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Santa Monica Daily Press

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ In July, as teams of poverty-stricken soccer players from around the world showed up in Scotland for the "Homeless World Cup," immigration officials denied entry to players from Kenya, Zambia, Burundi, Cameroon and Nigeria because they lacked funds for lodging and meals during the tournament.

■ In March, when Knoxville, Tenn., prosecutors ordered 582 parents of chronically truant students to a meeting to advise them of their responsibility to get their kids to school, 241 failed to show up.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 231st day of 2005.
There are 134 days left in the year.

Fifty years ago, on Aug. 19, 1955, severe flooding in the northeastern U.S. claimed some 200 lives.

In 1942, about 6,000 Canadian and British soldiers launched a disastrous raid against the Germans at Dieppe, France, suffering about 50-percent casualties.

In 1960, a tribunal in Moscow convicted American U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers of espionage.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Don't compromise yourself.
You are all you've got."

JANIS JOPLIN
AMERICAN ROCK SINGER (1943-1970)

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Accused killer claims he acted in self-defense

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

AIRPORT COURTHOUSE — The bar owner who shot to death an angry customer after he tried to kill him 20 years ago told jurors on Thursday he acted in self-defense.

A jury heard testimony from Antonio Pedraza, the man accused of murdering Javier Garcia, 25, on June 21, 1984. Garcia was shot in front of the Jalisco Cafe, a now-defunct bar once located at 1811 Olympic Blvd.

Pedraza, 58, maintains he acted in self-defense. If convicted, he faces 16 years to life in prison.

Thursday marked the first time

Pedraza has testified in the five-day trial. The jury is expected to begin deliberating today.

The fatal shooting occurred late at night, after an intoxicated Garcia was kicked out of the bar for throwing beer bottles on the floor, witnesses and police said. Pedraza demanded that Garcia leave. Garcia waited outside the bar until Pedraza confronted him from the front side of the building. A shoot-out subsequently occurred and Garcia was killed.

Garcia suffered a total of 14 gunshot wounds from 11 bullets — with some of the gunshots entering and exiting multiple parts of his body, police said.

Pedraza was never questioned

Access granted: City working with SMC

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

SMC — A parking and traffic crisis that's been simmering all

summer for Santa Monica College will likely be paved out in time for classes this fall.

Officials from City Hall, SMC and West LA met last week to

Getting sloshed



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

A kite-surfer attacks the incoming waters along the Santa Monica Beach, hoping to catch some air over the Pacific swell.

by police at the time of the shooting. He fled the scene, and abandoned his bar, wife and three kids. He was on the lam for 19 years before being arrested in Los Angeles in July of 2003 on drug charges. He allegedly sold narcotics out of a bar parking lot

where he worked, according to police.

Shortly after the shooting, police found Pedraza's tan Ford pick-up truck abandoned in Santa Monica.

See MURDER TRIAL, page 7

STATE

Debt be damned: Californians taking risks on real estate

BY GILLIAN FLACCUS

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Soaring home prices in California haven't deterred first-time buyers from entering the market in record numbers — and many of them are going to extraordinary lengths to dive in, according to a study released Thursday.

Fueled by the promise of a market that seems to only go up, Californians are increasingly affording the unaffordable by sinking more than half their incomes into mortgage payments, taking on enormous debt, forgoing downpayments and signing interest-only or adjustable-rate mortgages, according to the study by the Public Policy Institute of California.

Although California still lags behind most states in terms of home ownership, the buying frenzy has lifted it to its highest

See DEBT BE DAMNED, page 7

Square route of 3



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Senior graphic art students — (from left to right) Diana Assil, Guillermo Gutierrez and Jason Garrison — from the Art Institute Los Angeles, California, dress as pixels and run along the Santa Monica Beach on Thursday as part of their master class project.

begin addressing messy traffic and parking issues related to the airport shuttle lot and SMC's nearby Bundy satellite campus. As a result of the meeting, SMC will begin using Beach Parking Lot No. 5 as a temporary solution for parking and shuttle service to and from SMC's main campus at 1900 Pico Blvd. Meanwhile, City Hall continues to restrict SMC students from having vehicular access to the Bundy campus.

Both West LA and City Hall have a history of concerns with the way SMC manages its growth. Likewise, the meeting was considered by many a first of its kind, a summit in which all the major players were represented to begin hashing out their issues.

City Hall this summer prevented vehicular access onto the Bundy campus site from Santa Monica entry and exit points, in response to neighborhood complaints related to the college's expansion plans. City officials have said that restriction will be indefinite unless other agreements

See BUNDY CAMPUS, page 6

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Slow your pace, Aries

Santa Monica Daily Press

JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS The stars show the kind of day you'll have:
 ★★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★★★★-Average ★★★★★-So-so ★★★★★-Difficult



ARIES (March 21-April 19)
 ★★★★★ You might want to calm down some, as today's Full Moon adds to the liveliness of your interactions and projects. Friends and loved ones test their limits. You actually might want to retreat into your office or private space by the afternoon. Tonight: Slow your pace.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
 ★★★★★ Clear your desk or your list of what must be done quickly. Your social life will suddenly demand your attention. Others simply want to be with you. Network or gather with friends. You are such the social butterfly! Tonight: Where the action is.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
 ★★★★★ Get your calls, research and thinking done in the morning. Life becomes hectic this afternoon with the Full Moon. Hold on tight as others demand your attention. You could feel pulled like a piece of taffy. Take charge and prioritize. Responsibilities demand your attention. Tonight: Out on the town.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)
 ★★★★★ Others might try to throw their weight around in a project. Don't fight the inevitable. Let others do their thing. A flurry of calls and requests marks your afternoon. You won't be lonely at all. Sort through your many invitations. Tonight: Flex with swift changes.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
 ★★★★★ Others will push and pull to get their way. You, as the gracious Lion, need to lie back. You might think that a money request is a bit outrageous, and you are right. Stall answering for now — that might be the wise action. Others want to claim their power. Tonight: Let someone else make the plans.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
 ★★★★★ Get as much done as you can this morning, even if you feel a bit off or rushed. You will find that others demand a lot from you from the afternoon on. Be positive. You get to pick and choose between invitations and people. Tonight: Let others have control.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
 ★★★★★ You might have difficulty settling in this morning. As a result, many of you will take off early and enjoy living life. Nevertheless, an errand or project demands your attention. You might need to isolate yourself. Tonight: Just don't make anything harder than need be.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
 ★★★★★ Handle a domestic situation as best as you can. By midafternoon, you are already in weekend mode. Holding back your playfulness and mischievous grin might be close to impossible. Tonight: Put on your dancing shoes.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
 ★★★★★ You cannot be everywhere all the time, which becomes quite clear today. Return calls and clean up your desk this morning before life takes on the hectic Full Moon tone. You might want to retreat into your private world this afternoon. Tonight: Cozy at home.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
 ★★★★★ You might revamp your budget or how you view a purchase. As a result, you might actively go out and seek others or a specific item. Don't be whimsical with this purchase. Do be whimsical with people. Tonight: Gather with your friends.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
 ★★★★★ A friend might reverse his or her plans or break a promise. Be easy with this person. You could do the same with him or her. A tendency to overindulge or spend too much could mark your activities. Tonight: Your treat.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
 ★★★★★ You have a low level of energy in the morning, but that will not last for long. Suddenly, you sparkle and are the lead player. Take advantage of this change and energize key projects or revitalize a relationship. Tonight: Smile, and the world smiles with you.



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PUBLISHER Ross Furukawa ross@smdp.com EDITOR Carolyn Sackariason editor@smdp.com STAFF WRITER Ryan Hyatt ryanh@smdp.com SANTA MONICA PARENTING Nina Furukawa nina@smdp.com ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER Robbie P. Piubeni rob@smdp.com STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER Fabian Lewkowicz	ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Rob Schwenker schwenker@smdp.com ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Stewart O'Dell stewarto@smdp.com TRAFFIC MANAGER Connie Sommerville connies@smdp.com PRODUCTION MANAGER Alejandro Cesar Cantarero II alex@smdp.com NIGHT EDITOR Lori Luechtefeld lori@smdp.com	NIGHT EDITOR Michael Tittinger ...somechum@smdp.com CLASSIFIEDS SALES MANAGER Annie Kotok anniek@smdp.com CIRCULATION Keith Wyatt CIRCULATION Glenn Bolan SPECIAL PROJECTS Dave Danforth dave@smdp.com MASCOT Maya Furukawa maya@smdp.com
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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Hospital seeks volunteers

By Daily Press staff

The Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center is looking for some adults and teens who can spend at least four hours per week helping volunteering at the medical center. Volunteers are needed in virtually all areas of the 280-bed medical center. Available departments include the admissions office, emergency center, gift shop, information desk, surgery waiting area and nursing units. The medical center also is recruiting volunteers to serve in special roles as patient liaisons. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, call volunteer services manager Kris Morneau at (310) 319-4614.

Artists to discuss works at local gallery

By Daily Press staff

In conjunction with the exhibition “Compulsive Repetition: (Re) reading the Object in Space,” on view from July 23 through Sept. 30, the 18th Street Arts Center will present a talk by the curator and the artists. Alma Ruiz, associate curator at MOCA, will lead the exhibition dedicated to new and recent works of Sandra Tucci and Joe Davidson. Both artists also will discuss their work and answer questions, facilitating an informal discussion with artists and curators in the exhibition gallery of the 18th Street Arts Center. The event will be held on Aug. 25 at 7:30 p.m. The event is a continuation of 18th Street’s “Art Talks,” which bring together local and international artists with the general public to discuss their works and projects. In 2005, public artist Jon Tarry of Australia, photographer Jaakko Heikkila of Finland, art administrator Alexandra Cohen and filmmaker Sandy Amerio of France, have shared their point of view and experiences with audiences. Founded in 1988, 18th Street Arts Center is Southern California’s oldest and largest international art center of its kind, a nonprofit residential arts center in Santa Monica. The event is free and attendance is limited. For more information and reservations, contact Michael Sakamoto at (310) 453-3711 or office@18thstreet.org.

Activist group to hold public gathering

By Daily Press staff

The Activist Support Circle monthly public gathering will take place on Wednesday, Aug. 31, and will include an opening message by singer-songwriter and peace activist Stephen Longfellow Fiske. The gathering will take place at the Friends Meeting Hall, located at 1440 Harvard St. in Santa Monica. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the gathering begins at 7 p.m. The Activist Support Circle is a support group for progressive activists. Organizers say the purpose of the monthly gatherings are to guard against activist-related burnout, share activist-related frustrations, and learn helpful coping skills and ideas from other activists. The gatherings are free and there is free parking on-site. For further information, call the Activist Support Circle at (310) 399-1000.



SURF REPORT

The tide will be somewhat of an issue this weekend from a tidal swing due to a Full Moon hitting on Friday. This will swing early AM lows near the negative zone, and highs above 5 feet. Look for a noticeable variance in wave size during the extreme low and high tidal hours with better size during the mid tide hours. On Friday, expect the SW swell to back off into the waist- to chest-high zone.

Today the water is:

69°

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LOW TIDES

HIGH TIDES

	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
MONDAY	1:07	0.2	11:37	3.0	8:10	3.5	6:13	6.0
TUESDAY	1:15	-0.5	12:50	2.8	8:42	3.8	7:10	6.6
WEDNESDAY	2:37	-1.0	1:48	2.4	9:13	4.2	8:03	7.0
THURSDAY	3:17	-1.3	2:39	1.9	9:45	4.5	8:52	7.2
FRIDAY	3:55	-1.3	3:29	1.5	10:18	4.8	9:39	7.1

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The Q Line

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The Santa Monica Police Department informed the public last week that three suspicious men had been sighted videotaping specific areas of the Santa Monica Pier, including access roads and the SMPD’s substation. The men, all of Middle Eastern descent, recently were reported for similar activities in other SoCal communities.

Based on this suspected terrorist activity, officials are determining how to pay for \$2 million in security upgrades throughout Santa Monica, including the addition of a security camera system throughout the downtown area. So this week, Q-Line wants to know, “Are you in favor of beefing up security in Santa Monica? If so, how should it be funded?”

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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Putting a muzzle on dog activists

Editor:

Dog activists ask ours and other communities to just “try” an unfenced, unleashed free-roaming dog beach. They ask us to try this potentially disastrous experiment based on us believing facts that purports to be true, but upon closer inspection, are highly dubious. They ask us to believe that all current dog beaches are clean, safe, supported wholly by the community and their representatives, are environmentally sound, are not a threat to native wildlife and are welcomed by everyone.

The dog activists make assumptions not based on scientific fact but hearsay, half-truths and false statistics, which are either well-intentioned delusions or selfish manipulations to further the dog activists’ agenda at the expense and welfare of the entire community.

A few points:

■ Dog defecation is going to happen on the beach. No matter how much the “volunteers” claim they will keep fecal and urine out of the sand everyone knows this is an impossible task. This tainted and soiled sand will make its way into the ocean or onto someone’s body either through swimming or picked up or swallowed particularly by a child.

■ The potential for dog bites is huge, particularly in the areas proposed in Santa Monica and El Segundo. The recent escalation of dog maulings in Los Angeles with a child recently being killed by an unleashed household dog that everyone said was “very friendly,” illustrates the unpredictable nature of unleashed dogs no matter their supervision.

■ AB 359 was effectively defeated this year in the California State Senate after representatives led by State Sen. Sheila Kuehl, actually saw what this measure would do and its effect on the environment (http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/bill/_asm/ab_03510400/ab_359_cfa_20050628_162811_sen_comm.html).

■ Dog activists cite the full support of the Los Angeles City Council of AB 359 but fail to mention not one of the council members could have seen the actual area proposed — a one-mile stretch of beach where an aquatic youth center is to be built — as they listed it as Playa del Rey not El Segundo.

■ Dog volunteers cannot keep away the bad apples. We can just see Georgia Umamo, the president of Unleash the Beach, and other dog activists, with their whistles and neon vests shooing away gang members, out-of-town rottweiler and pit bull owners and irresponsible dog poopers from the sand and water — then calling for help from the lifeguards or police.

■ A recent article in the outdoor section of the LA Times (www.latimes.com/travel/outdoors) with respect to unleashed dogs becoming a huge problem on trails and in our parks, illustrates the predatory nature of even the nicest canine, especially to threatened species such as the endangered Snowy Plover, which makes its nests in the proposed dog beach areas.

■ It is every California citizen’s constitutional right to enjoy safe and free open access to any public beach in this state? We do not want “volunteers” to tell us not to swim or recreate along with our children through the dog beach zone for fear of our health and safety.

For the above reasons and many others, we cannot let our beaches become dangerous experiments for an elite group. Please join LA County Beaches and Harbors, Department of Parks and Recreation, the Surfrider Foundation, the Audubon Society, Heal the Bay, Natural Resources Defense Council, Defenders of Wildlife and thousands of environmentalists, beach goers and responsible dog owners, and urge your representatives to oppose any legislation that would explore an unleashed, unfenced, free-roaming dog beach along the Santa Monica Bay zone.

Ben Jacobs

Save the Sand Committee, Santa Monica

Let’s pay for peace

Editor:

A recent article about the lack of funds for needed police services in Compton (LA Times, Aug. 5) raises a fundamental question: Why is there no money to address the causes and symptoms of violence in Compton and elsewhere, while we have huge funds to support a gargantuan U.S. war machine? Its current estimated cost is \$1 trillion: a Pentagon budget of \$500 billion, the war against Iraq: \$300 billion and rising, and the “War on Terror,” moving toward \$200 billion and beyond.

Based on population percentages, California’s share of that \$1 trillion is about \$121 billion. LA’s is \$12 billion and Santa Monica’s is \$288 million — vast sums that should be used for vital social concerns, e.g., crime and public safety, health care, education, housing and homelessness, the environment and transportation.

The vast sucking sound heard in Compton, Santa Monica and the state is the whoosh of our taxes leaving to feed a Pentagon militarism that serves to undermine efforts to make all our cities safe and financially sound. We must demand that our taxes support peace, justice and an end to violence — not a war system that enriches a few major corporations while spreading terror abroad and misery at home.

John Marciano
Santa Monica

Building blase leaves little to imagination



OUR TOWN

BY TED WINTERER

In my last column, I railed on City Hall at how often it issues a Request for Proposals (RFP) from design-build teams when it seeks plans to construct new public buildings. This approach may work for the Marines’ Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, but it too frequently fails to yield the best architecture in civic structures.

Consider the selection of a design-build team for the restoration of the city-owned property at 415 Pacific Coast Highway, the site of the old Sand and Sea Beach club. A RFP was published on two dates in the LA Times and sent to more than 90 design, engineering and construction firms chosen by city staff. Unless you scoured the Times or were on the city’s preferred list, you wouldn’t have known about this gig. In fact, a distinguished local architect on our Architectural Review Board told me he wasn’t aware of the RFP until it was too late.

Out of this less-than-extensive outreach to the design community, the city received three qualified bids. Three out of 90. That’s a pretty lame batting average, about what Rafael Palmeiro’s going to hit now that he’s off the juice.

A committee made up of staff from the Annenberg Foundation, providers of grant money for the rehab, and from the city’s environmental and public works management, and community and cultural services — hardly a jury of design peers — selected the winning bid. Their choice was quickly rubber stamped by the City Council, with only Bobby Shriver objecting to the meager options.

Fortunately, the architect on the chosen team is Fred Fisher and Partners, an accomplished local firm, so we may get lucky: this grievously defective means for picking a designer may yet yield a soul-stirring structure. But for such a high-profile project shouldn’t we have had a choice of one of many top notch architects?

By way of contrast, let’s look at how the Arts Commission’s procedures strive to single out community artists who will “produce work of the highest quality and public benefit.” Selection panels are formed of “individuals who have a background or professional expertise in the arts.” Panelists are paid for their work and, to provide a diversity of tastes in a subjective process, can serve only once every two years. Likewise, artists who have been commissioned within three

years are ineligible for new projects to ensure “a diverse collection that is representative of the wealth of aesthetic and cultural options.” It’s a sensible approach, one ignored by City Hall when the same people chose the same firm for the Civic Center Plan and the downtown design guidelines, and the same architect for the new library and Civic Center garage.

Finally, the Arts Commission acknowledges that RFPs are “not an appropriate selection process for projects where a design team approach is desired. Further, it is important to note that few established artists will respond to an open RFP.” Instead, a competition among artists “is particularly appropriate in the case of complex projects where a limited number of artists may be capable of successfully competing.”

Now we can argue until we’re blue in the face about whether or not architecture is art, but certainly the two have one thing in common: We’ve got to look at the results for the next 30 years or more. Wouldn’t it make sense to choose public architects in the same way we select public artists: a competition judged by professional colleagues?

How would such a competition ideally work? It would be internationally publicized in the right places, such as professional newsletters and periodicals. It would be open to all comers rather than by discretionary invitation. It would be a blind competition, with design schemes reviewed without names attached, to eliminate any favoritism. And it would be judged by a panel of prestigious practicing architects and academics, compensated appropriately for their time.

Yes, these competitions might cost more than the RFP process, but the public benefits of great design are worth the expense. Sadly, however, City Hall is in the midst of a massive makeover of its properties and most of the opportunities for transcendent public architecture have been missed.

All that’s left is the housing development called “The Village” in the Civic Center, where once again the RFP approach has narrowed the choices down to three teams, only one of which is composed of architects of any repute.

Perhaps it’s not too late to start over with the Village and try an international competition to seek the best possible design. I might not mourn the old RAND building so much if I thought that just once City Hall could build something great in aged building’s place.

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



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LOCAL



CRIME WATCH

By Daily Press staff

Say it, don't spray it

At 11:34 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 10, the Santa Monica police responded to the 1300 block of Montana Avenue regarding suspicious activities. When officers arrived at the scene, they noticed two male juveniles hiding in the alley. One of them was climbing a ladder leading to the roof of the building, and the other was hiding in some bushes. Officers eventually detained the two suspects. Upon further investigation, it was determined the suspects were both on the roof spray-painting graffiti. Some of the graffiti was painted on the wall and was visible from the street. Shermetis Noel, 18, of Santa Monica and Mark Thomas Plachowski, 18, were arrested for felony vandalism. Bail was set at \$20,000.

At 6:45 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 11, the Santa Monica police responded to the 1700 block of Pico Boulevard regarding suspicious circumstances. When officers arrived at the scene, they spoke to the reporting party, who reported that her boyfriend — still inside the apartment — was assaulting her. Robert Scott Holbert, 33, of Santa Monica, was placed under arrest for domestic violence and parole violation. No bail was set.

At 10:17 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 10, the Santa Monica police responded to the 2300 block of Ocean Park Boulevard regarding two subjects fighting. When officers arrived at the scene, they discovered that a male pinned a female against the garage door as she was trying to get away. Officers determined the suspect had kicked the victim in the upper body and rib area. At approximately 1:15 p.m., George Jones, Jr., 59, of Los Angeles, was identified and arrested for assault with a deadly weapon. Bail was set at \$30,000.

At 1:05 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 10, the Santa Monica police responded to the 200 block of Idaho Avenue regarding suspicious activity. When officers arrived at the scene, they spoke to the reporting party who said she saw two subjects wearing dark clothing spray-painting the side of the wall. The two suspects were stopped in the 2009 block of Idaho Avenue. Alfonzo Robert Bell, 22, and Christopher Michael Bell, 24, were booked for felony vandalism. Bail was set at \$20,000.

At 6:17 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 8, the Santa Monica police responded to 700 Broadway regarding a theft investigation. When officers arrived to the scene, they spoke to the employee, who said the suspect entered a store and removed the sandwich from the deli case and fled. Once outside, the suspect was confronted by the employee and in an attempt to arrest him he pushed the employee and left on foot. The suspect was stopped in the 1400 block of Third Street and a field show up was conducted. Michael de Alvarado, 26, transient, was booked for strong-arm robbery. Bail was set at \$50,750.

This police report was prepared by Daily Press staff writer Ryan Hyatt.



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TO: ALL PERSONS WHO WORKED IN THE MOTION PICTURE AND/OR BROADCASTING INDUSTRIES, INCLUDING COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING, BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 30, 1996 AND THE PRESENT;

and/or
ALL PERSONS WHO WORKED FOR HOUSE OF BLUES, MCA, INC., THE SHUBERT ORGANIZATION, INC., AND/OR ANY OF THESE COMPANIES' AFFILIATES BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 30, 1996 AND THE PRESENT;

and/or
ALL PERSONS WHO RECEIVED PAYROLL CHECKS ISSUED BY ONE OR MORE COMPANIES WHO SPECIALIZE IN PROVIDING PAYROLL CHECKS IN THE MOTION PICTURE AND BROADCASTING INDUSTRIES.

Your rights may be affected by a proposed settlement in a class action case pending in Los Angeles County Superior Court, State of California, Case No. BC 237787.

The Court has tentatively approved a proposed settlement in a class action lawsuit that alleges that many persons who worked in the motion picture and/or broadcasting industries and/or who worked for and/or received payroll checks from the companies described above (a) did not receive timely payments following their last day worked, (b) did not receive check stubs with complete information, and/or (c) did not receive overtime under certain circumstances. The settling defendants deny all liability. The Court has not yet ruled, one way or the other, on the merits of the claims.

The settlement makes available \$5,348,000 in cash (plus non-monetary benefits). If you want to be excluded from the settlement, you must send a letter to the Claims Administrator at P.O. Box 2995, Portland, OR 97228-2995 postmarked on or before October 15, 2005. The last day to file and serve with the Court listed below any comments in support of or in opposition to the settlement is also October 15, 2005. If you want to make objections, you must comply with the procedure set forth in the long form notice. To obtain a copy, or to obtain more information regarding the settlement, you may log on to www.motionpicturesettlement.com, or submit the request for information form. Class counsel will seek an award of up to \$2,221,800 in attorneys' fees and up to \$275,000 in costs from the settlement funds. This notice is a summary only. **To be eligible for the potential benefits under the settlement, you must submit a claim (see instructions in the box to the right) to the Claims Administrator, P.O. Box 2995, Portland, OR 97228-2995 by no later than October 15, 2005.** A hearing to consider the fairness of the settlement will be held on November 18, 2005, at 9:00 a.m. in Department 311 of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, located at 600 S. Commonwealth Avenue, Los Angeles, California, 90005. **Please do not contact the Court for information.**

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
(This is not an Opt-Out Request)

☐ I would like to have more detailed information about the proposed settlement and a claim form mailed to:

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PANINI GARDEN-This authentic European eatery serves traditional Italian and French style food. Panin style sandwiches grilled on a cast-iron panini grill that seals all the savory flavors inside a bread envelope of your choice, from very soft and thin like the tramezzini, soft and crispy for the al forno and crusty for the rustico. A large selection of meats and cheeses, organic produce, fresh and healthy combinations of menu items to enjoy everyday have made PANINI GARDEN the local's favorite. In addition, delicious crepes are served all day, for breakfast or just dessert, it is always a treat. The setting is quiet in the lavender garden with the bubbling fountain. Hours: 8am-9pm Sunday-Thursday, 8am-10:30pm Friday and Saturday. 2715 Main Street, Santa Monica. (310) 399-9939.

THE GALLEY-Rediscover Service - Rediscover The Galley. Visit Captain Ron at what Zagat Guide refers to as the place to go for "marvelous" steaks and "stiff drinks". NOW OPEN FOR LUNCH ON THE WEEKENDS AT NOON featuring 1/4 lb. Kosher hot dogs with fries served at the bar for \$2.00 until July 31st. GREAT PATIO DINING. All fresh fish from Santa Monica Seafood and the best tuna salad sandwiches you will ever get at any restaurant! Capt. Ron will walk the plank if you don't agree! Hours: 5pm-until Capt. Ron gets tired Monday-Friday, noon until the party stops Saturday and Sunday. 2442 Main Street, Santa Monica. (310) 452-1934.

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THE SLICE-A true neighborhood pizzeria serving authentic New York pizza & buffalo wings. We also offer a selection of hot & cold subs, pastas and salads. You can also create your own calzone. Eat in, take out, or delivery. Catering is available. Hours: open daily 11am-9pm. Visit one of our three locations: 915 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica (310) 451-7542, 1622 Ocean Park Blvd., Santa Monica (310) 399-4060, 13151 Fountain Park Drive, Playa Vista (310) 437-7499.

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.

LOCAL

Class action: Cities solving parking woes

BUNDY OPEN FOR BUSINESS

BUNDY CAMPUS, from page 1

are made. Meanwhile, college officials contend their plans for the Bundy campus site have been scaled back to accommodate neighborhood concerns. College officials would like to have vehicular access to the Bundy campus, at entry and exit points located within Santa Monica and West LA. The goal of the Aug. 11 meeting was to find ways to provide college students with parking and shuttle lot service for fall classes, which start Aug. 29. The meeting also was an opportunity for City Hall, SMC and West LA to begin addressing long-term access, traffic and parking concerns at the Bundy campus, which opened this summer.

For years, SMC used the airport shuttle lot along Airport Avenue to bus students to and from SMC's main campus. However, City Hall is planning to begin construction on a new park in the area in November, so SMC has been in need of a new parking and shuttle lot.

Construction on the Airport Park will take 15 months and likely hinder traffic access on Airport Avenue during that time, city officials said. Assistant City Manager Gordon Anderson, who helped organize the meeting, said the negotiations, however complicated, are moving in the right direction.

"There were key officials that came together in earnest to talk about solutions for the main objectives of all parties," Anderson said. "It does look like we are going to be able to come to a positive solution that will be beneficial."

Beach Parking Lot No. 5, located south of Ocean Park Boulevard on Barnard Way, will be open to SMC students from 6:45 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

The airport shuttle lot will be open during the day for students enrolled in classes at the Bundy Campus. The shuttle lot will also be open for shuttling service during the evenings and all day Friday.

City Hall considers SMC's shuttle service at the beach lot — which will be free — a short-term solution for the college as it works to secure its own permanent shuttle lot.

The college says it's working diligently to find one.

The Bundy campus, which has enrolled 460 students this summer, is planned to provide classes to some 800 students once it is fully online, SMC officials said.

The site has a 100,000-square-foot, four-story building housing classrooms intended for nursing, teaching and community education courses. In addition, Bundy has a 30,000-square foot, two-story building the college is not using, and a surface parking lot capable of holding 609 cars, which SMC officials said will meet the needs of expected campus operations.

However, vehicular access to Bundy is currently limited to college staff and the disabled. The satellite campus is buttressed against the city of Los Angeles to the east, with a small road that permits turning in and out of the site from Bundy Drive. The Bundy campus is also fronted by Los Angeles to the south and east, on the corner of which is Stewart Avenue, a north-south neighborhood street the college has agreed not to use for campus access, except in the case of emergencies.

Bundy is also buttressed against the city of Santa Monica to the north, lined with commercial buildings City Hall leases, which separate the Bundy campus from Airport Avenue, a two-lane east-west road that leads to 23rd Street.

SMC's agreement with City Hall comes after weeks of escalation, which reached a climax at the July 28 City Council meeting when college officials publicly requested extended use of the Airport lot, as well as be granted Bundy campus access from City Hall. SMC officials also met earlier that week to discuss possible litigation against City Hall.

City Councilman Richard Bloom, who has long been critical of SMC growth strategies, said he is "cautiously optimistic" City Hall's relationship with the college is improving.

Tom Donner, SMC's interim president, shared similar sentiments with Bloom, while cautioning there is more work ahead.

"Traffic is the biggest issues on people's minds," Donner said. "I can understand why the Santa Monica and Mar Vista people are looking at traffic impacts.

"At the same time, they need to take a look at the educational impact of what's going on here."

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LOCAL □ STATE

Pedraza takes stand 21 years after killing

MURDER TRIAL, from page 1

According to his testimony, Pedraza went to Mexico. He returned to the United States 10 years later and lived here under a different name until his arrest.

Pedraza appeared in court on Thursday wearing a dark sport coat, dress shirt and a red-striped tie. He had streaks of gray in his dark hair, with a white mustache. An interpreter seated next to him on the witness stand translated questions from attorneys.

Pedraza said it was common for customers to bring guns and shoot outside the bars. On the night he shot Garcia, he was without a security guard because he had been shot at the bar a few weeks before. On the night Garcia was killed, Pedraza was wearing a bullet-proof vest and was armed with a can of mace and a .38 semi-automatic pistol tucked in his waist.

Garcia and his brother, Ramon, entered the bar, asked for beers and were served. Garcia, who appeared angry, took his beer to the pool table and proceeded to smash his and other customers' beer bottles against the floor, Pedraza testified.

"I picked up a pool stick and walked up to him," Pedraza said. "I said, 'I don't want any problems in my business.'"

Pedraza called Garcia a huero, which is a slang word for "blondie" or "light-skinned." Garcia was Hispanic.

A struggle ensued. Pedraza maced Garcia and escorted him out of the bar.

Garcia threatened Pedraza, he testified. "I'm going to come back and you're going to get f--ked over," Pedraza said Garcia told him. "It means he was going to kill me."

However, Pedraza said he wasn't too concerned at that point.

"Drunk people always say stuff like that," he said.

However, Pedraza said Garcia returned to the front of the bar pointing a gun at him and reminding Pedraza about his threat.

"Tony, I told you you're going to get f--ked over," Pedraza said Garcia told him.

Mojgan Aghai, Pedraza's public defender, asked Pedraza if he was scared. "Yes," he said.

Pedraza walked toward the back door of the bar. He heard a revving car take off and thought Garcia had left. Pedraza walked along the side of the building toward the front of the bar.

Pedraza took a step on the sidewalk and spotted Garcia, who was near a tree on the opposite side of the bar's facade. Pedraza warned "blondie" that he didn't want to kill him and that he should go home.

Garcia proceeded to fire. Pedraza took a bullet to the chest, which was protected by his vest.

Garcia charged at Pedraza. Pedraza took cover behind the corner of the building, while Garcia was exposed on the sidewalk. They fired at each other repeatedly. Garcia fell to his knees, and Pedraza continued shooting until Garcia fell face first in the street.

Pedraza walked up to Garcia and shot three more rounds in the back of his head.

Deputy District Attorney Larry Droeger argues that the final shots proved the case was an act of murder. He noted in his cross-examination that Pedraza failed to lock the front door of the bar when Garcia first waved the gun. Pedraza also failed to notify police once he felt threatened Garcia might kill him.

Pedraza said he acted the way he did because he was fearful for his life and leaving his children orphaned.

Under-35 crowd snapping up homes

DEBT BE DAMNED, from page 1

level — 59 percent — since 1960, the study found.

The statewide median home price in July was \$451,000, with median prices in San Francisco hitting \$606,000 and in Southern California \$469,000, according to real estate research firm DataQuick Information Systems.

Many first-time buyers are low- and middle-income families or young investors who wouldn't be able to afford such expensive homes without bucking traditional financing guidelines, said Hans Johnson, lead author of the study, titled "California's Newest Homeowners: Affording the Unaffordable."

"I thought what we would find was that it was only people who had equity or very high incomes who were getting into the market," Johnson said. "But that's simply not true."

People under 35 now make up 33 percent of all recent homeowners statewide, and the rate of home ownership increased more among that age group than any other between 2000 and 2003, the study found.

The median household income of those who have bought a house in the past two years was \$68,000, the study found. Nearly 13 percent of recent buyers made between \$25,000 and \$40,000, while nearly 19 percent made between \$40,000

and \$60,000 a year.

Johnson said many of these families are able to afford a home by compromising on size or by buying inland instead of on the coast.

But a growing number, he said, have resorted to risky financial tactics that could pay off if the housing market continues to expand — or backfire if it slows.

More than half of Californians who purchased a home in the past two years ignored federal guidelines and spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing. One in five spent more than 50 percent of their income, the study found.

Seasoned real estate agents say such financial risks were unheard of just years ago, but the superheated California market has lured a glut of first-time investors hoping to get rich quick.

"You're a first-time buyer and all you know is that for the past five to 10 years anyone who's bought a piece of real estate has made money. All they've seen is the market go up, up, up," said Stephanie Vitacco, a Coldwell Banker real estate agent in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley.

"That's the mentality. But what they haven't experienced is that the market also goes down," said Vitacco, a 17-year veteran who specializes in first-time buyers.

Vitacco says she now routinely shows homes to clients who have agreed to 100 percent or 110 percent financing.



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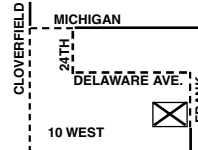
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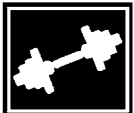
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STATE

STATE BRIEFS

Authorities put smackdown on meth ring

By The Associated Press

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — Federal and local authorities busted a U.S.-Mexico methamphetamine ring this week by arresting five men, officials said.

Officers made the arrests Tuesday and Wednesday after serving six search warrants in Fontana, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Moreno Valley and Ontario.

The suspects, who were not identified, smuggled 40 to 60 pounds of the drug into the country each month, said Stephen Azzam, assistant special agent in charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration office in Riverside.

During a nine-month investigation, authorities arrested 17 other people and seized 84 pounds of the methamphetamine, worth an estimated \$4.8 million, Azzam said. They also seized 17 weapons and six luxury vehicles, including Cadillac Escalades.

“We were able to significantly disrupt a major methamphetamine operation in the Inland Empire,” Azzam said. An unspecified number of suspects remain at large, he added.

Transportation chief hits the road

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — City Transportation Director Wayne Tanda, whose department has been criticized by the city’s new mayor, announced that he will resign.

Tanda was hired three years ago by former Mayor James Hahn and his resignation is the first departure of a department chief under new Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

Tanda, who earned about \$177,000 a year, said he was leaving because of the demands of traveling from San Jose, where his wife is a teacher and where he worked for three decades.

Villaraigosa said in a statement that Tanda “has worked to relieve traffic congestion, reduce the impact of development on city streets and ensure the safety of the millions of drivers who commute on Los Angeles streets.”

“The need to improve our transportation system and get Los Angeles moving again is as great as any need facing the city of Los Angeles,” he said.

When he was a member of the City Council, Villaraigosa often clashed with the department’s management. In January, he said it was “staggering” that the department had lost out on income by failing to request its share of parking fines from a company that collects them.

The city is expected to name an interim general manager in coming weeks.

Snatched purse victim gets dragged by car

By The Associated Press

FONTANA, Calif. — A woman apparently trying to recover her stolen purse through a car window was dragged several hundred feet through a parking lot, suffering a collapsed lung, scrapes and bruises, police said.

The woman, 25-year-old Mary Huzar of Fontana, was getting her child out of her car Monday night when a girl as young as 10 snatched her purse and jumped into a waiting car with a man and woman inside, police Sgt. William Megenney said.

Huzar reached in through the car window after her purse and was dragged when the car drove away, he said. She may have been run over.

“The car actually went several hundred feet until she fell out or was pushed out,” Megenney said.

Huzar was hospitalized but her condition was not released.

Detectives monitoring activity on her bank and credit card accounts found that someone attempted to make several transactions Monday night in San Bernardino, but the suspects have not yet been identified, Megenney said.

Murderer cops plea to avoid death penalty

By The Associated Press

TORRANCE, Calif. — A man accused of burning his former wife to death and attacking her boyfriend with a chain saw pleaded guilty to murder and attempted murder charges.

Carlos Hernandez Romo, 36, entered the plea Wednesday in Superior Court and is expected to be sentenced Oct. 7 to life in prison without possibility of parole.

“I am guilty,” he said, avoiding the death penalty that could have been sought with special murder allegations of torture, lying in wait, burglary and arson. He also pleaded guilty to burglary and arson charges.

Authorities say Romo, a gardener, attacked Paz Maya Romo and Fredy Flores Sept. 28 in the unincorporated Lennox area, about 10 miles southwest of downtown L.A.

Witnesses said the woman’s boyfriend ran out of the home naked and asked people to alert police. A fire erupted and the woman came rushing out of the apartment trying to extinguish her flaming clothes with a garden hose. Romo kicked and swore at her, witnesses said. She was hospitalized and died about two weeks later.

Crews move to avoid toxic situation

By The Associated Press

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif. — Crews are hauling toxic waste from a closed land-fill after discovering cracks in rain-soaked berms that could lead to spills.

The emergency cleanup began last month after maintenance crews found 19 cracks along an 18-foot berm. Another storm could cause the berm to give way and spill hazardous materials onto streets.

STATE



Dems want to cut deal before special election

BY TOM CHORNEAU
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — With time running out, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Democratic leaders are engaged in delicate negotiations to see if compromise is possible on all or some of the governor's special election initiatives.

The Secretary of State identified midnight Thursday as the last time the Legislature can put any new measures on the ballot. But both sides said that deadline can be extended, perhaps as long as another two weeks.

Talks have been ongoing for months but appeared to be headed nowhere because neither side seemed motivated to find common ground. Recent days have seen an infusion of energy, especially with the arrival of former Assembly speaker Bob Hertzberg as a mediator.

Even with the heightened urgency, both sides acknowledged it will be difficult to strike a far-reaching deal in time.

"Looking at last year, we accomplished so much, Democrats and Republicans, I feel very strongly we can do that again this year," Schwarzenegger said Wednesday during an event highlighting school funding in Ontario. "We are still negotiating, but it could be that we run out of time."

Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, D-Los Angeles, has said he also wants an agreement. He warned Assembly members that they could be called back into session this weekend, Nunez spokesman Steve Maviglio said.

Both Schwarzenegger and the Democrats who control the Legislature have reason to compromise and avoid a costly ballot fight. But both also risk alienating their core constituents if they reach a settlement that is seen too lenient to the other side.

"Each side has reason to move forward and reasons not to," said Larry Gerston, a political scientist from San Jose State University. "I can guarantee you that both sides are also polling like crazy right now, too."

Schwarzenegger called the special election in January and since helped qualify three measures he believes are needed to overhaul the state's political landscape. He wants to impose a new cap on spending and give the governor more authority over the state budget; redraw legislative and congressional districts; and extend the probationary term of teachers.

Other initiatives have qualified, as

well, including one that would require parental notice before minors could get an abortion. Two involve prescription drug discounts and another would restrict the use of union dues for political purposes.

If the governor and Democrats find common ground, they could create a new slate of ballot measures and campaign against Schwarzenegger's original ones. Gerston said the governor might be motivated to compromise to turn around his sinking support among California voters.

"Schwarzenegger's public opinion numbers have plummeted almost overnight," he said. "He badly needs a win."

But Gerston said Democrats still must be concerned with Schwarzenegger's success on the campaign trail and the fear that the former actor and bodybuilder could regain his popularity with voters.

Republicans, meanwhile, have been preparing for the election for months. Tens of millions of dollars already have been spent qualifying measures, polling voters and building campaign organizations. Some Democratic supporters - especially unions - also have made themselves ready for political battle and believe they can defeat Schwarzenegger's agenda.

Also standing in the way of an agreement are skeptics in the Legislature. A two-thirds vote in both the Senate and Assembly would be needed to place a compromise package of initiatives on the ballot.

Sen. President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, said earlier this week that there was not enough time to compromise because the issues are too complicated.

Assembly Republican leader Kevin McCarthy, of Bakersfield, said Wednesday that he opposes extending the deadline beyond midnight Thursday. He said it reduces the amount of time the Legislature and voters would have to debate any compromise.

Still, political observers said the arrival of Hertzberg, a longtime Democratic leader who has been an unofficial adviser to the governor since he took office, indicates that both sides are serious about trying to forge agreement.

"There's no individual in the state more capable of bringing Schwarzenegger and Nunez to some type of agreement than Bob Hertzberg," GOP consultant Dan Schnur said. "There's no way to know if a compromise can be reached, but his presence in the conversation speaks volumes."



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Entertainment

Cherry jubilee: 'Virgin' a gas

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

I cannot remember laughing much harder than I did during the scene in this movie when Andy Stitzer (Steve Carell) wakes up with a stiffy and pees on his own face. Crude? Damn straight. But as presented here it's lowbrow comedy of the highest order, folks, and believe it or not, "The 40 Year-Old Virgin" (written by Carell and "Freaks & Geeks" creator Judd Apatow, making his feature film directorial debut) is more than just a puerile frat-boy romp. Off-color dude-humor abounds, to be sure, but like many R-rated comedies of late, this one also embraces its inner chick flick. The hero's on a mission to engage in a long overdue roll in the hay, but it's clear that what he's truly after is the love of a good woman.

Carell, "The Daily Show" alum turned scene-stealing cinematic second-fiddle ("Anchorman," "Bruce Almighty"), is absolutely hilarious and awfully sweet too as the meek, meticulous electronics store stockroom worker who collects action figures and travels by bicycle. In an awkward attempt to participate in some sex banter with his co-workers — Paul Rudd, Romany Malco and Seth Rogen — Andy describes



the feel of a woman's breast as sand-like, and just like that, his chastity is out of the bag. Andy's buddies are all very funny and their futile attempts to help him score produce some of the movie's most memorable

moments. Misguided notions of what women want and how men ought to give it to them land Andy in all sorts of misadventures, with a variety of women who aren't quite right: Among them, oversexed bookstore clerk Beth ("Seabiscuit's" Elizabeth Banks) and a party girl in desperate need of a designated driver (Leslie Mann). All the women in "Virgin" deliver fantastic, none

better than Katherine Keener, playing against type as an easy-going single mom who gives Andy all the reason he needs to give it up. My only gripe is that the film runs about 20 minutes too long.

(Rated R for pervasive sexual content, language and some drug use. Running time: 116 minutes)

'Sympathy' for audience

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

"Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance" is the first film in celebrated Korean filmmaker Park Chanwook's "Revenge Trilogy." Observant Asian cinephiles will note, however, that the second installment, "Oldboy," was released prior to "Vengeance" in the U.S. "Oldboy" is a superior, intelligible action drama. "Vengeance" is a real mess, splattered with blood and out-of-place social commentary.

Billed as a modern day Greek tragedy,

"Vengeance" features two men who've wronged each other and are hellbent on revenge. Ryu (Shin Ha-Kyun) is a deaf mute who is fired from his menial job and is therefore unable to afford a kidney transplant to save his dying sister's life. In desperation, Ryu and his girlfriend Yeong-mi (Bae Doona) hatch a plan to kidnap the daughter of wealthy former boss, Park Dong-jin (Song Kang-ho). When Ryu's plot goes awry, so does Park's movie. Entire scenes seem to be missing and it's difficult to determine not only what's going on, but why as well.

(Rated R for strong gruesome violence, strong sexuality. Running time: 129 M)



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THE IMBIBER

BY DAN DUNN

Happy trails: A cosmic concoction can shower any night with universal fun

You gotta hand it to the promotions people in the wine and spirits industry, who seem to have a limitless capacity to exploit special (and not so special) events in order to sell more hootch. Christmas, Easter, Kwanzaa, the season premiere of "According to Jim" ... just name the occasion — there have likely been scores of alliteratively-appelled cocktails created to celebrate it. Having a Super Bowl party? Break out the Hail Mary Margaritas! They're drafting a constitution in Iraq? Try a Baghdad Bomber or a delicious Fallujah Fizz! It's that time of the month again, eh? Well ... you get the picture.

Turns out, there was a meteor shower passing through our solar system the other week, and wouldn't you know that the folks at Moët came up with a few champagne cocktails to toast the bright lights in the sky. According to NASA's Web site, stargazers who are "outdoors at the right time can see colorful fireballs, occasional outbursts and, almost always, long hours of gracefully streaking meteors.

So next time, make a drink, grab the telescope, and get yo'self up on the roof.

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- Moët Nectar Impérial

Add a spoonful of sorbet to a martini glass and stir in vodka. Fill with champagne.

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'Red Eye' takes viewers on wild ride

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Well it damn near took 'em til Labor Day to get around to it, but at long last our entertainment enablers in Hollywood finally offer up the kind of hair-raising,

Review

Welcome back, Wes Craven, and kudos on what very well could be the most skillful bit of movie direction so far this year.

"Red Eye" rocks harder than an airplane in a thunderstorm, which is precisely where always-in-control luxury hotel manager Lisa Reisert (Rachel McAdams ... schwiining!!!!) finds herself trapped when Jackson (a chilling Cillian Murphy), the charming guy who's been making time with her since check-in, reveals his true intentions: He needs Lisa to assist him in a plot to assassinate the Deputy Security of Homeland Security. He assures her that if she refuses to help, another operative will kill her father (Brian Cox) before the plane touches down — and that's the jolt that sets the spine-tingling story in motion.

Don't be fooled by the misleading ad campaign, the most compelling moments of the movie are hardly limited to the bumpy



plane ride. After Lisa and Jackson arrive in Miami, Craven and first-time scripter Carl Ellsworth really raise the stakes. Now, if one were to carefully dissect the plot mechanism you might find some inconsistencies, but what Craven adroitly and subtly manages to do without so much as a single distracting CG extravagance is to keep the focus squarely on Lisa's desperate plight: Saving herself, her family and a high-ranking government

official from a ruthless killer. Across the board, the execution in "Red Eye" is superb, with McAdams and Murphy emerging as one of the most captivating pairs of this or any other year. Move over Vince and Owen, your leading lady's flying high in her latest film and is poised to take over the box office.

(Rated PG-13 for some violence, and language. Running time: 86 minutes)

Murphy in 'Red' and out of sight

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

Cillian Murphy may play a ruthless villain in "Red Eye" a suspense thriller at 30,000 feet directed by Wes Craven, but the 29-year-old Irish-born actor is quite reserved when it comes to talking about himself.

And there's a lot to talk about — he's currently involved in two films and he just completed a third. After he's done with his latest project, Murphy's looking forward to kicking back at his place in London and spend some quality time with his wife, Yvonne McGuinness.

Murphy recently sat down with the Metro in a Beverly Hills hotel suite to talk about his recent work and what he thinks of his budding career.

How are you at promoting your films?

I don't do talk shows. I won't because that makes you a personality then. I perform when I'm acting, I don't perform as myself. And I don't think I'd be very

good at it. I'm not able to turn it on.

Do you have a fear of flying or had any harrowing experiences?

"No. Thank God, no."

Your character is pretty ruthless. Are you ruthless in certain situations?

"No. I'm typically quite relaxed with people. It's inanimate objects that make me angry. Things never work for me. Anything mechanical, it just breaks.

What genre would you like to tackle?

"A Woody Allen movie, an intelligent comedy."

What was your favorite part of making this film?

"I can't pinpoint one particular thing. You always put it down like 'I've done that, it's done.' I can't watch a film more than once because it's a closed book. It's a full stop. It's weird coming back and talking about it eight months, or a year later. I've done three films since then."

What's your take on the United States?

"I love coming here. New York and California, you only think they exist on television as a kid ... I'm kind of mad at

your president."

What's your take on Hollywood?

"It's a one-industry town. I think you can smell the bulls--t very quickly. There is an industry built around the bulls--t. Like the stupid magazines and the stupid TV shows. People want to see that and read about that and that's fine, but I'm quite happy not to do that."

Is there is an actor that you would like to most represent?

Johnny Depp, Sean Penn, Jeff Bridges. I like their choices in movies and I love their performances."

Do you resemble their early careers?

"I'm not going to compare myself to those great movie stars, but I admire them tremendously."

Do you have a favorite villain?

"Jack Nicholson. He is the best. He was at a screening I was at and had his sunglasses on the whole time."

What's on the horizon?

"I wouldn't mind stopping for a while. Just hanging out. Stay at home, take walks and buy milk and things."

Can you smell that? It's the local cineplex

BY VIC PLATINUM

Special to the Daily Press

Spent last weekend at my sister's place watching the video from her wedding and,

Review

I'll be damned if Ewan McGregor didn't turn up onscreen!

He played the best man ... I mean, c'mon, does poor Ewan ever sleep? The guy's appeared in, like,

37 movies this year alone. He works so much, he makes Michael Caine look lazy.

In other movie news, the critically-panned flicks "The Skeleton Key," "The Dukes of Hazzard" and "Deuce Bigelow European Gigolo" were all in the top five at the box office this week. I talked to one industry insider who told me there hasn't been this big a stink in theaters since Harvey Weinstein crapped himself the first time he screened that Gawd-awful

"Jersey Girl." Oh, and that reminds me ...

Ben Affleck turned 33 this week. Wow! Seems like only yesterday he was interesting. Ben's best bud Matt Damon has a movie coming out next Friday called "The Brothers Grimm," which does not — I repeat — NOT have anything to do with the Baldwins' career prospects.

Hands down, my favorite moment of the Comedy Central Roast of Pamela Anderson was when New York's own Jeffrey Ross

turned to a bloated and blotto Courtney Love and asked how it was possible that she looks worse than Kurt Cobain? Ross then turned his attention to the guest of honor, ripping Pam and her celebrated boy-toys Tommy Lee, Bret Michaels and Kid Rock with the zinger, "Don't you ever (bleep) anyone with talent?"

And finally, happy 59th birthday Bill Clinton! I just sent my intern out for some cigars so we can properly honor the occasion.

‘Babes In Arms’ returns to the stage

By Daily Press staff

The babes will be back in arms in Santa Monica, courtesy of Back on Broadway.

Back on Broadway Restaurant, in association with Ruskin Group Theatre, is presenting the Broadway musical classic “Babes in Arms” from Sept. 15 through Oct. 9 at the Miles Memorial Playhouse.

Originally produced on Broadway in 1937, the Rodgers & Hart hit play ran 289 performances and left an imprint on the American music scene with such unforgettable songs as “My Funny Valentine,” “The Lady is a Tramp,” “Johnny One-Note,” “I Wish I Were in Love Again,” and “Where or When.”

In 1939, the original book and songs were changed and augmented and made into a movie starring Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland. Subsequent theatrical productions have traditionally added or dropped some of the original libretto and score.



FRED DENI

For this “Babes,” the play and orchestrations have been updated and adapted for the venue by director Andy Belling. The play is about a group of youngsters at

a music camp during the last summer of World War II who put on an original show to save their theater from being repossessed by the bank. With state-of-the-art lighting, new orchestrations and a stylized approach, this version is an affectionate tribute to the Rodgers and Hart classic.

Performances are 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 5 p.m. Sundays at Miles Memorial Playhouse, 1130 Lincoln Blvd. Tickets are \$45, with about half the proceeds going to various charities.

“This is an exciting opportunity to bring to life a new version of a chestnut that holds significant meaning to me,” said Fred Deni, Back on Broadway owner and producer of the show. “I’ve done four productions of ‘Babes in Arms,’ including one on Broadway. It’s a wonderful play with great music, and this production will give it exposure to new audiences.”

Said Mike Myers, managing director of Ruskin, “We’re proud to be a co-producer

of this play. Fred Deni is something of a legend in Santa Monica and the Westside, and his long commitment to theater and philanthropy makes this production a wonderful marriage of two of his great passions.”

For tickets and information, call (310) 397-3244 or go to <http://www.ruskingrouptheatre.com>.

A nonprofit organization is still needed for opening weekend.

The list of nonprofits lined up so far are:

- American Red Cross
- Hill N Dale School
- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
- Salvation Army
- Santa Monica Conservancy
- Santa Monica Police Activities League
- Santa Monica Historical Society
- SERTOMA, a service organization

Writers ‘Storm’ the Westside in name of speech

BY HANK ROSENFELD

Special to the Daily Press

“Since we seem to have landed in a battle, let us fight!”

— B. Brecht

A warm night and 100 writers in a theater on the Westside talking about the government. What are the chances?

The rare evening was “Writers of the Storm,” presented at the Odyssey Theater by Jayne Lyn Stahl, poet and founder of Writers-at-Large (WAL), a nonpartisan California Arts Council-funded advocacy group for free speech.

The Odyssey setting was perfect. On stage, remnants from “Reapers,” a play by John O’Keefe currently in production: A blown-apart shack and busted high brown fence against a backdrop of storm clouds painted dark and forever. Standing in front of this stage picture were nine embattled, unembedded, “enemy combatants-with-PowerBooks,” including Joseph Bosco, April Smith, Paul Krassner, Catherine Ann Jones, and other authors discussing words to take to the barricades “in the Age of Terror.”

Snowy-haired in serious suit and bow tie, Constitutional law expert Stephen F. Rohde (American Words of Freedom) began by announcing 12 factors taking us on a path to totalitarianism.

“Especially the media being in service of the state,” he brought it home. Accusing writers and journalists of becoming, “a delivery system for government press releases,” Rohde blamed them for failing “to serve the function given to them under the first amendment.”

Final insult he added: “43 percent of Americans say the media has too much freedom. Only 14 percent know that freedom of the press is part of the first amendment.”

David Koff, performer with the street-

popular Frogworks Theater, suggested we “educate ourselves, speak out, and organize.” John Daly (The ROIL System: How to Be Well-Informed in A Media-Biased World) praised web logs. Today, “everyone is a journalist,” he said. Blogs like his, he claimed reach up to 100,000 readers every month.

Storyteller/healer Deena Metzger (Entering the Ghost River) considered the moment — Aug. 9, anniversary of the atomic bomb drop on Nagasaki — and asked across the crowded room: “Are we still stunned? Or have we just set it aside?” She called Sept. 11 “our Reichstag,” drawing parallels here to the suspension of civil liberties in 1933 Germany. One editor told her to take any 9-11 references completely out of one of her books.

After Jervey Tervalon, (co-author, Cocaine Chronicles) offered a new civil disobedience idea, “When will the blue states stop paying their taxes?” Rohde shocked the typewriter monkeys again: Sixteen measures of the Patriot Act expected to end this December were all re-upped on July 29. One of Patriot Act II’s clauses, he said, makes activists committing civil disobedience face, “20 years for what used to be a \$100 fine.” Huh? How? “If you have caused a risk to life ... a change in government policy ...” he warned, citizens could face the death penalty under a provision in the “Domestic Security Enhancement Act.”

* * *

Krassner and Bosco broke their own news. Co-founder of the “Yippies” (Youth International Party) in the 1960s, Krassner was called by Rohde, “an iconic figure since the 1950s.” The author of “Murder at the Conspiracy Convention” and other works said he was “old enough to remember when the word ‘media’ was

plural.” His new book is called, “One Hand Jerking: Reports from an Investigative Satirist,” and reveals how some inside the New York Times believe Judith Miller outed Valerie Plame. Why? Joe Wilson’s op-ed column “was in effect an attack on Miller” for what she wrote in the run-up to the invasion.

“There are so many asses being covered,” concluded Krassner, “it’s like a Christo art project.”

April Smith, novelist (Good Morning Killer) and TV scenarist (Chicago Hope), said she worries that, “underneath all the rhetoric is the ancient, ugly American grip of prejudice.” If she’s right, it signals “a core much more intractable than we know.”

Dick Russell (Eye of the Whale) told a story of leaving his job at TV Guide “to study a fish for seven years.” His new book “Striper Wars” changed his life. Take action and keep moving forward he said, via what a friend of his has coined, “ambulatory hopelessness.”

“I’m pissed off,” Joe Bosco broke back in. Raised in a Jim Crow segregated Mississippi, in 1966 he became, “part of a movement that stopped a war and brought down a president.” He praised actor Ed Asner, who was sitting in the theater, for fighting the good fight. “Everyone knows what he stands for,” said Bosco, smiling at Asner and admonishing everybody else. “What about you? Are you sick of it? Then do something about it.”

Bosco said he reveled in being “part of the longhairs, who smoked dope and were part of that movement.” The right wing, he said, is still angry at the movement for taking back the country back then. Krassner said it was “the pioneers and Puritans who founded the country (that) have brought us to the culture wars.” Just returned from covering a “neo-Pagan festival” for The Nation, Krassner called the

Pagans, “the canary in the cultural war coal mine,” and cited recent burnings of Harry Potter novels in Florida.

A woman in the theater cried out: “Why is this happening?” Another asked, “Do we have to go down, as a culture in order to remember that it’s not about money and fear?”

“We need to support intelligence,” Terrence McNally, host of Free Forum on KPFK-Pacific said from his seat. “We need a way to make intelligence more robust, emotionally and physically so that accurate facts and challenging ideas can get through to mainstream Americans and can’t be demonized (by the right) as elitist and ‘foreign.’”

Emotionally, where were the writers’ hearts now? Deena Metzger’s words returned at the end of the confab. “Self-scrutiny is required,” she told her fellow correspondents. “Everyone knows about Abu Graib. It should have taken the government down. But nothing happened.”

Maybe after such an evening, as the cornucopia of writers left the Odyssey and headed back into their own adventures, a bit of John Locke’s philosophy might inspire. “Happiness,” he wrote, “is the weapon I wear in the war of all against all.”

Writers-at-Large is funded by the California Arts Council and is a non-partisan group believing that “an injustice to one is an injustice to all.” Founder Jayne Lyn Stahl says WAL speaks out against censorship, McCarthyism and issues like FCC restrictions on free speech. “Our goal,” says Stahl, is “to have writers’ advocacy groups like this in every city.” The “Writers of the Storm (sic)” event was sponsored by City Lights, Dutton’s, Book Soup, PEN USA and Friends of Writers-at-Large, Ed Asner and Patty Egan.

(Hank Rosenfeld is a folk journalist in Ocean Park.)

‘Valiant’ effort not a total waste, with charm to spare

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Ewan McGregor, Ricky Gervais, Tim Curry and John Cleese lead an all-star, all-

Review

Brit cast of vocal talent in this animated period piece from the producer of the “Shrek” franchise. The triumph of the

underdog storyline is as by-the-numbers as they come, but what “Valiant” lacks in originality it compensates for with considerable charm and impressive design.

The titular character is an undersized pigeon from the English backwoods (McGregor) who dreams of joining the elite Royal Homing Pigeon Service and serving his country in World War II. McGregor deserves credit for bringing an

infectious enthusiasm to the proceedings. He arrives in London determined to earn his RHPS wings, and immediately hooks up with a wisecracking vagabond bird named Bugsy (Gervais) who reluctantly follows Valiant to basic training. The carrier pigeon forces have suffered major casualties at the hands ... er, talons of German falcons led by the insidious General Von Talon (Curry, chewing it up

in every scene), so it falls upon Valiant’s “Squad F” to deliver a top-secret message across enemy lines and to rescue a POW (Cleese, in the film’s funniest role). The movie’s most glaring deficiency is the short shrift given to the love story. By downplaying the romance, first-time director Gary Chapman wastes an opportunity to raise the stakes for Valiant.

(Rated G. Running time: 109 minutes)

NATIONAL



Pot farms in national forests a growing problem in AZ.

BY BETH DEFALCO

Associated Press Writer

PHOENIX — Arizona's national forests are becoming prime real estate for pot farmers, with nearly 94,000 marijuana plants discovered this year alone, authorities said.

The discovery of a pot farm north of Strawberry on the southernmost part of Coconino National Forest marks the sixth farm found this year by members of the Gila County Narcotics Enforcement Task Force.

"We seem to be the marijuana growing capital of Arizona," said task force commander Steve Craig.

The task force had been watching the latest farm, grown near a remote ravine, since a man was spotted tending the plants

and camping in the garden in July. Last week, another man was spotted in the garden, and on Monday, two others were seen there.

Task force members arrested the men on Monday. Authorities said the group had several weapons stashed at the campsite.

Three of them admitted they had been paid to tend the marijuana plants. All were illegal immigrants, according to paperwork filed with U.S. District Court in Flagstaff.

Craig said latest bust had as many as 10,000 marijuana stalks, planted in pockets along pine trees and scattered on the forest floor.

"It's not like planting corn in Iowa; there aren't neat rows," Craig said.

Authorities spent days this week

pulling the plants and airlifting them out of a heavily forested canyon so steep that it's difficult to access by road.

The other five farms discovered this year in nearby Tonto National Forest account for roughly 83,800 pot plants confiscated, said U.S. Forest Service spokesman Jim Payne.

Forest officials said they suspect public lands have become increasingly popular for marijuana gardens because of the vast remote locations patrolled only intermittently by Forest Service law enforcement.

Robin Poague, who supervises Forest Service law enforcement in Arizona and New Mexico, said he oversees 36 officers across his two-state region, meaning each person is responsible for an average of 200,000 acres.

In Gila County, where the majority of

farms have been discovered, Craig said less than 2 percent of the county is privately owned.

Forest officials said in addition to concerns over hikers or others stumbling onto a farm and potentially violent caretakers, environmental damage from the farms is immense.

Poague said many marijuana farmers use pesticides and other chemicals harmful to forest vegetation.

"It's not just the cultivation," Poague said. "It really impacts the environment."

He said the farmers hike into the canyons, reroute natural water sources to feed the farm, and leave a tremendous amount of trash behind.

It's then left to foresters to pick up litter and reroute drainages back into their natural path, which is expensive.

Mexican border counties are eager for emergency aid

BY JENNIFER TALHELM

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Sheriff Gary Ciccotelli already has plans for his share of emergency aid he soon may be getting: Hire five new officers, and station two of them near the Mexican border that makes up his county's southern boundary.

Ciccotelli's Luna County is among eight in New Mexico and Arizona that stand to benefit from emergency orders issued last week by Democratic Govs. Bill Richardson and Janet Napolitano freeing up \$3 million

in state emergency dollars for law enforcement overtime, costs related to illegal immigrants' deaths and other needs.

Ciccotelli said the situation along the border is getting worse, with increasing reports of migrants breaking into homes or appearing on residents' doorsteps looking for food or water. Money is badly needed to bulk up local officials' ability to respond, he said.

"All of us are doing a good job with the resources we have, but we're short-handed. This is going to help our response time," the sheriff said.

Both governors accused the federal government of failing to control crime and other problems associated with illegal immigration. Richardson also said Mexico needs to do more.

Ruben Aguilar, a spokesman for Mexican President Vicente Fox, said Wednesday that it's a necessity for the U.S. and Mexico to resolve the security problems at the border. But he said the emergency declarations had not harmed the relationship between the two countries.

"From the point of view of the presidency of Mexico, the relationship with the

United States is not at stake," Aguilar said at a news conference in Mexico. "There are common problems, shared by both sides, including different visions on the part of American authorities."

The actions in New Mexico and Arizona could spread to at least one other border state.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger told a San Diego radio station that the emergency declarations were a "terrific idea" and that his state would take the same step in its border counties "if we see a need for this."



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U.S., Mexico unveil effort to stymie migrant smugglers

BY OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ

Associated Press Writer

MONTERREY, Mexico — The U.S. and Mexican governments on Wednesday announced a bilateral effort to help authorities identify and prosecute migrant smugglers working on their common border.

The program, dubbed "OASISS," will facilitate the exchange of information and evidence to assist both governments in the prosecution of migrant smugglers and help save migrant lives, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Robert C. Bonner said in a statement.

"By exchanging critical information, coordinating enforcement operations and jointly targeting cross border criminal activity we will yield a more safe and secure border," Bonner said.

In a separate statement, the Mexican government said the program also includes campaigns alerting would-be migrants about the dangers of crossing illegally into the United States and training for migrant rescue crews on both sides of the border.

"The program aims to reach a legal migration that is safe, ordered and respectful of migrants' rights," it added.

The program was agreed upon by Mexico's Foreign Relations Department, the attorney general's office and

the Interior Department in conjunction with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. It comes amid rising tension between the two countries regarding border security.

On Tuesday, Mexican President Vicente Fox said that authorities on both sides of the border bear responsibility for lawlessness in the area.

"On that side and this side there is organized crime; on that side and this side there is drug consumption," Fox said. "The question is: All those drugs that cross over there, how do they get to the consumers? What is it that is being done on that side?"

He added, "The invitation is to work together."

Fox's comments came days after Govs. Bill Richardson of New Mexico and Janet Napolitano of Arizona called new attention to border security by declaring emergencies in seven southern counties, citing shortcomings by the U.S. federal government.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Wednesday the United States and Mexico are confronting tough issues but still maintain "a long, broad and deep relationship."

"In any relationship that size and with such a close neighbor there are going to be tough issues you have to work through," McCormack said. "They're issues that you work through in an open way and in a spirit of cooperation, and that's what you have now."

Biggest Sunni group criticizes constitution; bomb north of Baghdad kills four soldiers

BY ANTONIO CASTANEDA

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Lawmakers tried to reach compromises with Sunni Arab leaders Thursday on Iraq's draft constitution, and a roadside bomb north of Baghdad killed four American soldiers, the U.S. military said.

Government officials said that Wednesday's synchronized car bombings at a bus station and nearby hospital that killed up to 43 people in Baghdad were an attempt to target Shiites and stoke civil war between religious groups in the country.

"They targeted an area that has a population of people from southern Shiite provinces, and their message was that their government is unable to protect you from us," government spokesman Laith Kubba said. "They want a reaction against Sunnis to therefore deepen the sectarian crisis in the country."

Kubba said flyers had recently been handed out in some Baghdad neighborhoods threatening Shiites if they did not leave the city. At least one person, a Sunni Arab woman married to a Shiite, had been killed after the threats, he said.

Kubba also said four suspects arrested on suspicion of being involved in the attack the prior day had been released after questioning.

The military said a roadside bomb killed four U.S. soldiers Thursday in the tense, religiously mixed city of Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad. No further details were immediately available.

Samarra is among a series of towns and cities in central and western Iraq that fell into insurgent hands last year after the United States transferred sovereignty to the Iraqis. U.S. forces regained control last year but the situation there remains uncertain.

As the constitutional talks began, one Sunni Arab lawmaker expressed confidence that remaining differences would be resolved in time for the Monday deadline.

"I expect that the constitution would be finished before Monday. Negotiations are still underway and everybody is determined to finish it before the deadline," said Saleh al-Mutlaq, a Sunni member of the constitutional committee.

Al-Mutlaq also warned that serious differences remain.

"I believe that there are some groups that have taken more than they deserve and want to pass the constitution quickly," he said. "In order for this constitution to work,

these groups that have taken more than what they deserve must abandon some of their demands."

Sunni members were scheduled to meet the U.S. and British ambassadors later in the day, al-Mutlaq said. He accused U.S. officials of rushing the drafting process.

"Americans are more concerned about the sacred deadlines rather than the contents of the constitution," he said.

Government officials said that Wednesday's synchronized car bombings at a bus station and nearby hospital that killed up to 43 people in Baghdad were an attempt to target Shiites and stoke civil war between religious groups in the country.

On Wednesday, the country's largest Sunni political group, the Iraqi Islamic Party, issued a blistering attack on the drafting committee, accusing it of bias and incompetence. The party said major differences remain on the same issues that blocked a deal last week.

Lawmakers said the unresolved differences included federalism, the role of the Shiite clergy and the distribution of Iraq's vast oil wealth. The Sunnis also want the new constitution to affirm the country's Arab and Islamic identity and that Islam be declared a main source in legislation.

Once the draft is approved by parliament, it will be submitted to the voters in a referendum Oct. 15. If two-thirds of the voters in three of the 18 provinces reject the constitution, it will be defeated. Sunnis form the majority in at least four provinces.

The lawyer for Tariq Aziz, a former deputy prime minister, foreign minister and top lieutenant of Saddam Hussein, claimed Thursday his client could be released soon because of legal missteps by the Iraqi tribunal set up to prosecute former regime figures.

"I expect some relief for detainees and I expect that Tariq Aziz might be released because there are no charges against him, along with many detainees," said lawyer Badee Izzat Aref.

INTERNATIONAL



Forces storm synagogues to evict resisters

BY RAMIT PLUSHNICK-MASTI

Associated Press Writer

KFAR DAROM, Gaza Strip — Israeli riot police with helmets and shields broke open the door of a synagogue in this hard-line settlement and fired water cannons at barricaded protesters, who responded by hurling debris and what police said was acid at the troops.

In the most violent confrontation since the forced removals began this week, several Israeli police and soldiers, in obvious discomfort, stripped off their clothes after being doused. Their comrades poured water over their heads and torsos to wash them off.

As forces cut through the barbed wire to reach the synagogue's roof, protesters threw sand and blue-green liquid and sprayed them with foam. Some used sticks to try to push away the ladders used by security forces to reach the roof.

Others reached the roof via shipping containers hoisted by a crane.

A sign hanging from the roof said, "We won't forget. We won't forgive."

Two officers slipped off a ladder to a ledge just below the roof because of oil thrown from above. Many policemen were covered in what appeared to be white paint. One, covered in a blanket, was carried away on a stretcher.

Eventually, protesters were pushed into the container, which had wire-mesh doors, and then carried into waiting buses.

The images were reminiscent of the removal of protesters from the Israeli settlement of Yamit in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula in 1982. Israel TV ran side-by-side shots of the evacuations of Kfar Darom and Yamit.

President Bush was "getting frequent and regular updates from his staff on the developments" while vacationing at his Texas ranch, White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said Thursday.

"The president continues to support Prime Minister Sharon and what he has called a very bold initiative," she said. "It's very courageous. We understand the deep sentiments that are felt and the difficulty one feels when leaving ... their home."

Thursday's confrontation was one of two at Gaza synagogues used as the last bastion by settlers opposed to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's withdrawal from Gaza, which Israel has occupied for 38 years. No deaths have been reported in the Gaza Strip pullout, but a Jewish settler, apparently despondent over the withdrawal, opened fire Wednesday at Palestinian workers in the West Bank, killing four.

Palestinians opened fire on Israeli troops on the road linking Israel to Gaza's Jewish settlements, and a soldier was slightly wounded, the army said.

At a synagogue in Neve Dekalim, the largest Israeli settlement in Gaza, the crowd chanted "Jews don't expel Jews!" as police charged into the prayer hall. Protesters booed, whistled and threw water on troops.

In the front rows, young men lay on the ground, linking arms, while those behind them tried to push away soldiers trying to get hold of arms and legs. Some of the protesters had their arms wrapped in leather tefilin prayer boxes and rocked fervently as they recited prayers. Rabbis in the crowd wore orange vests identifying them as clergy.

Protesters chanted "Blasphemy! Blasphemy!" as soldiers dragged some of the young men away by their feet,

then carried them feet first down a ramp onto a bus. One man was taken away on a stretcher, with an intravenous drip. Another was draped in an Israeli flag.

The people inside the synagogues have provided some of the fiercest resistance to the pullout.

It was no coincidence that they chose synagogues to make their last stand. Many of the settlers and their supporters are devout Jews who believe the West Bank and Gaza were promised to the Jews by God. They say their eviction is sacrilege.

Security forces dragged screaming residents out of homes, and settlers burned houses, fields and tires in protest.

Security officials said they expected to clear out all 21 Gaza settlements by Tuesday, more than two weeks ahead of schedule. By late Thursday, 17 settlements were empty, police said.

Neve Dekalim was completely cleared out by Thursday night, hours after soldiers burst into the synagogue and carried out about 1,500 protesters taking refuge there.

As the troops approached the synagogue, a bearded settler wearing a skullcap spat on an Israeli flag and ripped it into pieces. The man wore an orange Star of David on his shirt - reminiscent of the star the Nazis made Jews wear during World War II. Some soldiers involved in the operation burst into tears.

In the farming settlement of Netzer Hazani, protesters set fires that sent a huge plume of black smoke into the air. Youths in Shirat Hayam, a hard-line beachfront outpost, burned tires and garbage.

In nearby Kfar Yam, a settler armed with an M-16 rifle threatened to shoot troops if they attempt to evacuate him. He later surrendered.

The army declared a curfew in Al-Mawasi, a Palestinian town adjacent to Shirat Hayam and Kfar Yam, to protect settlers and soldiers during the pullout.

On Wednesday, a Jewish extremist in the West Bank killed four Palestinians in an apparent attempt to disrupt the Gaza pullout. Sharon called the shootings an act of "Jewish terror."

In Kfar Darom, soldiers formed cordons around Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, who oversaw the operation, to shield him from shouting settlers.

Thousands of soldiers entered the settlement at dawn and quickly encircled the synagogue and two nearby buildings. After failed attempts to negotiate a peaceful surrender, troops began moving into homes.

"Why did you become a soldier, to be in this crazy situation?" screamed a young mother, cradling a baby, as soldiers entered her home.

In another house, a husband and wife lay on the floor, shrieking and clutching their small children. A soldier participating in the evacuation of a religious school suddenly disobeyed orders and was quickly carried away by troops.

Troops also burst into a nursery school crowded with protesters. People sang and danced as the troops entered, and about two dozen young children played with toys. Troops quickly cleared out the building.

Moti Cohen, who came from Jerusalem to be with the settlers, said protesters at the synagogue hoarded sand bags and cans of foam spray for the confrontation. A large banner draped over the facade read: "For the Lord will not abandon His people or abandon His land."

Residents jeered the forces throughout the day, driving several soldiers to tears.

"You're right! Cry like we are crying!" a settler, still in his white prayer shawl, shouted while being loaded onto a bus. By midday, 200 people had been removed, the army said.

Noga Cohen, whose three children were maimed in a Palestinian shooting attack on a bus, said Israel was surrendering to Palestinian militants. On the door of her house was a sign that read: "In the event you knock on the door, you are a direct partner in the most terrible crime in the history of the nation of Israel."

Just a few yards outside Kfar Darom, dozens of Palestinians stood on rooftops to watch the evacuation.

"For the first time in the last few years I'm standing here without any fear that Israelis will shoot at me because their battle today is against themselves," farmer Mohammed Bashir said.

Sharon proposed his "disengagement plan" two years ago to ease Israel's security burden and help preserve Israel's Jewish character by placing Gaza's 1.3 million Palestinians outside the country's boundaries. Israel has occupied Gaza for 38 years.

The Palestinian Authority and the United States want the pullout to be the beginning of the "road map" peace process.

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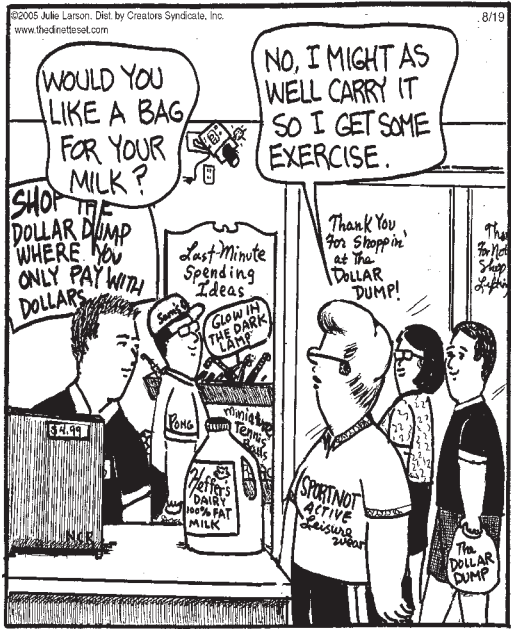
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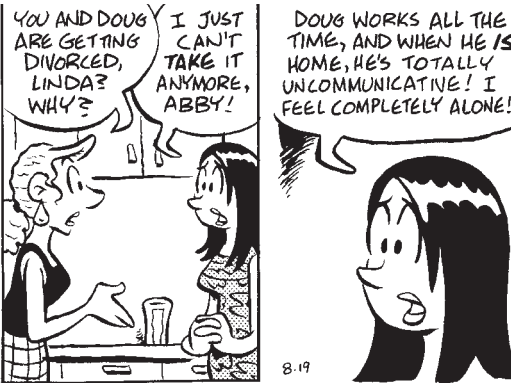


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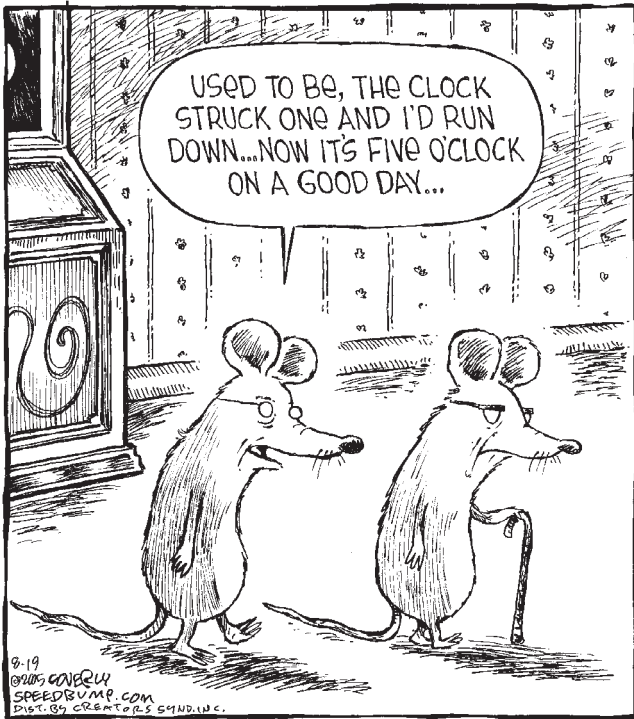
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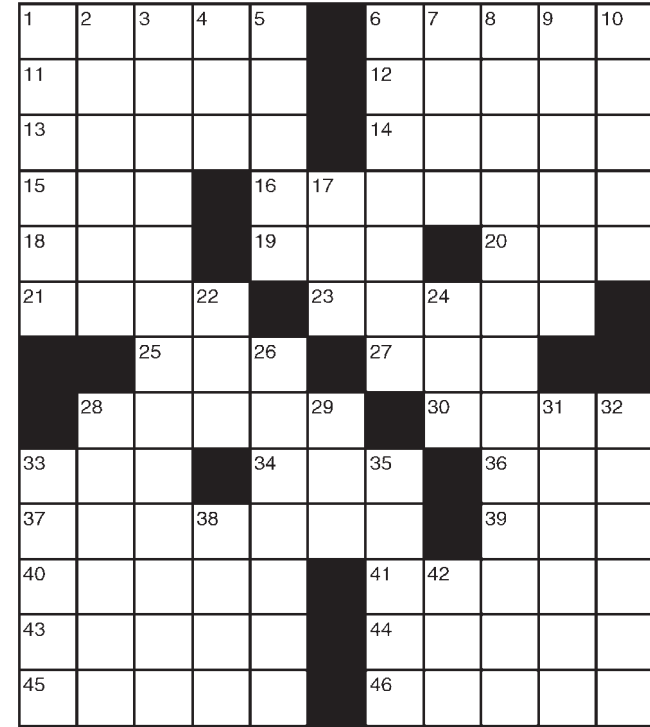
- 1 "42nd Street" song
- 6 Stadium tops
- 11 Sky color
- 12 Full price payer
- 13 Bart's mom
- 14 Singer Lena
- 15 Outdated
- 16 Indomitable
- 18 Born
- 19 — Kippur
- 20 Goal
- 21 Deserve
- 23 Pitcher Martinez
- 25 Chum
- 27 "This is tasty!"
- 28 Already
- 30 Workout spots
- 33 Abe's son
- 34 Dazzle
- 36 Fixed
- 37 Franklin's wife
- 39 General practice
- 40 Play place
- 41 Corpulent
- 43 Soda buy
- 44 Seasonal songs

- 45 Massage targets
- 46 Airport areas

DOWN

- 1 Singer Vic
- 2 Funnel-shaped flower
- 3 Neil Simon film
- 4 Work unit
- 5 Squalid
- 6 Benin, formerly
- 7 Sneaker problem
- 8 Chandler-based film
- 9 Noted current
- 10 Mount
- 17 Alley —
- 22 Sister
- 24 Excavated
- 26 Depressing things
- 28 Monopoly avenue
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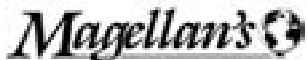
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