



FREE

Santa Monica Daily Press

August 14-15, 2004

A newspaper with issues

Volume 3, Issue 236

DAILY LOTTERY

FANTASY 5

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DAILY 3

Daytime: 7 6 5

Evening: 5 7 6

DAILY DERBY

1st: 02 Lucky Star

2nd: 04 Big Ben

3rd: 07 Eureka

RACE TIME: 1:41.12

NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ No "Professional Courtesy": Marsha Watt, a graduate of Northwestern University School of Law and formerly an associate at the prestigious Winston and Strawn law firm in Chicago, was disciplined in 1997 by the Illinois Bar over her then-recent conviction for prostitution (i.e., the kind involving sex, for which her published rate, according to a personals ad cited in her conviction, was roughly three times what the law firm was billing for her services).

TODAY IN HISTORY

ONE YEAR AGO, on Aug. 14, 2003, a huge blackout hit the northeastern United States and part of Canada; 50 million people lost power.

■ In 1848, the Oregon Territory was established.

■ In 1917, China declared war on Germany and Austria during World War I.

■ In 1935, the Social Security Act became law.

■ In 1973, the U.S. bombing of Cambodia came to a halt.

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Ax to grind



Nicky Five Aces/Special to the Daily Press
Lead singer Lady P and bassist Don Verde of the LA band Los Abandoned rocked the pier on Thursday night. Three Latin rock 'n' roll bands with female lead singers were featured as part of the annual Latin American Music Conference, as well as the weekly Twilight concert series, which continues each Thursday through Sept. 2.

Samohi band director busted on sex charges

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

AND JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writers

A band director at Santa Monica High School was arrested last week on two felony counts of allegedly performing "lewd and lascivious" sex acts upon a child.

Carl Hammer, 37, who's married with young children, turned himself in to authorities on Aug. 6 after months of investigation. He posted \$40,000 bail and

was freed the same day.

Hammer has worked in the local school district for nine years — at Samohi, and Lincoln and John Adams middle schools, officials said. Students said Hammer seemed happy with his wife and young children.

"He's very serious about the band. He's got a nice family. I never thought this was anything he would do," said Sam Cieply, 16, a tenor saxophone player who

See SEX CHARGES, page 7

The dog days of summer: Council sniffs out new law

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Peanuts, bread crumbs, bird seed and dog diets were at the heart of a recent, often heated, debate between Santa Monica's elected leaders.

What started out as a discussion among members of the City Council over where local residents should be allowed to feed and walk their pets quickly expanded into a disagreement over the feeding of wild birds and squirrels. In the end, the council passed a law intended to clarify the city's

position on public feeding and park access for dogs.

"I'm reminded of the dilemma that one faces visiting a national park and being bitten by a mosquito," City Councilman Kevin McKeown said. "Tempted to slap — you're not supposed to harm the wildlife, but you're not supposed to feed them either."

On one side of the debate were council members hoping to preserve a popular form of recreation. On the other, council

See DOGGONE IT, page 7

'Starr' is born: SM filmmaker getting 'er done

(Editor's note: This is the first installment in a series following the efforts of local resident Matt Stanton to produce an independent feature film).

BY MICHAEL J. TITTINGER

Daily Press Staff Writer

SOMEWHERE IN WESTERN TEXAS

— As the rented blue minivan hiccuped its way along the dirt roads that define this stretch of God's country, side door slung open and videotape rolling, it didn't take long for budding filmmaker Matt Stanton to realize he was a long way from home.

With the tattered, rustic landscapes of such towns as Baird, Clyde and Putnam, Tex., rolling away as unassuming as they had come into focus, the region's timeless simplicity had him perched on seat's edge.

"It's perfect," he remarked. "We fly two

hours and we're a world away, another time and era."

That era left behind, albeit just for a four-day scouting trip last week in Western Texas, is modern-day Santa Monica, where Stanton tends bar nightly at the House of Billiards on Wilshire Boulevard. Serving up cold beers and billiard balls, the lanky, longhaired Ohio transplant is recognized throughout the city, if not by name than as the quick-witted "black cowboy."

Bartering, however, is just a means to an end for Stanton, a theater major who graduated from Loyola Marymount in 2001 after a seven-year hiatus from school. His passion is "North Starr," the screenplay he wrote as an acting

See HORSIN' AROUND, page 8



Michael J. Tittinger/Daily Press

MEETIN' AND GREETIN': Budding filmmaker Matt Stanton takes a break from scouting film locations in Texas last week to cozy up to one of the locals of the Sand Hills Ranch.



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Eddie Guerboian

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Make your heart sing, Gem

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)

***** Demonstrate your fire and your get-up-and-go. You have the spirit of the weekend embedded in your actions. Whatever you do, you do right because you give 100 percent. When trying to choose what to do, opt for something more kidlike. Everyone, as well as you, will let go. Tonight: Lead the weekend parade.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

*** Stay close to home, where you can entertain others and enjoy and relax at the same time. Invite loved ones over and allow them to lend a hand. You might be surprised by what others do. Give a family member or friend the space he or she needs. Tonight: The action surrounds your place.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

***** Be ready for unexpected developments, and be ready to switch plans if it is more fun doing something else. What might be important is having a talk or renewing your ties. Friendships grow. Be sensitive to one particular person. Listen to calls, then decide. Tonight: Whatever makes your heart sing.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

*** You might need to do some shopping or run errands. Relax and don't push yourself. You might find an item irresistible but costly. Your self-discipline is tested. It is your decision. Make sure that if you go for it, you will enjoy the item to the max. Tonight: Let someone else treat.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

***** You smile, and others respond. You are in prime shape, and nothing seems to stop you. Think carefully about what you want to do, because today you carry a magic wand and can make dreams real. Tonight: Just wish, and you will receive.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

*** Give yourself permission to vanish if you want. You might want to find a special friend to hang out with. Relax and enjoy yourself. The quiet recharges you — your mind and body. Indulge yourself. Tonight: Pull the shades, please.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

***** Follow your friends. Go to a baseball game or have your own. Laugh and enjoy all the people around you. Adjust to others and flex with the moment. Just go, do and be. Where the fun is, is where you need to be. Tonight: Be wild.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

***** You could be dazzled by others. You might not believe what is happening around you. You might need to assume a leadership role. Others like your choices and ideas. Wherever you are, others are too. Tonight: Leader of the gang.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

***** You need a mental release, be it playing out a fantasy or simply relaxing to a great piece of music. You might decide that a day trip could do the same. Go where you can think and chill out. Tonight: Do something different.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

***** Work with a close friend or associate you trust. This person can be very dramatic. Keep that in mind. Exchange ideas, brainstorm and catch up on news. If you are attached, you'll enjoy the day alone together. Tonight: Mutuality is the theme.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

***** Others have definite plans, which include you. You will be able to gain a perspective of others if you go along for the ride. Not everything has to be your way. Gatherings and parties just seem to happen. Tonight: Say "yes."

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

***** Whatever project you have in mind cannot be postponed much longer. Dig in and get it done so that you can enjoy the sense of completion you get. Make relaxing plans. Tonight: Be a couch potato.

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1427 Third Street Promenade, Ste. #202 • Santa Monica, CA 90401 • www.smdp.com

PUBLISHER

Ross Furukawa ross@smdp.com

EDITOR

Carolyn Sackariason sack@smdp.com

STAFF WRITER

John Wood wood@smdp.com

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

Rob Plubeni rob@smdp.com

ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Rob Schwenker schwenker@smdp.com

ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Chris Allen chris@smdp.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Alejandro Cesar Cantarero II alex@smdp.com

PRODUCTION ARTIST

Rick Reynolds rick@smdp.com

EXECUTIVE TRAFFIC MANAGER

Heather Rich heather@smdp.com

CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE

Mitch Troy mitch@smdp.com

CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE

Kitty Seeger kitty@smdp.com

NIGHT EDITOR

Lori Luechtefeld lori@smdp.com

NIGHT EDITOR

Michael Tittinger mikeyt@smdp.com

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Mike Aviles mike@smdp.com

CIRCULATION

Keith Wyatt keith@smdp.com

CIRCULATION

Glenn Bolan glenn@smdp.com

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Dave Danforth dave@smdp.com

MASCOT

Maya Furukawa maya@smdp.com

LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

If they show it, they will come

By Daily Press staff

A field of dreams awaits in Malibu this weekend.

Ladies Home Journal and Dodge Caravan are hosting "Family Movies Under the Stars," an evening of outdoor family fun.

Activities include the screening of the 15th anniversary edition of Universal's "Field of Dreams," starring Kevin Costner, James Earl Jones, Amy Madigan and Ray Liotta. There will be treasure hunts, giveaways, free popcorn and on-screen trivia games.

The free event will be held at the Malibu Bluffs Community/Regional Park and begins at 7 p.m. The movie will air at 9 p.m. The park is located at 24250 Pacific Coast Highway

For more information, log onto: www.lhjmovenight.com.

Homeless have opportunity to 'reclaim' lives

By Daily Press staff

Help is on the way for the homeless.

People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) will host Law Day 2004, a one-day conference designed to provide information and counsel on legal rights to the homeless and low-income individuals, on Aug. 21, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at PATH's Regional Homeless Center, 340 N. Madison Ave.

Co-sponsored by Special Counsel, the Beverly Hills Bar Association and Public Counsel, the event will include educational seminars on topics including accessing public benefits and resolving tickets and warrants with no money or jailtime. Legal professionals and benefits experts also will be available for one-on-one consultations to provide advice, referrals and assistance.

"We want to empower the homeless and low-income people with the knowledge and ability to remove the legal barriers that hinder them from reclaiming their lives," said Joel John Roberts, executive director for PATH.

PATH, founded in 1984, is a non-profit community organization that seeks to empower homeless people with the tools for self-sufficiency, helping them find work, secure housing and obtain an array of social and health services to reclaim their lives. Its supportive services and transitional housing facilities assist some 17,000 people annually in Southern California.

For more information on attending Law Day 2004, call PATH at (323) 644-2209.

Feds recognize Malibu Reserves

By Daily Press staff

Volunteers during crisis situations in Malibu recently received national recognition.

The Office of the U.S. Surgeon General has announced that the Malibu Medical Reserve Corps' registration is complete.

The MMRC is now officially recognized as part of the White House's USA Freedom Corps initiative and the Department of Homeland Security Corps.

The MMRC provides an organized way for medical, public health and citizen volunteers to offer their skills and expertise during local crisis and throughout the year.

Malibu-based MRC volunteers assist during large scale medical emergencies, natural disasters, or an act of terrorism.

Officials say MMRC is working closely with the city of Malibu to forge a mutually beneficial alliance to protect the lives and well-being of Malibu residents and visitors alike.

The registration allows the MMRC to access federal resources, to use the official MRC logo, participate in National MRC Leadership Conferences, and participate in regional MRC meetings and conferences.

Malibu MRC has received a similar recognition from the State of California and is operating as a part of California MRC coordinated by the California office of Emergency Operations.



SURF REPORT

Saturday the SE swell will back down slightly, leaving us with NW windswell, and background SW swell. Most spots will hold in the knee- to waist-high range while the combo spots drop off slightly in consistency.

New SSW swell starts to arrive on Sunday and into Monday. Look for leftover surf early Sunday morning with some shoulder-high sets starting to hit by late afternoon. These waves will hold into Monday with waist- to chest-high surf at most exposed breaks.

Write us at wood@smcp.com and tell us what the surf is doing today at your local break.

Today the water is:

69°



LOW TIDES

HIGH TIDES

	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	3:42	-0.3	2:53	2.4	10:12	4.1	9:01	6.2
SUNDAY	4:08	-0.4	3:27	2.2	10:34	4.2	9:34	6.2
MONDAY	4:34	-0.3	4:01	2.0	10:57	4.4	10:06	6.0
TUESDAY	4:59	-0.2	4:39	1.9	11:21	4.6	10:40	5.7
WEDNESDAY	5:25	0.1	5:20	1.8	11:47	4.7	11:17	5.3
THURSDAY	5:50	0.5	6:08	1.7	N/A	N/A	12:15	4.9
FRIDAY	6:17	1.0	7:07	1.6	12:00	4.7	12:47	5.0

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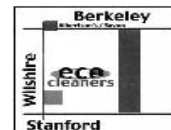
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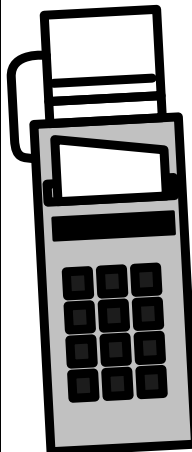


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Add SM Airport to 'green' acres

Editor:

I just wanted to comment on Marty Rubin's article "Residents fuming over fumes at SM Airport" (SMDP, Aug. 11, page 5). Ditto.

The frequency of jets with their noise and fumes have adversely affected our lives in West Los Angeles. The city of Santa Monica advocates "green" policies throughout their city, so it is time for the removal of jets from Santa Monica Airport.

Deborah Deming
West LA

Residents done with jet-set lifestyle

Editor:

First, I need to let you know how moved I was that finally a newspaper or agency has taken what has appeared to be a suppressed issue and brought it to a public forum (SMDP, Aug. 11, page 5). I have lived in the shadow of the Santa Monica Airport for the past nine years, and have found it confounding and fascinating how the situation with jets has coalesced.

I have had contact with various officials at the Santa Monica Airport, as well as associated with Santa Monica officials. What is clear is that all the residents around the airport and Santa Monica do not want the airport to function in the way it has. In fact, in the past before the "jet threat," there has been significant desires to close the airport to any air travel at all.

While jets are by law expected to land at a specific trajectory, limit the decibel levels of their engines, and not wantonly pollute the regions they land on, idles by or takes off over, there is no true governing agency to monitor this activity at the Santa Monica Airport.

Only the FAA can police or monitor these activities and there is no FAA monitoring agency at the airport. The West Los Angeles residents often will see extremely low flying jets dangerously landing over our houses and not to mention over Richland Elementary and Webster Middle Schools. There is no airport in the nation that is located as close to a heavily residential area, and the airport jet activity is growing. Hopefully, it won't take a catastrophe to get anyone's attention.

I have given up complaining about the jets taking off at 7 a.m. or the late arrivals after midnight. I was told by the Santa Monica Airport the planes could only land in emergencies after 10 p.m. I was told that they were warned if their decibel levels were too high, and later fined. There was no one to discuss or monitor pollution. I was wondering over the past five years what the dark spots were on my lemons or the dark droplets on my trees and white paint. No one has come out to check if emissions from the jets are virtually spraying our houses and the lungs of our children. The discoloration has been progressively worsening over the years and while some might say it is not related to the increased jet activity, there is definitely a temporal relationship.

It is astounding how relatively a minimal few individuals with financial power can

inflict such a large residential base, possible danger, and definite noise and air pollution. I have had a dream for about 20 years regarding the airport, which is that the city of Santa Monica takes a stance. That would be the opposite of what is happening throughout the world. That stance is to close the airport and instead build botanical gardens in its place. The botanical gardens would be surrounded by low income housing for our senior citizens who would aid in upkeep of the gardens. Also scattered throughout the senior housing would be preschools for our children who would also receive instruction and aid from the senior citizens. Imagine "unpaving paradise by tearing up a parking lot." Think how many residents surrounding the airport would financially support the idea of closing the airport to build botanical gardens surrounded by senior housings and preschools.

Oh, what the heck ... at least get the jets emissions to stop polluting my children's air and contaminating our fruit.

Charles Blum

Santa Monica

Northern exposure not necessary

Editor:

I'm curious about the guest editorial which ran in the letters column (SMDP, Aug. 10, page 4). Between letters from Santa Monica residents supporting the cat-declawing ban currently before the City Council was one from Mike Nordin of Duluth, MN, decrying a lack of hospitality at pro-Bush rallies to persons seeking to counter-demonstrate. Drawing from the shared lore at DemocraticUnderground.com and other places, Mr. Nordin told tales of exclusion of protesters from Bush rallies in West Virginia, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico and Iowa. I fail to see the reason why this letter was printed in our local paper.

Mr. Nordin tells of lamentable behavior. It is too bad that we have not reached a point of political ecumenicism wherein opposing points of view are accepted at political rallies, but I do not think anyone expects that will ever happen. I agree that it was wrong for the police to eject the ranks from the rally in West Virginia — for which the city rightly abjectly apologized. I do not see why this information was chosen for inclusion in the letters column. A political commentary by resident John Marciano was placed in a guest commentary box on the opinion page, and Mr. Marciano's views are certainly of more moment for Daily Press readers than those of Mr. Nordin.

The only justification for bringing Mr. Nordin's views from Minnesota to Santa Monica is that the paper wishes us to learn of the events that he describes, with the spin he places upon them. However, the events were not newsworthy, and the foolish concluding statement by Mr. Nordin that Bush/Cheney campaign events are "paid for by taxpayer dollars" undercuts his credibility. Please leave the letters page for local opinions and local issues. Mr. Nordin's letter should not have run here, or anywhere.

Robert Butchko
Santa Monica

Forget Athens, let games begin with Decision 2004



MODERN TIMES

BY LLOYD GARVER

The television broadcast networks can't be happy with the low ratings of the Democratic Convention. There's no reason to assume that the Republican Convention will be any more popular on television. However, the Olympics are expected to have a huge audience. So don't be surprised if someday soon the networks combine the political conventions with the Olympics.

It will probably seem like a natural to those executives who give us things like "Growing Up Dahmer" or whatever their latest "reality" series is called. Both the Olympics and the presidential elections are held every four years. Sports and politics have a lot in common. For example, stretching is something that athletes do with their muscles before they compete. Stretching is something that candidates do with the truth while they compete. Women's wrestling is a new sport in the Olympics, but has been going on for a long time in American politics as women

continue to fight to have some input and voice in their party. And softball is not just a game played in the Olympics. Softball involves the kind of easy questions that reporters ask if they want to keep being invited to fancy cocktail parties or for rides on candidates' jets.

So maybe it's not that far-fetched to view presidential politics as another version of the Olympics.

The **MARATHON** is a long, brutal race, testing each entrant's physical, mental and spiritual being. Some drop out before the finish line. Some never recover. In politics, this is called "The Presidential Campaign."

PRELIMINARY HEATS aren't watched by many people. That's where the Democrats stuck Jesse Jackson and Dennis Kucinich, and may wish they stuck Al Sharpton.

DRUG TESTING is something that has become necessary in Olympic competition. It may become necessary at political conventions as more and more delegates dye their hair, paint their faces, wear silly hats and whoop like maniacs every time their state is mentioned.

SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING might have inspired **SYNCHRONIZED TESTIMONY**, as President Bush and Dick Cheney insisted on testifying together

at the 9/11 hearings.

BALANCE BEAM: The Republicans might not enter anybody in this event, since it would be hard to top John Kerry's balancing act of being both for and against the war.

BIASED JUDGING: For years, Soviet bloc judges were accused of favoring their own, and in the 2002 Winter Olympics a French skating judge made a decision that was so obviously biased that it was embarrassing to the world. Obviously, the Florida recount and the Supreme Court decision follow in this Olympic tradition.

A RABBIT is someone who rushes to the lead in a long race, sets a ferocious pace for the other runners, and then when he can't keep it up, drops out of the race. In future Olympics, these racers may be referred to as Howard Deans.

THE 100-METER DASH is one of the shortest Olympic events, lasting about 10 seconds. Expect to see about the same amount of time at the Republican convention devoted to explaining why the economy is "good" now.

GYMNASTICS provides a model for many political events. At the conventions, "floor exercises" are the exercises that important politicians go through down on the floor, when they shake hands and pretend to listen to delegates they don't really

care about. The "parallel bars" are those two bars across the street from the convention halls where the real decisions are made. And the "triple somersault with a twist" is what John McCain does as he explains how he can still support George Bush.

SHOOTING at targets is an old, Olympic sport, requiring great skill. Shooting at innocent birds in front of photographers is something politicians in both parties do to demonstrate that they are manly and American.

One of the most popular things on the Olympic broadcasts are the emotional "**UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL**" features. In these, the audience learns that through determination, sacrifice and family support, the athlete overcame enormous hardships. Politics has co-opted this, and both parties show us how their candidates have overcome their personal hardships of family connections, wealth and Ivy League educations to get to where they are today.

(Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier." He also has read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSNews.com's Opinion page and can be reached at smdp@lloydgarver-moderntimes.com).

OPINION

The QLine

CLASS DISMISSED: MALIBU SHOULD SECEDE

This past week, Q-line asked:
Is it time for Malibu to have its own school district? Why or why not?
Here are your responses:

☉ "For the past 100 years, all of the Bayside cities between Palos Verdes and Malibu have had their own school districts. Since Malibu is now a city whose residential community, for the most part, are wealthy professional individuals who pay high property taxes and are also willing to subsidize the Malibu school district, should have that privilege. In my opinion, a split from the Santa Monica school district should be mandatory, and not politically debatable."

☉ "I think this would be a good idea. My son goes to Santa Monica schools and I think it's best for Malibu to split from the school district here."

☉ "I think every home with children should be its own school district and tax itself for teaching at home. If you breed 'em, you feed 'em and teach them yourself."

☉ "What a wonderful idea! It couldn't happen soon enough. Since this arrangement is now illegal, why should it take years to get out of it? Santa Monica should stop funding Malibu schools right now."

☉ "I definitely support Malibu separating from Santa Monica. They have been, for too long, taking advantage of

us and our tax dollars. Now, with this recent gift policy, they are unwilling to share the limited amount of fundraising dollars with us. This only goes to show they are undeserving of all the help we have been giving them over the years."

☉ "I am a parent in the Santa Monica school district. I do believe it is time for Malibu to vigorously explore developing an Independent district. I have long felt they do not have a philosophical congruity with some of the policies of its southern neighbors. They don't contribute commiserate with their income to the district as a whole. They have been reluctant to support measures that were passed by a narrow margin to give more funding for the schools. They are not that interested in participating in some of the policies the district is looking at to bring more equality to the schools. It is time for them to be on their own. I wish them the best."

☉ "Malibu has been a city for many years and has had its own schools as well. It would seem to me, it's time for it to have its own school district."

☉ "Malibu should break away from Santa Monica. This way, Malibu can save itself from Santa Monica City Hall and Santa Monica city policies that have ruined the great City of Santa Monica."

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People & Places



Photos courtesy of The Santa Monica Star
(Top and above) The Third Annual National KidsDay celebration was held Aug. 1 on the Santa Monica Pier. Coordinated by the Boys & Girls Club of Venice, club members from across Southern California joined local youngsters at the pier for rides, games, crafts, food and entertainment.



Photo courtesy of The Santa Monica Star
(Above) Lionel and Elza Ruhman renewed their wedding vows at a ceremony last weekend at the First Methodist Church in Santa Monica, where they were married 50 years ago. Both her maid of honor and his best man were on hand. To surprise Elza, Lionel had restored a 1950 Oldsmobile, the kind of car they had when they were first married. Following the ceremony, a celebration dinner was held with friends and family at the Masonic Center on Santa Monica Boulevard. Lionel was responsible for the rebuilding of the center after it was damaged in the 1994 earthquake. Lionel is president of the Rotary Club of Santa Monica. Elza is a member of the Soroptomist Club.

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LOCAL



Samohi rocked by second sex arrest of summer

SEX CHARGES, from page 1

played under Hammer for five years.

The victim is either 14 or 15 years old. It's unknown whether the victim is enrolled in local schools, but sources close to the situation said the victim might have been Hammer's neighbor. Hammer could not be reached for comment and his wife Jennifer declined to comment when a reporter called their Santa Monica residence.

Samohi's band is considered among the best in Southern California and has earned accolades under the leadership of Hammer and performing arts department chair Terry Sakow. The Samohi orchestra

traveled to Europe last year. The marching band performed in Washington, D.C.

Schools superintendent John Deasy said Hammer will remain on paid leave, according to his contract, indefinitely. Hammer is expected to appear at the Airport Courthouse near LAX on Oct. 8.

"The district was made aware of the investigation through the local police department, once the employee was charged with a felony, and is on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation," Deasy said this week. "It does not presume guilt."

The months-long investigation into Hammer was conducted jointly by the

California Department of Children and Family Services and the Santa Monica Police Department.

On July 8, the SMPD was contacted by the department of children and family services regarding a child abuse investigation, SMPD Lt. Frank Fabrega said. Local police detectives then conducted their own investigation and issued an arrest warrant for Hammer. Prosecutors said the two charges stem from an alleged encounter between Hammer and the victim on July 6.

Hammer's arrest comes just two months after Samohi football and basketball assistant coach Mike Hearn, 37, was arrested

for his alleged relationships with three different underage girls. Last month, Hearn pleaded not guilty to nine felony charges stemming from those relationships.

Prosecutors charged Hearn with six counts of unlawful sex with a 17-year-old girl, two more counts for allegedly having oral sex and performing a lewd act upon a 15-year-old girl, and one count for sharing pornographic materials with a third girl, also 15 years old. The two 15-year-old girls were Samohi students, but the 17-year-old was not, district officials have said. Hearn was placed on home assignment after his June 2 arrest. His next court appearance is scheduled for Aug. 30.

Council heeds call of the wild at recent confab

DOGGONE IT, from page 1

members who said feeding wild animals set a dangerous precedent and disrupted natural cycles.

"It seems my whole life, everything I've ever learned about wild animals, whether they reside in the mountains or in the cities, is that they shouldn't be fed because it changes the way they behave, populations get out of control," said City Councilman Bob Holbrook, who recounted an unpleasant experience he had after putting a wild bird seed feeder outside his home.

"When the food finally ran out, you won't believe this, but I couldn't keep the squirrels out of the house," Holbrook said. "They just would gnaw through the screens, come into the kitchen and beg for food ... or run across the living room floor."

"Once they start getting fed, it really becomes a problem for everybody."

City Councilman Ken Genser, who has said he enjoys feeding squirrels in Palisades Park, disagreed and pushed for more relaxed laws governing the feeding of wild animals and pets in parks, and on streets and sidewalks. Genser criticized the proposed law, which was designed to simplify a variety of laws pertaining to dogs.

"I just think this is overly broad," he said. "And it is very inelegantly addressing a potential problem. I'm not even sure there is the problem, but it's sort of like

throwing a buck shot and hoping you hit a couple targets."

The law, which was tweaked and eventually approved by the council (5-1), makes it illegal to feed dogs in leash-free areas of parks, among other things.

"Dogs often descend on the food en masse, which creates a significant likelihood of aggression and conflict. Also, some dogs must adhere to strict diets, which preclude ingestion of unauthorized 'treats' offered or left behind by well-meaning park visitors," according to city documents.

The new law also makes it illegal for dogs to venture onto private property unwanted, requires dogs on private property to be enclosed and finally makes legal a practice that's long been accepted — taking leashed and licensed dogs into city parks.

By far the stickiest part of the discussion concerned the feeding of wild animals. Donn Ueber, manager of Santa Monica's animal shelter, said the law was designed to protect both the wild animals and resident recreational activities.

"The consensus among staff was that it might be a little bit Draconian to penalize the stereotypical little old lady who's throwing bread crumbs down for birds and getting enjoyment out of that," he said.

Though Mayor Richard Bloom said he tended to agree with many of Holbrook's points, he wended up voting for the law,

which allows people to feed wild animals, so long as they don't leave behind any extra food.

City Councilwoman Pam O'Connor was not present for the voting.

One question, though, remains unanswered.

"Totally personal question on this," City Councilman Mike Feinstein said to

Ueber, "but being a person who always thinks like whole wheat is better than Wonder Bread, I always see people throwing Wonder Bread out for these animals. Isn't it bad for them? I've just always wanted to ask someone."

After some banter between council members, Ueber replied, "I assume that's a rhetorical question."



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LOCAL

Filmmaker looks to buck the Hollywood system

HORSIN' AROUND, from page 1

vehicle for himself, and a project he's been tinkering with for the better part of six years. The West Texas landscapes — rolling hills of sun-burnt brush, randomly staggered double-wide trailers and two-block stretches that earn the "downtown" moniker — are about as far removed from Hollywood as one can get, which is just fine with Stanton, whose plans for a disturbing, provoking independent film are decidedly un-Tinseltown.

"The environment is a significant element to the story, in order for it to be told truthfully," he said.

"North Starr" is the story of an inner city youth's personal growth amid preju-

dice and hatred, both tangible and seething below the surface. It follows the journey of Demetrius, who after witnessing a brutal murder in Houston, makes a b-line for San Antonio. His road to renewal, however, takes an unexpected turn in the fictional town of Trublin, a dot on the map haunted by its racially divided past.

Stanton is poised to play David, the town's lone black rancher dealing with ghosts of his own.

"I want people to climb out from behind the walls they live within," he said.

"We live in so much isolation. Of course, that's comfortable, but I guess I want to challenge people to embrace differences — socially, culturally, politically."

Stanton knows the precise moment when "North Starr" was born — sitting, dog-tired on the carpet in a friend's Ohio ranch house about a decade ago. After working until 2 a.m. building horse stalls, he said he suddenly felt compelled to sit up and jot down some notes while the voice of inspiration prattled away.

"When I told my friends I was writing a screenplay, that was the most foreign idea in the world," he laughed. "I was surprising myself. I had no intention of writing a film then ... but I'm glad I paid attention."

The lyrics of a Clint Black song, "State of Mind," served as the launching point. The opening lines, "Got a big leather suitcase, all I own's inside. Seems I've been walkin' for days, can't even bum a ride," spawned a pivotal scene in which Demetrius, fleeing Houston on a dusty country road, finally hitches a ride with the black rancher David.

"It's not something I anticipated," he said, recalling his days at a horse-breeding facility back East. "But something about that song resonated within me and planted a vision of this chaos found in 'North Starr.'"

LOOKING FOR TRUBLIN

The project took a major step towards fruition last week when Stanton, riding shotgun, and his buddy Wayne Campbell stormed through the towns of Campbell's youth looking for Trublin. Armed with a rented digital video camera, the pair exhaustively filmed potential locations and met with area ranchers in attempts to set the production wheels in motion, that



Michael J. Titinger/Daily Press

ON THE PRECIPICE: Santa Monica resident Matt Stanton contemplates the journey ahead from a second-story hay loft in Oplis, Tex.

is, once the finances are in order. Another goal of the trip was to compile footage for a promotional trailer, as Stanton next sets out to secure the estimated \$50,000 he will need for the production of "Starr."

Not unlike his protagonist, Stanton finds himself on an uncertain path. While he has secured minor roles in both television and film, this is the first major film project that rests squarely on his 6'1" shoulders. The stakes are high, not only for the feature film, but also for his fledgling production company — Fat Bessy

See HORSIN' AROUND, page 10

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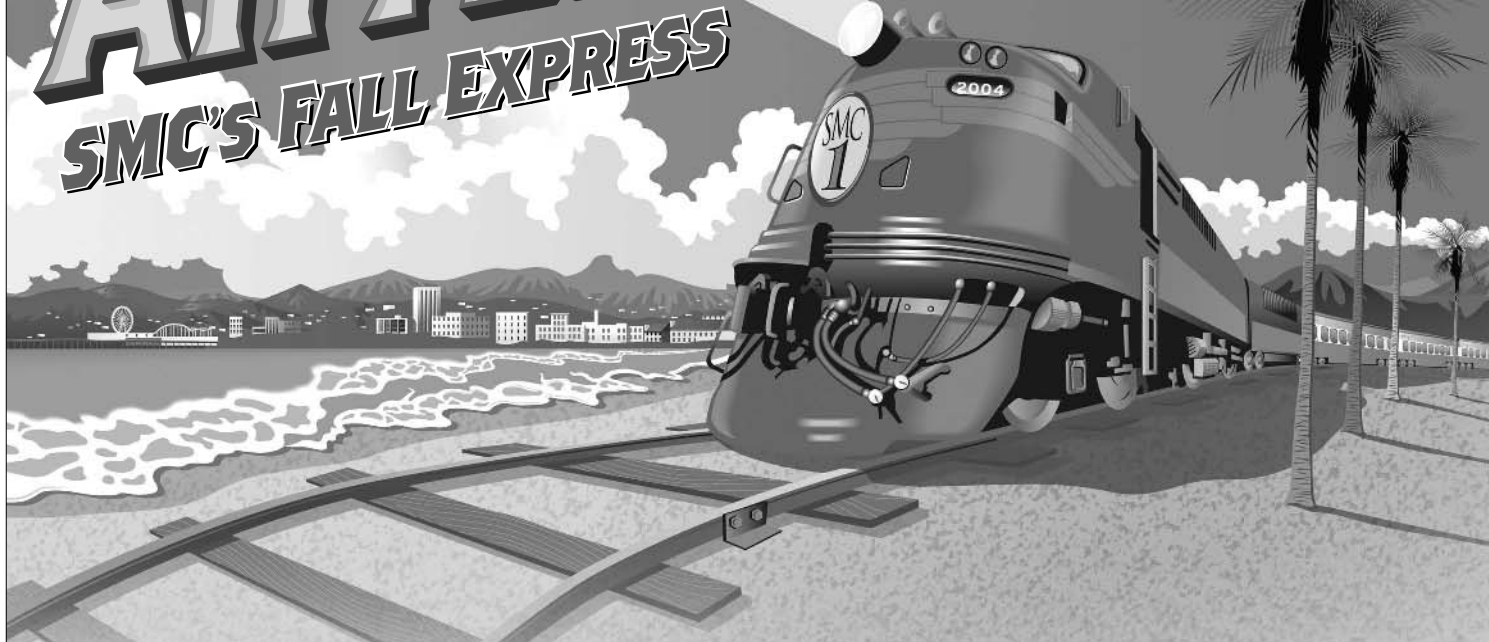
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LOCAL

Resident keeps it real for movie project in Texas

HORSIN' AROUND, from page 8

Films. Stanton envisions "North Starr" as just the first rung of a career ladder catered to provocative independent films.

Of course, the Holy Grail for independent filmmakers today is the annual Sundance Film Festival, staged each January in Park City, Utah. The push to meet this year's entry deadline has become a sudden driving force for Stanton after several years of intermittent work on "North Starr."

The sudden compulsion and increased sense of fortitude can be traced directly to a recent fallout with Santa Monica director Bill Slate, who had been scheduled to direct "Starr" for the better part of the past year. But after creative differences forced a parting of the ways, Stanton again found himself alone to champion his project.

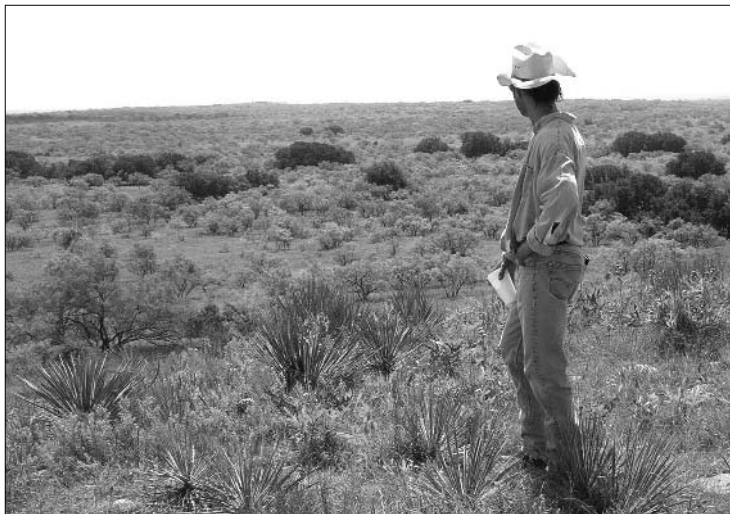
In retrospect, he feels, it was the best thing that could've happened.

"I've gotten more done in the past two months than we did in a year," he said, as his rented Dodge Caravan cruised along through rattlesnake country. "I think I just got caught up in the excitement of someone wanting to make my movie ... But my progress has been validated by the strides I've made on my own."

He's quick to point out his three serious dealings with potential producers on the film project. The first, he says, told him "to give me your money." The second, "Show me the money." The third, "Just shut up and keep writing."

"I don't accept any promises anymore, except those I make to myself," he said.

According to Stanton, a major sticking



Michael J. Tittinger/Daily Press

HOW NOW: Writer and actor Matt Stanton surveys the Sand Hills Ranch from atop an old Indian lookout site in Oplin, Tex., last week.

point between he and Slate was the location of the shoot. In Stanton's eyes, the tiny town of Trublin, Tex. — bleak, suffocating, even backward — serves as a major character in the film, an uninviting universe in which hatred in all shapes comes to the fore. Slate reportedly wanted to shoot the film in Stanton's hometown of Chagrin Falls, Ohio, a somewhat trendy, rustic town on the outskirts of Cleveland.

Ironically, it was Campbell, the irrev-

erent car salesman Stanton befriended back in Ohio, who suggested Stanton film "Starr" in his old Texan stomping grounds.

"Look at this place ... this is Trublin," remarked Campbell in his western twang, cruising through the town of Clyde. "All these people, in the houses up here, they got money but you'd never know it. Appearances ... they don't give a sh—."

"That's just how they do it down here."

ROUGH CUT

With camera at the ready and an ice chest stuffed with Coors cans by the backseat, the pair maneuvered through the Texas countryside blaring the likes of Travis Tritt, Gary Allen, Kenny Chesney

and "The Three Horsemen." Scrawled in thick black marker across Campbell's CD, burned in preparation for the trip, are the words "Get 'er done," an expression he often uses that soon became a mantra for the film expedition. Stanton, by all accounts, is looking to get 'er done.

Before setting out for Texas there was a certain uneasiness amongst the pair, warranted trepidation given the fact that a black filmmaker from LA doesn't come knocking on their porch doors every day. However, the two were surprised by the warm reception they received throughout the region — people wanting to lend their services, lend use of their land, even play a role in the film.

"Going in, I thought there would be measures of resistance and tension, but what I found was to the contrary," said Stanton. "They actually made us feel at home. I haven't felt that way in awhile. I don't even feel that out here (in LA)."

The eagerness of the locals to participate should only move Stanton closer to his goal of shooting during a three-week stretch this fall, assuming he can secure the necessary investors to fund the project. The more roles manned by the locals will not only feed to the desired realism of the project, but also trim the necessity to caravan a full cast of actors from California.

Of course, those too entrenched in the Hollywood lifestyle need not apply. The filmmaker was plotting out his crew "encampment" last week on a ranch in Oplin, Tex. A shaded, deserted picnic area could very well serve as home for those willing to rough it a bit during the shoot. But, no worries, there'll be a marshy runoff pond in which to cool off from the exhaustive heat, temporary fencing to keep out the rattlers and maybe even a tent in the shade, that is if the nearby steer agree to mosey on.

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STATE



Riverside County wins OK for conservation zone

By The Associated Press

RIVERSIDE — The nation's fastest-growing large county has won approval to protect dozens of threatened and endangered species by locking out developers from a half-million acres of land.

Anti-sprawl groups, environmentalists and builders worked together on the conservation proposal, part of Riverside County's nationally recognized effort to integrate planning for development of roads and homes with protections for delicate wildlife and plant habitat.

Officials gathered this week in Riverside and at the new 9,000-acre Potrero wildlife reserve to mark the approval of state and federal permits moving the project forward. The permits were signed in June.

"This is the largest multispecies plan that's ever been developed," Deputy Interior Secretary Steve Griles said. "It shows you can have both a healthy environment and a growing economy."

A total of 146 plant and animal species

will be protected within the mountains, deserts and urban centers of the western Riverside County conservation zone. They range from the Aguanga kangaroo rat to Ziegler's aster, a plant.

To actually protect the area, public agencies must buy 153,000 acres from willing private sellers. The 25-year acquisition process will cost the county and state more than \$812 million.

"It's a challenging next step," said state Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman. "There's a significant amount of mitigation and cleanup that needs to be done over time."

The plan allows for new homes across sections designated as outside the habitat conservation area. That provision is "kind of a hard bullet for environmentalists to bite," said Peter Kiriakos of the local Sierra Club chapter.

Kiriakos said he participated in tense weekly negotiations with developers as the plan was crafted. He and other environmentalists worry the swaths of uninter-

rupted land aren't large enough for animals to roam.

"It actually ends up with rather a Swiss cheese effect," Kiriakos said. "It doesn't quite line up with all the scientific principles."

Riverside's population grew 15.4 percent from 2000 to 2003, making it the nation's fastest-growing county with more than 1 million residents, according to U.S. Census data released in April.

National observers credit the county for looking ahead to the effect of such booming growth on the region's plentiful wildlife and plants. Development is balanced with conservation under the county

project, which charges developers in certain areas a fee that public agencies can then use to buy sensitive habitat.

"Riverside County's planning process is cutting-edge in the nation," said Don Chen, executive director of Washington, D.C.-based group Smart Growth America. "And it's a very prominent example because the Los Angeles metropolitan area has so many endangered species."

He said only a handful of other large metropolitan areas — including Minneapolis and Portland, Ore. — have made similar links between planning for land use, roads and the environment.

Sun sets on solar plans

BY DON THOMPSON

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — A legislative committee on Thursday defeated a \$1 billion proposal to run half of new California homes on solar energy by 2020, in part because Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has yet to sign on to the proposal advanced by his own Environmental Protection Agency.

The vote came hours before the governor met privately with senior aides to decide how to fulfill an ambitious campaign pledge, and a day after he renewed a promise to help put the state on a par with world leaders like Japan and Germany in offering solar incentives.

"This is really about whether the governor supports it today," said the bill's author, Sen. Kevin Murray, a Democrat from Culver City. "This is just a holding pattern" until Schwarzenegger arrives at his plan.

The Assembly Appropriations Committee defeated the bill after some members withheld their votes, citing Schwarzenegger's neutrality.

Aides to Murray had lobbied to send the bill on to another committee while they waited for Schwarzenegger's decision, and while they seek an alternative to a \$100 million annual tax increase contained in the EPA's draft "Million Solar

Homes Initiative."

They fear lawmakers are unlikely to adopt a new tax in an election year, though the EPA estimates homeowners would more than offset the increase by selling solar electricity back to utilities.

The EPA's draft proposal was built on raising \$100 million for each of 10 years from a new monthly utility bill surcharge of about 25-to-30 cents per household.

An earlier, tougher version of Murray's legislation cleared the Senate despite opposition from the building industry to stiffer requirements for equipping new homes with solar panels. But the California Building Industry Association was more amenable to the EPA amendments Murray attached to his bill this week, which focus on financial incentives instead.

The incentives alone would be enough to get solar panels on 40 percent of new homes by 2010 and 50 percent by 2013, the EPA estimated in a draft proposal obtained by The Associated Press. The incentives would be backed by a requirement that builders include solar on 5 percent of new homes by 2010 and half by 2020.

The proposal would far exceed incentives and requirements in other states. It comes three years after the energy crisis that helped unseat former Gov. Gray Davis last fall, leading to Schwarzenegger's election.

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NATIONAL

N.M. company helps companies check on poor drivers

BY ANDREW WEBB

Associated Press Writer

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — If you think you don't need to tell your boss about that drunken-driving arrest last weekend, think again.

Same with that expired license. Or that no-proof-of-insurance ticket.

If the skyrocketing growth of a New Mexico company is any evidence, employers are increasingly interested in their employees' driving records on and off the job.

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"As much as we want to think that people will self-report, think again," said Linda Atkinson, of the Albuquerque-based DWI Resource Center, which, among other things, counsels businesses on how to reduce drunken driving by employees. "If you haven't checked an employee's driving record, you've been put at risk. These are liabilities that go back to the employer."

Founded in 1999 to help provide secure access to auto title information for New Mexico businesses, SAMBA Holdings Corp. has grown to counting 1,000 customers in more than 40 states with a service that lets employers keep tabs on their employees' driving habits.

Acting as an "infomediary" between often antiquated government systems and business, SAMBA is one of a handful of firms nationwide specializing in packaging complex government data. It converts the information for customers that want to monitor the driving records of their employees without the hassle of dealing with local motor vehicle departments' cumbersome systems.

Its growth has coincided with the groundswell of attention paid to drunken driving in New Mexico, which has consistently hovered at or near the top of the list in the nation for drunken driving accidents and deaths per capita.

Nationwide, drunken driving deaths and injuries cost businesses \$180 billion per year, Atkinson said, citing a study by the Maryland-based Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

"In a state like New Mexico, where we have a lot of small mom-and-pop companies, that's a real critical piece that I think can have huge impacts," she said.

That's where a company like SAMBA comes in.

Using its access to state driving records, the firm offers an easy-to-use, Web-based system with which employers can download monthly reports on their drivers' records everything from drunken driving convictions to soon-to-expire licenses.

"It's had a great deal of effect on saving us time," said Bob Morris, safety manager for Denver Public Schools, which is about to enter its second school year using the FleetWatch system.

The Denver district uses the system to monitor 600 drivers of its 485 district-owned buses. Unlike Albuquerque and other New Mexico schools, Denver does not contract with private busing companies.

Besides getting monthly reports, Denver schools use SAMBA to run instant checks on job applicants.

"I take in probably 2,500 and 5,000 applications for drivers per year," Morris says. "Of those, a good 40 to 60 percent were worthless. But to find that out, we had to go

to the motor vehicle department, pull the record and find out they didn't meet the criteria. Now, through this program, we can pull up anyone that walks in."

The district also previously audited its drivers' records twice a year by pulling records at state offices, an arduous process that still let its drivers get away with infractions for up to six months.

"Now, if someone gets a ticket, DUI or has their license suspended, we know right away," Morris said.

He estimates the system has helped the school system cut its yearly accident costs by more than \$30,000. It pays about \$9,000 annually to monitor its drivers, down from the \$20,000 he says the district formerly shelled out to obtain and analyze state records.

In the wake of high-profile drunken driving incidents, such as the one involving 15-year Bureau of Indian Affairs employee Lloyd Larson in New Mexico that killed two vacationing Nebraska couples in early 2002, more state agencies are requiring continuous monitoring. Larson had several drunken driving convictions and license suspensions by the time of the accident.

"We feel it's a responsibility to make sure we have competent and qualified individuals behind the wheel on a daily basis," said Gilbert Perea, assistant secretary for program support and pupil transportation for the New Mexico Department of Education.

Beginning this school year, the department will contract with SAMBA to monitor all drivers of the state's 2,340 district-owned and -contracted buses.

SAMBA still offers its original product, a Web-based vehicle titling system used by many of the state's auto dealers. The firm, which reported about \$2.7 million in revenues in 2003, according to the Flying 40, employs 35. Chief operating officer and co-founder Greg Miller said the firm has had little trouble finding qualified employees.

SAMBA directly accesses state records in about nine states; the rest it purchases from California-based First Advantage, an employee background check and government information supplier. The firm now offers FleetWatch in 44 states and the District of Columbia. Half of its customers are from outside New Mexico, Miller said.

But making companies aware of employees' driving records goes only so far, says SAMBA marketing director Colleen Shaw. SAMBA's customers have to have rules to follow when an employee gets a traffic infraction.

"We can provide all the statistics," she said. "But if you don't have some sort of policy in place, there's nothing we can do."

Kobe Bryant prosecutors appeal key ruling and seek delay in trial

BY JON SANCHE

Associated Press Writer

DENVER — Pressure is mounting on the judge overseeing Kobe Bryant's sexual assault case, with prosecutors citing courthouse gaffes as a reason for seeking the indefinite delay of the NBA star's criminal trial and the father of his accuser blasting the bench for bias against the prosecution.

Prosecutors requested the delay even as they made moves to appeal a key ruling in the case, arguing to the Colorado Supreme Court that the accuser's sexual activities should not be admitted as evidence. If accepted, the appeal could delay the trial for weeks.

The legal moves came as the father of Bryant's accuser wrote a blistering letter to District Judge Terry Ruckriegle saying his family had "lost trust that we can

obtain a fair trial in your court."

"It has been painfully obvious that you treat the defense as if they can do no wrong and the prosecution and my daughter's attorney as if you have something against them or this case," he wrote in a letter filed with the court on Monday and posted on the Web sites of the Vail Daily and KUSA-TV on Wednesday.

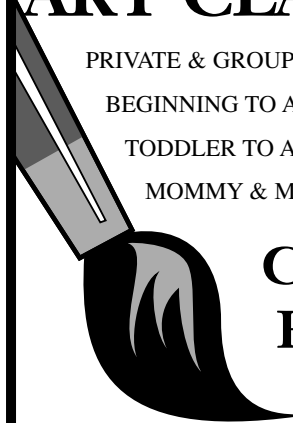
Bryant, 25, has pleaded not guilty to felony sexual assault. He has said he had consensual sex with the woman, then 19, at the Vail-area resort where she worked last summer. Jury selection is scheduled to begin Aug. 27.

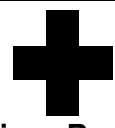
Experts said it was unlikely Ruckriegle will agree to a delay at such late notice. Nearly 1,000 residents have been mailed jury summonses, witnesses have been scheduled to testify, and the judge and attorneys have cleared their calendars for September, said Craig Silverman, a former prosecutor.

"It is an incredible logistical task to reschedule all of this," he said. "What will happen is once the continuance is denied, I would not be surprised if the prosecution throws up its hands and says, 'Well, then, we cannot proceed.'"

The request for delay, the high court appeal and the letter could indicate the victim is planning to abandon the criminal trial, legal experts speculated Wednesday.

"It seems to be part of this well-orchestrated exit strategy from this fatally flawed criminal case," Silverman said.

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NATIONAL

When your car is a mansion, you park carefully

BY RUKMINI CALLIMACHI

Associated Press Writer

NEWPORT, Ore. — Back when they owned a basic camper, Mike and Marina Wolfgram parked it on riverbanks, in rustic campgrounds and on the sides of highways.

That all changed when they bought their first luxury motor home — a 45-foot coach the size of a yacht and at \$1 million just as expensive.

But driving in luxury created an unexpected problem for the couple — parking. So, after buying their coach and outfitting it with a state-of-the-art navigation system, a queen-sized bed, two phone lines and three TVs, the couple went on to invest in three lots at three different luxury RV resorts.

"If you own a Porsche, you don't want to park it in a dump," said independent equity analyst Ruthanne Williams.

At the resort here, the Wolfgrams paid \$150,000 for a lot ringed with flowering shrubs, facing Oregon's crashing coast. In Surprise, Ariz., their lot backs up to an 18-hole championship golf course, while their third property in Indio, Calif., has a private waterfall.

"You get to this age in life and you want a certain level of comfort," explained Mike Wolfgram, 62, who sold his house in Yuba City, Calif., to finance the new life he shares with his wife.

For the last five years, the fastest-growing segment of the RV industry has been the sale of luxury-end rigs — a market that has grown 120-fold since 1991. That year, only 100 RVs costing \$200,000 or more were sold. Last year, the number soared past 12,000.

The demand for luxury rigs like the Wolfgrams' has given birth to a secondary industry — posh RV parks, outfitted with swimming pools, club houses, golf courses and private lagoons.

"It's the Ritz Carlton of RV accommodations," said Ron Petty, president of Outdoor Resorts of America in Bermuda Dunes, Calif., which operates 12 luxury motorcoach resorts in the United States, including the Pacific Shores Motorcoach Resort in Newport.

To the Wolfgrams, comfort is found first on the inside — the opulent interior of their coach resembles a mansion on wheels. But it's also on the outside, in the gated community they share with other owners of luxury rigs.

"It's the difference between a Motel 6 and the Sheraton," said Anne Carlson, 69, of Palm Desert, Calif., a former United Airlines stewardess who parks her Marathon Coach on lots she and her husband own at the Newport resort. "It's like being at the Marriott, but getting to wake up in my own bed."

RVs have been a part of America's fabric since 1914, when the first commercial motor home was created by erecting a canvas tent on a trailer bed. But for decades the image of RV parks has been one of a seedy retreat.

"People think 'trailer trash,' They don't realize how much the technology has changed," said Linda Profaizer,

president and chief executive of the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds in Falls Church, Va.

The modern motorcoach resort is the brainchild of the founding fathers of today's luxury rig, who realized their customers needed a destination for their mansions-on-wheels.

"We needed a place to park our toys," said Bob Lee, founder of Country Coach in Junction City, Ore., and developer of the Desert Shores Motorcoach Resort in Indio, Calif.

In 1998, only 11 percent of high-end motor homes were in excess of 26,000 pounds. By 2001 it was 32.7 percent.

When the coaches began to get longer and wider, he said, finding the proper electrical hookups became a problem — as did a space that was wide enough to fit the rig.

Lee's Indio resort, which is nearly sold-out, features a complex network of waterways.

"It's almost like being on your own private lake," he said.

Bob Schoellhorn, chairman and CEO of Marathon Coach in Coburg, Ore., is now majority owner of Outdoor Resorts of America Inc., which plans to add eight more resorts to its existing 12 within the next five years. Monaco Coach Corp., the second-largest maker of motor homes in the United States, and also based in Coburg, is building two resorts, including one in Las Vegas.

Of the 8,500 privately owned RV parks in the United States, Profaizer estimates that as many as 150 are now offering a resort-like experience. The most luxurious among them have amenities that rival those of the best hotels and admission rules that are stricter than those of many country clubs.

"We don't allow trailers. No fifth wheels. No pop-ups. No campers," said Mike Parks, manager of the Pacific Shores Motorcoach Resort in Newport. "And nothing less than 25 feet. We'll get out and measure it if we have to. It's the opulence to the nth degree," he said.

The market for luxury resorts can only grow, said Schoellhorn at Marathon Coach, given the age and tastes of baby boomers and the reluctance of many to travel overseas.

Overall, the \$12 billion-a-year RV industry is booming. In June, even as oil prices reached a 13-year-high, wholesale RV shipments rose 17.8 percent over June 2003. Richard Curtin, director of consumer surveys at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, said wholesale shipments in 2004 are on track to set a quarter-century record.

Meanwhile, every day 11,000 Americans turn 50 — and their tastes are becoming more expensive, said analyst Craig Kennison with Robert Baird & Co. in Milwaukee, Wis.

"These are couples who have often spent 30 years paying off a mortgage and can now turn that equity into

a lifestyle," he said.

At Monaco Coach, shipments of high-end RVs are up 21.7 percent over last year. At Marathon Coach — which makes the most exclusive motor homes, with prices ranging from \$1 to \$1.7 million — production has doubled since 1995. The coaches they make today include everything, including Jacuzzis and electric fireplaces.

For Mike and Marina Wolfgram, sipping gin on the verandah of their lot facing the Pacific Ocean at one of the most luxurious resorts in the country is the end of an evolution.

"We did campers. We did trailers. We slept in the dirt. We paid our dues," she said.



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NATIONAL

Bush and Kerry trade barbs over the economy

BY NEDRA PICKLER

Associated Press Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. — President Bush traded one refrain for another Friday, saying he is “getting the job done” on the economy and more. Not so, said Sen. John Kerry, criticizing administration tax cuts as insensitive to the middle class as he ended a 22-state tour.

“Don’t for an instant be shy about using the word sensitive,” the Democratic presidential nominee told one questioner, referring to criticism a day earlier from Vice President Dick Cheney.

“If you don’t speak your mind, you shouldn’t be the president of the United States. And I intend to speak my mind,” Kerry said.

In their latest campaign convergence, Bush and Kerry were both in Oregon, a state that has drawn \$5.5 million in television advertising from the two candidates combined thus far even though it has only seven electoral votes. Bush lost the state to Al Gore by 7,000 votes in 2000.

The two men spoke a few miles apart on slightly different schedules. Close enough, though, so that all four local network affiliates briefly aired live, split-screen coverage of the president and his Democratic rival at

dueling appearances.

The president blended local politics with national concerns as he labored to move the state into his re-election column.

“I like to remind people, in the nation’s capital a lot of them can talk a good game. I like to be the person known as somebody getting the job done,” he said. Later, announcing that the administration will support a plan to dredge the Columbia River shipping channel, he said, “It’s getting the job done.”

Aides said the phrase was a replacement for another one hastily jettisoned. “We’ve turned the corner and we’re not turning back” was a staple of the president’s campaign speeches for several days this month, but it drew ridicule from Kerry and skepticism from some voters.

Bush also accused Kerry of backing plans that will require higher taxes. “Here’s a fellow who has made \$2.2 trillion in new promises, and we still have September and October to go,” said the president. “When you start running up those tax rates on individuals, the people who start paying are small businesses.”

Kerry denies the charge. He says his plan would roll

back the Bush-era tax cuts on the top 2 percent of all income earners and use the money for health care, education and other programs.

Standing before enormous shipping cranes, Bush announced the administration will request funds to begin deepening 104 miles of the Columbia River channel from the Pacific Ocean to Portland, Ore., and Vancouver, Wash.

“What I’m telling you is we’re committed to keeping the Columbia River open for navigation and trade, and we’re committed to keeping America’s great ports open for business,” he said.

Bush’s announcement marked an election-year policy exception for his administration — a textbook example of the prerogatives of power. Since he took office, the White House budget office has opposed new projects by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers not required by environmental laws.

Bush’s announcement had implications beyond his own race.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., was present for the announcement and the White House also invited her rival for the Senate seat, Republican Rep. George Nethercutt.

Murray’s office released a letter she wrote Bush earlier this week noting her own efforts to secure funding for the project. “... Unfortunately, you have failed to step forward and support it. For two years running you requested zero dollars for channel deepening ...,” she wrote.

Kerry drew a huge crowd in Portland, last stop on a two-week coast-to-coast, post-convention tour of 22 states by bus, train, helicopter, plane and ferry. The four-term Massachusetts Democrat seized on a report by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office that showed Bush’s tax cuts since 2001 have shifted more of the tax burden from the nation’s rich to middle-class families.

“John Edwards and I know that we can restore fundamental fairness to America,” he said.

The subject of sensitivity arose when Kerry was told by one person in his audience that most people in prison are black or Hispanic. “How do we change that figure to make this country more sensitive — I don’t want to use the word sensitive because Bush has screwed that word up — but more aware of the problem?” he was asked.

“Don’t for an instant be shy about using the word sensitive,” Kerry said.

“I don’t think it’s very sensitive to have a vice president who has secret meetings with the polluters who write the laws. And I don’t think it’s very sensitive to expect the wealthy to shift the tax burden to the average American.”

On Thursday, Cheney quoted Kerry as saying he would wage a “more sensitive” war on terror, and mocked him for it.

Edwards, campaigning in Michigan, faulted Cheney for campaign distortion.

“He’s talking about a man who still carries shrapnel in his body. He’s talking about a man who spilled his blood for the United States of America,” said the North Carolina senator.

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NATIONAL



Battle for the Hispanic vote heats up in West

BY DEBORAH BAKER

Associated Press Writer

SANTA FE, N.M. — It's lunchtime outside a convenience store, on the front lines of the war for the Hispanic vote.

Clipboard in hand, Yolanda Maez assesses the steady stream of customers intent on filling their gas tanks and their stomachs.

"Excuse me, are you registered to vote?" Maez asks a dark-haired young woman teetering toward the door in high-heeled sandals.

Yes, the woman replies, and then laughs: "I did it outside the grocery store, actually."

Maez, a 26-year-old single mother and a former waitress, spends upwards of 40 hours a week at stores, cafes, hamburger stands, skateboard parks, fairs, — wherever people gather — mining the crowd as a paid worker for Moving America Forward, the political committee founded by Democratic Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico.

With polls pointing to a tight race between Republican President Bush and Democrat John Kerry, the votes of Hispanics — the fastest-growing minority group in the nation — are considered crucial by both parties.

That's particularly true in the so-called battleground states in the West such as New Mexico, where Democrat Al Gore defeated Bush four years ago by just 366 votes.

Moving America Forward's registration effort, aimed at shoring up the Democratic vote, is targeting New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada and Florida — the same states in which the Bush campaign is advertising in Spanish.

The committee expects to register about 150,000 new voters by the Nov. 2 general election and Maez estimates she's already contributed 300 of those. Today is slow, however: Lots of people already registered, lots of noncitizens who can't, a handful of tourists from out of state, a few people who are adamantly not interested.

"A lot of people complain about what's going on in the world, yet they don't vote," says Maez, her tone conveying her puzzlement.

Hispanics account for nearly 39 percent of the voting-age population in New Mexico, 21 percent in Arizona, nearly 17 percent in Nevada, 16 percent in Florida, and nearly 15 percent in Colorado, according to U.S. Census figures from 2000.

Moving America Forward — which has spent more than \$1 million on the effort — is focusing on places where the number of Hispanic citizens of voting age is burgeoning, but registration hasn't kept up.

That includes southern Miami, the Denver metropolitan area, Henderson and North Las Vegas in Nevada — two of the fastest-growing communities in the country — and New Mexico's three urban areas, Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Santa Fe. In Arizona, the project is signing up voters in Phoenix and Tucson, those cities' suburbs, and in some border areas.

Some 86,000 new voters have been registered, according to Daniel Sena, the committee's national field director. While most of the new voters in New Mexico, Colorado and Florida have registered as Democrats, roughly half in Arizona and Nevada have registered without selecting a party, Sena said.

Democrats have good reason to want to register Hispanics: A recent poll by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation showed Kerry with a 2-to-1 lead over Bush among Hispanic voters.

Republicans, however, are not ceding any ground, contending that the president's positions are more in line with those of Hispanic voters than Kerry's — and they just need to get that message across.

"We're going after every single Hispanic voter," said Danny Diaz, a spokesman for the Bush-Cheney campaign, which has lined up about 7,000 volunteers in the state.

The volunteer-based "Viva Bush" grassroots effort has been organizing neighborhood meetings, voter registration drives, phone banks and door-to-door visits.

"It's reaching out to folks on a personal level and developing those relationships. ... Our effort is built upon neighbors and communities," Diaz said.

Voters like eye contact, handshakes and personal stories, said Vickie Perea of Albuquerque, a former city councilor and Democrat-turned-Republican who's on the campaign's national Hispanic leadership team.

"Obviously television and radio reaches more people, and we're not going to stop that. It's just that those of us who have a story to tell need to get out into the various communities," she said.

Art Ortiz, a Republican who is organizing the "Viva Bush" effort in heavily Democratic Taos County, says he is talking to his Hispanic friends about the values they share with the GOP.

Hispanics in his area aren't necessarily swayed by TV or radio advertising, he said.

"But a call from a neighbor or a friend or a relative who can try to persuade them with logical arguments I think goes a long way," he said.

Ensuring that newly registered voters actually get to the polls is a challenge, especially when they're likely to be juggling multiple jobs while trying to manage child care.

Promoting absentee voting by mail is one answer, and many newly registered voters opt to sign absentee ballot requests at the same time.

"The barrier of having to vote on one given day in a 12-hour period is completely eliminated," said Moving America Forward's Sena.

The project follows up with phone calls to be sure that new voters got their mail-in ballots and know what to do with them. "The last thing you want to do is throw the things out with the pizza coupons," Sena said.

And starting as long as two months before the election, Moving America Forward will make repeated calls to voters, making sure they know when and where to cast their ballots.

When voters get so fed up with the all the attention they threaten not to vote at all, "That's when I know our program's working," Sena said.

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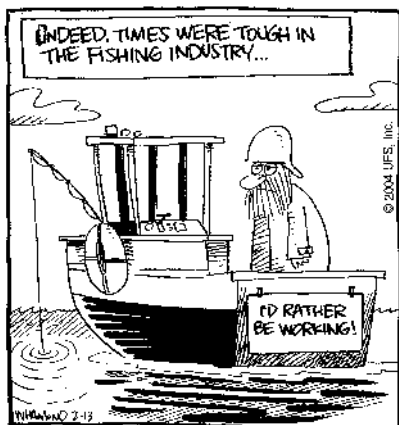
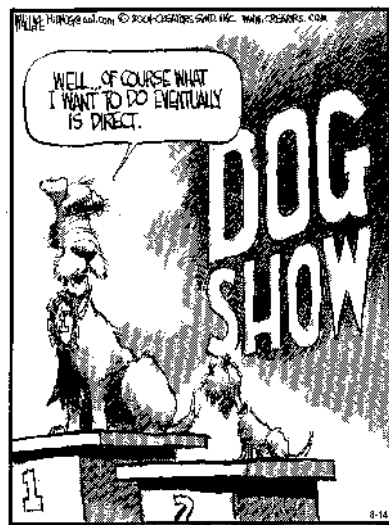
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- 26 Too
27 Talk and talk about
28 Mean
29 Becomes old
30 Bowling unit
34 Wagon part
36 Homer's dad
37 Sought a seat

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8-14

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Net gain: Venus Williams has designs on Athens

By The Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — Venus Williams is giving a new meaning to the term "overhead."

The defending Olympic singles tennis champion and budding fashion designer served up a new hat she created for McDonald's employees to wear while serving food during the Athens Games.

The oversized, red-twill newsboy cap features abstract designs in black representing various Olympic sports. Each one bears Williams' signature on the inside label.

"I guess it's my first big step, huh? I'm making a name for myself!" she told The Associated Press on Friday. "My first designs were more like a baseball cap, more like what you see in the McDonald's stores. But then they came back to me and said no, we want you to do something more creative."

Creativity has been the trademark for Williams and her sister Serena when it comes to their tennis attire. They are nothing short of fashion icons with their sexy, skin-baring styles and meticulously coordinated accessories.

Serena was to have appeared in Athens alongside Venus but pulled out of the Olympics this week with a knee injury and stayed in the United States.

While 22-year-old Serena already has launched her own clothing line — called Aneres, which is Serena spelled backward — Venus, 24, is studying fashion design at the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale in Florida.

Venus recognizes that with rappers, actors and athletes getting into the act, having a fashion label is "the hot thing right now — but I want to really be credible and I want to finish my education. I actually started school before it became trendy to have a fashion line and I want to do it the right way."

WILMINGTON, N.C. — A real estate agent misrepresented the condition of a waterfront home purchased

four years ago by "Dawson's Creek" star James Van Der Beek, a jury has ruled.

The New Hanover County Superior Court jury ruled Thursday that real estate agent Gwen Page misrepresented the condition of home, which Van Der Beek purchased in February 2000. Jurors awarded Van Der Beek \$123,000, \$20,000 more than he had sought.

Van Der Beek, 27, shook each juror's hand as they left the courtroom. He and his wife, Heather, embraced after the verdict.

"I'm just pleased with the verdict and I thank the jury for all their time and hard work," he said. "Even under the circumstances, it's really terrific to be back. It just reminds me how much I really miss the area."

"Dawson's Creek," which ran from 1998-2003, was taped in Wilmington.

Van Der Beek sold the house last December.

He asked for \$103,000 in damages, including nearly \$83,000 in repair bills for the water-damaged home and \$20,000 to cover commission fees paid to Page and her co-defendant, Intracoastal Realty.

Page left the courtroom in tears. Her lawyer, Scott Lewis, had no comment.

The jury found that Page committed fraud and made negligent representations to Van Der Beek in the sale of the home for \$826,000.

Several area real estate agents testified that Page acted properly in her handling of the sale.

RICHMOND, Va. — Richmond lawyer Joseph W. Kaestner is nothing if not persistent. And patient.

He filed a lawsuit in October 1997 in Richmond Circuit Court against Calvin Broadus, better known as rapper Snoop Dogg. Kaestner is seeking \$1 million in damages for trauma and humiliation for his client, music promoter Patricia Ann Richardson.

The lawsuit alleges that Snoop tricked Richardson into picking up three FedEx packages at a Petersburg motel in January 1997.

Richardson contends she didn't know 7 pounds of marijuana were in the packages until police stopped her at Club Flava, a Petersburg establishment where she was promoting one of Snoop's concerts.

No one was arrested, but Richardson was searched, handcuffed and questioned at a Petersburg police station, according to the lawsuit.

"Subsequently, she was subpoenaed and caused to appear before various investigating bodies," the lawsuit said.

Snoop lives in California and appears infrequently in Virginia. Kaestner couldn't serve the state court lawsuit on him.

The lawyer took steps that he believes have kept the case alive for almost seven years, and he arranged for the Virginia Beach Sheriff's Department to serve the lawsuit on Snoop when he appeared for a concert in that city Wednesday night.

The rapper has 20 days to file a formal response.

CHICAGO — Oprah Winfrey was expected to make an appearance at the Cook County Criminal Court — for jury duty.

A spokeswoman for the talk-show host confirmed Friday that Winfrey would report Monday.

She is scheduled to appear along with some 300 other prospective jurors, Cook County sheriff's office spokeswoman Sally Daly said Thursday.

Winfrey will not receive special treatment once she's inside the courtroom but will be allowed to use an alternate entrance, Daly said.

"Obviously, due to her popularity and her status, there is the potential — if she would come in the front public way — to cause a commotion, confusion or a possible security issue," the spokeswoman said.

If Winfrey isn't picked for a jury by the end of the day, she'll still receive a \$17.20 check from the court, said jury supervisor Allen Klein.

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