



FREE

Santa Monica Daily Press

August 21-22, 2004

A newspaper with issues

Volume 3, Issue 242

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ Ronnie Darnell Bell, 30, was arrested in Dallas in 1998 and charged with attempting, all alone, to rob the Federal Reserve Bank. (In the movie "Die Hard With a Vengeance," knocking off the New York Federal Reserve Bank required a small army of men and truckloads of weapons.) According to police, Bell was initially confused because there were no tellers, so he handed a security guard his note, reading, "This is a bank robbery of the Dallas Federal Reserve Bank, of Dallas, Texas, give me all the money. Thank you, Ronnie Darnell Bell." The guard pushed a silent alarm while an oblivious Bell chatted amiably, revealing to the guard that only minutes earlier he had tried to rob a nearby Postal Service office but that "they threw me out."

■ As of May 1999, the city-supported Icelandic Phalological Museum in Reykjavik was closing in on its goal of housing at least one sample penis from every mammal native to Iceland. Only "man" and one species of whale were missing, and curator Sigurdur Hjartarson had solved the first problem with a letter from an 83-year-old former Lothario promising his organ upon his death (in an erect state if doctors can act quickly enough). Some whale species, though, have only the tips displayed because the entire organs are too long (10 feet) or too heavy (over 100 pounds).

TODAY IN HISTORY

One hundred years ago, on August 21, 1904, jazz musician and band-leader William "Count" Basie was born in Red Bank, N.J.

■ In 1831, former slave Nat Turner led a violent insurrection in Virginia. (He was later executed.)

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Nicky Five Aces/Special to the Daily Press

(Left to right) Santa Monica Police officers Rob Dawson, sitting atop his steed 'Mr. Cool,' and Skystone Lambert, riding 'Spider-man,' patrol the Santa Monica Pier during Thursday night's Twilight Dance Series.

District keeps problems in house

BY GENEVA WHITMARSH

Daily Press Staff Writer

DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS

— If students get busted with drugs or alcohol this year, they may not face mandatory exile to another school, as was the case in years past.

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District board this week tweaked its existing controlled substances policy to make the subsequent transfer to another campus following a violation optional rather than mandatory.

A group of Malibu parents had actively lobbied the board to change its policy after eight Malibu students were found drunk at their prom last spring. As a result, they were forced to attend Santa Monica High School for the remainder of the school year.

Parents and some principals argued that such mandatory trans-

fers disrupt staff and harm students who might already be at risk for academic failure.

Among the concerns:

■ Sudden, unanticipated transfer of students does not provide time for the receiving school to prepare an equivalent academic program or become familiar with the history and needs of the student.

■ Students who transfer in the later part of one semester and return to their home school after the following semester have entered into two disruptive semesters.

■ Transferred students who use public or district transportation cannot stay after school for remedial or support groups.

■ Parents of transferred students find it harder to establish a working relationship and keep in

See EXILE, page 6

Sleeping tight may get costly

BY JOHN F. MULLER

Special to the Daily Press

DOWNTOWN — For some local hotel owners, the passing of a November ballot measure to tax the local tourism industry could translate into tens of thousands of dollars in lost profits. For others, the initiative, which could raise \$3.5 million annually for the city, represents a logical step that could do a lot of good for the hotel and tourism industries if spent correctly.

Regardless, industry officials agree the initiative is too complicated and too vague, not explaining to voters exactly where additional revenue raised by the tax would be spent.

At 12 percent, Santa Monica's hotel bed tax—the tax assessed to hotel visitors on a nightly basis—is expected to generate \$18.5 mil-

See BED BUGS, page 5

Rock and a hard place



Nicky Five Aces/Special to the Daily Press

A huge crowd rocked out recently on the Santa Monica Pier during a free concert that was part of the Twilight Dance Series, which runs every Thursday night through Sept. 2.

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Eddie Guerboian

GOOD TO EAT

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Tonight, wander Pisces

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The stars show the kind of day you'll have:

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Share some of your dreams with that special someone, and see what happens. You'll find that his or her responsiveness increases tenfold. Two heads work better than one. Your chance of realizing your goals becomes even more possible. A spontaneous get-together is fun. Tonight: Go back to being a duo.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ Others seem to be much more in the mood to talk and socialize. A child and/or lover becomes chatty. You have a delightful time visiting with friends or a loved one. Whatever you choose works. Tonight: Go out. Choose the most fun invitation.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Sometimes you find that your mind and your projects go in separate directions. Just be careful when working with dangerous machinery. You might need to do something ultimately relaxing. Tonight: Play it easy.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ Your inventiveness and creativity come through no matter what you choose to do. A friend expresses strong feelings. Romance flows, if that is what you want. Spontaneity works. Go with a whim, and you'll be happy. Tonight: Paint the town red.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★ You know when to cool your heels and slow down. Such is the case at the moment. You might have taken on a bit too much. Allow others to pitch in, and you'll see how very cared about you are. Tonight: Stay close to home.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ Express yourself in a positive, strong manner. You could be delighted by a partner's or loved one's unexpected gesture. Your energy is high. You are quite a force to be around. Please understand that you could easily exhaust others. Tonight: At a favorite spot.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ Spend a little on yourself, perhaps to spruce up your image — join a gym or have a massage. Sometimes you are so busy helping others that you forget yourself. Pamper yourself as you would a loved one. Talk about your hidden anger before it rages out of control. Tonight: Treat yourself first, then others if you want.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ The Moon in your sign makes you a force to be dealt with. Don't stop or hesitate. Your unpredictability mixed with your imagination only adds to your popularity and enjoyment of those around you. Tonight: Give up the word "no."



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★ Read Libra and consider following the same path. You and/or a family member are likely to create some form of uproar at home. Try not to take others personally. Share your feelings with someone you respect and trust. Tonight: At home, please.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Show others just how well the Goat knows how to enjoy him- or herself. Wherever you are, a celebration seems to break out. The spontaneity and unpredictability of the day might surprise even you. Relish the moment. Tonight: Leader of the gang.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ Others seek you out. You can be sure you're in the limelight, though you might prefer doing something else. Be inventive with a purchase. You could surprise yourself. Be aware of your public image. Tonight: A force to be dealt with.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ If you stretch and walk in someone else's shoes, your actions might surprise you. Sometimes you think you understand, but you really don't. Open up a discussion without judgment. A partner could be a touch difficult. Tonight: Be where your imagination can wander.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Powerhouse Mondays coming to end

By Daily Press staff

The Litwits at the Powerhouse present their last Monday evening of the summer on Monday at 8 p.m. at the Powerhouse Theater.

“MacBush!” will include: Variete con comedian Rick Overton; composers Suzy Williams and Bill Burnett; former mayor of Gainesville, Fla. Gary Gordon with the evening warcast; Former Second City players Menken and Menken; special ghost Darryl “We Are The Real Republicans” Henriques; Ocean Park’s own Paul Lyons with Palms Prankster Jeff Norman, plus some ideas for “restarting the 21st century.”

The theater is located at 3118 Second St. For details, call (310) 581-9400, or log onto www.stampoutbush.com.

Memorial held for former Elk

By Daily Press staff

There will be a memorial for Harold S. “Steve” Brouillette, who passed away on Aug. 9.

The memorial will be at the Elks Lodge at 1040 Pico Blvd. at 1 p.m. on Aug. 22. Brouillette was Exalted Ruler in 1997-1998. He had been an electrical contractor in Santa Monica for many years. He was president of the Contractors Association in 1955. He was a member of the Westside Sportsman. Brouillette was 93 years old.

For more information, call Curt Curtiss (310) 645-8989.

‘Oz’ night next week

By Daily Press staff

Fans of the classic “Wizard of Oz” will be able to check out the flick under the stars on the pier next week.

TCM and DirecTV present a special screening of “Oz” on Aug. 24 as part of the Santa Monica Film Festival. The screening will begin at 6 p.m.

For free tickets to the event, call the Santa Monica Convention and Visitor’s Bureau at (310) 393-7593 or on-line at www.smff.com.

Stepping up for mental illness

By Daily Press staff

To recognize 20 years in Santa Monica, community members are planning to step up with fundraising.

Step Up on Second is celebrating 20 years of providing assistance to individuals suffering from mental illness with the charity fundraising event “Art Heals,” a group display of member artwork at the Lowe Gallery in Santa Monica, 2034 Broadway on Sept. 30, from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

“The art show will highlight some of the gifted talents of our participants, all of whom are living with a diagnosed mental illness,” said Tod Lipka, CEO. More than 30 pieces of art will be on display, created by members through the “Art Heals” program at the Second Street facility.

The display, with additional client artwork, will then be moved to the Community Focus Gallery inside Santa Monica Place, to be on display to the public for a month.

The champagne reception for honored guests and event sponsors will begin at 6:30 p.m., and the catered event, with dessert provided by Loew’s Hotel, will begin at 7:15 p.m. Several of the artists will be at the reception, and there will be a wine bar, live jazz and valet parking.

Step Up on Second is a nonprofit corporation that assists individuals with severe and persistent mental illness reintegrate into the community. The agency provides long-term support to people in recovery and their families, offering educational, social and work programs, quality housing, and shower and laundry facilities, in addition to a daily meal program.



SURF REPORT

Saturday will see a small SSW swell mix with a touch of NW wind swell. South Bay spots will stay shadowed from the S swell but NW windswell will offer some ankle- to knee-high surf at most spots, with occasional sets to waist-high at best combo breaks in the north half of the bay. Northern LA breaks with good exposure to the S swell see inconsistent knee- to waist-high waves, while the standout spots pull in some bigger sets on occasion.

Look for mostly light wind on Saturday morning with building W winds in the 8-10 knot range through the afternoon.

Today the water is:

65°

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



LOW TIDES

HIGH TIDES

	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	6:45	1.6	8:24	1.5	12:54	4.0	1:27	5.1
SUNDAY	7:18	2.1	10:03	1.2	2:13	3.4	2:19	5.2
MONDAY	8:06	2.7	11:38	0.7	4:31	3.0	3:28	5.4
TUESDAY	9:46	3.0	N/A	N/A	6:52	3.2	4:48	5.6
WEDNESDAY	12:47	0.0	11:35	3.0	7:51	3.7	6:02	6.0
THURSDAY	1:40	-0.5	12:49	2.7	8:28	4.0	7:03	6.5
FRIDAY	2:24	-0.9	1:46	2.3	9:01	4.4	7:56	6.8

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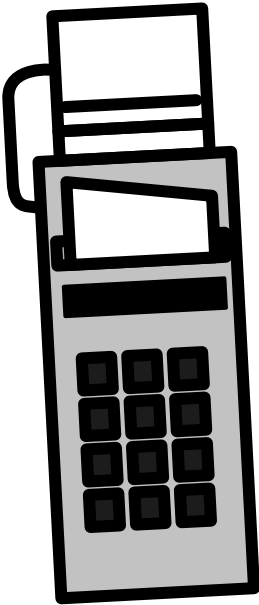
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OPINION

The Q Line

ON THE WINGS OF DESPAIR

This past week, Q-line asked:
“Does the increase of jet traffic in Santa Monica concern you? What can local politicians do to solve the problem?”
Here are your responses:

(Editor’s note: Due to a heavy response, not all answers were printed).

- ☉ “No. The increase in jet traffic does not concern me. It seems to me that that airport has been there a long time, longer than the people that are complaining about it. Didn’t they know there was an airport there when they moved there? It seems to me that they also were complaining years ago about propeller-driven traffic in and out of the airport. They made their bed and can live with it. They shouldn’t have bought there. They shouldn’t have built up around there. What the city council should do is nothing.”
- ☉ “Yes, there are too many jets in Santa Monica and they certainly should be curtailed back, especially at night. Also, they ought to enforce the laws that say the planes have to take off and keep their flight pattern until they over the coast so that they don’t turn out to the north or the south over the neighborhood. This is important. It would be a better idea if they closed the whole airport. Just think about what all that land could be used for — housing for the poor, things like that. More parks.”
- ☉ “In regards to your article concerning residents against airport pollution, I think the acronym for that group is called CRAP. And I think your publication of that article equals their acronym. I think you should do some research to find out what the true issues are because what you are putting in your paper is crap.”
- ☉ “The increase in jets at Santa Monica Airport really concerns us. There is clear and imminent danger to our health from the fumes and the black soot, known as particulates. There is danger to our lives and property if we have a crash. Last night, two or three jets missed the runway because of the marine layer, which is a common occurrence in this area. They came screaming over our house before they were finally able to land. This morning, when we were taking our walk, we actually observed a jet that had missed the runway. Where were the air traffic controllers when they were needed? Jets should be banned at this airport, just like they were before the 1994 Santa Monica FAA agreement.”
- ☉ “Santa Monica’s politicians can help increase jet traffic by loading up the airport with the Santa Monicans For Renters Rights council people, rent control board and all of the others that have clogged up the college board and commissions for a one-way flight anywhere but Santa Monica. Twenty-five years of their influence on life here is enough. Say ‘good-bye.’”
- ☉ “Yes, the jet traffic does concern me as a native of Santa Monica and living by the airport. I think that they should charge a very high luxury tax for Lear jets taking off from Santa Monica Airport because that’s a luxury utilizing our airport that taxpayers paid for and they are multi-millionaires, and heaven knows, Santa Monica needs the money. The other idea I had was to put the entire city council on a jet and let them fly away.”

- ☉ “I used to live near the Santa Monica Airport. I think it’s wonderful, but I also think that some safety precautions need to be put in.”
- ☉ “I would like to commend the Santa Monica Daily Press for focusing on this crucial matter. I moved within earshot of Santa Monica Airport 20 years ago and every year it has gotten worse. In the last five years, it has become absolutely unbearable. We are dealing with a major environmental and health hazard right in our midst. I think it is very significant if you look at an aerial photograph and you see how ridiculous the airport looks surrounded by a mass of housing. It’s extremely annoying to have to put up with this noise. It’s just not going away and this is a major problem. We’re looking at cancer clusters in addition to the noise and the pollution and the overriding safety considerations. We hardly need to remember 9/11 to know what can happen when a fully loaded jet crashes into offices and homes. Something has to be done. It’s appalling that the city has taken this long to let this situation deteriorate to where with the increase in fractional jet ownership we are having to put up with this on an accelerating curb of jets. Two have taken off while I have been talking.
- In 2015, the lease is up ... only 11 years. We need to start working right now to close that airport down and put that land to good use. Maybe a park. The views there are incredible. We could all enjoy a park up there, looking at the ocean.”
- ☉ “This morning, I noticed five planes within two hours that had taken off, and I became aware of their noise, so to speak. Two of them were jets. They made noise and disappeared. Three were prop planes, one of which was really loud. If I had to compare any of the planes, it had nothing to do with the jets. It was the prop planes, by far, that were louder. The airport has been there a long time and has been there before most of us moved into the vicinity of the airport. So I don’t think people need to be doing anything politically with the airport other than just doing what they are doing now, which is monitoring things.”
- ☉ “I live in the neighborhood west of the Santa Monica Airport and I am absolutely concerned about the increase in air traffic coming out of the airport. Not only the noise, pollution and so on and so forth, the question is what can the city do about it. Well, I think one of the things they can do about it is start enforcing the laws that were passed several years ago and fine the jet carriers who are violating the rules. I do hear these planes taking off early in the morning and late at night and I think nobody is really ... monitoring the takeoffs and landings.”
- ☉ “Yes, the increase in jet traffic concerns me. Yesterday, we were trying to have people over for dinner and eating outside. But after about 30 minutes, planes overhead were just so unbearable we had to come inside. It’s pointless to buy the white plastic furniture here because in two days it’s black, and then you realize ‘My God, we are all inhaling that everyday.’ That is what concerns me. Our local politicians don’t seem to care about it.”
- ☉ “After living in our home for 20 years, we have noticed an increase in planes and jets ... Besides the noise ... we also have a great amount of jet-fuel emission that leaves a soot on the house. We just have to wonder what effect that has on our bodies and our health, long term.”
- ☉ “In the last three years, I have seen air traffic double in activity during the day and night. I have been feeling the effect of that, both on air quality and a lot of increasing noise ... this has been quite the impact on me and my neighbors. We would like to see more done about it from the city. It seems that the city is reluctant to do anything.”

Postal Service welcomes you to get your licks in



MODERN TIMES
BY LLOYD GARVER

You no longer have to be dead to have your face on an official United States postage stamp. You no longer have to be famous. You don’t even have to be human. Last week, the Postal Service authorized a private company to sell postage to people who want to create their own stamps. All you have to do is choose a photo, upload it to Stamps.com, and order it. In about a week, you’ll be able to send out mail with stamps bearing that embarrassing photo of your now grown-up kid as a 2-year-old, in her pajamas, wearing pearls and earmuffs.

Ken McBride, chief executive of Stamps.com, says that orders have been pouring in for stamps featuring kids, pets and family celebrations. The stamps cost more than their face value, and there are rules: No nudity, no celebrities, no copy-

righted material, and no politically partisan images. So, forget about ordering that naked Dick Cheney stamp.

As with most innovations, I have mixed feelings about these personalized stamps. (I didn’t trust microwave ovens for years). At first, the stamps sounded like fun. I could see people using them, especially for special occasions like Christmas, birthdays, or after a weight loss. I thought I might send my college kids letters, using our dog, Rascal’s picture as the stamp. I figured they’d think it was cute. (Then I tried to remember the last time they thought anything I did was cute. I came up with “never”). But there were plenty of photos that I’ve taken that might amuse my friends if I used them as stamps. And most of all, personalized postage would finally give me something to do with my digital photos besides putting them on my computer and never printing them.

But I started feeling a little guilty as I considered personalized stamps in a broader, historical context. Stamps are not just indications of how much postage costs. They are little bits of history. They

represent countries, and often honor heroes. They symbolize a nation’s struggles and its triumphs. George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin have been on our stamps. It doesn’t seem to be in the same tradition to have stamps with a picture of that guy down the street with the bad toupee and the old Buick. The White House belongs on a stamp. Does your first apartment? It was fitting that the Marines at Iwo Jima were honored for putting up the flag. Should we honor you and your buddy in the same way for putting up a basketball hoop in the driveway?

Will stamp collectors brag about having the entire series of the Johnson family picnic in Omaha, Neb.? Will they trade their mint condition Bobby Edwards T-Ball stamp for a Janice Smith, “This is what my new kitchen looks like” stamp?

Maybe this innovation will motivate people to rediscover the lost art of letter writing. Hardly anybody writes personal letters these days, preferring to use the phone or e-mail. It would be ironic if the digital camera and computer promoted a

return to the old ways. And it is possible that people will be more willing to sit down and write a letter to their friends, now that they can show off their bowling trophy on the envelope.

But where will it all stop? Should I worry about personalized American Flags next? Maybe instead of stars in the blue field, they’d have a picture of Uncle Oscar’s new teeth.

So, I’m a little confused about this. I’m not sure if the personalized stamp seems weird to me because it’s weird or just because it’s a new idea. I certainly don’t want to participate in something that seems almost sacrilegious, that might make a mockery of a great American tradition. Then again, Rascal is a really cute dog.

(Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from “Sesame Street” to “Family Ties” to “Frasier.” He also has read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the “Modern Times” column for CBSnews.com’s opinion page and can be reached at smdp@lloydgarvermoderntimes.com

LOCAL

Hoteliers losing sleep over potential tax hike

BED BUGS, from page 1

lion for City Hall this year. The measure, which was unanimously placed on the ballot earlier this month by the City Council, would increase the tax rate to 14 percent and increase nightly rates at local hotels by an average of about \$4.

With the new dollars, the city should be able to more easily balance the budget for the current year and 2005-2006. It would also help fund the city's public schools. With an additional \$3.5 million, City Hall could cover its stated ambition of giving an additional \$6 million to the schools each year for the next five years.

However, it is feared that raising the tax could turn away some potential business, especially travel agents who buy package deals in bulk for foreign tourists. The city's current tax is lower than the taxes in a number of surrounding cities, including Beverly Hills, Marina Del Rey and West Hollywood.

It could also deal a significant blow to medium-sized Santa Monica hotels that have booked foreign visitors in travel packages at set rates. For large hotels that do not offer such packages, individual tourists will pay the increase in tax as they rent out new rooms. At the medium-sized hotels that do, hotel owners will have to pay the tax out of their own pockets for all the packages they have already sold, because they can't renegotiate them in order to accommodate for the new tax level.

For Hotel Carmel on Broadway, which does 60 percent of its business in pre-sold packages to international tourists, an increase in tax could mean losses of tens of thousands of dollars.

"I know the City Council was thinking that this was an easy source to average the budget, and I'm not opposed to having hotels pay their fair share," said Sherry Kellogg, the hotel's general manager. "Our gripe is the process. We weren't really given any notice, and when they said it's going to vote in November it does hurt. We work way in advance in order to promote the city of Santa Monica as a destination, and on top of that we have to deal with this (tax increase coming out of our own pockets).

"It's going to devastate us. It's like a slap on both cheeks."

Hotel Carmel has packages pre-sold until March 2006. If the measure passes, the rate will pop up to 14 percent in January 2005, forcing the hotel to swallow unexpected expenses for more than a

year. Kellogg expressed frustration with how quickly the proposed measure would be instituted.

"To bring it to a vote and bring it so rapidly to fruition, in my mind, is unacceptable, because it limits the way we can do business," she said. "You're talking about a lot of money in a very short period of time."

The city hasn't changed its bed tax rate since 1989.

Larger hotel owners were also wary about the proposal, in part because it does not specify where the new funds will be utilized.

"I understand the need to increase," said Francois Khoury, the general manager of the Doubletree Guest Suites Hotel on Fourth Street. "The only thing I would have liked to see is a predetermined amount allocated to the CVB (Conventions and Visitors Bureau) instead of the general fund where it could be used for anything. For them to justify the increase in bed tax, we need something to offset it by."

City Councilman Bob Holbrook agreed that a portion of the money should be earmarked for the bureau if the measure passes, and stressed that the tax would also pump money into the city to be used to maintain city services that have been declining and fund the schools.

"It's important that the operators of the hotels that have to charge higher rates receive a direct benefit from it," he said. "We need to make sure that the visitors of the community are well served. The bureau could also help strengthen our position as a tourist destination, which would be well received by the hotel and tourism community."

Misti Kearns, the executive director of the Visitors and Convention Bureau, said she was hopeful the city would choose to spend a portion of the new revenue on the bureau in the event the measure passes. In a 2000 economic impact study, the city found that the bureau helped bring \$798 million into the city on a \$968,000 budget. It currently receives \$1.5 million annually.

"There isn't any guarantee that the visitors bureau would receive any of it," she said. "I do believe that the city is supportive of what we do and that they do understand the extensive impact. The bottom line is that tourism means jobs. Without further reinvestment of that money, we can't be sure that we can maintain or increase that revenue stream."

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School board OKs tentative deal with teachers

EXILE, from page 1

touch with the new set of teachers who are located in another city.

Board members approved, per the recommendation, changing the current wording of "shall" to "may," and allowing principals to look at violations on a case-by-case basis.

The existing policy also was revamped to require any student found violating the substance policy to complete 24 hours of substance abuse counseling, perform 40 hours of community service and, if deemed necessary, participate in a 12-step program. The child's parents must also attend counseling.

If a student is found to have committed

a second offense, the principal "shall recommend that the student be expelled from the district."

Board members also discussed the possibility of a full-time on-campus suspension center for five-day suspensions.

"Somewhere along the line we need to make sure they're on campus," said school board member Maria Leon-Vazquez. "Maybe they're isolated somewhere, but they're doing their work on campus."

School officials, however, questioned whether there are adequate resources for such a center. For example, on-campus suspensions would require additional staff to supervise the students.

"If we don't have the resources, we

need to look at what it's going to take and what the cost is to do something like that," Leon-Vazquez said. "I don't want it to just sit there."

The revamped policy was scheduled to be printed Friday and be distributed to students, parents and staff at the start of the upcoming school year, which begins Sept. 8.

In other business, the school board recommended approving the tentative agreement between local teachers and school officials. The agreement, reached in July, is set to be voted on by members of the district's Classroom Teacher's Association next month and will cover the period 2003-04 through 2004-05.

The contract scales back health care benefits and provides for a 1 percent pay

increase. The health care changes are expected to save the cash-strapped school district more than \$500,000 a year and help curtail future escalating medical costs. According to the deal, single teachers with the most expensive PPO plan will pay for the portion of their coverage that exceeds the basic HMO plan. Families and couples already had to pay that difference.

Board members also recognized Mark Kelly as the new principal of Malibu High School. Also receiving acknowledgment at the meeting were Malibu High School assistant principals Suzanne Webb-Monastero and Matthew Horvath, Santa Monica High School's "A" House principal, Wendy Wax Gellis, and "I" House principal Eva Mayoral.

Cities tackling violence at Internet gaming cafes

BY ALEX VEIGA

AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES — Six days a week, teens crowd the Blue Screen Gaming cybercafe to hunt each other down with assault rifles inside virtual worlds created by a network of personal computers.

They sit for hours, eyes fixed on their flashing monitors, their headphones trapping the racket of simulated gunfire so only random clicks on keyboards are heard — until the storefront salon erupts in triumphant yelps and laughter.

"Ooh! That was beautiful," hoots Ricardo Gama, 16, after a friend lobs a grenade to kill three opponents playing the terrorist-fighting game "Counter Strike: Source Beta."

At gaming cybercafes the world over, pixelated warfare is joined and nobody gets hurt. But real-life episodes of violence at several such businesses in Southern California have prompted municipal crackdowns; Los Angeles is the latest, and largest, California city to impose restrictions.

Beginning Saturday, an ordinance mandates that the city's 30 Internet gaming parlors enforce the city's long-standing curfew for minors and pay for in-store surveillance cameras. There are other restrictions, among them limits on how many computers each business can operate and the prohibition of dark window coverings.

Cybercafe owners are chafing.

"There may have been problems with certain individual locations, but those could have been handled another way other than with blanketwide legislation," said Ernest Miller, a spokesman for San Francisco-based iGames, which represents about 500 PC gaming parlors in the United States and abroad.

Blue Screen owner Lisa Woo-Rogers says she has never had any violence problems at her establishment.

"This is going to cost an outpour of money that we weren't necessarily going to spend," she complained.

California municipalities are alone in passing specific laws covering Internet gaming parlors, though some cities have sought to apply existing arcade zoning laws to the gaming cafes, Miller said.

Several shootings near cybercafes in 2002, two of them fatal, prompted the LA ordinance, which passed last month. In one of the fatal shootings, witnesses told police that the victim, a member of an

Asian gang, was at an LA cybercafe hours before his body was found. In the other homicide, the victim was shot at an Internet cafe in the San Fernando Valley. The next month and not far away, one youth was shot in the leg and another severely beaten at separate cybercafes.

In addition, a Los Angeles police analysis found that 86 percent of the 134 people arrested at cybercafes were minors, most for curfew and truancy violations. Officials became convinced that the cafes tend to be gang havens.

"We wanted to put in measures before we have future problems," said Councilman Dennis Zine, who proposed the ordinance.

Miller takes issue with the theory that cybercafes are more of a magnet for gangs than any other place for youths.

"A haven for gang activity can be any location where people gather — corner liquor stores, pool halls or cinemas," Miller said. A business's location can be a major factor, he said.

Miller, who operates an Internet gaming parlor in Whittier, also blames sensationalist media coverage, which he maintains wrongly links games with violence.

Since Los Angeles began mulling its own ordinance more than a year ago, there have been no reports of serious crimes associated with cybercafes, said Los Angeles Police Lt. Debra A. Kirk.

"They realized they had to clean up their own act," Kirk said. "They've been self-regulating in anticipation of this ordinance."

Woo-Rogers maintains that her cafe has long adhered to the city's curfew, which prohibits those under 18 from roaming the streets during school hours or after 10 p.m. without a guardian.

She estimates that it will now cost her \$2,500 to install video surveillance and buy a police permit. Other operators, especially those who have crowded computers into small spaces, could be forced to turn customers away or spend on costly refurbishment (the ordinance has per-computer space requirements).

Still, the Los Angeles regulations are "very reasonable," Miller said, compared to some earlier ordinances such as one enacted in Garden Grove. That city passed an ordinance requiring businesses to log customers, have an adult and security guard present, limit hours and videotape their premises.

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Masters in the dog house

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — It seems sometimes a man isn't a dog's best friend.

After hearing horrific stories of tethered dogs with chains embedded in their necks, living out miserable lives in the summer heat or winter cold with little or no water, the City Council voted this week to boost the standard of canine living.

Owners could now be in the dog house and forced to pay a \$250 fine for failing to provide a clean, dry home for dogs that are kept outside.

"We have people who think proper shelter is an old, rusted-out car body," said Cmdr. David Diliberto of the city's Department of Animal Services.

The council ordered a draft of an ordinance outlawing the practice of permanently chaining dogs in yards and setting strict standards for dog houses. There are similar laws in other cities, including New Orleans and Washington, D.C.

"A lot of people are watching Los Angeles and hoping to see some leadership down there," Sacramento animal

services chief Hector Cazares said, adding he intends to take a similar proposal to the Sacramento City Council.

The ordinance would make it illegal for anyone to tie up a dog for an extended period of time. If a dog must be restrained to keep it away from the gardener, for example, or because a fence has broken, owners would have to tether the animals with a non-choke collar on a leash at least three times the dog's body length.

Dogs must also have access to water and shelter at all times.

Dog houses would have to be leak proof and equipped with clean bedding. From November to May, doghouse windows and doors would have to have flaps to keep out the cold; and from June to October, there would have to be refuge out of the sun.

Exemptions would be dogs kept indoors or those with access to doggie doors.

"This is not creating a whole new group of dog police," Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski said. "It's mostly to empower animal control when they get a complaint."

Paw Project put to test

By Daily Press staff

The Paw Project, a Santa Monica-based nonprofit animal welfare organization, is the sponsor of Assembly Bill 1857, legislation introduced by Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) that would protect native, wild and exotic cat species such as lions, tigers, cougars and bobcats from the painful and unnecessary surgical procedure known as "declawing."

The bill already has been approved by the State Assembly with a bi-partisan vote of 48-28 and will be presented for a vote by the entire Senate before the legislative recess at the end of August. AB 1857 does not apply to domestic house cats. In 2003, The Paw Project spearheaded movements to outlaw declawing in West Hollywood and to pass resolutions against the practice in Malibu, San Francisco, and Berkeley.

AB 1857 will ban declawing of big cats in the state's animal cruelty statutes. The bill makes it a misdemeanor for anyone to perform the surgery and comes with a possible penalty of up to a year in jail and/or a \$10,000 fine. The penalty is consistent with other violations of the animal cruelty statutes, such as cock-fighting exhibitions or maliciously maiming an animal.

Jennifer Conrad, DVM, a Santa Monica veterinarian and founder of The Paw Project, has repaired more than 100 crippled feet of animals who had been declawed, mostly by animal trainers for use in film and television. Declawing is an amputation of the toe bones that contains the claws. Tendons, nerves and muscles are severed when the bone is removed. The effects of declawing are particularly debilitating for big cats and

can result in a variety of painful complications and lameness, veterinarians. AB 1857 allows for declawing for therapeutic purposes only, such as treatment of chronic infection.

"Fortunately, there are a growing number of animal trainers who know that declawed cats are not safer to be around and that declawed cats can become dangerous biters," Conrad said. "There are many cases of people being attacked and killed, or gravely injured by the teeth and jaws of a declawed cat."

"In fact, declawing these big cats can lead to a false sense of security, which can encourage handlers to take risks with these animals that they might not otherwise, endangering both the handler and the public," she added.

The veterinarian for Siegfried and Roy has recently admitted that he had declawed Montecore, the tiger that delivered the near-fatal bite to Roy Horn.

The American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians and the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians felt the common practice of declawing captive wild cats was an important enough issue to officially declare their opposition to the procedure earlier this year. The Humane Society of the United States, The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights, The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and many other animal welfare organizations also support the bill. Declawing is illegal in many industrialized countries around the world.

"California should take the lead in this country and outlaw this cruel, inhumane, and totally unnecessary procedure," Koretz said.

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NATIONAL

Celebrity chefs in Vegas are kicking it up a notch

BY ADAM GOLDMAN
Associated Press Writer

LAS VEGAS — The waiter appears tableside wearing a fashionable three-piece suit and tie. Before reciting the day's special menu items, he recounts the restaurant's devotion to farm-fresh produce and tosses out a morsel about its namesake, chef Bradley Ogden.

"Unlike other celebrity chefs," the waiter says, "Bradley Ogden is here. He's preparing the food as we speak."

While Las Vegas has attempted to put itself on the cooking map, culinary critics have leveled their forks, charging the city with trying to accomplish its gastronomic goal at the expense of the food.

Many of the well-known chefs who landed lucrative deals with major hotel-casinos have abandoned their kitchens to underlings. Some of the most lavish eateries are merely cash cows to feed dynasties and savory outposts in more important food cities such as New York, Los Angeles or San Francisco.

"It could be so much better if the chefs were there actually doing the cooking," Esquire magazine food critic John Mariani said. "It's all about the money — the astounding amount of money that can be made."

Ogden took a different approach. He moved to Las Vegas and accomplished what no other chef here has done: He won a prestigious James Beard award this year for the nation's best new restaurant, the equivalent of the industry's Academy Award or Pulitzer Prize.

"If I wasn't here every day that wouldn't have happened," Ogden said. "A lot of the chefs don't like me being in the kitchen every day. It forces the bar."

When Bradley Ogden opened last year in Caesars Palace on St. Patrick's Day, Ogden didn't plan to spend most of his time in the kitchen. At most, Ogden thought he would burn one or two days a month there.

His other successful restaurants in San Diego and the San Francisco Bay area, including the renowned Lark Creek Inn in Larkspur, Calif., demanded much of his energies.

But that commitment intensified when Caesars wanted to emblazon his name in huge letters atop the place.

"If you put your name on something it has to be great," Ogden said, who said he puts in at least 70 hours a week in the sprawling kitchen. "If you are not there, it's too big of a risk. The risk is getting a

bad rep. It will catch up to you."

The elegant restaurant, across from Celine Dion's theater, cost about \$6 million to build, said the 50-year-old Ogden, who has full operational control. It specializes in new American cuisine.

When diners spy him inside, Ogden says, "people are sort of blown away by that."

For good reason. The list of celebrity chefs who have opened restaurants in Las Vegas and don't live here is longer than a fillet knife: Wolfgang Puck, Thomas Keller, Stephen Hanson, Emeril Lagasse, Tom Colicchio, Charlie Palmer, Jean-Georges Vongerichten, Michael Mina, Nobu Matsuhisa and Hubert Keller.

Others are on the way. Rick Moonen, Guy Savoy, Bobby Flay, Joel Robuchon, Alain Ducasse and Daniel Boulud all have restaurants set to open by 2005. Mario Batali and Paul Bocuse are said to be discussing putting their stamp on Sin City.

It's likely they won't be shopping for homes in Las Vegas.

"The new action that has rolled into town seems to hold to the same 'who-cares-if-the-chef's-never-here?' attitude of the past," Mariani wrote in his weekly newsletter called "Virtual Gourmet."

"Does anyone seriously believe these fellows will be spending a major part of their time there? Can you see the 78 year-old Bocuse shuttling back and forth between Lyons and Las Vegas every two weeks?"

Some might ask — though not the food elite — why it matters if chefs are present every night inspecting the dishes.

Critics argue it's like Joe Torre leading the Yankees or Gen. George S. Patton commanding the 3rd Army across Europe. They might not fire a shot or swing a bat, but their presence is the difference between success and failure, brilliance and mediocrity.

"Every single musician in the New York Philharmonic is the best in the world, and they need a conductor," Mariani said. "Even the best cooks in Las Vegas need a conductor."

MGM Grand President Gamal Aziz has led the revival of his hotel-casino by luring Colicchio, Mina, Hanson and Puck. The restaurants are a major success, he said. In 2003, food and beverage revenues were \$167 million, up from \$151 million in 2002. The casino is projected to do \$200 million this year and could reach \$225 million once all the property's projects are completed.



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“We played in Prague and Budapest on our very first tour, in 1996, and this summer was our third visit to those cities,” he added. “Each time, the audiences have increased and the people were excited to have us back.”

A big thrill for the orchestra was playing in the baroque splendor of Kromeriz Palace where Amadeus was filmed.

“Everyone grabbed their cameras, and people played their videos for us on their laptops in the tour bus,” Gross said.

Along with new American music, the orchestra played Dvorak, Bach and Haydn.

For Gross, the tour had a very special meaning. Gross’ mother came from Tokay, in the famed wine region of Hungary, and the orchestra performed a benefit concert there for the restoration of the local synagogue.

Gross’ mother emigrated to America from Tokay in 1938 and the members of her family who survived World War II joined her in America in 1956.

Before the war, there were 6,000 people living in Tokay, among them, 1,000 Jews. The synagogue was one of the finest buildings in the town. When the Jews were deported to Auschwitz in 1944, the synagogue was laid waste. Now, two of Gross’ cousins are raising funds to restore the synagogue. The concert in Tokay was a benefit for the cause.

The Santa Monica Chamber Philharmonia is comprised of Santa Monica Symphony members along with players from California, New York and Oregon. Previous tours have taken them to France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Poland and The Netherlands.

Allen Robert Gross can be seen conducting the Santa Monica Symphony’s 2004-2005 season of four Sunday concerts begins on Oct. 10 at 7:30 p.m. in the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, with a concert featuring virtuoso violinist Martin Chalifour playing Ravel’s showpiece “Tzigane,” “Rhythm Changes” by the acclaimed young Pasadena composer Peter Knell, and William Schuman’s “New England Triptych,” with themes from traditional American music.

After the intermission, will be Schumann’s “Rhenish Symphony,” a celebration of the majesty of the river and the triumph of life.

BY D. LYNN WALDRON

Special to the Daily Press

The Santa Monica Chamber Philharmonia, led by Santa Monica Symphony Conductor and Music Director Allen Robert Gross, have just returned from what they describe as a triumphal concert tour of central Europe.

“Everywhere we go, people have heard of Santa Monica,” Gross said. “We are musical ambassadors for the United States and audiences want to hear new American music, which I always include.”

This year, they performed Malibu composer Maria Newman’s violin concerto “Lux Aeterna.”

“I love Maria’s music,” Gross said.



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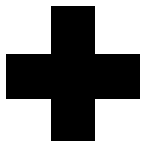


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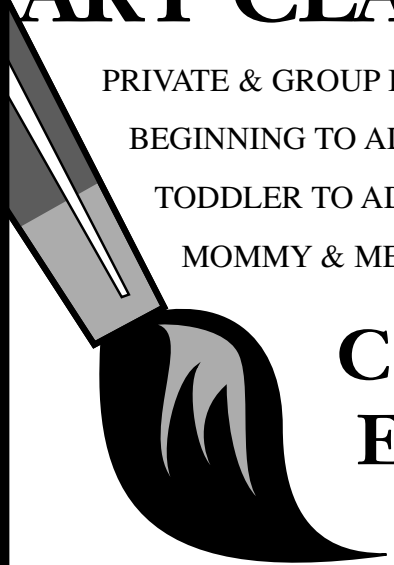
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NATIONAL

New commercial ports planned to ease congestion from Mexico

BY ARTHUR H. ROTHSTEIN
Associated Press Writer

TUCSON, Ariz. — Authorities are planning to upgrade or build new commercial ports at San Luis and Nogales to ease congestion that has led to a declining number of trucks crossing from Mexico.

Meanwhile, Mexican officials intend to increase the number of produce trucks moving through the Lukeville port of entry. Sonoran Gov. Eduardo Bours Castelo was expected to visit the area Thursday.

During fiscal 2003, 1,043 trucks, or fewer than three a day, crossed into Arizona at that port — least of any in the state.

Mexican officials have said they plan for between five and 20 trucks a day, mostly hauling produce intended for the Phoenix area, to cross there.

"Expanding it from three or four a day to 15 or 20 is a significant increase, but in absolute terms it's a very, very small volume," said David Randolph, border coordination officer for the Arizona-Mexico Commission.

The Mariposa commercial port of entry at Nogales, one of that city's two vehicle crossings, is Arizona's busiest commercial port, with a mix of goods from maquiladoras, or manufacturing plants, and much of the nation's imported winter produce and bulk trade.

But figures compiled in a University of Arizona study for the Arizona-Mexico Commission show that north-bound commercial truck crossings declined steadily from 1998 through 2002.

The numbers also showed that truck crossings dropped each year at Nogales, down to about 242,000 in 2002 — a drop of 6.4 percent over the four years.

"Arizona in the last several years has actually been losing market share for a variety of reasons," Randolph said. "One is the fact that we have congestion at our ports of entry."

Companies that consider setting up plant operations south of the border look at how quickly their trucks can cross the international boundary, he said.

But not everyone agrees that traffic congestion is the culprit.

"It's just the trade patterns," said Brian Sweeney, commercial compliance officer for field operations in

Tucson for the Department of Customs and Border Protection.

"It's not the congestion. You're not going to drive five hours to save 15 minutes. There's more trade in El Paso and Laredo (than in Nogales) because of the population," he said.

"The problem with Mariposa is it was never designed to handle the volume of traffic it's handling now," Randolph said.

Seasonal traffic there reaches its highest levels from January through March, when 1,200 to 1,400 trucks cross daily, most bringing winter vegetables to warehouses in Nogales, Ariz.

"Traffic could back up several miles" waiting to go through one of two truck lanes to cross the border, Randolph said.

Efforts for a short-term fix, involving building a fast lane for free and secure movement of low-risk trucks, is under way with an Arizona Department of Transportation grant, Randolph said.

But a long-term solution must start with a congressionally funded feasibility study to redesign and reconfigure an expanded commercial capacity, which officials hope they can start later this year, Randolph said. Construction at Nogales is unlikely before 2009 or 2010, he added.

Feasibility studies were completed this year for a new commercial port for San Luis, with a construction target date of 2007 or early 2008, Randolph said.

The San Luis port now is clogged with a mix of commercial and passenger vehicles, Arizona-Mexico Commission executive director Marco Lopez said. It handled 38,525 trucks for the last fiscal year — 106 a day.

Lopez and Randolph predicted little impact from a Supreme Court ruling allowing Mexican trucks to bring goods into the United States interior, since Mexican truckers will not be allowed to haul products point-to-point in this country.

Volume of traffic coming through Arizona's other ports of entry is quite low. For the last fiscal year, fewer than 26,000 trucks crossed through Douglas; 3,264 entered through Naco and 1,616 at Sasabe.

Las Vegas water officials back off on declaring drought emergency

By The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Southern Nevada water officials are backing off plans to impose emergency drought measures next year, crediting area residents with cutting water consumption.

"There's no need to go to the next step," said Pat Mulroy, Southern Nevada Water Authority general manager.

She told the authority board on Wednesday that while the drought hasn't eased, area residents cut water consumption about 15 percent from 2002 to 2003.

"We're watching what the community is doing very, very closely, and the response has been outstanding," she said.

The shift drew criticism from Daniel Patterson, a desert ecologist with the Tucson, Ariz.-based Center for Biological Diversity, which monitors drought issues.

"I think there has been a pattern of denial by Pat (Mulroy) and the water authority," Patterson said. "It's troubling because they're going to have to get really serious about sustainable water use."

Mulroy said water consumption in the Las Vegas area dropped from 318,000 acre-feet in 2002 to less than 272,000 acre-feet in 2003, while the area population grew at a rate of about 5,000 people a month.

An acre-foot is 326,000 gallons, or enough to 1 1/2 average southern Nevada households, according to water authority figures.

The authority credits a "Water Smart" landscape pro-

gram with helping cut outdoor water use by encouraging the replacement of thirsty grass turf with dry desert landscaping.

Environmentalist Jeffery van Ee, who served on a water authority panel that considered water austerity measures, said the authority should also encourage indoor water conservation. While Nevada gets return-flow credits for sewer water it collects, treats and returns to Lake Mead, van Ee said the process could eventually foul the regional water supply.

Emergency would be the most severe of three drought stages the water authority set in February 2003. It would allow water-rate hikes, tighter restrictions on water use, bigger fines for water scofflaws and a complete ban on watering decorative turf.

The region gets about 90 percent of its water from Lake Mead, the Colorado River reservoir behind Hoover Dam. With the lake level expected to drop below 1,125 feet above sea level by year's end, the water authority was planning to declare a drought emergency. The lake elevation was just under 1,127 feet on Thursday.

Authority officials are recommending the Lake Mead link be dropped as a drought index in favor of criteria dependent on water consumption.

Exact benchmarks have not been set, but an emergency would be declared if water use increases, the drought significantly worsens, or both.

"An emergency should be just that, an emergency," Mulroy said.

NATIONAL



Park Service works to warn travelers of delays

BY BECKY BOHRER

Associated Press Writer

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, Wyo. — Stuck in a long line of vehicles near a construction site, Darby Long took the delay in stride this hot August day. He reclined in his SUV, dangled a foot from a window and tried to catch a short nap.

"For me, this hasn't been a big deal," said a slightly disheveled Long, of Charleston, S.C. "There are worse places to be stuck."

It may be the splendor and natural beauty that attract travelers like Long to Yellowstone and other national parks each summer. But it's the road construction, the subsequent traffic delays and long lines, that often keep them in one place longer than anticipated. Summer construction is a fact of life for many national parks and an inconvenience not all travelers take as well as Long.

But the Park Service and some of the "gateway" towns near park entrances are trying to make the necessary construction a bit more bearable, using tools like the Internet and e-mail and old-fashioned methods like fliers and word of mouth to keep travelers aware of work and delays and to keep frustration levels low.

Employees like Christopher Rast in Yellowstone distribute road information fliers with maps at park entrances. Local business and tourism officials send faxes and e-mails to motor clubs and other contacts. And park concession workers provide information in park lodges and in confirmations sent in advance to visitors who've booked stays.

The idea, officials said, is to keep visitors as well informed as possible about the work that must be done within a relatively limited time — winter comes early and stays late in Yellowstone — helping ease any frustration they may otherwise have at seeing a stop sign and line of cars forming.

Besides Yellowstone, where three large road construction projects are under way, work has begun on what's expected to be the largest overhaul in decades on the famous Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park in northwestern Montana.

In Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, crews are in the first of a planned two-year, \$5 million project for 17 miles of major road improvement. And work has also begun on a stretch of the scenic Beartooth Highway, near Yellowstone's least-visited northeast gate and the town of Cooke City, Mont.

Road work is typically undertaken each summer in the park, with this year not dramatically different from years past, Yellowstone spokesman Al Nash said. Having three projects under way in relatively close proximity, though, may make it seem to travelers that there's more work going on than usual, he said.

One of the potential headaches for visitors in Yellowstone this year is on Sylvan Pass, near the park's eastern entrance. It is where Long ended up lounging for nearly a half-hour on his way to find a hiking trail.

The pass is a winding stretch of road offering beautiful scenery but potentially dangerous conditions; parts of the road have no guardrails and steep dropoffs. It was along this stretch last month that a mudslide buried a portion of the road, trapping tourists and closing the east entrance for several days. The cost of the pass project is about \$26 million, Nash said.

In Cody, about 50 miles east of the park, visitors can find out at the local chamber of commerce or businesses just what to expect in the way of road work or delays. Signs nearing the park also alert travelers of the work ahead.

Gene Bryan, executive director of the Cody Country Chamber of Commerce, said a common complaint from tourists about the work on Sylvan Pass is that the road closes early and some visitors cannot make it to their evening destinations.

That stretch of road has been closing at 8 p.m., and access will be even more limited after Labor Day, the unofficial end of the summer travel season.

"Some folks get caught up in the excitement of Yellowstone and forget to get out" before the road closes, Bryan said.

Nash said park officials are mindful of the visitor experience. Roughly 3 million people visit Yellowstone each year, and experiencing delays for construction is not what many expect to encounter.

"For a lot of visitors, a lot of their experience at Yellowstone is traveling the roads," Nash said. "And we need to be sensitive to keep that experience as much as other visitors had earlier."

Dunraven Pass, another popular route in Yellowstone, is closed and likely will be until next year, as a nearly 10-mile stretch of road undergoes its first major rebuild in decades, Nash said. Completion of the total project depends largely on the availability of funding, he said, adding the current phase will cost about \$10 million.

Work is also set to begin next year on the first phase of a 38-mile reconstruction project expected to last seven years and delay traffic along Togwotee Pass, another Wyoming route leading toward Yellowstone and Grand Teton.

Lisa Murphy, a spokeswoman for the Wyoming Department of Transportation, said a key part of that project will be keeping the public informed. A marketing firm will focus on getting travelers information and keeping them coming through towns such as Dubois, Riverton, Lander and Jackson, she said.

Workers in local businesses will be trained and provided with the latest information, and an official hired by the department will handle day-to-day information, such as how long delays will be.

The idea, she said, is to communicate with one voice — and minimize the effect of the work on towns that look to the tourist trade.

"We want people to know that they're still open for business up there," Murphy said.

To inform visitors about road construction and other happenings, park and business and tourism officials use a

variety of methods.

Back in Yellowstone, near Sylvan Pass, there weren't many complaints on one recent day as travelers waited near a construction site. A young woman with a stop sign informed motorists it was a good opportunity for them to get out of their vehicles and stretch their legs.

Some took photos or chatted with strangers; a motorcycle rider opted to flirt with the young flagger.

Andy Leach and Dana Weniger, who were traveling to Seattle, found some shade along the side of the road and set out a picnic lunch of sandwiches and cookies. At another delay, Frank Pyle, of Logan, Utah, used the time to check out the climbing gear stowed in the back of his vehicle for a trip in Grand Teton.

The wait is a little frustrating now, he said. "But it will be worth it when this is all done."

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NATIONAL

Popular Powell keeps his distance — well, sort of

BY BARRY SCHWEID
AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Colin Powell is walking a thin line between boosting his boss for re-election and maintaining a traditional distance from the rough and tumble of election-year politics.

Probably rounding out his last months as a prominent public servant, Powell has declared he is obliged as secretary of state not to engage in “parochial debate.”

At the same time, he stoutly defends President Bush’s policies, including the one on which his contest with Democrat John Kerry may turn — the war in Iraq.

The decision to overthrow Saddam Hussein with massive U.S. force had Powell’s support — although he put more emphasis on first taking the case to the United Nations. And he continues to defend it even though weapons of mass destruction were never found in Iraq.

In a speech this week before the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Cincinnati, Powell stood squarely behind the president. “A sworn enemy of the United States,” Powell said, “Saddam Hussein

could have passed on that weapons of mass destruction capability to terrorists.”

Kerry, as a U.S. senator, voted for the war. But as a presidential candidate, he is challenging Bush’s approach as go-it-alone unilateralism that cost the United States important European support.

He also accuses the president of an inclination to take pre-emptive action, even while saying he would not rule out taking such action himself in certain situations.

Powell has publicly disagreed with Kerry’s characterization of Bush’s approach. Is that politicking by the secretary of state? Or is it expounding on U.S. foreign policy, as secretaries of state do even in election years?

It could be a matter of perception. Still, Powell, on the advice of the White House, will skip the Republican National Convention, which no sitting secretary of state in recent memory has attended.

Henry A. Kissinger, having served as secretary of state for Republican Presidents Nixon and Ford, spoke at the 1980 GOP convention that nominated Ronald Reagan against Democratic incumbent Jimmy Carter.

Kissinger slashed at Carter, accusing his administration of “drift, confusion, retreat and weakness in our foreign policy.” He also described Carter’s approach to world problems as “diplomacy of incoherency.” No matter that the platform Reagan ran on opposed arms control agreements with the Soviet Union that Kissinger had supported.

In 2000, Powell, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff then widely rumored to be in line for a top job if Bush won, spoke at the GOP convention that nominated Bush.

He praised Bush as bridging racial divides. However, Powell, the nation’s most prominent black Republican, spoke in support of affirmative action and how it might help “a few thousand black kids get an education.”

Four years earlier, Powell spoke at the convention that nominated Bob Dole for president. There, too, Powell spoke in support of affirmative action, which is taboo to most Republicans. At the 1996 gathering, former Secretary of State James A. Baker also spoke, and blasted President Clinton’s foreign policy as “Gullible’s Travels.”

State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said last week that “on White House instruction, Secretary Powell as well as others among the Cabinet, will not attend” the Republican convention, which opens Aug. 30 in New York City.

“This is in keeping with past practice,” he said.

And so it is, so far as secretaries of state are concerned.

But being in Bush’s Cabinet does not automatically disqualify officers from campaigning.

Commerce Secretary Donald Evans, who was Bush’s campaign chairman in 2000, will attend the convention, spokesman Ron Bonjean said. Education Secretary Rod Paige is scheduled to speak at the convention. Paige, who is black, is expected to make the case that Bush’s education agenda helps poor and minority children.

With the economy rivaling Iraq as the most decisive issue in the Bush-Kerry race, Treasury Secretary John Snow is campaigning for the president in states where the contest is close.

Homeland Security watching border from above

BY GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press Writer

BELLINGHAM, Wash. — As part of a dramatic boost in surveillance of the Canadian border, federal customs and immigration officials on Friday dedicated the first of five planned bases for regular flights to look for drug runners and others crossing illegally.

The 69-person Bellingham Air Marine Branch will use helicopters, airplanes and high-speed boats to patrol the border. Although similar bases have policed the Mexican border for three decades, the new facility is the first on the Canadian border.

Previously, customs and immigration service aircraft have patrolled the border only sporadically, even though much of

the border is in rugged and largely empty country that presents little challenge to a determined smuggler.

The new bases, which will dot the border from Washington state to upstate New York, are a response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks as well as ongoing smuggling of illegal aliens and drugs, including British Columbia’s potent strains of marijuana.

“Smuggling is a two-way street,” U.S.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesman Michael Milne said. “We’ve got cocaine and money going north, B.C. bud and human smuggling coming south.”

A second station in Plattsburgh, N.Y., is scheduled to open by the end of the year, Milne said, followed by bases in Michigan, Montana and North Dakota.

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NATIONAL



Contentious overtime overhaul begins this week

BY LEIGH STROPE

AP Labor Writer

WASHINGTON — In an unprecedented overhaul of the nation's overtime pay rules, the Bush administration is delivering to its business allies an election-year plum they've sought for decades.

The new rules take effect Monday after surviving many efforts by Democrats, labor unions and worker advocates to block them in Congress and kill them through public and political pressure.

The Labor Department says as many as 107,000 workers could lose overtime eligibility under its new rules, but about 1.3 million will gain it. The Economic Policy Institute, a liberal Washington think tank, says 6 million will lose, and only a few will get new rights to premium pay for working more than 40 hours a week.

But no one really knows. That makes the issue harder to demonize politically, a benefit — or a problem — depending on the side you take.

"I do not see any kind of rush by employers to take away overtime rights," said Bill Schurgin, a labor attorney for the Seyfarth Shaw law firm in Chicago, who represents employers preparing for Monday's change. Critics claim that 6 million workers will lose eligibility is "a red herring."

Regardless, "nobody should get their overtime pay taken away," said Karen Nussbaum, executive director of Working America, an AFL-CIO organization created for workers unable to join unions.

About 115 million workers are covered by the overtime rules in the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act.

Today's change is the culmination of decades of lobbying by business groups representing retailers, restaurants, insurance companies, banks and others that have been hammered by workers' overtime lawsuits, many of them successful.

Wal-Mart is facing dozens of worker lawsuits claiming they were cheated out of overtime and worked off the clock. An appeals court upheld a \$90 million verdict against Farmers Insurance Exchange, sued for overtime by claims adjusters. Other companies that have made multimillion-dollar payouts include Starbucks, Radio Shack, Rite Aid and Bank of America.

Labor Secretary Elaine Chao told Congress the new rules would help stop "needless litigation" because it is designed to clarify who's entitled to overtime.

She and department officials are traveling the country touting to employers, human resources officials and friendly labor unions what now is called the Fair Pay initiative.

"As the new rules become effective, people will come to see that they do exactly what we've said they will do, which is provide a stronger and clearer overtime guarantee for more working Americans," said Deputy Labor Secretary Steven Law. He noted that a judge last month ruled in favor of Geico insurance claims adjusters, citing the pending new rules.

Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, who led the Senate fight to block the regulations, questioned the Bush administration's motives. "Let's face it, some of their major supporters in industries covered in here want this change," he said.

The rules could be politically dangerous in an election year when the weak jobs market is a big concern for voters.

"There is a risk — we are in high season," said Rich Bond, political strategist and a former Republican National Committee chairman. "Every word at this point will be parsed, for good or bad."

After an uproar from Democrats and labor leaders about the initial proposal and unsuccessful attempts in Congress, with the help of moderate Republicans, to block the final plan, the rules were revised. The Fair Pay title was added and estimates of the number of workers affected were trimmed.

"It's absolutely true that it's been much

more of a political issue than it should have been," said Michael Eastman, U.S. Chamber of Commerce's labor law policy director. "It's been on the regulatory agenda since the Carter administration. It shouldn't be this controversial."

The critics were heard. Gone from the rules are estimates on workers who might lose overtime based on changes to the duties tests, which describe the tasks that entitle a worker to overtime. The draft had said 1.5 million to 2.7 million workers "will be more readily identified as exempt." The new analysis says: "It is impossible to quantitatively estimate the number of exempt workers."

Language was removed suggesting employers could avoid extra overtime costs by cutting the hourly wages of newly eligible workers and adding back the overtime to equal the original salary.

Sections were added to make clear that police, firefighters and other public safety officers are not exempt from overtime, regardless of rank or pay level. But labor officials say middle- and upper-ranking officers such as lieutenants still could lose overtime.

Union workers covered by contracts will not be affected by the change, though labor leaders argue that unions will face tougher negotiations when their contracts expire because of the new rules.



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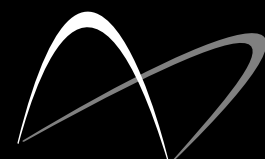
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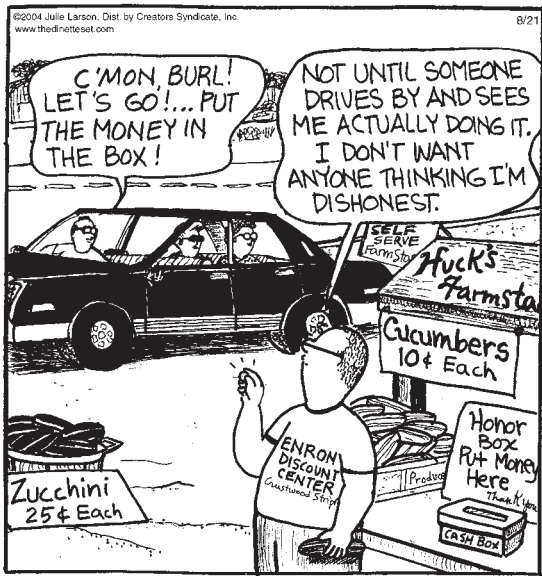
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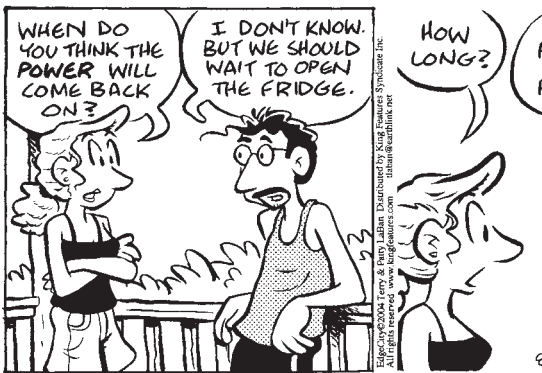


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The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



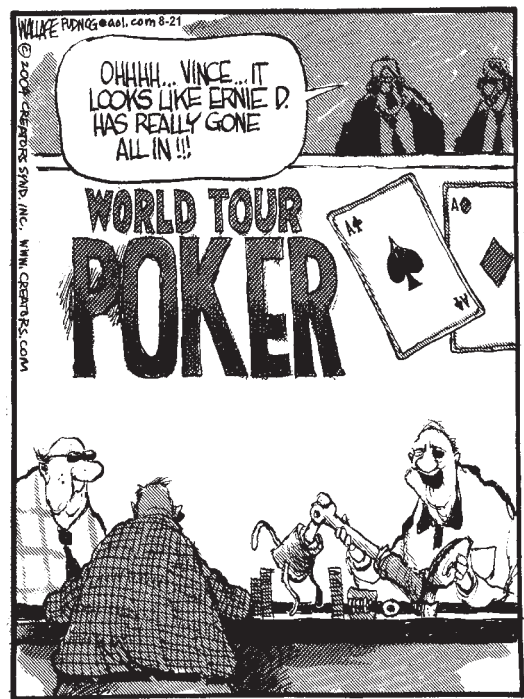
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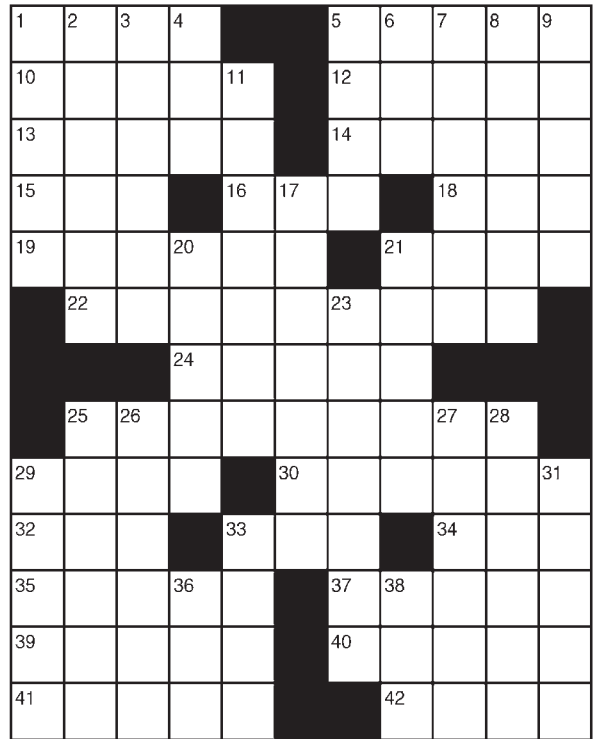
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

As the Crow flies, so goes the effort to oust Bush

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The coalition of the willing-to-rock is growing.

Sheryl Crow, Jack Johnson and Crosby, Stills & Nash have joined the nearly 20 other musicians trying to unseat President Bush in November.

Crow and company were added to the Vote for Change tour, which boasts a lineup of artists including Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Pearl Jam and Dave Matthews Band. The musicians will perform in an array of combinations at some 38 shows in 32 cities over the course of 12 days in October, concert promoters announced Thursday.

Money generated from the concerts will go to America Coming Together (ACT), which promises on its Web site to "derail the right-wing Republican agenda by defeating George W. Bush." The shows will play in election swing states. They'll be presented by MoveOn PAC, the electoral arm of the liberal interest group MoveOn.org.

NEW YORK — Regis Philbin has lived a lifetime on television. Logging 15,188 hours on the tube has yielded him fame, fortune — and now a place in the record books.

Friday's broadcast of "Live With Regis and Kelly" gives the talk-show host the Guinness World Record for most hours on camera. He passes broadcaster Hugh Downs for the record, as calculated by Guinness World Records researcher Stuart Claxton.

"Now it's all a big blur," Philbin told The Associated Press Thursday as he looked back on his career that began as a San Diego news anchor in 1958. "When you look back that's a lot of hours on TV."

With now officially the longest resume in television, Philbin wonders, "You'd think it might make me better,

but I don't know."

Philbin, who will turn 73 next week, has hosted the syndicated "Live" in all 16 of its seasons — now with Kelly Ripa. In his 46-year career, he's hosted numerous news and entertainment shows, as well as the ABC game show "Who Wants to Be a Super Millionaire."

Of all the experiences, Philbin most remembers the interviews of other talk-show hosts — people, he says, "that do what I do. People like Jack Paar, Steve Allen, Merv Griffin, Johnny Carson, David Letterman that know what being a talk-show host is about."

LOS ANGELES — The new director of the third "Mission: Impossible" movie got the job by making Tom Cruise a fan of his TV show "Alias."

J.J. Abrams, who created the ABC spy series that stars Jennifer Garner, had a meeting with Cruise to discuss the upcoming "Mission: Impossible" sequel, but considered himself a long shot.

"I had a meeting with Mr. Cruise and I gave him the (first and second season) 'Alias' DVDs. He'd never seen the show, and I thought, you know, 'He'll never watch it,'" Abrams said Wednesday. "I got a call a couple of months later and he had watched every episode."

After a long search, Paramount Pictures and Cruise's production company announced this week that Abrams was their choice to direct the third installment in the "Mission: Impossible" action-adventure series, which is a remake of a popular 1960s TV show.

"Alias" has been in some ways preparation for what that will be," Abrams said of the movie. "If it hadn't been for the DVDs, I definitely wouldn't have the job."

He made the remarks at a presentation in Hollywood for the DVD of season three of "Alias," which goes on sale Sept. 7.

The first "Mission: Impossible" movie came out in 1996 and was directed by Brian De Palma. John Woo

directed "Mission: Impossible II."

Cruise and Abrams plan to begin shooting the movie in summer 2005, after Cruise finishes working with Steven Spielberg on a new big-screen version of H.G. Wells' Martian-invasion saga "The War of the Worlds."

Meanwhile, Abrams will finish work on the fourth season of "Alias" and the launch of his new ABC show, "Lost," about a group of plane crash survivors stranded on an island populated by mysterious animals.

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Hungarian director Istvan Szabo has criticized documentaries by American filmmakers, saying movies such as Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" and Morgan Spurlock's "Super Size Me" were fictions "with elements from the real life."

"I don't believe in documentary," Szabo, jury president for the Copenhagen International Film Festival, told reporters. The festival, which opened Thursday, will run through Aug. 29.

Szabo said Moore's documentary about President Bush, the terror attacks and the Iraq war, and the movie in which Spurlock goes on a McDonald's-only eating binge for 30 days to dramatize America's growing obesity problem, "are fictions with elements from the real life."

He got up from his chair and gesticulated to show that a director can choose whatever angle he wants to show "a little bit of reality only."

"The question is always who is paying the guy behind the camera," he said.

The Hungarian filmmaker, whose latest film is "Being Julia," starring Annette Bening and Jeremy Irons, said he prefers fiction because actors play roles, and sets and dresses are specially created.

"The fiction genre is honest because everyone knows from the beginning that it is a lie," he said.

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