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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Daytime: 6 4 2
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

The Maryland schoolteachers' union was found by the National Labor Relations Board to have violated labor law by obstructing two of its own staff members' challenges to working conditions (March). And a 59-year-old man drowned in a quarry near Hillsville, Pa., while testing his new water depth-finder (March). And two days before Easter, the city council in Mission Viejo, Calif., exasperated by the destruction of plants and shrubbery, authorized residents to shoot on sight the animals suspected of causing the damage: rabbits.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 175th day of 2005.
There are 190 days left in the year.

On June 24, 1948, Communist forces cut off all land and water routes between West Germany and West Berlin, prompting the western allies to organize the massive Berlin Airlift. In 1968, Resurrection City, a shantytown constructed as part of the Poor People's March on Washington, D.C., was closed down by authorities.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"There is a way to look at the past. Don't hide from it. It will not catch you if you don't repeat it."

PEARL BAILEY
AMERICAN SINGER AND ACTRESS (1918-1990)

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Class of '05 heads into the world



Fabian Lewkowicz/Special to the Daily Press

Santa Monica High School seniors cross the threshold into adulthood, snagging their diplomas at a Thursday ceremony.

Homeless man convicted of murder

David Wright faces life in prison for 1998 killing

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN LA — A Santa Monica homeless man will spend the rest of his life in prison for the murder of a 20-year-old woman, a judge ruled Thursday.

Superior Court Judge Ruth Ann Kwan found David Thomas Wright guilty of first-degree murder for the killing of Aviva Labbe, who authorities found dead on June 14, 1998. Labbe was discovered lying face down in a walkway at a vacant home on the 200 block of Hill Street.

Judge Kwan is expected to sentence Wright on July 25. Wright is facing life in prison without parole.

In addition to the verdict, Judge Kwan also established that Wright was found guilty for assault with intent to commit rape of a Santa

Monica woman in the mid 90s, giving him a strike against him in the sentencing guidelines. The 1995 incident involved Wright attempting to rape the woman at the corner of California Avenue and Second Street. The woman managed to flee from him.

The ruling is intended to ensure that if Wright successfully appeals the murder case on a technicality he will still have a strike against him, which would extend the years of his sentence, said Deputy District Attorney Ellen Aragon, who prosecuted the case.

"He shouldn't be ever getting out, so whatever crimes he commits, it will have to be in prison," Aragon said.

Labbe's murder had been classified as a "cold case" and remained unsolved for nearly four years until a sampling of Wright's DNA linked him in 2002 to the

murder through the U.S. Department of Justice's database system, authorities said. Convicted felons are required to give a DNA sample, which puts them in the database for authorities to periodically check.

Wright, 49, was found in the California state prison system serving a six-year sentence for battery of a Santa Monica police officer during an unrelated incident, authorities said. In January of 2001, a jury found him guilty of battery, resisting arrest, and failing to register himself as a sex offender.

The murder trial began March 21 and lasted through April 7, just as Aragon was prepared to make her closing arguments. Since then, the trial was resumed and postponed several times.

The DA's office had agreed to help Wright secure his evidence.

See **GUILTY**, page 10

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

SAMOHİ — Santa Monica High School's Class of 2005 proudly bid its farewell to 12 years of public school education on Thursday.

In a ceremony replete with laughter, shouts and a few tears, Samohi's 775 graduating seniors remarked on the joys and struggles of the last four years, while keeping an optimistic eye out for the new challenges ahead.

With spirits high, the seniors — donned in bright blue caps and gowns — marched with beaming smiles into Samohi's outdoor Greek Theatre, after a serenade from underclassmen. They were met by family and friends standing to the side, a shower of hugs and high-fives and flashing cameras, as they walked down the theatre steps and took their positions on the far side of the arena.

The ceremony, at times contagious with excitement, began a few minutes before 6 p.m., amid a bright, blue, beautiful Santa Monica day.

After a rendering of the Star

See **GRADUATES**, page 6

Case against alleged opium dealers bumped

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN LA — Defense attorneys have successfully requested to delay court proceedings against a Santa Monica man accused of heading an international opium ring which brought millions of dollars worth of drugs into Los Angeles, in order to have time to thoroughly review the evidence.

Attorneys representing Mehrdad Nejad Lari and four others arrested in May on charges related to the sale and distribution of opium were granted a request on June 14 by U.S. District Court Judge Audrey B. Collins to extend a

See **OPIUM**, page 6

Jacquie Banks

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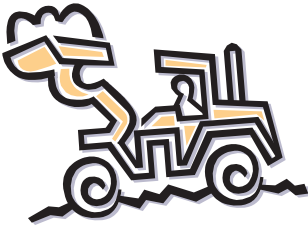


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Just don't be alone, Leo

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)

★★★★ You can breathe a sigh of relief, partly because it is Friday, but also because the Moon is in your sign, highlighting you. You have the energy and drive to hit a home run. In fact, invite others to get together for a game of ball or just for fun. Tonight: Celebrate the end of the week.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Your instincts serve you well with bosses and those in power. Be careful how hard you push. Are you holding in some anger? Use care then. Your efficiency emerges. As everyone hops into his or her weekend, you might still be working. Tonight: Don't count on an early night.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Your mind is on distant places and probably some fun happening. If you can, get out of what you are doing as soon as possible. Follow your heart and mind. Others greet you positively. Use your imagination wherever you are. Tonight: Relax to some good music.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Deal with a partner, especially if it involves a public or professional commitment. You might want to get feedback from this person more often. You will be coming from a secure place, especially with an investment. Tonight: Say thank you nicely.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ You might be surprised at the difference a day can make. Suddenly everyone seeks you out. You get an important call from someone at a distance. Socialize and network. What you say delights others. Tonight: Just don't be alone.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ A partner or co-worker has a very strong point of view. Let this person pitch in and help, because you will only clear out more work that way. Your assets and talents merged together could be very powerful. Don't spend money before you get it. Tonight: Buy favorite munchies on the way home.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ You have romance, or at least some special plans, on your mind. Don't let someone's demanding nature toss you into chaos. Claim your power, and don't allow others to push you. You don't always need to be the nice guy. Tonight: Spice up your life.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ You might want and need to head home as early as you can. If you must bring a project home, do so. You also might have a lot to do around the house. Don't worry about a change in routine. Tonight: Make dinner easy.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Someone you like or a child could be very assertive about what he or she wants. Respond, but don't rain on this person's parade. Having time with you means more than you realize. Plug your ingenuity into your day, especially your conversations. Tonight: Chat over dinner.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Come from a basic point of view. You might need to make an investment or a major repair on a property or your home. Don't forget to check in on an important commitment or project. Your responsibilities call. Tonight: Treat yourself to something special.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ The Moon in your sign energizes you, causing your natural traits to emerge. Be careful how you deal with others. You might be a lot more brash or assertive than you realize. See the big picture. Tonight: Just ask.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★ Take your time. You might have a strong feeling about what to do financially. Take a risk while honoring your limits. You need to resist overspending. A partner or friend pitches in with an expense. Tonight: Curl up at home.



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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

SMC to celebrate America's independence

By Daily Press staff

Celebrate your independence at Santa Monica College two days early. This year's "Celebrate America" celebration at SMC will feature a fireworks show and entertainment by Dixieland band Main Street and the rhythm-and-blues group JD Hall & the JD Hall Band, officials said. The festivities will be held at SMC's Corsair Field, on 16th Street and Pico Boulevard. Gates open at 5 p.m. and entertainment starts at 6 p.m. The fireworks — by Pyro Spectaculars — will be at dusk. For information, call (310) 434-3000. Attendees may bring picnic dinners or purchase one from one of the many food vendors. Alcoholic beverages, glass containers, barbecues and fireworks are prohibited. The celebration will be held Saturday, July 2, and is free but donations are welcome. Parking is \$5.

Franklin pupils can figure it out

By Daily Press staff

The numbers added up for the fourth and fifth grades at Franklin Elementary earlier this month. The school's fourth and fifth grade teams competed for the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District in this year's math field day on June 4, which was sponsored by the Los Angeles County Office of Education.



Photo courtesy Franklin Elementary students take honors in county math fest.

Team members were selected by the math club and were coached by Mrs. Helen McCullough and Ms. Dawn Silhavy. The fourth grade team members were Ella Marks, Ben Vigman, Jessica Deese and Rick Tennenbaum. They came home with medals in two out of the five competition categories. The fifth grade team members were Kayla Shapiro, Aziz Yehia, Hanyu Chwe, and Adam Platt. They medaled in three out of the five competition categories.

Elks raise funds for handicapped children

By Daily Press staff

The Elks have recently lent a helping hand to handicapped children. The California-Hawaii Elks raised \$2,735,385 in 2004-05 to help children with disabilities. Ray Beers, this year's exalted ruler of the Santa Monica Elks, presented a check for \$24,851 to the Elks Major Project. "We are pleased and proud that members of our Elks lodge were so generous with their dollars and time," Beers said. "It should be noted that this represents \$91.70 for each member of our lodge." Over the past 55 years, the 99,000 members from California and Hawaii have turned over more than \$78,000,000 to the California-Hawaii Elks Major Project. It should be noted that the majority of the funds are raised in urban areas and spent in rural areas. All of the funds are devoted solely to providing therapy treatment, vision screening, scholarships and vocational training to children with a wide variety of disabilities. In rural areas, the services are not readily available, officials say. Santa Monica Elks had the highest per capita contribution — which was \$91.58

See BRIEFS, page 9



SURF REPORT

It's looking like a moderate SW swell day with a 10 to 15 percent drop in size from Thursday, about waist-high or so. NW is looking nil, ankle to knee-high. It will be sunny in the day with highs in the mid 60s to lower 70s at beaches. Expect it to be clear in the evening then areas of low clouds and fog, with lows in the mid 50s.

Today the water is:

68°

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	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
TUESDAY	3:46	-1.4	2:35	2.3	10:21	3.8	9:02	7.1
WEDNESDAY	4:32	-1.7	3:24	2.4	11:10	3.8	9:49	7.2
THURSDAY	5:19	-1.7	4:17	2.4	12:00	3.9	10:38	7.0
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The Q Line

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For the first time in a few years, the city's budget shows a surplus. The majority of the surplus already has been earmarked for programs intended to improve the quality of life in the Pico neighborhood; help better address homelessness; streamline the planning process; better maintain streets, parks and landscaping; increase the focus on the arts; and build the new library.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Where do you think the budget surplus should be spent? Are the city's major needs being covered or has something been overlooked?"

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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OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Santa Monicans are getting hosed

Editor:

Consider your washing machine: convenient, reliable, necessary — and soon to be on the front lines of the city's battle to become more "sustainable."

The City Council's latest lightning bolt is a plan to raise water rates significantly higher for those who use more water.

Who would these high-tier users be? Who would pay for this sustainability scheme? The minority segment of city residents who live in homes. We the wasteful people who dare to have a green lawn, or washing machine. Or lots of people under one roof.

Call it the Santa Monica Maytag Divide: residents with gardens vs. those with parking spots, a divide between families and single apartment dwellers, between those with washers and those who trudge baskets, and between those on our council who want our water bills to help save Lake Mead and those who first and foremost want a well-run utility.

I hope the council doesn't fall for this silly idea — soaking home owners with their own hose. Of course water is precious. If and when there's a water shortage, we'll drain the pools, kill the bluegrass and drive dirty cars. Until then, if we want to do our part for the Colorado River, and plant cactus, we will. Don't slap it on us. If we ever achieve some true measure of using less, saving more and living better, it will be because of voluntary efforts, not back-handed coercion. Incentives, not higher taxes, for things like shower-water recycling and rock garden installations.

Most importantly, I think it's wrong to confuse the finances of a potentially bloated city "enterprise" with a new, financially punitive environmental initiative, especially as utility bureaucrats want to increase our utility rates by four times the rate of inflation. (Remember, this department already receives an automatic CPI annual adjustment. This new increase is on top of that, with more looming.) Why? Because their cash reservoir may be low. Four times inflation! That's the average across the city. Under the current proposal, who knows how much higher the water tax increase will be for us, the infidel sprinkler minority.

Bobby Shriver was incredulous when he tried to understand the city's pitch for more cash: where's the discussion of utility costs? (One senses this question hadn't been asked in years.) How can we decide anything, Shriver wondered, about rate increases until we know what we pay for? And why we buy what we do, added Bob Holbrook. Do the people really know what we've been buying at premium prices — and recouped in extra high utility rates — in the name of "sustainability?" Does anybody care?

We should. Water bills easily top \$800 a year per household when you add the sewer part. These are bills, by the way, that most apartment dwellers never see nor ponder, bills the rest of us pay to an unregulated monopoly that holds us captive, that also wants higher taxes for trash and street sweeping. (What about landlords? The council tap-danced that question over the Rent Control Board. Let 'em figure it out, whenever. And by the way, higher rates will be in the mail as soon as legally possible, like, next month.)

Monopolies suck, always have, always will, unless tightly controlled. Which brings the question: Why can't we buy water from Los Angeles, if it's cheaper? It all comes from the same big pipe. Why can't we hire private trash haulers, if they're cheaper than the city with its cool new trucks? It all goes to the same big hole.

No, we can't buy DWP water; we're trapped in this system, and trapped until election day with this council, and its \$25,000-a-day-hedge-fine activist majority — liberal on social issues, conservative on development issues (except, it seems, with mall developers) and impotent to the one issue that matters most to most people: Vagrants. Meanwhile most of us, I suspect, don't really give a damn about this water issue one way or another, to answer Holbrook's question.

What the hell. It's only 15, 20 bucks a month more for water and trash, and good

See LETTERS, page 5

If city treats us like kids, throw tantrums



OUR TOWN

BY TED WINTERER

When asked how old she is, my daughter Eleanor recently stopped answering "three and a half" and now replies that she's "almost four."

Along with this quantum leap in development she's acquired a new intolerance for having her intelligence underestimated. Too often I forget how fast she's growing up, so I might remind her to wear her helmet when she rides her bike or to brush her teeth before bed. Her response is invariably an outraged "I know that!" as she feels I'm being patronizing.

Her newfound gumption got me thinking about the condescending manner in which city officials often deal with us as if we were small children. For instance, you may have noticed the new parking meters installed around town, which along with increasing fees have a slot in which to insert a prepaid debit card. Now there's a swell idea: If I'm going to pay more for parking at least there's a new and convenient means to do so.

A number of months ago I inquired at City Hall how I might obtain one of these ingeniously named "Santa Monicards," as I was weary of hoarding loose change to assure I had a dollar to park for an hour. A senior official in transportation management advised me these cards would not be available until each and every meter in Santa Monica had been converted to the new format. Otherwise, I was told, people "might find it confusing."

Great. So City Hall thinks we're all so dimwitted that we can't handle a simple analysis: debit cards can be used in new meters but not in the old ones. Does it really take a Mensa membership to figure that one out?

Anyone who participated in the first public input to the revisions to the general plan most likely also felt talked down to by our government. For instance, to gauge community priorities for the new circulation element, folks were given \$100 in play money and asked to allocate their allowance among fishbowls with labels like "parking" and "walking." We could have played this game at Eleanor's third birthday party. And if you tried your hand at the city's "5 Steps to Discover Santa Monica" walking tour, you were treated to definitions of apparently abstruse planning terms like "active living," "density" and "mobility." It seems we're all a bunch

of nincompoops.

But what really chaps my hindquarters is the way the city and the Macerich Co., the owner of Santa Monica Place Mall, have deigned to treat us in their joint effort to "Reimagine Santa Monica Place." To sell their vision for an immense, traffic-clogging new development in place of the aging mall, consultants were retained for a series of exercises masquerading as a comprehensive analysis of popular opinion.

First, surveys were mailed to residents, who were asked to rank a smorgasbord of "uses and opportunities" for a redeveloped Santa Monica Place and then provided only a few lines for additional comments, as if most of us were incapable of anything more complex than a simple sentence. No where did the survey address the questions most pressing to citizens, such as the size of a new project and the corollary increase in density and congestion. Also absent was the choice of simply gussying up the old dowager of a mall within its existing envelope.

Next came a series of "hands-on community workshops" at which people were told not to constrain themselves with worries about vital issues such as financing or zoning and handed building blocks to design their dream development. (Now there's a notion for my daughter's next birthday party.) And not surprisingly, once asked to behave like 4-year-olds, many folks did just that — fabricating enormous complexes which were then photographed as community support of enormity. Too bad residents weren't given little wooden cars to replicate the gridlock any such development would generate.

This summer, when many will be on vacation, we'll get to look at some amorphous concepts for a redeveloped mall, rather than specific plans with particulars about height, density, costs to taxpayers and environmental impacts. Once again an adult dialogue will be discouraged, but when the developers seek approval from the Planning Commission and the City Council, all parties will insist this sham be considered genuine public outreach.

And we're not supposed to see through this transparent con job? I really resent being treated like a child, so I joined the Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City (www.smclc.net) to insist residents have meaningful input into the largest development our town has ever seen. I hope you'll do likewise.

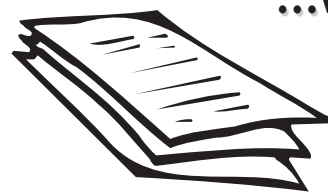
(Ted Winterer is a writer and grownup who lives in Ocean Park. He can be reached at ourtownsmdp@aol.com.)

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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Santa Monica Daily Press



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LETTERS, from page 4

Lord, who cares about roses, Lake Mead is shrinking even as you read this! It’s only 20 bucks here, 25 there, write the check, lick the stamp, write the check, bill after bill, every two months, year after year — that is, for us non-renters who have Santa Monica utility accounts. The rest of you righteous renters, thank your sustainable stars you don’t have potty-challenged toddlers, and a washing machine.

Mark Shepherd
Santa Monica

Bride-to-be not a news event

Editor:
This is a really immature woman. If it was life or death, then she didn’t really want to be married.
She had four days to call off the wedding and announce that she’d changed her mind. I think it’s great that this man is standing by her, but he’s obviously ignoring the waving red flags. I don’t know how long this wedding/marriage has been planned, but I doubt that it was overnight. I also doubt that she decided to take-off at the last minute. What is pathetic is that this became a national news event and cost taxpayers lots of money.
Jennifer should be forced to repay the police, etc. for all costs of investigating her lack of responsibility. I’m sick of hearing about it, as I’m sure others are too. This is a stupid way to gain fame. Others change their minds, but it never becomes a national “problem.” After she disappeared, her groom-to-be should have been grateful and relieved to be rid of her.

Cheryl Erb
Santa Monica

How about walking to work?

Editor:
I have the perfect solution to the residential/business parking debate.
Let all the employees of the businesses concerned buy or rent residences near their place of work. That way they would qualify for preferential parking or could, thanks to Santa Monica’s wonderful weather, walk to work every day.

Ken McCrae
Santa Monica

Bewildered vet not so bewildered after all

Editor:
I wish to respond to Stewart Resmer’s characterization that a local homeless and “bewildered” veteran is somehow disingenuous about his motive to resist a service center on the West LA VA campus for non-vets. (SMDP, June 16 page 4).
Resmer exhibited a classic example of sophistry and use of text out of proper context — which is always error. I’ve known the “bewildered vet” — Jimbo, as I like to call him — for almost 10 years and he is one of my closest pals. I met him back in ‘96 at the VA while he was a volunteer there, and I can tell you that notwithstanding his self-deprecation for labeling himself a “stinkin’ good for nothin’ bum,” when it comes to his motives concerning God, country, and veteran affairs he’s as pure-of-heart as a sweet sleeping baby Jesus in a feathery soft Christmas scene manger.
Resmer allows that my friend isn’t “bewildered” because his thoughts, as Resmer states, “were well researched outlined, and reported.” What — because Jimbo has a faculty for articulation and syntax he can’t have bewilderment? The context of his being “bewildered” was simply as to why some of your city officials voiced an idea for a homeless vet service center on the VA campus in such a way that made it seem no such services existed. Resmer could have understood that had he spent more time reading Jimbo’s paragraphs instead of counting them — which, by the way, totaled 18 and not 16 as Mr. Resmer said in his seven paragraph critique — but I digress.
During the past 10 years or so, when not out-flanked by his archenemy, Jimbo has continued to be of service behind the scenes, which is why it’s contemptible for Resmer to insinuate my friend is out to fool or somehow deny benefits to vets and our current returning warriors and their dependents. I remember when he used to come to my home when I lived in the Los Angeles area to borrow my typewriter. He would sit for hours transcribing traumatic combat events experienced by Vietnam vets who had trouble with their PTSD claims. I would watch him listen to tape recordings the men made for him, and though I never found out what was said on those tapes, Jimbo didn’t want me to hear or read of the horrors — his ashen face, quiet tears and deep-breathed pauses spoke volumes. His work enabled vets to receive compensation that totaled into six figures — my friend refused every penny offered him by these men. Every damn penny. Jimbo doesn’t like to openly discuss his efforts in trying to help vets, but I would be remiss to not mention at least that one.
Yes, Jimbo’s no angel — but he’s no devil in disguise either. God Bless ya, J.

Cheryl Strong
United States Navy
Colorado City, Colo.



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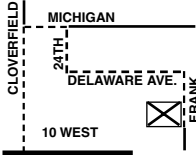
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LOCAL

Flowers fill air during commencement ceremonies

GRADUATES, from page 1

Spangled Banner, sung by the thousands in attendance, nearly two dozen administrators, faculty members and students took turns sharing, in turn, both the serious and humorous about the past four years.

Speakers remarked that at a time when the California public education system is facing unprecedented financial challenges, and the very nation and world itself seems to be run amok with a lack of quality leadership, there are occasions deserving of celebration.

"Everything good about public education is standing right here on this stage," said Dr. Michael Burnett, a Samohi teacher. "If you look at these young people, not critically, you will be amazed as much as they amaze me."

Burnett advised students to follow the advice his father had passed on to him, which was "finding an occupation you enjoy, so you don't have to work for the rest of your life."

It was a point well-received by students and parents to a round of claps and laughs, considering 87 percent of this year's grad-

uating class will be heading on to higher education and have earned \$6.1 million in scholarships to help themselves along the way, according to Ilene Straus, Samohi principal.

School superintendent John Deasy followed with a message of equal faith, while reminding those present of the grim realities of the world in which the '05 class would be charged to lead, having begun their freshman year in the same weeks of the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

"You are entering the world at a time when it needs you most, when your leadership will be essential," Deasy said.

Alluding to a general corrosion of the American character brought by increasing disparities of wealth and the fostering of ignorance, Deasy reminded students to not let themselves to become misguided in the future.

"The willingness to be tolerant, fair and compromise is called 'growing,' and it is not common," Deasy said. "We congratulate your accomplishments, but more importantly, we look forward to your leadership."

"You will always be a graduate of Santa Monica High School, and we will always be proud of you."

Deasy's speech was followed by a

three-woman dance called "Celebracao," during which time a beach ball began making the rounds among anxious graduates, until it bounced off a school board member's head and was snagged by administrators.

Four students representing various races spoke about the lessons learned from the April 15 fights that caused the school to go on lockdown. The four students, friends before the fights, help mend wounds afterwards between conflicting racial groups and said they had "embraced each other's cultures and made them part of ourselves."

Before the presentation of diplomas, Peter Haas, a graduate and varsity basketball player, discussed the cynicism he felt going into high school.

"Samohi is a place where students find themselves," Haas said, while noting "we all bleed blue and gold."

The momentum seemed to build as the last names were called for diplomas. Then, white flowers flew into the air as students and attendees chanted and cheered.

For a moment there was a sigh in the arena, even silence, as the hundreds of graduates began walking away into an unwritten future.

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Suspect allegedly moved millions in opium since '01

OPIUM, from page 1

pre-trial conference until July 25, on the grounds more time is needed to prepare a defense for a case authorities said has been building since 2001.

Lari, 47, was arrested at his home on the 300 block of 11th Street in Santa Monica on May 4 for possession with intent to distribute opium and is being detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center in downtown Los Angeles. He pleaded not guilty to the charges and has been denied bail.

Authorities allege Lari bought and sold millions of dollars worth of drugs to various mid-level opium distributors throughout Los Angeles from 2001 to as recently as March, according to an affidavit filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office, which is prosecuting the case. Lari allegedly purchased opium from Gholam Hassan Nasser-Jafar, who supplied the drug organization from his sources in Iran even after he was arrested in December of 2003 by the German State Police.

Opium is a primary component of heroin, both of which are derived from the opium poppy plant harvested mostly in Asia, authorities said.

Prosecuting U.S. Assistant Attorney Peter Hernandez said the July 25 pre-trial conference will be an opportunity for those involved in the case to discuss possible trial dates.

"There has not been much going on because the (evidence) has just been produced and counsel is trying to learn what the case is about," Hernandez said.

Lari's attorney, Donald M. Re, declined to comment.

Lari's wife, Marjan Sarshar, 47, who also was arrested on May 4 for her alleged involvement, has since had the charges against her dropped, attorneys said.

Sarshar has previously said she and her husband are Santa Monica residents who have children.

Sarshar's attorney, Mark Werksman, said he has been hired to help Sarshar retain her property, which he said the U.S. Attorney's Office is attempting to confiscate.

"She has not been indicted, and they're trying to take the property because they said it comes from Lari," Werksman said. "We're dealing with it in court."

Hernandez has characterized the drug bust that led to Lari's arrest as "huge." Multiple criminal complaints filed in U.S. District Court in May show that in December 2003, German State Police and the DEA in Frankfurt seized about 271 kilograms of opium — worth about \$5.4 million — from a drug organization run by Nasser-Jafar. Nasser-Jafar and his associates were arrested, and further investigation uncovered an international drug ring, where the opium was obtained from Iran, passed through Germany and shipped to Los Angeles, according to the complaints.

The business cards of Lari and an employee were found in Nasser-Jafar's apartment in Dusseldorf, Germany, in October of 2002, when German police served a search warrant there, according to the affidavit.

Lari owns and operates a jewelry and design company called Mallery Design, located in the jewelry district in downtown LA. The affidavit alleges Lari used his business to sell opium, purify it from its raw form and launder the proceeds from its sale.

A Drug Enforcement Agency special agent had been investigating Lari and several individuals alleged to have been involved in the ring since 2003. The U.S. Attorney's Office alleges the money laundering and opium distribution ring involved

See OPIUM, page 10

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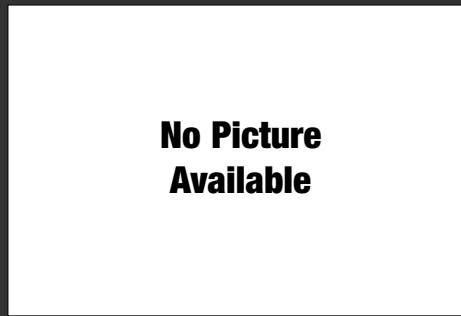
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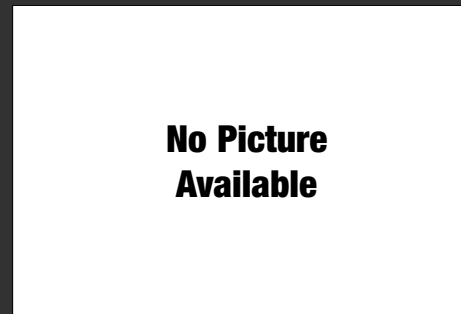
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Schwarzenegger seeks to keep his top asset — his own image

BY BETH FOUHY

AP Political Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Arnold Schwarzenegger has stared down adversaries before — from bodybuilding rivals in his Mr. Olympia days to the menacing fake enemies of his action films.

But after months of trying to stare down Democrats over a package of government reform measures, a new poll shows the posture may not be playing as well in the political arena. And it's costing him the currency he's long valued most — his own popularity.

A statewide Field Poll shows Schwarzenegger's job approval has skidded to just 37 percent, down from a stratospheric 65 percent last year. And only 37 percent support a special election to consider his reform measures, which include setting a state spending cap, redrawing legislative districts and increasing from two to five years the time it takes teachers to get tenure. The poll showed voters support the tenure measure, but the other two are running well behind.

What this means for the governor depends on who's answering the question. His opponents see weakness in the numbers and viewed him as humbled and conciliatory during his Tuesday news conference to respond to the poll. Others closer to him say the governor is aware of public sentiment but isn't letting the poll sway him from his special election message.

Indeed, members of Schwarzenegger's political team have publicly challenged the poll's credibility and insisted the special election campaign was moving forward as planned.

His chief political strategist, Mike Murphy, issued a statement declaring the poll results "balderdash." And fundraising consultant Marty Wilson said the poll would have little impact on the team's strategy going forward.

"I've been running campaigns in the state for 25 years as have a number of our colleagues in the governor's high command," Wilson said. "Not once have we made a decision based on what the Field Poll says. And we're not going to now."

The poll seemed to have a different effect on the governor, however. He appeared subdued during the Tuesday news conference compared to his usual playful swagger. He told reporters he would step up his efforts to reach a compromise agreement with the Legislature.

"People make mistakes sometimes, and I think that we learn," Schwarzenegger said when asked about the lessons of the poll. "These are very clear messages that we must work together, and so I am looking forward to that."

Schwarzenegger biographer Laurence Leamer said that while the governor has had a knack throughout his life for remaining positive in the face of adversity, nothing has prepared him for the body blow to his image indicated by this week's poll.

"Here's this guy who promised things would be great again, and the people of California bought into it. Boy, it's fallen apart," said Leamer, whose biography "Fantastic" was released recently and who remains in touch with the governor and his team. "He has gotten a lot of bad reviews for his movies, but this is something else. He is troubled. He is a troubled man at this point."

Lost in the focus on Schwarzenegger's poll numbers are the companion figures for the state Legislature, which is controlled by Democrats.

Democrats so far have successfully steered the campaign away from the Legislature, but the Field Poll indicated those lawmakers also have reason to seek a compromise with the governor. Just 24 percent of voters approve of the job the Legislature is doing, a 10-point drop since February.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

— of any lodge in the State Association, Elks officials said.

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By Daily Press staff

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LOCAL

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Fabian Lewkowicz/Special to the Daily Press

Richard Dobeck, a student at Lincoln Middle School, performs Concerto No. 1 in F minor, as the Santa Monica's Kiwanis Club held its 56th Annual Kiwanis Music Scholarship Award on Wednesday at the Santa Monica YMCA. Dobeck won a first-place scholarship in the middle school instrumental division. He will be transferring to Samohi in the fall. Kiwanis gave out 24 scholarships ranging from \$75 to \$600. First Federal Bank of California was a co-sponsor.

Wright can appeal murder conviction

GUILTY, from page 1

That evidence was discussed at proceedings last week, with Judge Kwan expected to make a decision this week.

After the verdict, Wright questioned Aragon's evidence, indicating there was no witnesses to the murder, no motive and a pager, which had been found in Labbe's rectum, hadn't been tested for any physical evidence. He also questioned Judge Kwan on her decision.

"He was complacent," Aragon said about Wright as he heard the ruling. "Other than that, he was saying why he wanted her to delineate on her decision."

Wright was informed that if he was not satisfied with the ruling, he could make motions to appeal the decision.

"I can appeal?" Wright is reported to have said.

Wright, who defended himself in the court trial, was being shadowed throughout the proceedings by his former public defender, Leonard N. Garber.

Garber, who disagreed with a panel which ruled Wright was competent to stand trial, has been on "stand-by" during Wright's court appearances, often shifting out of frustration in one of the juror's

seats as Wright attempted to defend himself.

Garber said he is Wright's legally appointed attorney through the California Bar Association who Wright fired last year, possibly for disagreeing with his decision to not have a jury trial.

Wright's rap sheet goes back to at least 1990, when he pleaded no contest to petty theft. In 1993, he was convicted of possessing a dagger and given probation. In 1994, Wright was sentenced to two years in prison for assault with intent. In 1999, he was acquitted for possessing a deadly weapon.

Aragon, who said Wright seemed to have his bearings and was not sure if he had been putting on a charade during the trial, said the biggest obstacle to prosecuting the case was Wright's tendency to become fixated on minutiae, using valuable court time to discuss points he considered imperative to the case but may not actually have played a significant part in Judge Kwan's decision.

Aragon said she is satisfied by the way the court has handled the case.

"(Kwan) gave him a long and fair trial and ample opportunity to bring in witnesses and evidence," Aragon said.

Informants played role in busts

OPIUM, from page 6

more than a dozen people, with Lari being described as the "boss of the bosses."

The DEA and the FBI allege Lari and Ali Mojaddam distributed the opium received from Nasser-Jafar in Germany, and wired the sale proceeds to various international locations. Additionally, Lari allegedly used the proceeds to acquire property and high-valued vehicles, as well as set up limited liability corporations and refinance real property and homes.

During the investigation in LA, authorities obtained telephone records, bank records, property loan records and other information relating to the organization, all of which led a special agent to believe Lari and Mojaddam allegedly continued to sell opium and launder money even after Nasser-Jafar's arrest, the affidavit said.

Confidential informants aided authorities in tracking the smuggling of drugs, which were carried into the United States

in false-bottomed suitcases.

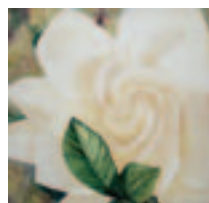
In total, 11 arrests were made by the DEA and the FBI. Also arrested for their alleged roles in the opium drug ring that stretched from Iran and Germany to Boston and Los Angeles, were Kamran Atarzadeh, 53, and Faramarz Bokhour, 55, both of Los Angeles. They were arrested for possession with the intent to distribute opium.

Individuals arrested for money laundering include Bijan Kohanzad, 43, of Brentwood; Houshyar Babelpour, 44, of Woodland Hills; Benham Azimi, 45, of Pasadena; Fariborz Ahl, 44, of Los Angeles; and Moussa Abadiah, 55, of Beverly Hills. All of the arrests were made in the Los Angeles area.

Mehdi Ilkani, 58, of Santa Monica, was arrested at his home in the Ocean Park neighborhood. Ilkani was arrested for money laundering and is considered by authorities as a mid-level opium distributor.

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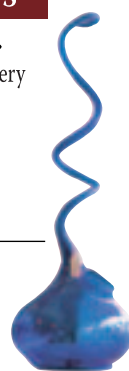


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Entertainment



‘Bewitched’ should be swept under carpet

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Nicole Kidman has emerged in recent years as one of the most talented movie stars of her generation, having sunk her pearly whites into meaty dramatic roles in “The Hours,” (for which she was awarded a Best Actress Oscar) “Moulin Rouge” and “Cold Mountain.” When it comes to comedic chops, however, the Aussie beauty is sorely in need of a set of braces cause she can’t seem to get things straight. On the heels of the criminally unfunny “Stepford Wives” remake, Kidman reportedly land-

Review

ed the role of Samantha in Nora Ephron’s “Bewitched” as she could crinkle her nose, Elizabeth Montgomery-style, like nobody’s business. Those unfortunate enough to see this movie may inadvertently develop a similar skill because, boy, it stinks something awful. Bad enough Hollywood keeps churning out lame-o remakes of démodé TV shows, but when accomplished thespians like Kidman, Will Ferrell and Michael Caine sign on to star in them, it augurs for the end of civilization ... or, at least, “Full House: The Movie.” Yikes!

In keeping with the studio zeitgeist, “Bewitched” is a “high concept comedy,” which is becoming synonymous with “confusing and unfunny.” The 1960s

series chronicled a witch who married an ordinary guy in the hopes of achieving normalcy, but the film proffers an even more unlikely conceit: The witch, Isabel (Kidman), longs for a simple life devoid of hocus-pocus (in a luxuriant Beverly Hills enclave, no less — a familiar domain of the Ephron oeuvre), but magically winds up being cast as Samantha opposite a narcissistic, washed-up film star (Ferrell) in a 21st century revival of “Bewitched.” So she’s a real witch who’s hot for the actor who plays a guy who falls for the pretend witch she plays on TV, and yes, it is tedious as it sounds. Kidman inexplicably plays Isabel like Jeff Bridges’ bemused alien in “Starman,” and her skin appears to have been digitally airbrushed in post-pro-

duction, giving it an unnaturally translucent cast that is damned creepy. Oh, yes, and Shirley MacLaine also is in the picture. Ferrell’s a very funny man who has proven adept at elevating mediocre material by sheer force of personality. But asking him to squeeze some laughs out of this lemon is like asking Ephron to lay off the schmaltz. It’s just not possible. “Bewitched” languished in development Hell for 10 years with countless stars and filmmakers dropping in and out. As it turns out, the project could have used another decade or so in the incubator.

(Rated PG-13 for some language, including sex and drug references, and partial nudity. Running time: 98 minutes)

‘Herbie: Fully Loaded’ sputters out of gas right from the starting line

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

As a favor, I took a friend’s 11-year-old daughter to a screening of “Herbie: Fully Loaded” and just as soon as star Lindsay Lohan appeared onscreen the girl turned to me and whispered, “She doesn’t look anorexic.” The tabloids, however, say she is. They routinely report other unflattering things about the young actress’s personal life, and whether there’s truth to any of it is immaterial.

Review

What matters in show business is the public’s perception, and Lohan’s troubled party-girl image is so pervasive that her short but successful run as Disney’s family-fare go-to-girl (“Freaky Friday,” “Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen”) seems like a distant memory ... even to 11-year-old girls. And that — even more than the predictable storyline, tedious action sequences and wince-inducing supporting performances — is what stalls the latest outing of the world’s most famous Beetle.

After five decades in the biz, there’s no denying Herbie’s got staying power. But

for as lovable as the winking VW is, and as pretty as Lohan looks behind the wheel, this movie simply doesn’t rev the engine. Lohan plays Maggie Peyton, youngest member of a legendary NASCAR racing family. Though she’s clearly racetrack-savvy, Maggie’s overprotective pop Ray (Michael Keaton, barely hanging in there) has forbidden her from competing, instead entrusting the Peyton legacy to his bungling son, Ray Jr. (the always-unremarkable Breckin Meyer). But after Maggie rescues Herbie from the junkyard, the little car that could repays her by whupping arrogant NASCAR star Trip Murphy

(Why, Matt Dillon? Why?) in an impromptu street race. That sets the wheels in motion for a third act rematch in The Big Race, the outcome of which is never in doubt. Everything that happens en route follows the kid-flick formula to the letter: Girl proves she’s as good as, if not better, than the guys; disapproving dad comes around and becomes her biggest cheerleader; cute boy fawns; and parents sit in the audience praying that their kid never winds up on the cover of the National Enquirer looking, well, fully loaded.

(Rated G. Running time: 100 minutes)

‘Land of the Dead’ seems ripe for a burial

DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

With all due respect to George A. Romero, zombie flicks are dead and long overdue for a burial. In the past three years alone, there have been somewhere in the neighborhood of a dozen releases that pit the living against the undead, all of which follow an almost identical blueprint. Romero created the genre with his 1968 horror classic, “Night of the Living Dead,” followed up by the equally chilling “Dawn of the Dead” (1978) and “Day of the Dead” (1985). In the 20 years since, the director has sat idly by while a new

Review

breed of filmmakers with bigger budgets and smaller imaginations have cashed-in on the public’s fascination with flesh-eating corpses. Too bad Romero waited so long to get back in the game, because “Land of the Dead” might have paid off had we not seen it all before (and will be seeing again next week, incidentally, when Lions Gate’s “Undead” stumbles into theaters). To his credit, at the outset Romero attempts to inject some novelty to “Land of the Dead” by giving his zombies a consciousness their predecessors lacked. Sure, they still hunger for flesh, but they’ve also reacquired a taste for the humanity they once knew — sorta like Madonna. Led by the aptly named Big

Daddy (Eugene Clark), the zombies set out to infiltrate Fiddler’s Green, a fortified human compound ruled by the imperious Kaufman (Dennis Hopper, delightful as ever). To keep the zombies out and the impoverished humans who dwell in the streets beneath his ivory tower in check, Kaufman employs a group of mercenaries that includes a dashing hero, Riley (Simon Baker), the mischievous Cholo (John Leguizamo) and requisite



sexpot Slack (Asia Argento). Given the ambitious setup, you might expect Big Daddy and his crew to bond with their human counterparts — “See, bro, we’re just like you, only clammier” — depose of the dictatorial Kaufman, and divvy up his booty commune-style. Ah, but zombies will be zombies and their quest to be more “in” mortality is abandoned faster than one can say, “Um, um, them ass cheeks look tasty.” That’s when Romero’s film goes flat and joins the ranks of all the others, and that’s just a shame.

(Rated R for pervasive strong violence and gore, language, brief sexuality and some drug use. Running time: 100 minutes)

Caine mutiny: ‘Alfie’ turns to playing father figures

BY DAVID GERMAIN
AP Movie Writer

LOS ANGELES — In “Alfie” mode nearly 40 years ago, Michael Caine played a man who avoided the prospect of fatherhood at any cost. Now Caine, who personified the heartless swinger in that 1966 classic, has become the father figure of choice for everyone from Austin Powers to Batman to the conjurer who marries a mortal in “Bewitched.”

Caine, the title character’s super-spy dad in “Austin Powers in Goldmember,” is staunch butler Alfred in “Batman Begins,” playing surrogate sire for Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale) as he makes his transition from grieving heir to masked superhero.

In the big-screen “Bewitched,” Caine’s an ancient warlock keeping tabs on his daughter (Nicole Kidman), who’s a real witch cast as the sorceress opposite a prima donna actor (Will Ferrell) in a remake of the TV show.

Fatherhood does not end there for Caine, a two-time Academy Award winner who, at 72, is relishing a late-career renaissance. Come fall, Caine co-stars in “The Weather Man,” playing a successful writer with a contemptuous attitude toward his son (Nicolas Cage).

An Academy Award winner for supporting actor with 1986’s “Hannah and Her Sisters,” Caine hit a patch of so-so movies in the 1990s and was ready to call it quits, figuring his acting days were over.

Then a rush of prime roles came his way with “Little Voice,” “The Cider House Rules,” which earned him a second supporting-actor Oscar, and “The Quiet American,” a film over which Caine still chides Miramax boss Harvey Weinstein. Saying Miramax abandoned the film during Hollywood’s cutthroat awards season, Caine stumped for the movie himself and picked up a best-actor Oscar nomination.

He also earned Oscar nominations for “Alfie,” “Sleuth” and “Educating Rita.” Caine sat down with The Associated Press to discuss his career revival, his roles in “Bewitched” and “Batman Begins” and his thoughts on remakes of his own movies (“The Italian Job,” “Get

Carter” and “Alfie”).

AP: Batman’s butler and an ancient warlock. How do you prepare for two such different roles?

4I do a backstory, and the backstory on the butler is, he was a sergeant in the British Special Services. Very tough, got wounded, got put in charge of the sergeant’s mess or canteen. Therefore, he knew how to do drinks and serve and do that. He was seen by the father of Bruce Wayne, who said come and be my butler. Sort of butler-bodyguard. So I played him as that, and the voice was the voice of my sergeant when I first joined the British Army. And he looks like he’s more active than a butler’s ever been. I wanted him to look like a man of action who’s a bit too old to do it professionally, but if push came to shove, he could take care of himself.

AP: And the backstory on “Bewitched”?

Caine: I gave up on that, because he’s a warlock who’s a thousand years old, and I thought, I’m not doing a thousand-year backstory. So I played him as an extremely sophisticated English gentleman roue with a keen eye for the ladies. And a very doting, loving father, because I have two daughters, so I knew exactly how to treat Nicole as a daughter.

AP: In the “Batman” TV show, Alfred the butler was a stuffy guy lingering in the background. Did you worry you were playing “just the butler?”

Caine: If it had just been a butler saying, “Dinner is served,” and “I’ll fetch the brandy,” there’d be no point in it. But it was the dialogue and the relationship. And I was very fortunate with Christian. He had this relationship going so well with me. To be able to work with an actor like that is really good.

AP: Does it bother you that you’re in a string of supporting parts rather than lead roles?

Caine: Oh no. Blimey, it’s a relief, because I did “The Quiet American,” then I had to go out and promote it without a lot of backup, shall we say, from Harvey. It was such a nightmare, doing that. I thought, I don’t want to play the lead in a movie for a while, so I was very happy to do these parts. But now, I’m

‘Marching of the Penguins’ is worthy of a black-tie affair

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Every winter on the icy continent of Antarctica, thousands of resolute “emperor” penguins embark upon a months-long grueling odyssey in which they waddle, slip and slide from the ocean to an ancient breeding ground 70 miles inland, enduring the worst Mother Nature can dish out in order to reproduce. And you thought horny frat boys went to great lengths to get lucky. The penguins’ amazing mating ritual is the subject of this gorgeous and moving documentary from acclaimed wildlife filmmaker Luc Jacquet, who along with his predominantly French crew spent 13 months stranded in one of the coldest and inhospitable places on Earth captur-

Review

sort of ready. Now I’ve had a good rest. I haven’t worked since November. I’ve only got one project ... Jude Law and I want to remake “Sleuth.” We have a very good rewrite by Harold Pinter, and we might do that. I figured everybody else is remaking my movies. I’ll remake one. And Jude’s already remade one of mine.

AP: Jude’s “Alfie” flopped last year. What did you think of it?

Caine: I thought it was very good, but you see, it’s timing. It was the wrong movie at the wrong time. The basis of my Alfie, what was funny about my Alfie was that he was a man who not only did not have a feminine side or was out of touch with his feminine side, but he just had no idea. That’s what was funny about him. I mean, he called women it. Jude played it as a modern man who is in touch with his feminine side, so it’s not as funny, but it’s more touching. I was sort of a barbarian, an absolute barbarian in the world of sex, so when Alfie turned at the end of the movie and he said “What’s it all about?” you knew there was something that had happened to him. When Jude said “What’s it all about?” you thought: well, I thought he really knew at the beginning. He was a modern man, and he

ing some breathtaking images.

Though it’s set in an environment where the wind chill routinely reaches 100 degrees below zero, “March of the Penguins” is sure to warm even the most frigid of hearts. Morgan Freeman’s easy-going, cleverly scripted narration and Alex Wurman’s operatic score are in perfect harmony with a narrative that is alternately effervescent and tragic, and vivifies a frozen wasteland that remains largely unadulterated. The stars of the show, though, are the anthropomorphic emperor penguins, models of sobriety and endurance who know how to work a camera. And though all coupling occurs out in the open on a frozen field, puritanical filmgoers need not fear an orgy: Emperor penguins, unlike so many of their regal human counterparts, are monogamous creatures.

(Rated G. Running time: 85 minutes)

knew what it was all about. He’d been beaten up by women for the last 25 years, and he knew what it was all about.

AP: Does it surprise you that so many good parts are coming your way late in your career?

Caine: It’s amazing. I’d more or less given up, and it just goes to show, you’ve got to hang in there. The great thing about acting, people say, “Aren’t you a bit old for acting?” I say, “Well, how old are the people in the story? Do they have stories where there aren’t any 80-year-olds in it or 75-year-olds?” They always need someone that age, you know? So it intrigues me.

AP: With all these big films, is this about as a fun a time as you’ve had as an actor?

Caine: It is, because I don’t have to work for the rent or the telephone bill. I sort of treat myself as someone who’s retired, who is absolutely enticed out of retirement to play something that’s great. To play Nicolas Cage’s father and Batman’s butler, Nicole’s father in “Bewitched.” In my vernacular, these are offers I can’t refuse. It gets me out of bed in the morning, because I really look forward to going to work.



NATIONAL

New proposal hardens Social Security battle lines

BY GLEN JOHNSON
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — House Republicans are rallying around a new proposal they say would “stop the raid on the Social Security surplus.”

Democrats go on the attack immediately, arguing that it amounts to little more than “privatization lite.”

The rhetorical battle, continuing for its fifth month since President Bush declared the retooling of Social Security his top domestic priority, came as Republicans sought to regain momentum for the initiative. Democrats have declared it dead for the year and polls show no groundswell of support for the president’s ideas.

Republican Reps. Jim McCrery of Louisiana, Clay Shaw of Florida, Sam Johnson of Texas and Paul Ryan of Wisconsin announced Wednesday they were drafting a bill that would wall off the surplus payroll tax revenues Social Security is slated to receive until 2017. They propose transforming general IOUs — which the government places in Parkersburg, W.Va., as the money is spent on other government programs — into personal IOUs for each of the 110 million Americans who pay taxes into the program.

“The American people believe that there is something

out there in West Virginia with their names on it,” Shaw said during a news conference. “There is not now — but there will be if we pass this bill.”

While the federal government would continue to spend the surplus tax money, the individual accounts would bear marketable Treasury bonds that give American workers a sense of ownership over their retirement money, as well as an inheritable asset should they die before they stop working, the congressmen said. A bill being introduced Thursday by Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., has a similar thrust.

The government would continue to spend the excess revenues, a new bureaucracy would be required and the government’s debt would still increase. Democrats said the plan was little different from Bush’s call for personal savings accounts funded with a portion of the payroll taxes workers pay each year.

“They can twist themselves into any pretzel shape they want,” said Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y. “As long as privatization is on the table, there will be no compromise on Social Security.”

Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, said: “I’ve been consistent and faithful to the idea that we shouldn’t spend the Social Security surplus on other initiatives. But it strikes me as

being disingenuous that you can rip out of the budget almost \$2 trillion in tax cuts over the next decade and then say that Social Security is in crisis.”

The House Republicans said their measure will not contain any of the politically painful cost-cutting steps — higher taxes, an increase in the retirement age or curbs in benefits — needed to ensure long-term solvency for Social Security.

Officials said that under the proposal, for an initial three-year period, surplus Social Security funds would be used to establish individual accounts for willing younger workers. The money would be in the form of “marketable Treasury bonds,” according to a written description, with the interest rate set by the government.

The legislation will establish an advisory board to recommend changes to Congress to take effect after three years, officials said. Democrats argue that at that time, Republicans will attempt to transform the accounts into ones similar to what Bush has been unsuccessful in selling.

McCrery, Shaw, Johnson and Ryan are member of the Ways and Means Committee, which is working on an omnibus bill aimed at addressing the overall issue of retirement security. They said their measure will likely be folded into it, and even Democrats concede it could pass the House.

Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Calif., the committee chairman, was intimately involved in drafting the bill, and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Texas, issued a statement calling it a “positive first step toward strengthening retirement security for future generations.”

Ron Bonjean, a spokesman for House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., also called the proposal a good first step but declined to say whether the speaker would schedule the bill for a floor vote.

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INTERNATIONAL



G8 foreign ministers focus on Afghanistan

BY ED JOHNSON

Associated Press Writer

LONDON — The Middle East peace process, Iran's nuclear program and tackling opium production in Afghanistan topped the agenda at a meeting of G8 foreign ministers Thursday, officials said.

Britain's Foreign Secretary Jack Straw will host the daylong summit in London that brings together his counterparts from the United States, Canada, Russia, Japan, France, Germany and Italy.

On the sidelines, representatives of the so-called Quartet that drafted the road map to peace in the Middle East — the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia — will discuss Israel's planned withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the West Bank.

Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah will join the G8 meeting for talks on how to stem the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan.

That country last year supplied more than 90 percent of the world's opium, the raw material for heroin, sparking warnings that Afghanistan was turning into a narco-state just three years after the fall of the Taliban.

A senior British official, briefing reporters in advance of the talks, said Britain would urge the other G8 members to make a long-term commitment to helping Afghanistan.

In return, the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai would have to make progress on good governance, building institutions, tackling corruption and improving human rights, the official said on condition of anonymity.

Britain is working closely with Karzai's government to tackle the narcotics problem. A five-point plan developed in the latter half of 2004 includes promotion of alternative crops for poppy farmers, eradication and interdiction of heroin labs and storage facilities.

The plan appears to be failing, however. Earlier this year a U.S. report said the area in Afghanistan devoted to poppy cultivation last year set a record of more than 510,000 acres, more than three times the figure for 2003.

The foreign ministers will also focus on efforts to persuade Iran to abandon its nuclear program. The clerical regime in Tehran insists the program is peaceful and has threatened to resume its suspended uranium-enrichment program.

Uranium enriched to low levels can be used as fuel in nuclear reactors to generate electricity, but further enrichment makes it suitable for a nuclear bomb. The United States, and Britain, France and Germany who are spearheading the diplomatic effort on behalf of the European Union, don't want Iran to have its own nuclear fuel cycle.

The Quartet meeting — to be attended by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana and Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov — comes at a sensitive time.

Israel plans to withdraw from all 21 Jewish settlements on the Gaza Strip and four of the 120 in the West Bank.

The Quartet hopes the withdrawal will revitalize the stalled road map, which envisages Israelis and Palestinians living peacefully side-by-side in separate states.

There are fears, however, that the withdrawal could lead to an escalation of violence if Palestinians fire at settlers leaving their homes in the coastal strip or at security forces carrying out the mass evacuation.

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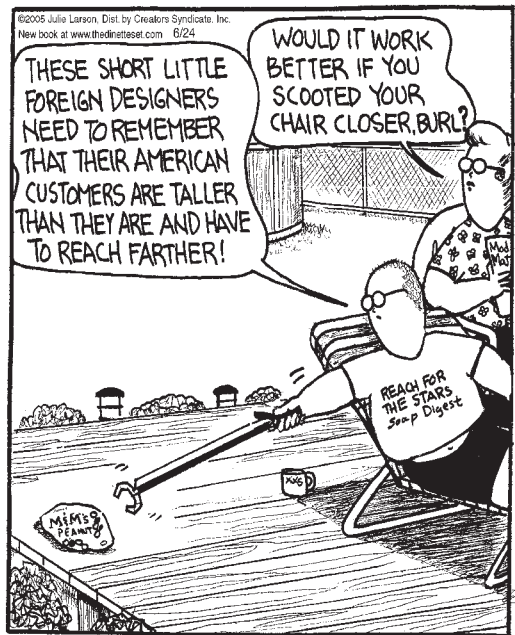
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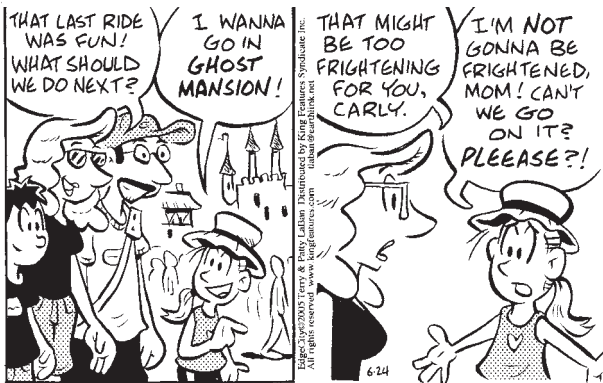


COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



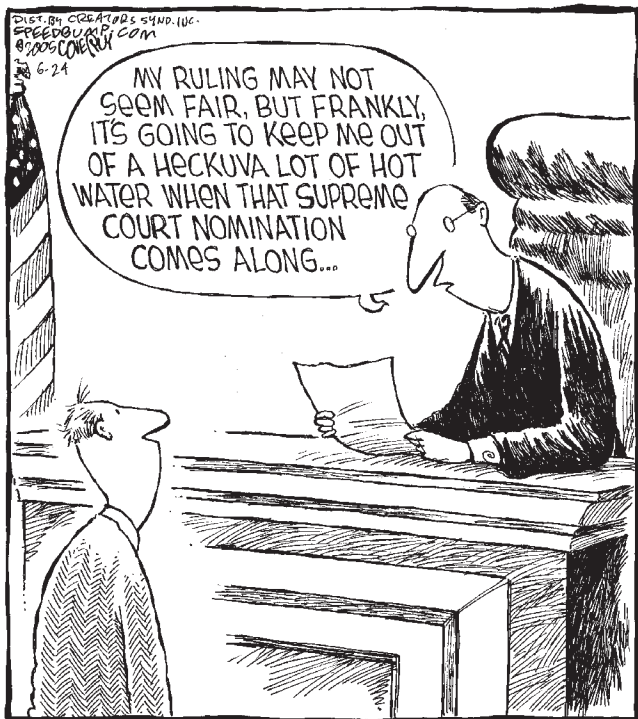
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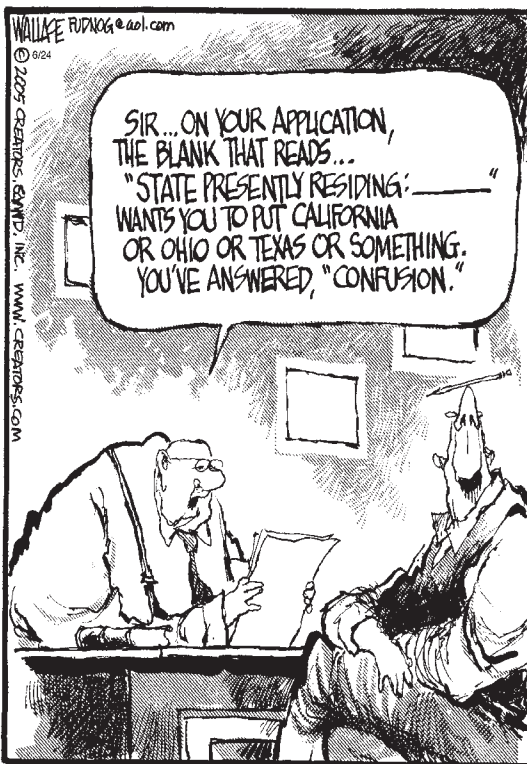


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12 "Chicago" heroine
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6-24

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 Where: 2121 Cloverfield Blvd, Santa Monica, CA (Inner Court Yard)
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DBAS

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAMES STATEMENT FILE NO. 05 1066701 FIRST FILING. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as Ziva Interanational, Inc., 5154 Ingwood Blvd., #7, Culver City, CA 90230. The full name of registrant(s) is/are : Ziva International, Inc., 5154 Ingwood Blvd., #7, Culver City, CA 90230 This Business is being conducted by, a corporation. Signed: The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed on (Date)2/13/2005. /s/: Ziva International, Inc., Chief Operating Officer/ President, MeiWah Wong This statement was filed with the County Clerk of LOS ANGELES County on 5/05/2005. NOTICE: THIS FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT EXPIRES FIVE YEARS FROM THE DATE IT WAS FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK. A NEW FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT MUST BE FILED PRIOR TO THAT DATE. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name statement in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14411et seq.,Business and Professions Code). SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS to publish 6/3/2005, 6/10/2005, 6/17/2005, 6/24/2005

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAMES STATEMENT FILE NO. 05 1129320 FIRST FILING. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as Corporate Identity, Corporate Identity Solutions, Corporate I.D., Corporate Solutions, 5218 Pacific Avenue, Suite C, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292. The full name of registrant(s) is/are : Deidre A. Leclercq, 5218 Pacific Avenue, Suite C, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292 This Business is being conducted by, an individual. Signed: Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious name or names listed herein.. /s/: Deidre A. Leclercq This statement was filed with the County Clerk of LOS ANGELES County on 5/12/2005. NOTICE: THIS FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT EXPIRES FIVE YEARS FROM THE DATE IT WAS FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK. A NEW FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT MUST BE FILED PRIOR TO THAT DATE. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name statement in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14411et seq.,Business and Professions Code). SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS to publish 6/13/2005, 6/20/2005, 6/27/2005, 7/4/2005

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAMES STATEMENT FILE NO. 05 1250541 FIRST FILING. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as Magic Tan Asia, 4331 Mammoth Ave., #9, Sherman Oaks, CA 91423. The full name of registrant(s) is/are : Allan Moreau, 4331 Mammoth Ave., #9, Sherman Oaks, CA 91423 This Business is being conducted by, an individual. Signed: Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious name or names listed herein.. /s/: Allan Moreau This statement was filed with the County Clerk of LOS ANGELES County on . NOTICE: THIS FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT EXPIRES FIVE YEARS FROM THE DATE IT WAS FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK. A NEW FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT MUST BE FILED PRIOR TO THAT DATE. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name statement in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14411et seq.,Business and Professions Code). SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS to publish 6/24/05, 7/1/05, 7/8/05, 7/15/05

DBAS

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAMES STATEMENT FILE NO. 05 1242362 FIRST FILING. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as Conjunto Madera, 1239 Maple St., Inglewood, CA 90301. The full name of registrant(s) is/are : Andres Garcia, 1239 Maple St., Inglewood, CA 90301, Manuel Vasquez, 3275 Feather Ave., Baldwin Park, CA 91706, Elias Garcia, 1239 1/2 Maple St., Inglewood, CA 90301, Oscar Garcia, 1239 1/2 Maple St., Inglewood, CA 90301, George Perez, 1239 Maple St., Inglewood, CA 90301, Pedro Fernandez, 1141 S. Fairfax Apt., #6, Los Angeles, CA 90019 This Business is being conducted by, co-partners. Signed: Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious name or names listed herein. /s/: Andres Garcia, Manuel Vasquez, Elias Garcia, Oscar Garcia, George Perez, Pedro Fernandez This statement was filed with the County Clerk of LOS ANGELES County on 5/26/05. NOTICE: THIS FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT EXPIRES FIVE YEARS FROM THE DATE IT WAS FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK. A NEW FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT MUST BE FILED PRIOR TO THAT DATE. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name statement in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14411et seq.,Business and Professions Code). SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS to publish 6/24/2005, 7/1/2005, 7/8/2005, 7/15/2005

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