



Santa Monica Daily Press

October 1-2, 2005

A newspaper with issues

Volume 4, Issue 278

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

2 17 28 37 45
Meganumber: 5
Jackpot: \$9 Million

FANTASY 5

9 11 15 26 38

DAILY 3

Daytime: 5 7 4
Evening: 0 4 1

DAILY DERBY

1st: 02 Lucky Star
2nd: 07 Eureka!
3rd: 06 Whirl Win

RACE TIME: 1:42:17
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

British insurance companies occasionally write policies on unconventional risks, as News of the Weird reported in 1996, when Goodfellow Rebecca Ingrams Pearson wrote a \$160,000-equivalent policy covering alien abduction (including pregnancies resulting from the abduction, even if it is a male who gets pregnant, in the event that the aliens have such extraordinary powers that they can impregnate males). In July 2005, sponsors of the Visit Scotland Adventure Triathlon in Loch Ness announced they had purchased insurance from the company NIG to pay up to the equivalent of \$1.8 million in case any of the competitors are attacked by the Loch Ness monster.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 274th day of 2005.
There are 91 days left in the year.

On Oct. 1, 1908, Henry Ford introduced the Model T automobile to the market.

In 1962, Johnny Carson debuted as the regular host of NBC's "Tonight" show.

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Arrest warrants issued for former dealership employees

Three-year investigation reveals Honda of Santa Monica sales reps overcharged customers

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN LA — Investigators on Friday issued felony arrest warrants for five former employees of Honda of Santa Monica who allegedly scammed hundreds of thousands of dollars from customers.

The alleged scam, which investigators say occurred from 2000 to 2002, involved the car dealership's sales representatives tacking on charges of "theft etch" to customers' contracts without the customers knowing it. Theft etch marks a vehicle's parts with traceable numbers in the event of a theft.

"Theft etch would show up on the contract as a VT registration charge," said Los Angeles Deputy

It was a very heavy investigation, and this is being investigated in conjunction with other dealerships."

DANA ARATANI

Los Angeles Deputy District Attorney

District Attorney Dana Aratani, who works in the consumer protection division. "Based on interviews with people, we know that over \$500,000 of theft etch has been

sold (at Honda of Santa Monica)."

Ali Asghar Hussain, Hamid Reza Khaki, Yaprem Zohrab Yarialian, Ahtamet Uersunthornwattana, Yaser Alkasem and Thomas Holterhoff all face felony counts related to the overcharging of customers, according to the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, which filed the felony complaint. Holterhoff is being charged, but an arrest warrant has not been issued for him.

The DA's office launched an investigation into the dealership, owned by Sonic Automotive, in July 2002, after an employee tipped investigators off to the alleged scam. The dealership was raided by investigators, including FBI agents, who seized boxes of

files from the finance and sales departments on Sept. 25, 2002.

Ever since, investigators and prosecutors have been sifting through files, computer records and other evidence to build their case.

"It was a very heavy investigation, and this is being investigated in conjunction with other dealerships," Aratani said, adding more charges against additional suspects in unrelated cases are expected in the following weeks. "It makes it a difficult task, but we are trying to get the larger picture."

According to the felony complaint, 33 different customers were bilked out of nearly \$30,000 between 2001 and 2002, when all

See **WARRANTS**, page 14

Citizens: Report would allow Santa Monica to become New York City

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Citizens fearful of further development in Santa Monica called on elected leaders this week to prevent a recent report from allowing this quaint beach town to become New York or Hong Kong.

More than 40 residents outraged by the release of the "Opportunities and Challenges" report — part of City Hall's ongoing process to update Santa Monica's general development plan — demanded on Tuesday that elected leaders put into effect a

"zero" to "minimal" growth policy in Santa Monica for the next 20 years. In light of the controversy, city officials urged staff to make sure the public's comments were heard as the land-use plan moves forward.

In August, City Hall's planning department released the completed "Opportunities and Challenges" report, which builds on community visions presented in the "Emerging Themes" report reviewed by the City Council and Planning Commission in April.

As part of the two-year, ongoing

See **DEVELOPMENT**, page 13

NATIONAL

Surf industry riding on Alaskan waves

BY JEANNETTE J. LEE

Associated Press Writer

YAKUTAT, Alaska — The chill of seawater mixed with glacial melt doesn't faze pro surfer Josh Mulcoy as he launches his board off a beach piled high with whole spruce logs and multihued rocks smoothed by the grinding of ice.

"Right now it's not that bad," said Mulcoy, of Santa Cruz, Calif. "It probably gets worse in the winter."

Mulcoy in 1992 was one of the first people to surf Alaska waves. His appearance on a cover of Surfer Magazine the

See **ALASKA SURF**, page 17

Surf's up



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press
SUNSET SURF: A surfer heads out to catch one of the day's last waves at Bay Street under a colorful sunset, thanks in part to a lingering smoke hanging in the air from the Topanga fires. See page 5 for the story.

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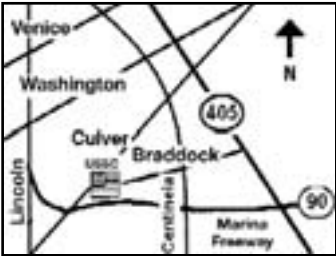
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Santa Monica Daily Press



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



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★ Though you might not feel it for a while, your ruler, Mars, goes retrograde today. You will experience some frustration in the next month. You would be wise not to start any projects during this period. Tonight: "Intense" describes an interaction.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★ You will experience the impact of Mars going retrograde in your sign. Many of you have been swallowing your anger. Perhaps you need to find appropriate ways of expressing this feeling. Some have been the raging Bull. Learn to calm down and express your feelings. Tonight: It could be fun if you let your hair down.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ You might be more volatile than you realize. Read Aries and Taurus for more understanding. Anger is an issue that needs to be dealt with in the next few months. Start working on it today. Sometimes you try too hard to be nurturing. Tonight: Stay close to home.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ A friend might return to your life in the next few months. You also might decide to eliminate a friend who has become very difficult. Try to avoid a problem by opening up discussions. Tonight: Someone lets you know how much he or she cares.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★ As confident as you can be, a sassy or difficult cohort could upset you. You will be weighing the importance of this contact in your life in the next few months. Some might think about a career change. Tonight: Treat a family member or roommate.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ You will be particularly vulnerable to gossip and incorrect information. Learn not to absorb others' words and to detach. A trip might need to be delayed. A loved one expresses his or her caring in a very simple but adoring way. Tonight: Others will follow your lead.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Someone you count on to be a stable factor in your life starts acting like an angry lion. Oh, dear! You will need to work with this person, though solutions might not be easily forthcoming. Don't personalize his or her comments. Tonight: Indulge yourself and a dear friend.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Venus in your sign draws many to you. However, with warlike Mars retrograding in your opposite sign, you might feel like you are standing on quicksand — not always, but sometimes. Remember your long-term goals rather than trigger with the moment. Tonight: Where there is music and fun.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Passion runs high, but you might not be aware of a tendency to be overly sensitive, which plagues your feelings and decisions. Be aware of this tendency in the next few weeks. Do something special for a friend or loved one. Tonight: Beam away.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ You might be surprised by someone's actions and how much this person wants to make you happy. You might have difficulty verbalizing your feelings. Instead, take action and do something special with this person. Tonight: In a whirlwind.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ Though many think everything is A-OK with you, you are going through many internal changes. A partnership could be the source of this transformation. Your property, home and domestic life might be ready for fall cleaning. Tonight: Don't be the overly friendly Aquarian right now.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ You have a vision and the ability to communicate these thoughts to others. You could find others highly responsive when you explain what you are thinking in simple terms. Caring evolves through a trip or a call. Tonight: Just say yes.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

A blessing of the animals this Sunday

By Daily Press staff

Animals of all denominations are welcome to receive a blessings at a Santa Monica fair this Sunday.

Pet owners also may bring photos or other mementos of deceased animals that can be blessed.

The annual "Blessing of the Animals and Community Animal Faire" takes place from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the St. Augustine by the Sea Episcopal Church, 1227 Fourth St.

Pet owners must restrain their pets appropriately during the entire festival.

The Animal Faire will have a variety of booths — Parrots First, Wilshire Animal Hospital, Wild Oats, Aquarium and Pet Center, Petco, LA Animal Services, and Centinela Feed and Pet Supplies.

Community organizations will offer education and care tips, as well as advice on how to choose pets, how to animal-proof a home and proper pet nutrition.

The Humane Society/LASPCA will be collecting donations for animal victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Free shots for the tots

By Daily Press staff

Children and teenagers can get free shots at a health center this weekend. The Westside Family Health Center is offering immunizations and TB tests for anybody under 18 years of age from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

California law requires children to have their shots updated before they can attend school or daycare centers, according to a release.

The shots will protect against diseases that are known to infect small children and teenagers, such as diphtheria, hepatitis B, measles, rubella, hemophilus influenza, mumps, polio, tetanus and whooping cough.

Casino night a gamble for kids

By Daily Press staff

Saturday will be a night of gambling — for the kids. The Santa Monica Family YMCA and Y's Men and Women's Clubs invite the people of Santa Monica to attend their Eighth Annual Casino Night. The event will be held at the Santa Monica Family YMCA, 1332 Sixth St., from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. There will be a silent auction, blackjack, craps and roulette. A \$25 donation is asked of each person, who must be 21 years of age or older. There will be snacks available all evening. The proceeds will benefit the Kids to Camp Program. For tickets or for more information, call (310) 395-8389.

See BRIEFS, page 16

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SURF REPORT

No southern hemi energy will be around Saturday, but some NW ground swell is due. This is from the Aleutian Chain system we started tracking late last week, and as mentioned in previous reports, this system will have more of an impact above Pt. Conception along the Central Coast and Northern California. For SoCal, some longboardable ground swell is anticipated on Saturday with waist-high sets, and when the tide is right, some pluses at standout west-facing breaks in the chest-high zone can be expected. Sunday, the NW ground swell should peak with size once again around waist high with some pluses.

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



LOW TIDES

HIGH TIDES

	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	2:55	0.4	3:00	1.3	9:11	5.0	8:58	5.3
SUNDAY	3:15	0.6	3:31	1.0	9:28	5.2	9:31	5.2
MONDAY	3:35	0.8	4:04	0.7	9:47	5.4	10:06	4.9
TUESDAY	3:55	1.2	4:40	0.5	10:08	5.6	10:44	4.5
WEDNESDAY	4:16	1.5	5:19	0.4	10:31	5.8	11:27	4.1

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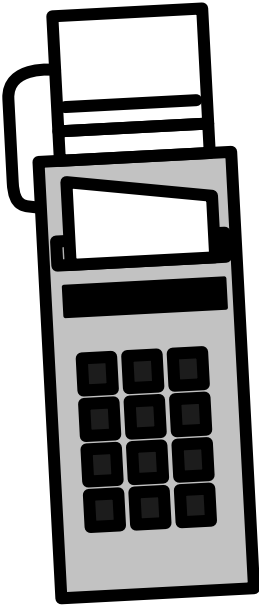
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CHECK OUT THIS WEEK'S Q-LINE
RESPONSES ON PAGE 4.**

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OPINION

The Q-Line

KEEP THE CARTS ROLLING

This past week, Q-line asked:

"Do you think the vending program on the Third Street Promenade needs to be revamped? And do you think City Hall is handling the situation with the merchants in a fair manner?"

Here are your responses:

① "I think the vending cart program does not need to be revamped. As far as I can see, it's in good shape. I don't know what we have to do with it. And I don't think City Hall is handling the situation with the merchants in a fair manner. The City Council we have does not handle anything or anybody in a fair manner. They are the worst City Council we have ever seen. If we could impeach them all, I would immediately vote for that. And these carts, charging them so much money to have a cart on the Promenade is out of the question. We should just leave it. To me, I'm only a pedestrian, and to me it looks like it was all right as far as I'm concerned. I never heard any complaints."

② "City Hall should leave the vending carts on the Third Street mall area alone and concentrate on getting rid of the bums and the vagrants and the tacky, so-called entertainers in that area. As far as fairness in handling any problem or situation in Santa Monica, you can forget that. These inept, self-serving individuals do exactly as they please, despite the obvious will of the people. Witness this escalating homeless mess and their lunatic, so-called solutions."

③ "I find the vending carts to be charming and lend a gypsy-like atmosphere to what would be otherwise be a dull walkway. For the most part, the cart vendors sell hats, caps, purses and souvenir memorabilia depicting the dubious distinction of one visit to the most controversial beach city on the face of the earth. I do not believe any of the cart vendors are getting rich and do not compete with the trendy, high-priced stores along the walkway. These cart vendors create a distribution and circulation cash flow that is good for the economy. If the city of Santa Monica, a postage-stamp-sized city, cannot function on its tax base, then I suggest an audit and that the city change, not the cart vendors."

④ "With the city in a state of crisis with all the indigents pouring in on a daily basis and no solution in sight, all the bright lights in City Hall concentrate on is the vendor cart program. Amazing."

⑤ "It figures. Santa Monica does everything it can to get rid of small businesses like these carts. Jack up their rents, make them pay more in fees, what's the point? Why don't we just get rid of them now and save them a lot of money? That way if we get rid of the carts now, they can go somewhere else and save the money instead of losing money over the years while they slowly go out of business. Better to put them out of business quickly and get it over with."

⑥ "Well, here they go again. Whether they are little government or big govern-

ment, there they go squeezing out the little guys from making a living. This is atrocious what they are doing to the vendors on the Promenade, and I think the council people should be strung up. All they are doing is having their pockets open, and more and more money is being signed off to change what's going on in our town. Again, it ain't broken, but they are trying to fix it."

⑦ "I think the cart program does need to be revamped. I think the current carts look old and beat up and not good. I think the products could definitely be improved. Some of them are good, but a lot of them are boring and sort of touristy. So I think it needs to be revamped."

⑧ "Does City Hall do anything in a fair manner? Look at the bus lane on Lincoln Boulevard. The businesses should get a tax break. Then you have the Boathouse, Perry's Pizza and mall carts. The city can't stand the perceived small-town atmosphere of Santa Monica, but we'll have a coffee shop surrounded by \$70 million of taxpayer money. The \$2,600 a month for the mall carts is a tough nut to crack. Why don't you give them a smaller rental fee and take a larger percentage of the monthly income? I have a better idea. How about robots pushing and selling merchandise on the mall carts? There have been great technological strides in robotics and like in the movie 'Forbidden Planet' we could have a 'Robby the Robot' selling from the carts. While doing that, he could catch purse snatchers, zap skateboarders, and I don't want to mention what would happen to people urinating and defecating in the mall. The robot I really like is from the movie 'The Day the Earth Stood Still,' Gort. He doesn't have funny dialogue like Robby, and he doesn't speak, but he destroys with his laser stupidity and danger to public good. We might want to keep him away from City Hall with their robotic, pun intended, utterances of progressive crap. Gort would be a great asset to the mall. Who would try to cheat him? Clatto Verata Nicto."

⑨ "First of all, you cannot close a public street to make a commercial venue, and what they are doing is against the law. I know that people have to make a living, and I'm sure that these poor souls down there with these little carts will never swing \$1,500 a month for rent by selling little strings of beads. The City Council just keeps going on and on and on screwing the citizens of Santa Monica. It's absolutely disgusting. Any other country in the world, they would throw them out in five minutes flat. It's just that everybody is so frightened to say anything because the City Council caters to the rich North of Montana mob by forking money out for the schools all the time. It's about time the citizens woke up and got rid of that lot."

Bad news is big news



MODERN TIMES

BY LLOYD GARVER

I couldn't have been the only one last week who thought that some of the television news reporters actually seemed disappointed that Hurricane Rita didn't do more damage.

I'm not saying that they would have preferred more destruction, but they were just so sky high the day before predicting the worst, it was probably natural that they were a little let down. After all, on television at least, bad news is big news.

I'm not forgetting some of the great reporting in the field on both hurricanes. The television news people brought us the story and challenged the explanations given by public officials. But some of their enthusiasm for the story seemed to evaporate when Rita wasn't as big a storm as they had thought it might be.

It also seemed a bit bizarre to see so many reporters standing out in the rain, telling us it was raining. At the same time, they told us that those who hadn't evacuated the area were being foolish. What about them? How many people saw them on TV and reasoned, "If they can be out in the storm, it must be safe for me to be in my house?"

But at least their being on the scene conveyed what it was like there. There was some rationale to it. Too often, in television news stories, a reporter will be at a location purely to imply that the story is more important than it is. Good examples are often on the late night local news. The anchor will tell us that a crime was committed and that the perpetrator was caught and is now in jail. Then they'll cut to a reporter standing outside the jail, saying that the criminal is inside and will be arraigned tomorrow. Why do we have to see the outside of the jail at 11 p.m.? How does that add to the story?

A perfect case of bad news being the life source of television news happened last week as that Jetblue aircraft was flying around with its front landing gear stuck at a weird angle. This occurred in the midst of all of the pre-Rita hoopla. Some news stations had split screens, half showing a weather map, and half showing the airplane circling around. And you could sense the rising pulse of the anchors

as they juggled the stories.

The networks tried to maximize the negative in the Jetblue situation. The airplane circled over Los Angeles International Airport for three hours, using up fuel. During that time, nobody on the plane was in any danger, but some stations showed every minute of those three hours. They interviewed various experts, including pilots and engineers.

Everyone they interviewed said they doubted there would be any problem in landing the plane. They emphasized that pilots are prepared for just such unusual circumstances. But "there probably won't be any problem" is not a good lead for a news story. So, each station frantically sought out more and more people who might suggest that there was at least the possibility of the story having a newsworthy ending.

The best they got was a couple of pilots admitting that they had never landed a plane whose landing gear was stuck like that.

Finally, it was time for the plane to land. This is where the story began for me. This was exciting, not like the three hours that preceded it. Would the pilot be able to land the plane smoothly and safely?

And then he did. He landed it perfectly. To me, that would have been a great story — despite worries about equipment, a competent pilot landed the plane without a problem. But again, that's not exciting TV news.

The story continued onto the Larry King show on CNN. The person he was interviewing confirmed that all the passengers were safe, and that none of them had suffered any physical problems. There was a long pause. Then Larry said something like, "That may be true. But who's to say how many of these passengers will suffer from psychological problems because of this ordeal?" He just couldn't resist putting out that little bit of hope for some bad consequences to the story.

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

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STATE



Major progress in SoCal wildfire battle

BY JEFF WILSON

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Smoky haze from a 20,655-acre wildfire hung over parts of the city Friday, but fighters helped by good weather canceled most evacuation orders as they made significant gains against the flames.

A return of airflow from the Pacific raised fire-slowing humidity levels, and winds were far calmer than at midweek, when strong, moisture-sapping, dry winds from the interior spread the so-called Topanga fire rapidly in the hills and canyon lands between the northwest edge of Los Angeles and Ventura County suburbs to the west.

Amid the good news there were new fire concerns 70 miles east of Los Angeles where 1,200 people were evacuated from mountain communities because of a 450-acre blaze in the San Bernardino National Forest. And a small fire slumbering in hills above suburban Burbank also awakened, sending up a towering plume at mid-day.

The Topanga fire overlapping the Los Angeles-Ventura county line was 20 percent contained, up from 5 percent late Thursday, and was expected to be 35 percent surrounded by day's end, said Los Angeles County Deputy Chief Mike Bryant, the incident commander.

"We're really happy with the weather today. This is a good opportunity for us," Bryant said at the unified command post in Thousand Oaks. "It is a very, very important day for us in fighting this fire."

Evacuations were canceled in 10 areas and remained in effect for only two, Lake Manor and Bell Canyon. About 400 people remained registered in Red Cross shelters.

Despite the fire's furious pace over the previous two days, confirmed structure losses stood at just one single-family home, three outbuildings, one storage building and one detached garage.

Some 3,000 firefighters from agencies throughout the state were on the lines, aided by six retardant bombers and 11 water-dropping helicopters.

"Thousands and thousands of homes have been protected and saved by these firefighters," said Kevin Nestor, a Ventura County fire official.

Fire officials indicated they would continue to focus on the south side of the fire area to keep any flames from jumping U.S. 101 and moving south. Fires northwest of Los Angeles have a history of blowing southward through the Santa Monica Mountains and through Malibu to the ocean.

Efforts were also under way to beef up fire lines on the north side of the fire as a

precaution in case winds began blowing from the south.

The fire erupted Wednesday afternoon in the Chatsworth area of northwest Los Angeles and was rapidly spread by strong winds out of the northeast that pushed the flames in a southwesterly direction. The fading of that Santa Ana wind condition let ocean air move back inland Thursday, pushing flames eastward overnight.

Evacuations were canceled in 10 areas and remained in effect for only two, Lake Manor and Bell Canyon. About 400 people remained registered in Red Cross shelters.

The shift also pushed smoke into the skies over parts of Los Angeles and neighboring valleys, triggering air quality alerts. Health officials urged people to restrict outdoor activities and special precautions were advised for students and people with heart and lung diseases.

Downtown Los Angeles bank employee Jolie Gorchoy, 40, said the bad air was giving her headaches.

"I don't close my windows because it doesn't make a difference ... the air is so thick and smoky you can taste it," she said.

Ashes from the fires fell on the production site of the TV show "ER," actor John Leguizamo told Fox 11 News.

"We were shooting in Burbank and you could smell them. We wrapped the episode last night. You could see like the smoke coming on and ashes flying through the trailers," Leguizamo said.

In the San Bernardino National Forest, a fire that broke out Thursday afternoon near Highway 38 led to evacuations of a number of small communities including Angelus Oaks, Mountain Home Village and Forest Falls.

No homes or structures had been damaged, but a firefighter was treated at a hospital for back injuries after being hit by a rolling boulder, said forest spokeswoman Kathy Ungemach.

One other large wildfire in Southern California was 100 percent contained after burning 1,160 acres in San Timoteo Canyon between Redlands and Moreno Valley in Riverside County. No homes were destroyed.

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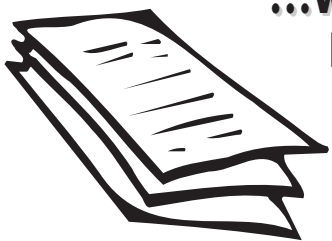
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Santa Monica Daily Press



STATE

Human waste divides California town

BY TIM MOLLOY

Associated Press Writer

LOS OSOS, Calif. — This Central Coast town is divided by a sewer that doesn't exist — and perhaps never will.

The dispute over how to deal with the town's waste has made mudslingers of even the most civic-minded residents, sometimes literally.

At a groundbreaking for the sewer in July, two black-clad members of the board overseeing the troubled project tossed down their shovels and turned their backs in protest. Sewer supporters kept digging, even flipping some dirt on the downed shovels as hecklers booed.

Things haven't gotten any friendlier since. On Tuesday, the majority of the oversight board was thrown out in a recall election spearheaded by sewer opponents who say the project would be too expensive, obtrusive and smelly.

Plenty of places have "not in my backyard" disputes over new development. But rarely are they as colorful as in this quiet town of 15,000 midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, where one sewer supporter claims opponents enlisted a dead deer in their protest and a local painter has conjured a "sewer dragon" to symbolize monstrous change.

The town finds itself in the stink because it never modernized its plumbing as it grew from a post-World War II retreat to a bedroom community of San Luis Obispo.

Proponents of the \$135 million project,

which would include a wastewater treatment plant and a network of new pipes, say it is needed to replace septic tanks that seep pollution into the town's water supply and the tranquil Morro Bay estuary, home to more than a dozen threatened or endangered species.

Though the town has no central area, opponents object to the site of the treatment plant because it is near homes, a library, a community center and the estuary. Critics want a cheaper solution and say sewer bills of up to \$200 a month — in addition to installation costs of \$1,000 to \$4,000 per home — could price out residents ranging from young families to aging hippies.

"It would definitely kill the diversity," said Betty Field-Haley, 67, who displays her paintings of a longtailed sewer dragon at public meetings on the project that often drag early into the morning.

On Tuesday, voters kicked three sewer supporters off the board of the Los Osos Community Services District, which was founded in 1998 to deal with the problem. The three were replaced with new members who join the two shovel-tossing board members in pledging to halt the project in favor of something new.

What that would be has yet to be precisely determined — so no end is in sight for the town's great plumbing debate.

"There are people who for years got together and had dinner parties who don't talk to each other anymore," said Michael Drake, who was hired as the community

The town finds itself in the stink because it never modernized its plumbing as it grew from a post-World War II retreat to a bedroom community of San Luis Obispo.

services district spokesman soon after the groundbreaking debacle. "All over how to handle our wastewater problem."

Drake said opponents of the project have cursed him on the phone and threatened him at the grocery store. He said the debate reached a low point when a dead deer was posed against the fence surrounding the sewer site to make it look as if the project somehow killed it. Drake accused project opponents of rigging the scene.

Gail McPherson, who led the successful recall campaign, said the deer was trying to get into habitat fenced off by the project when it was hit by a car. She said the impact threw the deer's body against the fence and a project opponent moved the body to take a picture of it.

One thing both sides can agree on is that something needs to be done.

The region's water quality control board ordered Los Osos to replace septic systems two decades ago, citing groundwater and ocean pollution. Since then, the sewer's projected costs have more than tripled as townspeople debated what kind

of system to build.

Lisa Schicker, one of the board members who took part in the groundbreaking protest, said opponents of the sewer plan recognize the need to replace the septic tanks but want to do it with a project outside of town. She supports a system of open air ponds that would use earth to contain the sewage, saving money on concrete and steel.

Stopping the original project now could result in fines of up to \$10,000 a day from the regional water board, Drake said. The district has already received nearly \$13 million of a \$135 million state loan for the project and spent an additional \$20 million on design, studies and land, he said.

But Drake may not be around to deal with that problem: He expects the newly anti-sewer board to fire him and other employees who backed the project. Though construction continues at the treatment plant, the new directors are expected to halt it at an Oct. 6 meeting.

That's how it goes in a town split by sewage.

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STATE



Civilian patrols target wider circle

BY ELLIOT SPAGAT

Associated Press Writer

CAMPO — As the sun set, Roy Wood looked out of place patrolling a dirt road a few steps north of a rusty fence that separates the United States from Mexico. The clean-shaven English-as-a-second-language instructor wore a T-shirt tucked in clean blue jeans, a pistol strapped to a belt.

Many of the hundreds who make up the self-appointed civilian patrols monitoring the border to deter smuggling of people and drugs are unemployed or underemployed ex-military men who have long resented Mexicans who come to the United States illegally and, in their view, compete for jobs, crowd hospitals and schools and threaten English as the nation's dominant language.

The civilian patrols of recent months have failed to stem the tide of illegal crossings, but they have ratcheted up pressure on Washington to better police U.S. borders and fueled tension in border towns about potential violence. And as the patrols continue, they are targeting a wider circle of volunteers.

There are urban dwellers, young women, even some Hispanics. Their gripes about illegal immigration are often the same as those of the gun-toting veterans, though their backgrounds are different.

"It shows that the problem reaches all of America, not just a specific group," said Gayle Nyberg, 57, a Murietta, Calif., woman who slept in the back of a 1976

Chevrolet Suburban painted in camouflage while on patrol.

More than 200 people signed up with the California Minutemen, who spent three weeks at the border this summer.

Civilian patrols are opposed by 56 percent of Californians but supported by a majority of Republicans and people at least 65 years old, according to a recent Field Poll. Support was weak in Los Angeles and San Francisco and among Hispanics and people under 40. The telephone survey of 426 registered voters Aug. 19-29 had a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percentage points.

Wood, who battled two hours of rush-hour traffic to get here, has taught immigrants English for two years. Most of his students have been Asian.

Returning home to Southern California in 2002 after spending 11 years teaching in Japan, he found his opposition to illegal immigration hardening. He concluded that Mexican immigrants have failed to assimilate in the United States, unlike the Vietnamese star students at his high school in Huntington Beach or the students he teaches English.

"Suddenly, they make American friends, they learn the language, they buy a car, they start to acclimatize themselves to the American way of life, just as I did in Japan," he said.

Heather Evans, a 25-year-old Los Angeles microbiologist, was initially uneasy about joining the patrols which she'd seen on a television news report. But when she drove three hours to the bor-

"Suddenly, they make American friends, they learn the language, they buy a car, they start to acclimatize themselves to the American way of life, just as I did in Japan."

ROY WOOD
ESL instructor

der one July weekend, her fears quickly evaporated.

"I told my family it was like an armed picnic on the border," said Evans, who is considering whether to buy a gun for future visits.

She traces her opposition to illegal immigration to the time, a few years back, when she noticed that men who whistled and hooted at her often looked Mexican to her.

Rogelio Cabrera said he felt harassed in a different way. A 30-year-old who loads port containers in Long Beach, he said illegal immigration began troubling him when day laborers who he said appeared Mexican began gathering outside a neighborhood Home Depot store.

"They see I'm Latino, coming out with bags of cement, and they huddle around me saying, 'What can I do for you?'" said Cabrera, who joined the patrols despite the fears of his Mexican-born wife.

Two dozen or so recruits gathered one August evening in Campo, 40 miles east

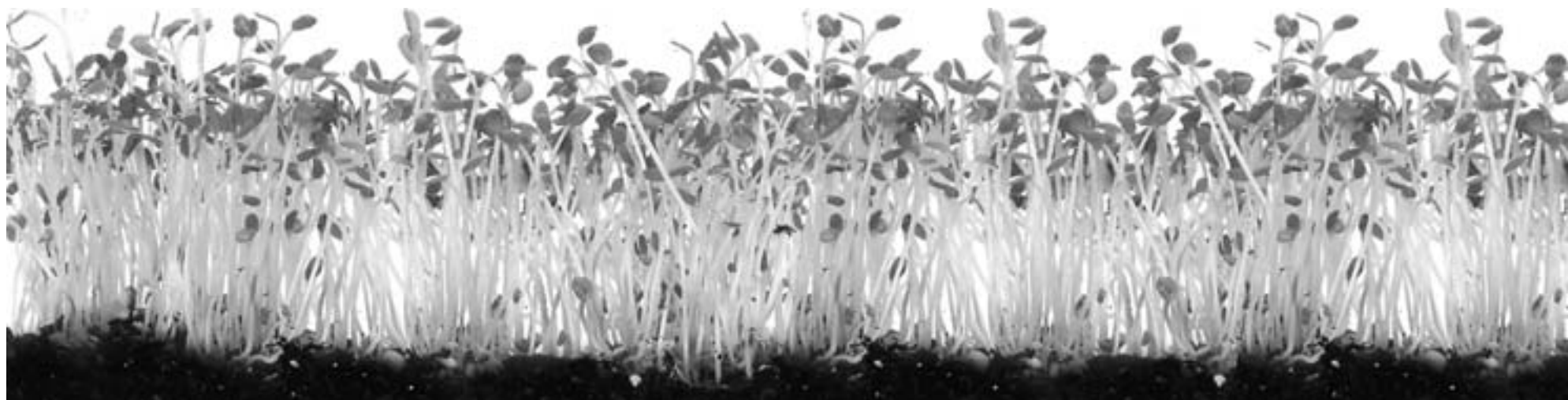
of San Diego, where many had been camped for nearly three weeks. Small groups were assigned along a mountainous 16-mile stretch of the border blanketed with mesquite, cedar and manzanita trees.

Wood was dispatched to "base camp" — a metal-roofed canopy with an electrical generator that powered a 28-foot radio communications tower. Volunteers sat on the canopy's roof and scanned the landscape with night-vision binoculars.

Britt Craig had spent three weeks at base camp living on canned food out of the back of a yellow van. Craig, a former Marine paratrooper, wore a patch over his left eye from what he said was a shrapnel wound in Vietnam. "I'm kind of a solitaire," he said.

Craig, 56, has never been terribly troubled by illegal immigration but left his home in Florida when he learned about the citizen patrols, which he saw as a

See **PATROLS**, page 9



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Cage fighter put behind bars for life
By The Associated Press

RANCHO CUCAMONGA — The mother of a man killed by a cage fighter told the killer in court he would spend the rest of his life in a cage.

Rafiel Torre was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole Thursday for killing 32-year-old Bryan Richards. Richards’ relatives denounced Torre at the sentencing.

“You were trained to fight in a cage, that was your job,” Richards’ mother, Helen Richards, told Torre. “Now guess what? You get to spend the rest of your life in a 6-by-8 cage. It’s where you belong.”

Torre, 40, fought professionally before his arrest and worked as a commentator and journalist covering cage fighting, in which martial artists battle in caged rings before arena and TV audiences.

A jury convicted Torre in August of murdering Richards, whose body was found in December 2001. Prosecutors accused Torre of strangling the married father of two so he and Torre’s widow could live together off a \$1 million life insurance payout.

Torre, who is trained in jujitsu, admitted to an affair with Richards’ wife but denied killing Richards.

He blamed Angelina Richards for arranging her husband’s death, but two other professional fighters testified Torre offered to pay them to kill Richards. One said Torre later confessed the murder to him.

Richards appeared to have been strangled with an inescapable jujitsu chokehold known as the “mata leon,” or “lion killer.”

Mistrial declared in murder proceedings
By The Associated Press

HERMOSA BEACH — A judge declared a mistrial in proceedings to determine whether a Hermosa Beach woman was sane when she ran over and killed a restaurant worker, saying she was not competent to stand trial.

Marie-Elise West has been shuttled between jail and a state mental hospital since the Sept. 1, 2000, death of Jesus Plascencia, 65. She has been repeatedly declared not competent to stand trial.

Judge Michael Johnson halted the latest proceedings Thursday based on West’s behavior and an expert’s evaluation. A progress report was scheduled for Jan. 12.

A jury convicted West, 40, of second-degree murder in November for running over the restaurant worker with her car outside a Van Nuys bagel shop after acting erratically for weeks.

She made racist remarks before and after the killing of Plascencia, who was Hispanic, and referred to him as “road kill.”

Jurors rejected the prosecution’s contention that the crime was motivated by racial hatred. It also deadlocked 10-2 in favor of finding her sane at the time of the killing.

Two of the three court-appointed psychiatrists who evaluated West determined she was insane when she killed Plascencia, but one said she was likely faking her symptoms to avoid prison.

54-year-old grocery store closes its doors
By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A fixture of the neighborhood around USC — an old-fashioned grocery store that cashed checks and sold lettuce for 33 cents a head — is shutting down.

The 32nd Street Market just north of the University of Southern California always hired local youths rejected for other jobs. Its customers included cash-strapped students who knew they could wrangle IOUs and senior citizens turned off by chain supermarkets.

“Stores like this, you don’t see them anymore,” said 85-year-old Larry Nash, a customer for 50 years. “A lot of people are going to miss it. It had the best prices and the best variety around.”

The store has been around since 1951, when longtime owner Morrie Notrica’s father, Joe, began selling meat, eggs and vegetables from a cramped shop at 32nd and Hoover streets.

Since then, it has moved twice and expanded to a 50,000-square-foot space that rivaled chain stores in size.

The store is closing because negotiations with USC, which owns the shopping center where the store is located, ended without an extension of Notrica’s lease. Neither Notrica nor USC would say why negotiations failed.

Carolyn Webb de Macias, a campus vice president, said in a statement that USC was sorry to see the store close but “we cannot go into detail as to the reasons for the market’s closure.”

Notrica, 76, said he feels he’s being forced out but didn’t want to challenge the decision in court.

“I’ve had a good ride, believe me,” he said.

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Santa Monica Daily Press





Polls find opposition to civilian border patrols

PATROLS, from page 7

question of people exercising their right to bear arms.

"I grew up with guns, I believe in guns, I believe in an armed citizenry," he said. "These folks are answering to a national defense need."

Nothing prevented people from carrying licensed weapons in most of the areas where the Minutemen patrolled, authorities said. Still, the San Diego County Sheriff's Department extended the nighttime hours of its tiny Campo substation and paid overtime to reinforcements.

A small group of protesters, who camped in tents, closely followed and frequently taunted the patrollers.

"When we have two very diverse groups, very polarized and highly emotional, running around, many of them carrying guns, obviously we're going to have to be there," said San Diego Sheriff's Lt. Bill Hogue.

He added: "I don't know how you'd feel about a bunch of people running around your neighborhood with guns but it makes some people uneasy."

No one spotted illegal crossers this night, which is typical. The Border Patrol credits the California Minutemen for reporting crossings that resulted in three arrests during a three-week patrol. The agency has made about 1.1 million arrests over the last year — or an average of 20,000-plus a week.

It was a quiet evening of friendly conversation and rock-music playing on the radio, except for a tense, 20-minute argument with four men who approached in a Nissan Maxima. They belonged to a small group of protesters camped about a mile away over a dirt road. The protesters followed the patrollers at every step, banging pans, shouting through bullhorns and shining flood lamps on them.

"What's happening here is unacceptable!" shouted the driver, a portly man who stepped outside the car. "We have to tear (the border fence) down. You want to build it up."

T.S. McMullen, a former Marine toting an M-14 rifle, responded calmly that the protesters were "communists."

The driver compared the civilian patroller to Nazis. "I hope your children get harassed by bigots, like you are!" the driver shouted.

"We are not racists," McMullen said.

"You're the only racists."

"Unfortunately, this is a war," the protester said as he returned to his car. "I despise everything you represent but I respect you as a soldier."

There was plenty of verbal jousting between patrollers and protesters but no arrests during the three weeks the Minutemen spent on the border. The patrollers have drawn criticism from Mexican President Vicente Fox, who accuses them of practicing vigilante justice.

Wood didn't see any illegal crossers during his three nights on the border, though he likes to think his presence may have scared them away.

The son of a California Highway Patrol officer and an elementary schoolteacher, Wood never followed illegal immigration when growing up. He said he rarely mingled with Mexicans in high school.

While teaching English at a high school in Yokkaichi, Japan, he said he noticed American staffers were given lighter workloads, special treatment he said he didn't deserve or want. When he returned home one summer and sought to bring his Brazilian girlfriend, he said he had to haggle with an official at a crowded U.S. consulate to get her a tourist visa.

"Seeing that situation, all these (visa applicants) waiting to get into the United States and then coming back and hearing how illegal aliens just jump over fences," he said, shaking his head at the dining-room table of his rented one-bedroom apartment in Oceanside. "It's like being at an amusement park and waiting for two hours in line, then someone just cuts right in front of you. That isn't fair."

When Wood brought his current girlfriend, who is Japanese, with him to the Minuteman patrol, he said she was terror-stricken during the night and feared being kidnapped or killed.

Wood acknowledged a lack of economic opportunity back home often drives illegal immigrants, but he was unsympathetic. "They're really poor, they have no skills, it's almost like Mexico just wants to unload its undesirables," he said.

Wood said he felt right at home with the Minutemen and plans to return when his schedule permits.

"I'll do it as long as it takes — until it's just as hard to get across the border as it is to get in through an airport," he said.

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Man indicted on five arms-smuggling charges

BY SETH HETTENA

Associated Press Writer

SAN DIEGO — A convicted Pakistani arms dealer was indicted Thursday on charges of conspiring with others to illegally export plane parts to Malaysia, Belgium and the United Arab Emirates.

The lawyer for Arif Ali Durrani, 56, said that most of the equipment was destined for Iran, but insisted his client was innocent and was set up by the U.S. government.

The five-count indictment, returned by a federal grand jury in San Diego, makes no mention of Iran.

Prosecutors charged this week that Durrani conspired with others in 2004 and 2005 to illegally export engine components for the F-5 fighter jet to Malaysia and Belgium and a cockpit canopy panel for the T-38 Talon to the United Arab Emirates, according to a complaint filed in federal court in San Diego.

Defense attorney Moe Nadim said he believed the F-5 engine parts were ultimately destined for Iran. Nadim said that a man, identified by prosecutors as an uncharged co-conspirator, traveled to Iran and sold the aircraft parts, but did not do so at Durrani’s instruction, as prosecutors have alleged.

“This case is all about lies,” Nadim said in a telephone interview. “Durrani was set up.”

Durrani was convicted in Connecticut in 1987 of selling guidance systems for Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to Iran. Throughout the trial, Durrani maintained Oliver North, a former National Security Council aide, told him to make the shipments and not worry about an export license. The prosecution called him a liar and Durrani spent five years in prison.

“Despite my conviction and imprisonment, I have borne no grudge against the United States,” Durrani said in a 2002 affidavit filed in an unsuccessful attempt to have his federal conviction overturned.

In the affidavit, Durrani claimed that an FBI agent sought his help in 1996 in catching Mir Aimal Kasi, who killed two CIA employees in a shooting rampage outside the spy agency’s headquarters three years earlier. Durrani said he advised the agent, Bradley Garrett, how to

deal with Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence, the country’s equivalent of the CIA, the affidavit states. Kasi was captured in 1997 in Pakistan.

Debbie Weierman, an FBI spokeswoman in Washington, says the bureau doesn’t comment on whom its agents consult or interview during an investigation.

After the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Durrani claimed that he had information to pass along from his contacts in Pakistan regarding the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden. April Langwell, an FBI spokeswoman in San Diego, confirmed that FBI agent David Duke traveled to Mexico and met for four hours with Durrani, who provided information that was publicly available.

“He is absolutely not helping us with any information,” Langwell said.

Durrani was kicked out of the United States and moved in 1998 to Baja California, Mexico, where he opened a restaurant.

Prosecutors say he also resumed his illegal military parts supply business with the aid of Richard Tobey, who ran Airpower Supply in Temecula, and another unnamed man, according to the complaint. Tobey pleaded guilty in August to conspiring to violate U.S. arms export control laws and, as part of his plea, said that Durrani instructed him to send a T-38 cockpit canopy to the United Arab Emirates in 2004.

Another man, identified as uncharged coconspirator No. 1, told investigators that Durrani told him to ship three amplifiers for the F-5 to Malaysia by FedEx in 2004 and 2005. The man also admitted that he sent an F-5 afterburner actuator — which allows the plane to travel at supersonic speeds — from a Mail Box Center in Escondido to Belgium in 2005, according to the complaint filed Friday.

Nadim identified the man as a retired Navy commander in Escondido.

Durrani has been in U.S. custody in Los Angeles since June when he was expelled from Mexico and charged in a different case — a 1999 indictment accusing him of illegally exporting compressor blades for military aircraft engines that authorities suspected were headed for Iran. Those charges were dropped Monday.

Bodies of missing Yosemite tourists found in steep ravine

By The Associated Press

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK — The bodies of two missing Chinese tourists were found in the wreckage of their rental car in a steep ravine outside the park, authorities said Friday.

There was no suspicion of foul play in the deaths of Xiaodong Yuan, 34, who lived in Atlanta, and his mother, Zhaohui Wang, 60, of Beijing, said Scott Gediman, a Yosemite National Park ranger. They were identified Friday by the Mono County coroner’s office.

The bodies were found Thursday in Lee Vining Canyon, about 150 feet off the road that plunges from 9,945-foot Tioga Pass at

the park’s east entrance to the Owens Valley along a steep, winding canyon edge that lacks guardrails in many places.

The mother and son, who had been missing a week, appeared to have died from traumatic injuries when their car rolled down the embankment, but an investigation was underway, according to the Mono County Sheriff-Coroner’s Department.

The pair had spent two nights in a cabin at Curry Village and checked out Sept. 23. A search began after they failed to make a flight Sunday from Las Vegas to Atlanta.

The two had planned to drive the well-traveled Tioga Road, Highway 120, toward Nevada.

INTERESTED IN YOUR DAILY FORECAST?
CHECK OUT THE HOROSCOPES ON PAGE 2!

NATIONAL



Couple nears end of coast-to-coast hike

BY MARTIN GRIFFITH

Associated Press Writer

RENO, Nev. — Marcia and Ken Powers went for a walk in Delaware seven months ago — and they're still walking, as they approach the end of a 4,900-mile trek from coast to coast.

The Pleasanton, Calif., couple was crossing the Sierra Nevada this weekend, near their goal of becoming the first backpackers to complete the official route of the transcontinental American Discovery Trail in one continuous hike.

They say their fast pace — 21 1/2 miles a day — is no big deal. After all, the couple said, they have taken only four days off since starting on Feb. 27 from Cape Henlopen in Delaware.

"We're not out for records," said Marcia Powers, who would only say she's in her 50s. "We needed to get to the Rockies as soon as the snow melted and we have to get over the Sierra before the snow falls."

She and her 60-year-old husband sought a new challenge after joining an elite group that has hiked all three major national scenic trails: the 2,000-mile Appalachian in the East, the 3,000-mile Continental Divide in the Rockies and the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest on the West Coast.

Among other obstacles, they have had to deal with flooding in Ohio, a quicksand scare in Utah and uncomfortably close lightning strikes in Kansas.

But they rave about the French history of St. Louis, the grandeur of Colorado's Crag Crest National Recreation Trail and the countless strangers who have gone out of their way for them.

Memorable characters included a doctor and dentist who opened their homes to them around Chester, Ill., and a motorcyclist who gave them water after they failed to find a water cache on Utah's lonely Wah Wah Desert.

"There's one word for it: serendipity. The chance happenings out there with people are amazing," Marcia Powers said as they passed through western Nevada earlier this week.

Silverton becomes Colorado's 25th ski area — but for extremists only

By The Associated Press

SILVERTON, Colo. — The state is getting its 25th full-scale ski area high in the San Juan Mountains, and this remote town is getting a winter economic engine.

Silverton Mountain has received a permit from the Bureau of Land Management to operate over 1,300 acres — all expert-level terrain — with up to 475 skiers a day. The area has been open for four winters but only for guided skiing.

"It's still going to feel, even with unguided skiers, uncrowded and vast," said owner Aaron Brill. "Five hundred skiers a day is smaller than the smallest days at other ski areas."

Powder hounds will outnumber Silverton's year-round population of around 400, San Juan County Administrator Willy Tookey said. The expansion could jump-start the town's dormant winter economy, he said.

The transcontinental hiking, biking and horse trail passes through 15 states from Cape Henlopen to Point Reyes in California. It traverses 14 national parks and 16 national forests. It also passes through cities, including Cincinnati, St. Louis, Kansas City, Denver, Sacramento and San Francisco.

The trail opened in 2000 — 11 years after it was proposed as the first coast-to-coast footpath connecting the three major north-south trails.

"The American Discovery Trail is cities, desert, mountains, farmlands. It's so diverse," Marcia Powers said. "It's never had the rhythm the other trails have had. It has been adapt, adapt, adapt, because things continually change."

In 2003, Joyce and Pete Cottrell of Whitefield, N.H., became the first people to backpack the entire official route of the American Discovery Trail. But they hiked segments out of sequence over two calendar years.

The Powers passed the 4,400-mile mark of their journey when they reached Carson City on Tuesday. They hope to complete the hike north of San Francisco sometime in mid-October.

They plan no more rest days, which means they will have averaged a day off only once every two months or 1,225 miles.

Veteran backpacker Jeffrey Schaffer, author of Pacific Crest Trail guidebooks, said he finds the mental aspect of the Powers' hike more remarkable than the physical challenge.

"The hard thing is the mental will to do it," he said. "That's what gets to long-distance hikers more than anything else. It's just such a trudge day after day that they lose the will to do it."

"I applaud them for setting a good example. There are too many older folks sitting in front of TVs and computers. They need to be out active," added Schaffer, 62.

The 6-foot, 150-pound Ken Powers and his 5-foot-6, 110-pound wife haul an average of only 20 to 25 pounds. They arranged for one of two adult sons to mail them 42 food boxes to points along the way.

Both are retired.

across the nation, and looks forward to turning a profit. "I'm really hoping to start to take home a paycheck in the next couple of years," he said.

The BLM, after three years of review, granted Brill a permit Tuesday for 40 years. The public has 30 days to appeal the decision.

Even with the addition of unguided skiing and snowboarding, Silverton will stand out. Its easiest run is a match for the most difficult double black diamonds at many other resorts.

It has one lift, but almost nothing in the way of amenities at its base. There's no grooming and no snowmaking. The area receives an average of 400 inches of snow a year.

"Silverton matches or surpasses pretty much every other ski area as far as extreme terrain goes," said Greg Ditrinco, executive editor at Ski Magazine. "They're trying to serve only the hard-core audience. They're definitely swimming upstream."

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UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP!



NATIONAL

Residents return to parts of New Orleans

BY AMY FORLITI
Associated Press Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Some of the city's most popular neighborhoods officially reopened to residents Friday, a move that could bring back about a third of New Orleans' half-million inhabitants.

The newly opened areas, including the French Quarter and Garden District, all escaped major flooding when the city was devastated by Hurricane Katrina a month ago before receiving a second blow from Hurricane Rita last week.

"This is my home. I will never leave New Orleans," said Virginia Darmstadter, 75, who has lived in the Garden District since 1984. Her husband is in a nursing home in Houston.

Their home doesn't have electricity and suffered water damage, which contributed to mold. The family planned to return to Houston this weekend after cleaning up a few things.

"As soon as we get electricity and my husband is strong enough to come back, believe me, I'll be back," Darmstadter said. "I've lived long enough to know that life is a wave, you move up and down. When you are down, you have to muster the wherewithal to face it."

Mayor Ray Nagin has pushed aggressively to reopen the city despite concerns raised by state and federal officials. Serious health hazards remain because of bacteria-laden floodwaters, a lack of drinkable water and a sewage system that still does not work, said Stephen Johnson, chief of the Environmental Protection Agency.

"There are a whole lot of factors that need to be weighing on the mayor's mind," Johnson said Thursday. He said the EPA was not taking a position on Nagin's plan. He declined to say whether he would allow his own family to return to New Orleans.

Along Prytania Street, people cleared brush and downed tree limbs from their yards as repair crews worked on power lines. Taylor Livingston, 40, was using a leaf-blower, hoping to create a lived-in look at three homes he is guarding against looters.

"I don't know how it's going to come together," he said. "I don't know if there's ever been a big city evacuated the way we were evacuated. It's all new. I don't know that we can come back that quick."

Business owners began showing up Thursday, some saying they were pulling out and others vowing to rebuild.

"We are lucky. I was expecting much

worse than this," said Germame Kassa, whose Ethiopian grocery and deli was relatively unscathed, although the stink of rotting food wafted through the locked doors. "One way or the other, we'll be back in business."

State officials say at least 140,000 homes and businesses across southeastern Louisiana were so badly damaged that they must be torn down. The storms also left 22 million tons of debris, including 350,000 cars and trucks, said Mike McDaniel, chief of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

"Just as the nation knew that we had to create economic greatness in New York City after 9-11, the nation and the world needs south Louisiana," Gov. Kathleen Blanco said in seeking federal tax breaks, incentives and grants.

Even as the city welcomed some residents home, the police department said it was investigating a dozen officers accused of looting during the lawlessness that engulfed the city after Katrina.

"The investigation does in fact show police officers with some items," acting Police Superintendent Warren Riley said. He said four of the 12 officers have already been suspended for failing to stop looting.

"It was not clear that they in fact looted," Riley said of the four. "What is clear is that some action needed to be taken and it was not."

Riley drew a distinction between taking useful items such as food and jeans, which he contended didn't amount to looting in a crisis, and taking luxuries such as jewelry. He suggested that arresting looters was difficult amid the chaos following the storm.

"Minor offenders, it was determined, we could not in fact arrest them," he said.

Incidents in which officers took Cadillacs from a dealer's lot were not looting because the officers patrolled in the cars, said Riley, who was appointed to the job this week after his predecessor resigned. However, Riley said authorities were looking into whether the officers had driven the cars illegally.

"There were some officers who did use Cadillacs," Riley said. "Those cars were not stolen."

Katrina's death toll in Louisiana rose to 923 on Thursday, up from 896 the day before, the state health department said. Mississippi's toll rose to 221 Friday from 220, with confirmation of a body found under a collapsed motel, said Harrison County Coroner Gary Hargrove.



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LOCAL



Next part of public process on plan to include 'choices'

DEVELOPMENT, from page 1

ing overhaul of the city's development and traffic plan, the latest report examines existing conditions and trends that pose challenges to the kind of community Santa Monicans want in the future. It also identifies 16 focus areas for further exploration during the next phase of the project, categorized as "choices."

While elected officials made it clear the report is intended to ask public policy questions, not answer them, residents who spoke on Tuesday said a range of development options proposed by the document undermines a process that was held in the spring when community members helped "Shape the Future" of Santa Monica's general plan by participating in workshops and surveys.

According to residents at Tuesday's meeting, the public wants as limited growth in the city as possible, which the report failed to reflect.

"I'm concerned with the direction you are going," said Ellen Brennan, a Santa Monica resident. "This report is a developer's dream, and we're not buying it."

"It's 180 degrees off course."

Residents said there were myriad failures within the report. Many lamented the lack of policy language regarding the city's need to secure more rent-controlled and affordable-housing units. Others were dismayed by a suggestion the city could accommodate as many as 14,000 additional housing units built over the next 20 years, indicating such a proposal would prevent Santa Monica from keeping its "town scale" or properly address parking and traffic issues.

"We don't want 14,000 more housing units unless you can promise that the people who live in them will work in Santa Monica and not use cars," said Zina Josephs, a member of the Friends of Sunset Park neighborhood group.

Others were a bit more direct in their requests.

"Solve the traffic problem with the present density, which doesn't seem to be working, before you do anything else," said Marshall Williams, a Santa Monica resident.

Not only did residents feel the report failed to address development issues as they relate to parking and traffic woes, they said the middle class also would be squeezed out by redevelopment scenarios suggested in the report.

"More density doesn't necessarily bring more affordable housing," said Santa Monica resident Joel Brand. "Affordable housing is what keeps getting demolished in this town."

"If you really want more of it, stop tearing it down."

Others said the report needed to include better policy language to preserve more buildings, increase the retail options for locals, and foster the school system.

Denny Zane, chair of Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights, said it was time City Hall begin taking a more proactive role on development issues to assuage public concerns.

Zane said there needs to be a system in place that allows City Hall to put an annual cap on development citywide. He said if City Hall began regulating its redevelopment process in such a way, developers would be forced to compete for use of limited space. As a result,



File photo

Some residents are concerned that development plans in the works could bring a bigger-city feel to an already built-out Santa Monica.

City Hall would be able to award use for sites to those developers whose proposals best address parking, traffic or other public needs.

"We need to think about a model that caters more to the community," Zane said.

The residents' concerns over growth was shared by councilmembers.

"I truly believe a huge segment of the city's population was represented here tonight, and what they want us to do is nurture a historic, traditional scale in Santa Monica," Councilman Ken Genser said. "We really need to look at policies that will truly limit the growth of the city."

While noting the desire to limit growth, some councilmembers said a policy that aimed to halt development all together was unrealistic. Councilman Herb Katz said he favored the "town scale" approach to Santa Monica's future size, while indicating there were areas in the city that afforded opportunities for more building height.

Katz said residential areas that are largely comprised of homes should remain virtually untouched. However, sections such as downtown or the Wilshire commercial corridor may provide opportunities for increased building height that wouldn't necessarily jeopardize the quality of life for residents.

"What we want is the Santa Monica we're used to and keeping it that way," Katz said. "Buildings need to be proportionate to the space around them, but we can control what we allow in our commercial areas."

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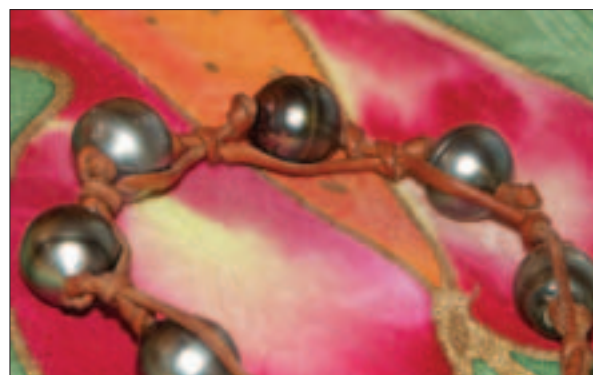
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Three expected to surrender on Monday

WARRANTS, from page 1

of the defendants worked in the finance and sales departments at the dealership.

"There are a lot more people affected by theft etc, but these are the people we interviewed," Aratani said.

The informant, James Alexandre, who worked at the dealership until April of 2002, wrote a letter to the DA's office detailing the allegations, which was received July 9, 2002. The next day, the investigation was launched.

Back in 2002, Hussain, when questioned about overcharging, allegedly told Alexandre that "he was smart enough to cover any of his tracks and that the auditors from Sonic Automotive didn't know what to look for, even if the evidence was right in front of their eyes."

Overcharges and fake charges for LoJack systems, and what was called a "California tire fee/doc fee," and "Touch of Class," "tint" and wheel locks also were part of the alleged scam, according to the complaint.

The 25-page complaint details 114 overt acts that the defendants allegedly took part in. There also are 24 additional counts that charge the defendants with

grand theft of personal property exceeding \$400.

Hussain, 37, who was director of finance at the dealership from December of 2000 to June 2002, faces 25 counts related to conspiracy to defraud another of property.

Khaki, 38, who was finance manager from December 2000 to July 2002, faces nine counts related to conspiracy to defraud another of property.

Uersunthornwattana, 44, who was finance manager from January 2001 to August 2001, faces seven counts related to conspiracy to defraud another of property.

Yaralian, 39, named as a coconspirator in the complaint, faces five counts related to conspiracy to defraud another of property.

Alkasem, 43, also named as a coconspirator, faces six counts related to conspiracy to defraud another of property.

Holterhoff, 63, another coconspirator, faces two counts related to conspiracy to defraud another of property.

Aratani expects three of the defendants to surrender on Monday, one of whom is coming from Arizona while the other two are in the area. The DA's office is attempting to contact the other three



File photo

Investigators, including FBI agents, raided Honda of Santa Monica on Sept. 25, 2002.

defendants — two of whom are in the area and the other is in San Jose. The three defendants who are expected to surrender will be processed and arraigned in down-

town Los Angeles.

On the same day of the raid, a class-action lawsuit was filed against the dealership in downtown Los Angeles Superior Court. The suit alleges several customers were ripped off by the dealership, located at 1720 Santa Monica Blvd. That suit has been put on hold until the criminal investigation is complete, said Dan Hoffman, the attorney representing the plaintiffs.

Customers who have signed onto the lawsuit allege they had been given favorable deals in the showroom only to have the dealership's finance department renegotiate the deals afterwards. Such a practice is forbidden by state law, according to the lawsuit.

After the raid, all of the defendants were fired. Honda of Santa Monica is owned by North Carolina-based Sonic Automotive, which owns car dealerships across the country. Sonic reportedly bought Honda of Santa Monica in 1999 from Kramer Motors Incorporated, which also is named in the class-action lawsuit.

Honda of Santa Monica officials have said in the past that they have replaced the entire finance and sales departments, and have instituted safeguards to ensure that no more scams will occur.



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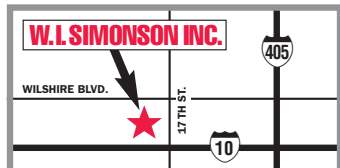
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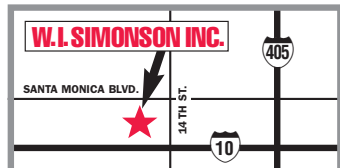
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LOCAL

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

A Jewish day at the pier

By Daily Press staff

A Jewish musical festival will take place on the Santa Monica Pier this weekend. The free concert will have Jewish folk dancing, food and a wide range of music. A classical trio will perform new and developing songs, and Stefani Valadez will play Ladino music.

The Santa Monica College Madison Project director Dale Franzen will receive an honor for “Local Hero” after she was nominated by the World Festival of Sacred Music.

The event is part of SMC’s new Music Academy and Performing Arts Center, which is currently under construction and is scheduled to open in January 2007.




Photos courtesy

(Left) Hollywood Klezmer is one of the groups that will be featured at the Festival of World Jewish Music, presented by The Madison Project of Santa Monica College. (Right) Stefani Valadez will perform at the event.

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NATIONAL



Alaskan waters not surfed until early '90s

ALASKA SURF, from page 1

following year helped establish Yakutat as the state's main surf stop.

Since then, a mom-and-pop surf shop has become a community landmark, Outside magazine named Yakutat one of the top five U.S. surf towns, and riding the chilly waves has gone from a fringe to mainstream leisure sport in this seaside hamlet of fewer than 700 people.

Yakutat passed another milestone when it hosted its largest group of pros and media, in town for photo and video shoots, near the end of September.

Surf industry heavies included the first bunch of pro women to surf Alaska, about a dozen male pros, three surf magazines and the extreme sports channel, Fuel TV.

At a barbecue for the visitors, Mayor Casey Mapes announced a resolution welcoming the surfers and presented awards to Mulcoy and female surfer Layne Beachley, who's won six straight world surfing titles.

The city hopes this visit will "open the door to establishing Yakutat and Alaska as premier surfing destinations," the resolution said.

Alaska's waters had remained largely untested by surfers until the early 1990s. Just before Mulcoy's arrival in Yakutat, a few locals had scrounged up used wetsuits, along with old surfboards from the town dump and the rear of someone's garage, and started sampling their backyard breaks.

"Then the place got discovered by Outside surfers," said Mapes, a lifelong Yakutat resident. "We wound up getting together with those guys and learned some tricks from them."

Yakutat is a commercial fishing town that sits on a peninsula yielded up by a receding glacier in southeast Alaska. Its roads peter out near city limits along Yakutat Bay and Tongass National Forest. Just two flights a day roll in on the local tarmac, making it more difficult and expensive to reach than most warmer surf breaks.

Driving out to Yakutat's beaches can take up to 40 minutes on a packed dirt road pocked with potholes. The road muscles through a thick undergrowth of alder, large-leaved devil's club and bushes of cheery red salmonberries. A canopy of Sitka spruce and hemlock towers overhead.

"It's so opposite of any other place I go," Mulcoy said. "It's nice to go someplace where there's not a whole bunch of surfers."

Yakutat's waves are the progeny of storms brewing in the North Pacific. The faces of water can rear up at heights of 25 feet or more, especially in the spring and fall when the storms are most fierce.

The waves are decent, surf pros say,

but they visit mostly because Alaska is an exotic change from the sunny surf sites in California, Australia and the Pacific Islands, where photo shoots and contests are normally held.

"These waves are a little bit difficult to surf because there's no real hollowness to them until they get to a bigger size," Beachley said. "But it's just beautiful. You have stare-downs with seals. There are bald eagles. It's just like you see in the postcards."

Surf culture is spreading from Yakutat slowly along the southeast and south-central Alaska coast.

Scott Liska, who operates Alaska Surf Adventures out of Anchorage, ferries increasing numbers of surfers out to waves lapping islands and coastlines in south-central Alaska.

Surfers, along with kayakers and wind-surfers, have also ridden the wave formed by the incoming bore tide as it races up Turnagain Arm near Anchorage.

"More and more people are surfing each year," Liska said. "Five years ago people thought you should be locked up. People thought you were crazy."

Shops stocked with surf gear have opened in Anchorage and the island of Kodiak to serve Alaska's cold-climate clientele.

In Yakutat, Icy Waves surf shop sells hooded sweatshirts, fleece vests and wetsuits, but there's no sign of the drawstring board shorts or skin-baring swimsuits found in surf shops at lower latitudes.

There's even a board designed specially for local surf conditions. The yellow and white-striped longboard by California shaper Jed Noll was dubbed the "Yakutat model" because it's thicker and more buoyant than a normal board. That's to compensate for the extra weight of a wetsuit and the reduced flotation caused by the lower-than-normal salt content in Yakutat's waters, said store owner Jack Endicott.

City finance director Connie Klushkan is one of a few dozen Yakutat residents who have picked up the sport in the past few years.

"With Endicott opening his shop and making all the equipment available to us, that's what opened up the sport," she said. "It's good exercise and it's relaxing, challenging and mostly it's fun."

Sam Demmert, who rented his first equipment from Icy Waves, now owns three boards. He's confident enough to surf alone off beaches with no lifeguards, but still likes checking out the techniques of visiting pros.

"It kind of legitimizes the place, that they're willing to come up here and surf," Demmert said. "You and your friends want to get better. Well, there's the pinnacle of the sport right there."

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NATIONAL

Finding fugitives is a challenge in the wild

BY JEANNETTE J. LEE
Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — With a land mass comprising one-fifth of the continental United States, there are simply many places to hide in Alaska.

And that's the vexing part for Alaska State Troopers, who are scouring the vast Alaska wilderness and its sparsely populated communities for the man known as Papa Pilgrim, the patriarch of a self-styled pioneering family who is accused of sexually abusing one of his 15 children.

But in Alaska, it can take a long time to ferret someone out of the wilderness, even if they want to be found.

So it's worse when the person is Robert Allen Hale, which is Papa Pilgrim's real name, an experienced outdoorsman who apparently doesn't want to be located.

Authorities say the wiry 64-year-old went on the lam last week after he was indicted by a state grand jury on 30 felony counts, including sexual assault, kidnapping and incest.

Troopers flew to Hale's campsite in McCarthy on Friday night to arrest him. They believe Hale heard the helicopter and fled on a four-wheeler. After troopers departed, Hale allegedly returned and drove off in a van.

Troopers collected evidence this week at the family's homestead inside Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Authorities claim the abuse of a daughter occurred over an eight-year span, but culminated in January when Hale locked her in a shed for several days, troopers spokesman Greg Wilkinson said Wednesday.

The deeply religious family moved to Alaska from New Mexico in 1998. Four years later, Hale pooled their Alaska dividend checks to put money down for their homestead on mining property inside the national park. There, they lived a simple life, hunting, fishing and reading the Bible.

But they are best known for waging a well-published feud with the park service over access to their property near McCarthy, a mining town of about 50 people inside Wrangell-St. Elias.

The problem for authorities is Alaska's sheer size. Even if he stayed inside the park, there's 13.2 million acres to provide

cover. If he went elsewhere in the state, that makes finding Hale, whose most recent photographs show him with a full white beard, even more daunting.

About 370 troopers patrol the entire state, which sprawls for more than a half-million square miles. Wilkinson didn't want to discuss specifics of the case to compromise the investigation, but said the department is using various technologies in their manhunt and troopers are following up on tips.

Alaska's mountains, ravines and forests can provide an endless supply of hiding places, and even those who want to be found routinely go missing for days before authorities find them, if at all.

A woman hiking near Juneau's Mendenhall Glacier was lost for five days in July after setting out for what she had believed would be a short stroll. Shokoufeh Attaei wandered the region's glacier fields and woods before reaching a road on her own. No one in Juneau had realized she was missing until the fourth day.

Even plane crashes can be swallowed up by mountains, water or ice. U.S. Rep. Nick Begich, father of Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich, presumably died in a plane crash with then-U.S. House Majority Leader Hale Boggs, D-La., in October 1972 on a flight from Anchorage to Juneau. No evidence of their plane was ever found.

If authorities have any advantage from Mother Nature, it might be the approaching winter. The cold climate and limited food supply in some areas could stymie the most determined fugitives and force them back to civilization.

Another plus is that many of Alaska's 648,000 residents are segmented into small communities where everyone is familiar with their neighbors' business and new faces attract attention.

"If a person wanted to hide out in the mountains, it would be hard to find them, but it would be difficult for them to hide out in a small town," said Eric Gonzalez, spokesman for the FBI's Anchorage office.

But that doesn't rule out the possibility of Hale blending into one of the state's few population centers.

"He could be sitting in a motel room somewhere," Wilkinson said.

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NATIONAL



Judith Miller ends her silence in investigation of CIA leak

BY PETE YOST
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — New York Times reporter Judith Miller testified before a grand jury Friday, ending her silence in the investigation into whether White House officials leaked the name of a covert CIA operative, Valerie Plame.

Miller, out of jail after 85 days, said, "I was a journalist doing my job, protecting my source until my source freed me to perform my civic duty to testify."

Escorted by her lawyers and New York Times Publisher Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr., Miller met with reporters for several minutes after spending more than four hours inside the courthouse.

Miller said she agreed to meet with the grand jury after hearing "directly from my source" by telephone and in a letter that she should cooperate with the investigation by Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald.

"I concluded from this that my source genuinely wanted me to testify," she told reporters.

"I served 85 days in jail because of my belief in the importance of upholding the confidential relationship journalists have with their sources," Miller said. "Believe me, I did not want to be in jail. But I would have stayed even longer."

As part of the deal, Fitzgerald agreed in advance that he would limit Miller's testimony to her communications with her source "and that was very important to me," Miller added.

"I know what my conscience would allow and ... I stood fast to that," the reporter said.

Miller's testimony has been characterized by Fitzgerald as key to his investigation into the White House role in the disclosure of Plame's identity.

Although Miller declined to identify her source, The New York Times identified him as Lewis "Scooter" Libby, chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney.

Until a few months ago, the White House had maintained for nearly two years that Libby and presidential aide Karl Rove were not involved in leaking the identity of Plame, whose husband had publicly suggested that the Bush administration twisted intelligence in the runup to the war in Iraq.

The timing of the criticism by former Ambassador Joseph Wilson was devastating for the White House, which was already on the defensive because no weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq. The presi-

dent's claims of such weapons were the main justification for going to war.

Libby met with Miller just two days after Wilson blasted the Bush administration in a Times op-ed piece.

Time magazine reporter Matthew Cooper has testified recently that Rove and Libby had spoken to him about Wilson's wife that same week in July 2003 when Miller spoke to Libby.

In October 2003, with the criminal investigation gaining speed, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said of Rove and Libby: "Those individuals assured me they were not involved in this" leaking of Plame's identity.

Miller, released from jail Thursday night, had been in custody in Alexandria, Va., since July 6. A federal judge ordered her jailed for civil contempt of court when she refused to testify.

The disclosure of Plame's identity by syndicated columnist Robert Novak on July 14, 2003, triggered the criminal investigation that could still result in charges against government officials.

White House aides signed waivers earlier in the probe, but Miller wanted personal assurances that her source's waiver was voluntary.

Miller's newspaper identified Libby as her source, saying that Miller and Libby spoke in person on July 8, 2003, then talked by phone later that week.

On Thursday, Times publisher Sulzberger said that "as we have throughout this ordeal, we continue to support Judy Miller in the decision she has made."

Fitzgerald spokesman Randall Samborn declined to comment.

The federal grand jury delving into the matter expires Oct. 28. Miller would have been freed at that time, but prosecutors could have pursued a criminal contempt of court charge against the reporter if she continued to defy Fitzgerald.

Of the reporters swept up in Fitzgerald's investigation, Miller is the only one to go to jail.

Novak apparently has cooperated with prosecutors, though neither he nor his lawyer has said so.

Novak's column in July 2003 said two senior administration officials told him Plame had suggested sending her husband to the African nation of Niger on behalf of the CIA to look into possible Iraqi purchases of uranium yellowcake.

Wilson's article in the Times, titled "What I Didn't Find In Africa," had stated it was highly doubtful that any such transaction had ever taken place.

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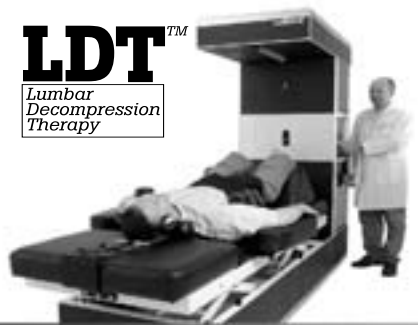


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Seattle, fearing more strip clubs, considers banning lap dances

BY GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press Writer

SEATTLE — Fearing a rash of new cabarets after a federal judge struck down the city's 17-year moratorium on new strip clubs, the City Council plans to vote Monday on whether to impose some of the strictest adult-entertainment regulations of any big city in the country.

No lap dances. No placing dollar bills in a dancer's G-string. And much more light — think parking-garage bright.

The regulations would run counter to Seattle's usual freewheeling attitude, which traces its roots to the days when the city had a thriving business separating prospectors from their gold at brothels and saloons. Anti-war demonstrations are routine here, a gay population has thrived for nearly a century, and the police department has been ordered to make marijuana arrests and seizures its lowest priority.

"Seattle had always had that reputation for being a wide-open town, so it's an almost-normal kind of Seattle controversy — what is sin?" said local historian David Wilma.

The ban on new strip clubs had its roots in the late 1980s, when the number of cabarets in Seattle jumped from two to seven. Concerned residents persuaded the city in 1988 to impose a 180-day moratorium, to freeze the number while officials studied the social effects of the clubs and whether zoning regulations were needed.

For almost two decades, the City Council has repeatedly extended the moratorium as a way of avoiding the sensitive issue of where to allow strip clubs. The number of cabarets in the city fell to four. By contrast, Atlanta has roughly three dozen.

Last year, a man who hoped to open a club downtown sued. U.S. District Judge James Robart sided with him last month, ruling the moratorium was an unconstitutional restraint on free speech.

In anticipation of the ruling, however, Democratic Mayor Greg Nickels came up with rules designed to make it easier to police strip clubs and to discourage new clubs from opening. The rules require dancers to stay four feet from customers, bar the use of private rooms or

curtained areas in the clubs, bar customers from giving money directly to entertainers, and increase the lighting required in clubs.

The rules also would make the entertainers employees of a club instead of private contractors, which the city believes will make it easier to go after club owners for violations. In Seattle, most dancers pay about \$150 per shift to dance in a club, and keep what they make in fees and tips.

Several suburban communities around Seattle already have the four-foot rule, one reason clubs seek to open in Seattle, Nickels argues. The regulations "are necessary to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of Seattle," he wrote in a letter to City Council. Some council members say the regulations may go too far, but the measure appears to have enough support to pass.

Technically, the city already bans "touching" between a dancer and customer. But city officials say it's impossible to enforce and completely ignored in the clubs.

"How do you know there's no touching unless you're one of the participants?" asked Mel McDonald, the city official charged with strip club regulation. "It's dark in there. You don't know whether they're half-an-inch away or not. With the four-foot rule, it's a lot less subjective. Our vice people can enforce it without buying a dance."

City Council meetings to consider the rules have drawn protests from more than 100 of the city's 554 licensed dancers, many toting young children. Tiffany Neatrou, a 24-year-old dancer at Sands Showgirls, said she wouldn't be able to afford to support her two daughters, ages 1 and 5, without the \$400-\$600 a day she makes — almost all of it from lap dances. While she's working, her mom or sister babysit.

"I don't know why they're bothering. We're not doing prostitution in there, at all," Neatrou said. "I'd be making a lot more money if I was. If they want to go after prostitution why don't they go after the escort services?"

Last year, about 197,000 people visited the city's clubs. But a council aide, Paul Elliott, said the public doesn't seem terribly interested in the debate. The council has received about three dozen letters and e-mails concerning the new rules — most of them opposed to the regulations.

Proposed LNG terminal hits local opposition

BY JOSEPH B. FRAZIER
Associated Press Writer

KNAPPA, Ore. — A proposal for a liquefied natural gas import terminal along the lower Columbia River near here hit a wall of sometimes hostile opposition Thursday night at a hearing called to allow area residents to express concerns.

While river pilots and tug boat operators told the U.S. Coast Guard and federal energy regulators they were confident the massive tankers could be brought upriver safely, many speakers expressed fear of environmental damage, terrorist attacks and the possibility of an explosion and firestorm.

The proposed site at Bradwood Landing, a former lumber mill company town, is 38 river miles from the Columbia's mouth. Northern Star Natural Gas wants to build two LNG storage tanks with the capacity of sending out about 1 billion cubic feet of natural gas a day, enough to meet about a third of the needs of the Pacific Northwest.

The crowd of several hundred at Knappa High School was heavily dotted with people in red T-shirts with the slogan "I am NOT an LNG 'acceptable risk.'" Many were from Puget Island in the Columbia River, a tip of which is about a half mile from where the tanks would be placed. A fireball from the tanks, residents said, could cause second-degree burns to some islanders.

LNG ships, which can be 1,000 feet long, would discharge cargo about twice a week.

"If it goes ahead," said area resident Robert Pile, "the natural setting of the lower Columbia would change radically and for practical purposes forever."

He said while there is an assumption that a disaster will not take place, "the possibility remains."

Northern Star has sent preliminary application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which will prepare an environmental impact statement. The five commissioners will decide whether to grant the permit.

The hearing was to gather information on what should be considered in seeking the permit.

Northern Star hopes to begin building in 2007 and be operational by 2010. It notes that energy demands in the region are going up and says they are best met by natural gas, which is abundant, clean and relatively cheap.

A terminal in the Northwest, spokesmen said, is a way to free the region from reliance on gas from other areas of the country.

There are no LNG import terminals on the West Coast now, but four are being discussed for the Columbia as is another near Coos Bay.

But there was wide skepticism Thursday night that the Coast Guard, try as it might, could not guarantee there would not be a terrorist attack on the ships or on the storage site, whose two tanks would hold the liquefied equivalent of 7 billion cubic feet of gas.

Skepticism runs high among many of the 800 or so residents of Puget Island, connected to the Oregon side of the river by a small ferry. The island, part of Washington, is the nearest populated area to the proposed site.

Bill Coons, who retired to the island of small farms and, increasingly, other retirees, 13 years ago said the system probably is safe if it works as intended.

"But if there's an attempt by a terrorist to set one of these off, oh man..."



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INTERNATIONAL

Latest wave of attacks kills 13 in Iraq

BY THOMAS WAGNER

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Sunni-led insurgents killed at least nine people with a car bomb in a crowded vegetable market Friday, the Muslim day of worship, in the second blast against Shiite civilians in as many days, police said. The death toll rose to nearly 100 from the previous day's attacks in another Shiite town.

In the southern city of Basra, an Iraqi police convoy was ambushed late Thursday, killing four policemen and wounding one, said police Capt. Mushtaq Khazim.

The surge of violence before an Oct. 15 referendum on Iraq's constitution has killed at least 194 people, including 13 U.S. service members, in the past five days.

The insurgents have vowed to wreck the referendum, whose passage is crucial to prospects for starting a withdrawal of American troops.

Al-Qaida in Iraq, the country's most feared insurgent group, has declared "all-out war" on the Shiite majority that dominates Iraq's government. Moderate Sunni Arab leaders have urged their community to reject the constitution, saying it will fragment Iraq and leave them weak compared to Shiites and Kurds.

U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad has been struggling to negotiate changes to the charter in hopes of winning Sunni Arab support, and senior U.S. officials in Washington have said they are confident that Iraq's draft constitution will be approved. But those officials also have said that if the constitution is defeated, Iraq could descend into anarchy.

On Friday, a car bomb exploded in a bustling vegetable market in the mostly Shiite city of Hillah, killing

at least nine people, including three women and two children, and wounding 41, said Dr. Mohammed Beirum of Hillah General Hospital. The vehicle was parked when it detonated at about 9:30 a.m. in the city 60 miles south of Baghdad.

As Iraqi police and soldiers sealed off the Al-Sharia vegetable market, emergency workers lifted the wounded and dead into ambulances from streets covered with pools of blood and debris.

In Iraq, the weekend is Friday and Saturday, and before heading to services in mosques at midday Friday, the Muslim day of worship, many Iraqis shop in their local markets.

Jawad Khazim, 45, who witnessed the Hillah attack from a nearby street, said he was temporarily deafened by the explosions. "I saw a fireball rising from the market-place, and vegetables and human flesh flying through the air," he said.

He condemned the insurgents for trying to kill Shiites and questioned why they would target a crowded market-place where minority Sunnis and Christians could also be.

On Thursday, three suicide attackers exploded near-simultaneous car bombs in the heart of the bustling, mainly Shiite town of Balad, 50 miles north of the capital, killing at least 99 people and wounding 150, police and hospital officials said.

Apparently aimed at killing a large number of Shiite civilians, the string of bombings started just before sunset Thursday when the first blast ripped through an open-air market crowded with Iraqis buying vegetables. The next bomb exploded at a bank just yards away, followed by a third on a nearby street of clothing shops.

Most of the fatalities were civilians, though the

wounded included the police chief and four officers, said Dr. Qassim Hatam, the director of Balad hospital. The victims also included an unspecified number of Sunnis who run some of the stands in the market.

New information about the Balad attack emerged Friday, when police said the insurgents had hit a police checkpoint in the city with six mortar rounds at the same time, killing one civilian. U.S. soldiers based there returned the fire and detained an Iraqi suspect from a nearby home after finding traces of explosives on his body, the military said.

Also Thursday, the U.S. military announced the deaths of five U.S. soldiers a day earlier in a roadside bombing during combat in Ramadi, west of Baghdad, a hotbed of Iraq's insurgency.

It was the deadliest single attack against American troops in more than a month, bringing to 1,934 the number of U.S. service members who have died since Iraq's war started in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count.

In Washington, the top American commander in Iraq said Thursday that the process of withdrawing U.S. troops depends greatly on the referendum results and elections set to follow if the constitution passes. "The next 75 days are going to be critical," Gen. George Casey told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Sunnis could defeat the charter because of a loophole in voting rules: If two-thirds of voters in any three of Iraq's 18 provinces vote "no," the referendum fails.

Sunni leaders complain the constitution does not emphasize Iraq's unity and Arab character. They say its federal system will leave Sunnis in a weak middle region, cheated of oil resources.

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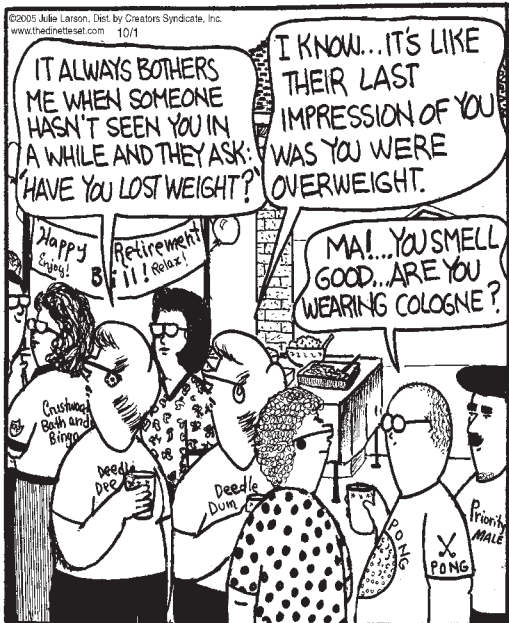
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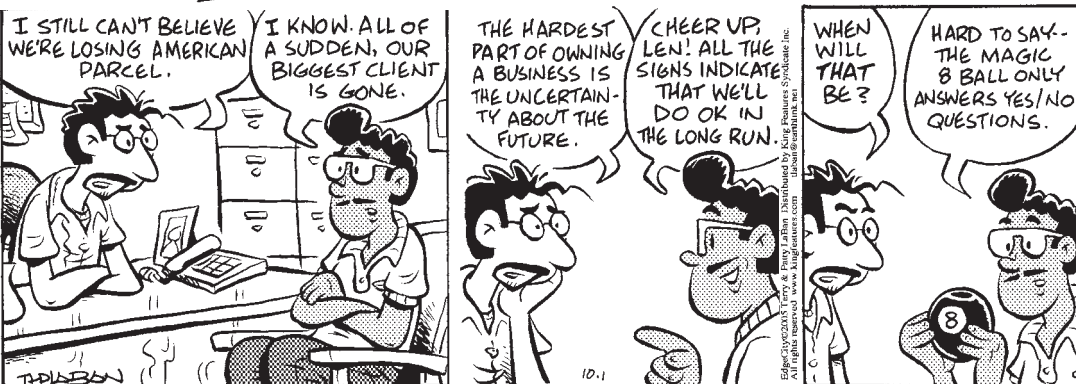


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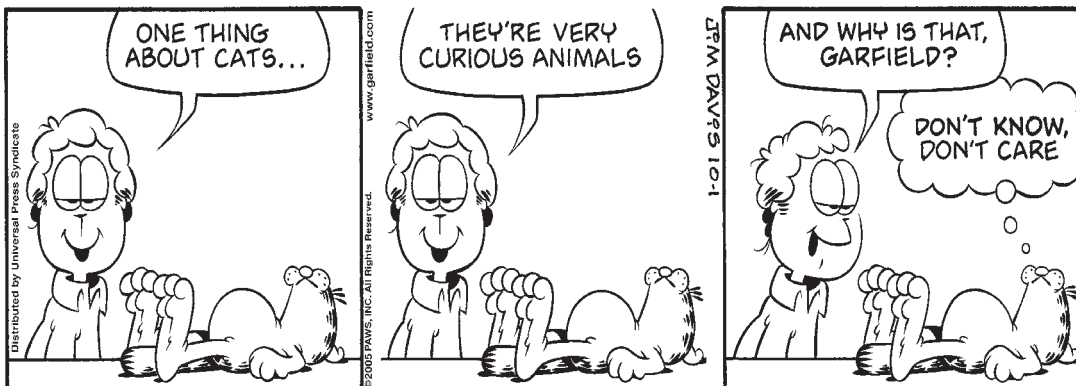
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Yesterday's answer

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EOE

Obituaries

RALPH EVERETT HEDGES

Ralph Everett Hedges, Santa Monica native, passed away on September 22, 2005 at the age of 80. He served in the US Army in WWII, and graduated from UCLA in chemistry. He taught high school chemistry for over 30 years. He was an active member of the First United Methodist Church in Santa Monica, a member of Alpha Gamma Omega, Retired Teachers, and delivered Meals on Wheels after his retirement. He loved to travel, visiting all 50 states and many countries.

He is survived by his wife, Marilyn; children, Kathleen (Russell) Loftman and Robert (Patricia) Hedges; sisters Elizabeth Hedges and Marie Rourke.

A celebration of his life will be held on October 1 at 2:00 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 1008 11th Street, Santa Monica.

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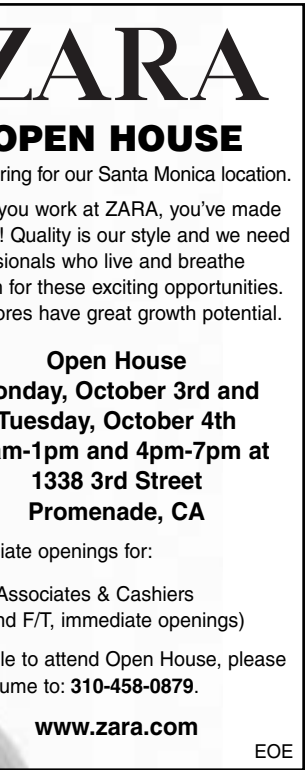
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