department of Defense officials that the general had proven his shooting skills.

Eres waited until four days before he initially was to leave for Iraq before going to a firing range to practice with his 9mm pistol and an M-16 rifle. An e-mail from Capt. Peter Lewis, the general's aide de camp, said Eres "loaded, fired and cleared his weapon for familiarization purposes" while sitting at a table but "did not qualify his weapon."

However, Lt. Col. Sonja Banowetz, the general's top administrative aide, signed and faxed a document asserting that Eres qualified as a sharpshooter by hitting targets 37 of the 40 times he fired while standing, kneeling, crouching and lying down. Banowetz was not at the range.

Lewis told the newspapers that no one at the range kept track of the general's score.

Also prompting questions was a trip a Republican friend wanted to arrange last month to NORAD headquarters in Colorado.

Eres had offered to put the Coachella Valley Lincoln Club on a military flight for the trip, which appeared to violate military rules because of the group's partisan party affiliations. The Coachella Valley is the Southern California desert region that includes Palm Springs and Indio.

Two weeks before the planned trip, the National Guard Bureau in Washington rejected the request to put the group on a refueling tanker to Colorado. Schwarzenegger Cabinet Secretary Terry Tamminen also directed Eres to cancel the trip.

In private life, Eres was an attorney specializing in base-reuse issues as well as commercial real estate, corporate and government law. His tenure lasted through last month's Pentagon announcement on which bases it wants to close.

Eres, a Republican from the Sacramento suburb of Carmichael, took command in March 2004 after stints directing the Guard's Office of Homeland Security and Defense and commanding the California Army National Guard.

Eres enlisted as an infantryman in the Guard in 1965 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1970. Schwarzenegger, in a statement, thanked Eres for his years of service, particularly in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks. On Tuesday, a spokeswoman referred requests for further comment to the Guard.

Alexander, 61, began his military career in 1966, also as an enlisted man in the Guard, and was commissioned as an officer in 1968.

He was in charge of day-to-day operations at the Guard after serving 13 years as the officer accountable for all federal government money and property provided to the California Guard.

Conflict at the top has dogged the Guard through two administrations.

Under former Gov. Gray Davis, Adjutant General Paul D. Monroe Jr. faced dissension that in 2003 led him to fire his second in command, who had been a competitor for the top job.

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STATE

Star witness testifies in transgender killing

BY MICHELLE LOCKE
Associated Press Writer

HAYWARD, Calif. — She was slapped. She was smashed in the head with a can and a frying pan. She was knocked unconscious and tied up. She was strangled.

As the blows began to fall, 17-year-old Gwen Araujo said only one thing, one of the men who was there that night testified Tuesday.

"She said, 'No, please don't, I have a family," said 22-year-old Jaron Nabors, the prosecution's chief witness in the murder trial of three men accused of killing Araujo.

Prosecutors say Araujo, who was born a boy named Edward but grew up to believe her true identity was as a woman, was murdered in a cold and calculated revenge when the men discovered that the flirty girl two of them had sex with was biologically male.

But a previous trial ended in a hung jury after one of the three defense attorneys argued the case was manslaughter, a crime of passion provoked by sexual deceit — a move that angered Araujo's family and transgender advocates.

On trial are Michael Magidson, Jason Cazares and Jose Merel, all 25. Nabors also had faced murder charges, but was allowed to plead to manslaughter in exchange for testifying.

Nabors, spending his third day on the stand, laid out the bleak details of Araujo's death Tuesday. He is scheduled to be back on the stand Wednesday when cross examination is expected to start.

The four met Araujo, known to them as Lida, in late summer 2002, and started spending time together at Merel's house in Newark, a San Francisco suburb.

Things changed after Merel and Magidson had sexual encounters with Araujo and compared notes, Nabors said.

The situation exploded in the early hours of Oct. 4, 2002, he said, with angry demands: Are you a man or a woman?

The debate ended when another woman at the house grabbed Araujo's genitals. Magidson subsequently pulled Araujo to the ground and pushed aside her underwear, Nabors said.

"I'd never experienced anything like that or seen anything like that before," Nabors told jurors. "I was shocked."

Nabors said he saw Magidson choking Araujo several times, stopping only when others in the house remonstrated with him.

But soon, no one was coming to Araujo's aid.

Nabors said Merel struck Araujo with a can of food and a frying pan.

Defense lawyers have already told jurors Nabors is not credible, noting that he lied to police in the past and charging that he is trying to mask his own culpability.

Merel's attorney, Bill DuBois, told jurors his client only menaced Araujo with the can of food and hit her a glancing blow with the pan. He said Merel genuinely cared for Araujo and did not do her any serious injury.

But under questioning from prosecutor Chris Lamiero, Nabors said Merel, a high school athlete, hit Araujo hard both times, putting a dent in the can.

Nabors said the next thing he remembers is seeing Araujo lying on the ground.

In the courtroom, Araujo's mother wiped away tears.

As the attack progressed, Nabors said Cazares asked him "Are you down?" which he took to mean was he willing to do "whatever would be expected of me."

Cazares said they were going to get shovels because Araujo was going to be killed.

On the ride to get the shovels and a pick axe, Cazares told Nabors that Araujo had said she had connections to the Norteno gang and also offered Cazares money if he would get her out of the house safely, Nabors said.

Cazares' attorney, Tony Serra, says Nabors is lying. Serra said his client was outside when Araujo was killed and did not plan her death, only helping to bury the body afterward out of loyalty to his friends.

In his opening statement, Magidson's attorney, Michael Thorman, said his client did take part in the attack and is willing to take responsibility for that, but is not guilty of anything more than manslaughter. He denied that Magidson strangled Araujo.

At one point, Lamiero asked Nabors why he didn't try to stop the attack, why he didn't say anything.

"How did you feel about the prospect of killing somebody?" Lamiero asked.

"I guess I didn't even care," Nabors said.



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City first in 'green' buildings

ACCORDS, from page 1

we had a lot of shared problems and realizing there are things we can do as mayors and members of city councils to make inroads in improving the environment, because a lot of our federal government is not doing it," said O'Connor. "Part of that is sharing what we are doing.

"If one city found something works, others can learn and don't have to start from square one."

San Francisco was the first U.S. city to host World Environment Day, celebrated each June 5. WED was established in 1974, with annual conferences staged since 1987, according to organizers.

The theme of this year's gathering was "Green Cities," with the slogan "Plan for the Planet." The conference ran between June 1-5, during which time cities traded ideas on renewable energy, recycling, public transportation, parks and clean air and water. More than 230 activities were scheduled in and around the San Francisco Bay area.

O'Connor credited San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom for the success of the event.

"He went out of his way to get WED in North America and had the idea to make it into a several-day event which allowed for the kinds of exchanges we had," O'Connor said. "He did an excellent job."

O'Connor said the conference helped her realize the importance of the direction the city is heading in sustainable efforts.

"It gave me reassurance about what we're doing," O'Connor said. "Santa Monica is one of the cities at the forefront, so I will reinforce that continuing down the road."

SANTA MONICA PLACES FIFTH IN SUSTAINABILITY

Brian Johnson, environmental program manager with the city, said Santa Monica was recognized at the conference for being ahead of the pack when it comes to sustainability efforts.

He said SustainLane, a privately held company, conducted a comprehensive search to determine the most sustainable cities in the U.S., in which Santa Monica was ranked fifth overall.

SustainLane representatives said their ranking system measured 25 U.S. cities' cumulative performance and programs across 12 economic development and quality-of-life categories. The information was gathered by 20 public and non-governmental organizations.

According to Johnson, SustainLane's awards were the only ones presented to American cities during the conference, and that he felt the group's ranking was worthwhile because of the quality of the research that went into it.

"SustainLane is fairly new on the scene, and its most effective claim to fame was the credibility of the analysis," Johnson said.

In addition to placing fifth overall, SustainLane representatives said Santa Monica finished first in the rankings for its number of "green" buildings, as well as for the city's solid-waste diversion program, planning and the environmental knowledge of residents.

However, Johnson said the city may have ranked even higher had it not been for factors outside the city's control, such as air quality and transportation issues.

"Santa Monica is such a unique community," Johnson said. "It is an urban island in a sea of Los Angeles, and that sort of regional condition dragged our ranking down a bit."

Still, he said Santa Monica's environmental programs are a great source of pride for the city.

"It's not about the destination. It's about the journey."

Encouraging green businesses of 'principle' concern

PRINCIPLE, from page 1

mental manager with the city, said he attended this year's presentation on the "precautionary principle", something he already uses when he can.

"It is a very democratic, egalitarian and forward-looking tool for institutions to navigate through decision-making," Johnson said. "During my tenure at the city, we have practiced the precautionary approach, but have not held it up as the 'precautionary principle.'"

Johnson said the principle has already been moved by the city's Task Force on the Environment to go to the City Council to be adopted into the sustainability plan.

"The principle might be employed, for example, if you were buying a chemical product," Johnson said. "If you were concerned about the toxicity of the product, it would be up to the company to prove it's not toxic.

"The principle would provide the full analysis of the alternative."

Judy Rambeau, city spokesperson, said that because the sustainable city plan was recently updated, she does not expect the City Council to be in a rush to make changes and additions.

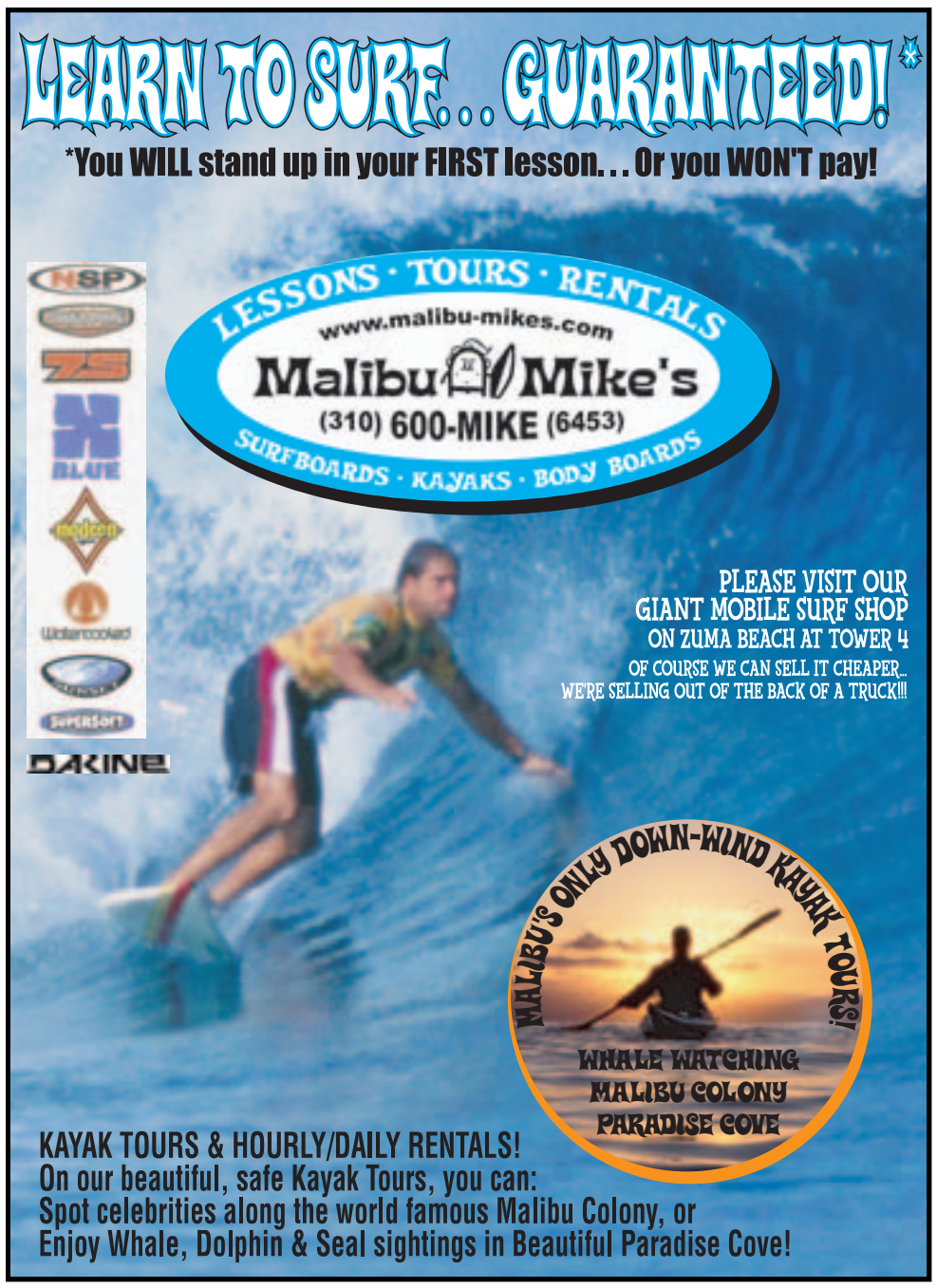
She said the principle, along with other sustainability ideas, would likely not come before council until the city's environmental and public works management division does its next sustainability progress report, expected later this summer.

In addition to developments regarding the precautionary principle, Johnson said staff would be looking at ways to improve incentives for businesses to be headquartered in Santa Monica and which make environmentally safe products.

Staff attended a "green purchasing" presentation intended to drum up support for green businesses.

"The focus was to get our minds and bureaucracies around the movement as it stands today and find key mechanisms in the public and private sector to allow new products to flourish," Johnson said. "We need to work on a mature economic development plan that recognizes sustainable development with better products and services that cuts into the local workforce."





Opal find causes headaches for federal officials

BY BOB MOEN
Associated Press Writer

SWEETWATER STATION, Wyo. — The scattershot stakes of different sizes and colors stand out among the sagebrush with nothing more than a lonely, sauntering wild horse as far as the eye can see.

Over here is a 4-by-4 stake spray-painted pink and yellow on the top with rocks painted the same colors at its base. "Giddy Up and Go 3-4-05" is written in black marker on one side. Bird droppings mark the flat top of the post.

Over there is another stake, bearing a clipboard bound with duct tape; written on the board: "2 claims Total Size 200 yds x 500 yds."

Across a dirt-and-gravel road is a 2-by-4 stake, with "Discovery Cor .23" written on two sides. A plastic freezer bag is attached near the top with duct tape. Inside is a folded document that describes the claim's dimensions.

The stakes are monuments to a 21st century rush of prospectors. They descended on this remote, hilly area in south-central Wyoming last March with grand hopes and dreams of striking it rich by finding a precious gemstone called opal.

The rush caught federal officials off guard, resulted in a bureaucratic paperjam that has delayed actual mining and prompted authorities to take measures to protect an endangered flower from being trampled.

Opal is considered the most colorful of all gemstones, and the best opal gems are more valuable than diamonds, fetching up to $10,000 a carat, according to the International Colored Gemstone Association.

The Wyoming opal site is a three-square-mile area about 100 miles west of Casper. It was initially discovered by a local rockhound who told the State Geological Survey, which undertook a more extensive survey and found large deposits of opal. Most of the opal is "common opal," which isn't worth much. But geologists found some of the highly valued "precious opal," leading them to conclude that there was more to be found.

Fremont County Clerk Julie Freese said her office received 1,048 mining claims over a nearly two month period after the State Geological Survey publicly announced the exact location of the opal deposit. Each claim cost $135 in fees.

"I thought it would be more; it didn't seem too bad a price," said Jim Montgomery of Cheyenne, who along with a partner staked out two claims — named "Mother Lode" and "Lucky Strike" — for a total of $270.

"We went up and kind of picked around a little bit, but didn't find anything too exciting yet," Montgomery said.

Unlike the gold rushes of Old West lore, these new prospectors aren't allowed to begin digging until their paperwork is properly filed with the state and the federal Bureau of Land Management, which manages most of the land where the opal is located and which must record all the claims.

So far, the Wyoming BLM office in Cheyenne has received only 50 of the 1,048 claims. And even among those 50, most lack the proper legal description in order to be accepted, further delaying the digging.

"They'll all be getting letters asking them to correct the legal description," said Pam Stiles, a land law examiner with the BLM.

There may be more delays for other prospectors trying to pick their way through complicated federal and state mining rules. For instance, claims of 10 acres or more require additional paperwork, and prospectors who plan to use heavy equipment to dig must obtain a special permit from the state Department of Environmental Quality.

In addition, every Sept. 1, in order to keep the claim, each prospector will either have to pay the BLM another $100 or document $100 worth of improvements made to their claim.

While the paperwork has put a clamp on actual digging for now, the rush to the 1,680-acre area, where the only known resource of value previously was oil and gas, certainly wasn't lacking for adventure, surprise and some comic relief.

Even though most of the opal is on land administered by the BLM, the agency was caught off guard because the State Geological Survey kept the exact location of the deposit secret until a public announcement March 4.

"It would have been helpful to have more time to get prepared to respond to the intensive level of activity out there," said Jack Kelly, manager of the BLM office in Lander, who had to call in help from other BLM offices around the state to handle the onslaught of prospectors.

"The bottom line is it impacted our staff, who were totally unprepared for the workload," BLM spokeswoman Cindy Wertz said.

Nice digs





Fabian Lewkowicz/Special to the Daily Press
(Above) Santa Monica Mayor Pam O'Connor and SMC Interim President Dr. Thomas J. Donner break ground Tuesday on Santa Monica College's new Liberal Arts Building on the main campus. (At left) An artist's rendering depicts what the finished structure is expected to look like.



NATIONAL

Cool, wet weather downgrades fire danger

BY CHRISTOPHER SMITH
Associated Press Writer

BOISE, Idaho — With fresh snow blanketing mountaintops and unseasonably cool June temperatures around the West, federal forecasters are backing away from previous predictions of a busier-than-normal fire season.

"Of course we are going to have a fire season, but the large fire danger has moderated and it's not going to be as dire as we first thought," said Larry Van Bussum, national fire weather operations coordinator for the National Weather Service.

The Predictive Services Unit of the federal government's national wildfire coordination center here is expected to release its latest western fire season outlook Friday, downgrading previous "above normal" forecasts for much of the Pacific Northwest and Rockies to "normal."

But the situation still could change again, one analyst noted.

"It's more like realigning our priorities," Tom Wordell, wildland fire analyst with the U.S. Forest Service said of the change. "To believe this cool weather will persist the entire summer season is going to be a reach."

Fire-weather forecasters say the summer wildfire outlook for Washington and Oregon is being scaled back to normal, with the exception of the northwest Cascade Range and northeastern Oregon. In the Great Basin region, most of Nevada now is expected to have a normal fire season, while the critical danger in the Northern Rockies is expected primarily in the higher elevations of the Idaho Panhandle, western Montana and the Salmon and Challis areas of eastern and central Idaho.

Fire-weather forecasters say their original projections were based on the dry winter experienced in many parts of the Northwest and Rockies, a trend reversed in the Southwest, where winter precipitation set records.

The damp Southwest winter encouraged the growth of fine grass fuels to levels fire forecasters liken to waving fields of grain. Those grasses are now drying to tinder, and as a result, the outlook in southern Utah and western Arizona is for a wildfire season that is more active than usual.

To the north, the wet spring has eased much of the fire threat, and long-range forecasting models call for cooler and wetter-than-normal weather through June in the entire Northwest quadrant of the country, including northern California and western Montana.

"Early in the season, the snowpacks and winter precipitation patterns were just dreadful," said Heath Hockenberry, National Weather Service fire program manager. "However, all that outlook can be basically canceled out by a wet June."

Tuesday, a chilly Pacific storm moved through the interior West, dumping up to 8 inches of snow in the Wasatch Range of Utah. It came on the heels of another wild winter-like blast — complete with two tornadoes — in Wyoming's Bighorn Basin that forced state highway officials to put snowplow trucks back into service to clear several inches of slushy hail and snow from roadways late last week.

"In much of western Oregon right now, we've already had a month's worth of rain, so the normal precipitation for June has already fallen," said Oregon State Climatologist George Taylor in Corvallis, Ore. "In the Northwest, it's dry enough every year for fires, but the biggest variable we've seen is the number of dry lightning storms, which tends to make for a bad fire year."

Precipitation during May and early June has moistened the rotting logs and fallen timber that fuels catastrophic fires. Forecasters say continued cool temperatures have helped retain that moisture into a period when fuel loads would normally be drying out.

Ninety-degree days are frequent in southwestern Idaho by mid-June, but Boise-area temperatures have been 5 to 10 degrees below normal and the trend could challenge the existing record for the latest appearance of the first 90-degree day of the summer, set on July 6, 1953.

"Traditionally, there's a decent, consistent path toward 90-degree weather that begins in June," said Hockenberry. "But we're definitely not seeing that."

Brigham Young's purported will garners $70,000 at auction house

BY JENNIFER DOBNER
Associated Press Writer

SALT LAKE CITY — The purported original last will and testament of Brigham Young, the second president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was sold at a Philadelphia auction house on Wednesday for $70,000.

The amount was smack in the middle of the $60,000 to $80,000 sales price projected by the Alderfer Auction Co.'s experts.

Bidding on the will lasted only two minutes, said Bob Lucas, an artifact consultant for the auction house who verified the authenticity of the will.

The opening bid was $25,000 and the sales price increased in increments of $2,500 until it hit $50,000. Then the price jumped up $5,000 with each bid until the sale.

It was bought by a private collector who asked the auction house for anonymity, Lucas said. He did not know if the purchaser is a member of the Mormon church and said he thought the person's interest in the will was "mostly historical."

In addition to the $70,000, the new owner will pay an additional 15 percent in fees, Lucas said, bringing the total to $80,500.

The amount is appropriate, said Lucas.

"The important part of this piece is that it is the original document signed by Brigham Young," said Lucas. "He had to sit in front of it, he touched that piece of paper and for hardcore history collectors that means a lot. This was the great Mormon leader and (the will) had actual implications on his life and his family."

As leader of the church and the territorial governor of Utah, there was much call for Young to sign documents, said Lucas. Other documents and examples of his signatures have often been auctioned, but have mostly fetched between $1,000 and $10,000 depending on the quality and the type of record.

"The content drives the price," said Curt Bench, owner of Benchmark Books in Salt Lake City. "It's an important legal document in anyone's existence and the fact that it's Brigham Young's makes it more so."

But Bench wonders about the will's authenticity.

Young's will was hotly contested after his death by family, some of whom produced either copies of this version — which was signed and witnessed in November 1873 and filed with the courts shortly after his death in September 1877 — or with an earlier version, Bench said.

"My question is, is it the final one? I'm sure they must have done their homework," Bench said, noting that he has only seen this will in photographs. "I'm sure they did their homework."

The authenticity of the document appears to be without question, said Lucas, who did the verification work himself, by comparing the 12 Young signatures and nine initials on the will to 35 other original documents bearing Young's signature.

Lucas also compared the signatures of the three witnesses — Joseph F. Smith, David McKenzie and James Jack — to other original documents bearing their autographs.

"The all match perfectly," Lucas said. "Young had a very distinctive signature."

Young took over leadership of the Mormon church after the death of its founder Joseph Smith in 1844, leading the migration of church members across the Western plains to establish church headquarters in Salt Lake City.



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NATIONAL

North Korea's talking seen as good first step

BY BARRY SCHWEID
AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON — The White House reacted cautiously Wednesday toward North Korea's declaration that it is willing to return to negotiations on its nuclear weapons program, saying it was too early to tell if the announcement is a diplomatic breakthrough.

"We will see," said Scott McClellan, the spokesman for President Bush. "They haven't given us a date."

A return to negotiations after a yearlong breakoff would test the Bush administration's Asian alliances and its influence with China.

In a statement Wednesday, North Korea mentioned the meetings with U.S. officials but didn't give any indication of its imminent return to the negotiating table.

The North said a resumption of the disarmament talks "was entirely dependent on how the United States accepts our demand for creating right conditions and environment," according to the statement carried by the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

Asian and Russian officials also greeted the prospect of a resumption of talks caution and hope, and Chinese U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya said in New York that the talks were likely to resume in the next few weeks in Beijing.

ABC News reported Wednesday from the capital of Pyongyang that a North Korean representative to the six-party talks said the country was willing to rejoin the negotiations if the United States toned down its rhetoric. The report by correspondent Bob Woodruff was a rare instance in which Pyongyang allowed a Western reporter into the country.

Last year, North Korea promised to reopen talks in September, but stayed away, hurling invective at the Bush administration and refusing to bargain again with the United States and its four partners, China, South Korea, Japan and Russia.

In January, Rep. Curt Weldon, R-Pa., said after leading a congressional delegation to Pyongyang that North Korea appeared ready to negotiate "in a matter of weeks."

It never happened.

"First things first," Mitchell Reiss, the State Department's policy planning director in the first Bush administration, said Tuesday. "The North Koreans have to come back to the table and they have to stay, and they have to negotiate seriously."

Reiss, now provost at William & Mary College, pointed out in a telephone interview that the United States had work to do, as well.

At the last round of talks, in Beijing last June, U.S. negotiator James Kelly floated the prospect of a U.S. pledge not to attack North Korea, along with economic incentives to the hard-pressed regime.

"We have to flesh it out," Reiss said.

The former senior official said he was very skeptical of success but that the United States must make a reasonably serious attempt to reach an agreement with Pyongyang. "This deals with managing our alliances with South Korea and Japan and also being seen in Asia as willing and able to address a core national security issue."

Clearly, the Bush administration is looking for help, and China is its target.

Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, who now is in charge of the negotiations, told reporters that China has a big job to take on with the North Koreans.

"The exercise is not just getting them to the talks," Hill said. "It is getting them to the talks with a willingness to give up permanently their nuclear program."

Hill also held over North Korea's head a threat of seeking political and economic sanctions from the U.N. Security Council.

"It's an option we always reserve when we feel it's appropriate," he said.

In New York, China's U.N. ambassador said six-nation talks were likely to resume in the next few weeks in Beijing. Ambassador Wang Guangya told reporters the talks were the best way to resolve the nuclear standoff and said he was hopeful progress would be made.

South Korea reacted cautiously.

Presidential aide Chung Woo-sung said that although the U.S. claims were "a good sign," the North "has not set a date."

"It is too early to jump to a conclusion," he said, adding that the talks should resume in "June or July, at the latest."

Balbina Hwang, policy analyst on North Korea for the Heritage Foundation, took a sobering stance in an interview Tuesday.

"I think people are jumping the gun," she said. "We have to put this into perspective. People are running around elated.

"Getting North Korea back to the table is not in and of itself a success. The success is getting North Korea to agree to the proposal" to end its nuclear program, she said.

"I will believe North Korea has come back to the table when they actually come back," Hwang said. "And even then I will view that with skepticism until I see what their response to the proposal is."

Michele Flournoy, a senior Pentagon official in the Clinton administration, agreed that "getting them back to the table is a critical first step."

Flournoy, senior adviser to the Center for Strategic International Studies, said the outcome of negotiations will depend heavily on the Bush administration "being much more explicit up front about the kinds of incentives they would get if they halted their nuclear program."

"Make it real, make it concrete," she said in an interview.

And the main challenge for the Bush administration, Flournoy said, "is creating a united front with China, Japan, South Korea and Russia so North Korea cannot exploit differences among us."

Daily flights for illegal immigrants resume on Friday

BY ARTHUR H. ROTSTEIN
Associated Press Writer

TUCSON, Ariz. — A program to provide illegal immigrants caught crossing the Mexican border with free plane rides home through Mexico City will resume Friday for a second summer, said the commissioner of Customs and Border Protection.

The so-called interior repatriation program is considered an important part of the Border Patrol's effort to disrupt illegal immigrant smuggling operations and better enable the agency to get control of the Arizona border, "our weakest area" along the 2,000-mile boundary with Mexico, said Commissioner Robert C. Bonner on Wednesday.

"Our goal is to control the border ... to attain and assert control over what is no question our weakest area," Bonner said in a teleconference call from Washington with reporters.

The Tucson sector, which has been the nation's busiest for illicit border crossings for several years, accounted for more than half of the 1.1 million apprehensions of illegal immigrants made last year by Border Patrol agents.

Normally, illegal immigrants from Mexico who are caught and who have no criminal record can be voluntarily returned, or repatriated, just across the border through a port of entry, such as Nogales or Douglas, Ariz. Many immediately make contact with the smuggling group they hired to arrange for another attempted crossing.

Bonner said the interior repatriation, which is voluntarily, is considered important in helping disrupt that contact.

"We know from experience that if you simply return them to Nogales, Mexico, you are returning them literally to the arms of the smuggling organizations and they will often return the next day ... through treacherous terrain that exposes these migrants to death in the desert," Bonner said.

Roughly 70 percent of the migrants arrested in Arizona come from south of Mexico City, he said, and repatriation flights allow the United States to return Mexican citizens closer to their hometowns, he said.

What's more, Bonner said, monitoring after last year's flights showed that many of those returned to the Mexican interior didn't come back, though the vast majority of people crossing the Mexican border have crossed repeatedly.

Plans negotiated with the Mexican government call for a total of 226 flights — two a day — from Tucson to Mexico City, with the goal of taking 33,900 illegal immigrants back to the Mexican interior.

A total of 14,067 people were returned to Mexico City or Guadalajara on flights between July 12 and Sept. 30 last year.

"Working with the government of Mexico, we will reduce the number of people who are entering the United States illegally, particularly in treacherous areas, in what I call the season of death, and we will reduce deaths in the desert," Bonner said. "When you start thinking of saving human life, that alone justifies the expense that will occur."

A spokeswoman said 160 migrants have died along the entire southwestern border during the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, including 91 in Arizona. There have been 15 heat-related deaths in the Tucson sector, which covers most the Arizona border.

The project is expected to cost $14.2 million this year, a $1.2 million savings over last summer's operation, the spokeswoman said.



INTERNATIONAL

Iraqi president's praise may not be a positive

BY QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraq's president openly praised Shiite and Kurdish militias in a statement Wednesday that could further antagonize Sunni Arabs at a time of growing fears of sectarian strife.

Clashes in Baghdad and other attacks around Iraq killed at least eight Iraqis as the Sunni-dominated insurgency pressed on with its campaign against the Shiite-led government. In addition, four U.S. troops were killed Tuesday and Wednesday.

Two U.S. soldiers were killed in an attack on their base in Tikrit, north of Baghdad, late Tuesday, while another was killed by roadside bomb north of the capital, the military said. A fourth was killed Wednesday when a roadside bomb exploded near his vehicle close to Adwar, 10 miles south of Tikrit, the military said.

At least 1,680 U.S. military members have died since the war began in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count.

The wave of violence that broke out after the April 28 announcement of Iraq's new Shiite and Kurdish dominated government has killed more than 874 people, including more than 10 Sunni and Shiite clerics in apparent retaliatory slayings that raised fears the country was facing a civil war.

President Jalal Talabani's backing of the Shiite Badr Brigade militia came despite accusations by Sunni leaders that the militia has killed members of the minority. The Sunni leaders have demanded that it be disarmed and complained that it provides intelligence and support for some Shiite-dominated special security units.

The Badr Brigade was the military wing of the country's largest Shiite political party, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Republic in Iraq. The party claims the Badr Brigade is no longer a militia but performs social and political functions.

"Badr is a patriotic group that works for Iraq's interest and it will not be dragged into sectarian or any other kind of conflict," said Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, SCIRI's leader and the former commander of the Badr Brigade. "Badr is for all Iraqis," he added.

Talabani, himself a Sunni Kurd, spoke at a conference marking the second anniversary of the Badr Brigade's transformation from a solely military body to a political one.

"May those who describe the heroes of Badr and their Kurdish brothers as militia be doomed to failure," Talabani said.

"You and your (Kurdish) brothers are the heroes of liberating Iraq," he added. "You, my brothers, march on without paying attention to the enemies' claims because you and the (Kurdish militia) are faithful sons of this country."

There are no accurate figures on the size of the brigade, but it is thought to be smaller than the Kurdish Peshmerga militia, estimated at 100,000. The Peshmerga has been largely exempted from efforts to disband militias because of its close ties to the United States and its supporting role during the war.

Sunni criticism of Talabani's remarks was swift, with Abdul-Salam al-Qubeisi, spokesman of the influential Association of Muslim Scholars, saying the president was acting in line with "U.S. policies to prolong the struggle in Iraq and turn it into an Iraq-Iraq conflict."

Al-Qubeisi accused the Badr Brigade of providing intelligence to units such as the feared Wolf Brigade, an elite commando unit from the Interior Ministry that is headed by a top SCIRI member.

"We do not have problems with this party or another, we only have problems with the chasing and killing of Sunni clerics and their followers," al-Qubeisi said. "Even the militia elements who have joined the Iraqi army have been heavy-handed during army operations."

The Badr organization's leader, Hadi al-Amiri, challenged the association's head, Sheik Harith al-Dhari, to prove his group involvement in the killings and said an investigation should be held.

"If the accusations prove to be true, then we will apologize and punish the offenders, but if they turn out to be false, al-Dhari should apologize," he said at Wednesday's gathering.

On Tuesday, Laith Kuba, spokesman for Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shiite, said there was "no place for militias" in the new Iraq and that such forces could be incorporated into the police and army.

The complaints came a day after a Sunni Arab politician said two insurgent groups were willing to negotiate with the government, possibly opening a new political front.

Former electricity minister Ayham al-Samarie told The Associated Press the Islamic Army in Iraq and the Army of Mujahedeen were ready to open talks with the government aimed at eventually joining the political process. The groups account for a large part of the Sunni insurgents and were responsible for attacks that included assassinations and kidnappings.

A senior U.S. official confirmed that influential Sunni leaders have been negotiating with some insurgent groups interested in embracing the political process.

The official told reporters at a briefing that U.S. authorities have met with some of those leaders to try to persuade insurgents to lay down their arms.

"Some insurgents are irredeemable and have to be dealt with in a purely military way and there are some who are looking to enter the political process under some conditions," he said.

The official said he did not think those Sunni leaders who American authorities were talking to had a direct role in terrorist attacks, but they do have ties with insurgents.

The effort to begin talks comes at a delicate time for the government, criticized by Sunni Arab groups for deliberately targeting the minority in counterinsurgency campaigns such as the ongoing Operation Lightning in Baghdad.

The association said the operation, which has led to nearly 900 arrests, could spark sectarian strife. Now in its second week, the campaign involves thousands of Iraqi security forces and 7,000 U.S. troops, according to the U.S. military.

In Habaniyah, 50 miles west of Baghdad, insurgents attacked a supply convoy carrying supplies to a U.S. base, and local reporters said they saw at least seven bodies. U.S. military and diplomats said they were not aware of any Americans in the convoy.

Reporters who returned to the scene Wednesday saw four more bodies. The other bodies were still there and armed men were present.

Mbulelo Mtilwa of the South African Embassy in Jordan confirmed that a South African was part of the convoy but it wasn't known if he was killed, captured or wounded.

In other violence Wednesday:

■ Gunmen killed two industry ministry officials in a drive-by shooting in the capital.

■ One police officer was killed and six injured in clashes in northwest Baghdad.

■ Police Col. Nashwan Hadi was killed in a drive-by shooting near his home in Mosul. The attackers then fired a rocket at his house, injuring five people, including two children.

■ A police officer was shot and killed in eastern Mosul.

■ A car bomb in Baqouba killed two people. Gunmen also killed a translator at an American base.

Security guards facing murder rap for missing teen-ager

BY MICHAEL NORTON
Associated Press Writer

ORANJESTAD, Aruba — Two former security guards arrested in the disappearance last month of an Alabama honors student are being investigated for murder and kidnapping, their attorney said.

The two have not been charged in the disappearance of 18-year-old Natalee Holloway, and authorities have not said she was a victim of foul play. Police on Tuesday also said they had not ruled out accidental death in the case.

A judge was to determine Wednesday whether authorities have enough evidence to continue to hold the two men, who deny any connection to the high school graduate, said defense lawyer Chris Lejuez.

"They both say that during the time" of the disappearance, "they were not at the (girl's) hotel and they don't know this girl," Lejuez told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, police and the FBI kept up a search for Holloway, but a lack of any solid leads was hindering progress, according to several officers. Local officials asked the FBI to bring in dogs trained to search for people.

The parents said they had not received any request for ransom or any other evidence that she had been kidnapped.

In an interview with The Associated Press, they thanked the people of Aruba for helping in the search.

"The support is phenomenal," said her mother, Beth Holloway Twitty, 44.

Holloway has been missing since May 30, when she vanished while on a five-day trip with more than 100 classmates celebrating their high school graduation on this Dutch Caribbean island. Seven chaperones accompanied them.

Authorities had not ruled out any possibilities, including that Holloway may have drowned, Attorney General Caren Janssen said. Two divers among the eight FBI agents in Aruba have been searching the waters surrounding the island, Comemencia said.

The two men in custody were security guards at a hotel two blocks from the Holiday Inn where Holloway was staying. Their work contracts expired the day before she disappeared, a police officer told The Associated Press.

The men were known to police because they had a habit of going around to hotels trying to pick up women or bum cigarettes, said the officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Holloway's parents and other relatives who rushed to the island last week refused to give up hope of bringing her home alive.

"I feel determined. I won't leave here until I find my daughter," said Holloway Twitty, who was accompanied by the missing girl's stepfather, Jug Twitty.

In Holloway's hometown of Mountain Brook, Ala., residents tied yellow ribbons to everything from mail boxes to ATMs.


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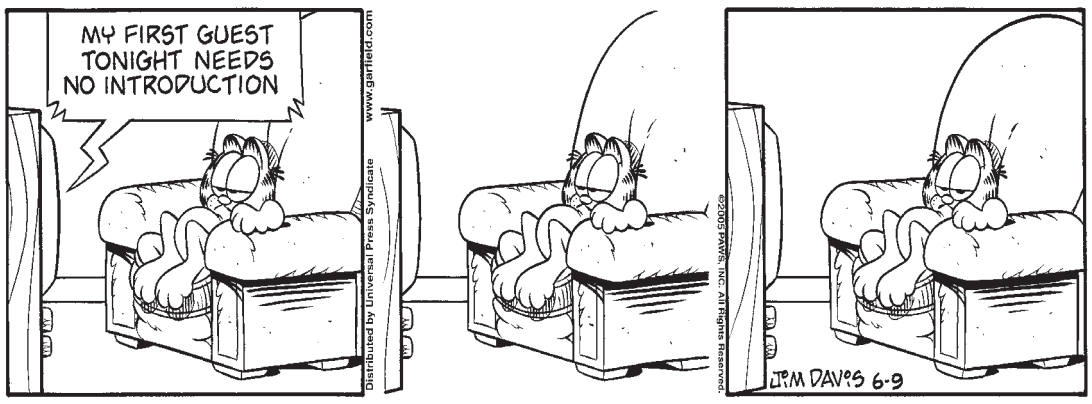
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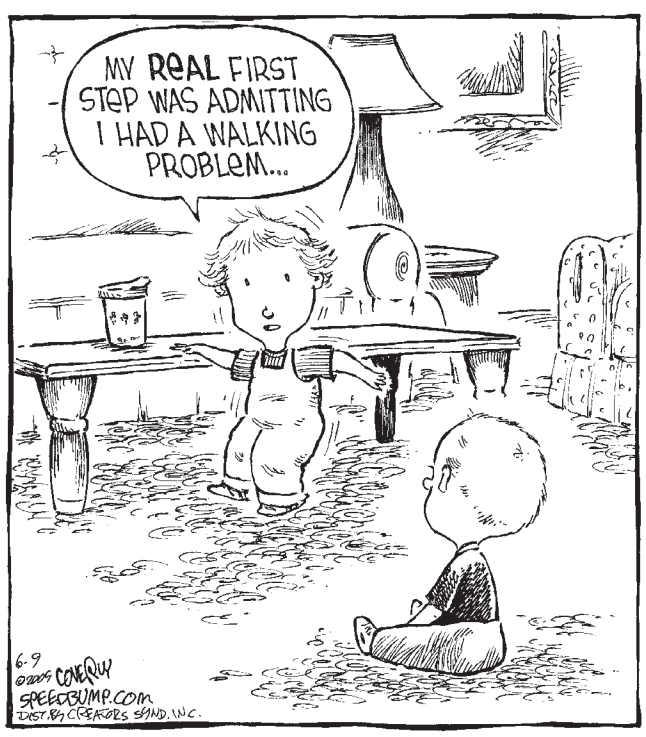
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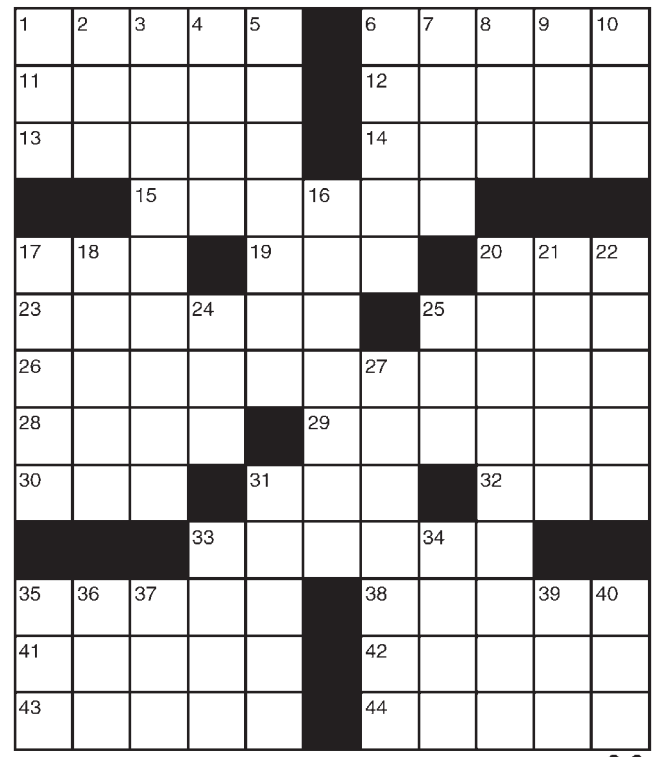
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1 "East of Eden" brother
2 Had lunch
3 Movie-listing info
4 Musical sound
5 Move like a snake
6 Censor
7 Crowd sound
8 Ump's cry
9 Clumsy fellow
10 Private room
16 "I remember when ..."
17 Peony part
18 Chum
20 Grace periods?
21 Confused
22 Look after
24 Homer's neighbor
25 Crooner Tormé
27 Hit song of 1959
31 Worker's burden
33 Bit of smoke
34 Honey bunch?
35 Do something
36 Charge
37 Distant
39 Unbroken
40 Match part

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VENICE HIGH School flea market. 13000 Venice Blvd., Los Angeles, CA. Antiques, toys, crafts, collectibles, jewelry, clothes. June 11, 2005, second Saturday each month. 9am-4pm. Free admission & free parking. Vendor information call (310) 390-5851.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE BUDGET OF
SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

The governing board of Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District will hold a public hearing on the BUDGET OF THE DISTRICT FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2006, prior to Final Adoption as required by Education Code Section 42103.

The public hearing will be held at 1651 16th Street/Santa Monica, CA on June 24, at 4:30 o'clock p.m. The public is cordially invited to attend this meeting.

The proposed budget will be on file and available for public inspection at the following location(s) should members of the public wish to review the budget prior to the public hearing. Location Office of the Superintendent - 1651 16th St./Santa Monica, CA from June 21 - 24, 2005 during the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Dr. Darline P. Robles, Ph.D., Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools
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