

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO
2 8 13 23 27
Meganumber: 15
Jackpot: \$22 Million

FANTASY 5
2 3 7 10 38

DAILY 3
Daytime: 2 8 1
Evening: 8 0 6

DAILY DERBY
1st: 01 Gold Rush
2nd: 07 Eureka
3rd: 06 Whirl Win

RACE TIME: 1:44.59
Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site: <http://www.calottery.com>

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

In separate incidents on Tuesday, July 26, mothers in Falls Church, Va., and Zephyrhills, Fla., kicked their young sons (ages 4 and 7, respectively) out of their cars on busy highways and abandoned them as punishment for back-talk. Channnoah Alece Green, 22, in Virginia even knocked her son down driving off on Interstate 495 as he tried to climb back in. The problem addressed by Lori Heine, 46, in Florida was that her son wanted a McDonald's Cheeseburger Happy Meal when she had already bought him a McNuggets Happy Meal.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 244th day of 2005.
There are 121 days left in the year.

On Sept. 1, 1939, World War II began as Nazi Germany invaded Poland.
In 1923, the Japanese cities of Tokyo and Yokohama were devastated by an earthquake that claimed some 150,000 lives.
In 1932, New York City Mayor James J. "Gentleman Jimmy" Walker resigned following charges of graft and corruption in his administration.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Nothing succeeds, they say, like success. And certainly nothing fails like failure."
MARGARET DRABBLE
BRITISH AUTHOR

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Have you herd?



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

BUFFALO SOLDIERS: Josh Osher (left) and Mike Mease, Buffalo advocates from Montana, took their cause, as well as a giant inflatable buffalo, to the Third Street Farmers' Market on Wednesday. The pair are traveling through the southwest on a campaign to bring awareness to the dangers facing the last genetically pure herd of wild buffalo.

Put to test, school district makes grade

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

DISTRICT HDQTRS — Local public schools continue making gains on two assessments crucial to evaluating the district's performance. The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District released on Thursday last year's Academic Performance Index (API), showing overall gains for Santa Monica and Malibu public schools.

For the 2004-05 school year, the SMMUSD earned an API of 806, eclipsing the California standard mark of 800 for the first time. "Our improvement is remarkable for a district that continues to score well above state and county levels," said John Deasy, superintendent. Last year marks the third in a row the SMMUSD has enjoyed significant improvement on the API, according to records. School officials said the API is the cornerstone of the California

"I have found people who can well afford private schools want to have their kids in good public schools, such as those in Santa Monica, because they're not a rarefied atmosphere, offering real world experience."

— JACQUIE BANKS
Real estate agent, regarding Santa Monica's public schools

Public Schools Accountability Act, intended to measure the academic performance and growth of the local public education establishment. The numeric range for a given district varies between a low of 200 and a high of 1000. The statewide target for all schools is 800. Deasy said the formula to determine a district's API score is complicated, but it includes such factors as student achievement on

Four indicted for terror plot

One of the charged may have been an SMC student

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

SANTA ANA — Four men, one believed to be a Santa Monica College student, were indicted here on Wednesday by a federal grand jury for their alleged roles in a terrorist plot to attack Southland armed services sites and synagogues, a plot that may have included a Santa Monica military recruitment center.

The indictment charges Kevin James, 29, and three associates with "conspiracy to levy war against the United States government through terrorism" and "conspiracy to possess and discharge firearms in furtherance of crimes of violence," according to the complaint filed in U.S. District Court on Wednesday. James, a U.S. national, allegedly founded the radical Islamic organization Jam'iyyat Ul-Islam

Is-Saheeh (JIS) in 1997 while serving time in California State Prison-Sacramento. As part of his recruitment efforts, James secretly distributed a document to fellow prisoners that included his religious teachings as well as the "justification" for killing non-followers, including U.S. government and Israeli interests.

In November of 2004, Levar Washington, a U.S. national, swore an oath to James and the JIS while serving time in the same prison. Upon his release later that month, Washington, 25, allegedly recruited co-conspirators Gregory Patterson, 21, a U.S. national, and Hammad Riaz Samana, 21, a lawful permanent U.S. resident originally from Pakistan, in order to plot terrorist attacks and commit armed robberies to help fund their activities, according to the complaint.

In addition to charges related to terrorism and furthering violence,

See **TERROR PLOT**, page 6

STATE

Money pits aren't deterring CA buyers

BY TIM MOLLOY
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Californians have the nation's highest home values but are stretching further than people in most other parts of the country to meet their high mortgage payments, according to Census data released Tuesday.

The numbers reveal a trend that isn't surprising, said Dowell Myers, a USC professor of urban planning and policy: Californians are willing to sacrifice for what they perceive to be a good investment, and so far soaring home prices are helping them gain equity in those investments.

"Californians have more equity because houses have

See **MONEY PITs**, page 9

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Antiwar group goes on the offensive

By Daily Press staff

A local antiwar group will be presenting a documentary on the media's coverage of the Iraq war, a job they say was done poorly.

Following their presentation of "Weapons of Mass Deception," Film for Peace activists will host an open discussion led by the documentary's distributor.

The documentary probes the relationship between the media and the military, an interaction the antiwar group characterized as "militainment."

The film also explores the notion some hold that journalists in Iraq were targeted by the U.S. military, a suspicion recently fanned after the number of journalists killed during the Iraq war surpassed the number killed throughout the Vietnam War.

The event will take place Friday, Sept. 2, at 7 p.m. at Velocity Cafe, which is located at 2127 Lincoln Blvd.

Seating is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Love and let live: Tennis tourney to combat cancer

By Daily Press staff

The Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center will be trying to beat breast cancer with tennis balls.

The medical center will be hosting their eighth annual "Westside Challenge to Beat Breast Cancer" tennis tournament, calling on tennis players of all skill levels to register.

The event will be held on Saturday, Oct. 22, at the UCLA-Los Angeles Tennis Center.

The event features a round-robin tennis marathon as well as family activities, entertainment and a post-tournament reception with a silent auction and awards ceremony.

Proceeds benefit the low-cost mammography screening program at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center, which provides affordable screening and diagnostic mammograms, if needed, to eligible community residents.

All players receive a souvenir tennis bag and are invited to pre-event instructional clinics run by tennis professionals.

For a player packet or more information, e-mail tennis coordinator Rick Grant at ricgrant1@earthlink.net or call (310) 823-0157.

Power shuffle at Elks

By Daily Press staff

The Santa Monica Elks have a new commander.

Mark Hasson took the leadership position at Legion Post 123 after the former commander was transferred to Monterey and opted against commuting.

Hasson and his wife are both Elks and have been active in many Elks programs dealing with veterans.

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SURF REPORT

South-facing are seeing waist- to chest-high + surf, shoulder-high + on the better sets at standouts. West-facing breaks are running chest-high with set waves at direct west-facing breaks and dual exposure spots going head high at times.

Today is looking like a small surf day. The wind swell is expected to drop off considerably. South-facing breaks are looking best with knee- to waist-high sets.

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

**Today the
water is:**

67°

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
MONDAY	1:42	0.2	12:57	3.1	8:46	3.9	6:53	5.3
TUESDAY	2:21	0.0	1:41	2.8	9:08	4.0	7:38	5.6
WEDNESDAY	2:52	-0.1	2:14	2.4	9:27	4.2	8:14	5.8
THURSDAY	3:18	-0.1	2:45	2.1	9:44	4.3	8:47	5.9
FRIDAY	3:42	0.0	3:15	1.9	10:12	4.0	8:17	5.9

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The Q Line

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According to recently released numbers, Santa Monica's students continue to show improved performance on standardized tests — a trend that has been ongoing ever since such test results started being tracked in the 2000-01 school year. However, officials acknowledge there is still plenty of room for improvement.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "What does the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District have to do to ensure this upward achievement trend among students continues?"

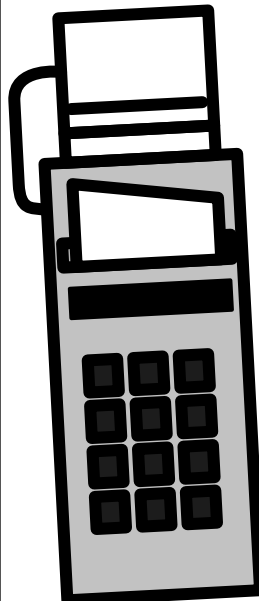
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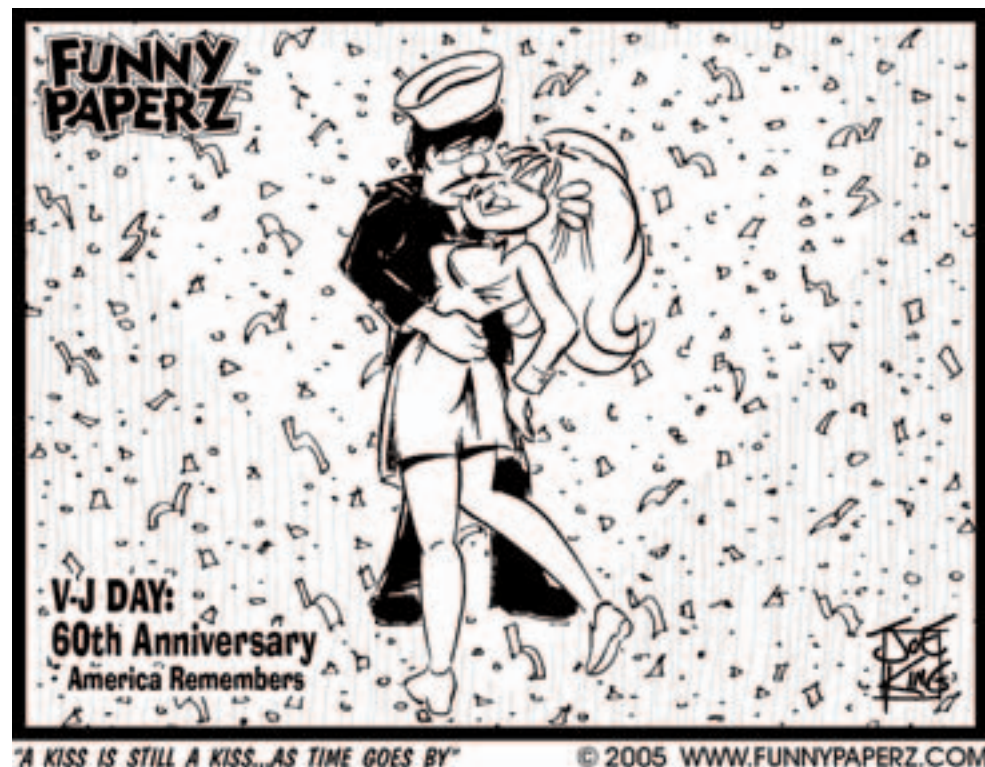
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OPINION



Big Easy, Baghdad vie for Guard's help

NEWS ON THE EDGE

BY RON SCOTT SMITH



What tool do you use to clear brush?

I would guess a shovel. Maybe a hoe? Whatever, it turned out to be an eventful vacation for the president between, let's say, shovelsful — more eventful than he may have liked. The world outside the gates of his Prairie Chapel Ranch must have seemed to be fairly falling apart right before his eyes every time he put down the hoe.

What tool do you use to drain a lake out of a major city submerged in the aftermath of a catastrophic natural disaster? I would guess it would be what they call "high-water-level" equipment. If ever you needed something called "high-water-level" equipment, it would appear to be right about now in New Orleans. But it seems most of the "high-water-level" equipment, vehicles and generators belonging to the Louisiana National Guard are in Iraq, working on another disaster — this one man-made.

What happens when you reach into your pocket for the National Guard, whose main defined task as its name implies is to have this nation's back in times of trouble, and your hands come out empty? Some 6,000 National Guardsmen in Louisiana and Mississippi, who are needed in Hurricane Katrina's deadly wake, are in Iraq along with the "high-water-level" equipment. While Biloxi barely appears to exist anymore, the Mississippi National Guard has only a reported 853 troops on hurricane duty, while about 3,000 of them watch their homes get washed away on a television set somewhere in Baghdad.

That's just about enough to ruin even the most voracious vacation appetite. A whole lot of good Texas barbecue has been served at the ranch during the Bush vacation to a whole lot of guys who look out of place in the blue jeans with the big shiny belt buckles and the big wallets bulging out of their back pockets. You know they long for the suit. But their jean pockets are the kind the president can confidently reach into and always come out with a handful of what he needs.

So while they chowed down on the sides of beef and the catfish, down the driveway a ways a heartbroken mother of a soldier killed in Iraq saw her lone vigil morph into a nationwide anti-war move-

ment because her son's commander-in-chief stonewalled her request for just a moment of his time. As camp breaks and they reflect upon it, the protesting forces may come to realize all they had to do was take up a collection, call it a contribution, and give it to Bush. Cindy Sheehan could have much more easily bought her meeting with the president.

What she would have told him if she had the money is, "Please, sir, get our soldiers home from Iraq now." And whether you're pro- or anti-Bush and the war, that simple idea makes more sense all the time. The mission is really accomplished this time, and the president might just as well accept victory — hard as that may be with this kind of victory. He must step out on the deck of a ship somewhere with a bull-horn, and tell us, one and all. Maybe throw a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue. Tell us they're free now, that they drafted their own constitution, in fact, a point Bush takes great pride in. In the preamble to that constitution it says, "Islam is the official religion of the state and is a basic source of all legislation." Uh oh. Then, "No law can be passed that contradicts the undisputed rules of Islam." He must be sweating bullets, thinking, "Could this be true? Could I have possibly spent 2,000 American lives and tens of thousands of Iraqi lives to set up a fundamentalist regime probably guided by the mullahs in the dreaded axis-of-evil ringleader, Iran?"

Meanwhile, his favorite conservative pundit, Pat Buchanan, called for his impeachment; his favorite ex-communists, Russia, hooked up with his favorite current communists, China, for massive joint military exercises aimed at guess who? And his favorite rock-and-roll band, the Rolling Stones, wrote a new song for him called "Sweet Neo-Con." One verse goes: "You call yourself a Christian, I call you a hypocrite; you call yourself a patriot, I think you're full of sh*t." The Stones are notoriously more party than politics, but even Jagger and Richards could keep this sentiment to themselves no longer.

"There's a lot of hard work we're gonna have to do," said the tanned, buffed, relaxed leader of America on Wednesday afternoon, shortly after 2 p.m., some two days after Katrina howled into his southernmost states and laid them to waste. It appears to have been all he could do to cut the vacation short by a day to tend to the ravaged Gulf Coast.

There must have been brush yet to be cleared in Crawford.

(Ron Scott Smith can be reached at edgeofthewest@aol.com)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

An inspiration

Editor:

I would like to thank you for running Michael Beattie's guest commentary, "Ex-Bridge pupil has to give credit" (SMDP, Aug. 25, page 4).

As executive director of the Bridge Program, it was particularly thrilling for me to see Michael's thoughtful, compassionate, incisive voice in print for the public to read.

I'd like to add that not only did Michael indeed gain back his self-respect, self-worth and dignity, but he reflected those same qualities back to his classmates, the interns and the instructors, constantly reaffirming to them that they were changing in positive ways and that he could see it.

He's been an inspiration to me.

Magdalene Brandeis
Santa Monica

What a waste

Editor:

Just when I start to believe the schools really are desperately short of funds, I read an article like the one in the Daily Press about the new community day school (SMDP, Aug. 29, page 1).

Let's see: \$400,000 divided by six students, equals... \$66,666 per student!

Clearly, the SMMUSD coffers are overflowing.

It's always intrigued me that the lowest performers and least interested students who cause the most problems consistently receive the greatest percentage of student dollars.

The students who behave and work hard in school receive the least. Hmm?

By the way, SMMUSD already has a school for students who are unable to matriculate in the normal fashion. It's called Olympic Continuation School.

K. Zompa
Santa Monica

Get out of Iraq

Editor:

The American public was lied to in order for the Bush Administration to attack a sovereign country. The administration has continued to spin the real facts in the media to the American people.

We do not belong in Iraq! If there is a war on terror to be fought, it should be in the hills of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, billions of dollars line the pockets of defense contractors and our kids are dying.

William Dunn
Woodland Hills

OPINIONS EXPRESSED are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned. Preference will be given to those that are e-mailed to editor@smdp.com. All letters must include the author's name and telephone number for purposes of verification. Letters also may be mailed to our offices located at 1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite 202, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

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Santa Monica Daily Press

COMMENTARY



GUEST COMMENTARY BY MICHAEL BEATTIE

Turning Point lives up to its name

Day in and day out, we are constantly bombarded with criticism and complaints about both homeless people and the programs that support them.

We hear over and over that these programs, in general, and OPCC's access center, in particular, just aren't solving anything. The usual complaint is that these programs are only putting a Band-Aid on an open wound and that they do nothing but enable the cycle of homelessness to continue without addressing the underlying reasons for the homeless in Santa Monica.

Well, that's only half the story.

In June of 2004, after being homeless for about three years, I just got tired of the 24-hour-a-day struggle of survival. I had used the OPCC Access Center, stayed at Samoshel and used Swashlock to store my belongings. Although none of these programs specifically addressed my needs and never helped with any realistic long-term solution to the mess I had gotten myself into, they just made it easier for me to continue in my day-to-day homelessness. My situation never changed, despite these programs and despite myself, and my struggle to end the cycle of fear.

And then it all changed when I was lucky enough to be accepted into another OPCC program called "Turning Point."

Turning Point Transitional Housing Program is a 55-bed temporary shelter for men and women designed to pave the way toward permanent housing. The program does work, despite what many in the community say. I know. I am proof. So are numerous others who I have seen transition into permanent housing during my time here. Far more residents succeeded than failed, and in the nine months that I was there, the majority secured permanent housing. I saw it happen for not only myself, but lots of residents who were there with me.

Turning Point offers those who are accepted a place to stay for nine months, but does much more than just warehousing people and enabling the cycle of desperation to continue. They work closely with other organizations like Edelman Mental Health, so that they can provide you with the skills and help that you need. In addition, it takes away all the stress of being homeless and searching for a way out.

Turning Point doesn't do it for you, but provides you with all the tools necessary to become successful in your search to secure permanent housing.

My experience at Turning Point was typical of the majority of the residents. They start with extensive case management so as to be able to match me with the right programs to best help me. I am on disability, so during the week I attended the "Day Program" for those of us on SSI. The day program consists of psycho-educational groups, in conjunction with a program called "Campion" and art therapy. It taught me how to deal with my stress and anxiety, which I had acquired while living on the streets.

Individual counseling also is available through Campion. Four days a week there are A.A. meetings for those who suffer from alcohol addiction. Another benefit provided comes from the Junior League of Los Angeles. Three times a year they come to Turning Point for a six-week program. Through them I learned about job interviewing, balancing my checkbook, shopping to make the most of my budget and money management, how credit companies work and how to search for an apartment. There also is a computer class on Mondays that teaches computer illiterate residents how to write a resume, or do an online job and apartment search while also learning to use a word processing program.

In my time at Turning Point, I was able to secure permanent housing with all the help they gave me and would not have been able to do it otherwise. I know. I had already tried. It was a wonderful feeling when I first put my key in my door in my apartment.

With all the skills I acquired through the assistance of Turning Point, I now have the skills to maintain my life after homelessness. They also offer an alumni program for successful residents, which further benefits me because I know that I have a support system in case I need it. I will continue to participate and learn in the future and feel really good about not only myself, but I have also regained my pride dignity and self-respect that I had so willingly given up as a result of my homelessness.

If the Access Center is just putting on a Band-Aid, then Turning Point cleans the wound, stitches it up and allows it to heal. I will have the scar for the rest of my life to remind me about what can happen if I don't plan for my future and be serious about myself and my life.

Never again. Never again.

(Michael Beattie can be reached at michaelbeattie1@yahoo.com.)

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LOCAL

Four men face six counts related to terrorism

TERROR PLOT, from page 1

the six-count indictment accuses Washington, Patterson and Samana with conspiracy to kill members of the U.S. government and foreign officials. Washington and Patterson are further charged with interference with commerce by robbery and using and carrying a firearm in connection with a crime of violence.

All four defendants are in custody.

Samana was taken into custody Aug. 2 and has been detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles, according to the U.S. Bureau of Prisons.

The arrest of Samana, an SMC student from Inglewood who has been living in the United States for at least three years,

was part of a terror probe that began when Torrance police arrested Washington and Patterson on July 5 for a series of gas station robberies.

Torrance police searched an apartment and discovered a list of possible sites targeted for terror on Sept. 11, 2005. That list included three National Guard facilities in the Los Angeles area, including a military recruitment center at the corner of 20th Street and Santa Monica Boulevard. That list also included the Israeli Consulate and several synagogues, according to recent news reports.

It's unclear what led authorities from Washington and Patterson to Samana. Santa Monica College officials would neither confirm nor deny that Samana was a

student. That information was corroborated from other sources.

Lt. Rod Irvine, spokesperson for the Torrance police, would neither confirm nor deny whether a Santa Monica military recruitment center was listed as a possible target, as reported recently on ABC World News Tonight.

Santa Monica Police Chief James Butts Jr. said he knew about the Torrance arrest through the intelligence community when he met with elected leaders in closed session on Aug. 9 and requested \$2 million worth of additional security measures be taken throughout downtown Santa Monica, including surveillance cameras.

The Santa Monica police learned in July that a possible probe of the Santa Monica Pier was conducted by suspected

Middle Eastern operatives who may be involved in a terrorist organization.

Though Patterson and Samana have no criminal history, records show that Washington, allegedly a former Rollin' 60s gang member, served almost six years in prison for a 1999 assault and robbery in Orange County.

Both Washington and Patterson have pleaded not guilty to robbery charges in Los Angeles Superior Court. Patterson's attorney, Winston McKesson, denies his client has connections to any extremist groups.

James is still serving time in California State Prison-Sacramento on a robbery conviction.

(See related story on page 9)



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School district exceeds state standards

MAKING THE GRADE, from page 1

exceeding the standard by six points.

The SMMUSD, which is ranked in the top 1 percent of the state's public school systems, has achieved a level of performance few other districts have, Deasy said. While the district has exceeded the 800 goal, schools statewide continue to struggle. Last year, the average API score for districts in California was 709 — nearly 100 points less than the SMMUSD, records show.

According to Deasy, the state sets a high standard for its schools, but may expect too much from districts which it fails to support adequately to meet the lofty expectations.

The 14 schools within the SMMUSD had an average improvement of 20 points between 2003 and 2005. McKinley Elementary scored the biggest gains, going from 813 API in 2003-04 to 855 API in 2004-05, an increase of 42 points.

Cabrillo Elementary, which fared the worst in the district, dropped one point from 844 API in the 2003-04 school year to 843 in 2004-05.

Seventy percent of the schools are now scoring above the 800 mark, compared to

just 32 percent across the state. Four SMMUSD schools — Franklin, Point Dume, Roosevelt and Webster elementaries — scored at or above 900 API.

Santa Monica High School, which received a 741, has improved by 21 points since 2003-04. Overall, Samohi has improved 47 points within the past three years.

Deasy said this was an incredible achievement that reflects the "power of the re-design and smaller learning communities" that are part of the "house system," which has provided freshman with more one-on-one interaction with teachers.

By redesigning the large campus into smaller, individual ones, Samohi students have higher attendance rates, higher grade-point averages and lower dropout rates; while both students and teachers report being more satisfied with the overall experience, studies show.

In addition to the API results, the SMMUSD has met its annual yearly progress (AYP) required by the No Child Left Behind Act, which included making a percentage needed for student proficiency in the language arts and math, as well as boosting its API by one point.

The API and AYP results will be used

throughout the fall as the district plans for staff development, according to one district administrator.

Jacque Banks, a Santa Monica real estate agent, said the API and AYP results also have broader impacts outside the classroom.

Santa Monica's continued improvement on API scores would likely be a factor that continues to drive the city's real estate market.

"People come to Santa Monica primarily because it's an incorporated city with its own services, but also because of the school system," Banks said. "I have found

people who can well afford private schools want to have their kids in good public schools, such as those in Santa Monica, because they're not a rarefied atmosphere, offering real world experience."

Banks said another factor that distinguishes Santa Monica public schools are the parents who support them.

"It's also been my experience as a real estate agent that when visiting these schools, parents are very participatory," Banks said. "They support a varied program that still includes an arts and physical education, more than just the basics."

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Business

SANTA MONICA BUSINESS BRIEFS

Le Merigot-getter: GM is setting the tone

By Daily Press staff

Paul Hortobagyi, a veteran of the hospitality industry, leads the staff and sets the tone for the ambiance at Le Merigot Beach Hotel & Spa in Santa Monica. His tenure is considered a major accomplishment in an industry where change is the norm.

Prior to securing the coveted assignment of general manager for Santa Monica's last city-approved beachfront property, Hortobagyi successfully managed the Georgian Hotel for more than eight years. While at the Georgian, he received the prestigious Manager of the Year award (in the small hotels category) by the American Hotel & Lodge Association in 2004. Other accomplishments included securing a spot on the Top 400 Hotels list by American Lodging Magazine and the award for Best Service Hotel in Santa Monica by the American Film Market attendees.

The Georgian also became a AAA Three-Diamond hotel under his leadership.

Hortobagyi also has been with Southwest Hospitality (flagships include the original Hilton Hotel/La Posada in Albuquerque) where he was considered a "turn-around" specialist. He spent 90 days at a property to assess its needs and implement management directives and soft and hard goods strategies to bring a hotel or restaurant back in the black.

Prior to Southwest Hospitality, clients for whom he served as an independent consultant tapped Hortobagyi's food and beverage expertise. His signature coffee-house concept, including development of recipes and menus to design, service and staffing, was in demand by a variety of hospitality entities. Similarly, while employed at R&R Hospitality whose Pea Soup Andersen's dot the landscape along the historic Route 101 and elsewhere, he functioned as food and beverage director implementing creative and successful operational tactics, innovative menus and service standards. Hortobagyi's extensive knowledge of restaurants comes from personal experience, as well as from the many high-profile posts he's held. In the late '80s he owned a delicatessen and a New York-style bistro offering casual fare in Orange County.

Hortobagyi has worked in Florida as a regional food & beverage manager for a diversified chain that counted specialty restaurants and aviation-themed venues on the roster. While the picturesque locales of Clearwater, Sarasota, Miami, Ft. Lauderdale and West Palm Beach were a draw, it was the humidity that pushed him to the perfect climate of another Ocean [Avenue] in Santa Monica.

As an active member of the Santa Monica Convention & Visitor's Bureau, Hortobagyi is on the Executive Board, as well as treasurer, and a Board Member with the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce and a Certified Hotel Administrator.

Originally from Hungary, Hortobagyi trained at the revered Hospitality Industry Institute in Budapest receiving a degree in Hotel Management as well as a Masters in Culinary Arts. After graduation and because of stringent Iron Curtain regulations that were still in effect at that time he agreed to join the family business. The Flying Hortobagys, a well-known acrobatic ensemble of performers, was his ticket out of Hungary during a difficult time.

The family traveled all over Europe prior to coming to Florida as a headlining act with Ringling Brothers. Little did he know this would lead to his reverting back to the hospitality industry in which he trained, a permanent residence in the United States and eventually, a wife. Paul was a Teeterboard Acrobat and met his wife, a Trapeze Artist from Prague, while on the circuit. When the communist government ordered them back to their respective countries in 1978, the two opted to stay in the land of opportunity.

Stay comfortable as you diversify



MIND YOUR BUSINESS

BY KIRK G. AUGER

Diversification is an investment strategy that helps you avoid putting all your eggs in one basket. When you allocate your investment dollars among many investments, you potentially reduce the risk of a single investment and help to optimize your overall return given your risk tolerance. There are a number of ways you can diversify when deciding which stocks are best suited for you. Consider the following possibilities.

Diversify among industry sectors. A sector is an area of the economy composed of industries that have certain characteristics in common. All industries in a given sector typically tend to react similarly to trends in the overall economy. In general, you should include stocks from a number of sectors, but dedicate a greater dollar amount to the sectors that are currently in favor.

Diversify by risk level. There are many categories of stocks with different degrees of volatility. A well-diversified portfolio may include stocks from a number of risk

levels, since lower-risk stocks are likely to offer greater portfolio stability and higher-risk stocks tend to provide higher potential rewards. As you near retirement age, you may wish to adjust your portfolio to reduce risk. Of course, your risk tolerance will vary with your individual situation.

Diversify globally. Foreign stock markets provide an extra degree of diversification, which has been shown to reduce portfolio volatility and enhance returns over time. Keep in mind that past performance does not guarantee future results, and overseas investments are subject to certain risks beyond those applying to domestic investments, such as political, market, economic and currency exchange risks.

In the end, the specific way you choose to diversify your portfolio will depend upon your individual investment objectives and risk tolerance. Your Financial Advisor can help you determine which methods are best for your own individual financial situation.

(Call Kirk Auger at (310) 319-5220. This article is published for general informational purposes and is not an offer or solicitation to sell or buy any securities or commodities. Any particular investment should be analyzed based on its terms and risks as they relate to your circumstances and objectives.)

GUEST COMMENTARY BY ROB JUPILLE

Financial products aren't bad, they're just sold that way

Oftentimes when we meet with clients and prospects, we find they are taking advice from financial media pundits and personalities. We caution them about putting too much credence into the ranting of the popular financial flavor-of-the-month, and remind them that many of these financial celebrities are actually in the business of selling magazines, books and/or investment courses.

To stand out from the crowd, they often take very strong stances, pronouncing some financial products "good" and others "bad."

In our experience, with the exception of outright illegal products, it is ridiculous to attach a "good" or "bad" moniker to a particular financial product. Any tool, financial or otherwise, is "good" for some situations and "bad" for others. Would you say that a screwdriver is a bad tool because it doesn't cut wood? What you might say, is that the screwdriver is a bad choice for cutting wood, but good for its designed purpose.

One product that gets a lot of bad press is annuities. Various columnists, who shall remain nameless, will simply say annuities are bad. They'll argue that annuities aren't liquid, they are expensive, pay huge brokerage commissions and that you absolutely don't need one. What these columnists fail to tell you is that annuities are a great tool when used

for their primary purpose — providing a stream of income that you cannot outlive.

Annuities work much like traditional pension plans, providing a steady stream of income that will last a lifetime. For a segment of the population, this guarantee provides the priceless benefit of peace of mind.

We all know there's no such thing as a free lunch. The fact that the broker receives a commission doesn't make it inherently a bad product — it just makes it imperative that you understand the potential conflicts of interest.

Do you not need an annuity? Until we've met with you for a full review of your entire financial picture, we can't tell if an annuity fits in the mix. Nobody can. In fact, we recommend you run far and run fast from any advisor that makes a recommendation without asking questions.

Hopefully, you'll consider two points: Media personalities are generally in the business of selling more of their products, so take what they say with a grain of salt, and be wary of anybody that tells you that a product is "good" or "bad" without understanding your unique financial situation in its entirety.

(Rob Jupille is the president of RTJ Financial Management, Inc. For more information, call (310) 587-3370 or visit www.rtfjfinancial.com.)



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STATE



FBI looking for cells within state prisons

BY DON THOMPSON

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — FBI agents nationwide have been ordered to conduct “threat assessments” of inmates who might have become radicalized in prison and could commit extremist violence upon their release, according to an FBI letter obtained by The Associated Press.

“The primary goal of these efforts is to assess and disrupt the recruitment and conversion of inmates to radicalized ideologies which advocate violence,” according to a letter from the acting assistant chief of the FBI’s Los Angeles office, Randy D. Parsons.

The agency has been concerned since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that groups with extremist ideologies may be targeting felons as prime candidates for conversion during their time in prison.

The FBI has worked with prison officials to identify potentially disruptive groups for “some time,” according to the letter. “However, recent investigations have identified a clear need to increase the FBI’s focus and commitment in this area,” Parsons wrote in the letter, which was dated Friday and obtained Tuesday by the AP.

He said the FBI wants to increase its efforts to “identify, report, analyze and disrupt efforts by extremist persons or groups to radicalize, recruit or advocate for the purpose of violence within correctional facilities.”

Laura Eimiller, spokeswoman for the FBI’s Los Angeles office, and Denise Ballew, an FBI spokeswoman in Washington, D.C., declined to comment on the letter.

The order comes as the investigation continues into whether a suspected Southern California terror plot originated in a state prison in Folsom, near Sacramento.

Three Los Angeles area men, including a parolee from California State Prison, Sacramento, are suspected of plotting attacks on Jewish and National Guard sites.

FBI director Robert Mueller warned the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee in February that prisons are “fertile ground for extremists,” but FBI officials have declined to disclose steps they are taking.

Karen Ernst, a spokeswoman for the FBI’s Sacramento office, confirmed her office is participating.

“The FBI will be going into each institution and assessing each population,” said Todd Slosek, spokesman for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. “It’s encouraging that prison populations are getting looked at because in my mind they’re breeding grounds for criminal and disruptive behavior.”

He expects the FBI to examine the department’s information on all “disruptive groups,” including prison gangs, and not just Islamic organizations.

That shouldn’t interfere with inmate religious practices, free speech or other rights, Parsons wrote in the letter.

Salam Al-Marayati, executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council in Los Angeles, said he worries that some inmates are forming radical groups and “putting a veneer on it and calling it Islam.”

On the contrary, he said many inmates emerge less violent after adopting religion in prison.

“I think they need to involve Muslim chaplains in the program because it’s been proven chaplains have been the antidote to radicalization,” Al-Marayati said.

Authorities said they believe the Southern California plan originated in a shadowy group at the Folsom prison known as Jamiyyat Ul Islam Is Saheeh.

(See related story on page 1)

Much appreciated: Buyers risking it all for new homes

MONEY PITS, from page 1

appreciated faster,” Myers said. “The bad news is we’re stretching ourselves to make these investments.”

Though Californians’ median household income is only the ninth-highest in the country, homeowners are paying the second-highest monthly housing costs — \$1,733 compared to \$1,847 in New Jersey, the state with the fifth-highest median home values.

New Jersey residents don’t have to stretch as far to make their mortgage payments, however. They have the highest median household income in the country — \$61,359 compared to California’s \$51,185.

The disparity between California’s household incomes and housing costs has given the state the nation’s highest percentage of homeowners who spend at least 30 percent of their income on housing costs.

Just over 44 percent of California mortgage holders spend at least 30 percent on their mortgages, compared to 32.4 percent of mortgage holders nationwide.

What justifies the high costs in the minds of home owners are rapidly appreciating home values. Golden State homes

have median home values of \$391,102 — more than double the national median of \$151,366.

Home values in California climbed about 17 percent from \$334,426 in 2003. Nationally, the median home price rose about 2.7 percent from \$147,275 in 2003.

But those high prices have shut out many buyers. At 58.6 percent, the state has the third-lowest rate in the country of owner-occupied homes.

The numbers were released as part of the American Community Survey, a questionnaire that provides in-depth data on cities and covers about 800,000 households. It also said the percentage of Californians living in poverty was 13.3 percent, just above the national average of 13.1 percent. California’s poverty rate was the 20th-highest in the nation, according to the survey.

The government also released official poverty figures Tuesday from the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey, which said the national poverty rate was 12.7 percent. It was conducted over three months, beginning in February, at about 100,000 households nationwide. Of the 37 million living below the poverty level, about a third were children.

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LOCAL

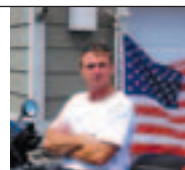


Courtesy Lance Schmidt/Special to the Daily Press

TRES AMIGOS: Easy Writer, flanked by a couple of Alaskan outback guides, takes a moment of respite after a change in travel plans, and partners.

A chilling realization amid Alaska discovery

EASY WRITER
NOTES FROM THE ROAD



(Editor's note: Santa Monica resident Lance Schmidt is spending his last summer days cruising through Alaska on his motorcycle. He will provide a glimpse into that world for Santa Monicans every Thursday until he returns home in September. Check out smdp.com/archives for previous reports.)

Denali National Park, AK — I am sending this dispatch from outside this pristine national park. Without my riding companion. I would have gone in sequence, but this is something I need to get out. My ego has been bruised, but worst of all, my aerobic pump chinked like Sir Lancelot's armor.

I had become emotionally attached to the lovely professor.

It all started to unravel when we left our campground at Beaver Creek, Yukon Territory.

Day 13 — It was getting dark (by Alaskan standards) and growing chilly. The lovely professor and I had been on the road now for almost two weeks and had gotten into a routine that was comfortable ... yet uneasy. Notwithstanding intimations alluded to in earlier dispatches, we had not yet become, um, romantically involved. We both knew that the "talk" would have to come.

We pulled into Cathedral Rapids, Alaska, at about 10 p.m. Our campsite was along the banks of the Tanana River, a major watercourse that was home to an array of native villages. (I'm told the villages' inhabitants and their ancestors have used the river as a food supply and trading route for hundreds of years.) It was still light out and we established our camp without incident. Having already dined at a roadhouse, I lit a fire and poured us each a cup of Jack Daniels.

"Well, Mr. Adventure, there is something I need to tell you," the professor said in a tone that somehow jolted me. "I have to get off in Anchorage. I just can't continue this trip — not this way."

I looked at her with a slightly mocking grin. "Oh, too hardcore for the professor?" I replied with what I hoped was a hint of jaunty sarcasm.

"Well, it is hardcore," she said. "But, that's not the reason. You see, I just can't travel with you in such a beautiful environment, leading you on and, well ... living a lie."

"Oh, you mean the sex thing?" I said bluntly, expecting a prim (if not prudish) response that would serve as her opening gambit in our sly little dance. "I was going to ask you about that."

The professor went on to explain that she had joined me on this trip as sort of a psychological quest — a test to see if she could enjoy traveling while savoring the physical companionship of her male guide. She explained that she very much enjoyed our journey and our companionship, but that I had helped her realize what she knew inside all along. The lovely professor was a lesbian.

Day 15 — We pulled into Anchorage about noon and headed directly to the Alaska Airlines terminal. The professor loaded her things into her bags, gave me a big hug and a light kiss on the cheek.

"Be careful out there, Mr. Adventure, and stay safe," she said as she walked to the ticket counter.

"You too," I answered, my head ringing with memories of the haunting warning offered by the urban cougar back in Santa Monica.

I fired up the Zebra and headed toward downtown Anchorage. I needed to find a hotel that would take girly-men and contemplate my next move.

Day 16 — I rode into downtown Anchorage to do a little sightseeing. I expected a city a bit more picturesque than what I found. Established in the early 1900s and rebuilt after the 1964 earth-

See **EASY WRITER**, page 11

LOCAL



Courtesy Lance Schmidt/Special to the Daily Press

Easy Writer, now continuing his trek solo, is captured here on an Alaskan Glacier.

Writer finds misery loves company on road

EASY WRITER, from page 10

quake, Anchorage is an efficient, Spartan supply town lacking any particular set architecture or “feel” to it. As I passed the city center, I noticed a sign that read: “Discover Alaska — Motorcycle Tours and Rental.” I was alone and without my confused navigator. Perhaps these folks would head me in the right direction. At this point, I welcomed any assistance I could get.

I popped my head into the tour’s outfit office to inquire about how best to explore the interior on motorbike. Behind the desk was a tall fellow in a Hawaiian shirt cradling the phone and barking orders to his mechanics.

“Howdy, I’m Phil. How can I help you?” he asked with a smile.

I slowly began telling him my situation. The rest of the employees started to gather around to hear of Mr. Adventure’s journey.

“Well, that’s quite a story,” Phil said laughing. “Sounds like you could use some help.”

As luck would have it, Phil was going to Deadhorse on the North Slope to deliver a couple of new motorcycles to some unnamed clients. He would be bringing along a support van along with another client on motorcycle and his new lieutenant-in-training. He said that my BMW Zebra would probably make it where they are going, but that if I wanted to explore some really untouched Alaskan outback, I should leave the Zebra behind and take one of his smaller bikes. I took him up on his offer.

Day 17 — We all met at the office early in the morning as Phil introduced the team to each other over a hot cup of coffee. The two other team members, Andy (the guide-in-training) and Darren (the 20-something motocross racer from the lower 48) introduced themselves while looking me over with suspicion.

After loading our bikes and the support van, we headed north out of Anchorage toward Fairbanks and the next leg of our northern expedition tour. Our

journey would take us along the George Parks Highway past Fairbanks, toward Trapper Creek and into Denali National Park.

The ride North would get harsher and more remote as the days went by and as we headed into more diverse topography. Taller peaks, fewer paved roads and, as Phil colorfully explained, “much more wildlife and adventure than bear on moose.” That wildlife and adventure would come soon enough for the team — and give an early lesson to the two lower-48 explorers.

A few letters from the e-mail bag:

Dear Easy Writer,

I was on vacation from the Seattle Area and read your column decrying Washington drivers as the worst in the nation. I take exception to this. Maybe it’s because we are careful and aren’t crazed madmen like you people out in LA.

Beatrice
Seattle

Dear Beatrice,

You are right. Washington drivers are not the worst drivers in the nation. They are the worst on the planet!

Dear Easy Writer,

All of my co-workers and I have been reading your columns about you and the lovely professor. We all want to see a picture of her. She sounds hot.

Bill
Pacific Palisades

Dear Bill,

After reading this week’s column, you’ll know why I cannot do that. She should be back in Santa Monica by now. Enclosed, please find her cell number.

Next week: Past Denali and onto the North Slope

(You may reach Easy Writer at: Easywritermail@yahoo.com)

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NATIONAL

Small town learns to embrace Burning Man

BY LESLIE FULBRIGHT
Associated Press Writer

GERLACH, Nev. — Everett Gates repairs a tire in an auto shop packed with plastic cat suits, thong underwear, goggles and boxes of condoms. It's that time of year again.

"The Burning Man people have started to roll in," he says. He's ready for them. He's stocked with supplies that those headed to the playa may need on their last stop before venturing into the desert.

Most of Gerlach's 180 residents have learned to have some fun during Burning Man — and make some cash. "For Sale" signs have popped up all along Main Street as some of the more than 35,000 people expected at the annual weeklong countercultural arts festival, which started Monday, drive through town before going another 10 miles to the temporary Black Rock City.

There is a trailer full of bikes for \$40 each, a bar selling cheap beer and whiskey, and piles of secondhand goods for a flea market at the senior center.

And then there is Bruno Selmi behind his namesake bar, Bruno's.

The 83-year-old has lived in Gerlach since he arrived from Tuscany in 1946. He worked for years at the nearby gypsum company and bought the bar in 1952 for \$6,500. He now owns just about anything

worth owning in Gerlach.

Selmi, who has never been to Burning Man and never surfed the Internet, clearly enjoys the dusty and costumed revelers who stop in for a cold beer — though he wonders why anyone would get their nose pierced and why a man would ever willingly put on a tutu.

"I have no interest in going to Burning Man. It's not my thing," Selmi says. "But if each person going wants to come and spend \$1, that's all right."

Try to take a quick wash in his bathroom, though, and he will call the sheriff. A sign above the door tells dusty Burning Man customers, "Absolutely No Bathing."

The rules are a little more strict down at the Miners Club, where a sign out front reads: "No Hippies. No Whiners. No Glowsticks. No Pacifiers. No Ravers."

Gerlach, a tiny town about 100 miles north of Reno, is the last outpost and primary staging ground for those headed to Black Rock Desert and the playa, a dry lake bed that is 100 miles long and said to be one of the flattest places on Earth.

Burners have been coming to Gerlach since Burning Man moved to the desert from San Francisco in 1990. The locals weren't too happy about it and worried that a freak-fest might stamp out the small-town vibe. But over the years, most of Gerlach's residents have formed a symbiotic relationship with Burning Man.

"In the beginning, we hated it," said Gates, the mechanic. "In Gerlach, we don't like change and we don't like the strange, so it took some getting used to."

It's helped that Burning Man has woven itself into the fabric of the town. Burning Man has an office on Main Street and, more important, generates about 10 percent of the town's business revenue as its attendees pass through.

Though Burning Man attracts most of Gerlach's visitors, balloonists, wind sailors, race car drivers, hunters and rocketeers also come through on the way to the desert. They all follow Main Street, where there are three bars, a gas station, a post office, two schools and a small motel. Selmi owns most of the businesses, making him the town's third-largest presence after the railroad and Burning Man.

The majority of Gerlach's residents are either retired or work for Washoe County or the nearby gypsum plant. The blue-collar town is sprinkled with a few artists who live in some of the small plain houses surrounded by sagebrush. It's a quiet place where not much happens.

"Gerlach is a good place to raise kids," Gates said. "I don't have to take the keys out of my truck and only lock the door to my house so the kids don't raid my freezer. And there is no traffic."

All that changes during Burning Man. The festival brings gas lines that wind

around the block. The bars get full. And the closest store in Empire, about seven miles south of Gerlach and home to the gypsum company, is packed.

The store is bustling with Burners stockpiling supplies. Cases of water and Pabst Blue Ribbon beer are stacked along the walls. Burning Man is responsible for about 30 percent of the store's annual sales each year.

The rest of Gerlach is catching on. "People started realizing that it is a good time to have yard sales," said Shiloh Williams, a 27-year-old Gerlach resident who is helping organize a flea market for the coming weekend.

Beyond bringing in tens of thousands of people who spend lots of cash, Burning Man donates proceeds from the sale of ice and coffee at its Black Rock City cafe to the town's schools and infrastructure. Burning Man volunteers redid the roof and shingles on Gerlach's historic water tower. And Burning Man brings free entertainment to town — a big deal for people who have to drive 100 miles each way to see a movie.

Didi Nay, site manager at the senior center, said many of Gerlach's retirees are intrigued by the event. For the past five years, a bus has taken three dozen seniors to Burning Man to see the sights.

"This year, the signup sheet was full the first day," Nay said.

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NATIONAL



Wyoming's last drive-in is still a hit

BY NINA MCCONIGLEY

Associated Press Writer

POWELL, Wyo. — It's almost 9 p.m., and the summer sun has nearly set. Inside the concession stand of the American Dream drive-in theater, the popcorn is popping and the pickles-on-sticks are on ice. "Sea of Love," by the Honeydrippers, crackles over the 191 speaker boxes across a gravel parking lot.

Soon, a cartoon of dancing concessions lights up the screen, and for people in 25 cars spread across the lot, the show begins.

Built in 1949, the American Dream drive-in once was one of more than 30 drive-in theaters in Wyoming. Now, it is the last in the state. And, surprisingly, it's thriving in this town of 5,400, with people from as close by as Cody, Billings and Worland — and from as far away as Sweden and Venezuela — coming to be a part of this increasingly rare and uniquely American tradition.

Nationwide, there are only about 420 drive-in movie theaters left. Only around 40 have been built since 1990.

Paul and Winnie McCalmon first saw a drive-in movie in the late 1940s on a trip to Kansas City. While Winnie (now Winnie Kindler) watched the movie, Paul talked to the guys who worked at the theater. After seeing how things worked, he got back in the car and told Winnie, "Let's go home and build one," she said.

Kindler, 92, who still lives in Powell next door to the theater, said they built the drive-in in a hayfield next to their house. Paul's Drive-In opened May 6, 1949, with a double feature, "The Devil on Wheels" and "Tumbleweed Trail."

While the two continued to work other jobs, the theater showed a different movie almost every night, charging 50 cents admission for adults and 9 cents for children. On a 1956 advertisement, the theater boasts "bottles warmed free for the baby."

In 1955, after the Wyoming wind blew down the screen, Paul and Winnie added a bigger screen. In front of the screen they built a playground. Paul got five Shetland ponies and offered pony rides for the kids. He built a small pond and had four little boats to tool around in. Paul even wired a speaker to the house, which is next door to the theater, so they could listen to the movies at home.

Kindler recalls how they dug out a ditch in front of the theater, so if there was a kid hiding in the trunk, trying to avoid paying admission, you'd hear the bump.

"I'd say, 'Open your trunk, and I'll sell you a ticket.' I can hold my own with anyone," Kindler said.

Donna Adamson, Winnie's daughter, was 15 when her parents started the theater. She'd fry burgers and take tickets. She'd look to the movies for her clothes and the latest fashions.

"Mom was a seamstress. She'd have to watch a show three nights in a row to draw the design of a dress and then make it," she said.

The McCalmons ran the theater until 1967, when they

sold the theater to have more time to travel.

From 1967 to 1975, Norman Bentz owned the theater. In 1975, Allen Mercer of Powell leased it. He later bought it.

Mercer figures a lot of things contributed to the demise of drive-ins across Wyoming. "For lots of drive-ins, the land got too valuable," he said.

"Daylight-saving time didn't help drive-ins," Mercer added. "The movie didn't start 'til 9-9:30 p.m. That killed the drive-in in the northern part of the country."

But Mercer knows why the drive-in is such a novelty. "It's the love of the automobile. You got to use your car with entertainment. You got your own world in your car. It was freedom," he said.

Julie Sullivan is a self-admitted movie nut. Poky Heny just plain loves the drive-in.

They bought the theater, then named the Vali Drive-In, from Mercer in January 2004 and quickly went to work renovating it. The theater still boasts the original 1949 speakers and projector, although now movie watchers can listen to the movie through an FM frequency.

They remodeled and painted the concession stand. The snack counter was replaced, the old grill removed. Julie painted an American flag on the side of the building.

In April 2004, prom night in Powell, the newly named American Dream drive-in opened.

"Isn't it everyone's dream to have their own business — to own a drive-in?" Heny asked.

They knew that running a drive-in, especially in a DVD-driven culture, would be a difficult venture.

"This is not going to be our fortune bucket. But we're not interested in making the family fortune. We're interested in family."

They pick mostly family-oriented films, rarely showing anything above PG-13. "We don't want people driving by and seeing a head get cut off," Heny said.

In the spirit of families, Sunday and Monday admission is just \$10 for a carload. The regular admission price is \$6 for adults, \$4 for seniors and students.

Heny lives directly across the street from the drive-in and can see the screen out her dining room window. She and her husband, Scott, had their first date at the drive-in in 1978; they saw "Grease."

Sullivan picks the movies and runs the projector along with her sons, Patrick and Kyle. Mercer trained them and helps if anything goes wrong. Each week, Sullivan splices together the film for the week.

Heny's domain is the concession stand.

Their season lasts until October. On a typical night people bring lawn chairs, blankets, sleeping bags and spread out on the ground or in the back of pickups.

Heny and Sullivan keep dog biscuits at the counter for those who bring pets.

They don't mind if people bring their own food and drink. But for those looking for a bite to eat, they offer burgers, hot dogs, cheese fries, honey butter cinnamon sugar pretzels, nachos, pickles, candy and popcorn. Also

on the counter are bug-wipes to keep mosquitos away.

Sullivan and Heny have big plans for the theater. Earlier this summer they did a retro night and screened "Grease." Everyone dressed up in '50s clothes.

They hope soon to convert the old snack bar into a VIP room that can be used for parties. They would love to have a playground again, but with insurance costs, it seems unlikely.

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NATIONAL

Water keeps rising in New Orleans

BY BRETT MARTEL

Associated Press Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Army engineers struggled without success to plug New Orleans' breached levees with giant sandbags, and the governor said Wednesday the situation was worsening and there was no choice but to abandon the flooded city.

"The challenge is an engineering nightmare," Gov. Kathleen Blanco said on ABC's "Good Morning America." "The National Guard has been dropping sandbags into it, but it's like dropping it into a black hole."

As the waters continued to rise in New Orleans, four Navy ships raced toward the Gulf Coast with drinking water and other emergency supplies, and Red Cross workers from across the country converged on the devastated region. The Red Cross reported it had about 40,000 people in 200 shelters across the area in one of the biggest urban disasters the nation has ever seen.

The death toll from Hurricane Katrina reached at least 110 in Mississippi alone, while Louisiana put aside the counting of the dead to concentrate on rescuing the living, many of whom were still trapped on rooftops and in

attics.

A full day after the Big Easy thought it had escaped Katrina's full fury, two levees broke and spilled water into the streets on Tuesday, swamping an estimated 80 percent of the bowl-shaped, below-sea-level city, inundating miles and miles of homes and rendering much of New Orleans uninhabitable for weeks or months.

"We are looking at 12 to 16 weeks before people can come in," Mayor Ray Nagin said on ABC's "Good Morning America," "and the other issue that's concerning me is have dead bodies in the water. At some point in time the dead bodies are going to start to create a serious disease issue."

Blanco said she wanted the Superdome — which had become a shelter of last resort for about 20,000 people — evacuated within two days, along with other gathering points for storm refugees. The situation inside the dank and sweltering Superdome was becoming desperate: The water was rising, the air conditioning was out, toilets were broken, and tempers were rising.

At the same time, sections of Interstate 10, the only major freeway leading into New Orleans from the east, lay shattered, dozens of huge slabs of concrete floating in

the floodwaters. I-10 is the only route for commercial trucking across southern Louisiana.

The sweltering city of 480,000 people — an estimated 80 percent of whom obeyed orders to evacuate as Katrina closed in over the weekend — also had no drinkable water, the electricity could be out for weeks, and looters were ransacking stores around town.

"The logistical problems are impossible and we have to evacuate people in shelters," the governor said. "It's becoming untenable. There's no power. It's getting more difficult to get food and water supplies in, just basic essentials."

She gave no details on exactly where the refugees would be taken. But in Houston, Rusty Cornelius, a county emergency official, said at least 25,000 of them would travel in a bus convoy to Houston starting Wednesday and would be sheltered at the 40-year-old Astrodome, which is no longer used for professional sporting events.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency was considering putting people on cruise ships, in tent cities, mobile home parks, and so-called floating dormitories — boats the agency uses to house its own employees.

To repair one of the levees holding back Lake Pontchartrain, officials late Tuesday dropped 3,000-pound sandbags from helicopters and hauled dozens of 15-foot concrete barriers into the breach. Maj. Gen. Don Riley of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said officials also had a more audacious plan: finding a barge to plug the 500-foot hole.

Riley said it could take close to a month to get the water out of the city. If the water rises a few feet higher, it could also wipe out the water system for the whole city, said New Orleans' homeland security chief, Terry Ebbert.

A helicopter view of the devastation over Louisiana and Mississippi revealed people standing on black rooftops, baking in the sunshine while waiting for rescue boats.

"I can only imagine that this is what Hiroshima looked like 60 years ago," said Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour after touring the destruction by air Tuesday.

All day long, rescuers in boats and helicopters plucked bedraggled flood refugees from rooftops and attics. Louisiana Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu said 3,000 people have been rescued by boat and air, some placed shivering and wet into helicopter baskets. They were brought by the truckload into shelters, some in wheelchairs and some carrying babies, with stories of survival and of those who didn't make it.

"Oh my God, it was hell," said Kioka Williams, who had to hack through the ceiling of the beauty shop where she worked as floodwaters rose in New Orleans' low-lying Ninth Ward. "We were screaming, hollering, flashing lights. It was complete chaos."

Looting broke out in some New Orleans neighborhoods, prompting authorities to send more than 70 additional officers and an armed personnel carrier into the city. One police officer was shot in the head by a looter but was expected to recover, authorities said.

A giant new Wal-Mart in New Orleans was looted, and the entire gun collection was taken, The Times-Picayune newspaper reported. "There are gangs of armed men in the city moving around the city," said Ebbert, the city's homeland security chief. Also, looters tried to break into Children's Hospital, the governor's office said.

On New Orleans' Canal Street, dozens of looters ripped open the steel gates on clothing and jewelry stores and grabbed merchandise. In Biloxi, Miss., people picked through casino slot machines for coins and ransacked other businesses. In some cases, the looting took place in full view of police and National Guardsmen.

Blanco acknowledged that looting was a severe problem but said that officials had to focus on survivors. "We don't like looters one bit, but first and foremost is search and rescue," she said.

Officials said it was simply too early to estimate a death toll. One Mississippi county alone said it had suffered at least 100 deaths, and officials are "very, very worried that this is going to go a lot higher," said Joe Spraggins, civil defense director for Harrison County, home to Biloxi and Gulfport. In neighboring Jackson County, officials said at least 10 deaths were blamed on the storm.

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INTERNATIONAL



Close to 650 killed in bridge stampede by shrine

BY QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Panic engulfed thousands of Shiites marching across a bridge in a religious procession Wednesday after rumors spread that a suicide bomber was about to attack, triggering a stampede that killed 648 people.

Scores jumped or were pushed to their deaths into the muddy Tigris River about 30 feet below, while others were crushed in the crowd. Most of the dead were women and children, Interior Ministry spokesman Lt. Col. Adnan Abdul-Rahman said.

It was the single biggest confirmed loss of life in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion.

Tensions already had been running high in the procession in Baghdad's heavily Shiite Kazimiyah district because of a mortar attack two hours earlier against the shrine where the marchers were heading. The shrine was about a mile from the bridge.

Abdul-Rahman said 648 were killed and 322 injured, although figures from other official sources varied slightly. Survivors were taken in ambulances and private cars to several hospitals, where officials scrambled to compile accurate casualty figures.

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shiite, declared a three-day mourning period.

Thousands of people rushed to both banks of the river to search for survivors, and bare-chested men jumped in to try to recover bodies.

Scores of bodies covered with white sheets lay on the sidewalk outside one hospital because the morgue was jammed. Many of them were women in black gowns, as well as children and old men.

Sobbing relatives wandered amid the dead, lifting the sheets to try to identify their kin. When they found them, they would shriek in grief, pound their chests or collapse to the ground, sobbing.

Hundreds of thousands of Shiites had been marching across the bridge, which links Baghdad's Shiite Kazimiyah district with heavily Sunni Azamiyah. They were heading for the tomb of Imam Mousa al-Kadhim, a 9th century Shiite saint, about a mile from the span.

Television reports said about 1 million pilgrims from Baghdad and outlying provinces had gathered near the shrine for the annual commemoration of the saint's death.

Interior Minister Bayn Jabr told state-run Iraqiya television that the procession slowed at security barricades about a quarter of the way across the bridge.

"Pushing started when a rumor was spread by a terrorist who claimed that there was a person with an explosive belt, which caused panic," Jabr said. "Some fell from the bridge, others fell on the barricades" and were trampled to death.

The barricades were placed there months ago to keep extremists from both sectarian communities from infiltrating the other's neighborhood.

Police later said they found no explosives — either on any individual or in any cars parked nearby.

"We were on the bridge. It was so crowded. Thousands of people were surrounding me," said survivor Fadhel Ali, 28, barefoot and soaking wet. "We heard that a suicide attacker was among the crowd. Everybody was yelling, so I jumped from the bridge into the river, swam and reached the bank. I saw women, children and old men falling after me into the water."

Health Minister Abdul-Mutalib Mohammed told Iraqiya television that "there was many cases of suffocation."

First reports suggested that the bridge's railing collapsed, but TV video showed the green, waist-high railing undamaged.

Shiite processions, which can draw huge crowds, are often targeted by Sunni extremists seeking to trigger sectarian war, so worshippers are on guard for trouble.

Mortar shells had exploded in the shrine compound about two hours earlier, killing at least seven people. U.S. Apache helicopters fired at the attackers.

In March 2004 suicide attackers struck worshippers at the Imam Kadhim shrine and a holy site in Karbala, killing at least 181 overall.

The head of the country's major Sunni clerical group, the Association of Muslim Scholars, told Al-Jazeera television that Wednesday's disaster was "another catastrophe and something else that could be added to the list of ongoing Iraqi tragedies."

"On this occasion we want to express our condolences

to all the Iraqis and the parents of the martyrs, who fell today in Kazimiyah and all over Iraq," said the cleric, Haith al-Dhari.

Elsewhere, a U.S. soldier was killed Tuesday by a roadside bomb in the city of Iskandariyah, about 30 miles south of Baghdad, the military said.

Eyewitnesses said the town of Qaim, about 200 miles northwest of Baghdad, was quiet and virtually deserted Wednesday after a day of U.S. airstrikes and heavy fighting between the pro-government Bumahl tribe and the pro-insurgent Karabilah tribe. Iraqi officials said 45 people had died, most in the tribal clashes, during which hundreds of residents fled their homes and took refuge in the surrounding countryside.

The border region is considered a prime infiltration route for smugglers and foreign militants trying to reach central and western Iraq.

This week's violence came amid new twists about Iraq's draft constitution. On Tuesday, U.S. ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad raised the possibility of further changes to the draft charter finalized by the dominant Kurdish and Shiite Arab bloc but vehemently opposed by Arab Sunnis who form the core of the armed insurgency.

Sunnis had demanded revisions in the constitution, and Khalilzad's move indicated the Bush administration has not given up its campaign to obtain some sort of Sunni endorsement for the national charter.

Khalilzad said he believed "a final, final draft has not yet been, or the edits have not been, presented yet" — a strong hint to Shiites and Kurds that Washington wants another bid to accommodate the Sunnis before the Oct. 15 referendum.

Shiite leaders had no comment on the ambassador's remarks. As constitution wrangling drew to a close last week, Shiite officials complained privately that the Sunnis were stonewalling and that further negotiations were pointless. Khaled al-Attiah, a Shiite member of the constitution drafting committee, insisted Tuesday that "no changes are allowed" to the draft "except for minor edits for the language."

This indicated that the Shiites and Kurds would be unlikely to compromise on their core demand for Iraq to be turned into a loose federation. Sunnis fear this would eventually lead to the breakup of the nation which has been ruled as a centralized entity since it was established by British occupiers in the 1920s.



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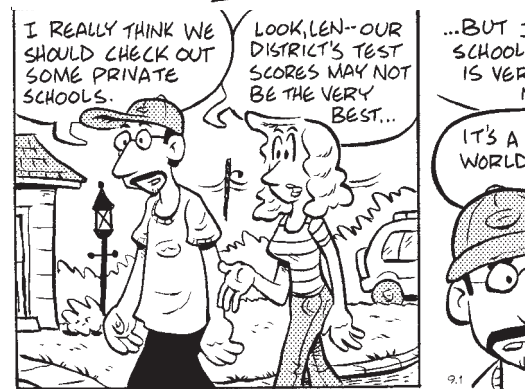
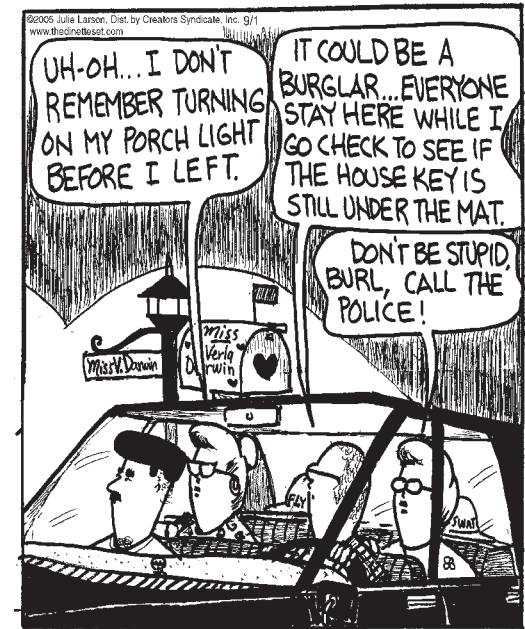
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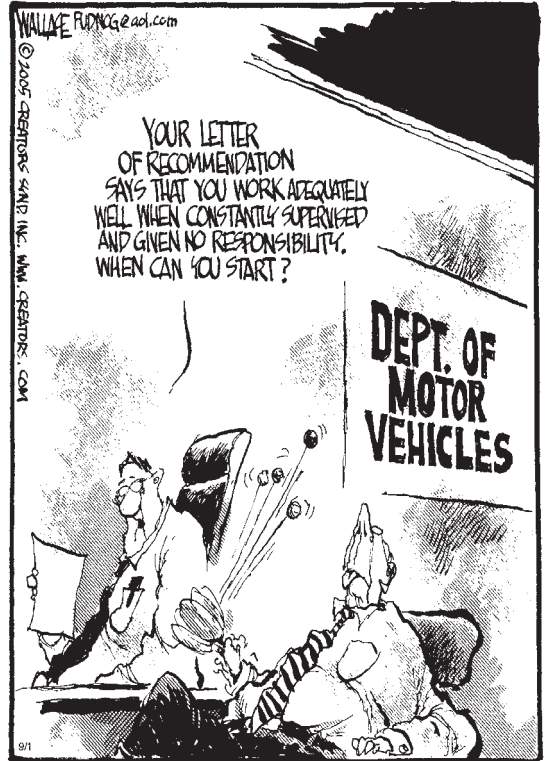


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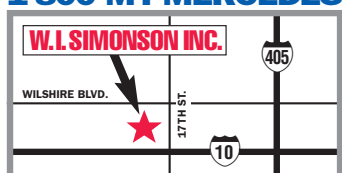
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