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NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

A 21-year-old student at University of Tennessee-Chattanooga died after pulling her car into a garage and closing the door behind her but leaving the engine running while continuing a long cell phone call (February). A 54-year-old man in the Tokyo suburb of Musashimurayama became the latest person to be killed by a suicide jumper's inadvertently landing on him (December).

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 217th day of 2005.
There are 148 days left in the year.

On Aug. 5, 1864, during the Civil War, Union Admiral David G. Farragut is said to have ordered, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!" as he led his fleet against Mobile Bay, Ala.

In 1924, the comic strip "Little Orphan Annie," by Harold Gray, made its debut.

In 1962, actress Marilyn Monroe, 36, was found dead in her Los Angeles home; her death was ruled a probable suicide from an overdose of sleeping pills.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"One can live in the shadow of an idea without grasping it."

ELIZABETH BOWEN
IRISH AUTHOR (1899-1973)

INDEX

Horoscopes

Hang with friends, Gemini 2

Surf Report

Water temperature: 69° 3

Opinion

City needs to aim high 4

Commentary

Berry medley 5

Crime Watch

Fought the law, but the law won 6

State

Carpool water is warm 7

Entertainment

Future fondling 12

Classifieds

Ad space odyssey 17-19



Paul Reese/Special to the Daily Press

A series of trash haulers at the City Yards located off of Michigan Avenue caught fire Wednesday evening, filling the sky with a billowing smoke cloud.

Gas-powered vehicles burn in city yard blaze

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY YARDS — Four trash trucks operating on compressed natural gas burned to a crisp Wednesday evening, creating a massive cloud of smoke and flames that reached far into the approaching night sky.

No one was injured in the blaze, for which the damage is estimated to be at least \$1.3 million, said Santa Monica Fire Department Capt. Ken Polhill. It took firefighters nearly 20 minutes to get the fire under control and a couple more hours to completely extinguish the area. The fire was

reported to the SMFD at 7:52 p.m.

Officials do know the cause of the fire, and have yet to determine what ignited the compressed natural gas (CNG) filling station at the city yards.

Several trucks and city vehicles, like Big Blue Buses, were parked at the yards, hooked up to the CNG station. The station allows the vehicles to slowly fill, with the pump automatically shutting off when full, Polhill said.

The tanks are designed not to explode — they have a relief valve built in to them in case of a leak, but the fuel already in the trucks is

See **CITY YARDS**, page 11

Bad behavior: School board checking itself

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

SMMUSD HDQTRS — School district officials are re-evaluating their behavior in the aftermath of a board member bringing former gang members onto a local high school campus to tell struggling students why crime doesn't pay.

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District governing board members reviewed a staff report last week which details proposed updates to the rules by which they are expected to conduct themselves as elected officials. The report comes in light of criticism by some toward school board

member Oscar de la Torre, who, in the week following an April brawl at Santa Monica High School, brought two former gang members on campus to share their experiences and urge students to pursue a violence-free lifestyle.

No action was taken on the staff report during the Thursday, July 28 meeting, said John Deasy, SMMUSD superintendent. The school board requested the staff report be brought back in coming weeks for further discussion and possible action.

Deasy did not say whether pro-

See **BAD BEHAVIOR**, page 10



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

A car sits idle after crashing into the wall of a business on Pico Boulevard.

Driver takes a turn for worse

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

PICO BLVD. — An elderly man crashed his car into an insurance office building on Thursday afternoon, leaving a gaping hole in the wall and four automobiles damaged.

No one was injured.

At 4:30 p.m., the 85-year-old driver, who hasn't been identified, was driving southbound on 14th Street approaching Pico

Boulevard. He made a right turn and struck a vehicle in the left-turn lane of eastbound Pico Boulevard. The man also hit two additional vehicles headed eastbound on Pico Boulevard.

The driver then crashed into the offices of Valdez Insurance Agency and Sanchez and Associates Notary Public, located on the north side of the 1300 block

See **CRASH**, page 11

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Just did it: Run Hit Wonder kicks off in Santa Monica

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica will serve as the training ground next week for this fall’s Nike Run Hit Wonder Race.

The Nike Run Hit Wonder Race returns to Los Angeles on Sept. 24 at the Los Angeles Coliseum, with 20,000 runners rocking the course to the sounds of Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, and west coast natives The Donnas, as well as Fountains of Wayne, Nina Sky, Z-Trip and The Aquabats.

Building off the success of last year’s sold-out race, the 2005 tour is coming back with a summer of Run Hit Wonder events. To kick-off the official opening of this year’s race registration, Nike and KIIS-FM will host a special Run Hit Wonder training run and concert with an exclusive musical performance by duo Nina Sky at the Santa Monica Pier’s “Drive-In at the Pier” next Tuesday. Partygoers also will enjoy a post-event outdoor screening of “Austin Powers.”

Early race registrants will sport Nike Run Hit Wonder race gear for the evening and will race to the pier from Nike’s Running Energy Center (REC) in Venice. Additionally, early registrants are invited to continue the Run Hit Wonder-themed evening at a post-event cocktail party at the REC.

The event marks the beginning of the summer of Nike Run Hit Wonder in Los Angeles that will offer a host of events leading up to the race. Runners will have access to the REC offering a series of programming as well as Nike’s free training runs which will take place throughout the city and suburbs.

Interested participants can now register for the Run Hit Wonder race or find a training run near them by visiting www.nikerunhitwonder.com. Trainees will try out the new Nike Shox Cog and Nike Shox Go, Nike Sphere apparel and Triax Series watches. All race registrants also will receive a custom designed Nike Run Hit Wonder Dri-FIT T-shirt.

Los Angeles residents who want to participate in the special training run and the Santa Monica Pier event can win tickets by listening to KIIS-FM, visiting the KIIS-FM Beach Shack at the Santa Monica Pier, or by visiting Niketown LA. Please note there are limited tickets available. Additionally, members of Niketown.com, Nikewomen.com, and Run Club LA will receive invitations via e-mail.

The kickoff will begin on Tuesday, Aug. 9 at 6:30 p.m. Attendees will meet at the REC house at 423 Ocean Front Walk, Venice, and will run to the Santa Monica Pier.

Mixed-media artist’s show all about ‘Choices’

By Daily Press staff

Artist Kami Lerner has made some choices with her art.

The mixed-media artist will exhibit her newest body of work, entitled “Life Choices” at the Altered Space Gallery in Venice during August. Being a self-taught artist, Lerner began painting as a way to express her thoughts and experiences, according to sources. With her love of music came her portraits of celebrated musicians Dave Mathews, Ray Charles, Bob Marley and Stevie Wonder, among many others. Color began to play a bigger role as Lerner’s figurative work evolved into abstract interpretations, sources say.

“In this work I’m expressing what I feel is most important in life, loving, and learning,” Lerner said. “These paintings came out of thinking about the choices we make on a day-to-day basis that somehow change our path and re-direct us in life.”

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Lerner spends her time creating art, and supporting and encouraging other artists. In recent years, she owned and operated Dream Weavers, a gallery of artist-made works in the Brentwood Country Mart. She

See BRIEFS, page 7

CORRECTION — In an article in the Aug. 4 edition, there was an inaccuracy regarding Rolando Baker, an Alzheimer’s victim who left his retirement home on July 28 and hasn’t been seen since. Baker resides at Holiday Villa East, a retirement hotel — not Holiday Villa, a licensed care facility.

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SURF REPORT

Today is looking even smaller than yesterday, with weak knee- to waist-high SW and little to no NW. Expect areas of low clouds and fog in the morning, otherwise mostly sunny. Highs from the mid 60s to low 70s.

Today the water is:

69°

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
MONDAY	2:45	-0.2	1:37	2.9	9:37	3.7	7:48	5.8
TUESDAY	3:20	-0.4	2:18	2.7	10:05	3.8	8:36	6.0
WEDNESDAY	3:50	-0.4	2:53	2.5	10:28	3.9	9:01	6.0
THURSDAY	4:18	-0.4	3:25	2.4	10:50	3.9	9:33	6.0
FRIDAY	4:44	-0.4	3:58	2.2	11:12	4.0	10:04	5.9

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The Q Line

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Animal-rights activists are criticizing City Hall for its attempts to reduce the local population of squirrels — the fleas of which can carry disease — by setting out pesticide bait traps. Officials, who say the city stopped setting the traps in late June, contend the measure was necessary in the interest of public health.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, “Do you feel the city was correct in setting out poison traps to reduce the number of local squirrels in the name of public health? Why or why not?”

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

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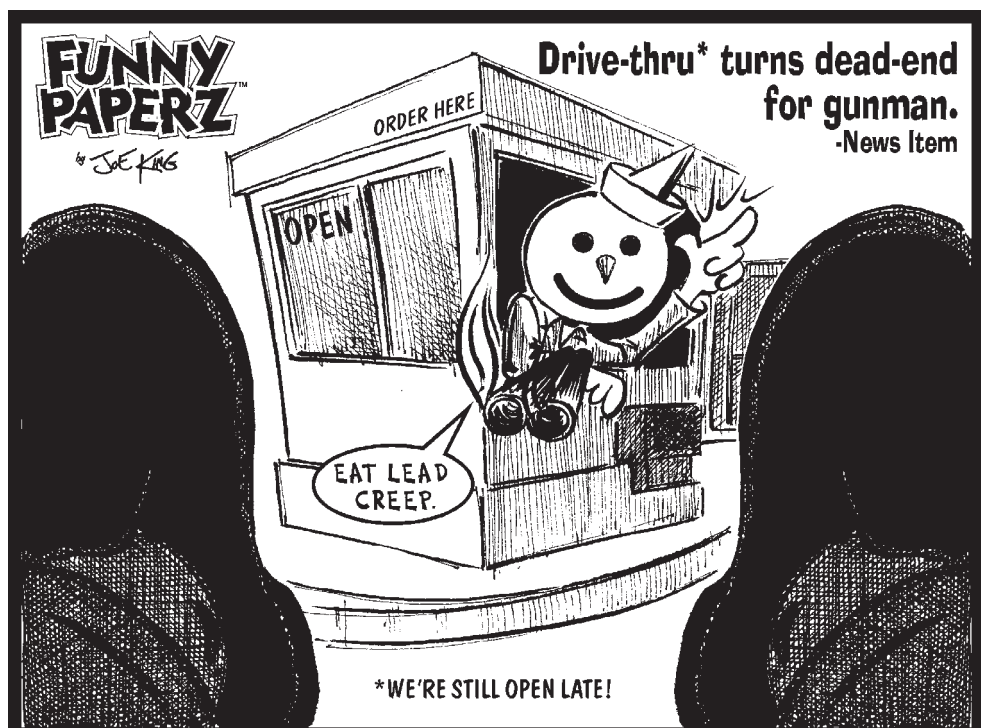
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OPINION



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Squirrels don't have to die

Editor:

I'm a California Department of Fish & Game licensed wildlife rehabilitator and a humane nuisance wildlife control operator specializing in California ground squirrels. I submitted a humane control plan to Santa Monica last year. Animal advocates offered to pay for the plan. We do this with other cities in Southern California who have issues with wildlife. The Santa Monica Mayor and City Council never got back to us. I resubmitted my humane plan again a few days ago because of the many complaints I've received about the poisoning.

A few corrections about your article (SMDP, July 29, page 1). There is birth control for ground squirrels. It can be added directly to feed now. The USDA has been working on this for years. Not all ground squirrels fleas have the plague. Please don't cause public hysteria with misinformation. Only the fleas of some ground squirrels and chipmunks at higher elevations may carry the plague. The plague is just the flu. Eighty percent of all people are immune to it. If they truly feared the plague, they need to dust the park for fleas, not kill squirrels. If you kill the host animal, the flea will just jump on a dog who could then infect a human.

Poison does not solve problems. It just creates bigger problems. I am still willing to help the city with a humane plan.

Mary Cummins
Los Angeles

Where is your compassion, Santa Monica?

Editor:

I keep asking myself, why are we not compassionate enough as a society to forgive 88-year-old Russell Weller, the driver of the car that killed 10 people in that incredible, unfortunate accident at the downtown Farmers' Market on July 16, 2003? How can it be that so many civil suits and criminal charges are filed against this very unfortunate man and what can we as a society do to protect the ordinary citizen who makes a mistake?

Mr. Weller and his loved ones must suffer every day with the memory of that horrid accident and the knowledge that 10 people died as a result of Mr. Weller's actions and reactions. Why must we further punish him and the surviving families by requiring them to live and constantly re-live the tragedy of that fateful Wednesday? Why can't we honor the stellar citizen as an aging senior who made a mistake, and help him and the families of those who died and all the rest of us find healing and closure?

What has happened to us as individuals, as a city? Where is our heart, Santa Monica? If we cannot find compassion, understanding, reason and healing for Mr. Weller, how can there ever be hope for reconciliation among nations?

If better barriers will keep another person from suffering similar consequences, it would be reason enough to warrant better barrier protection at our often street-long farmers' market locations.

Perhaps it would be better to do away with the barriers altogether, and the cars on Wednesdays. Wouldn't it be nice to have no cars in the streets on Farmers' Market days, block off the whole of downtown, open the streets to all vendors and let the city and its inhabitants breathe, bike and walk freely on that one day per week? Wouldn't that be a nice memorial to the 10 who died July 16, 2003?

Hanna Levinson
Santa Monica

City's elevated goals display little panache



OUR TOWN

BY TED WINTERER

I, of course, rely on the Daily Press as my primary source of news. But I'll quickly scan other local rags in case the crack staff at the Press missed an item of significance.

So the other day I came across an interesting piece in the Los Angeles Times about Frank Gehry being named the lead architect for the enormous Grand Avenue development in downtown LA. The July 22 article noted that this news suggests "we've entered an era in which ambitious developers are not just open to the notion of working with architecture's boldest talents but ... are desperate to avoid working without them."

Apparently this laudable trend has escaped the attention of Santa Monica's most ambitious developer, City Hall itself, as our new public buildings are, at best, conventional in their design.

The Times article also observed that Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain "proved that progressive architecture can itself operate as a kind of urban planning — that if a new building is enough of a draw, it can revitalize a city or region as effectively as the most comprehensive master plan."

I can attest to this as I once had an office in the Gehry-designed Edgemar building on Main Street. Tourists throng to the place, spending their yen and francs at local businesses.

On the other hand, I drive by the new Public Safety building at least once a day and have yet to see visitors gawking at it and snapping photos. And I somehow doubt that when the new Main Library is finished it will attract crowds of admirers.

Why in Santa Monica can't we build public structures which transport the soul and animate streetscapes? One reason is that City Hall selects designers for many of its public works by issuing a request for proposals (RFP) for design-build development teams consisting of an architect and a contractor. The theory behind this practice is that builders will control those kooky architects from a free-spending whimsy. However, if you look at the cost overruns in recent city buildings you might suspect the theory is sounder than the practice.

The problem is that the design-build approach rarely produces truly great architecture. Most contractors are unlikely to partner with an innovative but

unknown architect and instead will team up with the golfing buddy who made them a mint designing a shopping mall, resulting in a public building that looks like, well, a shopping mall. Few builders would have allied themselves with local Pritzker Prize winner Thom Mayne when he was known mostly for some innovative residences and the Kate Mantilini restaurant.

And architects are certainly capable of working within a budget without a contractor riding herd on them. One only has to look at Mayne's Caltrans building in downtown LA to see evidence of daring design built with controlled costs.

Then the RFP process also drastically reduces the number of talented architects who are likely to submit a proposal for a public project, for the city's means for publicizing its RFPs are inadequate.

First, City Hall sends out RFPs to firms selected by staff. If you aren't on this list of the same old suspects chances are you'll never know the city is soliciting bids. Consequently, city contracts seem to be awarded to familiar names like the ROMA Design Group and Moore Ruble Yuddell with the same regularity with which the Bush administration turns to Halliburton to solve problems ranging from the budget deficit to Laura's latest hangnail. Shouldn't there be a greater range and diversity in the designers offered the chance to imagine our new public spaces?

True, the city also will run a couple of ads in a local paper and post a notice on its Web site. But unless Rem Koolhaas is sitting in a cafe in Rotterdam surfing the 'Net and browsing through the LA Times, he's not going to know about a potential commission in Santa Monica. And as city officials seem loath to advertise their RFPs in more sensible places, such as the AIA online newsletter available to all licensed architects, a large proportion of talented designers will be left out of the loop.

Finally, many brand name architects won't bother to respond to RFPs, for the same reasons Bill Gates doesn't reply to solicitations for a Visa card: They don't need to. If you really want them, you have to pick up the phone and court them.

Essentially, our town solicits bids for public architecture the same way the Pentagon procures new weapons systems. If the Medici had operated this way, Florence wouldn't be what it is today.

(Ted Winterer is a writer who lives in Ocean Park. In his next column he'll offer some notions on how to create great public buildings in Santa Monica. He can be reached at ourtownsmdp@aol.com.)



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COMMENTARY



Strawberry jam: Date with destiny disturbed

PISTACHIO PERSPECTIVE

BY SUSAN ANN CONNOR



I was shuffling CDs, attempting to find a matching melody for meeting Mr. Strawberry. Sweet, but not too mushy. Not that my eyes weren't concentrated on the road, but my car sort of drove itself the two miles to Starbucks. By the time I settled on "Lou Rawls' Christmas," my car was in the parking lot.

Look, I was nervous. I just hadn't felt this kind of chemistry in a while. And I hate first dates. Not that this was a date. I dared not call it that for fear of slipping into another psyche spin-cycle. And, honestly, I'm rather used to being single. I've grown accustomed to my face and accepted its flaws.

Alrighty then. Deep breath. No big deal. Don't have to marry him. You're only having a caffeine stimulant. Maybe a little cake.

Now, get out of the car. Do I absolutely have to? GET out of the car please. OUTTA THE CAR!

Bolting out of my vehicle and refusing another neurotic thought, I held my head high and focused on my destination. Flip, flip, flip went the sound of my sandals. Only I heard their rhythmic flipping. I became so one with the flipping, that I didn't see the crack in the sidewalk.

"Ooops. Careful," said a homeless person sitting on the curb.

I'd tripped, but I didn't fall. However, I did look around to see what might have caused the crack ... and if Strawberry had witnessed my lack of coordination.

He hadn't.

Because ... "there he was just a-walkin' down the street, singin' 'Do wah diddy-diddy-down-diddy-do.' Snappin' his fingers and shufflin' his feet." No, I jest. He wasn't singin', snappin' or shufflin'. He was just walkin' tall and lookin' good. Oh my.

I arrived at the entrance a moment after him. He smiled when he finally saw me. "Hi."

"Hi," I said shyly. Geez.

"Nice to see you again."

"Nice to see you." Really nice.

Opening the door, he asked what I wanted to drink. "You sit down, and I'll bring it over to you."

He then proceeded to walk me to the table and pull out the chair. This time I almost did fall.

"Thanks," I said, stunned.

OK. Charming. Very sweet, Mr. Strawberry.

When he returned with my requested green tea, his capa-frappa-something and luscious lemon cake, I knew it was show-time. But I was seriously tongue-tied.

"This July's June gloom sure is gloomy," I observed. Ughhh, that was a pathetic opening line. But he laughed. He thought I was being funny.

We sipped and commented on cake. Somewhere around the third bite, our chatting began to flow. Perhaps it was the politics. I mentioned how I wanted more women on the Supreme Court. He agreed. Another point for Strawberry.

"Did you know," he said with concern, "that of 185 countries with National Parliaments, the U.S. ranks 61st in the percentage of women in office?" I just shook my head.

This was all going pretty well, when he abruptly excused himself. I saw him huddling over by the straws, on his cell. Odd. When he returned, he apologized and told me he had to leave right away. No explanation.

Great. I walked out two minutes later, disappointed. I didn't even finish the cake.

As I reached my car, I saw Strawberry running toward me. The guy ran funny. His pants jingled. But it didn't matter. I was standing in my flippers thinking we all have to overlook some things. And I may have to overlook his running style.

"I'm really sorry," he said, panting. "My phone vibrated. It was my ex-wife. There's still some issues. Would you have dinner with me next week, even with issues?"

Issues. Good old issues. I figured he was cute enough to find out what they are. So, it was yes for dinner.

... Suzy and Strawberry sittin' in a tree k-i-s-s-i-n-g. First comes love, then comes ... then comes ... ah, think I'll stop here. My pitch is getting out of range. Lalalala

(Susan Ann Connor can be reached at pistachiocolumn@aol.com.)



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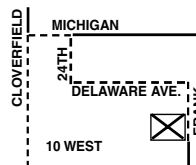
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LOCAL



CRIME WATCH
By Daily Press staff

Suspects drink at bar, steal woman's car

At 1:15 a.m. on Wednesday, July 27, the Santa Monica police responded to the 1600 block of Ocean Avenue regarding an auto theft. Two suspects went into a restaurant/bar and befriended a female who was having a drink. The suspects proceeded to engage the female in conversation, and when she left the table to go to the restroom, the suspects took her car keys and left the restaurant, stealing her car. The information regarding the theft was broadcasted to officers, and the suspects were stopped at Eighth Street and Arizona Avenue. They were placed under arrest for auto theft, and one for driving under the influence. The driver is identified as Michael Joyce, 27, of Marina del Rey, and the other is Thomas Eugene McCormick, 29, of Santa Monica. Bail was set at \$20,000 each.

At 3:48 p.m. on Thursday, July 21, the Santa Monica police responded to the 2700 block of Wilshire Boulevard at the Washington Mutual Bank regarding a forgery suspect. When officers arrived to the scene, they spoke to the employee, who detained the suspect. The suspect was attempting to deposit a fraudulent check into his account for \$15,084.09. The bank contacted the check owner and confirmed they didn't issue a check to the suspect. Oscar Samuel Posada, 27, of Los Angeles, was placed under arrest for forgery and commercial burglary. Bail was set at \$20,000.

At 10:01 a.m. on Wednesday, July 27, the Santa Monica police responded to the 700 block of Broadway regarding a theft investigation. When officers arrived to the scene, they spoke to the security guard, who said the suspect had been entering the store and stealing coffee every day. The total loss is estimated at \$5. Hannah Hudson Mengesha, 51, was booked for theft and transported to Santa Monica jail.

At 7:57 a.m. on Tuesday, July 26, the Santa Monica police responded to the 1500 block of Palisades Park regarding a subject brandishing a knife. When officers arrived to the scene, they spoke to the city employee, who said that he was doing landscaping work when there was a group of homeless individuals sleeping. When he woke them up, one of the homeless individuals became angry and approached him holding a knife in his right hand and began to yell. Krifther Yesseff Gutierrez, 23, transient, was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon. Bail was set at \$35,000.

At 6:37 p.m. on Saturday, July 16, the Santa Monica Police responded to the 300 block of Colorado Avenue regarding a theft investigation. When officers arrived to the scene, they spoke to the security guard, who said the suspect entered the store, stole pants and shirts from the men's section, and left without paying for the items. Once outside the store, the suspect was placed under arrest by security. Steven Henry Alexander, 40, transient, was transported to Santa Monica jail on the charge of commercial burglary. Bail was set at \$20,399.

This crime report was prepared by staff writer Ryan Hyatt.



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STATE



Make room: Hybrids will be merging over

BY TIM MOLLOY
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Hybrid car owners who have waited months to drive solo in California's car pool lanes should soon get their chance.

State lawmakers passed a bill last year that gave some types of the high-mileage, low-emission vehicles access to the coveted lanes — a perk meant to encourage drivers to buy them.

But while California's law was supposed to take effect Jan. 1, it first needed approval from the federal government.

With that permission tucked into a \$286 billion transportation bill that Congress passed last week, only one last strand of red tape is keeping hybrids out of high-occupancy vehicle lanes. State air regulators still need to clarify which vehicles meet mileage and low-emissions standards. The policy's supporters hope hybrids will be allowed in the lanes by year's end.

"Knowing that you're able to drive in that car pool lane would be huge, and I think it would attract others to say 'Hey, I should have a car like this as well,'" said Andrew Werts, a 31-year-old marketing director from Redondo Beach who recently sold his SUV and bought a Toyota Prius.

Only two other models — Honda's hybrid Civic and Insight — meet eligibility standards of getting at least 45 miles per gallon and producing almost no smog-causing emissions, according to an aide to the author of California's bill, Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills.

California Air Resources Board attorneys are reviewing the bills to determine officially what vehicles will qualify, said spokeswoman Gennet Paauwe. Solo drivers in hybrids that don't meet those standards will remain stuck in the regular lanes.

Hybrids get better mileage by supplementing gas with electricity harnessed from energy during braking and coasting, but some are more efficient than others.

California will become the second state to allow hybrids into the car pool lane. Virginia enacted the change in 2000, and Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia and Minnesota are considering it.

In Virginia, some drivers complain that the crush of new cars has slowed once-speedy commutes. Some California hybrid drivers say they understand the argument that they don't deserve the same advantage as car poolers.

"If two people are driving a car that gets at least 30 miles per gallon, it's a better deal (environmentally) than one person driving a Prius that gets about 45 mpg," said Los Angeles resident Charlie Orchard, 39, who owns a Prius with his wife, Carrie.

The American Lung Association of California, which advocates hybrids, took no stand on the car pool bill based on fears it might cut car pooling, leading to more pollution.

"We were not convinced that this incentive was needed and we were concerned about the potential to slow traffic in HOV lanes and discourage people from car pooling," spokeswoman Bonnie Holmes-Gen said.

To prevent hybrids from clogging car pool lanes, Pavley's bill expires in 2007 and caps the allowable number at 75,000. The owners of those vehicles would pay about \$8 for decals to help police identify their hybrids in traffic.

As of the end of June, there were 57,164 hybrids registered in California, though not all would be car pool eligible, according to the Department of Motor Vehicles. In a sign of the vehicles' growing popularity, nearly 24,000 hybrids were registered in the first six months of this year.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

also created TikiGirl, a signature beachwear clothing line of tanks, tees, panties, hats and canvas bags. Lerner's current work can be seen on www.kamiart.com.

Sand Brim, owner of Altered Space Brim, opened the Culture Shop Gallery on Santa Monica's Montana Avenue in May of 1997. When she moved to Abbot Kinney in Venice early this year, she re-named the gallery Altered Space and she joined A. Mason, a fashion boutique, and Koren, a fashion accessories boutique, in the Abbot Kinney Collective. The Altered Space collection includes furniture and lighting, fine art and sculpture, a vast selection of functional art for the home, and a jewelry collection. In addition to the work showcased in the gallery from more than 150 contemporary artists and craftsmen, a number of other artists are represented through their portfolios. The gallery is known for its expertise in bringing artistic talent to their clients by facilitating commissions and custom work, artistic officials say.

The official opening is Saturday, Aug. 20, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., and will be open until Sept. 25. The Altered Space Gallery is located at 1220 Abbot Kinney. Gallery hours are from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and noon to 6 p.m. on Sunday and Monday. For more information, call (310) 452-8121.

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STATE

Full of big air: Most boarders stick to street

BY RYAN PEARSON

Associated Press Writer

LAKE FOREST, Calif. — Yeah, it took some guts to jump over the Great Wall of China on a skateboard. You'll just never convince Donny Duhadway that pro skater Danny Way's leap last month was anything more than a stunt.

"It's not even skateboarding. It's like a daredevil thing," the 16-year-old street skater with braces and shoulder-length curly hair said during a break at an Orange County skate park. "That's not cool!"

The growing gulf between vert skaters' aerobatics and the more popular closer-to-the-ground technical finesse that Duhadway and others embrace will be on display at ESPN X Games 11.

Other sports at the games, which begin Thursday in Los Angeles, are motocross, BMX freestyle and wakeboarding. In-line skating has been dropped and a surfing event was held Tuesday in Mexico.

Way, whose China jump drew national headlines, again will take to the massive mega ramp he created — and which debuted at last year's X Games. He's expected to dominate in the big air contest, which will be broadcast live Sunday on ABC. Street skaters are relegated to a tape-delayed broadcast on ESPN.

Although X Games manager Chris Stiepok calls street skaters the "rock stars" of the insular skate world, they're largely unknown outside it. With studied

cool and a wariness of the corporate world, they also trail vert skaters in major endorsements from non-skate companies, which can be a key source of income for pros.

It's the result of the gap between the crowd-pleasing drama of mid-air flips and the sometimes imperceptible nuances of street tricks.

"People that don't know anything about skateboarding don't really know what they're seeing" in street skating, said pro skater Rick McCrank. "They don't know if that's harder than the next thing. But on vert, it's more spectacular. You could just be doing the easiest thing on vert, and someone would think it was amazing."

The 29-year-old McCrank skated vert at a park where he grew up in Ottawa, but quit after two summers when the park shut down.

He's among the majority. About three-quarters of the nation's 10.5 million skateboarders prefer the streets to skate parks and ramps, according to data from marketing researchers American Sports Data Inc. and Board-Trac Inc. An even higher percentage stick to the streets when skaters under 12 aren't considered, Board-Trac's Marie Case said.

Other action sports have worked to smooth over splits between disciplines. In motocross, a race blending leapers with racers was introduced to X Games last year. The supermoto combines big jumps

with a dirt and street course and proved popular with all types of riders. It will be held Sunday.

A similarly blended skateboard discipline called transition or park was dropped from X Games two years ago after only street skaters showed up — and then complained that it wasn't "natural" enough. The all-street course last year included stairs, picnic tables, ledges and rails.

Event champion Paul Rodriguez Jr., the 20-year-old son of comedian and actor Paul Rodriguez, said there were no parks with halfpipes or vert ramps where he grew up in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley.

"Basically, I just stuck to the streets," he said in between signing autographs at the Lake Forest skate park last month. "To this day, I don't know one kid that skates vert."

Part of the reason for that, McCrank says, is the aging and corporate image of the elite vert and big air skateboarders. "Everybody that's doing it is kinda old now, and the kids look up to people their age," he said.

McCrank has a friend teaching youngsters how to tackle halfpipes, and jokingly recommends they stick with it.

"That's where the money is, the soup deals," he said. The reference was to repeat X Games vert champion Bucky Lasek's two-year endorsement of Campbell's Soup At Hand, a partnership

McCrank calls "hilarious."

"It's so beyond skateboarding, it's funny," he adds.

Skaters and other pro action sports stars walk a fine line with the business world. They rely heavily on sponsors for income, but can lose street cred if the product they're endorsing isn't accepted in the skate community.

"A lot of people think all the vert skaters sold out," Duhadway said.

Stiepok said it took some doing to convince street stars to even show for the biggest, most well-known action sports contest because of its corporate, made-for-TV image.

"They were not standing in line to get into the X Games," he said.

Among sponsors, Mountain Dew gets the OK because it latched on to action sports long ago. Cell phone companies are also fine.

But a food company deal — like Tony Hawk's with Bagel Bites — can be tricky. Lasek faced derision over his soup endorsement and recently parted ways with Campbell's after two years.

But street skating eventually may be forced to face up to its own popularity. Rodriguez is sponsored by Nike, which in March released the Zoom Air Paul Rodriguez, putting him among the elite athletes with signature shoes from that company. Others include LeBron James, Serena Williams, Michael Vick and soccer star Ronaldo.

Escape routes were inadequate in deadly California wildfires

BY DON THOMPSON

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Firefighters failed to give themselves enough escape routes while battling a wildfire in the Stanislaus National Forest last fall, according to a report by state and federal investigators Wednesday. Three firefighters were injured and one was killed.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection firefighter Eva Schicke, a star athlete in college, was not able to out-climb the wildfire up a steep slope to a safe zone a mere 35 feet away.

Schicke, 23, was the department's first female firefighter to be killed in the line of duty when she died Sept. 12.

The firefighters started backfires designed to burn toward the wildfire. But when the wind suddenly shifted, the backfires themselves were what burned over the crew, the report concluded.

The crew immediately began running to their previously identified safety zones — a riverbed below and a road above.

"However, due to the steepness of the slope and rapid change in fire behavior, they did not all reach safety," concludes the report by a joint investigative team of

the state forestry department and the U.S. Forest Service.

The report said the fire burned over crew members in just 30 seconds. They never had time to unfold their tent-like fire shelters; the entire flare-up lasted less than two minutes.

One firefighter was already on the road, retrieving equipment. Four others downhill headed to the river.

Schicke and her closest colleague, Shane Neveau, headed uphill, but Schicke was caught by the firestorm just five feet from the road: she "was killed by inhalation of superheated air; she died within seconds."

So steep was the slope that her body slid 100 feet downhill.

Chiefs at the crew's former unit and air base declined comment on the report, referring calls to department spokesman Michael Jarvis.

"The report speaks for itself," Jarvis said. "People can draw their own conclusions."

In a statement, the department said the Accident Investigation Team "determined no individual was at fault," but said it will use the report to improve its policies, procedures and coordination with other agencies.



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STATE



‘Duke’ of hazard: Rep. blasted for friendships

BY SETH HETTENA
AND ERICA WERNER

Associated Press Writers

SAN DIEGO — Even in a world that thrives on perks and friendly deals, Rep. Randy “Duke” Cunningham has stood out. The California Republican and Vietnam War flying ace wasn’t a wealthy man when he arrived on Capitol Hill in 1991, but in recent years he has lived like one. His home in Washington was a rent-free yacht provided by a defense contractor. In San Diego, he bought a mansion using the profits from a home sold to the same contractor.

Cunningham, 63, is best known as an emotional lawmaker given to both teary-eyed speeches and flashes of temper. Now his relationship with defense contractor Mitchell Wade is being investigated by a grand jury here after raising eyebrows in Washington.

“It’s got to be tempting to allow yourself to be flattered, buttered-up, helped, given favors and so forth,” said Gary Jacobson, a political scientist at the University of California, San Diego. “It’s hard to refuse them unless you very consciously recognize that it’s one of the permanent ethical challenges of that life.”

Cunningham’s approach to such questions is now being questioned.

The former “Top Gun” flight instructor sold his home in the seaside community of Del Mar to Wade for a price that appears to have been inflated by about \$700,000. He used the proceeds to move into a \$2.55 million, seven-bath mansion in the exclusive San Diego County community of Rancho Santa Fe.

When in Washington, he lived rent-free on Wade’s 42-foot yacht, the Duke-Stir, docked at the private Capital Yacht Club, paying only dock fees and maintenance.

“I should have given more thought to how such a transaction might look to those who don’t know me,” Cunningham said last month, announcing that he won’t run for a ninth term and that he planned to sell the Rancho Santa Fe house and donate the proceeds to charity.

Even Cunningham’s business, Top Gun Enterprises, came under scrutiny for selling \$575 Buck knives emblazoned with the image of the congressional seal. The Web site was quickly taken down.

As a member of the House Intelligence Committee and the Appropriations

Committee’s defense subcommittee, Cunningham had spending and policy control over classified work Wade’s company, MZM Inc., did for the military. And MZM’s federal contracting work was growing. Last year the little-known company tripled its revenue and nearly quadrupled its staff, according to its Web site.

Cunningham’s attorney, Lee Blalack, said the congressman’s business dealings were all aboveboard and that allegations that his conduct in office crossed ethical or legal lines are unsupported.

The congressman acknowledges using his role on the Appropriations Committee to push contracts for MZM, along with other firms including ADCS Inc., another company with ties to Wade. Both companies donated generously to Cunningham’s campaigns; some MZM employees told the San Diego Union-Tribune that they were pressured to contribute.

The congressman’s name also surfaced in a 2002 criminal case in U.S. District Court in San Diego involving a local defense contractor, Science and Applied Technology Inc. The firm’s employees, a subcontractor and friends gave more than \$30,000 in campaign donations to Cunningham between 1991-1999 to help generate business for SATI’s experimental guided missile program, according to court documents.

Contributors were often reimbursed with cash, checks, company funds or inflated billing hours on military contracts, according to an indictment charging SATI’s owner, Parthasarathi Majumder. Cunningham was never charged, and a spokeswoman said he cooperated with investigators.

In 2000, Cunningham wrote to prosecutors on behalf of a New York developer convicted in a bid-rigging scheme. The developer, Thomas T. Kontogiannis, later bought Cunningham’s 65-foot flat-bottomed riverboat, netting the congressman a \$400,000 profit.

A company run by Kontogiannis’ nephew and daughter helped Cunningham finance a condominium in Alexandria, Va., and the house in Rancho Santa Fe, and Cunningham reportedly gave Kontogiannis advice on getting a presidential pardon. He was not pardoned.

Cunningham became the Vietnam War’s first fighter ace after shooting down five enemy aircraft.



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VIOLET-At Violet restaurant the atmosphere is casual, comfortable, and, like its cuisine, is uncluttered. Chef Jared Simons’ flavorful small plate fare has something to suit everyone, from light eaters to those with a taste for a more robust fare. The Braised Short Ribs with Shallot Potatoes (\$14.50) melt apart while the Multi-Colored Beet Salad with Eel delights with Kumquat and Ginger Vinaigrette (\$9) and the favorite among the regulars is the Baked Macaroni and Gruyere Cheese with Serrano Ham (\$7.50). Unique selection of new and old world wines by the bottle, glass or flight as well as an impressive list of domestic & imported artisan beers. Hours: Lunch: Tuesday-Friday, 11:30am-2pm. Dinner: Tuesday-Friday, 6pm-10pm & Saturday and Sunday, 5:30pm-10pm. 3221 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica. www.violetrestaurant.com (310) 453-9113.



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LOCAL

Board pencils in ideas for conduct

BAD BEHAVIOR, from page 1

posed campus visits involving former gang members would be allowed within Santa Monica schools as a result of the updates. Instead, he said presentations would be looked at on a "case by case" basis, and the procedures to permit such are "clearly outlined" in the new policy.

Deasy deferred all questions regarding proposed rules and their ramifications to the school board. President Emily Bloomfield, who was out of town, and vice president Julia Brownley were not available for comment.

Board member de la Torre said he intends to bring former gang members onto Santa Monica school campuses in the future, while abiding by the procedure to do so.

He said doing so is following the board's primary goal of furthering educational opportunities for students, while referring to the effectiveness of similar programs the district offers.

"We have a practice in our district of having ex-drug addicts talk to kids about the dangers of drug addiction," de la Torre said. "This is a sound practice."

"If we are going to have young people learn about bias and bigotry, it would be smart to have a former KKK member on campus to talk about those dangers," he reasoned. "Likewise, if we have a problem of gang violence on campus, it would probably be smart to invite guest speakers who can share their stories about the dangers and misery violence causes."

De la Torre said the former gang members, whose legitimacy the Santa Monica

police questioned, work as mediators for Pico Youth & Family Services and that the value they can bring the community is misunderstood by some.

"Anyone who can share real life stories of dysfunctional behavior — who is no longer involved in that destructive behavior — I think they have a legitimate voice," de la Torre said. "I am less concerned about the individual that talks openly about their mistakes and the past, versus school employees or invited guest speakers who have bad intentions for our students and have no history of criminal conduct."

The 23-page SMMUSD staff report asks the board to replace seven of ten policies, some of which have not been updated since the 70s. Three other policies require revision, according to the report.

The proposed updates are intended to better comply with the California School Board Association and better reflect current laws and educational concerns, according to the staff report.

The policies aim to define and specify a wide-range of appropriate governing board member behavior as it relates to furthering the cause of public education, dealing with fellow board members, school staff and the media.

At least six fights broke out at Samohi during the lunch hour on Friday, April 15, requiring a school-wide lockdown in which three police departments were called to the scene to secure the campus. Between 30 and 40 students stopped fighting, but wouldn't return to class until police threatened to make arrests, school officials said.

Feather thruster



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Dancers, singers and musicians will entertain during the 29th annual festival of chariots on Sunday. Three 50-foot tall chariots will be pulled by hand from the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, beginning at 10 a.m., south on Main Street towards Venice Beach. Entertainers will take to three stages, with food and gift booths, displays of Indian art, culture and spirituality, and a free feast for 20,000 people all available.

While about two dozen concerned students and parents attended the following school board meeting on April 21, and demanded an action plan from school officials as a result of the lockdown, Police Chief James Butts, Jr. demanded to know what school administrators intend to do about de la Torre's visit.

An officers' report stated that de la Torre and his guests walked through the quad area as students were getting out for lunch. A Samohi administrator informed assistant principal Greg Runyon that some black students were upset over de la Torre's two guests, who appeared to be Latino gang members, according to SMPD officers on campus. Rumors were spreading about weapons being on campus and assaults expected to take place during the school day, according to the officers' report detailing events.

According to the report, 25 black students were standing in a group watching de la Torre and his guests. Some of the students were visibly upset and said they were "going to call their people, too."

Runyon approached the officers, and together they attempted to speak with de la Torre, who ignored their calls for him, according to the officer's report.

Police confronted de la Torre, who according to the officers' report, said he had granted permission himself for his guests to be on campus. Runyon responded by saying that it was only allowable for de la Torre to be on campus, not his guests, according to the report.

De la Torre continued to ignore the

police, even after an officer warned his presence was going to start a riot. De la Torre agreed to leave only after police threatened his arrest, according to the report.

In a letter to the school board, Butts requested its members to explain its policies regarding non-student gang members being allowed on campus.

De la Torre has contended the individuals he brought to campus were there to deter students from considering a life of gang activity and crime. He said any other suggestions by the police could be grounds for a lawsuit.

Deasy said it's typical procedure for school board members to notify administrators when they come to campus.

In light of the miscommunication regarding the incident, the board's proposed policy update states, "visits during regular school hours should be first arranged with the teacher and principal or designees."

De la Torre said he and his guests checked in when they arrived at Samohi, and that was how police were able to identify his two guests.

De la Torre said he didn't communicate with senior Samohi administrators to inform them of his intentions because he said he didn't realize he needed to. He said when he came to school for a previous student leadership discussion that Samohi administrators said they were glad he dropped by. He expected the same treatment the day the incident occurred with his guests.

De la Torre said he also was unaware of rumors of there being weapons and an assault expected on campus during his visit.

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LOCAL



Collision is the latest accident involving senior citizen driver

CRASH, from page 1

of Pico Boulevard.

A man who works in the office had reportedly just left the building two minutes before the car plowed into the building.

The Santa Monica resident, who uses a walking cane, was interviewed by police at the scene and released. The cause of the collision is still under investigation.

The accident is at least the fourth collision involving an elderly driver in Santa Monica since 2003, with the most notable being Russell Weller, then 86, who apparently mistook the gas pedal for the brake pedal and drove through the farmers' market on Arizona Avenue on July 16, 2003. He killed 10 people and injured dozens more.

Weller is currently awaiting trial on involuntary manslaughter charges.

Then a month later, an 86-year-old Santa Monica man smashed his car into a fence that surrounds a home daycare center. The man, whose identity wasn't released, drove out of the Elks Lodge parking lot off of Pico Boulevard into the alley and plowed straight into an iron gate that blocked the north side of a house. The accident occurred late at night, when the daycare wasn't in operation.

The driver was cited for a misdemeanor hit-and-run. No one was injured in the accident.

Shortly after that, an elderly woman drove her car onto the Third Street Promenade in the early morning. No one was injured.

And in December of 2004, an 84-year-old man crashed a Dodge Ram pick-up truck through a bustling Fisher Lumber. No one was injured.

The driver, whose identity wasn't released, apparently hit the gas pedal instead of the brake at about 8:40 a.m. The truck sped through Fisher Lumber about 50 feet before coming to a stop in an aisle.

The owner of the vehicle, the driver's son-in-law, was inside Fisher Lumber shopping and the elderly man was waiting for him in the passenger side of the truck, which was parked in a space directly in front of the store.

Several employees had told the elderly man that the truck was illegally parked and was blocking the entrance. He apparently attempted to maneuver the truck from the passenger seat, extending his leg to the gas pedal and his arm toward the steering wheel.

The truck plowed through display cases and counters. Debris eventually stopped the truck and the owner pulled his father-in-law out of the vehicle.

For about an hour after the incident, the driver sat next to the store's entrance. He was questioned by police and let go. He was seen walking away with the aid of a walker.

All of the accidents occurred while a national debate has been stirring about senior citizens' driving abilities and whether their licenses should be renewed on an annual basis.



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

The 85-year-old driver (top) of a car that smashed into three others, before coming to a stop in the wall of an insurance company building on Thursday stands despondent following the accident. Police tape (bottom) is strewn across the hole in the wall where the man's car struck. An unidentified worker reportedly left the building just minutes before the mishap.

Witnesses report hearing explosions

CITY YARDS, from page 1

what firefighters had to combat. Witnesses reported hearing several explosions, which turned out to be the trucks' tires blowing up, Polhill said.

"It became an issue of the trash trucks and their fuel," he said. "It gave the appearance of a dramatic fire ... a

chin-dropper for sure. It was really going strong."

Four fire engines and a hazmat truck responded. Investigators were on the scene all day Thursday, as well as several other agencies including local, state and federal officials.

"It's going to take a while," to determine the cause, Polhill said.

Tell Santa Monica what you think!

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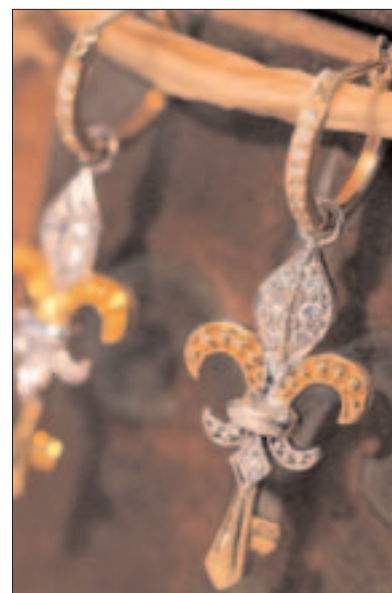
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Entertainment



Hot sex removes any language barrier in '2046'

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

The latest offering from revered filmmaker Wong Kar Wai ("Fallen Angels," "The Chungking Express") certainly isn't for everyone ("Dukes of Hazzard" devotees, for instance, need not apply), but those hankering for a subtitled, dreamlike elegy about a lovelorn lothario wrestling with painful memories in noirish 1960s Hong

Review

Kong should find plenty to love about "2046." The film is a concomitant to Wong's 2000 film festival favorite, "In the Mood for Love," with Asian superstar Tony Leung reprising his role as Chow Mo Wan, a hard-boiled serial womanizer working on a sci-fi novel that shares its title with both the film and the hotel room where many of Chow's sexual liaisons take place. It is the same room number in which, in the previous film, Chow carried on with his one true love, Su Li Zhen (Maggie Cheung, who has but a cameo here).

The non-linear, and at times confusing narrative follows Chow as he engages in steamy sexual trysts with one beautiful woman after another, then quickly beats an emotional retreat. This guy's heart has been damaged beyond repair by Su Li Zhen, and he callously dispenses payback with every new conquest. Leung's measured performance as an emotionally bankrupt, yet curiously endearing playboy is Bogart-esque, and he gets valuable support from his stunning leading ladies, Ziyi Zhang ("Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon"), Faye

Wong and Gong Li ("Red Sorghum").

The production value is striking. Christopher Doyle's camerawork and William Chang Suk Ping's art design combine to give "2046" a surreptitious quality; it all seems like a salacious secret being whispered between veiled strangers in a smoky, ill-lit anteroom. So what if it's sometimes hard to tell what it is they're saying?

(Rated R for sexual content. Running time: 129 minutes)

'Saint Ralph' meanders through melancholy marathon

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

From a team of tyro Canadian filmmakers led by writer-director Michael McGowan comes this

Review

unabashedly hokey, innocuous morality play about a Catholic schoolboy (newcomer Adam Butcher) who believes winning the 1953 Boston Marathon is the "miracle" that doctors claim is necessary to rouse his ailing mother from a coma. As if his plight weren't dicey

enough, the poor lad's father died in the war, he's living alone, the tyrannical school headmaster wants to send him to an orphanage, and he keeps getting caught with his hand down his pants. But he's got a swell support system in frocked track coach played by Campbell

Scott, and Jennifer Tilly's benevolent Nurse Alice. And after he runs the marathon, Ralph gets a standing O for his efforts. Holy melodrama!

(Rated PG-13 for some sexual content and partial nudity. Running time: 98 minutes)



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THE IMBIBER

BY DAN DUNN

Stop whining, help is here

After an exhaustive three-year search that brought me to the four corners of the world (Manhattan, North Jersey, Staten Island and Queens), The Imbiber is proud to announce the selection of this space's "Official Sommelier," who will henceforth be our go-to-guy on all matters vino. Before we bring out the star of the show, however, allow me to explain why it took so long to arrive at this momentous decision. Truth be told, several months passed before I even figured out what it is a sommelier does (they develop and maintain wine lists for fancy restaurants and hotels), and then I spent a couple more just mastering the pronunciation of the word (it's like the country, Somalia, only happier — "Suh-moll-YAY!"). Also, quite often I was very, very drunk.

So now, without further adieu, please put your hands together for The Imbiber's new "Official Sommelier," the one, the only, the soon-to-be regretful that he ever agreed to do this ... André Compeyre. André is the chief sommelier at Alain Ducasse at the Essex House in New York City, where he's responsible for pairing wines with the world-class culinary creations of executive chef Tony Esnault. For those unfamiliar with Alain Ducasse (pronounced "Cha-Ching!") it's arguably the most exquisite restaurant in all of the United States. In his nearly 20 years in the business, André has worked at world-renowned restaurants such as "Les Jardins de l'Opera" in Toulouse, "Le Gavroche" in London, and "Le Chateau d'Eza" near Monaco. He also oversaw the wine program at Restaurant Thomas Henkelmann in Greenwich, Conn.

"I am honored that out of the several thousand great sommeliers in this country, you asked me to participate, without even holding a drinking competition or asking me to pick a good merlot for Sugar Ray Leonard," said the affable Frenchman with the golden palate, referring to a recent Imbiber column featuring the boxing great. Appreciate the effort, André, but no need to suck up — you already got the gig. Look for "Andre's Pick" to appear here once or month or so, and whatever you do, wine lovers, listen to what the man says.

(Thirsty for more Imbiber? Pull up a barstool at www.TheImbiber.com)

ANDRE'S PICK:

"I would like to recommend a crisp white wine for summertime: 2004 Sigalas Assyrtiko from Santorini in Greece. It is a clean, fresh, mineral wine to enjoy as an aperitif or with a seafood appetizer such as chilled steamed langoustines with almond milk, cucumber and celery, which we serve at Alain Ducasse. The cost is approximately \$15 retail. Sigalas is a boutique producer, and you may equally enjoy Assyrtiko or Assyrtiko blends from any producer in the same appellation."

With a cell, we're all winners

BY VIC PLATINUM

Special to the Daily Press

Hey dudes and dolls, Vic Platinum here, coming at you from an airport bar at LAX where I'm waiting out a rather lengthy flight delay with my old friend Chardonnay. Apparently, planes don't like going out in this oppressive heat either. Seriously, could it be any hotter up in here? As if! I haven't felt this steamed since my cable carrier dropped the Oxygen Network to make room for PAX, a channel run by a pack of crazed Bible-waving prudes with no sense of style. But don't get me started on that, because there are itchier topics that need scratching today.

For instance, who is JD Power, and are his associates jealous because he gets top billing? And where did Jack Bauer, that yummy secret agent from "24," get his cell phone battery? That thing lasted an entire season on a single charge, whereas the rest of us must contend with cellies that have the staying power of horny teenaged boys.

And isn't it time someone come up with a good name for that overpowering impulse people have to use their cell phones whenever they're alone in a public place? All

I've got so far is "Look, everyone, I'm in demand-itis" and "Serenity-a-phobia." (That reminds me, I need to call the Hiltons' publicist to see what's up with Paris — after seeing those photos of her in this week's People, I've got two words for the twiglike heiress: Carbohydrates. Now!)

Did you know that "I am" is the shortest complete sentence in the English language? That's right, it is. And it's also the furthest into a conversation washed-up model "Surreal Life" star Janice Dickinson's gotten without peeing-off one her D-list housemates. That witch is absolutely wicked!

Speaking of which ... er, witch ... caught a performance of the Broadway sensation "Wicked" recently in Hollywood, and I just don't get what all the hype's about. Then again, I stopped caring about Oz after Rick Fox left the show!

Is it me, or does anyone else think Karl Rove looks like the sort of character you might see hanging around outside an elementary school with a bag of candy. And this guy's running the country, right?

Final thought: As a rule, people should not be driving any vehicle that costs \$100 to fuel up and then runs out of gas quicker than an episode of "Saturday Night Live."

The Vic gives audiences a taste of jazz

By Daily Press staff

The Vic for Jazz continues with its 2005 Jazz Series, during August.

Coming in on Aug. 11 will be Ilona Knopfler accompanied by trombone-player Jay Ashby, piano-player Alain Mallet, Tony Dumas on bass, and Enzo Tedesco on drums.

"She's a one woman Manhattan Transfer," says the Jazz Times.

Late night jazz features Ascendant, which is com-

prised of piano-player Aaron Antz, Gabe Noel on bass, and Aaron McClendon on drums.

The Vic is open from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m. Shows are on Thursdays, with two shows — one at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. Reservations are required. There is a \$20 cover and a two item minimum for the 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. shows. There is a \$5 cover and two drink minimum for the late night jazz, and no reservation is needed. Dinner is served from 7 p.m. to midnight. The Vic is located at 2640 Main St. For reservations call (888) FOR-JAZZ (367-5299) or visit www.thevicforjazz.com



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Marines’ casualty rate a sign of their daunting job in Iraq

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The Marines have one of the roughest assignments in Iraq: pacifying the perpetually restive Anbar province, home to Fallujah, Ramadi and Haditha, all sites of heavy American casualties since the insurgency went into high gear last year.

Underscoring the heavy load, the Marines have taken casualties disproportionate to their numbers in Iraq.

Marines number more than 23,000 out of 138,000 members of the U.S. armed forces in Iraq, or 17 percent. Yet they have lost at least 530 of the more than 1,820 U.S. personnel who have died there, or 29 percent, Marine officials said.

On Wednesday, they lost 14 when a roadside bomb detonated under an amphibious assault vehicle in Haditha in western Iraq. Just two days earlier, seven other Marines died.

Sen. Joseph Biden, ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called the Iraq campaign now a tough situation “that’s going to get tougher before it gets easier.”

“The truth of the matter is that we’ve made some pretty significant miscalculations in term of policy form the outset, and we leave these Marines in a very, very tough spot,” Biden said Thursday on CBS’s The Early Show.

“There’s such a gap between the reality on the ground in Iraq ... and the rhetoric back here” from the Bush administration, Biden said, asserting that the United States is in a race against time to get Iraqis trained to defend themselves, but using “too few troops in a place that needs a heck of a lot more security.”

Some military experts pointed to Wednesday’s attack to note the Marines are performing duties somewhat different from those for which they are organized and equipped. The amphibious vehicle, for example, was designed to get troops ashore and is less armored than some other infantry carriers.

“It’s basically designed to get across the beach and get a few dozen miles inland,” said John Pike, a military expert with Globalsecurity.org. “The point being, once (Marines) had managed to secure the beachhead and get a few miles inland, the Army would come ashore and take over from there.”

Beyond that, occupation and stabilization duties often

require expertise and equipment distinct from amphibious assault and the rapid capture of enemy-held territory, experts said.

“The entire Marine force was designed around the concept of amphibious warfare, which is a good deal different from the kind of conflict they’re fighting in Iraq today, hundreds of miles from the sea,” said Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute think tank. “The Marines are a light force; they kick in the door but they are not supposed to occupy all the rooms.”

The service has tried to adapt to changing missions, studying concepts like urban warfare and nonlethal weaponry. Marines took the lead in supplying food during a famine in Somalia in the early 1990s.

They, along with the Army’s 3rd Infantry Division, comprised the leading forces in the drive toward Baghdad in 2003.

Since the invasion of Iraq, the Army’s effort to keep its troops fresh by rotating them in and out of the country has created a need to use the Marines as a stabilization and counterinsurgency force in parts of the country, experts said.

The Marines killed Wednesday were part of a sweep for insurgents in communities along the Euphrates River between Baghdad and the Syrian border. At the Pentagon, Brig. Gen. Carter Ham said similar operations were under way in several communities at once, to prevent insurgents from skipping to towns without a strong U.S. presence.

He suggested the attacks on the Marines were the insurgents’ response to their stepped-up operations.

Many of the Marines killed Wednesday were assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines based in Brook Park, Ohio, a Cleveland suburb, and attached to the Regimental Combat Team 2. A civilian translator also was killed and one Marine was wounded.

Six more Marines were killed in Haditha earlier this week. A seventh was killed by a car bomb in Hit.

In November, Marines led the assault to retake Fallujah, an insurgent stronghold 40 miles west of Baghdad. They had regular clashes with insurgents there and in nearby Ramadi for months before.

In January, 30 Marines, along with a Navy sailor, were killed when their helicopter went down in bad weather. The military, however, still has not issued a finding on the cause of the crash.

Ex-oil and gas leader opposes Valle Vidal plans

By The Associated Press

SANTA FE — A former New Mexico Oil and Gas Association president says he opposes proposed coal-bed methane drilling in northern New Mexico’s Valle Vidal.

“I am a strong supporter of the oil and gas industry, and responsible drilling means there are some places we shouldn’t drill,” Gary Fonay said.

He said Wednesday he is asking members of New Mexico’s congressional delegation to permanently protect the Valle Vidal from mineral extraction.

“I call it, as many people do, the Yellowstone of the southern Rockies,” said Fonay, an outdoorsman who has camped and fished in the Valle Vidal in the Carson National Forest.

Fonay said drilling in the Valle Vidal “just changes what you have and changes the experience for people who are looking to see what Rocky Mountain life is all about.”

Houston-based El Paso Corp. has asked the Carson National Forest to open 40 percent of the 100,000-acre Valle Vidal for leases.

There currently are no oil and gas leases or producing wells on the 40,000-acre unit.

Environmentalists have said the natural beauty and pristine land could be lost forever if drilling is allowed.

The Valle Vidal — which has mountain peaks, streams and meadows and New Mexico’s largest elk herd — became part of the Carson in 1982 after being donated by Pennzoil Corp., an oil company.

Bob Gallagher, the association’s current president, said he told Fonay that he thinks Fonay’s opposition to

drilling “is a little premature.”

Gallagher said the Valle Vidal is a special place and there should be strict guidelines for drilling.

But “there has to be a full set of facts on somebody’s desk before they can reach a decision and those facts haven’t been developed yet,” Gallagher said.

Fonay’s stance was praised by Oscar Simpson, president of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

“I think it is really a big deal, because I haven’t heard any industry representative anywhere in the nation come forward” to oppose an energy development project, Simpson said.

“Not very many people are willing to stand up for their beliefs,” he said.

Fonay said there are others who feel the same way.

“I am not alone in the oil and gas industry by any means,” he said. “But I don’t know how many are willing to come forward like me.”

Fonay said he thinks the energy industry has done a good job when it comes to being sensitive about protecting the environment.

The federation is sponsoring 30-second radio advertisements featuring Fonay saying he supports energy development, but that it should not be allowed in the Valle Vidal.

The radio spots will be aired in Albuquerque, Raton, Taos and Farmington.

The U.S. Forest Service has been seeking input on how best to manage the Valle Vidal’s natural resources.

A decision on whether to allow drilling in the Valle Vidal will not come until 2007.



Discovery crew honors fallen Columbia astronauts

BY PAM EASTON

Associated Press Writer

SPACE CENTER, Houston — On a day when her crew remembered those who died on space shuttle Columbia, Discovery Commander Eileen Collins said Thursday she's confident about returning home safely next week.

"We have looked at everything," Collins told The Associated Press in an interview. "I wouldn't fly this flight if I didn't think it was a safe thing to do."

Deputy shuttle program manager Wayne Hale said overall Discovery is in good shape, but there remains one lingering issue: a hole torn in a thermal blanket near the cockpit window.

A fourth unplanned spacewalk may be necessary to take care of the problem.

The soonest the spacewalk could occur would be Saturday, which would delay Discovery's scheduled undocking from the international space station and result in the shuttle's return to Earth being pushed back a day until at least Tuesday.

Mission managers planned to meet Thursday morning to decide whether another spacewalk to repair the ship is needed.

As Discovery orbited the Earth Thursday, the shuttle's crew sent down images of the planet below and each crew member took a few minutes to discuss space exploration, its costs and remembered those who didn't make it home.

"We choose to do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard," astronaut Wendy Lawrence said. "And certainly, space exploration is not easy and there has been a human price that has been

paid."

Astronaut Charles Camarda said Columbia's loss in 2003 reaffirmed the need for those who explore to be vigilant about the risks involved.

Columbia was doomed by a piece of insulating foam shed from its external fuel tank during launch. The foam pierced a wing and caused the shuttle to disintegrate over Texas, killing all seven astronauts.

"In that accident, we not only lost seven colleagues, we lost seven friends," Camarda said. "They believed in space exploration. They knew the risks, but they believed in what they were doing. They showed us that the fire of the human spirit is insatiable."

Based on the Columbia tragedy, Discovery's astronauts have spent a majority of their test flight mission inspecting their ship, making repairs and testing out new repair techniques.

Collins said her crew had thoroughly studied the procedures before Wednesday's unprecedented spacewalk when astronaut Stephen Robinson removed two worrisome pieces of filler material from the shuttle's belly. It was the first time an astronaut has ventured below the ship.

NASA engineers thought the tile filler removed Wednesday might cause the shuttle to overheat during its descent through the atmosphere and lead to another Columbia-type disaster.

"We were watching with anticipation and excitement," Collins said of the spacewalk. "When I saw Steve pull the gap filler out, I started clapping and we were cheering in the flight deck."

Robinson told the AP that he was careful to make sure his body and none of his tools contacted the shuttle's

fragile belly during the task.

"I had my hand out and I had that purposely out there sort of as potential bumper," he said. "If I was going to hit anything on the orbiter, I wanted it to be my fingers in a springy position."

Hale said tile fillers, like the ones removed Wednesday, have probably protruded on previous flights, but this time the agency spotted them and was able to repair them because of the new inspection techniques put in place after Columbia.

Robinson was barely back inside the shuttle and out of his spacesuit Wednesday when Mission Control informed the crew about the chance of another spacewalk to deal with the torn thermal blanket.

The concern is that a roughly 1-foot section of the blanket could rip away during re-entry, whip backward and slam into the shuttle, perhaps causing grave damage. Engineers expected to know by late Thursday whether the danger is real and whether any blanket trimming is required.

"I think in the old days we would not have worried about this nearly so much," Hale said. "I am very hopeful that we will be able to put this issue at rest."

Also Thursday, astronauts finished up their testing of new repair techniques.

They demonstrated a proposed repair method for small holes in the carbon panels that line the shuttle's wings. That repair technique, tested in Discovery's mid-deck on samples brought to space, was the last of three techniques set to be tested on orbit by Discovery's crew.

Astronaut James Kelly told Mission Control the astronauts got 40 minutes of video from the experiment, which he called a success.

Cloned dog just latest milestone for S. Korea's stem cell pioneer

BY JI-SOO KIM

Associated Press Writer

SEOUL, South Korea — The "Pride of Korea" has struck again.

Pioneer South Korean stem cell researcher Hwang Woo-suk and his research colleagues have succeeded in cloning a dog, a global first that extends the remarkable string of laboratory successes by the Seoul National University professor.

Last year, Hwang's team created the world's first cloned human embryos. They followed that in May by creating the first embryonic stem cells that genetically match injured or sick patients.

Now, they've come up with Snuppy, an Afghan hound, now 14 weeks old, that Hwang's research colleague, Gerald Schatten of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, called "a frisky, healthy, normal, rambunctious puppy."

The goal of Hwang and his team, who reported their achievement Wednesday in the journal Nature, isn't to reproduce lovable pooches but to find ways to eventually help treat human diseases by creating a reliable research model.

Monkeys are the closest model to humans and they are crucial to medical research, but Hwang told reporters Wednesday that cloning a monkey "is technically impossible at the moment."

"Dogs share physiological characteristics with humans," Hwang, clad in his trademark white lab coat, told reporters in Seoul. "A lot of diseases that occur in dogs can be directly transferred to humans."

Embryonic stem cells are the source of all tissue. Researchers believe they can be coaxed to grow into heart, brain or nerve cells that could be used to renew ailing organs.

Hwang's previous achievements grabbed worldwide headlines and instantly made the 53-year-old a national hero in education-mad South Korea, which consistently scores in the top tier of world math and science surveys.

The cloning news was reported on the front pages of most major South Korean dailies Thursday.

"It's a matter of great national pride that such a person came from our country," Ro Suk-rae, a merchant in

downtown Seoul, said of Hwang. "All Korean people are waiting for the final results of his research ... to be applied to cure humans."

The name of the cloned puppy, the lone success from more than 100 dogs implanted with more than 1,000 cloned embryos, highlights the importance of Hwang's research base. Snuppy is shorthand for "Seoul National University puppy."

Seoul National is South Korea's top school. Admission is considered a sure ticket to the corridors of power and influence here.

Researchers congratulated Hwang's team on improving techniques that might someday be medically useful.

"The ability to use the underlying technology in developing research models and eventually therapies is incredibly promising," said Robert Schenken, president of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. "However, the paper also points out that in dogs as in most species, cloning for reproductive purposes is unsafe."

Other animals that have been successfully cloned are sheep, cats, goats, cows, mice, pigs, rabbits, horses, deer, mules and gaur, a large wild ox in Southeast Asia.

Still, uncertainties about the health and life span of cloned animals persist; Dolly the sheep, the first mammal cloned from an adult cell nearly a decade ago, died prematurely in 2003 after developing cancer and arthritis.

The successful dog cloning also re-ignites a fierce ethical and scientific debate about the rapidly advancing technology.

Ian Wilmut, a reproductive biologist at the University of Edinburgh who produced Dolly praised Hwang but cautioned that politicians and scientists must face the larger and more delicate issue — how to extend research without crossing the moral boundary of duplicating human life in the lab.

"Successful cloning of an increasing number of species confirms the general impression that it would be possible to clone any mammalian species, including humans," Wilmut said.

At a news conference in Seoul, the cloning team also condemned the reproductive cloning of humans as "unsafe and inefficient."

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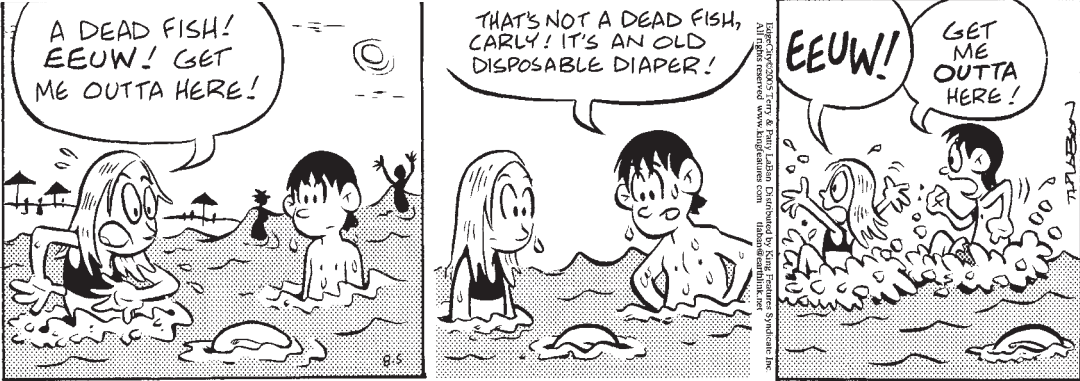


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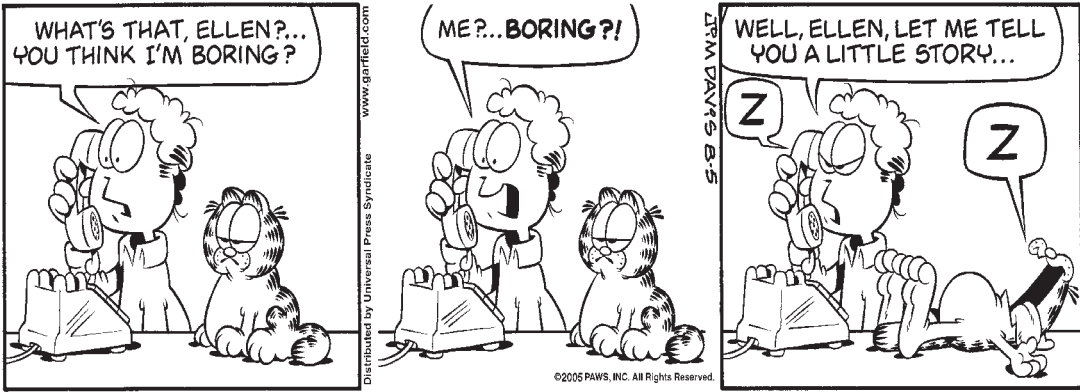
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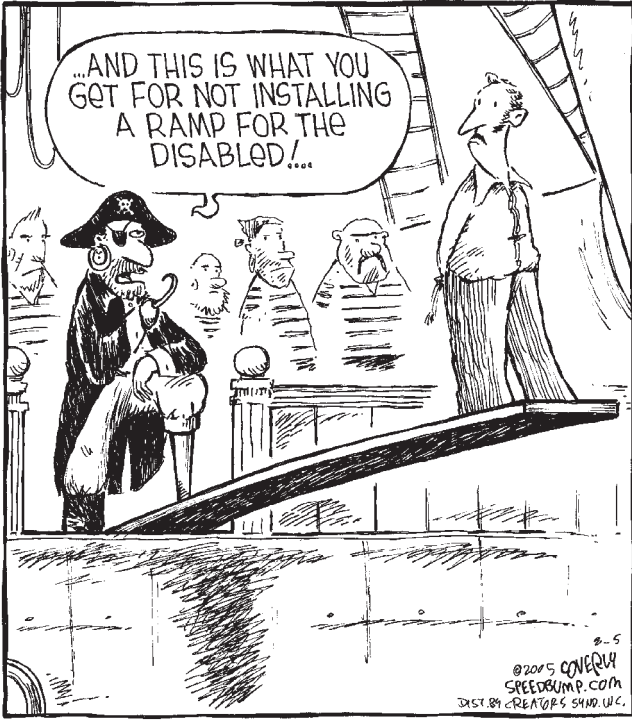
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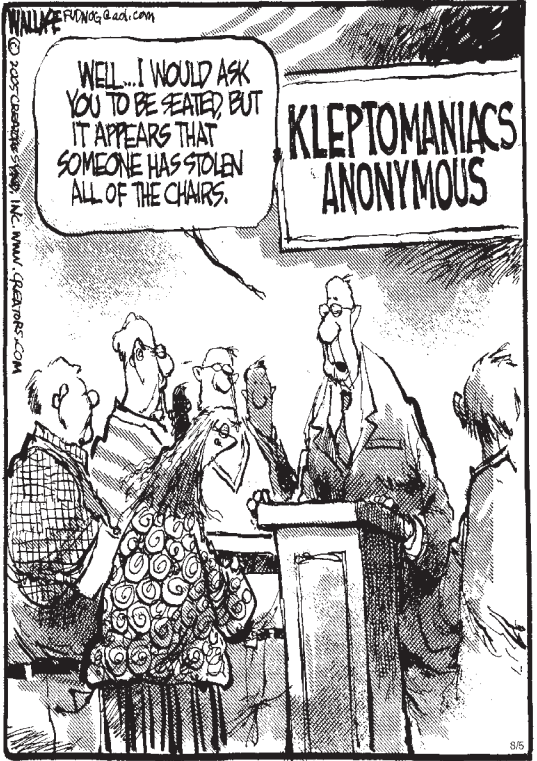


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- 2 Honey-suckle's cousin
- 3 Noted flamenco guitarist
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- 7 — tizzy

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13. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000; 284: 2561-2566.

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Rock solid: Etheridge on the mend and on stage

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Melissa Etheridge is jumping back into recording and performing after spending much of the last year fighting breast cancer.

The 44-year-old rocker has appearances booked for October, when her greatest hits collection "The Road Less Traveled" is due for release.

"I would say I'm 97 percent back now," Etheridge told AP Radio in an interview. "It is very hard. ... Chemotherapy is so hard on a person. And I would say I'm fully recovered, yeah."

Etheridge took to the stage with a shaved head but strong voice at the Grammy Awards in February for a Janis Joplin tribute — and received a standing ovation.

In an interview Wednesday with syndicated TV show "Extra," Etheridge said she and actress Tammy Lynn Michaels, who held a commitment ceremony in September 2003, are considering having a baby.

Etheridge shares custody of a daughter and a son with former partner Julie Cypher, who had the children through artificial insemination using a sperm donation from rocker David Crosby.

"We won't be using my friend," the singer told "Extra." "David has been there and done that."

Etheridge won a 1992 Grammy for best female rock vocal performance for "Ain't It Heavy" and a 1994 Grammy in the same category for "Come to My Window."

NEW YORK — Jerry Seinfeld and Paul Simon will perform together for one night only to raise money for research into autism.

The concert will be held Sept. 24 at the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles, hosted by Tom Brokaw of NBC News. It will benefit Autism Speaks, a not-for-profit organization launched earlier this year by NBC

Universal boss Bob Wright and his wife, Suzanne.

"I became aware of autism through some friends who are dealing with it and it is heartbreaking," Seinfeld said in a statement Wednesday. "I wanted to do something to help address this problem and decided to do a show to raise funds for research."

Tickets will be available beginning Aug. 15. Prices start at \$100.

NEW YORK — Michael Pena, Maggie Gyllenhaal and Maria Bello have been added to the cast of Oliver Stone's upcoming film about the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the World Trade Center.

The movie, also starring Nicolas Cage, will be based on the story of two Port Authority police officers who became trapped during rescue efforts after the collapse of the twin towers.

Pena will portray Officer William J. Jimeno and Gyllenhaal will play his wife, Allison. Cage will play Sgt. John McLoughlin. McLoughlin's wife, Donna, will be played by Bello, Paramount Pictures announced recently.

McLoughlin and Jimeno are said to be the last two men rescued.

"I was really impressed when I met Will — the police motto, 'protect and serve,' really means something to him," Pena said in a statement. "All he ever wanted to do is be a cop — it's one thing to read that on the page, but another thing to hear him say it."

The movie, expected to be released next year, is not yet titled.

Pena's film credits include "Million Dollar Baby" and "Crash."

LOS ANGELES — Mark Zupan, the most recognizable star of "Murderball," says he's embracing the fame brought by the documentary.

"Well, when you get recognized walking down the street, it gets really kind of strange," Zupan, with shaved head, goatee and tattoos, recently told AP Television News. "I'm still the same person."

"I just take the time and when people say, 'Oh! Loved the movie. I don't want to take your time,' I say, 'No, take time. I want to hear what you think. I want to hear what you like. I want to hear why you're curious.'"

"Murderball," now in theaters, is the story of quadriplegic athletes on the U.S. wheelchair rugby team. Wheelchair rugby — or "murderball" — is an intense, hard-nosed sport where players bash wheelchairs and flip each other while trying to carry the ball across the goal line in a gymnasium.

Zupan estimates that he's been interviewed more than 400 times this year, including an appearance on NBC's "Tonight Show."

Directors Henry Alex Rubin and Dana Adam Shapiro filmed consistently over three years, and the documentary has drawn rave reviews, in part, for its raw intimacy.

NEW YORK — What's your favorite summer song from the '60s, '70s or '80s?

A random telephone poll of 1,000 adults by VH1 Classic had more men picking the Rolling Stones' 1965 ode to sexual frustration, "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," than any other tune.

Women went for "I Got You Babe," Sonny & Cher's portrait of domestic bliss — at least until their divorce. That was also from 1965.

Others in the top five were The Police's song about an obsessive boyfriend, "Every Breath You Take," from 1983; the Doors' "Light My Fire" from 1967; and, from the Commodores in 1978, "Three Times a Lady."

VH1 Classic presents music videos, concerts and music specials featuring rock, soul and pop artists from the '60s, '70s and '80s.



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