

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

1 10 31 45 47
Meganumber: 17
Jackpot: 13 Million

FANTASY 5

12 15 17 26 29

DAILY 3

Daytime: 9 8 7
Evening: 9 7 4

DAILY DERBY

1st: 04 Big Ben
2nd: 10 Solid Gold
3rd: 03 Hot Shot

RACE TIME: 1:44.20



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPARD

Heavy rains around Dunn, N.C., in mid-August pounded soap-based runoff from the H&H Products facility just off U.S. 301, creating an awesome wall of white bubbles at least 20 feet high that obscured not only Jonesboro Road but the telephone poles alongside. A few drivers tried to go through the mess, but most avoided it until firefighters cleared the foam to the side of the road with their hoses.

TODAY IN HISTORY

ON OCT. 22, 1962, President Kennedy announced an air and naval blockade of Cuba, following the discovery of Soviet missile bases on the island.

■ In 1746, Princeton University in New Jersey received its charter.

■ In 1797, French balloonist Andre-Jacques Garnerin made the first parachute descent, landing safely from a height of about 3,000 feet.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Happiness is not a horse; you cannot harness it."

RUSSIAN PROVERB.

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Staying power: Incumbents rally funds

(Editor's note: This is the first article in a series on local election fundraising.)

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Facing a crowded field of 10 contenders, the four Santa Monica City Councilmen seeking re-election this November stepped up their fundraising campaigns in the first half of October,

CAMPAIGN 2004

collectively raising more than \$73,000, financial documents show.

Leading the four incumbents was City Councilman Ken Genser, who raised more than \$25,000 in the first two weeks of October. Genser was followed, in order, by Mayor Richard Bloom, and City

Councilmen Herb Katz and Mike Feinstein, according to the reports.

Still commanding the money race, however, was challenger Bobby Shriver, a Kennedy family descendant who's relied on family and personal connections to amass a massive campaign war chest. City Hall didn't receive Shriver's most recent disclosure forms Thursday, but by the end of September Shriver had already raised more than \$100,000. None

of the incumbents have reached that benchmark.

By contrast, Genser had raised only \$1,200 before this month. He raked in \$25,000 over the first half of October through donations from executives at Southern California Disposal; the re-election campaign for Assemblyman Paul Koretz; City Councilman Kevin McKeown; Santa Monica College administrator Don Girard;

See STAYING POWER, page 6

Out of their gourds



Crill Hansen/Special to the Daily Press

Students of the Canyon Charter School use their noggins to compare pumpkins at the school's 10th annual Pumpkin Patch and Bake Sale on Thursday. The sale continues Friday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the school (421 Entrada Drive).

Apartment rents on the rise in most Western markets

BY MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Business Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Apartment rents through most of the western United States are rising, a sign that landlords are regaining some of the leverage lost in a sluggish economy and a hot home-buying market that lured away tenants, according to a report released Thursday.

Through September, average rents had climbed from the previous year in all but four of the West's 20 major metropolitan

markets surveyed on a quarterly basis by RealFacts, a Novato, Calif.-based research firm.

Rents rose the most in the rapidly growing Southern California market of San Bernardino and Riverside counties, where apartment tenants paid an average of \$1,001 in September, a 6.9 percent increase from a year ago. It marked the first time rents have risen above \$1,000 in a region known as the "Inland Empire."

Many of the Inland Empire's residents have moved there to

escape the much higher cost of living closer to the Southern California coast. Los Angeles and Orange counties remain the most expensive metropolitan market, with September rents averaging \$1,356, a 4.5 percent increase from last year.

Other strong rental markets included: Ventura County at \$1,310, up 3.1 percent; San Diego County at \$1,210, up 3.2 percent; Reno, Nev. at \$777, up 3.6 percent; Las Vegas at \$767, up 2.7 percent; and Fresno County at

\$697, up 3.9 percent.

The biggest decrease occurred in Santa Clara County, a Silicon Valley hub where rents have plunged by hundreds of dollars during the last 3 1/2 years amid a high-tech slump triggered by the dot-com bust. Santa Clara County rents averaged \$1,283 in September, down 1.3 percent.

But there were even signs of an upturn in Santa Clara County. The average September rent there was

See ON THE RISE, page 7

Jacquie Banks

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Take off ASAP, Gemini

JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

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

★★★★★-Dynamic

★★★★-Positive

★★★-Average

★★-So-so

★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ You wake up smelling the roses and feeling that your day could be close to perfect. News from a distance might encourage you to adjust your plans and/or thinking. Allow a partner to help you. Your intensity marks your decisions. Tonight: Celebrate the weekend.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Take your bows; after all, you have put in your share of time and work. A partner wants to pitch in. Accept his or her support if you want to clear out of work at a reasonable hour. Let associates run with the ball. Tonight: Say "yes."

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ Your mind points you in the right direction. Sometimes you get accused of over-intellectualizing. Don't overthink things; just follow a good idea. A partner revises his or her thinking. As you change, so will this person, perhaps slowly. Tonight: Take off ASAP.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Clearly, you cannot get your two cents in. Let others run with the ball. You will like watching and not being responsible. You could learn a whole new approach. Trust a close associate. He or she will come through for you. Tonight: Be with your closest loved one.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ You could reverse plans left and right. Be whimsical, but get your work done. If you must, make one or two personal calls to set up your weekend. Respond to calls. You might take some work home and leave early. Tonight: Just don't be alone.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ The ball tumbles into your hands. Be responsible and get the job done. Some of you might be considering a home office. Return calls and schedule a meeting for next week. Touch base with those who count. Tonight: Soak or exercise stress away

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ You see humor in what others don't. Don't push your views on others; rather, understand where co-workers and friends are coming from. Emphasize financial security in the next few weeks. Don't risk what you don't have. Tonight: Lead the parade. Get into the weekend.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ You feel a change in your energy as the Sun slides into your sign today. Work on optimism and seeing the glass half-full. Sometimes you even get a bit stern or negative. Discuss a domestic change. Tonight: Head home.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ Your words and attitude have an impact. To many, you have reversed your stand. Actually, you are transforming and changing. Hence, you make different choices. Allow someone in closer. Share more of yourself. Tonight: Where your pals are.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★ Know when to lie low. You might need to reorient your thinking, as quite apparently you are barking up the wrong tree. You don't need to announce to others what you are about to change. A meeting turns into a Friday-afternoon get-together. Tonight: You are the party!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ You feel that you are on a roll, but you might have a hard time getting others to join in. Friends change plans at the last minute. Meetings at work could be rescheduled. Float out the door, but head home first. Tonight: Home is where the action is.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★ Take your time making a decision. A boss pushes you. Do what you must to maintain the peace, even though you might want to do otherwise. Take an overview and refuse to get into office politics. Consider taking a class to change your work status. Tonight: Cocoon.

Santa Monica Daily Press

Published Monday through Saturday

Phone: 310.458.PRESS(7737) • Fax: 310.576.9913

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LOCAL

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Cartoons, urban landscapes at SMC art gallery

By Daily Press staff

Art junkies can now view urban landscapes through contrasting mediums at the new "Seeing and Reading" exhibition at Santa Monica College.

Two nationally recognized artists, Marc Trujillo and Chris Ware, work in different media but share an unsentimental vision of urban landscapes. An exhibition of their paintings is currently being presented through Nov. 6 at the Pete and Susan Barrett Art Gallery at SMC. A free lecture featuring the two artists will be held on Friday Nov. 5 at 5 p.m. at the gallery.

Trujillo, an SMC art professor, and Ware, a Chicago artist, have been close friends since their undergraduate studies at the University of Texas at Austin in the late 1980s.

Ware is nationally known for art combined with poignant stories. Ware has had his work exhibited throughout the world, including the Whitney Biennial in New York in 2002. He has appeared on "60 Minutes" and has been featured in a wide range of publications, including Time magazine.

Trujillo's paintings in the SMC exhibit are urban landscapes, rigorously structured and void of political or moral overtones. They include ordinary places, such as big box retail stores, self-service gas stations and fast-food chains. While the subjects depicted are nominally in the Los Angeles area, they are actually generic environments that are numbingly familiar to contemporary Americans. He has shown nationally and had solo exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco since receiving his master of fine arts degree from The Yale University School of Art in 1994.

The art gallery is located at SMC's Madison campus on Santa Monica Boulevard and 11th Street. Gallery hours are 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. For information, call (310) 434-3434.

Free makeovers for new job seekers

By Daily Press staff

A workshop for formerly homeless women will offer free makeovers to participants to help them prepare for job interviews.

The seven-year-old workshop offers life-skills development and training to help homeless women turn their lives around and find jobs and housing.

The Junior League of Los Angeles, in conjunction with Pacheco Salon, are helping make the transition easier by offering free makeovers to more than 20 women participating in a life skills building program at Chrysalis.

The workshop is scheduled for Monday, Oct. 25 at 6:30 p.m. at Pacheco Salon in Santa Monica and will help the women learn how to apply appropriate makeup for a job interview.

The collaboration includes two seven-week workshops for formerly homeless women living in shelters and working with Chrysalis to find jobs and housing.

Chrysalis is a non-profit organization in Santa Monica dedicated to helping economically disadvantaged and homeless individuals become self-sufficient through employment opportunities. For more information, call Chrysalis at (310) 392-4117.

YWCA to host proposition party

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica voters can do their civic duty and party at the same time.

The YWCA of Santa Monica/Westside will host the first-ever "Proposition Party" to provide the public with information regarding state propositions. The party will provide a nonpartisan venue for voters seeking information about the current propositions and how they will affect individuals, families, and the community. YMCA's goal is to empower individuals to become pro-active voters. All community members are invited to attend the party.

The party will take place on Wednesday, Oct. 27, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the YWCA gymnasium at 2019 14 St. People interested in speaking about the pros or cons of a particular proposition should contact Robbin Turner at (310) 452-3881.



SURF REPORT

Today look for NW swell (290-300) to sharply drop off, especially through the afternoon. Most spots drop into the waist high and below range (and mainly below, especially for Northern LA). Standout NW breaks through the South Bay see some leftover sets to chest high in the morning. Light wind expected in the morning, builds WNW 8-12 knots for the afternoon.

Today the water is:

65°

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



LOW TIDES

HIGH TIDES

	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	4:25	1.8	5:50	-0.3	10:42	6.3	N/A	N/A
SUNDAY	4:55	2.2	6:51	-0.2	12:14	3.9	11:21	6.2
MONDAY	5:28	2.7	8:06	0.0	1:35	3.4	12:08	5.9
TUESDAY	6:14	3.2	9:35	0.1	3:42	3.3	1:13	5.5
WEDNESDAY	8:28	3.5	10:56	0.0	5:41	3.7	2:47	5.2
THURSDAY	10:51	3.2	11:58	-0.1	6:26	4.1	4:29	5.1
FRIDAY	N/A	N/A	12:11	2.6	6:58	4.6	5:49	5.2

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The Q Line

As election day draws near, voters are increasingly being inundated with political scare tactics, confusing campaign literature and promises from candidates — on the local, state and national levels.

Although many people might have made up their minds long ago on the presidential race, it is often much harder to make meaningful distinctions among local and state candidates and issues.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know,

"How comfortable would you feel stepping into the voting booth right now? Have you been sufficiently informed about candidates, or have the political tactics employed this year left you dazed and confused?"

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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SMRR agenda a failed one

Editor:

Ms. Fresco, how heartwarming it is to hear from you that the incumbent Santa Monicans For Renters’ Rights candidates (Bloom, Genser and Feinstein) had the “courage to take a stand in the face of controversy” in regards to the “historic preservation” proposition in 2002 (SMDP, Oct. 20, page 4). It’s too bad they can’t take a stand on ridding our streets and parks of the criminal vagrants that plague our city. It’s too bad that SMRR’s rhetoric of fear has kept them in power here for the last 25 years. It’s too bad that this trio couldn’t give two rabid squirrel turds about the people who pay the bills in this city. Ms. Fresco, be careful what you ask for because the only heritage that these three will ensure is the heritage of their failed social agendas, the heritage that Santa Monica is known as the bum capitol of the U.S.

Jeff Bender
Santa Monica

And the rest of SMC story

Editor:

By failing to perform even the most basic research, the Daily Press’ piece of Oct. 21 on Santa Monica College’s student transfer numbers to the UC system has done a disservice, not just to the residents of Santa Monica, but to prospective students of the college.

Making the statement that “how the transfer numbers factor into percentages” of the overall student body “isn’t clear” and relying on college officials that they “don’t calculate percentages because there are too many other factors to consider” ignores both existing federal mandates and dedicated efforts by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office to give prospective students, and those concerned with improving our community colleges, a real means to gauge transfer achievement.

The reason the “Student-Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990” (Public Law 101-542) was passed, and the CCCCO’s program of actual “cohort” measurements in both academic and vocational programs was developed, is to avoid just such misleading boosterism as SMC — and, by extension, the Daily Press — so enthusiastically engage in reporter John Wood’s account.

The SRTK rates measure both completion (the total number of students in the cohort who earn either a degree, a certificate, or who successfully completed a two-year-equivalent transfer-preparatory program) and transfer (the total number of cohort non-completers who were identified as having enrolled in another institution). The tracking period of the cohorts is three years, at which time the SRTK rates are calculated into a percentage, and made public via a comparison table that includes all the California community colleges.

Unfortunately, this “apples-to-apples” basis for transfers to the UC and CSU system paints an altogether different picture than that of SMC President Robertson and her spokespeople: SMC’s completion rate is mediocre, just eight tenths of a percentage point above the statewide average of 33.7 percent.

Shockingly, SMC’s transfer rate is even worse — at only 18.2 percent. SMC trails the statewide transfer average by almost 4 full percentage points. And this, from a community college that represents itself as a “transfer school,” as opposed to the more vocationally oriented institutions.

For those interested, vocational programs are also measured by the CCCCO, through the “VTEA Core Indicators of Performance” and here SMC is well below average again, lagging far behind the statewide averages in skill attainment, completions, job placement and job retention for the traditional employment sectors.

Students both require and expect valid and useful information when making their decisions about college — the reasoning behind the “Student-Right-To-Know” law. For SMC leadership to promote their “transfer fair” through such questionable, even misleading, statistics harkens to another big-top promoter, P.T. Barnum, and that “sucker born every minute” mentality.

But in this election time, the residents of Santa Monica, those who ultimately are responsible for the

direction the college is going, are also victimized by such misleading salesmanship. We too have a “right to know” about how our local institution measures up to others in the state, and a right to expect our local press to be more than just a superficial, promotional mouthpiece.

There may be those that feel that making such information public smacks of “SMC bashing,” but while blind support of the home team may be beneficial for the football team, it has the opposite effect when academic achievement is the goal. One thing that education reaffirms almost continuously is that problems must be dealt with, and the sooner the better;. Pretending that a deficiency doesn’t exist, whether it’s on the individual student level or the institutional level, ultimately leads only to failure.

Don Gray
Santa Monica

SMC spending out of control

Editor:

The Daily Press puff piece on Santa Monica College (SMDP, Oct. 20, page 1) is lacking in objectivity. Don Girard’s comment concerning the college raising \$160 million for the bond campaign is just one example. The college did not “raise” the money, they “raided” the Santa Monica College Foundation, Inc. for over \$100 million. By “laundering” campaign contributions through a charitable organization, the citizens of Santa Monica cannot find out who is backing this massive development proposal. The campaign also “raided” the Associated Student Body Association funds of \$60 million. The use of ASB funds may be illegal pursuant to Education Code Education Code 76060 et seq Education Code 7054, Stanson v. Mott, 17 Cal.3d 206 (1976), and Smith V. Regents of California, 4 Cal 4th 843;. The use of charitable funds for political campaigns may also violate the Internal Revenue Service rules and regulations. Haswell v. U.S. 500 F2d 11333(1974)(16 percent of budget violates IRS rules).

It is shocking your paper totally ignored how SMC is financing their campaign. Your paper is also ignoring how more than \$235 million spent for development will impact traffic and congestion, but I’ll leave that issue to another letter.

Mat Millen
Santa Monica

Democracy alive and well

Editor:

As one of the original backers of Prop. A, I am amazed and, I must say, grateful for the softball that Nina Fresco lobbied to us in her letter to the editor (SMDP, Oct. 20, page 4) objecting to homeowners exercising their constitutional rights by urging the ouster of Councilmembers Feinstein, Genser and Bloom. She gives us a chance to clear up some misconceptions.

First of all, she continues to repeat the outright lie that Prop. A was not a homeowner initiative, but instead was backed by some mysterious, nefarious developers which she cannot name. This is patently false, and no matter how many times she repeats it, it will still be false. Prop. A came about because literally hundreds of citizens attended Landmark Commission meetings every month for over a year and saw for themselves how the commission operates. It came about because citizens angered by their actions were summarily ignored, and we were frustrated. It was a citizen backed initiative, period, and it received 80 percent of the vote in the neighborhoods that would have been effected by their actions. The continued dismissal of the very existence of these homeowners by Ms. Fresco and the councilmembers in question is exactly the reason Prop. A happened.

By the way, Ms. Fresco met me and another backer of Prop. A at Peete’s Coffee shortly after the election and asked us if the homeowners had any suggestions of how to make the system work better for us (we gave her several ideas, but ... surprise ... none of them have been implemented). I don’t think she would have had that cup of coffee with us if she really thought we were developers.

She also says that Bloom, Feinstein and Genser “called the election.” This is completely insane. Prop. A

got on the ballot because we forced them to put it there, by gathering signatures. They did everything they could think of to keep it from a vote. “Called the election?” What color is the sky in her world?

She goes on to say that a “show of hands” would have closed the issue of an historic district on 18th Street. Well, 74 of the 118 homeowners on 18th Street came to their meetings month after month and said very clearly that we didn’t want it, but they plowed forward in spite of this. We were in that room speaking against it for so long that we saw Ms. Fresco go from not being pregnant to having a newborn. I guess our mistake was that we didn’t raise our hands.

Finally, the part of her letter that simply boggles the mind is when she accuses us of politicizing the preservation issue. It was her commission, along with Councilmembers Feinstein, Genser, Bloom and McKeown who did that when they sent out mailer after mailer to renters falsely claiming that Prop. A was a covert attack on rent control (be careful, they’ll be coming for you next). It was the sleaziest kind of politics, the politics of fear, and she and her council cohorts wallowed in it during the campaign. They also manipulated the process, changing the voting method to a mail in system, the one and only time that system has ever been used in the city (notice they aren’t using it for this election. I guess the fewer voters the better when their jobs are on the line).

I am not opposed to these candidates because they are backed by Santa Monicans For Renters’ Rights. I don’t care about SMRR one way or the other, I’m not a renter or a landlord. I am opposed to these three candidates because they screwed the city’s homeowners and continue to do so. Homeowners have not only a right, but an obligation to remember who stood with them and who stood against them when they go to the polls. Genser, Feinstein and Bloom (and McKeown) made it very clear that they intend to take an aggressively adversarial approach to Santa Monica’s homeowners. If we didn’t send a letter out and publish an ad urging voters to remember these councilmembers for their actions, not their words, we would be remiss in our duty to our neighbors. Ms. Fresco, it’s called democracy.

Greg Poirier
Santa Monica

There is a problem at City Hall

Editor:

Like Judy Avery (SMDP, Oct. 20) I don’t know who is behind “Santa Monica Citizens for Sensible Priorities,” but that is the extent of our common ground. Perhaps Ms. Avery should spend a little more time talking to those of us that own property or run businesses in Santa Monica, to learn about what drives the need for this new organization, and hopefully more like it.

Ms. Avery is irresponsible to assume that the cookie store example is an isolated instance of City Hall’s inefficiency and misplaced priorities. Ms. Avery draws an erroneous and dangerous conclusion that there’s no problem because building permits and business licenses are being issued. Following her logic it would be consistent to conclude that there’s plenty of affordable housing here because people live in Santa Monica. Or that wages are sufficient here because people work in Santa Monica. While she says the money spent on this ad campaign could feed the hungry and homeless, her logic, again, suggests there is no hunger because people eat in Santa Monica.

Frankly, it’s time to change the attitude and priorities of the Santa Monica City Council. It’s time to stop treating property owners and business owners as second-class citizens. And business-as-usual at City Hall needs a major adjustment.

I suppose, like Ms. Avery, I’m also allowed to make some assumptions. I’ll limit mine to the one — she must be a card-carrying member of Santa Monicans For Renters Rights. And, like Ms. Avery, I have an idea too. She might want to talk to a few people who have had encounters with the city administration.

Kevin Schoeler
Santa Monica

OPINION



Giving to down and out comes with no guarantees



**GUEST
COMMENTARY**
BY KELLY HAYES-RAITT

"I think people deserve to have a good meal once before they die," said Robert Ruelas, defending his unorthodox decision to invite a "pretty torn up" homeless man into the upscale Broadway Deli for lunch.

Ruelas knows. He's been pretty torn up himself. While homeless, he used to pass the tony restaurant, eyeing the outdoor diners' meals.

Ruelas is not a sympathetic character and he admits he had no sympathy for others for most of his life. The 65-year-old has been in jail more than out since he was 9.

"It was never my nature to help someone," he said. "Where I grew up, it's all shooting, and you live by an oath that you only look out for the homies ... Everybody else doesn't count. I started getting into organized crime, hijacking trucks, doing robberies, then bank robberies. I went to the federal joint. That's what I've been doing all my life."

"I got out (of jail) and I didn't have nothing, I was homeless. They give you money at the gate, then you run out. I was living in a hotel. My parole officer thought I'd end up back in the penitentiary. He thought I would never change my life."

As I sit listening to this hardened man, I wonder why I am not afraid. Looking straight at me, he said that not too long ago, he would have stolen my computer from under me. I wonder which of us is marveling more at how much he's changed — and at what finally prompted it after the thousands of tax dollars spent on him.

"My friend told me to go to St. Joseph's Center," Ruelas said. "They showed me how to do things the right way. I was messing up, I was going back to South Central and seeing my homeboys. (My St. Joseph's caseworker) kept telling me to cut LA loose, get a job, keep busy. She put me in a shelter, and was always there for me."

"I started changing when she was talking to me. I had problems, (but) St. Joseph's kept giving me courage. I started volunteering at PATH (People Assisting the Homeless), cleaning the kitchen, running errands, like a handy-person. I graduated from Turning Point, and St. Joseph Center got me (into) a place in Redondo, where I pay my own rent."

St. Joseph's Center has 11 programs to help homeless and low-income families, providing a continuum of care for people who are at risk of becoming homeless and for those climbing their way out. St. Joseph's participates in the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition, which net-

works several social service agencies to provide a wider variety of programs with less duplication.

"After the first year, I can see a change in me that I never thought I'd see," Ruelas said, shaking his head. "I never thought it would happen in a thousand years that I would feel sorry for anybody, especially a homeless person, that's why I know I'm changing. I started getting that little feeling in my body that I never had."

I trace the heavy blue tattoos on Ruelas' forearms.

"That one's Broadway — my gang nickname," he said.

"I eat at the Broadway Deli, I know mostly everybody there," he added, recalling the day of his impulsive invitation. "I went outside to smoke a cigarette, and this old dude comes walking up and is looking in. He tells me they won't let (him) in to buy a sandwich, he says, 'Cause the way I am, they don't want me in there, I'm homeless...'"

"I don't know (how), it just came out of my mouth. I told the guy, 'Come on in and I'll get you something to eat.' When we went in a lot of people were looking at us."

"The lady that works the (counter) says 'What are you doing?' I told them to give him anything he wants and I'll pay for it."

"There was a lady (sitting) next to me. She tells me, 'I've never seen anybody do what you did. Most people give money, but you brought him into this place.' I said it just came up that way, I didn't want nothing out of it."

"Turns out, the lady owns her own restaurant, and invites me to lunch."

Ruelas asks me if I'd ever done anything like that, and I recount an almost forgotten memory when I was 18 and newly living alone. My boss asked me to put up a new employee with nowhere to sleep.

"She just has nowhere to go, Kelly," he said. The woman disappeared from my couch early the next morning, stealing a loaf of homemade bread.

I'd felt ripped off, taken advantage of. It forced me to contemplate the complicated difference between giving with expectations and without, about how challenging it is to give when we have no control over the outcome, about how much faith and courage it takes to give with no guarantee.

"I feel real good," Ruelas said of his gesture. "The first thing that came into my mind after I talked with (the restaurant owner) was St. Joseph's. My caseworker guaranteed I would change, and I did. At that moment, I was changing."

(Kelly Hayes-Raitt is a political consultant specializing in public relations and community organizing campaigns. She consults with the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition. She can be reached at (310) 474-5545 or www.CommunityCampaigns.com).

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LOCAL

More financial reports to be filed at City Hall

STAYING POWER, from page 1

local preservationist Nina Fresco; and Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., a restaurant slated to open on the Santa Monica Pier, according to the reports at City Hall.

Of the money he's raised, Genser reported spending about \$10,000 so far, the vast majority on 17 pieces of campaign literature, including election mailers.

Bloom, who only had \$1,100 before this month, raised nearly \$21,000 in the first half of October, attracting campaign donations from, among others, John Maceri, the head of Santa Monica's largest social services provider, and Assemblyman Koretz's re-election campaign. Bloom reported spending \$9,000, mostly on 12 election mailers, a political

consultant and campaign office expenses.

Following Bloom was Katz, who raised \$16,400 in the first two weeks of October, adding to the \$58,900 he had already raised. Katz's recent donations came from the Action Issues political action committee; local business interests like the owners of Ye Olde King's Head and Shutters on the Beach; the Hilton Hotels Corp.; and attorneys Robert Bisno and Ken Kutcher, among others.

Feinstein raised \$2,700 in the first half of October, adding onto \$22,300 he already had raised and another \$44,800 he has lent his own campaign. Recent donations to Feinstein's campaign came from Rent Control Board spokeswoman Tracy Condon; Claire Ragge, owner of the Gaslite; and the Santa Monica Pier

Lessees' Association, among others, according to the reports. As to expenditures, Feinstein reported sending \$25,000 to the Gilpin Group, the consulting firm handling his campaign.

Candidates are limited by local law to accepting individual donations of no more than \$250. They also must regularly disclose their fundraising activities. Thursday was the last of the regular pre-election reporting deadlines, and officials expect more forms to arrive in the mail today. Election expenses made in the days leading up to Nov. 2 must be reported within 24 hours.

The money raised by individual candidates is just part of what will be spent prior to the Nov. 2 election. Local political groups like the powerful tenants'

group Santa Monicans for Renters Rights also have raised tens of thousands of dollars to support their chosen candidates. SMRR reported more than \$124,569 in cash contributions so far this year, forms filed Thursday show.

Also, several independent expenditure committees, which don't have to abide by the \$250 limit, but also are forbidden from communicating with candidates, recently have been established. Among the new independent committees are a group calling itself Santa Monicans for Change, which is backed by local businesses and has already sent out three election mailers, and two new groups formed this week — Santa Monicans for Responsible Government and Homeowners for Change.

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Crill Hansen/Special to the Daily Press
SinkHer co-founder Marni Kinrys (right) and employee Jory Steinberg (holding dog "Kramer") tend to business — making guys popular, and piquing girls' interest.

'Pickup' sticks: SinkHer has eight girls to impress

SINKHER, from page 1

said Kinrys. "We were dressed up. We looked nice. We were talking about how sociable we are and why can't we make money being sociable. We thought, 'We can be escorts, but we don't want to have sex.'"

So the pair of self-proclaimed "wing girls" concocted the idea for their company, SinkHer. They charge \$100 an hour to take guys to bars, clubs, farmers' markets — anywhere they might meet a mate — and introduce him to prospective dates. After 25 "dates," the founders now employ eight more girls and place their success rate at 75 percent.

"We're the only female pickup artists, if you want to call it that, in Los Angeles," boasts Kinrys. "We actually call it 'The ice breaker' because we take away that awkwardness of the first line."

Kinrys said the dates often turn into "live therapy sessions" when the guys explain what they're looking for and the girls give them pointers and reality checks.

Josh "Frederick," a 26-year-old UCLA graduate student too embarrassed to give his real last name, said he decided to try the girls after a friend spotted their ad online.

"You know, I go to a lot of bars, and I talk to girls a lot, but they're not really girls I wanted anything to do with," said Josh, who spent two hours with two of SinkHer's girls. "I figured I'd meet, maybe, higher quality girls" through SinkHer.

Josh got lucky. The SinkHer girls spent about half an hour talking to him about what

he wanted in a date, made him feel comfortable and then fanned out around the bar for him. They brought back a few women for him to talk to, and Josh ended up with several phone numbers. He even took one of the girls he met out for a date afterwards.

"We're going out again this week," Josh said.

The 25 clients who have used SinkHer's services since the company was formed last month have come from all sorts of social and economic backgrounds, according to Kinrys, ranging in years from 22 to 54. No "sleazeballs" are allowed, she added, saying the group carefully screens out potential clients who are just on the prowl for sex.

Rubin and Kinrys met each other in January on a trip to Israel. Rubin is a promotional marketer with a history in PR. Kinrys, who lives in an apartment near 19th Street and Wilshire Boulevard, moved to Santa Monica earlier this year to work for a PR firm that handles clients like Kettle One Vodka and Quicksilver clothing.

Now, Kinrys is doing PR for SinkHer, and going out with clients. Sometimes the company's work can pay off in unexpected ways, she remarked.

"We're having a blast every time we go out, because we can't believe we're doing this," she said. "The funny thing is we get a lot of dates when we're on a date with the guys, because we're not focusing on ourselves."

"We're just having a good time."

STATE



The role not taken: CA voters stuck on outside

BY TOM CHORNEAU
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Perhaps because California voters' strong support of Democratic Sen. John Kerry has taken the state off the list of presidential battlegrounds, a large majority of voters are unhappy the nation's most populous state has virtually no role in the campaign, according to a new poll from the Public Policy Institute of California.

Sixty-four percent of likely voters said they would back dumping the Electoral College, considered by many a political anachronism, in favor of a pure popular vote to determine the president.

In addition, the poll from the San Francisco-based, nonpartisan think tank found voters continue to give high marks to how Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is doing his job.

A year after the historic recall election that ousted Gov. Gray Davis and replaced him with Schwarzenegger, most voters also said they like the ability to have recall elections and would likely support one in the future.

According to the poll, Kerry and his running mate, Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina, continue to hold a substantial lead among California voters over President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney. Kerry-Edwards have the support of 51 percent of likely voters, while Bush-Cheney have 39 percent — the same as one month ago.

Despite the lack of drama in California, 61 percent of voters here said they were intensely interested in the presidential campaign and developments elsewhere in the country, a sharp increase from the 50 percent who said so last month.

Pollster Mark Baldassare said voters in California are unified on the desire to change the current presidential electoral system so that votes to the Electoral College are awarded based on the popular vote — instead of winner take all.

"Members of both parties support the idea," he said, noting the survey finding that 76 percent of Democrats and 52 percent of Republicans said they favor the proposal.

Baldassare also noted that California

voters are growing concerned over the whole question of how votes will be taken and counted in other places.

As he has in other recent polls, Schwarzenegger received strong approval ratings from likely voters, as 69 percent said they liked his performance. That includes 51 percent of Democrats.

Eighty-nine percent of likely voters said the former bodybuilder and actor had met or exceeded their expectations during his first year in office.

On the eve of the recall last year, Baldassare said, most voters were worried about the consequences of recalling a governor, which had only happened once before — in 1921 in North Dakota. Now, however, 74 percent of likely voters said a recall option is a good component of the state constitution.

"Our polling right before the recall found a lot of uncertainty and anxiety about the process of recalling a governor," Baldassare said. "Having a special election, with 135 names on the ballot and, in the end, the leading candidate was a movie star who had not spent a day in elected office. Now, looking back, people believe the recall process worked, it didn't have as many glitches as they thought it might and say it is a valuable process."

The survey found that Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer is holding a 53 percent to 35 percent edge over Republican Bill Jones among likely voters, with 10 percent undecided — results that have changed little in the past three months.

Likely voters gave strong support to Proposition 63, that would increase the personal income tax on wealthy residents to fund mental health services with 62 percent favoring and 24 percent opposed and 14 percent undecided. Proposition 71, which would sell \$3 billion in state bonds to pay for human embryonic stem cell research, is also favored by 50 percent of likely voters, with 39 percent opposed and 11 percent undecided.

The overall poll, conducted during the eight-day period ending Oct. 17, is based on interviews with 1,170 likely voters and has a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Landlords getting the upper hand

ON THE RISE, from page 1

\$12 higher than in June, marking the region's first quarter-to-quarter increase since its apartment rents peaked at \$1,955 in March 2001, according to RealFacts.

The only other major Western markets where rents declined were: San Francisco/Oakland at \$1,310, down 0.8 percent; Boise, Idaho at \$695, down 1 percent; and Salt Lake City at \$668, down 0.1 percent.

No market outside California had average rents above \$1,000. The Seattle metro market — another high-tech haven — was the most expensive non-California market with an average September rent of \$874, a 0.6 percent annual increase.

Although modest in most markets, the rental upturn may herald a tipping point for landlords, said RealFacts spokesman

Gerald Cox. "Compared to the way things have been going the last few years, this really is quite cheering," he said.

The tepid economic recovery since the last recession has forced landlords in many markets either to reduce rents or keep rent increases below the inflation rate. People unable to find decent-paying jobs often move in with family or friends to save money — a phenomenon that reduces the pool of potential renters.

The lowest mortgage rates in more than 40 years also have enabled many longtime renters to buy their own homes, another factor that has pressured apartment rents downward, Cox said.

Now that interest rates are slowly beginning to rise, Cox said, more people are likely to remain in their apartments, giving landlords more pricing power.



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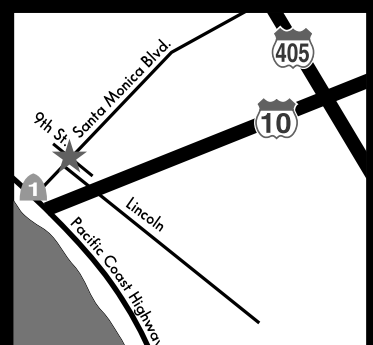
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Wednesday, October 27

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- UCLA, Kerckhoff Hall,
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(use Lines 1, 2, 3, 6, 12,
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Thursday, October 28

- 6:00 – 8:00 pm
- Vera Davis McClendon
Youth & Family Center
610 California Avenue,
Venice (use Line 2)

Saturday, October 30

- 10:30 am – 12:00 noon
- Ken Edwards Center,
1527 4th Street,
Santa Monica
(use Lines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7,
Super 7, 8, 9, 10)



STATE

Searchers find 16 hikers stranded by fatal storm

BY TOM VERDIN

Associated Press Writer

SHAVER LAKE — Seizing on a break in the weather Thursday, rescuers managed to locate all 16 hikers reported missing in a blizzard that also killed two climbers stranded on the face of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park.

“Oh thank God, thank God, this is the greatest day of my life,” rejoiced Rita Bargetto-Snider, who was at the command post where the rescue was being coordinated when she received word that her brother, Paul, was apparently safe.

The final 14 were located Thursday, including a group of four San Francisco Bay area residents who left last Wednesday on a four-day hike on Mount Whitney in Sequoia National Park.

Tony Smith, 42, of Scotts Valley, Amy Childers, 40, of Daly City, and Paul and Lula Shank of Redwood City were found about 9:30 a.m. near Mirror Lake, three miles short of the trailhead at Whitney Portal, said spokeswoman Alexandra Picavet.

They were airlifted out of the park and taken to Lone Pine where they were reunited with their families, Picavet said.

“It’s all due to their smart way of handling the situation,” Picavet said. “They had an itinerary they’d given to family at home, so when Tony’s wife did not get a call Sunday night, she initiated the search and rescue effort. Because she knew exactly where they were going, we knew exactly where to search.”

The hikers heard the helicopter this morning and starting jumping up and down and waving to signal the rescuers.

About the same time, a man who went hiking alone in King’s Canyon National Park also was rescued, Picavet said. Gabriel Janssen, 34, of Bishop initially tried waiting out the storm in a cave.

“While he was sitting there, another guy walked by and was kind of stuck in the same situation,” Picavet said. “He came into the cave and they decided to wait out the snow together.”

Rangers had been unaware of the second man, Mark Pollock, until they rescued him.

Earlier Thursday, four other missing hikers were rescued from Yosemite’s Ansel Adams Wilderness — Jeff Peacock, 45, his father, 75-year-old Tom Peacock, Douglas W. Schneider, 47, and Britt Jefferson, 57 — from the Bay Area city of Lafayette. All are experienced backpackers who had camped in snow previously and were prepared for bad weather.

“It was boring most of all,” Jeff Peacock said. “We were just sitting in the tents staying warm. We knew we’d be found eventually.”

Peacock said the conditions Tuesday were “pretty miserable” and the group used an insulated red pad and handkerchiefs to try to get the attention of rescuers in a helicopter.

“We had food and we were starting to conserve,” Peacock said. “We probably could have lasted another three days.”

Peacock said he wanted to take a hot bath as soon as he got home and didn’t plan to take another wilderness hike this winter.

Also rescued were four members of a Santa Cruz County winemaking family — two father-and-son pairs — who had been missing since Sunday from a 9,400-foot-

elevation lake east of Fresno in the Sierra National Forest.

Those four — Paul Bargetto, 47, his brother-in-law Frank Horath, 45, and their sons, Michael Bargetto, 20, and Dominic Horath, 16, began their hike Friday at Courtright Reservoir, in a remote area northeast of Fresno.

They were spotted from the air at about 11 a.m. walking around, and all appeared to be in good shape, authorities said. They were airlifted to Shaver Lake about 1 p.m. where about a dozen friends and family members were waiting to greet the hikers, none of whom needed hospitalization. Dominic Horath’s only complaint was he was tired.

“Once the conditions got overwhelming they stayed put and rationed their food and kept warm. They saved themselves,” said Jenna Endres, one of the rescuers.

Frank Horath said no one in the group packed gloves, so they shared wool socks and used them as hand-warmers. He said the group shared one tent because their second one leaked and because they only brought food for three people for one day, they ate five peanuts for breakfast and a scoop of peanut butter for dinner.

“After five or six days, we didn’t think anyone was coming for us,” he said, adding that when the weather began clearing, they would signal at airplanes with a mirror and lay out an orange tarp.

“I’ve never been that cold in my life,” Michael Bargetto said.

Another two hikers — John Bumgarner, 28, and Shana McCarthy, 24, of San Luis Obispo — were spotted by a helicopter crew Wednesday night and told to stay in place until rescuers could reach them. That couple — and their dog — appeared safe, Fresno County Sheriff’s Lt. Roby Rien said. They were airlifted out Thursday about 10:30 a.m., a spokesman said.

Rescuers also were hard at work on El Capitan, the forbidding monolith that rises up from the Yosemite Valley. Seven people were caught on the face of the mountain by the blizzard, and two died before rescuers could reach them. The others were all located and were either safe or being rescued on Thursday.

The two dead climbers — a man and a woman from Japan — were spotted Wednesday by a helicopter crew, dangling lifeless about two-thirds of the way up the 3,200-foot face. The copter was able to hover within a few feet of the bodies, close enough to see that they were blue and had icicles on them, said ranger David Horne.

Their bodies were carried up to the summit late Thursday and were expected to be sent by helicopter to the coroner’s office, a park spokeswoman said.

Rangers also rescued a solo climber from the mountain on Wednesday. Two others remained huddled on a portable ledge overnight on the sheer face of the monolith after rescuers were unable to help them off in the darkness.

Rescuers transported the two men to the summit late Thursday and were waiting for a helicopter to take them to safety. Their names and conditions were unknown, according to a park spokeswoman.

Still one more pair of climbers simply asked for some supplies but didn’t need other help.

STATE STATE BRIEFS



Bartender shaken after fatal crash

By The Associated Press

VENTURA — A young bartender pleaded no contest to manslaughter in a drunk-driving crash last Thanksgiving that killed three of his friends.

Tomas Mercer, 23, was charged in May with alcohol-involved vehicular manslaughter and the special allegation that the crash involved multiple victims. He changed his not guilty plea to no contest on Wednesday, the scheduled start of his preliminary hearing.

Mercer, who left the courtroom without comment, faces up to four years in prison when he's sentenced Jan. 5. Defense attorney Chuck Samonsky said outside court that his client feels "terrible remorse" about the crash.

"I think Tomas just doesn't have the wherewithal to contest a case like this," Samonsky said. "He couldn't be feeling any worse. I think he's wondering why he's living and they (his friends) aren't."

On Nov. 27, Mercer was behind the wheel of a pickup truck carrying six people en route to a Santa Paula home from a Ventura bar. He lost control of the pickup and it flipped, killing Rebecca Singer-Beilin, 22, Mike Frick, 23, and Tim Coultas, 23.

Two others had minor scratches.

Day trippers: Cops round up laborers

By The Associated Press

REDONDO BEACH — Responding to business owner nuisance complaints, police arrested 22 day laborers during undercover sweeps this week at two well-known gathering spots.

Officers working this week at two intersections — Manhattan Beach Boulevard and Inglewood Avenue, and Artesia Boulevard and Felton Lane — arrested 21 men on solicitation charges and another for a probation violation, city prosecutor Mike Webb said.

Two of the 22 had outstanding arrests for burglary and public drunkenness.

For years the strip mall at the corner of Manhattan Beach Boulevard and Inglewood Avenue has been a well-known loitering place, with groups of laborers lining up from 6 to 11 a.m.

Business owners said the crowds litter, urinate in public and get drunk, driving customers away.

"This has been a situation where the complaints have been building," Sgt. Phil Keenan said. "They know if we tell them to leave they don't have to leave. They're job-hungry."

Riverside cedes control of courts

By The Associated Press

INDIO — The state has taken over control of the Larson Justice Center from Riverside County.

The county ceded ownership as part of a California effort to streamline maintenance of state court facilities. The Larson Justice Center is the first Superior Court facility in California to transfer ownership from the county to the state.

The transfer is part of an effort to streamline the state's Superior Court system under the Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002, which shifts ownership and maintenance of court facilities to state control.

The county will no longer be responsible for maintenance and facilities costs, said Supervisor Roy Wilson, who moved his office out of the Larson Justice Center last month. More than 450 California courthouses are expected to complete the transfer over the next three years.

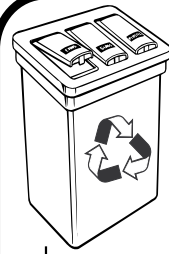
Cat-scratch furor: Council puts foot down

By The Associated Press

TEMPLE CITY — A cat-lover whose home was declared a public nuisance because dozens of felines turned the house into a urine-soaked, feces-strewn mess called City Council members names like dictatorial terrorists, Nazis, communists and al-Qaida members.

William Oliver Cain, said he tried to get rid of the cats but the animals are hard to catch. The property was cited for having cat feces and urine inside the house, along with piles of debris, excessive feces in the back yard and a deteriorating roof.

Former mayor and community activist Cathe Wilson helped remove 30 cats from the property and said several remain. Most of the animals were so sick they had to be destroyed, she said. Code enforcement and public safety officials said it was a health and safety hazard. Debris was so extensive in the home that Cain couldn't escape if a fire started, they said.



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It’s pure pabulum, set to Rodgers and Hammerstein numbers. Better to sit this one out.
Starring: Richard Gere, Susan Sarandon

TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE
Isn’t as consistently smart or amusing as the irreverent creators’ TV series, “South Park,” or their previous forays into feature filmdom.
Starring: Trey Parker, Matt Stone

P.S.
Credulity is stretched to the limits, and despite the solid work from an excellent cast the film fails to fully engage.
Starring: Laura Linney, Topher Grace

TAXI
Unless your destination is Dudsville, this is one “Taxi” you should certainly avoid hailing.
Starring: Queen Latifah, Jimmy Fallon

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS
One of the most entertaining sports films ever made.
Starring: Billy Bob Thornton, Derek Luke

RAISE YOUR VOICE
Pop princess’s latest offering is another bowl of sugar-coated pap that will have little girls everywhere asking for bigger spoons.
Starring: Hilary Duff, Rita Wilson

I HEART HUCKABEES
Inspired casting, a retro-European production design and the director’s smart incorporation/exploration of several conflicting existential philosophies combine to make this one of the most interesting comedies in recent memory.
Starring: Jude Law, Naomi Watts, Dustin Hoffman, Lily Tomlin

LADDER 49
A well-intentioned but somewhat overly indulgent encomium to the brave firemen who run into burning buildings for a living.
Starring: John Travolta, Joaquin Phoenix

SHARK TALE
In sending up classic mob films such as “The Godfather” and “Scarface,” the filmmakers seem to have lost sight of an important detail: Little kids don’t know those movies. As movies about marauding deep-sea predators go, this bites.
Starring: Will Smith, Jack Black, Renee Zellweger, Robert DeNiro

THE FORGOTTEN
The truth is out there: This movie is a dud. Has the tenor of a long-lost episode of “The X-Files” that should have remained missing.
Starring: Julianne Moore, Dominic West

FIRST DAUGHTER
A lackluster but harmless tween flick about the famous daughter of a President, whose greatest desire is to be normal.
Starring: Katie Holmes, Marc Blucas

THE LAST SHOT
A very clever comedy about dreams, and the extraordinary lengths to which people will sometimes go to realize them. Baldwin and Broderick make for a great team.
Starring: Alec Baldwin, Matthew Broderick

SHAUN OF THE DEAD
The cast is spot-on, and the film boasts several riotously funny set-pieces.
Starring: Simon Pegg, Nick Frost

A DIRTY SHAME
It’s pretty boring, which is something that isn’t often said about John Waters’ work.
Starring: Tracey Ullman, Johnny Knoxville

Gellar happy to just chill

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Seems like only yesterday Sarah Michelle Gellar was a bright-eyed bobby-soxer battling bloodsuckers on TV’s “Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” Though the 27-year-old actress is no longer wielding wooden stakes on the small screen, she’s still intrepidly battling monsters. In Takashi Shimizu’s paranormal thriller “The Grudge,” Gellar stars as an exchange student in Japan who stumbles upon a spook-infested house and must confront a terrifying evil. In an effort to get us to get you to go see the film, the urbane urbanite (she hails from New York City) recently chatted up a roomful of reporters.

QUESTION: “The Grudge” is a remake of the Japanese film “Ju-on.” Have you seen the original?

SARAH MICHELLE GELLAR: I have. I just thought it was so chilling, and I haven’t seen anything that stayed with me for so long afterwards. I made the mistake of watching it at night by myself, and I just couldn’t get it out of my head.

Q: What scares you, Sarah?
SMG: Long lines for restrooms and very crowded airports scare me. Those are the biggies.

Q: Do you believe in ghosts?
SMG: I believe in the idea of ghostly experiences. One of the things I love is this Japanese belief — which is almost a religious belief for them — that when someone dies with so much emotion, so much pain, anger and frustration, that the emotion envelops a place. I do believe emotions can transcend life and death.

Q: When buying a house, do you think it’s a good idea to check first to be sure nothing terrible has happened there?
SMG: (Laughs) In California, those types of houses go so quickly. I have a girlfriend who owns a house in which there was a murder — that’s not for me. No way. I think the only house that didn’t sell quickly was Nicole Brown Simpson’s place. Usually, though, it’s prime real estate, which is the strangest and most oddly sick thing I’ve ever seen.

Q: Do you miss doing “Buffy?”
SMG: I miss the character. I miss my family — the crew — but I don’t miss the hours. God, I so don’t miss the hours!

Q: You and your husband, Freddie Prinze Jr., worked together in two “Scooby Doo” films. Do you plan to make other movies together?
SMG: As an audience member, I don’t like watching real-life couples onscreen together. I think Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones had the right idea with “Traffic.” They got to be in the same city at the same time. They were both passionate about the project, and could share that passion. But at the same time, they were never in a scene together. That’s the only way we’ll do it again.

Q: You spent a great deal of time in Japan making “The Grudge.” What do you see as being the biggest differences between their culture and ours?
SMG: America is a youth-oriented society. Everything is about what’s new, what’s hot, and we throw away the old. In Japan, they revere the elderly; as well they should, because wisdom comes from experience.

Q: You achieved success in Hollywood at a very young age. Looking back, how has your career impacted your life off camera?
SMG: Working in this business has afforded me opportunities I don’t think I ever would have had otherwise. (My family) couldn’t afford to travel, but now I’ve gone all over the world. I found something that I not only love, but that I’ve been successful at. To have that sort of direction from a young age is really amazing.



Hold ‘Grudge’ against makers of silly scarefest

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

“The Grudge” is the latest Americanized version of a commercially successful, albeit humdrum Japanese horror flick (with many more to come over the next two years), but unlike “The Ring,” this remake is silly rather than chilling. Takashi Shimuzi, who wrote and directed the original “Ju-on: The Grudge,” also helms this one (with Sam Raimi of the “Spider-man” and “Evil Dead” franchises producing), but the translation is rough. Though set in Japan, the principal characters are American, a bit of cultural displacement that quickly becomes a distraction. As one dumb Anglo after another marches into a poltergeist-infested abode, one can’t help but wonder how many of them have to die before somebody figures out that poking around shadowy haunted houses in a strange land ain’t such a good idea.

Review

As Karen, the pretty exchange student who gets spooked, Sarah Michelle Gellar appears frightened throughout, especially when delivering such soporific lines as “The whole time, I was in that house, I felt something was wrong.” Really? What was your first clue, the ghoulish blue-skinned little boy locked in a closet, or the screeching wraith in the bedroom?

Apparently, something so bad happened to the kid and his mom that their spirits are hell-bent on vengeance. The film will leave you wondering why you’re in there ... the theater, that is.

It’s hard to survive Affleck’s latest flop

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

The holiday season’s first lump of coal arrives this week in the form of a Ben Affleck vehicle that is so relentlessly awful, it’s a wonder it survived even mainstream Hollywood’s notoriously lax vetting process. No doubt, Affleck’s semi-intact popular appeal — which is predicated almost solely on his looks and famous girlfriends rather than his acting — saved “Surviving Christmas” from the straight to video fate it most surely deserves, but it’s entirely likely big Ben will come to rue this wreck even more than last year’s notorious flop, “Gigli.” The abject failure of the latter film was as much a product of Ben and J-Lo backlash as it was poor quality. “Saving Christmas,” on the other hand, just flat-out sucks. For three years, DreamWorks resisted releasing it, and with good reason: In theaters, this dud will be lucky to survive the week-end. Affleck and co-star James Gandolfini (who reportedly sulked in his trailer throughout the entire shoot) can only hope their careers don’t suffer a similar fate.

Review

Affleck’s Drew Latham is an annoyingly eccentric millionaire marketing exec who has no friends or family. After his empty-headed girlfriend dumps him on Christmas Eve, Drew — determined not to spend the holiday alone — returns to his childhood home and on a whim, hires the dysfunctional blue-collar clan that lives there to pretend to be his own. They butt heads, but eventually — surprise! — everyone learns the true meaning of Christmas. Affleck’s preternaturally giddy performance is an absolute lock for a Razzie Award, and Gandolfini’s perpetual scowl suggests he’d like to sic Tony Soprano on everyone involved.

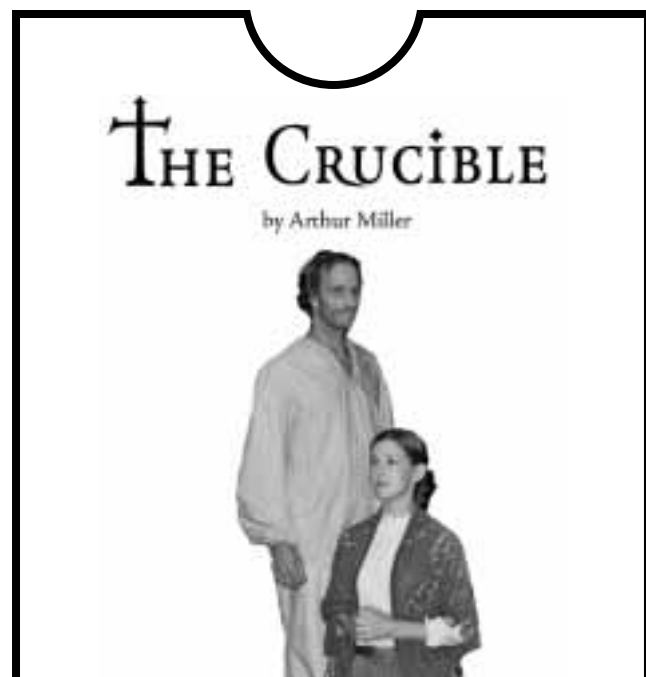
(Rated PG-13 for sexual content, language and a brief drug reference. Running time: 92 minutes)

'Sideways' suits all tastes

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Let's cut to the chase: "Sideways" is a fantastic movie from Alexander Payne, who may very well be America's most provocative cinematic storyteller. There's so much to relish about this tale of two 40-something friends whose road trip through California wine country leads to a powerful reckoning about life, that the challenge here is where to begin gushing. As Miles, the disconsolate would-be novelist whose enduring passion is vino, Paul Giamatti is sublime. His is a richly nuanced performance that ranks as one of the year's best, and serves notice that he is the best paunchy, balding leading man in Hollywood. Giamatti is complimented perfectly by Thomas Haden Church (of TV's "Wings" fame), as Miles' misbehaving best bud, Jack, an over-sexed washed-up actor whose impending nuptials are put in serious jeopardy. Virginia Madsen and Sandra Oh both deliver career-reviving turns as the women who rock Miles' and Jack's worlds. These four actors are so spot-on, it's quite possible all might receive nods come award-nomination time. Payne and Director of Photography Phedon Papamichael give "Sideways" a retro feeling using filtration and film stock that mimics the soft pastel qualities of 1970s films. The natural beauty of the Santa Ynez region elevates the mood of the picture to dizzying heights.

(Rated R for language, some strong sexual content and nudity. Running time: 123 minutes)



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A year after wildfires, recovery depends on where people live

BY ELLIOT SPAGAT

Associated Press Writer

SAN DIEGO — After last year's wildfires destroyed 312 homes in the upscale Scripps Ranch area, displaced homeowners banded together. They negotiated with contractors as a group, figuring that would be the quickest, cheapest way to rebuild.

In Harrison Park, a mountain enclave 60 miles to the east, residents turned against each other after fire claimed 170 homes. As they sought building permits, they discovered their property lines weren't where they thought — the result of poor land surveys performed decades ago.

The confusion has left the rebuilding effort there in turmoil.

"Neighbor has gone against neighbor, husband has gone against wife," said Neva Anderson, 83, who was told that her property line slices through the middle of her former home. Now she's living in a camper in her driveway, with no plans to rebuild.

The tales of Scripps Ranch and Harrison Park depict two extremes in the effort to recover from the firestorms of a year ago this month — the most destructive wildfires in recent California history. In many ways, the pace of recovery has come down to where people live.

Urban neighborhoods are rebuilding more quickly, bolstered by higher household incomes, better roads and sewers, and tight-knit organizations that know how to pressure government officials and insurance companies.

Mountain villages have lagged, hampered by haphazard construction and a go-it-alone spirit that has left residents fending for themselves.

"Overall things seem to be moving a little bit faster than other disasters, but there's such a wide range," said George Kehrer, executive director of Community Assisting Recovery Inc., a nonprofit group that assists homeowners. "A lot of it comes down to organization."

The wildfires devastated enormous swaths of land across five Southern California counties. For nearly a week in late October 2003, flames swallowed neatly planned, urban subdivisions as well as hardscrabble villages and vacation getaways in the mountains.

When the smoke cleared, 24 people were dead, more than 3,600 homes had been destroyed and 750,000 acres had burned.

A year later, only 183 of the 3,505 homes lost in the two hardest-hit counties — San Diego and San Bernardino — have been rebuilt. Construction permits have been issued for another 1,156 dwellings.

To make matters worse for some homeowners, a number of insurance companies pay living expenses for just a year after a disaster, leaving many people reaching into their pockets to cover rent.

Though the numbers may appear low, it's rare for anyone to rebuild in less than a year after a major disaster. California Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi said it took three to five years for most people to rebuild after the 1991 Oakland fire destroyed more than 3,000 homes.

Across Southern California, rebuilding efforts have been hampered by heavy demand for contractors and building supplies. Lumber prices have increased 8 percent since the summer and the cost of steel reinforcing bar has jumped 35 percent, according to Community Assisting Recovery.

Underinsurance has also been widespread. Adam Richardson, a technology consultant, put his Scripps Ranch home up for sale and is suing his insurance company for allegedly misleading him about the coverage he needed. Attorneys expect more than 300 such lawsuits related to the wildfires.

While some obstacles to rebuilding are common throughout the region, the differences between urban subdivisions and mountain villages may be just as important.

Consider Scripps Ranch, a community of 30,000 people in the heart of San Diego where homes sold for an average price of \$758,529 in September.

Only six of the 312 homes lost to the fire have been rebuilt. But the city has issued permits for 251 more. These days, its winding streets are busy with construction crews and lined with partially built houses.

The Scripps Ranch Civic Association — which pumps out 100-page monthly newsletters covering everything from the Girl Scouts to youth basketball games — encouraged homeowners to negotiate with contractors as a group.

Eventually, 81 property owners settled on Stonefield Development, an Orange County builder.

Stonefield offered seven floor plans, priced from \$93 to \$98 a square foot — about half of what many custom builders were asking. The first of the 81 homes will be finished in January, with the rest completed by April, said Julie Pack, vice president of sales and marketing.

Karen Reimus, whose home on a cul-de-sac was destroyed, said she had no choice but to go with Stonefield. Her insurance policy, purchased four months before the fire, left her \$150,000 short of the cost of replacing exactly what she lost.

Scripps Ranch also turned up the heat on elected officials. About 300 people packed a school auditorium in April to tell Garamendi that he needed to get tougher with insurance companies.

Reimus, a lawyer, was one of seven Scripps Ranch homeowners who later went to Sacramento to promote Garamendi's legislative agenda. The insurance commissioner called last month to wish her a happy 38th birthday.

"Some other communities have modest organizations but nothing like Scripps Ranch," Garamendi said.

In mountain towns, however, homeowners are mostly on their own.

In Harrison Park, many lots are still littered with old stoves, broken concrete slabs and other debris from the fire. Many displaced homeowners are still living in campers; some are in tents.

Unlike Scripps Ranch — where about 70 percent of the homes were built after 1980 and meticulously planned — Harrison Park got its start in the 1920s and slowly became a hodgepodge of odd-shaped lots with no two houses looking alike. Quail, wild turkey and deer roamed the forested hills of pine, cedar, oak and manzanita trees.

The confusion over property lines brought reconstruction to a standstill after the fires. In May, county Supervisor Dianne Jacob split the community into a dozen sections and asked each to peacefully settle their differences. She's still waiting for their solutions.

Manuel Machado, 69, a retired building contractor who built his home himself on land that his wife's family has owned since 1926, is livid about one neighbor who claims 40 feet of what Machado thought was his land. He figures he's entitled to 20 feet of another neighbor's property but is reluctant to make a claim.

"Somewhere along the way, someone is going to get squeezed," he said. "No one can stay where they are. They all have to move over and destroy one another."

Harrison Park, like other mountain communities, has a host of other problems, from poor sewage to a remote location that takes construction crews time to reach. Many people simply don't have the money to rebuild.

With daytime temperatures already in the mid-40s, bad weather may slow construction even more during the winter.

Machado looked out the window of the \$41,000 pre-fabricated home he bought with insurance money and counted 10 campers parked on a burned hillside.

"They're going to be very cold," he said. "You have to go through an awful lot of propane to heat those up, and it's very depressing to stay in a little box like that."



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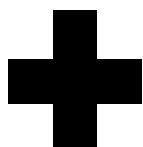
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NATIONAL



It's all settled: Qwest agrees to pay \$250M for financial fraud

BY DAN ELLIOTT
Associated Press Writer

DENVER — Qwest Communications International Inc. agreed Thursday to pay \$250 million to settle allegations that it engaged in "massive financial fraud" by improperly booking \$3.8 billion in revenue and misleading investors about it.

In a scathing 56-page complaint, the Securities and Exchange Commission accused Qwest senior managers of approving and directing a scheme to book one-time revenue from the sale or trade of fiber-optic capacity as recurring revenue from operations.

The regional telecommunications company became so dependent on the tactic that employees began comparing the company to a drug addict and the transactions as the company's "heroin," the complaint said.

Qwest agreed to the settlement without admitting or denying the allegations. "We are pleased to conclude this matter, which will now allow us to focus even more of our effort to provide exceptional value and service to customers," CEO Richard C. Notebaert said in a statement.

Donna Jaegers, a research analyst with Janco Partners in Denver, said the settlement means a welcome end to the 2 1/2-year investigation.

"This would be a great thing for Qwest to get this behind it. They need to be paying attention to their business," she said.

In afternoon trading on the New York Stock Exchange, shares of Qwest were up 7 cents at \$3.39. Its shares have been rising since sinking to a 52-week low of \$2.56 in August.

Qwest was launched in 1988 by billionaire investor Philip Anschutz as a fiber-optic network company. In 2000, it got into the local phone business with the \$38 billion takeover of US West, the main carrier in 14 Western and Midwestern states since the 1984 breakup of AT&T.

Federal regulators began investigating Qwest in 2002 for allegedly inflating revenue through fraudulent transactions with other telecommunications companies. Since then, the company restated financial results for 2001 and 2002 to lower revenue by about \$2.5 billion.

The complaint filed Thursday also alleges Qwest booked anticipated revenue long before it materialized, that its former phone book division delayed or moved up

Qwest settlement

By The Associated Press

WHAT HAPPENED: Qwest agreed to a \$250 million civil fine for what the SEC called a "massive financial fraud" of some \$3.8 billion.

ADDICTED: Regulators said Qwest became so dependent on a booking scheme employees began comparing the company to a drug addict and the transactions as the company's "heroin."

BIG BLOW: The fine is the second-largest ever levied by the SEC for financial reporting fraud. The largest was \$750 million against WorldCom.

MORE STORM CLOUDS?: The U.S. attorney in Denver is still investigating Qwest for possible criminal violations. The Securities and Exchange Commission is still investigating individuals.

publication dates to artificially inflate revenue figures, and that at least one senior Qwest employee pressured vendors to allow Qwest executives to invest in their initial public stock offerings.

The settlement requires Qwest to hire a permanent chief compliance officer to ensure it obeys federal laws. The officer will report to a committee of outside directors.

The complaint is harshly critical of senior Qwest managers but identifies them only by title and does not mention them by name.

The SEC has sued a number of former and current employees. The Wall Street Journal reported last month that the SEC has notified former Qwest CEO Joseph Nacchio that its staff would recommend civil charges be filed.

Nacchio, who left the company in 2002, has denied wrongdoing. A spokesman said he had no immediate comment Thursday. Nacchio has said he would be vindicated if any civil charges are brought against him.

About a dozen former Qwest executives either have settled allegations or have been targeted in civil or criminal cases. In February 2003, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced indictments against four former Qwest officials accused of a scheme to inflate revenues.

Two of them pleaded guilty in plea agreements with the government, and two were acquitted.

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NATIONAL

Alaska to present gas pipeline terms to oil companies

By The Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — The state will present terms to major oil companies for a natural gas pipeline from Alaska's North Slope within the next week, according to Gov. Frank Murkowski.

ConocoPhillips, BP and ExxonMobil support Murkowski's idea of the state owning a share of the pipeline, according to a written statement released by Murkowski's office.

An agreement would not mean pipeline construction would begin, but it would set out terms, such as production and property tax rates, hiring commitments, and the availability of some gas for local use.

Murkowski said the companies will respond to the proposal within a week of receiving it.

Oil company spokesmen were noncommittal.

"Fiscal contract negotiations are continuing, and we plan to have a comprehensive proposal available for legislative review early in the coming session," said Dave MacDowell, BP's Alaska gas spokesman.

Kristi DesJarlais, spokeswoman for Conoco in Houston, issued a similar statement.

Murkowski said the state wants to submit a final contract proposal to the Legislature early in the next session, which begins Jan. 10.

Larry Persily, a former state Department of Revenue official who took part in some of this summer's negotiations between the state and oil companies, said time is short for getting a contract in the hands of lawmakers.

The Alaska Stranded Gas Development Act, which gives the governor the power to negotiate a deal with the pipeline builders, requires a 30-day public comment period before the Legislature can fully consider the contract, he said.

Costs to build the pipeline from the North Slope and connect it to markets in Canada and the rest of the United States have been estimated to be as high as \$20 billion.

The three oil companies hold development rights to the North Slope's gas reserves, and for decades have said the cost of the pipeline makes the project uneconomical. The companies say they need stable tax and other terms for many years to risk building the line.

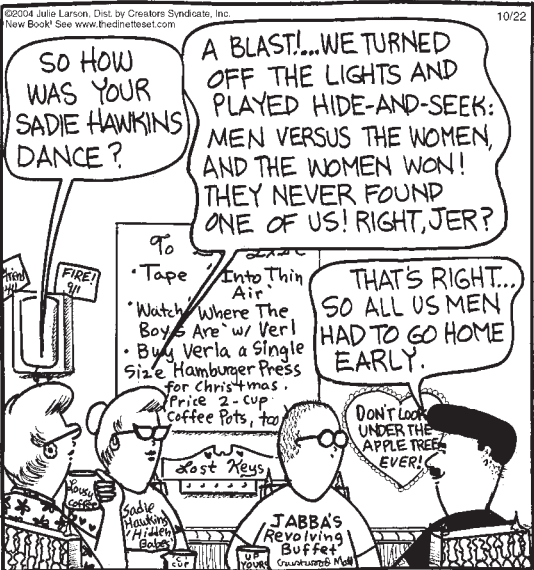
Negotiating teams for the state and the oil companies have been meeting for much of the year in Anchorage to try to agree on a contract under a state law that authorizes the governor to negotiate a deal with the pipeline builders, subject to legislative approval.



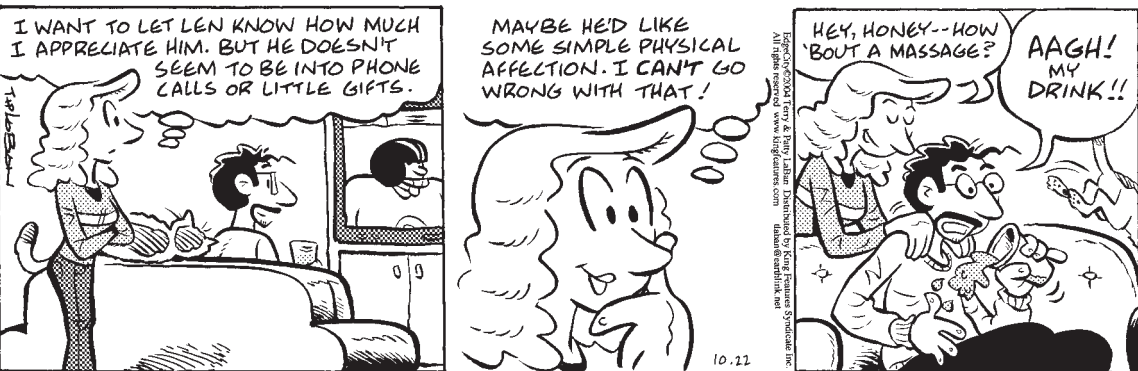
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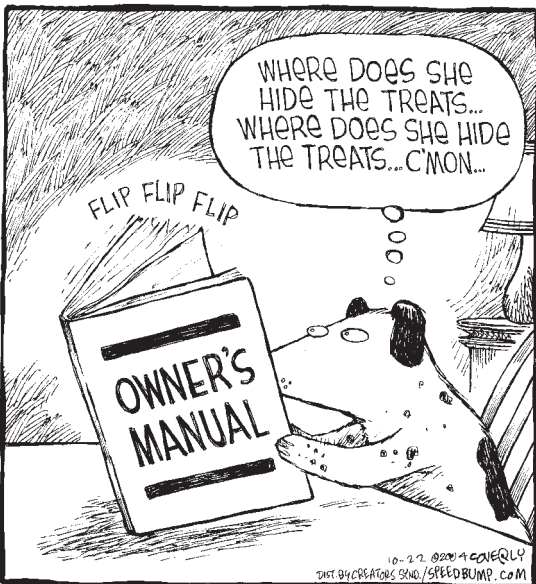
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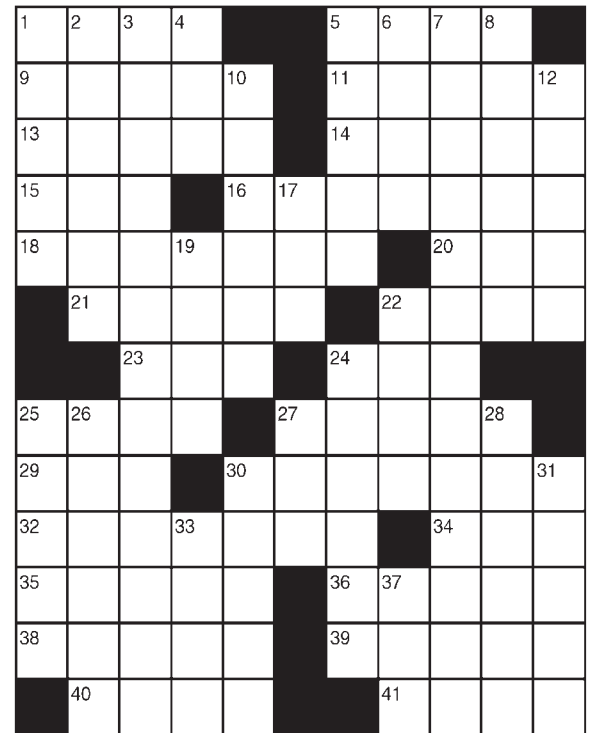
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