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Santa Monica Daily Press

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ Fred Simunovic was charged with armed robbery of a Key West, Fla., credit union, with "armed" referring to the pitchfork he was waving (March). And a man fled after attempting to rob a shopkeeper in Central Park Plaza in Jacksonville, Ill., in January by first threatening her and then slapping her several times with a fly swatter (January).

■ William Woodard, 39, suspected by police in the Trenton, N.J., area of more than 50 burglaries, was arrested in March, and authorities said they were confident they could match him to what had become one of the "signatures" of the crime spree: random splashes of excrement at several crime scenes. In the course of the arrest, a highly nervous Woodard failed to control his bowels, and police have submitted samples for DNA testing.

■ (1) Mr. Mamadou Obotimbe Diabikile was shot by police and arrested after his unsuccessful attempt to rob the Mali Development Bank in Bamako, Mali, in March, in part hindered by the nearly seven pounds of magic charms he was wearing to make himself invisible. (2) Musician Edna Chizema went on trial in March in Harare, Zimbabwe, for allegedly defrauding Ms. Magrate Mapfumo by convincing her to pay the equivalent of US\$5,000 for Chizema to fly in four invisible mermaids (folkloric goddesses of revenge, according to the Shona people) from London to help recover Mapfumo's stolen car.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"One of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity."

ANDREW CARNEGIE
US BUSINESSMAN & PHILANTHROPIST

INDEX

Horoscopes

Keep a reserve, Scorp 2

Surf Report

Water temperature: 62° 3

Commentary

Critical thinking 4

Business

Jobs, far and wide 7

State

Grapes of wrath 8

National

Prosecuting polygamy 10

Comics

Strips tease 12

Classifieds

Ad space odyssey 13-15

What's old is new again



Fabian Lewkowicz/Special to the Daily Press

Restorers take to the 600-foot-long, 8,400-square foot 'Unbridled,' a mural created in 1986 by Dave Gordon situated at Ocean Park Boulevard and Fourth Street. The entire job, being conducted by Sculpture Conservative Studio, should take between an estimated five to six weeks to complete. Working on the top level is Ana Flores, while Viviana Dominguez and Traci Lucero take to the project just below.

Regulators to tighten regulations on Pacific bottom trawling

BY TERENCE CHEA

Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Federal regulators were set to vote on a plan to protect deep water corals and other sensitive fish habitat that will likely include a permanent ban on bottom trawling in large tracts of the Pacific Ocean.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council, which advises the federal government on West Coast

fishing regulations, was expected to choose a plan Wednesday that will identify "essential fish habitat" in federal waters, which extend from three miles to 200 miles off the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington.

The plan will likely include measures to protect those areas, ranging from restrictions on fishing gear to setting aside areas that will be off-limits to trawling, the technique of dragging weighted

Euclid Park will stay open space

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — A new park proposal has Santa Monicans lining up, but not necessarily for a picnic.

Dozens of residents showed up at Tuesday's City Council meeting to object to the proposal, either saying they didn't want a park at all or at a minimum, it should have restricted hours and a fence, which would serve mostly to assuage concerns that the public space might become a haven for transients and criminal activity.

The residents said that, despite months of meeting with city officials, their concerns and requests went unanswered and City Hall is moving forward with its own agenda.

Euclid Park, expected to cost \$700,000, is scheduled to open in



Rendering courtesy

An artist's rendering of Euclid Park, scheduled to open in March 2007.

March 2007. It will be the first park to open in Santa Monica in more than a decade. Meanwhile, Councilman Kevin McKeown led the council forward on the proposal without requiring a fence to be built. After listening to members of the public and a representative from the Santa Monica Police Department, the council directed

See **EUCLID PARK**, page 5

Pair avoids lengthy prison terms in Ashland shooting

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

LAX COURTHOUSE — Two young Santa Monicans who pleaded guilty to manslaughter charges escaped lengthy prison time and will get a second chance at "normal" adult lives.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge James Brandlin sentenced Luke David Yeron, 20, and

Anthony Gregory Alfaro, 19, on June 3 for their involvement in the murder of Gabriel Becerrada.

Yeron and Alfaro were charged with killing the 38-year-old Becerrada, who was shot multiple times at 1:20 a.m. on Sunday, March 7, 2004, on the third floor of a public housing unit on the 800 block of Ashland Avenue, near

See **ASHLAND**, page 6

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Happy Birthday, Tom 'Homie' Triggz

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)

★★★★ Others — including you — have finally calmed down. Your instincts lead you in the right direction, especially with a property or domestic matter. Extremes mark your behavior, as well as others'. Try not to get others to conform to your way of thinking. Tonight: Go along with another's request.


TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★ You might have to handle much more today than you had originally anticipated. You have the energy, drive and creativity to make your way through a problem. Unexpected developments could impact a friendship. Tonight: Easy does it. Haven't you done enough?


GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Your playful mood could distract others, as well as yourself. Still, you cannot contain yourself. A compliment from someone you respect makes your day. The unexpected occurs with a public or professional matter. Tonight: Let off steam.


CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★ Family, home and real estate take priority. Make it your pleasure to deal with these issues. You care about the quality of your life. Do what's necessary to make it better. Reach out for someone at a distance. Tonight: Home is your castle.


LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Distraction could be a problem. Do yourself a favor: Make a list of what you must do. A partner or associate could surprise you with unanticipated information or actions. Others provide many imaginative ideas. Tonight: Catch up on a friend's news.


VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ You need to shore up some financial agreements, or at least clear out bills. You might decide to start a new health or diet program. Check with the doctor first. If there is something you really want to do with your life, start talking about it. Tonight: Order in.


LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ You naturally do the right thing. You might be considering a major change in your work or, at best, a different approach. Someone lets you know how very special you are. You beam from ear to ear. Tonight: Plans with your favorite person.


SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★ The less you say the better. Your gut instincts are right-on with a family member and long-term goal. Do needed research and find out more. Follow through on what is important to you. Don't share details yet. Tonight: Get as much sleep as possible. You will need every ounce of energy tomorrow.


SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ You no longer need to debate or struggle to get what you want. Everything finally falls into place — to your delight. A partner wants to go overboard with spending or in some other way. Tempted as you might be, you need to say no. Tonight: Be with the crowds.


CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Take charge while you can. Others are finally docile and easygoing. Your ideas meet mutual agreements. Listen well to suggestions. Incorporate good ideas. Others respect your leadership. Tonight: A late night.


AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ Continue actions that help your mind grow. Some of you might sign up for a class; others will travel. Aquarians are never happy unless they are breaking into new territory and thoughts. Accept a last-minute invitation. Tonight: Try a new restaurant.


PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ Work with a trusted associate. In fact, you do better with one-on-one contact. Maintain eye contact, and don't allow your mind to drift. Share an idea or two that you might have kept to yourself. The reactions you get might be important. Tonight: Share more of yourself.



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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS



Photo Courtesy

Rose Garden dedicated to professor's honor

By Daily Press staff

What better way to say you love someone than with roses?

Santa Monica College dedicated a rose garden in memory of Dot Gelvin on Wednesday, an anthropology professor and administrator who died in May 2004 at 57.

The dedication ceremony was held at the end of SMC's annual recognition breakfast, sponsored by the SMC academic and classified senates.

Gelvin, who had worked at the college for 29 years before her death, taught for five years and held several administrative posts, including her last position, dean of human resources. Gelvin also was active with the Santa Monica Lions Club for many years. Gelvin had many passions, including frequent trips to Africa, as well as devotion to her rose garden, officials say.

"The idea originated with economics professor Harry Gill and some faculty members who felt a strong tie and affection for Dot," said Academic Senate President Lesley Kawaguchi.

The garden will be planted along the northwest wall of the science complex facing the quad at the clocktower. Kawaguchi said rosebushes and trees will be planted, and the garden will include a plaque. The project is funded by a private donation drive spearheaded by the Academic Senate.

WISE to talk about Social Security reform

By Daily Press staff

Local seniors have a few things to say about the future of their Social Security and they plan to gather to discuss those ideas.

WISE Senior Services is hosting a panel discussion on Social Security reform. Speakers will be Sandy Cohen, deputy area director of the Social Security Administration, and Morrie Weiner, former member of the California Executive Committee of the AARP.

Limited parking is available in the center's underground garage. Overflow parking is available at the cemetery across the street. Pull up to the loading zone in front of the building for parking instructions, or to obtain a permit to park at the cemetery. The discussion will be on Thursday, June 23, from 10:30 a.m. to noon at WISE Adult Day Service Center, located at 1510 Pico Blvd. Call Liz Abbott at (310) 452-7802, ext. 29, to reserve a seat.



SURF REPORT

Thursday is looking like a small day with meager energy in the knee- to possibly waist-high range most everywhere, as SW and NW swells diminish. Onshore winds could pick up quite early starting on Thursday, more so Friday and Saturday.

Today the water is:

62°

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	7:31	0.2	6:19	3.1	2:59	3.4	N/A	N/A
SUNDAY	8:14	0.3	7:40	3.1	12:23	4.8	3:51	3.6
MONDAY	8:57	0.6	9:24	3.0	1:13	4.3	4:32	3.8
TUESDAY	9:40	0.9	10:58	2.6	2:19	3.8	5:04	4.1
WEDNESDAY	10:22	1.2	N/A	N/A	3:45	3.4	5:33	4.5
THURSDAY	12:07	2.0	11:02	1.4	5:17	3.2	6:00	4.9
FRIDAY	12:58	1.2	11:43	1.7	6:39	3.2	6:31	5.4

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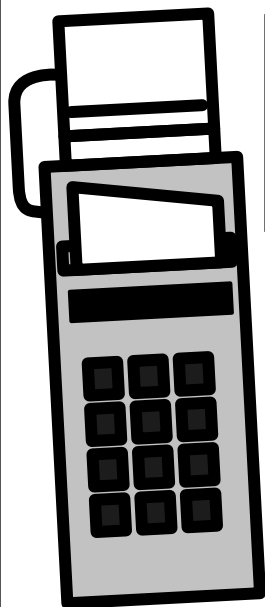
The QLine

While participating in the United Nations World Environment Day conference held in San Francisco a couple weeks ago, Santa Monica officials, along with representatives from about 70 cities worldwide, pledged to improve the city's sustainability efforts and work toward becoming a "greener" community.

So, this week Q-Line wants to know,

"Where should the city start? What environmental issues in Santa Monica should be given priority?"

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

Country was founded on faith

Editor:
Nobody seems to know the real meaning of the separation of church and state, so here goes: Our Founding Fathers believed that the church shouldn't have state powers. Or in other words, the church shouldn't be the state. In the Middle Ages, the church regulated taxes and killed anyone who had separate beliefs. They also tortured you for having an opinion. So it doesn't mean church can't be in the state. Rather, the state can't be in the church. It has nothing to do with "In God We Trust," or "prayer in schools." All that is manipulation. Our country was built on faith and under God. Without them, we have no country. However, we must equally respect other beliefs in this country.

James Esquivel
Santa Monica

Unleashing the dogs is illogical

Editor:
With respect to a few of your recent unleashed, unfenced, pro-dog beach letters, (SMDP, May 23, page 4) may I comment?
As a dog owner as well as a former professor and department chair of environmental studies, I do not question the motives of this pro unfenced, unleashed dog beach group, simply their objectivity.
In all due respect to this group's love for dogs, they have absolutely no foundation or substantiation of their claims with respect to bacteria, diseases and/or the stewardship of our endangered species which are threatened by free-roaming dogs along our Santa Monica coast.
Our Santa Monica beaches are the most treasured of all of our dwindling semi-unmolested recourses. And while it is true that man has disturbed their environs with our enjoyment of them, they should be protected at all costs from as many intrusions as possible.
The above stated reasons are why almost every nationally respected environmental, preservation and naturalist organization, along with our beach and park custodians have come out against this unleashed, unfenced dog beach run proposal. Certainly all of these groups which include Heal the Bay, the Environmental Defense Fund and the Audubon Society can't be all wrong?
Experimental trials on our habitat that are scientifically based or supported by sound logic are one thing. Experiments that threaten our coastline that are logically flawed and environmentally unsound to begin with, are quite another matter.

Frank J. Lubick, Ph.D.
Santa Monica

Vet no so bewildered about VA's role

Editor:
Several days ago you printed a 16 paragraph letter signed by a "bewildered veteran" (SMDP, June 7, page 4). In the letter, the writer ranged far and wide regarding City Councilman Shriver's' recent proposal to address the homeless problem in Santa Monica, in which Shriver envisions a taskmaster to resolve the many faceted issues of homelessness and to see to it that the designated Santa Monica representative interface with the regional solution.
While the "bewildered vet" quoted the names, groups, data, and history regarding the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Medical Center and the status of veterans included in the homeless population, he argues against Shriver's' proposition and, the "bewildered vet" even included himself as being homeless.
This strikes me as odd, first because the writer is clearly not bewildered, his thoughts were well researched outlined and supported, and second, if he were homeless why then does he not support optimum results for all veterans and their families from the VA?
The answer evades me, except to say that for a long time now there have been forces at play on the westside that oppose any utilization of surplus VA property already built on the West LA VA site. I can't help but suspect the writer is actually a farce for those forces in the community who covet the VA property for self serving reasons.
Whether or not Shriver is right or wrong, or the other council members will support this redoubled effort to serve "those who have borne the weight of battle" and all the other homeless this city has worked very hard to help, remains to be seen. But the VA in its charter has a mandate dating back to President Lincoln to see to it that our veterans are not left destitute.
Nothing is more important during time of war when many are already returning form yet another conflict, than we as a people honor that social contract that the Great Emancipator vowed.
I call upon those in our city who are of goodwill, to support Shriver and encourage the utilization of any and all surplus West LA VA facilities, and not be fooled by those who would attempt to deny the benefits rightly due our returning service members and their families. This was the intent of the Veterans Administration mandate when it was established.

Stewart Resmer
Co-event manager of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Tour

America goes all in over columnist's look at truth

NEWS ON THE EDGE

BY RON SCOTT SMITH



I noticed a sign the other day that touted a real estate agent from Coldwell Banker. It said ... "F. Ron Smith."
I know the feeling.
Today, I'd like to respond to a few formidable critics of this column. Some have been published right here on page four. Others I've received through the blinking-light miracle of electronic mail.



To a guy named Rutgers:
You're good, man, very good. You wrote, "I just read your latest anti-war article and I've got to say, I have never seen more bluster in one piece of s**t column. You probably cheer when troops die in Iraq ... What the f**k does your high school 'give peace a chance' bulls**t have to do with anything?" Mr. Rutgers, I know you're a prankster, as you speak of a "fight to the death" with me, but you give me a nice place to start. Peace out.

To a guy named Huemor:
You had a letter in here implying that your page four author muses in a moronic state: "I think only a moron would fail to realize that Palestinian militants are savage killers," is what you said when I characterized suicide bombings as desperate statements made by desperate people. That's the thanks I get? Then you asked the big question that stops anti-war types in their tracks. You know, the one you always ask just to get the argument ended: "Would you rather Saddam still be in power?" Rather than what we've ended up with — tens of thousands dead, hundreds of billions spent? The answer is yes — an unequivocal yes. He was fully contained, old, impotent. Let Iraqis deal with Iraq as they will, as they must, because we don't seem to have half a clue on a whole day what they're about.



To a guy named Lewis:
Mr. Lewis used his attendance at an anti-war rally before the invasion of Iraq as a premise to question my column on the new "great silent majority," those of us who helped shut down a similarly shameful war in the '60s, but who have apparently run out of gas and zipped it lately.
He lashed out at News on the Edge: "I saw people, some of Smith's apparent vintage, in effect rallying support for the maintenance of a murderous fascist dictator." There it is again — the "murderous fascist dictator" thing, the disposal of which is always worth a few thousand lives of the younger and the poorer. This dictator was weighing heavily, very heavily on Lewis, Bush and all freedom lovers. Saddam had to go, no matter the cost, no matter the reason, as the recently released Downing Street memorandum from

England once again bears out. By Lewis, by God, by Bush, he had to go. Now what? Seems nobody thought of that.

To a guy named Niemerow:
"You seem to be really pissed off at the world," you wrote me, then God bless you, tried to ease my pain, "I don't think it's really as bad as you try to make it. I think rooting out evil is the American way so lighten up." I appreciate the free psychotherapy from any readers. Keep the cards, letters and lithium coming. Then he challenged me, "Why don't you write an article that has some positive solution?" Look above, Mr. Niemerow. In one of those paragraphs you'll find a positive solution to the Iraq War. If you have a better one, what is it?



To a guy named Street:
No "F. Ron Smith" column citing the best of the best of the bashers could be complete without a word from the man I single-handedly drove out of town.
Mr. Street has peppered my mailbox throughout the years with excellent barbs, but my favorite was the one where he came in defense of the late President Reagan, after I questioned the deification process America was going through in the wake of his death last year. I excuse Mr. Street's dyslexia, as he probably didn't realize he had the two last names mistakenly reversed here when he said, "For me, all things considered, the world is better off because of Ronnie ... (Reagan not Smith)."

Then there was a guy named Woody — no, I'm serious — who wrote in response to my recent high tech, pilot light, madhouse piece, "Finally Ron Scott Smith wrote something he knows about, little blinky lights around his house. I was pleasantly surprised when he didn't mention the (Bush) administration once." But Mr. Woody should have known better, because when he got to the last paragraph, alas — "There it is, he mentioned Bushamerica. At least he is consistent in his blind hatred of this man and the people around him." Well, Mr. Woody, like your buddy Mr. Cooper once said to me about the president, "Love him or hate him, at least you know where he stands on issues," and if it's good enough for Cooper, it should be good enough for you. You like me, you really like me.

Which brings us to a guy named Shilling:
You started off great, Mr. Shilling — "When I read Ron Scott Smith's column my initial reaction was, what a jerk." But by the end of your dispatch, you went all warm and fuzzy on me, saying, "So I don't agree with Ron Scott Smith. So what? At least he tells it like it is, and for that alone I'll buy him a beer. Ron, name the place and time."
Over Under, tonight, game four, Pistons-Spurs, Mr. Shilling.
Hit me with your best shot, haters. I like the Padrone.

(Ron Scott Smith can be reached at edgeofthewest@aol.com.)



Last park opening in city was in 1992

EUCLID PARK, from page 1

staff to go fence-less and report patterns of use that take place at the park once it is open, so any further security measures that may be needed could be taken.

The council's decision was approved 5-2, with Councilmen Bobby Shriver and Bob Holbrook opposing.

"I think we've hit rock-bottom as a council," Holbrook said. "For the first time, people don't want a park in Santa Monica."

Holbrook said the controversy surrounding Euclid Park reminded him of a green space he once saw in Sausalito. That park had been fenced up and closed off to the public because it had become overrun with transients and criminal activity.

"You could look, but you couldn't touch," Holbrook said. "I hope we haven't reached that point."

"It's not the kind of environment we should have to raise families in."

The proposed Euclid Park will sit on a one-third acre property located on the 1500 block of Euclid Street, between Colorado Avenue and Broadway.

An earlier proposal to turn the site into a community garden was scrapped, largely because city staff said it would not qualify for grant funding because it would be dominated by one group, as opposed to providing a public benefit for all residents.

Mark Rios, who is associated with Rios Clementi Hale Studios, the consultant firm in charge of the Euclid Park design, said the site is centered in a highly-dense residential neighborhood and an extensive public process is what contributed to the park's proposed schematics.

The process included the consideration of 250 written responses to a survey sent to 3,000 residents who live close to the proposed park. There were at least two community workshops to discuss the proposal and two round-table discussions with the city's recreation and parks commission, all of which were public. Security issues were discussed at those meetings, Rios said.

"We've gone through at least three generations of park design," Rios said.

Residents attending Tuesday's council meeting, however, were not convinced their voices had been heard during the process.

Bernadette Scully, a resident who attended the Euclid Park workshops, said the request for a fence made by her and several other residents was ignored by city staff.

"The safety issue was dismissed then, and it is being dismissed now," Scully said. "The number-one thing residents want is safety."

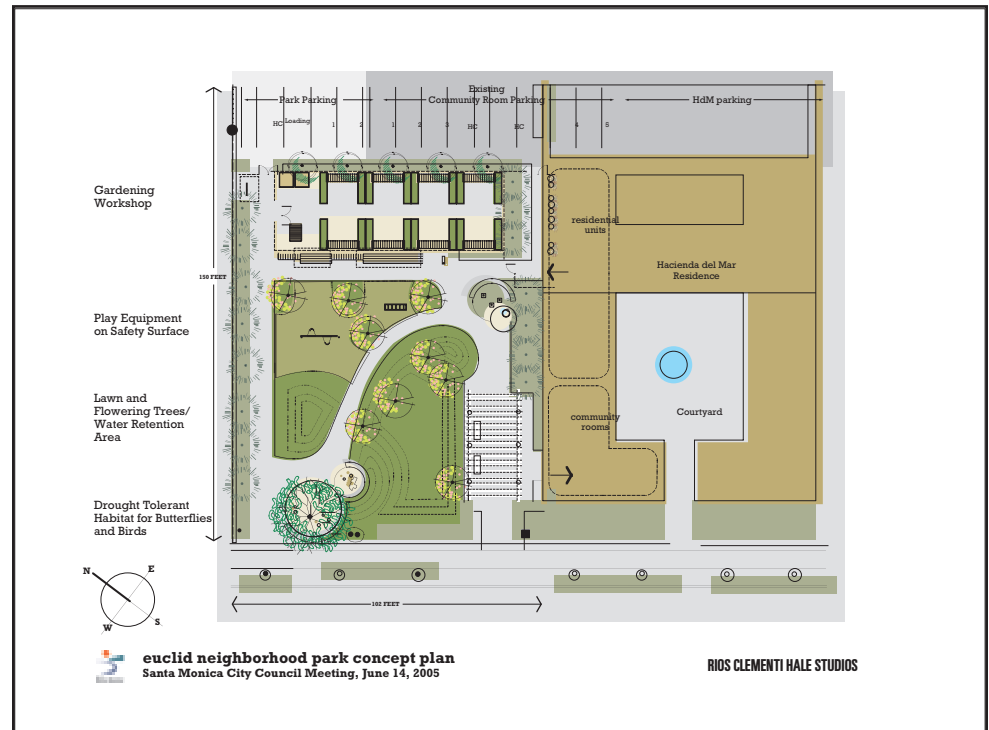
The city of Santa Monica has a number of parks that will be completed or expanded within the next few years. One — Cove Skate Park, a skatepark at Memorial Park — is set to open this week. City officials have said park capital improvement projects have been a long time coming, mostly because of budget constraints in the last few years.

Karen Ginsberg, assistant director with the community and cultural services department at City Hall, which oversees the city's parks, said the MGM Plaza Park was the last park to be built in Santa Monica. It was completed in 1992 as part of a development agreement. It was privately built and remains privately owned, but operates as a public park.

Prior to that, the last new park to be opened in Santa Monica was Ocean View Park in 1983. Of the more than 20 parks in Santa Monica, none are fenced. Euclid Park will be adjacent to Hacienda del Mar, a housing development for people with disabilities. Among the speakers requesting a fence were the disabled occupants of Hacienda del Mar. They and their parents, who also spoke on the issue, said a fence would deter criminally-minded individuals from taking advantage of the facility's inhabitants.

"We want a fence, and if you don't take us seriously it will be detrimental to the people who live there," said Justin Lee Gagnon.

SMPD Lt. Calisse Lindsey said the park would be patrolled regularly. In addition, park rangers from Memorial Park



would be on hand throughout the day to supervise Euclid Park. Violations that occurred during and after hours would be strictly enforced.

Councilman Ken Genser, who supported the decision to move forward with the park without a fence, said resident fears seemed unsupported based on his experience.

"I think the concerns we've heard tonight are not well-founded," Genser said. "I do get complaints about activities that occur at parks, but those (activities) are usually during the day. The police are there to enforce."

Shriver, who helps organize the Special Olympics and other activities that support disabled individuals, said he

would not vote for a park proposal that didn't include a fence.

"What I'm hearing is that people here are fearful, and if a fence makes them feel better, I'm all for it," Shriver said.

McKeown responded by saying that he is concerned about creating an environment that is safer rather than just one that makes them feel safe. He added that he was unsure whether or not a fence would actually deter criminal activity, but it could always be added to the park after it is built.

"It's nice to make people feel better, but a deeper strain for me is to make people actually safer," McKeown said. "Frankly, I'm not sure a fence is going to do that."

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LOCAL

Pair get 10 years, probation in Ashland killing

ASHLAND, from page 1

Lincoln Boulevard.

Both men pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter charges as part of an agreement made in May at the Los Angeles Superior Court Airport Courthouse. Attorneys involved in the case said by accepting the plea agreement Alfaro, the shooter, avoided a capital murder charge in which he could have faced life in prison without the possibility of parole, said Carlo Spiga, his attorney.

Instead, Alfaro will serve 10 years in California state prison. Typically, severe felonies will require criminals to serve 85 percent of their sentences, Spiga said.

Yeron, Alfaro's friend, faced a three- to 11-year prison sentence for his involvement, but will instead serve probation for

five years, according to Robin Yanes, his attorney.

"It went better than you can believe with Luke getting probation and Anthony the minimum under the deal, which was 10 years," Yanes said. "It was absolutely wonderful the way it went. The judge did justice, and these guys will have a second chance at a normal life."

Becerrada had been recently released from state prison and was on parole when police found his body outside an apartment door. He had been in and out of jail for drugs, guns, burglary and robbery since 1986, according to the California Department of Corrections. In addition, Alfaro's and Yeron's attorneys allege Becerrada was tied to several murders and was a prominent member of the Jokers, a street gang, although he had never been

convicted.

Sandra Alfaro, 35, Becerrada's girlfriend and mother of Anthony Alfaro, was arrested by Santa Monica police within days of the murder, along with her son and Yeron, his friend.

Sandra Alfaro was charged as an accessory to the murder. She has since been credited for an 11-month prison stay and was released on Jan. 31, 2005, after pleading no contest to the accessory charge.

Spiga said when Becerrada was released from prison he took up residence at Alfaro's apartment, where he used PCP and may have intended to sell drugs.

Spiga told the Daily Press earlier this year that Becerrada was a PCP addict acting psychotically and threatened to cut up Sandra "into little pieces, and they won't

find ya until they smell ya."

At the time of his murder, Becerrada had PCP in his blood and a bag of cocaine in his rectum, according to the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office.

Spiga said Anthony Alfaro was fearful of his mother's life and stole Becerrada's 9-millimeter handgun, at which point Becerrada threatened the mother and son's lives. Anthony Alfaro and Yeron went to Sandra Alfaro's apartment to confront Becerrada, according to Spiga. A confrontation ensued and Becerrada was shot three times in the head.

Larry Droeger, the Los Angeles deputy district attorney who prosecuted the case on behalf of the people, confirmed there were mitigating factors in the murder that contributed to the DA's office agreeing to a plea settlement.

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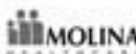
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Business

SANTA MONICA BUSINESS BRIEFS

Charting a road map for long distance jobs

By Daily Press staff

Finding a job in the city where you live is hard enough but trying to find a job hundreds or even thousands of miles away can be even tougher. Not only are you fighting against the job market in a city you don't know, you're also dealing with three big challenges:

Lack of a business network in the new city

Whether you realize it or not, many job openings are filled before they even become public knowledge. This hidden job market consists of business and professional contacts who may let you know of job openings in their area or even offer you a referral. But how do you break into the hidden job market in a long-distance job search?

Solution: A career coach can help you identify potential networking opportunities — even in a long-distance job search. By developing and using a networking strategy, you will be able to make meaningful contacts in your chosen city. And knowing someone in the right company or industry can make the difference between wanting the job and getting the job.

Reluctance of employers to choose outside talent

When an employer can choose among many qualified candidates who are already local, why should he choose you? Outside talent actually represents a greater risk to employers for a number of reasons. Reimbursing relocation costs and ensuring a good fit for the employee in both the job and the region can be costly. And what if the employee moves, then doesn't like the area? How do you get an employer to take a chance on you?

Solution: A professional resume can help showcase how you are actually adding value for the employer above and beyond the local candidates. A professionally written resume will:

- Demonstrate your superior industry knowledge
- Highlight your strong transferable skills
- Show proof of value through accomplishments with real bottom-line results

Investing in the services of a resume writer will help you craft a targeted marketing message that gets you noticed as a top candidate by employers, no matter how many local people apply.

Long-distance interviews

There are a lot of downsides to long-distance interviews, both for you and for your potential employer. Someone has to pay the cost of travel. You have to maintain confidentiality without arousing your current employer's suspicions as you take time off for the interview. And the time involved is much different than just taking a long lunch. Is it worth it for you to use up your valuable personal leave for a gamble that might not pay off?

Solution: There are many interview strategies that can actually help you maintain the confidentiality of your job search and use the travel/interview time to maximum efficiency. Hiring a career coach to tailor these strategies to your particular job search situation can make your job search shorter and more effective. With the guidance of a career coach, you can minimize your risk while improving your job search skills.

While no one enjoys embarking on a long-distance job search, there are many ways to make it easier on yourself. Investing in career coaching sessions and a professional resume can make your job search easier by providing you with a road map to get you exactly where you want to be. With this valuable tool in your back pocket, you'll travel the career roads with ease, no matter which city or job you choose. And that type of guidance is always worthwhile.

(Deborah Walker is a resume writer and career coach. To see resume samples and read more job-search tips visit www.AlphaAdvantage.com. To reach Walker, e-mail her at Deb@AlphaAdvantage.com.)

Start saving now for childrens' education



MARKET MATTERS

BY BRIAN HEPP

Parents today face a formidable task in grappling with the high cost of education. Fortunately, though, there are several savings vehicles available today that are specifically designed to help you meet the challenge of funding a child's education.

The most important thing you can do is start saving as soon as possible. One of the biggest mistakes parents make is waiting to save for college. Waiting until your children get closer to college age denies you one of the most important benefits of saving — compounding.

Many of today's college savings plans place your money in various investment vehicles. The earnings on those investments are compounded by being re-invested. Your money is accumulating by more than just the amount you put in.

There are many ways to save for college, and they all offer different features. You should evaluate each one to determine which is the most appropriate way to save for your child's education. Two of the more popular college savings vehicles available today are 529 plans and "Coverdell Education Savings Accounts." While they vary greatly in contribution limits, both savings vehicles allow you to invest money while earnings on those investments accumulate federal income that is tax-deferred. As long as you take that money out to pay for qualified education expenses, you will not have to pay federal taxes on those distributions. Distributions from 529 plans used for qualified education expenses are federal income tax-free through Dec. 31, 2010. Under current law, starting on Jan. 1, 2011, all distributions of earnings from 529 plans will be taxable regardless of the type of expense. Earnings on non-qualified withdrawals are taxed at the owner's rate, plus a 10 percent penalty.

The Education Savings Account allows you to save up to \$2,000 in after-tax contributions each year per child

under 18 years old. Your contributions and earnings can be withdrawn tax- and penalty-free as long as you use the money to pay for qualified education expenses before the beneficiary turns 30. In addition to higher education expenses, eligible elementary or secondary school expenses also are considered a qualified expense for ESAs. ESA funds also can be used to pay for tuition, room and board, fees, books, supplies and equipment required for enrollment or attendance.

Investing in a 529 plan offers another alternative to establish a systematic way to save for a child's education. Withdrawals from a 529 plan for qualified education expenses are federal-income-tax-free. What's more, the account owner retains control of the assets and can change the beneficiary at any time. Unlike ESAs, there are no income or age restrictions associated with 529 plan assets. As a result, almost anyone can contribute to such plans.

One big advantage of 529 plans over other education savings vehicles has to do with their sizable contribution limits. A single taxpayer can gift up to \$11,000 per beneficiary per year — a married couple could gift up to \$22,000 — without any gift tax consequences. A special provision pertaining only to 529 plans allows you to make five years' worth of annual exclusion gifts in a single year, as long as you don't make any more gifts for the next five years. A portion of the gift may be subject to a recapture if the donor dies before the 5-year period has passed.

Keep in mind that the value of your investment in a 529 plan will fluctuate, meaning your shares may be worth more or less than the original investment when you redeem them. All 529 plans have various fees and expenses. Before investing in a 529 plan, be sure to read the plan's offering document carefully for more information on fees, charges and expenses.

Regardless of the plan you choose, putting away money now for your child's education expenses will help prepare you for what lies ahead.

(Brian Hepp is a financial consultant at A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc. He can be reached at (310) 453-0077 or at brian.hepp@agedwards.com.)

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STATE

Wine merchant conned connoisseurs for cash

By Daily Press staff

A Colorado man who operated an Aspen Valley wine outlet called Rare LLC has agreed to plead guilty to federal fraud charges for bilking connoisseurs out of at least \$2.5 million worth of wines and wine futures.

Ronald Phillip Wallace, a 47-year-old resident of Basalt, Colo., also has agreed

to plead guilty to conducting an unlawful monetary transaction in connection with his importation of a BMW M5 automobile from Germany.

In the plea agreement filed Tuesday in United States District Court in Los Angeles, Wallace admits that from early 2000 through January 2003 he operated a fraudulent scheme that purported to sell clients wine and wine futures. In the case

of many customers, Rare did not own, had not otherwise secured and never obtained the wines promised to customers. Wallace admits that he collected "early deposits" from some customers who wanted to purchase wine futures from Rare, and that he used some of the later clients' "early deposits" and other payments to pay-off or otherwise satisfy earlier clients.

As set forth in the plea agreement, some of Wallace's victims include Paul and Maurice Marciano, who are executives with Guess? Jeans; Jamie Moyer, a pitcher with the Seattle Mariners; Garth Ancier, an executive with the WB Network; Arthur Sarkissian, a movie executive; and Antonio Castanos, a local restaurant owner.

"Through guile and deception, Wallace exploited the trust his clients placed in him because of his knowledge of the world's most collectable wines," said U.S. Attorney Debra Wong Yang. "While Wallace plied his trade in the rarified world of wine connoisseurs, in the end he turned out to be nothing more than a common huckster. We are pleased that Wallace has decided to accept responsibility for running this fraudulent business."

In March 2003, Wallace's fraudulent scheme collapsed, at which time Rare owed its clients more than \$13 million in wines that were never delivered. The \$13 million figure represents amounts paid by clients for the wines, but that figure was substantially less than the then-fair market value of the wines. Wallace and the government have stipulated that the provable losses for which Wallace will be held accountable at sentencing exceed \$2.5 million. Wallace has agreed to pay restitution to his former customers, and the district court will determine how much each victim will be due.

Wine futures — particularly in relation to French wines such as Chateau Haut-Brion and Le Pin, the famed Cabernet Sauvignon- and Merlot-based wines of Bordeaux — refer to offers made by wineries, typically through merchants or negociants. The customer buys wine that has been fermented but not yet bottled. Bordeaux futures are commonly offered the summer after the wine grapes are harvested, which is typically about two years prior to the wine being bottled and released.

Rare solicited business from individuals across the United States through the Internet and advertisements in publications such as Wine Spectator. In relation to 2000 Bordeaux, which was heralded by wine critics such as Robert M. Parker Jr. as an outstanding vintage, Wallace collected more than \$8 million from customers who wanted to purchase futures. However, instead of using the monies to pay for the requested 2000 wine futures, Wallace used some of the monies to make payments toward a car; to pay French and London-based negociants, as well as domestic retailers, for older wines that he used to satisfy demands of earlier customers; to pay contractors to remodel his house; and to pay for expenses incurred during a November 2001 wine tasting at the Peninsula Hotel in Beverly Hills.

Wallace has agreed to plead guilty to two counts of mail fraud, four counts of wire fraud, and one count of conducting an unlawful monetary transaction in which he used \$13,000 of Sarkissian's money to import a BMW M5 from Europe. Wallace faces a maximum possible sentence of 70 years in federal prison.

The date for Wallace's change of plea has not been scheduled, but it is expected to take place in the next several weeks.

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Protecting essential habitat new approach to run fisheries

PACIFIC, from page 1

there's no proof that trawling has hurt the West Coast groundfish fishery.

"There's no evidence that fishing itself has destroyed habitat so that the productivity of the fish stocks has changed," said Pete Leipzig, who heads the Fishermen's Marketing Association, which represents West Coast groundfish and shrimp trawlers.

Meeting in Foster City, south of San Francisco, the 14-member council must choose from more than a dozen proposals offered by environmentalists, commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen and other interest groups. The council will make its recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service, which is expected to implement the new regulations early next year.

In February, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, which regulates waters off the coast of Alaska, voted to ban bottom trawling on more than 370,000 square miles off the Aleutian Islands — a move hailed by environmentalists as a landmark in fishery manage-

ment.

Protecting essential habitat represents a new approach to managing fisheries, scientists say.

"Fisheries management has been conducted for decades without paying attention to the habitat that produces the fish," said Rod Fujita, a marine ecologist with Environmental Defense. "It's always about protecting the fish populations themselves, but not their homes."

In 1996, Congress amended the 1976 Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to protect against overfishing and restore depleted populations by requiring the government to identify and protect essential fish habitats.

Two years later, the Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted such a plan, but environmental groups filed suit, claiming the council didn't adequately identify threats to West Coast groundfish or take strong enough action to protect them. A federal court sided with the environmentalists in 2000 and ordered the council to conduct a new analysis.

INTERESTED IN YOUR DAILY FORECAST?
CHECK OUT THE HOROSCOPES ON PAGE 2!

STATE



Election likely to affect budget as deadline nears

BY TOM CHORNEAU

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — The state Legislature has failed to pass a budget by the constitutional deadline for the past 18 years, and lawmakers on both sides say there is little hope that will change on Wednesday.

Complicating the process this year are the political considerations surrounding the special election called Monday by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Several lawmakers fear the election could lead to budget gridlock beyond the more critical deadline of June 30 and the end of the fiscal year.

"Ironically, we are either going to have the first on-time, or nearly on-time budget in years or the longest stalemate in state history," said Kevin Gordon, a lobbyist for school districts.

"I'm not optimistic because I think there's too many people looking at the November ballot as a higher priority for political maneuvering than passing the budget on time."

Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed a \$115.7 billion budget that pays down some of the state's debts and increases funding for schools while imposing no new taxes.

But Democrats, who hold big majorities in both houses, have said education funding should be increased even more and have vowed to fight the governor over the issue.

Education will play a central role in the campaign leading up to the Nov. 8 special election, dominating two of Schwarzenegger's three initiatives. He wants to make teachers work longer to gain tenure, and his proposal to cap state spending also contains provisions that would change minimum school funding requirements. The third is to redraw legislative districts using a panel of retired judges.

The state's powerful education lobby has spent millions of dollars opposing the governor's election agenda, while members of the California Teachers Association recently approved an increase in union dues as part of an effort to build a \$50 million campaign fund.

The dispute over education funding in next fiscal year's budget centers on claims by educators that

Schwarzenegger broke a promise to provide a larger share of state tax revenues to schools. Teachers and school officials said they are owed about \$3 billion more than the governor has proposed.

The governor has argued that no such promise was made. He has said his budget would increase school spending by \$3 billion next year, which would be sufficient to cover growth in enrollments and other costs.

Despite the disagreement, Democrats in both the Assembly and Senate are expected to call for a vote Wednesday on a budget plan very similar to what the governor has proposed, while temporarily delaying a decision on how to provide more money for schools.

Separately, they also are expected to ask Republicans to pass a tax increase to fund education.

But they don't expect either idea to muster the two-thirds majority required because many Democrats believe the Republicans want a budget impasse that will reflect badly on the Legislature. Such a scenario could support Schwarzenegger's argument that his overhaul package is necessary.

"If the Republicans are not willing to vote for what is essentially the governor's budget and more money for schools — than they will have to explain why," said Steve Maviglio, spokesman for Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, D-Los Angeles. "It will look like pure posturing to make the governor look good for the fall election."

Republicans, however, insist they have no motivation to hold up a budget agreement.

Sen. Dick Ackerman, R-Tustin, the minority leader, said he is unsure what the Democrats will propose Wednesday but promised his caucus would not hold up a budget agreement to improve their footing in the fall election.

"Definitely not," Ackerman said. "We want an on-time budget, but the budget needs to make sense. Their proposals so far would spend more than we take in."

Meanwhile, Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, has suggested that the tax increase for schools could be put on the same special election ballot. The Legislature has until August to place a measure on the November ballot if approved by a two-thirds majority.

Governor launches campaign on behalf of ballots

BY SETH HETTENA

Associated Press Writer

SANTEE, Calif. — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger took to the road this week to campaign for a series of ballot measures that, if passed, would tip the power in state government away from the Legislature and toward him.

The governor was greeted with raucous protests, both in this San Diego suburb and later in Santa Monica, where he gave a commencement speech at his alma mater, Santa Monica College.

Schwarzenegger's first stop was in San Diego, where he visited a retired couple who said they couldn't afford any new property taxes to cover state spending. He promised not to tamper with Proposition 13, the landmark initiative that limits property tax increases.

The governor is backing three ballot initiatives that call for imposing a cap on state spending, stripping lawmakers of the power to draw their own districts and increasing the time it takes teachers to gain tenure.

Democrats have proposed raising taxes on upper income residents to pay for education but have not seriously advocated other new taxes.

Schwarzenegger didn't mention his proposals during his 15-minute commencement speech at Santa Monica College on Tuesday night, instead recalling his days as a college student, a world champion bodybuilder and an actor.

"I found so much joy educating myself at this college," he told the students. "Work, work, work. Study, study, study," he exhorted them.

In San Diego, Schwarzenegger met with Paul and Hermine Kendrick, who bought their home 46 years ago for \$13,000 and now live on a fixed income.

"Without Proposition 13, we wouldn't be able to live here," 86-year-old Hermine Kendrick said.

More than 50 protesters representing the California School Employees Association walked the sidewalk in front of the home, chanting "Hey hey, ho ho, Schwarzenegger has got to go."

One wore a Schwarzenegger mask and had a sign reading "True Liar," a takeoff on Schwarzenegger's film "True Lies."

The Republican governor is forging ahead despite a recent poll that shows a majority of voters oppose a special election estimated to cost about \$45 million.

On Monday, Schwarzenegger announced he would call the special election Nov. 8 for voters to consider measures aimed at curtailing the power of the Democrat-controlled Legislature and public employee unions.

Even more important to rival Democrats is an initiative promoted by Schwarzenegger supporters that would restrict the use of union dues for political purposes.

The ballot would be only the fifth special election in California since 1910 and will bring voters to the polls for the fourth statewide election in just two years.

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Expo Rail Line On Track For 2010
There's a rail line from Downtown to Culver City in the near future. Metro has approved plans for funding construction of the 9-mile Exposition Light Rail Line to have it completed in 2010. The line will parallel the I-10 Freeway along Exposition Boulevard to Venice/Robertson Boulevard and have eight stations.

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Senators consider raising age
to get Social Security benefits

BY DAVID ESPO
AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Work till you're 69 before getting full Social Security benefits?

That's one possibility — for Americans who retire two decades or more into the future — as Republicans on a key Senate committee review suggestions for improving the program's solvency.

No decisions have been made yet, and it could be fall before the politically volatile Social Security issue reaches the floor of either the House or Senate, if then.

At the same time, an increase in the retirement age is one of the suggestions that Sen. Charles Grassley, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, outlined last week for fellow Republicans on the panel, according to several officials. Officials said Grassley's suggestion for raising the retirement age would be phased in, possibly over two decades or more, depending on future demographic trends.

The Iowa Republican has also suggested steps to hold down benefits for future upper-income retirees. The officials who described his presentation did so on condition of anonymity, saying the discussions were confidential.

Under current law, the age for retiring with full Social Security benefits is 65 years and six months. It is rising gradually until it reaches 67 for individuals born in 1960 or later.

The GOP lawmakers on the committee are scheduled to meet again on Thursday to continue their work, hoping to agree on a plan that can unify Republicans and allow them to advance one of President Bush's key second-term priorities.

The issue has become intensely contentious in Congress, with public polls indicating tepid support for Bush's call to allow younger workers to create voluntary

personal accounts funded out of their Social Security payroll taxes. Democrats accuse the White House of seeking to privatize the depression-era program, while supporters of the accounts argue they are needed to modernize it.

"The easy path is to do nothing. That's the easy political path," Bush said Tuesday in State College, Pa., where he appeared before a young audience drawn from rural families.

"The tough path is to come together and get something done. But let me tell you something. By doing nothing, you're about to hear that we will have done a disservice to a younger group of Americans coming up," he told a convention of the Pennsylvania FFA, formerly known as the Future Farmers of America.

For their part, Democrats criticized Bush anew, saying his proposal would privatize Social Security while cutting benefits.

"Rural Americans tend to be older and more likely to depend on Social Security," Reps. Stephanie Herseth, D-S.D., and Bob Etheridge, D-N.C., said in a joint statement. They head the Democratic House Rural Working Group.

The president has called for a bill to create permanent solvency for the program, and he also wants the bill to give younger workers the option of establishing a personal retirement account financed from a portion of their payroll taxes.

Under current predictions, Social Security will begin to pay out more in benefits than it receives in tax receipts in 2017, and the trust funds will be depleted in 2041. At that point, benefits would be cut to adjust for the reduction in available funds.

Along with curbs in benefits or increases in taxes, raising the retirement age is one of three general approaches that lawmakers can consider as they try to improve the solvency of Social Security.

Anti-polygamy group urges more Utah,
Arizona prosecutions against practitioners

BY PAUL FOY
Associated Press Writer

SALT LAKE CITY — Rachael Strong was 18 and "too scared to resist" a marriage to a polygamist in his 60s who scheduled nights with his 17 wives on a calendar and ordered them to use birth control.

Strong broke away from the polygamous sect and said she can provide evidence of rape and bigamy at The True and Living Church in Manti, Utah — but she says authorities won't listen.

"Here I am," the 20-year-old Strong declared Wednesday at the Utah Capitol, in a lobby two floors under Attorney General Mark Shurtleff's office. "For over six months I've been willing to testify."

Strong made her appearance as an anti-polygamy group accused authorities of going only after the most visible polygamous leaders and ignoring the vast majority of cases of child abuse, incest and bigamy in secret societies throughout Utah and Arizona.

Tapestry Against Polygamy, which helps women escape polygamous homes with their children, said last week's felony indictment in Arizona of Fundamental Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints President Warren Jeffs, who is still a fugitive, underscored the gulf that leaves many other polygamy victims without the

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support of law enforcement.

"It's pathetic what's going on without (help) from the attorney general's office. We want something done. We're tired of waiting. There's thousands of children affected adversely by polygamy," said Vicki Prunty, the group's director.

Shurtleff has said prosecuting polygamy wasn't easy, especially with many women or children fearful of stepping forward to testify against family members, and that it was more productive to target the worst abuses of polygamists who take underaged brides or molest children.

But Shurtleff's spokesman, Paul Murphy, said Wednesday that Utah's chief law enforcement officer has done more than anybody else recently to crack down on polygamous communities that have thrived for more than a half-century without interference.

"Anytime there is a victim who will come forward to testify, we'll take the case," Murphy said. "Those victims have been few and far between."

Murphy said investigators were working on Strong's case and had accepted a case file prepared by an investigator for Tapestry Against Polygamy, despite the group's complaint it was being ignored.

In Arizona, Mohave County Attorney Matt Smith on Wednesday promised more indictments of polygamists living under Jeffs' control in the FLDS strongholds of Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Ariz., on the Utah-Arizona border.

A Mohave County grand jury indicted Jeffs last week for sex crimes for allegedly arranging a marriage between a teenage girl and a 28-year-old man who was already married.

Smith told The Associated Press on Wednesday he was seeking indictments against another 10 to 15 married men in Colorado City for having sex with girls under 18.

Jeffs has not been seen publicly in more than a year and is thought by some to be in Texas at a new church ranch. There, Schleicher County Sheriff David Doran said deputies will arrest Jeffs on the Arizona warrant if he's pulled over for a traffic violation, but won't raid the ranch to serve it.

INTERNATIONAL



Annan back in the scandal spotlight

BY NICK WADHAMS
Associated Press Writer

UNITED NATIONS — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan is back in the spotlight over the scandal-tinged oil-for-food program after two e-mail memos dating from 1998 appeared suggesting he may have known about a multi-million-dollar U.N. contract awarded to the company that employed his son.

One of the e-mails describes an alleged encounter between Annan and officials from Cotecna Inspection S.A. in late 1998 during which the Swiss company's bid for the contract was raised.

The second, from the same Cotecna executive, expresses confidence that the company would get the bid because of "effective but quiet lobbying" in New York diplomatic circles.

The previously unknown e-mails will be a new distraction for the U.N. secretary-general, who had claimed he was exonerated by an interim report released in March by the Independent Inquiry Committee, chaired by former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker. Anna and had hoped that the committee was finished investigating his personal involvement.

If accurate, the new details would cast doubt on a major find-

ing the U.N.-backed committee made in March _ that there wasn't enough evidence to show that Annan knew about efforts by Cotecna, which employed his son Kojo, to win the Iraq oil-for-food contract. The Associated Press obtained the e-mails Tuesday.

Through his spokesman, Annan said he didn't remember the late 1998 meeting. He repeatedly has insisted that he didn't know Cotecna was pursuing a contract with the oil-for-food program.

The \$64 billion oil-for-food program was aimed at helping ordinary Iraqis suffering under U.N. sanctions imposed after Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, but it has become the target of several corruption investigations since the Iraqi leader was ousted.

A key issue has been whether Annan was guilty of a conflict of interest because the United Nations awarded the \$10 million-a-year contract to Cotecna while Kojo Annan was a consultant for the company.

In the interim report in March, Volcker's committee accused Cotecna and Kojo Annan of trying to conceal their relationship after the firm won the contract. It said Kofi Annan didn't properly investigate possible conflicts of interest but cleared him of trying to influence the contract or violating U.N.

rules.

In a statement, the committee said it was "urgently reviewing" the two e-mails, which it received from Cotecna on Monday night.

"Does this raise a question? Sure," said Reid Morden, executive director of the probe.

Morden said investigators had planned to interview Annan soon as part of its investigation into management of oil-for-food. "This certainly adds another topic," he said of the Cotecna e-mails.

In a statement released earlier Tuesday, Cotecna again denied wrongdoing in getting the contract to certify deals for supplies Iraq imported under oil-for-food.

The first Dec. 4, 1998, e-mail from Michael Wilson, then a vice president of Cotecna and a friend of both Kofi and Kojo Annan's, mentions brief discussions with the secretary-general "and his entourage" at a summit in Paris in 1998.

He wrote that Cotecna's bid was discussed and Cotecna was told it "could count on their support."

U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said U.N. officials reviewed the records of Annan's Paris trip and found no record of any exchange with Michael Wilson. He said Annan also didn't recall talking to Wilson then.

Wilson's memo also refers to a "KA" who made courtesy calls to

various African leaders at the Paris summit. That could be Kojo Annan, then a Cotecna consultant.

Eckhard said it would be reasonable to assume that Kofi and Kojo Annan would have met in Paris if Kojo Annan was there, though he knew of no record of it.

The contents of that e-mail were first reported by The New York Times.

The second e-mail from Wilson, sent minutes after the first, discussed a meeting that took place three days earlier with U.N. procurement officials to talk about the contract bid.

Under a section labeled "conclusion," it said: "With the active backing of the Swiss mission in New York and effective but quiet lobbying within the diplomatic circles in New York, we can expect a positive outcome to our efforts."

Most telling about that e-mail, however, was a brief mention in which Wilson said Annan's approval of the bid was required. U.N. rules in fact did not require Annan to approve those decisions, something officials here have repeatedly stressed.

In that light, Wilson's belief that Annan's approval was necessary sheds light on his thinking at the time toward the secretary-general. Wilson could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Australian hostage freed; suicide bomber strikes Iraqi army base

BY PATRICK QUINN
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqi troops, backed by U.S. forces, freed an Australian hostage after six weeks in captivity, officials said Wednesday. The release came as a suicide bomber dressed in an Iraqi army uniform blew himself up in a mess hall north of Baghdad, killing at least 25 Iraqi soldiers and injuring 27.

No details were available on the operation in Baghdad that led to the release of Douglas Wood, a 64-year-old engineer who lives in Alamo, Calif. He was abducted in late April by a militant group calling itself the Shura Council of the Mujahedeen of Iraq.

The Australian government refused to bend to the kidnappers' demands that its 1,400 troops be

withdrawn from Iraq. It sent diplomats, police and military personnel to Baghdad to seek his release.

"I am delighted to inform the House that the Australian hostage in Iraq, Mr. Douglas Wood, is safe," Prime Minister John Howard told Parliament in Canberra, Australia.

"Mr. Wood was recovered a short while ago in Baghdad in a military operation that I am told was conducted by Iraqi forces in cooperation in a general way with force elements of the United States," Howard said.

Howard told reporters an Iraqi military unit rescued Wood but the full details of how it occurred were not yet known.

The suicide bomber walked into the crowded mess hall in Khalis, about 44 miles north of Baghdad, Iraqi army Col. Saleh al-

Obeidi said.

Al-Obeidi said the man was wearing an army uniform and waited until soldiers had gathered for lunch before blowing himself up. The soldiers belonged to the Al-Salam battalion of the 2nd brigade of the Iraqi army in Diyala province.

Although there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

Two Bulgarian soldiers were killed and another injured late Tuesday when their vehicle slid into a canal about 34 miles southeast of Diwaniya, in south-central Iraq, where about 400 Bulgarian soldiers are serving.

At least 12 Bulgarian soldiers have died in Iraq.

Iraqi legislators seemed close to agreement Wednesday on a demand by Sunni Arabs for more

participation in drafting a constitution. Such an agreement would help defuse growing sectarian tension between the majority Shiites, who control the government, and the Sunnis. The minority is thought to make up the core of an insurgency that has killed at least 1,042 people since Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari's government was announced on April 28.

Insurgents blew up a pipeline near Baghdad late Tuesday that carries crude oil between the domestic refineries of Beiji and Dora, a police officer said. It was still burning Wednesday, he added.

A gunbattle broke out in Baghdad's western Saydiyah neighborhood when gunmen opened fire on a police patrol, police Lt. Mohammed al-Heyali said. One Iraqi civilian was killed and six police officers were injured.

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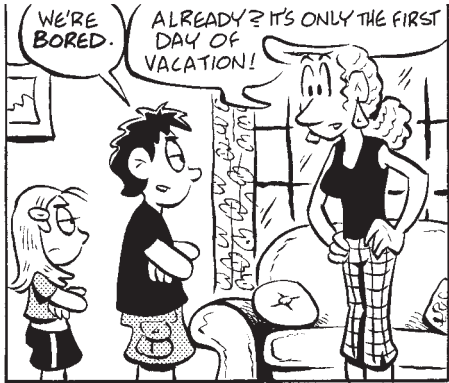
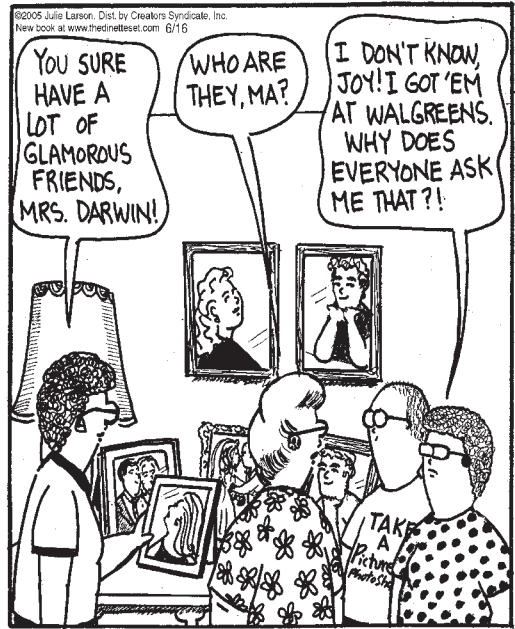
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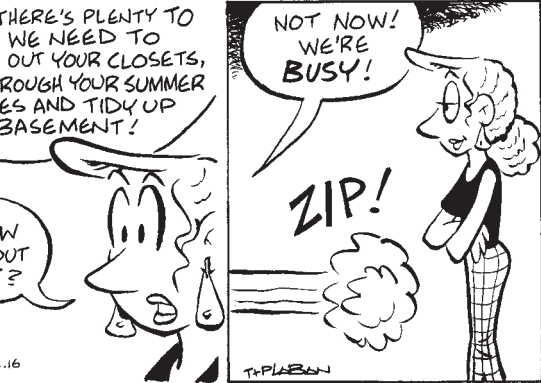
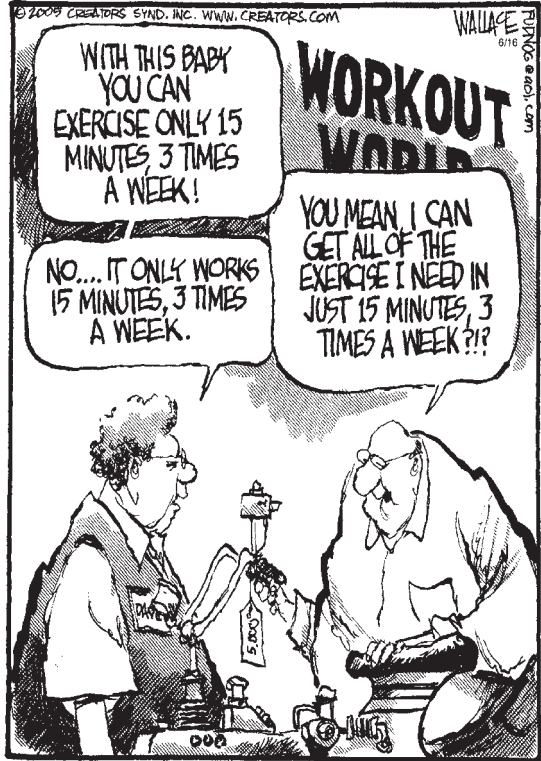


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- 15 Old desk fixtures
- 17 Long fish
- 18 Easy gaits
- 22 Singing cowboy Gene
- 24 Disparaging
- 25 Hit CBS series
- 26 Spy org.
- 27 Reddish dye
- 30 Creates
- 32 Borders
- 33 Pub order
- 34 "It doesn't matter"
- 38 "Jurassic Park" critter
- 41 Address for the king
- 42 Candidate of 2000
- 43 Make booties
- 44 Runway sights
- 45 A long time

DOWN

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- 2 Land south of the Caspian
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- 4 Ridicule sharply
- 5 Potential law
- 6 Island rings
- 7 TV role for James Van Der Beek
- 8 Inventor Whitney
- 9 Game for two
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Yesterday's answer

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- 20 Falco of TV
- 21 Spots for galleons
- 22 Throb
- 23 Not new
- 28 Gravity studier
- 29 Onto the beach
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