

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

7 22 28 30 37
Meganumber: 11
Jackpot: 23 Million

FANTASY 5

1 8 25 29 30

DAILY 3

Daytime: 6 4 0
Evening: 9 4 5

DAILY DERBY

1st: 06 Whirl Win
2nd: 05 California Classic
3rd: 10 Solid Gold
RACE TIME: 1:43.40

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

John Hutcherson, 21, was arrested in Marietta, Ga., in August for vehicular homicide and DUI after he drove 12 miles home and went to bed, allegedly oblivious of the dead body of his good friend that was hanging out his passenger-side window. According to police, the 23-year-old pal had been decapitated by a telephone pole guide wire when he stuck his head out the window after Hutcherson veered off the road. A neighbor alerted police the next morning when he saw the body still draped on the door of Hutcherson's truck.

TODAY IN HISTORY

ON SEPT. 17, 1787, the Constitution of the United States was completed and signed by a majority of delegates attending the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia.
In 1862, Union forces hurled back a Confederate invasion of Maryland in the Civil War Battle of Antietam.
In 1920, the American Professional Football Association — a precursor of the National Football League — was formed in Canton, Ohio.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Governments exist to protect the rights of minorities. The loved and the rich need no protection — they have many friends and few enemies."

WENDELL PHILLIPS
AMERICAN ABOLITIONIST (1811-1884)

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Task force thwarts Ecstasy smugglers

By Daily Press staff

LOS ANGELES — An international undercover operation involving the Santa Monica Police Department announced this week the arrest of 13 defendants allegedly involved in importing millions of doses of the club drug known as "Ecstasy" into the United States.

Through Operation Money Man, authorities have seized more than 300,000 doses of Ecstasy (or MDMA) worth an estimated street value of close to \$7 million.

The task force — which also included the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Immigration

and Customs Enforcement and Austrian and Czech authorities — capped a two-year investigation into the European drug ring with five arrests this week, including the apprehension of one Santa Monica man.

Bohumil Chudoba, 62, of Santa Monica, was arrested after delivering approximately 160,000 Ecstasy tablets to an undercover officer.

Each of the 13 individuals arrested in the sting operation are accused of being part of an international coalition that trafficked the illegal drug and laundered the profits.

According to criminal com-

See ECSTASY, page 7



Photo Courtesy
"Operation Money Man," conducted in conjunction with the SMPD, seized more than 300,000 doses of the club drug "Ecstasy."

Governor props up bill to aid local governments

By staff and wire reports

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, whose own attempt to raid tax revenues from local governments helped lead to a lengthy budget stalemate last summer, campaigned this week on behalf of a ballot measure to prevent the state from attempting such tax grabs in the future.

For Santa Monica, the passage of Proposition 1A could mean securing millions of dollars annually. More importantly, it would eliminate angst amongst City Hall's financiers who must budget a shortfall in anticipation of the state staking claim to local tax revenues.

"We'll be able to feel confident that we'll be able to retain the money we're supposed to get," said Steve Stark, City Hall's finance director.

City Hall's budget has accounted for a \$4 million deficit in case the state decides to dip into Santa Monica's tax revenues.

"In anticipation, we assumed they would withhold some money from us," Stark said.

Although it wouldn't be covered under Proposition 1A, the state government already takes \$3.2 million every year from Santa Monica in reduced property tax revenue that's earmarked for a special fund dedicated to education throughout California. Since 1992, Santa Monica has contributed about \$25 million, Stark said.

The Santa Monica City Council this week officially threw its support behind Prop. 1A.

"City officials have repeatedly made hard decisions to balance

See BALLOT, page 6

Wishy-washy



Crill Hansen/Special to the Daily Press

An area man takes time out recently to clean his car along Pico Boulevard.

Let there be light: City rethinking darkest hours

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Offices here are dark today, as they have been every other Friday for more than a decade. But that may change soon.

Since the early 1990s, California enacted stringent ride-sharing rules for all public and private entities with more than 250 employees. Companies and municipalities enacted programs to reduce the number of trips being made by their employees or pay hefty fines to the state. But most municipalities west of La Cienega

Boulevard went a bit farther.

City employees compressed their week, so they work 80 hours over nine days and receive every other Friday off.

But the reduced schedule has raised customer service concerns for many people who need access to City Hall during the work day, particularly developers and architects who need permits and other planning department assistance.

A recent study that examined the inefficiencies of the planning department has suggested that

See CITY HALL, page 6

Jacquie Banks

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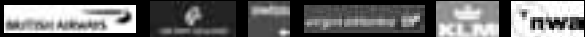
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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS The stars show the kind of day you'll have:



★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average ★★-So-so ★-Difficult



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★ Build on existing knowledge. You might be uncomfortable with another's dominance in the work arena. Perhaps you will learn a lot about your need to control. Learn to be an equal partner. Tonight: Decide with a loved one what would make you feel good.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ Others know what is needed. You might have to say very little other than exhibit attitude or determination. A child, loved one or new friend will turn him- or herself upside down to please you. Look at the big picture. Tonight: Party the weekend in.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Push at work. After all, you have a lot to get done. Your family pitches in, or perhaps you will be happier working from home. Bosses make unusual demands. See the creativity in their ideas. Don't get stuck in black-and-white thinking. Tonight: Decide to relax your mind and body.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ You could be overly serious, and others attempt to shake you out of your mood. If you are able to see the big picture, you will understand more of what is going on with others. Your imagination and creativity soar. Tonight: Be a wild thing.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Your intuition could put a bit of a downer on your mood. A partner could be touchy or unpredictable, but is that new? You need to learn to work with others and their need to be more free. Money and security play roles in your decisions. Tonight: Mosey on home and relax.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ You have the right words, which draw reactions from others left and right. A long-term friend could be a bit stiff. Know that you aren't going to change this person. Accept this person as he or she is. Meanwhile, others let their hair down. Tonight: Enjoy each person for what he or she offers.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ Expenses need a second look. It could be difficult to convince a superior of what you feel must be done. You could find life and work unpredictable. The good news is that you cannot complain about boredom. Tonight: Treat yourself first.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ You beam in many different people. Your imagination and creativity take you in a novel direction. You might have a difficult time explaining to others where you are coming from. Plug in your ingenuity. Tonight: As you like it.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★ Move back and allow others to express their ideas. You might be surprised by how serious an associate or partner is. You might have been bucking a very conservative trend. Open doors. A boss might have some off-the-wall feedback. Tonight: Vanish.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Others could be difficult, but if you know what you want, you will get exactly that. Don't buck the impossible, but head where you find others who are more positive. Work with the spontaneous. Tonight: Follow the gang.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ Maintain a high profile. You will want to check in with others who have very good ideas and prove to be more supportive. By taking the lead, you discover the unexpected financially. You have pulled the wild card. Tonight: In the limelight.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ Your unexpected behavior provokes another's attitude. He or she might close down or withdraw. Reach out for someone at a distance. Talk about a trip in the near future. Others reveal their opinions. Tonight: Take off ASAP.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

It's a wrap: Independent artists cap off Twilight

By Daily Press staff

Saturday marks the finale of the summer-long Twilight Pier Concert Series, high-lighted with four different musical performances.

KCRW is hosting "Next Up," a showcase of independent local artists. For the fourth year in a row, KCRW produces its own concert with performances by some of Southern California's rising stars. The event is free and open to the public.

This year's featured artists are the pop/Americana musical amalgamation of AM; Jesca Hoop's eccentric brew of traditional roots; the ethereal pop/rock of Quincy and Blue-Eyed Son's new wave of acoustic rock.

The artists were selected by KCRW Music Director Nic Harcourt. Harcourt is the host of KCRW's signature daily music show, "Morning Becomes Eclectic," which airs weekdays from 9 a.m. to noon on 89.9 KCRW and streams live on www.KCRW.com. KCRW's commitment to support new and emerging artists, without regard to record deals or promotional funding, has established the station's credibility in the music world. Several times a week, Harcourt hosts unsigned artists as well as internationally acclaimed bands live in-studio on "Morning Becomes Eclectic." Exposure on KCRW has helped launch the careers of such artists as Norah Jones, Coldplay, Jem, Damien Rice, Dido, Pete Dinklage and David Gray.

For the past two years, "Next Up" took place in Costa Mesa as part of the Eclectic Orange Festival. Several previously featured artists have since signed with labels, including Gary Jules, Ramsay Midwood, Trespassers William and Minibar. Next UP was launched at The Getty Center in 2001. Featuring four live bands in the courtyard at sunset, the event was such a success that more than 6,000 people attended, the most people the Getty has ever had on one night.

The event will take place on the Santa Monica Pier from 4 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. It's free and open to the public.

'Lame' event at the Laemmle

By Daily Press staff

To kick of this year's snow season, ZJ Boarding House and Bonfire present the only Southern California premiere of the new snowboard film by Robot Food, "Afterlame."

Robot Food is a coalition of creatives, cameramen and riders that have worked together for three years to produce snowboarding's most anticipated titles.

The premiere is Sept. 22 at 7:30 p.m. at the Laemmle Theater, located at 1332 Second St. in Santa Monica. Tickets are \$5 and are on sale at ZJ Boarding House, 2619 Main St., Santa Monica. They also can be bought the night of the event at the Laemmle Theater.

For every ticket sold, \$2 will be donated to "Boarding for Breast Cancer," a non-profit, youth-focused organization promoting breast cancer awareness, research and education. Ticket holders will receive one free raffle ticket for a drawing at the premiere. Additional raffle tickets will be sold at the event for \$1 with 100 percent of proceeds going to Boarding for Breast Cancer. Raffle prizes will include snowboards, boots, bindings and more.

An event after-party will be at Rusty's Surf Ranch on the Santa Monica Pier immediately following the movie. Admission to the party will be free with a ticket stub and \$5 without. There will be live music from LA surf rock band The Migs (themigs.com) and local indie rock band The Pop Kids (myspace.com/thepopkids).

For more information, please contact Becca Popkin at (310) 392-5646 or Becca@zjboardinghouse.com.

CLARIFICATION — In the Wednesday, Sept. 15 edition of the Daily Press ("City candidates respond to fleet of fuming citizens"), it was reported that City Council candidates Matt Dinolfo, Ken Genser, Michael Feinstein, Herb Katz and Jonathan Mann left a public forum at the Ken Edwards Center regarding jet traffic at the Santa Monica Airport early to attend a candidates' panel hosted across town. The five candidates did indeed remain until the conclusion of the airport panel discussion on Monday.



SURF REPORT

Look for 3-4 ft., waist- to chest-high sets, occasional-ly 5 ft., and fair conditions.

The current SW swell will wind down on Friday as a new SSW swell fills in through the day and keeps the surf fun into the weekend. On Friday, look for a mixture of slowly fading and slowly building SW swells (195-215+) to join some NW wind/ground swell energy.

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

Today the water is:

69°



LOW TIDES

HIGH TIDES

	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	2:38	0.0	2:10	2.3	9:08	4.4	8:10	5.8
SUNDAY	3:03	-0.1	2:42	1.9	9:25	4.6	8:43	5.9
MONDAY	3:27	-0.1	3:15	1.5	9:44	4.8	9:17	5.9
TUESDAY	3:51	0.0	3:49	1.2	10:05	5.1	9:52	5.7
WEDNESDAY	4:15	0.3	4:27	0.9	10:28	5.3	10:30	5.4
THURSDAY	4:39	0.7	5:09	0.7	10:53	5.5	11:12	4.9
FRIDAY	5:04	1.1	5:56	0.7	11:21	5.6	NA	NA

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The Q Line

Earlier this year, the Chamber of Commerce established a political action committee to endorse City Council candidates, which has never been done before. The chamber will raise hundreds of thousands of dollars and tirelessly campaign for their candidates. How it proceeds from here will be critical for the future of Santa Monica, political observers say.

Through local voters, the chamber hopes to overthrow a city government that has been dominated by a more liberal-thinking group called the Santa Monicans For Renters' Rights for the majority of the past 26 years. It's widely known that the chamber and City Hall have for years had an adversarial rela-

tionship. The business community laments that policies set by the current administration create an unfriendly environment for residents and visitors.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Do you think the Chamber of Commerce and its endorsements will represent your issues and views in the upcoming election? Why or why not?"

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

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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Living high off rent control

Editor:

I am 100 percent against rent control but if the citizens of Santa Monica want it so badly let's at least make sure that it is used for its intended purpose — to keep low-moderate income people living in Santa Monica.

Both landlords and council members agree on one thing — rent control as it exists is not a perfect system. Landlords claim that well-off tenants are taking advantage of their status and councilpersons like Feinstein and Genser, among others, feel it is better to have a broken system than no system at all. ("Broken" meaning the landlords get screwed).

Excuse me for saying this for the umpteenth time, but why isn't it mandatory for all rent-controlled tenants to be means tested? I've actually asked the Rent Control Board this question and the man's response was, "The law wasn't written that way." Sure, there will still be some who will hide their true incomes, but at least they will have to chance acting "illegally" if it is a law to hand over your 1040s each year in order to remain a tenant. The threat of incarceration should help to make people be honest.

Having a family member who is in the mortgage business in Santa Monica for years, I can tell you that the landlords are not wrong with their contention that many people who live in rent controlled apartments are actually well off. My family member would tell me of "bartenders" who made \$80,000 a year who lived in rent controlled apartments and were looking to buy property in Southern California.

I lived in a complex where a young couple was telling me that they were looking into buying a vacation condo in Hawaii. When I asked them how they could afford it, they told me that the \$500 they were paying for rent was such a small percentage of their income that they had saved enough to start looking. I followed up by asking if they were going to give up their apartment and they said, "Are you kidding? We will never give up this place. We'll come here to vacation."

As far as councilman Genser's assertion that census data shows that it is a "myth" that Bentley-driving, rent controlled living tenants exist in Santa Monica, well maybe not Bentleys but definitely BMWs.

Don't take my word for it. Look at SMDP articles on the Beverly Hills lawyer who kept his oceanfront, rent control apartments while living in his Beverly Hills mansion.

Tony Street
Bend, Ore.

Local Dems unflagging in support

Editor:

In response to "A Lesson in Flag Flying," (SMDP, Sept. 13, page 4) the campaign staff at the Democratic Club headquarters, located at 900 Wilshire Blvd. in Santa Monica, wants to underscore our respect for the flag and all that it represents — freedom and constitutional rights — precious values in great jeopardy under the Bush Administration.

The reader who accused us of hanging the flag in the wrong direction stood on the outside, not on the inside, where our many workers, tireless volunteers committed to saving this country from a trillion-dollar deficit and a go-it-alone foreign policy, look at the flag with deep respect and admiration.

Direction, like perspective, is relative. For us, Democrats from Malibu to Venice to West Hollywood, the direction of this country is what must be changed. Another four years of George Bush means we face at least 45 million Americans without health coverage, another \$2 billion on a "pre-emptive" war, oil drilling in protected waters off our beautiful California coast, a ban on a woman's right to choose, and a first-strike nuclear policy that reverses a 50-year commitment to global cooperation.

Although the Bush Administration has turned a deaf ear to the middle class and the bleeding veterans of Iraq, the Democrats at 900 Wilshire want to listen to what every American has to say. To show that we are listening, that we are responsive, we have changed the direction of the American flag in our window. We only hope that those who, like your reader, support the Bush/Cheney ticket, think about changing the direction of this country, as well. Our lives and our nation depend on electing John Kerry for president on Nov. 2.

Marcy Winograd
Board member, Pacific Palisades Democratic Club;
Democratic headquarters manager

Businesses now looking to produce more voters



POLITIGIRL
BY BETH SOLOMON

It's almost the end of the workday at Schaefer Brush Company in Waukesha, Wisc. but president Sheri Reichart is just getting her second wind. Following a full day of meetings in boardrooms and decision making by conference call, Reichart gathers up a stack of bumper stickers to hand out to her employees as they leave the building.

The stickers say, "I make things in America — and I vote."

Reichart is part of the National Association of Manufacturers' "Make the Difference, Vote!" campaign aimed at getting pro-business voters to the polls. Now the nation's largest industry trade association has teamed up with BIPAC, the Business Industry Political Action Committee, in a massive nationwide effort aimed at contacting 20 million voters and turning out 711,000 extra votes in 18 target states.

The grassroots campaign already has signed on 550 companies and associations which are now using the Prosperity Project's education and get-out-the-vote tools. Prosperity Project resources let employers and employees track key votes by local and national elected officials, compare the votes to NAM's positions, and send off instant constituent letters.

"I personally have contacted all our employees around the world about absentee voting," said Ned Masee, vice president of MeadWestvaco, a 30,000-employee manufacturer of packaging and specialty papers. "Every e-mail that goes out from me reminds people of the elections." It says, "Vote on election day." MeadWestvaco has major facilities and thousands of employees in states like Michigan and Ohio considered essential for a presidential win in 2004.

In 29 states, voters can now choose their own "election day," opting to vote as much as 50 days early by mail or in person without having to provide an approved reason. In a recent special election in South Dakota for a U.S. House seat, more than 10 percent of voters took

advantage of the option. Of 31,708 people who requested absentee ballots, 30,600 returned them. The winner, Democrat Stephanie Herseth, won by 3,005 votes.

Research indicates that employees who receive information from their employers are 15 to 30 percent more likely to vote. Other surveys indicate a strong tendency of employees to follow their bosses' lead in picking candidates.

"I don't tell them who to vote for," Reichart said. "But I let them know what their votes mean to manufacturing."

In a state where the 2000 election was decided by 5700 votes — efforts like these could literally decide the election.

The tactics come right out of labor unions' playbooks. The ALF-CIO's get-out-the-vote campaign has included door-to-door visits to a million union households in recent weeks. About 15,000 union volunteers in 16 battleground states have made house calls as part of a \$45 million political organizing effort in this year's election.

NAM's Executive Vice President Michael Baroody said such activities make business participation in elections all the more important. "In our representative republic, you can either choose to be an effective participant in the development of public policy or a victim of a government shaped by others," he said.

Ken Kneen, CEO of Al-Jon Inc. in Ottumwa, IA, said his Prosperity Project efforts are just beginning.

"We will have the discussion again, at least once and possibly twice, before the November elections," he said. "In the time between, employees will be receiving payroll stuffers and/or e-mails reminding them of the important role they play."

"Every company can do this," Kneen added. "Every company needs to do this. All you have to do is get started, the NAM and BIPAC have made the rest simple. A couple of clicks with the mouse can do more to advance business issues than all the campaign contributions you have made in your lifetime."

More information is available at <http://www.nam.org/p2> and <http://www.-nam.org/gotv>.

(Beth Solomon is associate director of media relations for the National Association of Manufacturers in Washington, D.C.)

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 sack@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.



ALL OPINIONS ARE EQUAL AT THE DAILY PRESS...

...PLEASE SEND LETTERS TO:

Santa Monica Daily Press: Att. Editor 1427 Third Street Promenade Suite 202 Santa Monica, CA 90401
Or email: sack@smdp.com

OPINION

Ill-timed allergy attack sure can ruin the mood

PISTACHIO PERSPECTIVE

BY SUSAN ANN CONNOR



Sitting at a long, oak, New York-style saloon, high heels clutching the crossbar of the tall stool that caressed my derriere, I slowly sipped my immaculately made martini. I'd been waiting 10 minutes for my tardy dinner companions. No matter, I was enjoying the ambiance and the sense of insouciance within me.

Suddenly, I felt eyes watching me. I turned my head gingerly, mostly not to rustle my hair. And good thing too, because the gaze was coming from one handsome fella. So best not to have a lock out of place. He smiled flirtatiously at me. I smiled back, then coyly returned to my masterful martini.

I questioned the bartender about the location of the ladies room, hoping the path would require slithering by Mr. Cutie Patootie. It did. So swinging my long legs 'round, I journeyed toward my destination, fully prepared to be cut off at the pass.

As I walked, music filled my ears, but it was all due to my own low level humming. "Strangers in the night, exchanging glances. Wondering in the night, what were the chances we'd be sharing love before the night was through"... ah-choo ... ah-choo ... ah-choo.

Skooby dooby doo ... "Something in your eyes was so inviting ..." AH-CHOO, AH-CHOO, ah-choo-choo-choo. Something in my eyes was turning red, and my nose wasn't far behind. I was having an allergy attack. Right in the middle of my upcoming romantic interlude.

I quickened my step, angling my now embarrassed rustled head of hair to the east and away from any future with Patootie. Seeking reconciliation with myself, I concluded he probably wasn't my type. Probably waxes his back and has a Ph.D. in astrophysics. I could never keep up with either. Besides who really wants to hang out with someone named Patootie, anyway.

I lingered in the ladies room trying to control the state of my sinuses. The sneezing was relentless. I searched desperately for antihistamines, which I sometimes

include in my purse for emergencies. Nope, must have been too busy hair styling to remember.

And no Kleenex. Not a one in my purse. Having to resort to restaurant toilet paper is never preferable, but I was glad to have it.

What was I allergic to? I couldn't figure it out. Normally if my allergies act up, it's slow and easy. This was warlike. It wasn't the martini, that's for sure. And it couldn't have been Patootie. I don't have food allergies. Cats can be a problem, but there was no sign of any felines. It had to be the environment. I must have caught an extra whiff of our unfortunate smog on my way to the saloon.

I continued to sit on the pink velveteen bench in the powder room, pondering my next move. If you have ever had an allergy assault like this, you know how miserable it can be. My sympathies to all who are prone. Holding my clogged head in my hands, I prayed for a return to normalcy.

Then she appeared. My darling red-headed sister-in-law to the rescue. A true expert in the allergy arts, this woman has had more pollen problems and more spring sniffles than Paris has shoes. She definitely would be carrying a remedy. "Hey Red," I said between sneezes.

"Hey, Susan, sorry we're late. You all right?"

"Allergies ...," I ah-chooed.

Recognizing the depth of my dilemma, she pulled out a sinus product and handed me two tablets. "This will take care of it," she said confidently. With watering eyes, I accepted her offering as if it were from the pontiff himself.

At dinner, thankful for regained clarity, I listened to Red tell me that researchers have found adding certain spices to your diet could help reduce one's vulnerability to allergies. She mentioned a regular intake of turmeric, sage, red pepper, cumin or coriander wouldn't eliminate, but could possibly curtail allergy aggression. Yahoo! I'll try anything.

I passed by Patootie on the way out. He was parlaying with a lovely looking brunette. He snuck a glance at me and gave a little wink. "Do de do be doooo ... do do de da" ...la la la la...

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

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Santa Monica Daily Press



LOCAL

City Hall mulls whether to throw switch back on

CITY HALL, from page 1

staff be available for the public five days a week.

"We are suggesting the permit center should be open 10 days instead of nine days," said Gary Goelitz, vice president of the Matrix Consulting Group, which conducted the study. "(Closing on Fridays) is the result of the Southern California Air Quality Board to reduce air pollution, and Santa Monica is trying to do its fair share, but there has to be a balance between customer service and the kinds of issues the air quality board brings to bear."

City Hall spokeswoman Judy Rambeau said the recommendation is being considered and it's a possibility that the planning department could open on Fridays in some limited capacity.

City Councilman Herb Katz, an architect who regularly relies upon the planning department, thinks it's bad business to close City Hall on a weekday.

"The reason (to close City Hall) was silly," he said. "The idea was it saves on traffic, but when you have a day off, you drive."

Katz added that many people think City Hall is open on Fridays and make the trip only to find the doors locked.

City Councilman Ken Genser agreed the idea is worth revisiting.

"I think it might make sense to look at it," he said. "But I don't hear a lot of com-

plaints."

According to an official at the Southern California Air Quality Board, in the 180 cities in Southern California, it's estimated only a couple dozen compress their work week. Many westside cities still use some combination of the compressed work week.

Beverly Hills City Hall used to be closed every other Friday, but altered its policy five years ago.

"It's good for customer service because before we were closed altogether on Fridays," said Arlene Vargas, who works in the human resources department. "Now, half of the staff work every other Friday, and the other half the other Friday. We're open with half the staff."

That's the same schedule as Malibu's City Hall, where every department is open, but with fewer staff.

"The City Council didn't want to take that approach (closed on Fridays) because of customer service," said Claudio Sanchez, deputy city engineer.

In Culver City, business hours at City Hall are normal — Monday through Friday, with reduced hours on the weekends.

"Why? Because they (the public) would kill us," said Monica Torrez, who works in the transportation department. "Friday's our busiest day."

The city of West Hollywood used to be

closed on Fridays, but when the public complained about a lack of customer service, City Hall opened in a reduced capacity in 1996.

"We changed from closed on Fridays to a very reduced service we call 'Friday Lite,'" said Vivian Love of the administrative services division. "We have only the first-floor services open, such as the Clerk's office, cashier, parking staff and rent stabilization."

Although the SCAQB never mandated shrinking the work week, it operates on a four-day week and closes every Monday.

It's unknown when and if Santa Monica City Hall would re-open on Fridays, but officials are interested in investigating the idea further.

"It's worth evaluating periodically," said City Councilwoman Pam O'Connor. "They did that a while ago and it's worthwhile to see if it's achieving its goals."

Proposition for city may cost \$1.3B over two years

BALLOT, from page 1

their budgets during takebacks, recessions or other economic downturns by cutting expenditures and/or raising revenue," a City Council report contends. "Local services will most certainly be adversely impacted further if the state continues to find it easy to balance its own budget on the backs of local government."

But there is a catch to the proposal — local governments have to give the state \$1.3 billion over the next two years. Santa Monica's portion would be \$2.7 million garnered from property tax revenue, according to Stark.

Under Proposition 1A, the state government would have to declare a severe financial hardship and it would take a two-thirds vote from the legislature in order to suspend any property tax revenue to cities. And if the state does keep that money, it would have to pay it back within three years. According to Stark, the state government wouldn't be able to keep money from cities more than twice in 10 years.

Also as part of the deal, the state government would have to pay back local municipalities the money it kept from vehicle licensing fees, which for Santa Monica equals \$1.6 million. The money has to be returned by 2006, Stark said.

At a training center for Los Angeles firefighters, Schwarzenegger joined Los Angeles Mayor Jim Hahn, police chief William Bratton and other local officials in urging support for Proposition 1A, one of 16 major initiatives on the Nov. 2 ballot. If passed, the measure would prohibit the state from dipping into local tax revenue, except in the case of a severe fiscal emergency, as well as prevent the state from imposing mandates on local governments without providing money to pay for them.

"You've made it very clear to me, you said, 'Arnold, we want you to stop the big spenders in Sacramento,'" Schwarzenegger said. "It was always the same old story — Sacramento spends, local government pays, and local services suffer."

Proposition 1A grew out of a deal struck by Schwarzenegger with city and county governments who have long complained of seeing their funding diverted to pay for legislators' spending habits. The state has pulled some \$40 billion from local coffers since 1992, much of which would have been directed toward police and fire protection.

Schwarzenegger, who vowed to protect local governments during last year's

recall election, made his own attempt in January to grab \$1.3 billion from cities and counties to plug the state's \$17 billion budget hole. Local governments then qualified an initiative, Proposition 65, that would prohibit such raids in the future.

Later, in a series of closed-door meetings, Schwarzenegger persuaded local leaders to forfeit \$2.6 billion over two years in exchange for his support for Proposition 1A, to prevent such raids in the future. Local government leaders also agreed to drop their support for Proposition 65, although it remains on the ballot. A dispute with legislators over elements of Proposition 1A, among other things, tied up the budget process for weeks.

If there were any lingering resentments over Schwarzenegger's attempted tax grab — or his decision last year to slash the vehicle license fee, which would have generated an additional \$4 billion for local governments — none was evident at Wednesday's campaign event.

"Gov. Schwarzenegger made a campaign promise to end the practice in Sacramento of raiding local government to balance the state's budget," Hahn said. "The governor is proving he's a man of his word."

Bratton, who came to Los Angeles in 2002 after running police departments in New York and Boston, praised Schwarzenegger's leadership on the issue and said the "quaint California custom of the state reaching in, unannounced, and taking as much as they want from local government" mystified him.

"I've only been out here a couple years ... and as crazy as I thought it was back there in New York and Boston during financial crises, I've never seen anything like this place," Bratton said.

While Proposition 1A has no organized opposition, supporters fear that the blizzard of other initiatives, as well as Proposition 65, will confuse voters.

Speaking to reporters, Schwarzenegger refused to divulge his position on the state's highest-profile ballot measure — Proposition 71, which would authorize a \$3 billion bond to pay for stem cell research — and another measure, opposed by both major political parties, to establish an open primary. So far, he has taken a position on nine of the 16 measures.

"It's very important to divide all this stuff up the right way — that's why today we wanted to single out the one that is extremely important to local government, which is Proposition 1A," Schwarzenegger said.

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FAA: Poor maintenance resulted in lack of control

BY MICHAEL R. BLOOD
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Failure to perform a routine maintenance check caused the shutdown of an air traffic communications system serving a large swath of the West, resulting in several close calls in the skies, the FAA and a union official said Wednesday.

Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Greg Martin said there was never a danger of a mid-air crash.

But a union representative said that in at least five cases, aircraft in the sky passed dangerously close to each other Tuesday night after the system based north of Los Angeles failed and contact with pilots was cut off.

Two flights “were almost near-mid-air collisions,” said Hamid Ghaffari, local president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association.

The FAA said it was looking into five instances in which planes apparently got too close to each other during the communications blackout.

In a prepared statement, the agency said radio contact failed but radar coverage remained fully operational and en route aircraft were safely handed off to other air traffic control facilities.

“A required 30-day maintenance check on the primary radio and voice communications system was not performed,” the agency said. “This system turns off if this check is not performed.”

It said a backup system also failed because it “was not configured properly to ensure its availability in the event of the primary system’s failure.”

The problems could have been avoided if strict FAA procedures had been followed, the agency said.

The Los Angeles Air Route Traffic Control Center controls airspace for a vast region that encompasses California, Arizona, Nevada and parts of Utah.

The blackout caused a ripple effect throughout the country as planes bound for the Los Angeles region were held on the ground for about three hours. Air travel returned to normal Wednesday.

During the blackout, Ghaffari said planes traveled perilously close to one

another as helpless controllers watched in disbelief.

“We couldn’t do anything,” he said. “If there are no communications, you are helpless.”

Three workers filed on-the-job injury claims after becoming traumatized by watching the flights on radar without being able to intervene, Ghaffari said.

Under FAA “separation standards,” planes flying higher than 29,000 feet must remain at least five miles apart horizontally, and no less than 2,000 feet apart vertically.

The center was tracking about 400 planes when the breakdown occurred about 4:40 p.m. Tuesday. The FAA said its other sites, including Denver and Albuquerque, bridged the communications gap.

But in the first 13 minutes after radio contact failed, FAA records showed, five pairs of planes flew closer to each other than permitted under safety standards.

FAA officials said at one point, two planes came within slightly less than a mile of each other while separated by 1,400 vertical feet. Still, Martin said it was “breathless hysteria” to suggest a collision was imminent.

United Parcel Service spokesman Mark Jiuffre said the captain of one of its cargo jets, headed from Louisville, Ky., to Santa Ana was alerted by on-board safety equipment that another plane was flying too close.

The pilot “climbed about 1,000 feet, and when they were climbing they did see a business jet in the area,” Jiuffre said. “The flight continued without event.”

Ghaffari said the UPS plane was one of several that were perilously close to other aircraft.

On-board safety equipment that includes a collision avoidance system alerted pilots to the danger and avoided potential disaster, he said.

“That was the hero of the night,” he said.

Throughout the evening, airports struggled to accommodate irked passengers who had been forced to wait hours to board delayed flights.

Traffickers raked in millions

ECSTASY, from page 1

plaints, the investigation began in March of 2002 when ICE agents learned that a group comprised primarily of Israeli nationals were trafficking Ecstasy into the Los Angeles region.

Investigators believe the ring shipped in excess of seven million tablets from the Czech Republic into the United States, Australia, Poland and Russia over the past

year alone.

“These criminals trafficked Ecstasy and laundered their profits through bank fraud and real estate transactions,” said Michael J. Garcia, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. “This investigation demonstrates the global reach of federal law enforcement to take drugs off the street and seize the profits from these criminal networks.”



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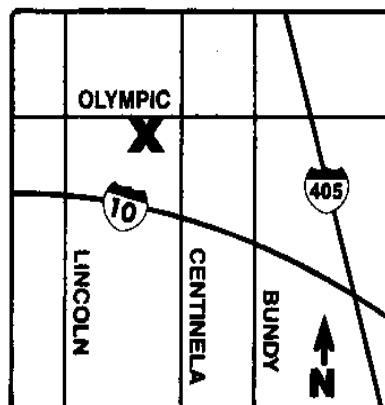
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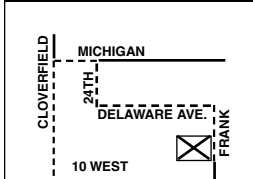


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STATE □ NATIONAL

Calif's oil industry struggles to attract younger workers

BY ANDREA ALMOND

Associated Press Writer

TAFT — It's a job of last resort.

That's how some of the next generation in California oil country see work in the fields.

It's smelly, dirty, backbreaking — thriving during the booms, yes, but crushing in the troughs. Many of the teenagers and twenty-somethings of Kern County say they'd prefer any alternative, despite the nearly unbeatable \$16-an-hour starting salary of a rig hand or roustabout.

They saw their fathers sweating in the fields, knew the uncertainty of the paycheck-to-paycheck pendulum — and actually listened when counseled not to follow in oily footsteps.

"We sure shot ourselves in the foot, telling the kids for years, 'Go somewhere else,'" said Fred Holmes, 60, one in a long line of oilmen and president of the Independent Oil Producers Agency. "Now that's just what they're doing. We've scared everyone off the oil patch."

The fields that once made California the nation's top oil-producing state still produce oceans of oil each year, but they have suffered a slow decline since the mid-1980s.

"There's nothing to keep the industry from sunseting," Holmes says.

In the meantime, the petroleum industry requires vigorous young workers, Holmes said.

Jobs in the fields are still plentiful, and the starting salary dwarfs minimum wage. But teens whose parents and grandparents made their livings from the rise and fall of a pump are opting for the burgeoning service economy — answering phones and waiting tables rather than donning oil-drenched overalls.

Keaton Polson, a 20-year-old hair stylist, worked for one summer as a rig hand.

Never again.

"I'd rather work in an air conditioned strip mall in Bakersfield and make \$50 or \$60 in tips than work in the oil fields, even if that pays more," he said.

Polson is taking night classes and, though still unsure what profession he'll choose, he knows it won't be oil-related.

For some, there's no escaping the pull of the fields.

Dennis Easley, 21, would've liked to study computer technology in college.

But having a child at 17 with his then-girlfriend derailed those plans. Like his father, Easley started oil work the day after high school graduation.

"If I had anywhere else to go, I would," Easley said, his jeans spattered with oil after a day repairing pumps in 90-plus-degree heat. "This ain't something people are running to do if they have other choices."

Some teachers are trying to convince high school students that oil is an attractive prospect.

As a group, oil industry managers are aging, locals say. They estimate the average age at about 51, which will leave a void in the next 10 to 15 years for today's teens to fill.

Local schools increasingly encourage students to look beyond the fields themselves and pursue white-collar opportunities in oil and energy as managers, analysts, lawyers and engineers.

At Taft Union High School, educators launched what they call the nation's only college-preparatory program that offers students a career focus in petroleum.

Teachers acknowledge what's common local wisdom — that oil is a fading dynasty in Kern County. But, they add, precisely because oil is harder to coax from the region's well-tapped fields, young minds must help discover better extraction methods or alternative fuel sources.

Four workers fired, one resigns amid Los Alamos lab scandal

BY MARY PEREA

Associated Press Writer

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A security scandal at the birthplace of the atomic bomb has cost five Los Alamos National Laboratory workers their jobs, lab officials said.

Four workers were fired from the nuclear lab and one will resign under pressure for their roles in a security and safety scandal at the lab, the lab's director said Wednesday.

The fired workers were among 23 suspended this summer after two computer disks containing classified information went missing and an intern was injured in a laser accident. The discovery of the missing disks July 7 prompted a virtual shutdown of the lab, idling roughly 12,000 workers.

Of the remaining 18 suspended employees, seven were subject to other discipline such as demotion from management, salary reductions or written reprimands. One remains on investigatory leave. Ten will return to their positions with a finding of "no wrongdoing."

"It's very important to get this behind us," Director Pete Nanos said in a phone interview. Nanos spoke by cell phone

from an airplane after meetings in Washington, D.C.

Nanos declined to discuss specific cases of fired employees but said that some were dismissed for "not taking actions that you were supposed to take, or signing off on things that you hadn't done." Another employee had not taken appropriate precautions in a safety area.

Three of the workers will leave the lab in connection with the missing computer disks; the other two were involved in an accident in which a laser injured an intern, he said.

"These personnel actions touched all levels of employment, staff and management and varying levels of tenure," lab spokesman James Fallin said. He declined to be more specific about the lab departments or positions involved.

Nanos also said the northern New Mexico lab has finished its investigation into the two missing disks. Information from the probe has been turned over to federal authorities. Nanos refused to release additional details. He said other agencies are still investigating.

Nanos, who held a series of all-hands meetings with lab workers after the scandal broke, added that the "commitment of employees right now is extremely high."



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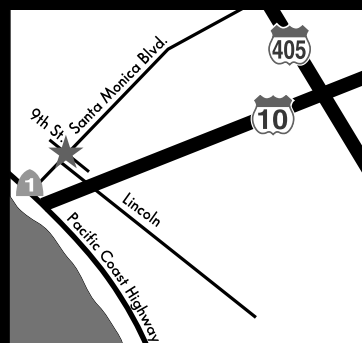
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Entertainment

Law lays it down, high in the sky as ‘Captain’

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

These days Jude Law is as hot as hot gets in Hollywood, with starring roles in four major motion pictures slated for release over the next two months. Not only is Law recognized as one of the best looking leading men in the business, he’s also one of its most talented. With two Oscar nominations to his credit (for “Cold Mountain” and “The Talented Mister Ripley”) and doubtless more to come, the 31-year-old Londoner seems destined for celluloid immortality. The latest step on that gilded path is as an intrepid aviator in the state-of-the-art special effects extravaganza, “Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow,” which co-stars Gwyneth Paltrow and Angelina Jolie.

Q&A

QUESTION: Having helped shepherd this project as both leading man and first-time producer, how did you react when you first saw the finished version?

JUDE LAW: I was thrilled and incredibly proud, because rather than being something I developed, it was something I stepped into and perhaps, for the first time, it was something I could lend my name to in order to empower a first-time director (Kerry Conran) to see this film through.

Q: “World of Tomorrow” is a throwback to the pulp fiction films of the early and mid 20th Century, yet at the same time it feels new and exciting. The kids are going to see the film, but do you also anticipate good box office returns from mature audiences?

JL: You go back and watch those old Errol Flynn movies, they’re full of romance, fighting and adventure, but there’s none of this drug-dealing, coke-snorting, testosterone-fueled cynicism. It exists out there and there’s a place for it in film, but this is a clean-cut, non-cynical action film for the family. It hearkens back to the old movies, and I hope that the older generations will embrace that because we’re not sending it up, but instead paying tribute.

Q: You and your co-stars acted this film almost entirely in front of a blue screen, with computer-produced backgrounds added in post-production. Does this augur for a future without location shoots and real sets?

JL: I don’t know if it does. There will always be room for straight-up dramas that are about script and actors and are shot on location. And there’s no other way of doing those films. There will never be another way of making those films. I suppose there will be more and more films made like (“Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow”) but I don’t think it spells the end for films like “Garden State” or “Closer.”

Q: This movie has franchise written all over it. Are you up for reprising the role of Sky Captain again?

JL: Absolutely. (While shooting this film) we were already inventing prequels and sequels and whatnot. It’s the kind of world where once you step into it, you can’t help but start thinking about what he’s done in the past, and how they all met.

Q: Several famous actors are also licensed pilots. Now that you’ve flown on film, do you have any interest in becoming a real Sky Captain?

JL: I don’t know if I have the time between the kids and work. Plus, whenever you work, you’re always insured — they hardly let you ride a bicycle when you’re working, let alone fly a plane. It’s certainly something that would be interesting to do, but there are other things on my list that I’d like to do before I learn to fly a plane.

‘Innocence’ lost in its own indulgence

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

This stylish but self-indulgent sequel to Mamoru Oshii’s 1995 anime hit is set 28 years from now, in a caliginous metropolis where lifelike machines outnumber humans. A protracted existentialist meditation disguised as a “Blade Runner”-esque sci-fi thriller, “Innocence” will be welcomed as a godsend by diehard fans of Japanese animation. The typical moviegoer, however, will likely find Oshii’s philosophizing to be far too esoteric. To convince us that we must move away from he believes is our limiting anthropocentric humanism, Oshii uses porcelain dolls and a cute dog as mirrors to our lost souls. Also investigating the meaning of existence — as well as a string of robot-on-human killings — is a burly cyborg cop named Batou. Half-human, half-machine, Batou is handy with high-powered weapons and is partial to quoting Descartes and the Bible. The film is a marvelous blend of traditional and computer animation, but despite its good looks, “Innocence” is done in by bloated outrecuidance.

(Rated PG-13 for violence, disturbing images and brief language. Running time: 99 minutes)

‘MR 3000’ as predictable as a fly ball

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

In his first at bat at the top of the lineup, Bernie Mac squeezes an extra base out of a slow roller in this chalk talk about the value of teamwork, modesty and accurate scorekeeping. It’s 1995 and Mac’s Stan Ross is a legendary me-first hit machine for the Milwaukee Brewers who, after collecting his 3,000th hit and virtually assuring himself a coveted spot in the Hall of Fame, immediately quits the game, hanging his contending teammates out to dry.

Without looking back, the self-serving Ross constructs a mini empire (actually, a shopping mall in Milwaukee) upon the foundation of his 3,000-hit milestone. Nine years after his retirement a scoring error is discovered that subtracts three hits from Ross’s vaunted total, effectively torpedoing his chance for election to the Hall and his claim to immortality. So Ross decides to return to the game to regain his mojo. The last-place, attendance-challenged Brewers are more than happy to accommodate him, and after a rather tedious montage of the old boy trying to whip himself back into shape, Ross finds himself back in The Show. What follows is a predictable trek down the road to self-discovery in which Ross learns that selfishness is bad, Angela Bassett is good, and the distance from home to first is considerable. The mordantly mirthful Mac never seems all that comfortable in the sweet-tempered confines of this Disney flick, but he injects just enough piquancy to the part to elevate the middling material.

(Rated PG-13 for sexual content and language. Running time: 104 minutes)

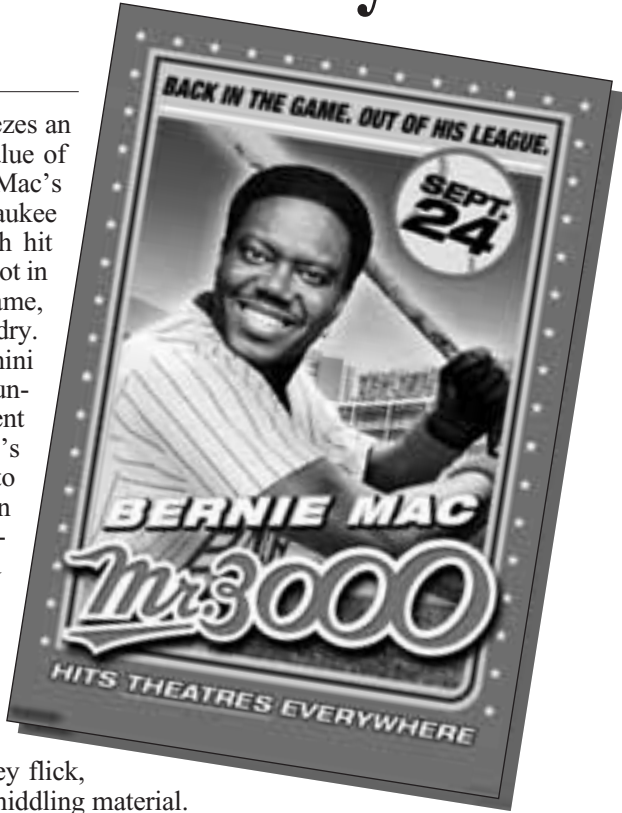
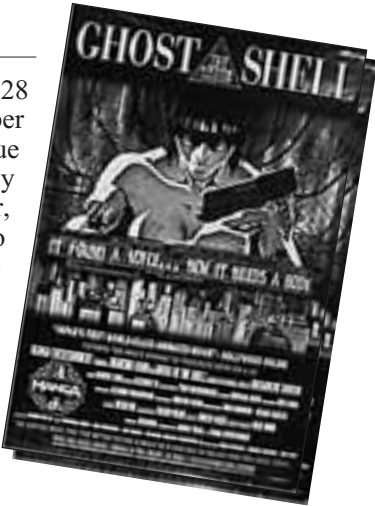
‘Head in the clouds’ will have your nose running

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

A passionate, decade-long romance between a carefree, peripatetic young woman of means and a working-class idealist is repeatedly put to the test in this handsome but unremarkable World War II drama from writer-director John Duigan (“Flirting,” “Sirens”). There are worse ways to spend two hours than watching beautiful people gallivanting across the picturesque European continent, but as eye-catching as “Head in the Clouds” is, neither the events that drive the too-familiar story nor the key players are all that inspiring. Duigan piles on the melodrama, but even the most obliging tissue-toters will likely be put off by the film’s conspicuous lack of originality and the surprising absence of chemistry between the romantic leads, real-life lovers Charlize Theron and Stuart Townsend.

Townsend plays Guy, the son of an Irish cop on scholarship at Cambridge. It’s there in 1933 that he meets Gilda Besse (Theron), an ethereal beauty with a devil-may-care attitude. Needless to say, Guy goes ga-ga over Gilda, and over the course of their long affair bears the myriad indignities she visits upon him with uncommon equanimity. Devotion is one thing, buy Guy truckles so easily to his amour’s will that he’s ultimately unable to carry his weight in what Duigan attempts to sell as a puissant pairing. The director attempts to level the balance of power in Paris, where Gilda has become a celebrated photographer, by introducing a third wheel in the form of a dynamic Spanish beauty named Mia (Penelope Cruz), who shares Guy’s sense of social responsibility as well as a burning desire for the increasingly irascible blonde bombshell. Somehow, the uxorious Guy manages to separate from Gilda and leave Paris with Mia to fight Franco’s fascist forces in Spain. Years later, he returns to the City of Lights to find that Gilda has taken a Nazi officer as a lover. Of course, Guy and Gilda have still got it bad for each other, setting the stage for the inevitable tragic denouement. Sniff. Sniff ... somebody please pass the tissue.

(Rated R for sexuality, nudity and some violence. Running time 132 minutes)



Bettany serves up an ace in schmaltzy tennis flick

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

From the producers of "Notting Hill," "Bridget Jones's Diary" and "Love, Actually" comes a film that is, not surprisingly, a lot like its commercially successful forebears. For fans of Working Title's schmaltzy oeuvre, "Wimbledon" will no doubt feel like a visit from an old friend. The film is overflowing with dry-witted, unconventional Brits and overused, yet always-gorgeous footage of London's famous landmarks. The only discernible difference between this effort and the others is the absence of Hugh Grant as the self-effacing male lead. That role is filled, and quite ably, by the immensely talented Paul Bettany.

Review

Pretty Kirsten Dunst stars as Lizzie Bradbury, an American tennis prodigy making her first appearance at the sport's most hallowed championship. Lizzie gets swept off her feet by Bettany's journeyman veteran, Peter Colt, much to the dismay of her overprotective father-coach (Sam Neill) who fears the affair will have an adverse effect on his daughter's game. Apparently dad's right, because not long after the requisite "falling-in-love" montage (complete with a shooting star sighting) and a few rolls in the hay, Lizzie — the world's top-ranked female player — is bounced from the tournament. Love agrees with Colt, however, a perpetual underachiever who finds himself on an incredible winning streak that captivates a nation, yet strains his relationship with Lizzie. As he moves closer to the title, the film begins to lose steam — hampered by sports movie conventions such as the money-hungry agent (Jon Favreau) and the blustery play-by-play guy (John McEnroe). Then there's the dubious prospect that Colt could lose all focus in the Wimbledon final simply because he and Lizzie had a fight.

Dunst looks great on the movie poster, but this movie belongs to Bettany. His performance alone is reason enough to recommend this romantic comedy. The exceedingly realistic tennis action isn't bad either.

(Rated PG-13 for language, sexuality and partial nudity. Running time: 98 minutes)



Absurd Person Singular

by Alan Ayckbourne



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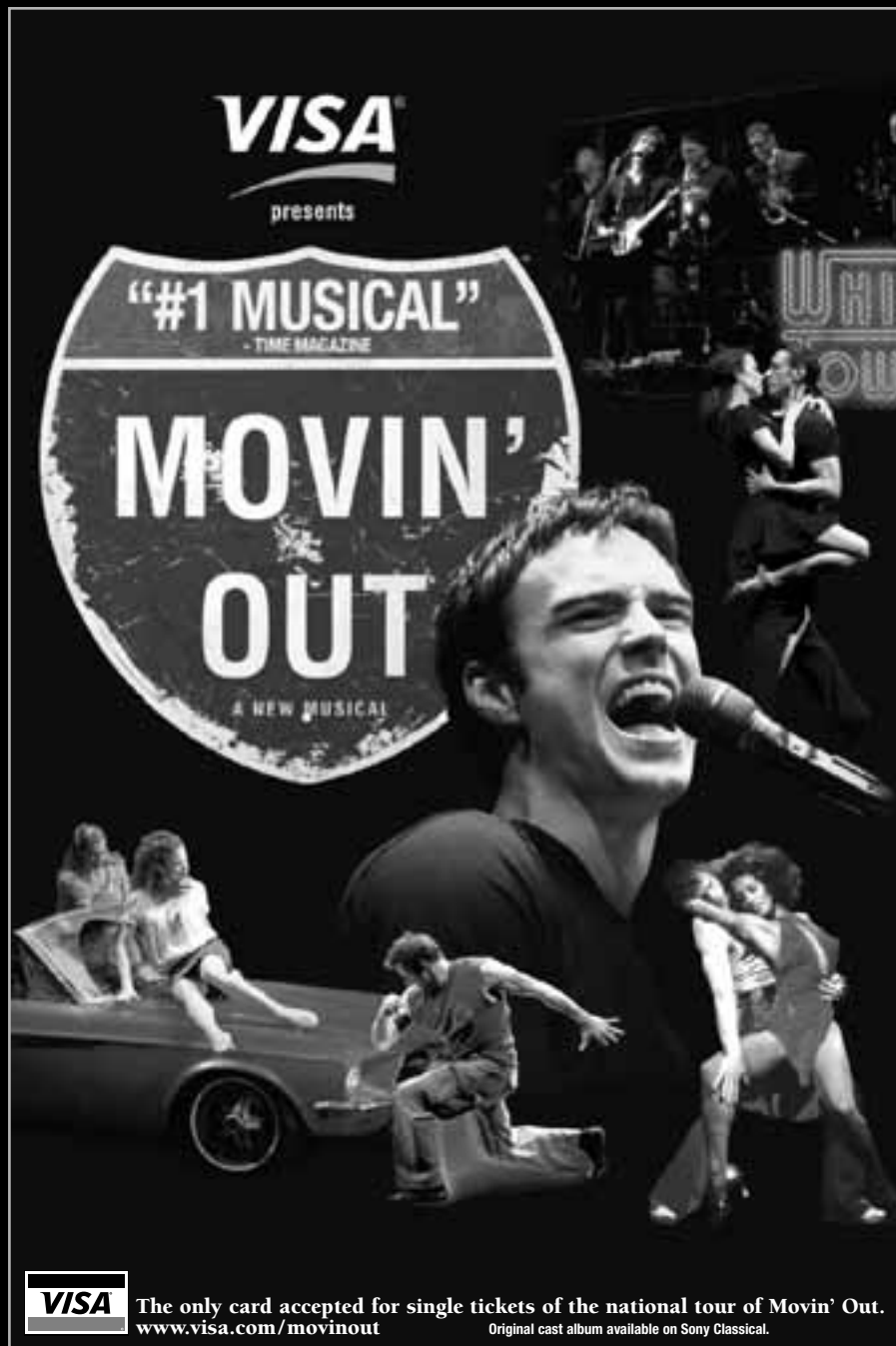


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NATIONAL

Taking a bite of of crime: Packer may be in the clear

BY ROBERT WELLER
 Associated Press Writer

DENVER — More than 130 years after Alferd Packer ate his five companions to survive a Colorado winter, a museum curator is making a case that the nation’s most notorious cannibal was innocent of murder.

David Bailey says he’s no Indiana Jones, but years of research on a 142-year-old pistol and detective work at the site where Packer was stranded support at least part of Packer’s story.

“Curators normally don’t get an opportunity like this. We usually are in the museum piecing things together,” said Bailey, who works at the Museum of Western Colorado in Grand Junction.

Packer was convicted of murdering the five men — prospectors he was guiding — but always insisted he had killed only one of them, Shannon Bell. Packer said he shot Bell after Bell killed the four others in the party and then attacked him with a hatchet.

Ten years ago, Bailey happened upon a gun in the museum’s collection that was marked as having been found where Packer and the five prospectors were stranded high in the San Juan Mountains of southwest Colorado in the winter of 1873-1874.

Bailey said his research confirmed the gun in the museum’s collection, an 1862 Colt Police pistol, had been found in a 1950 dig at the site where Packer had allegedly killed the five men.

Bailey began wondering if Packer’s story could be true. “When we started the case we just wanted to know either way,” he said.

Bailey and the museum staff then began looking at documents. They found the journal of a Civil War veteran who had seen the bodies and said one of them, Bell, had died of two gunshot wounds.

Bailey and other staff made several expeditions to the remote site near Lake City, 130 miles from the nearest interstate highway in Hinsdale County, which covers

1,124 square miles and has a full-time population of 790.

Among other things they found was lead residue on Bell’s clothes. Tests with an X-ray spectrograph showed the lead matched the lead in the three bullets still in the gun — two chambers were empty. Later, a bullet fragment was found in a sample taken from under Bell’s body.

At his trial, Packer said he had gone out to look for food and when he returned to camp he found the red-headed Bell “roasting a piece of meat which he had cut out of the leg of the German butcher,” Frank Miller.

Packer said he shot Bell as he attacked with the hatchet. Afterward, he said, he tried every day to find a way out of the mountains “but could not so I lived off the flesh of these men”

He predicted that someday he would be vindicated. He told a story of the men crying and praying as they starved, trying to live off pine gum and rosebuds.

“I have always suspected Packer was innocent. That is why it is good that Bailey is digging up fingerprints,” said Colorado historian Tom Noel. “He has done good work.”

Last month Bailey was honored for his work by the American Association for State and Local History.

Forensic anthropologist Walter Birkby of Tucson, Ariz., who was involved in an exhumation of the bodies in 1989, remains skeptical. He said there was no evidence of a gunshot wound, and that what appeared to be a bullet hole was the result of an animal gnawing on the bones.

Noel wasn’t the only one who suspected Packer was innocent. Under pressure from a campaign led by Denver Post columnist Poly Pry, Packer was granted a conditional parole in 1901. He had escaped execution only on a technicality.

Packer spent 18 years in prison, tending a garden and offering his opinion on everything from tourism to the Boer War. He complained he was rotting in prison “while

the Donner Party people are becoming millionaires in California.”

During the winter of 1846-47, 81 people traveling to California were trapped in the Sierra Nevadas and half of them died. Some members of the group ate the flesh of the dead to survive. And some of those who made it out of the mountains later became wealthy.

After Packer’s release he made dollhouses and handed out candy to children, living on a pension from his service in the Civil War.

He is immortalized today at the University of Colorado, where the student union food court is named after him.

Nevada firm to test British-made plane for fighting wildfires

By The Associated Press

MINDEN, Nev. — A Minden company will be testing a British-made airplane to determine its worthiness for fighting wildfires, company officials said.

The BAe 146-100 aircraft is scheduled to arrive Saturday at Minden-Tahoe Airport and will be tested for about two weeks, according to Tim Christy, chief pilot for Minden Air Corp.

Built in the 1980s, the plane designed to carry passengers will be evaluated by company officials, U.S. Forest Service and British Aerospace representatives to determine if it can be converted and used safely to fight fires.

Christy said Minden Air has an option to buy the aircraft from a private owner.

“We believe this model will serve as an excellent air tanker. Our goal is to have one in service for the next fire season,” Christy said.

Minden Air’s two Lockheed Martin P-2V air tankers, built in the late 1950s, were among 33 tankers grounded earlier this year by federal officials because of safety concerns.

Three of the aging tankers crashed between 1994 and 2002, killing seven crew members.

In July, federal officials allowed seven of the 33 tankers to fly.

Last month, one of Minden Air’s tankers and another owned by a Montana company were cleared for service for the remainder of the year but with special equipment.



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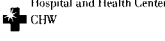
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NATIONAL



Missing records about Columbine shooting anger families

BY JUDITH KOHLER
Associated Press Writer

DENVER — Authorities overseeing the Columbine High School investigation decided soon after the massacre to withhold a document that shows deputies knew one of the killers had been accused as long as two years earlier of making death threats and building pipe bombs, according to a grand jury report released Thursday.

The grand jury also said it was “troubled” by still-missing documents in what remains the deadliest school attack in U.S. history. But it did not hand up any indictments, closing at least the third investigation that has not placed any blame for the slaughter of 13 people by suicidal teens Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold.

Victims’ families said the report confirmed their suspicions that the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office covered up mistakes that could have led them to the killers as much as two years before the attack.

“Clearly Columbine never should have happened and they don’t want the public to know that,” said Brian Rohrbough, one of several family members who met Thursday with Attorney General Ken Salazar. Rohrbough’s son, Daniel, was among the 12 students slain on April 19, 1999.

The grand jury said it didn’t hand up any indictments because all the witnesses claimed to know nothing about missing sheriff’s records. The records involved a draft search warrant for Harris’ house a year before the attack.

Salazar took the case to the grand jury after the sheriff asked him to investigate last fall.

The grand jury report said the draft affidavit, never submitted to a judge, was the subject of “a private meeting of high-ranking Jefferson County officials and law enforcement officials” called a few days after the attack to discuss the document and its “potential liabilities.”

As a result of that meeting, the sheriff’s office decided against discussing the affidavit in an April 30, 1999, news conference. A state district judge ordered the affidavit’s release in 2001.

Jefferson County District Attorney Dave Thomas and a deputy prosecutor were at the post-attack meeting.

Thomas said Thursday that was the first time he saw the affidavit and that it didn’t provide enough evidence to warrant a search of the Harris home. His spokeswoman, Pam Russell, also said prosecutors weren’t asked during the meeting whether investigators should publicly disclose the document.

Sheriff’s spokeswoman Jacki Tallman declined comment on the report.

Randy and Judy Brown, who contacted the sheriff’s office in 1997 and 1998 with complaints about Harris, including allegations that he had threatened their son, Brooks, said the private meeting is evidence of a cover-up by authorities.

“This is collusion. This is criminal. This is a criminal conspiracy,” Brown said after he and his wife met with the attorney general’s staff.

The Browns have long contended Columbine could have been prevented if authorities, including school officials, had heeded warning signs about Harris. Randy Brown said Harris likely would have been sent to jail had the sheriff’s office had checked into their allegations; when the affidavit was written, Harris and Klebold were in a criminal diversion program for breaking into a van a year before the shootings.

Like Brown, Brian Rohrbough said he believes authorities denied existence of the affidavit and shredded documents to duck responsibility. His son was gunned down outside the school.

Sheriff Ted Mink asked the attorney general to investigate last fall after coming across a Columbine report tucked inside a sheriff’s department binder. The 1997 report was about a Web site where Harris referred to “ground zero” and boasted that he and Klebold had built pipe bombs. It was apparently never pursued.

The attorney general’s investigation revealed that the files of sheriff’s investigator Michael Guerra, who wrote the proposed request for a search warrant, were missing. Salazar said earlier this year he had found no sign of negligence by the sheriff’s department but said investigators were still looking for some documents.

After discovering the Guerra file was missing, Salazar asked the grand jury to investigate.

The grand jury said all the witnesses it heard from denied knowing what happened to Guerra’s file. And it said that while the majority of documents in Guerra’s file have been reconstructed, the originals are still missing.

Some computer files in the case have also been purged — some of them the summer after the attack — and other documents shredded, though that was done under normal department procedures.

A supplement to the grand jury report referred to a tempestuous interview with former Sheriff John Stone, blamed by the Browns and others for mishandling the investigation.

“He expressed the opinion that our investigation was politically motivated, and he was visibly angry about this investigation and the way he was treated by the press regarding Columbine,” Salazar’s investigators said. “We were unable to ask Stone any questions or have any meaningful dialogue regarding our investigation due to his apparent state of agitation.”

The Browns, who praised Salazar for being the only public official willing to call a grand jury, said they believed he would keep pushing for release of all the records in the case.

But Ken Lane, Salazar’s spokesman, said the only thing left was to wait for a court decision on the fate of depositions given by the killers’ parents in now-resolved lawsuits by victims’ families. The Klebolds and Harris families believe they should be part of the public record.

Don Fleming, whose daughter Kelly was killed at Columbine, said he was not sure someone should have been indicted. He was just glad to have the information out.

“If you lose your child, you want to know all the details,” he said before he and his wife tearfully hugged the Browns.

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NATIONAL

No Señor, catching immigrant fugitives no easy task

BY ELLIOT SPAGAT

Associated Press Writer

SAN DIEGO — The basement office of the Fugitive Operations squad in San Diego is barely big enough for its four full-time agents. So when the team borrows nine other Department of Homeland Security agents for a night out, they gather in a nearby garage.

“We’re looking to do things really quickly,” supervisory deportation officer Marc Rapp tells the crew he splits into three teams — Alpha, Bravo and Charlie. “It should be a pretty easy evening.”

The goal is to catch 16 fugitives, illegal immigrants who have ignored deportations orders or whose criminal histories make them subject to removal. Over five hours, the crew will find six, with a seventh picked up the next morning.

The haul hardly dents Rapp’s backlog of 5,000 cases in the San Diego region, or the estimated 460,000 immigrant fugitives believed to be in the United States.

Several times a week, the San Diego team gathers to go where they believe fugitives live. They head out at 5 a.m., before many will have left for work, or after 5 p.m., when they may be home eating dinner.

On this cool March evening, the crew includes four Border Patrol agents, some on their second shift of the day.

Home addresses for most of the 16 targets are in the heart of San Diego, a promising sign. Agricultural areas, such as the strawberry fields north of the city, tend to draw more transient — and elusive — migrants.

The three teams scatter, radios their common bond.

The Alpha team’s first stop is supposed to be the home of Alvina Martinez, 54, who was deported once to Mexico in 1998. The real prize would be her son, a reputed gang member.

Martinez isn’t at the address the agents have, but a woman at the second-floor apartment tells them where to find her. About two miles away, Martinez is at home eating a chicken dinner with her family.

The agents talk their way inside, entering the back door of the single-story home, walking down a hallway that passes a small bedroom with several bunkbeds.

As Martinez’s young granddaughter sobs, agents order four children to sit on the living-room couch.

The reputed gang member isn’t home. The agents discuss whether to deport another son, 19 years old and also in the country illegally, but not among their targets. The

young girl is crying on his lap.

“Right now we’re trying to make a determination whether to take you with us, so please cooperate,” Rapp says, imploring the young man to be truthful. The man says he has a school identification card but doesn’t attend classes.

After the agents confer privately, Rapp announces it would be exceptionally hard on the children to deport the mother and son. “We’ll leave you alone,” he tells the teen.

The next stop is much quicker. Guillermo Ortega Diaz, who was convicted of driving under the influence in 1994, surrenders quietly. The 34-year-old is handcuffed in front of his home, away from his children. He’s deported to Mexico the next day.

The third stop demonstrates a common problem: Agents typically work without search warrants, considering the process too cumbersome. That requires them to use charm and guile to get invited inside a house. At this stop, they explain they’ve come to ask about their target’s car, not his immigration status. They are denied entry.

Noe Raymundo, a 29-year-old Guatemalan who ignored a 2001 deportation order, isn’t there anyway. Agents will find him when they return the next morning.

The fourth search proves fruitless. The agents visit two homes in the south San Diego suburb of Chula Vista, a trip which eats up an hour without turning up any valuable leads.

The evening’s fifth and final stop produces perhaps the most rewarding capture. Jaime Garcia Zuniga, 23, has convictions for fighting and for having sex with a minor. The agents walk down a dark narrow path sandwiched between two-story apartment buildings. As they talk to the person who answers the door, one agent shouts for help after Garcia jumps out the first-floor window and onto the street.

He’s caught and turned over to sheriff’s deputies on an outstanding warrant.

The Charlie team also finishes the night with three arrests: a 35-year-old Filipino with prior convictions for possessing stolen property and theft. The Bravo team comes up empty.

Some agents say they might have had more luck if they had more time, but the San Diego strike team has always stuck to a firm 10 p.m. deadline — a courtesy to neighbors.



Hide and go seek

By The Associated Press

The federal government created the Fugitive Operations program in 2002 to track down illegal immigrants who have received government orders to leave the country or report to immigration officials. The following is a look at the program, which is now under the Department of Homeland Security.

■ Estimated number of fugitives in the United States: about 460,000.

■ Estimated number of new fugitives each year: 40,000.

■ Number of fugitive operations apprehensions between October 2003 and August 2004: 9,571.

■ Number of fugitive operations apprehensions between October 2002 and September 2003: 3,411.

■ Approximate number of fugitive operation agents nationwide: 90.

■ Estimated average cost of removing one fugitive: \$8,000.

■ Budget for fugitive operations between Oct. 1, 2003 and Sept. 30, 2004: \$16.8 million.

■ Budget request for fiscal year 2005: \$66.8 million.

■ Estimated percentage of fugitives apprehended nationwide who have a criminal record in the United States: 47 percent; Percentage goal: 70 percent.

■ Estimated percentage of fugitives apprehended who have committed sex offenses and other violent crimes: 11 percent.

Source: Immigration and Customs Enforcement statistics.



Man shot in incident involving FBI, border-watch group

BY BETH DEFALCO

Associated Press Writer

PHOENIX — An FBI agent shot an acquaintance of a border-watch group member while trying to serve an arrest warrant, FBI officials said Thursday.

The shooting happened about 11:15 p.m. Wednesday in a grocery store parking lot.

According to the FBI, the agent was trying to serve Casey Nethercott of Douglas, Ariz. Nethercott is a known member of Ranch Rescue, a group that works to protect private property along the southern U.S. border.

At the time, Nethercott was with 22-year-old Kalen Riddle, also of Douglas.

Charlene Thorton, special agent in charge of the

Phoenix FBI office, said that “actions taken by Nethercott and Riddle led one of the FBI agents to fire his weapon,” and the shot struck Riddle.

The FBI would not elaborate.

Riddle was airlifted to a Tucson hospital, but FBI officials would not disclose his condition.

The FBI said it won’t release the name of the agent who fired the shot, keeping with FBI policy.

The warrant the FBI was trying to serve charges Nethercott with assaulting a federal officer. It was issued Sept. 8 by a federal magistrate in Tucson.

Nethercott, 37, is a convicted felon who served prison time in California.

He was also found guilty in June by a Texas jury of felony firearm possession. An accompanying assault

charge that accused Nethercott of pistol-whipping an illegal immigrant ended in a mistrial after jurors deadlocked on the charge.

In the Texas case, Nethercott was accused of pistol-whipping Edwin Alfredo Mancia Gonzales, 26, while on armed patrol at a Hebbbronville, Texas, ranch in March 2003.

He and several other Ranch Rescue members were patrolling a ranch owned by Joe Sutton, who said he asked for their help because he did not want illegal immigrants and drug smugglers on his land.

Nethercott, Ranch Rescue and the Suttons have been named in a civil lawsuit seeking damages backed by immigrants’ rights groups. That lawsuit has not yet been heard.

As security tightens at border, migrant smugglers turn to sea

BY WILL WEISSERT

Associated Press Writer

MEXICO CITY — Migrant smugglers are skirting heightened security along the border by using small boats to shuttle people from the under-supervised Baja coast into Southern California marinas and harbors, already jammed with legal commercial ships and pleasure boat traffic.

In San Diego, across the border from Tijuana, federal authorities so far this year have seized 12 boats carrying 48 Mexican and Chinese immigrants, compared with three vessels with 20 immigrants for all of last year.

Further north in Los Angeles, the seizure of a French-built yacht crammed with 50 undocumented Mexicans and piloted by two Americans shed the most public light on what has been a busy summer on the water.

The trend has raised questions about border security. Officials have increased restrictions on land traffic and commercial sea cargo. But small pleasure boats can often slip in under the radar.

"If you can get across that border in a boat undetected, you can bring terrorists, people, weapons of mass destruction, who knows," said Special Agent Derek Benner, group supervisor of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s San Diego Marine Task Force.

Mexican ports have been working with U.S. Coast Guard officials to meet new international anti-terrorism and security requirements that took effect July 1. The new protocols require each major harbor to hire a security chief who reports to the transportation and communications secretary in Mexico City.

But smuggling gangs simply sidestep major Mexican ports, picking up migrants along empty stretches of coastline. And Mexican authorities say they can’t stop potential smugglers because they don’t actually break the law until they cross into U.S. territory.

Jose Luis Rios, director of the port at Ensenada, 75 miles south of the border, said maritime officials sometimes stop craft with U.S. registration — but he said there’s little they can do unless some other law has been broken.

“You can ask where they are going,” he said. “But you’re subject to their good faith — you have to take their word.”

Smuggling syndicates work to avoid detection even inside Mexico because they often are moving migrants from other countries. Larger boats docking at harbors are also required to provide records on where they have been and where they are going.

"Are Mexican ports safer? Totally and absolutely," said Reymundo Mata, Mexico’s adjunct director of marinas. “But gangs of organized criminals on the high seas, they probably won’t be detected.”

Authorities have not captured a single migrant-smuggling boat near the Baja California coast in recent memory, according to Elizabeth Juarez of the federal attorney general’s office.

U.S. authorities say Ensenada was the starting point for the largest U.S. maritime smuggling case in years — the Aug. 30 apprehension of the 44-foot C’est La Vie sailboat near Los Angeles Harbor.





COMICS

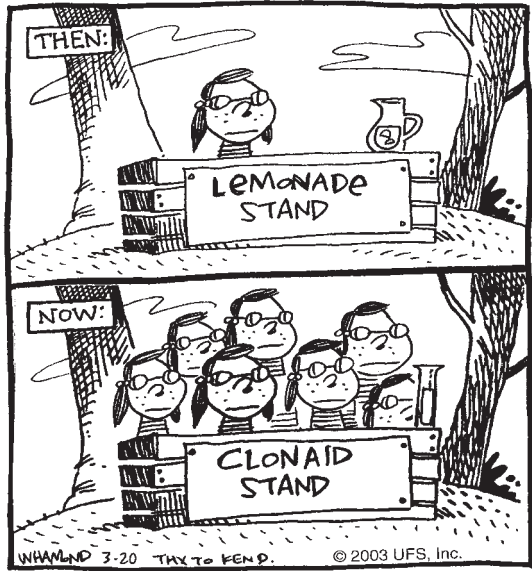
The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



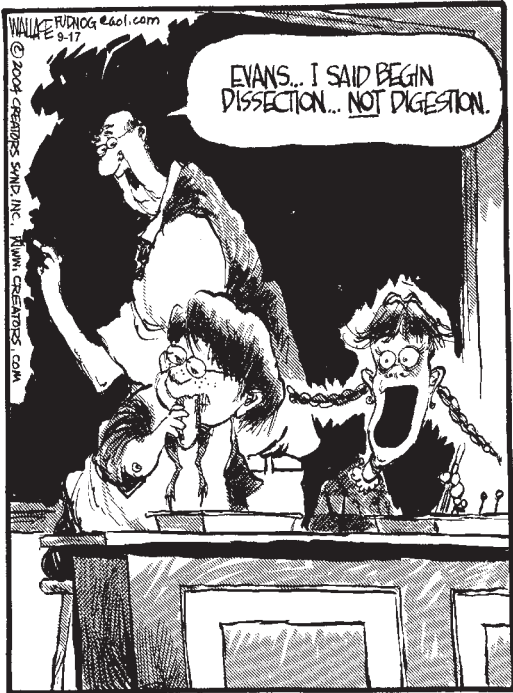
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 - 11 Dim
 - 12 Key
 - 13 Dancer
 - 14 Met
 - 15 Pasture
 - 16 Friend of
 - 18 Dapper
 - 19 Place for the
 - 20 Checkers
 - 21 Lose
 - 23 Modern
 - 25 Volleyball
 - 27 Writer
 - 28 Ibis's
 - 30 Breakfast
 - 33 "Isn't that
 - 34 Cry of
 - 36 Stolen
 - 37 Woke
 - 39 Galley
- DOWN**
- 40 PC
 - 41 Keen
 - 43 Tip
 - 44 Nebula
 - 45 Jury
 - 46 Fencing
 - 1 Puts up
 - 2 Fantastic
 - 3 Making
 - 4 Family
 - 5 Flower
 - 6 Museum
 - 7 Spot
 - 8 Info
 - 9 Ear
 - 10 Kiosk
 - 17 Copy
 - 22 Apiece
 - 24 Ensign's
 - 26 Serving
 - 28 Atlas
 - 29 Common
 - 31 Vandyke's
 - 32 Accent
 - 33 Block
 - 35 Saw
 - 38 Software
 - 42 Upper

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