

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

4 5 28 34 38
Meganumber: 9
Jackpot: \$7 Million

FANTASY 5

2 12 30 34 37

DAILY 3

Daytime: 0 6 0
Evening: 9 7 2

DAILY DERBY

1st: 11 Money Bags
2nd: 01 Gold Rush
3rd: 12 Lucky Charms

RACE TIME: 1:49.76

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

David Toumey, who is the county coroner in Bloomington, Ind., was hospitalized after accidentally shooting himself in the leg in September while demonstrating gun safety at a recreational facility. And a 61-year-old man accidentally, fatally shot himself in September in Rose Bud, Ark., as a result of showing off with his pistol before church. (He had removed the clip, held the gun to his head, and pulled the trigger, thinking it would not fire, but some will fire a bullet thus left in the chamber.)

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1815, American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton was born in Johnstown, N.Y.

Ten years ago: President Clinton arrived in the Philippines to open a campaign for free trade in Asia and to commemorate World War II Allied victories in the Pacific. Olympic track-and-field gold medalist Wilma Rudolph died in Nashville, Tenn., at age 54.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Money is always there but the pockets change; it is not in the same pockets after a change, and that is all there is to say about money."

GERTRUDE STEIN

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Police department put under scope

Chief Butts taken to task for perceived disconnect from residents

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — The Santa Monica Police Department has some explaining to do.

Elected leaders this week sent Police Chief James T. Butts Jr. into the field to mend relations with parents upset over how authorities have dealt with gang violence in Santa Monica.

Though crime rates have fallen to 40-year lows citywide, problems persist in Sunset Park and the Pico neighborhood, a low-income area with a long history of violent crime. Parents there galvanized this fall after 14 rounds were fired in front of an elementary school during midday. No one was hit.

Butts defended a neighborhood-based policing strategy he created for quelling violence, adding officers work hard with all willing Santa Monica residents. Parents disagreed sharply.

"Our community lives in fear," said Parent Teacher Association

co-president Griselda de la Torre-Garces, who attacked the police chief for resisting a proposed joint safety group with the local school district. "Parents worry about their children being safe at school, about them walking the streets of the neighborhood. They don't dare go out at night. Isn't this reason enough to involve them (the police department) in a dialogue? ...

"Why doesn't the police chief want this group?" added de la Torre-Garces, one of six mothers to speak on the issue before the City Council late Tuesday. "What does he fear citizens will say? What does he fear citizens will learn or what does he fear the citizens will do? Is being accountable to the citizenry not part of his job?"

Council members expressed frustration over the perceived disconnect between residents and the police department, agreeing unanimously to hold a special meeting with residents and police on the issue. In the meantime, they directed Butts to increase his rapport with local residents.

"When a mother comes down here at midnight and tells us, 'I'm scared,' I think we have to pay

See SMPD, page 4

Saluting the fallen



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Santa Monica Police Chief James T. Butts Jr. salutes the Veterans' Memorial at Palisades Park on Thursday. Butts laid a wreath at the base of the Navy monument in memory of the fallen soldiers who served in the U.S. military in honor of Veteran's Day.

Cavalia opener a night to remember

Acrobat's cable snaps, performer walks away

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

SM BEACH — Acrobat Anne Gendreau walked away with only a bruise after the cable she was suspended from snapped Wednesday, slamming her into the ground during the opening night of Cavalia.

Gendreau, who had been performing aerial acts for about four minutes alongside a Lusitano horse at heights of about 30 feet, was hanging from a waist harness and had nearly completed her act. When she released off the horse, Gendreau shot up and was thrown to the ground from about 12 feet

above. Her partner and the other performers immediately dismounted their horses to check on Gendreau, who slowly got up and walked off stage.

"The performers were shocked," said City Councilman Bob Holbrook, who, like the other 1,900 spectators in attendance, was stunned. "They didn't know what to do."

The accident was the first of its kind in the traveling show, which has put on more than 250 performances, said Cavalia spokeswoman Marie-Claude Lavigne, who was with Gendreau immediately following the accident.

"We were really lucky she was only bruised," Lavigne said, who added the performers on stage were cautious to move Gendreau because they were unsure of her

injuries.

"She is doing great and is more scared than hurt," Lavigne said Thursday, adding Gendreau took one night off and was planned to perform again today. "To be really sure, she is going to rest. To do what she is doing, she has to be confident."

The cable apparently wasn't designed correctly to handle the pressure. But it had been fixed.

"Everything we do we are very careful," Lavigne said. "It's a grand scale show and it's a risky business but they are all professionals ...

"You don't make anything spectacular without some spectacle," she added.

The accident occurred during the first act, shortly before the

See CAVALIA, page 5



Frederic Chehu/Special to the Daily Press
Erik Martonovich performs on 'Comet,' one of dozens of Cavalia horses.

Jacquie Banks

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

★★★★-Dynamic

★★★★-Positive

★★★-Average

★★-So-so

★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Your impulsiveness merges with creativity. You have great ideas, which, when used, could make a difference within your key relationships and your finances. Do not turn your back on laughter and humor, as it helps loosen up the creative process. Tonight: Laugh into the night.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ You make a decision about a relationship, and you might not want to talk about everything that you are feeling. Opt for a new beginning in an existing relationship, or decide on a new one. Tonight: With your best friend.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Leaving work takes talent. Others simply might want to visit at the end of the day. Invite co-workers for munchies and a cold drink after work. Someone new could zero in on you. You might not realize how desirable you are. Tonight: Relax and don't overdo it.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Your serious approach could spook someone close. Is that what you really want? Decide to lighten up and add more joviality to your life. Not everything needs to be serious. Let a childlike quality emerge. Tonight: Act and feel as if it is Friday night.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★ You might feel a bit more down than usual. As a result, you might want to withdraw or take the day off. Carefully rethink a personal or domestic matter. Figure out what is ailing you and go for what you want. Tonight: Happier at home.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Organizing others and just making plans work seem like hardy tasks today. You see reluctance on the part of others to take on anything more. Meetings don't flow. Go where others are easy and flow with you. Tonight: Make a decision about taking a workshop in communication.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ Pressure builds at work, but you will feel overwhelmed by all that is tossed at you. Reorganize your finances and tighten your belt. You will gain as a result and feel less of a need to put in overtime. Tonight: Fun doesn't have to cost!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Though you might not have all the vision and perspective you want, you feel great. Let your wit, intelligence and charisma meld together. You, as well as others, will like the end result. Bathe in your popularity. Tonight: Whatever you want.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★ Use your time to clean up your desk. Listen to a partner who might be way too serious. You can't change his or her opinion, but you can ask key questions. Make a decision to do more for yourself. Tonight: You don't have to explain. Vanish.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Close partners and loved ones could easily rain on your parade, but friends will not. You might be encouraged to rethink your relationships. Go where you are welcome. Meetings and groups help establish a new beginning. Tonight: Where the crowds are.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ Work might drag you down, but you enjoy interaction with bosses and the public. If you can network and opt for the more social side of your work, do so. Otherwise, you might think of calling it an early day. Tonight: In the limelight.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ You might find that your creativity falls flat or a new friendship is slightly touchy. Don't worry about what might be difficult or wrong, and look to what is right. Detach and think of someone at a distance or a pending vacation. Tonight: Be where the music is.

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Phone: (310) 458-PRESS (7737) • Fax: (310) 576-9913

1427 Third Street Promenade, Ste. #202 • Santa Monica, CA 90401 • www.smdp.com

PUBLISHER

Ross Furukawa ross@smdp.com

EDITOR

Carolyn Sackariason sack@smdp.com

STAFF WRITER

John Wood wood@smdp.com

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

Rob Plubeni rob@smdp.com

ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Rob Schwenker schwenker@smdp.com

ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Stewart O'Dell stewarto@smdp.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Alejandro Cesar Cantarero II alex@smdp.com

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Mauricio Feldman-Abe mauricio@smdp.com

EXECUTIVE TRAFFIC MANAGER

Brenda Casas brenda@smdp.com

CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE

Mitch Troy mitch@smdp.com

CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE

Mirella Reyes mirella@smdp.com

NIGHT EDITOR

Lori Luechtefeld lori@smdp.com

NIGHT EDITOR

Michael Tittinger mikeyt@smdp.com

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Mike Aviles mike@smdp.com

CIRCULATION

Keith Wyatt keith@smdp.com

CIRCULATION

Glenn Bolan glenn@smdp.com

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Dave Danforth dave@smdp.com

MASCOT

Maya Furukawa maya@smdp.com

LOCAL

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

A world of dance comes to SMC

By Daily Press staff

The local community college will kick up its heels around the world next week. Santa Monica College will celebrate International Education Week Tuesday, Nov. 16 with a "Festival of World Dance," featuring moves from Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia, West Africa and Spain. The free event will be held at 11:30 a.m. at the SMC Clocktower, 1900 Pico Blvd.

Dancers from the student troupe, Folklórico de SMC, will perform pieces from the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua. In addition, SMC students will perform Spanish flamenco and dances from Indonesia, Brazil and Ghana.

With more than 2,500 international students from 100-plus nations, SMC has one of the largest international student populations of any community college in the United States.

SMC is one of the many organizations nationwide that will celebrate International Education Week, a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Education.

For information, call (310) 434-4126.

Thanksgiving at St. Joseph Center

By Daily Press staff

St. Joseph Center will be giving thanks this year by providing several Thanksgiving events for its homeless and low-income clients, and also by providing others in the community with the opportunity to be of service.

Many local churches, restaurants, and other organizations come to the center during the holiday season to serve meals and to donate food and clothing.

St. Matthew's Church preschoolers will visit the Early Learning Center's children on Nov. 22 for lunch, and on Nov. 23, they will bring turkey baskets to the center's children.

On Nov. 23, the L.A. Clippers will serve turkey dinners with all the trimmings to homeless men, women, and children at the Bread & Roses Café in the morning, and distribute turkeys to clients at the family center in the afternoon. The National Charity League's Ticktockers will provide a potluck dinner at the Infant Toddler Development Center from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Every year, St. Joseph Center turns the holiday season into a series of "giving opportunities." One can take part by donating a turkey; serving meals; providing clothing, gifts, decorations and party supplies; or simply by making monetary contributions.

The St. Joseph Center's three-part Adopt-a-Family project matches donors with homeless and low-income families and individuals. Holiday gifts are needed for men, women, and children, such as backpacks or sweatshirts, or family gifts such as a set of new towels or a toaster with a value between \$20 and \$30.

Age-appropriate gifts are needed for children — value between \$10 and \$15, or grocery store gift certificates for a holiday meal — approximately \$10 per person. Eligible families and individuals will be ready to adopt by Nov. 29. Gifts are needed by Dec. 17.

The center is holding its first online auction, "Share the Season," Nov. 16 to Dec. 17 at www.stjosephctr.org, featuring many interesting items, including TV studio passes, sport fishing fares, golf lessons, and a four-day Trip to Zimbabwe for two.

"Many of our volunteers are students," said Maria Alderete, coordinator of volunteer services. "They're giving the gift of themselves."

The center promotes the spirit of giving during the holiday season by building a bridge between the caring and the less fortunate.

St. Joseph Center assists more than 7,000 working poor and homeless men, women, and children each year to achieve self-sufficiency through emergency services, food distributions, child care, case management, mentoring, job training and senior services.

For more information, call (310) 396-6468, ext. 325, or visit www.stjosephctr.org.



SURF REPORT

Friday will see a mix of WNW ground/wind swell and SW Southern Hemi. NW and combo exposures in Northern LA through the north half of the South Bay are in the knee-waist plus zone. Standout combo breaks see some bigger sets. The Southern South Bay is mainly knee-waist high. NW wind swell fills in some more on Saturday then a healthy NW'er kicks in on Sunday. Winds are NW 5-8kts Friday morning, building to 10-15kts for the afternoon. More onshores on Saturday.

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	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
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SUNDAY	11:57	2.1	11:51	0.7	6:08	4.7	5:29	4.4
MONDAY	N/A	N/A	12:33	1.4	6:25	5.1	6:18	4.5
TUESDAY	12:20	0.8	1:08	0.7	6:44	5.5	7:05	4.5
WEDNESDAY	12:49	1.0	1:45	0.0	7:08	6.0	7:51	4.5
THURSDAY	1:18	1.2	2:25	-0.6	7:35	6.4	8:39	4.4
FRIDAY	1:50	1.5	3:08	-0.9	8:06	6.7	7:51	4.5

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The Q Line

Even though the votes are in for the City Council race, there's still much debate as to what the election results really mean for Santa Monica. Voters on Nov. 2, in addition to re-electing three incumbents, overwhelmingly supported newcomer Bobby Shriver, who received votes from more than half of the Santa Monicans who turned out at the polls.

So this week Q-Line wants to know, "What do you think these results mean?"

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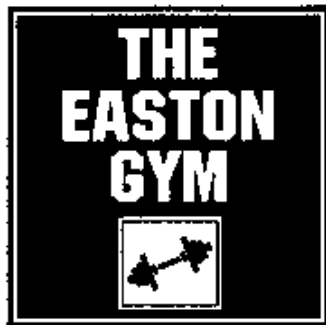


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LOCAL

Butts defends SMPD's record on gang violence

SMPD, from page 1

attention to that," said City Councilman Kevin McKeown, who called the Pico violence a "really glaring explanation" to an otherwise strong police record. "We've had half a dozen moms from Sunset Park and Pico neighborhood come down here tonight from halfway across the city. The public safety building's right across the alley. We're not hearing from the chief and I'd like to hear from the chief on this."

"I think it's time to say, 'OK, what is community policing? How is it really working?'"

A BROAD APPROACH

After reviewing part of the discussion on tape, Chief Butts Thursday evening said he understood why the parents were upset over the shooting.

"As a parent myself, I totally understand, totally empathize with the fear, the angst and the frustration that a parent feels that their child's school has been exposed to an incident like this," he said. "I totally understand that and concurrently I have a responsibility to do the best that I can to make the entire neighborhood safe."

Butts defended his resistance to the joint safety group, saying he invited school leaders to partner with the police in addressing the violence using systems already in place.

"Instead of wasting time on a task force designed to find out about issues that we have all the information here in-house ... we offered to bring people in to sit down and assess our program," he said.

"There is no department head that has more dialogue with this community, in general, than I do. ... Meeting with people in groups in this community is what I do and what I have done for 13 years," he added.

Butts credited a program he created called "Neighborhood Centered Policing" for decreasing crime in Santa Monica. The model calls for officers to be assigned to particular sections of Santa Monica. It also calls for regular dialogue with a variety of community groups and authorities.

Probation and parole officers, prosecutors, community and religious groups, other City Hall leaders and police work together under the intertwined strategy. Police said the blueprint for the neighborhood-based approach, introduced in 1990, was first fully used in 1998, when two homicides took place in one day. One was a gang-related shooting. The other was an unrelated homicide near the beach, when a tourist was fatally stabbed by two robbers.

While they've heard some about the program, council members said they needed more information and called upon Butts to explain in detail his strategy.

"I see the role of council in this sort of issue as we are the interface between the government and the members of the public," City Councilman Ken Genser said during the 90-minute meeting. "And yet, I know the department adopted this community centered policing, but we've never discussed it at the council. The only reason I knew about it is because I read about it in the newspaper."

ONGOING VIOLENCE

Pico residents and police even disagree on how many people have been killed. Parents and others said there have been 29

homicides in the last 15 years. Butts pegged that number much lower, at 16. The reason for the discrepancy is unclear, but it may be partly due to the way authorities track crime. A killing is considered a homicide when solved as one person intentionally killing another.

All sides agreed, however, that the ongoing problem of gang violence in Santa Monica was serious.

Though there hasn't been a fatal shooting in Santa Monica for more than a year, shots have been fired often on the east side of town. Less than two weeks ago, four teenagers were fired upon and two were struck while walking by Santa Monica College in Sunset Park, a neighborhood of mostly homeowners that borders the Pico neighborhood to the south. Neither victim suffered critical injuries.

"Violence in the Pico neighborhood has weighed heavily on my mind and heart for a long time," City Councilman Bob Holbrook said. "If you can't be safe in the Pico neighborhood, Santa Monica is not safe. Every person in our city deserves to live in a safe community and I'm willing to direct resources to see that that happens ... We have been moving resources over the years into this area, but obviously we need to do more, because it will never be enough until it all stops and gets better."

Criticizing police was the wrong approach, Holbrook added Thursday.

"How do we know what they've prevented? We don't know," he said. "All we know is what's happened — and for all we know, they could have prevented five times more than what's happened."

While the idea of dedicating more resources toward violence seemed like a good one on the surface, City Manager Susan McCarthy pointed to an ongoing effort between the city and the school district to address the issue. She initially suggested the council not hold a special meeting.

"Certainly I think there needs to be a sharper focus, I think, than there has been in the past," McCarthy said. "As to whether there should be a community meeting or a community forum, I think that you're going to hear calls for community meetings and forums on a number of topics ... Coming up in January, you could be meeting every night, and perhaps that wouldn't be too much given the gravity of the problem, but we do have a finite period of time in January to deal with myriad of things."

Once it became clear the council intended to push forward with the special meeting, McCarthy warned the council against vesting too much in how much progress can be made.

"I think we also need to be very clear about what the city can and can't do," she said. "And an objective that would not be reasonable is that that we would eliminate poverty in Santa Monica. That's not going to be something that we can either set out to do or pretend to be able to do."

MOVING RIGHT ALONG

In the end, as the discussion dragged into Wednesday morning, the council asked staffers to return with a "road map" for improving the situation. Part of that will be a special council meeting.

Meanwhile, parents plan to meet at Edison on Tuesday to discuss traffic cir-

LOCAL



Meeting to address Pico concerns, SMPD strategy

SMPD, from page 4

culuation issues around the school. A proposal was floated in the wake of the September shooting to close Virginia Avenue, which borders the school and is often used by criminals as a quick escape route onto Interstate 10.

Another meeting will be held sometime in January with McCarthy and school district superintendent John Deasy, to follow up with parents about the Edison shooting. The council meeting, which will focus on the broader issues of Pico violence and communication between residents and police, likely will be held sometime in January.

McKeown said genuine progress would require increased participation from all of those involved.

"I've been to enough meetings to know

that there is not a level of trust between the community and the police leadership that there needs to be, and we have to own that. The police have to own that. The community has to own that," McKeown said. "And the truth is that the police have not been as present in some of the discussions as they might be. And the truth is also, and I've been there, the community is not as present as it might be, because I think a lot of people in the community know what's going on.

"There are very few people causing a great deal of problems for this city and there are people in the neighborhoods who know who they are, but the culture is such that you don't tell the police that. But that's exactly what the police need to know to deal with the problem."

Cavalia dazzles, stuns audience

CAVALIA, from page 1

intermission. The announcer informed the audience as the second act was about to begin that Gendreau was OK and had suffered some minor scratches.

As if the show's acrobatics weren't enough to keep audience members on their edge of their seats, Gendreau's near miss left many wondering if something else would happen. It did. During the second act, a trick rider who was standing on two horses while they jumped at full speed over a suspended log couldn't slow down in time and was thrown into the wall. He walked away unscathed and the near-miss didn't interrupt the flow of the performance.

Despite the two incidents, opening night of Cavalia appeared to be a success. Audience members, who ranged from Santa Monica's mayor to the police chief

and fire chief, local politicians and dozens of community members, raved about the performance at an opening night reception held following the two-hour show.

Created by Normand Latourelle, one of the founders of Quebec's famed Cirque du Soleil, Cavalia is a involves acrobatics, live music, projected images and more than 69 performers, including a troupe of 37 horses from around the world.

During the show, horses cavort with acrobats, aerialists and riders in front of an ever-changing background projected on a 200-foot-wide screen. Acclaimed European "horse whisperer" Frederic Pignon and his wife, Magali Delgado, commanded the animals, who playfully pranced around the stage, side stepped, walked in unison and galloped at full speeds, oftentimes completely unfettered by brides or halters. The horses even took bows for the audience.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More on McLoud

Editor:
 Regarding Mr. McLoud’s guest commentary (SMDP, Oct. 30, page 8). As a Santa Monica resident, registered voter, and parent of children in the Santa Monica school district, I am appalled by this school board member’s comments. By choosing a public forum to discuss confidential personnel matters — payroll figures associated with a small number of easily identified individuals — and to insult people that are ultimately his employees, Mr. McLoud has demonstrated a fundamental lack of understanding of the responsibilities and obligations that come with the office he holds. This is not about politics or special interests, this is about common sense. Although he certainly owes everyone in the school district an apology — particularly those whose skills he so foolishly dismissed — no apology will restore his credibility as a member of the district’s governing body. The only credible, effective action that Mr. McLoud can still take as a member of the board, is to tender his resignation.

Richard Ver Steeg
 Santa Monica

The Right of Return

Editor:
 I would like to humbly offer this in balance to the letters to the editor by Liz Peel and John Marciano (SMDP, Nov. 10, page 4), as those both clearly contribute to the hate that already exists.
 Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion, however anti-Semitic, excuse me, anti-Israeli it is. But by misrepresenting the facts, a distorted picture of reality is produced. Let’s take a closer looks on the fact presented.
 Palestinian Post was published 1932-1950, i.e. during the times of a British Mandate over the Palestine, before the Israel was established as a country in 1948. Just to clarify the fact presented by Liz Peel, and not to dispute in any way the issues of Palestinian national identity, the Jews published it.
 Liz Peel listed all Jewish organizations that are probably known to her. A majority of these groups were created and acted for the purpose of self-defense, such as to guard settlements or in response to the mass massacre of Jews in Hebron, provoked by the mufti, who was a supporter and a friend of Hitler. Some indeed where involved in terrorism, or were “freedom fighters” as we call it today. A guerrilla warfare was against British occupational forces, which blocked the Jewish survivals of the Holocaust from entering the Palestine. There was a blown up hotel occupied by the military staff and hanged British sergeants. I’ve never heard of a public bus bombing or sniper killing of the children by any of these groups.
 In every nation, even if it is a Jewish one, there are people who have opinions or beliefs that are different from those of the majority. It is true that there are religious sects that believe that it is Mashiah’s (Messiah) job to restore the Kingdom of Israel.

The kingdom, and not the modern state. They are very few and relatively isolated. I seriously doubt any one of them was ever in Durban marching alongside Palestinians. Liz Peel is absolutely right to guess, that “there are Jewish people who are tired of their faith being used.” This is especially true relating to those like herself who posses neither knowledge nor understanding of the complicated matter. So, exactly who is lying?
 Another lie is to claim that Israel is not a member of UN. Just the fact that the state of Israel was established by the UN resolution. Israel has its ambassador there. I am not sure that anywhere in the world, even in Israel, bumper stickers ever express an official government policy. But, what about the UN’s failures of many years to prevent numerous attack against Israel? Failure to prevent wars launched by neighboring Arabs states — why forget it’s perpetuated by the Soviet block unbalanced pro-Arab position? It is not widely publicized fact, however, that not that long ago several UN “peace workers” were caught transporting terrorist missiles. Yes, think of Iran or Iraq or Libya and all the other countries that now preside over the UN’s Human Rights commission. Yes, please give it some thought.
 In her list, Liz Peel missed many intelligence organizations that use Israel as training ground — KGB, East German Shtazi and Romanian Securantsa, Iranian, etc. — they all trained terrorists to act there. Some of these students studied alongside me in Moscow. Unfortunately, that’s all I know. The same goes to the nuclear program. I guess Liz Peel would not reduce herself to a plain libel and surely has a hard evidences. Perhaps truth will come forward. That’s my prayer.
 There are young and not so young people who refuse to serve in Israel military. And there are many of those who will think of this service as a big honor. People are tired of this cycle of violence. No one likes a war. Never in my life I’ve met an Israeli parent who wanted his 18-year-old son or daughter to be drafted in the army instead of going to a university. When John Marciano in his letter quotes the number of killed Palestinian children versus Israeli ones, he somehow omits the fact that Israeli children were killed by terrorist attacks, while many Palestinian minors became victims during the clashes with the army and police. Please understand me correctly — any child should be protected in any possible way. This double standard, even when using the numbers, only helps to play down the responsibility of those who send children to harms way. It is them who are the real terrorists.
 There is no secret that Hamas received funding from Israel. I think it still receives some. This funding was for the hospitals, schools and social programs that Hamas runs. Does Liz Peel have any evidence of misuse? I guess in this situation, any honest person should alarm everyone about it, no matter Muslim, Jew, Christian or follower of Christ.
 I am not sure what a “fight” between Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews has to do with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel is a “melting pot” as is this country, with many immigrants, and clearly there are tensions between people of different cultures and backgrounds. And this is normal to any society. In this country we also have many social, ethnic and cultural tensions, even, as I learned from the letter, between the “Christian right” and the “follower of the Christ.” And this country is the greatest democracy in the world. Israel is a democracy as well. Is there any other country in

See **LETTERS**, page 7

Not another political column: Kids say the darndest things

TITTINGERS TAKE 2
 BY MIKE TITTINGER

I wasn’t holding out a lot of hope for scintillating post-election day debate, not after the skate rats rolled in.
 It was just as well, getting my noon-time grease at Carl’s Jr. last Wednesday, I was pretty burned out on swift boats and circling wolves, flip-flops and jibjabs. The front page of the LA Times, with all their cute little charts — red and blue and undecidedly gray all over — was almost enough to spoil my one-pound burger moment anyway.
 Typical, I wasn’t gonna be able to fret about the future, not with the brood of mangy-haired hooligans doing laps around the salad bar, then setting up shop smack next to me. And when the unopened ketchup packets began to fly, I reasoned that it’s their future too, and they don’t seem particularly concerned. Today’s no different to them from yesterday, regardless of who’s keeping the Oval Office seat warm.
 But then a funny thing happened on the way to the French fries.
 I was soon intrigued by the discussions of the junior circuit. True enough, it began with the timeless philosophical question: “Would you rather get shot or make out with a guy?” I admit I pondered that one for a moment as well, but their conversation took an unexpected turn — straight into the vert ramp world of politics.
 “My cousin was researching how to get out of the Army. He didn’t want to go to Iraq.”
 “He could say he’s gay.”
 “That doesn’t work anymore.”
 “Yeah it does. They’re afraid of gays.”
 “I read that Kerry earned his Purple Heart by shooting himself.”
 “No he didn’t. Where’d you read that?”
 “OK, I didn’t read it ... but I heard it somewhere.”
 “Kerry’s just a guy who got rich by marrying his wife. Her family invented ketchup.”
 “At least Bush is gonna bomb the hell out of terrorists ... Kerry wouldn’t.”
 “Yeah, but the economy sucks.”
 “Clinton had a surplus.”
 “What’s a surplus?”
 “Um, I think it’s when you have more money than you need.”
 So engrossed was I that I hunched toward the brood with bent ear, the fallen corner of my newspaper was soaking in ranch sauce.
 Aside from the occasional slap of a ketchup packet (not Heinz) to one another’s head when a comment didn’t go over well, this debate could have taken place on any street corner in Santa Monica, or across the country. And it had. Sure there was misinformation (and what political

discussion didn’t contain a hint of that?), but the point is that people of all walks, of all ages, recognize the players and realize the issues facing this country more so than at any point in a generation. Whether or not you agree with the direction this country is headed, democracy is alive and well in the United States. No one said unanimity was part of the process.
 The unparalleled interest taken in political races this season bodes well for our nation. Say what you will about the results — that America’s place in the world sits in peril, that we are on the road to ruin, that President Bush is the devil incarnate — more than 59 million Americans (or a majority of voters) disagree. They have every right.
 Such vehement debate can be expressed so loudly, so vociferously, so openly. Here is a ragtag group of 11-year-olds stopping on their way to the Boys and Girls Club skatepark to munch burgers and talk politics (of all things) for a good 20 minutes. I challenge you to keep an 11-year-old’s interest on any single topic for 20 minutes without a joystick and remote control. Ask a middle school teacher sometime.
 Visiting with family on the eve of the election, my two nieces and two nephews (ages 11 to 13) enlisted me to drive them home from a pizza party in my sister-in-law’s Chrysler convertible. Despite an intermittent rain, I relented and put the top down so they could hoot and holler and howl at the moon, presumably. The fact is I wasn’t quite sure why they wanted the top down.
 “Get out and vote tomorrow,” my niece screamed.
 Soon after, I was providing them with backing horn beeps while they beseeched their neighbors and passersby to “Rock the vote,” “Vote for Kerry” or “Re-elect Bush.” Their enthusiasm was infectious. Prepubescent political leanings aside, they knew full well the weight and importance of casting ballots the following day.
 And as we cruised through the slick streets on our rolling soapbox, kids’ heartfelt smiles defying the dropping mercury, it occurred to me that the medium was indeed the message. In my mind’s eye, the frantic debates in the days, weeks and months leading up to election day appears promising for the generation to follow. In hindsight, my own “Generation X,” seemed content enough on cruise control, riding the pre-9/11 status quo as apathetic and oblivious as trust-fund children.
 I was right there, riding shotgun much of that time.
 Despite being a journalist, I had never voted until this election. But I found myself standing by the ballot boxes last Tuesday alongside much of the country, inspired by my nieces and nephews, and punching holes with childlike enthusiasm.
 (Mike Tittinger is an editor at the Santa Monica Daily Press. To reach him, e-mail at tooroam@aol.com.)

OPINION



The gravity vote carries in Santa Monica

PISTACHIO PERSPECTIVE

BY SUSAN ANN CONNOR



It was still dark outside. But there was a hum in the air. Hum. Hum. And more Hum. I'd been awake since 4:30 a.m., and no matter which way I tossed or changed the pillow position, I couldn't get back to sleep. You know the drill. After dagnabit giving up, I unwittingly drifted off for a few minutes only to be awakened by the stinging blare of my alarm. Ho-Hum.

Six a.m. and not quite as dark outside, I voiced a quick appeal for my candidates, and eagerly jumped out of bed. It was election day, and I had signed up to work at one of the local precincts. I thought it would be fun and wanted to participate in the process. Besides I figured there'd be a selection of Krispy Kreme's to choose from.

By the time I arrived around 6:35 a.m., the lines had started. It was exciting. Our inspector and a couple of the other precinct clerks were there, and had already set-up the compact voting booths. I have to admit, not an election goes by that I don't wish I could draw a curtain and pull a lever to vote. There's something clandestine and puissant about it. Voting, itself, is empowering, but add a secret booth ... off the charts.

It was a non-stop voter parade throughout most of the day. We had a couple of short lulls, but then it would quickly pick up again. During an early calm and after a bit of coaxing by myself and another clerk, our kind inspector dashed off to fulfill our donut requirement. I figured it was the buttermilk glazed that saw me through the long day ahead.

About an hour into the routine, I had quite a misty moment. Glancing around, I saw people of all different ages, different races, different genders and different styles. There was the suited-up middle-aged professional man chatting with the smiling pierced-up male student, who couldn't wait to vote for the first time.

There was the postal worker, who pridefully pulled out a stack of stubs from voting in previous elections. There was the guy, who put his "I Voted" sticker on his stomach and told us, "I voted from my gut." And there was the elderly woman, dressed to the nines, in line behind the young woman garbed in her hospital blues. And on and on ... all concerned, all caring and all voting. There was a genuine sense of gravity to it all.

My favorite was a little girl, about 5 years old. Due to the deceased chad, I was the designated dot-demonstrator, and when her mother got to the dot spot, I began instructions. Standing in front of her mom, her little blond head just reached over the table top. Eyes were glued on the machine, and ears were heeding my words.

After I finished demonstrating, her mother said to me as she stroked her daughter's hair, "I was just telling her that women haven't always been able to vote. And that many women worked very hard in order to have the right to vote."

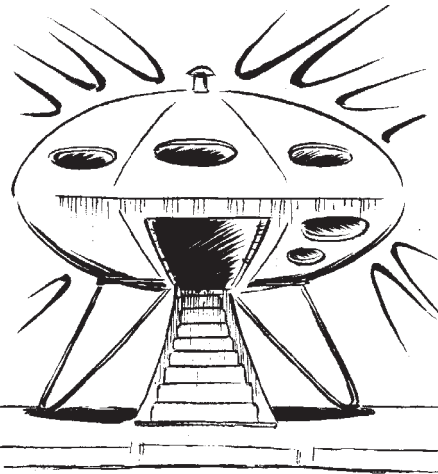
The little girl smiled up at her mom then across at me. She was ready to take a crack at it. And I was not about to deny her. "Would you like to try,?" I asked. "Yes, please," she answered. And she gave that pen enormous muscle landing her dot on the perfect candidate ... Lily Tomlin ... who, according to the example ballot, was running for U.S. Humorist.

Before she departed to cast her ballot, the fledgling voter's mom asked if I'd seen "Iron Jawed Angels," the HBO movie now out on DVD. I told her yes, I had. We both were a little aflutter about the remarkable life of Alice Paul, who led the final fight for a woman's right to vote. It wasn't until 1920 after decades of struggle by Paul and many dedicated women, that the 19th amendment, entitled the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, became a part of the Constitution of the United States.

Now that is gravity. Lalalala ...

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

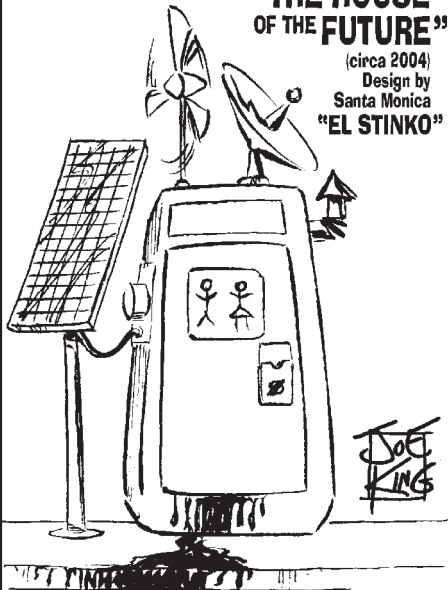
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LETTERS, from page 6

the world where the Arab member of the Knesset (parliament) could openly call for the destruction of the state in which Parliament he seats?

Right of Return is the law that guarantees any Jew in any corner of the world at any time a right to go to Israel and to be protected by this state. Law of Return was adopted as a result of the world's silence during the Holocaust. It helped to save and still saves the lives of thousands of people, and by itself is an important reason for existence of the state of Israel. When Iron Curtain collapsed, I went to study in Paris and after the Soviet Union could not even imagine that such freedom and democracy could exist. The family that hosted me traced its French routes to a Napoleon soldier. Recently they abandoned everything and moved to Israel because of the fear for their safety in a free France.

Not that much time passed here since Charles Lindbergh gathered crowds of thousands on his fascist meetings, or after the refugee passengers of the "Saint Louis" were not allowed to disembark in Miami and were sent back to the gas chambers. Give it now some thought of what Right of Return does to "Jews from all over the world who are or have been intelligence in their own countries."

Give it now some thought about the Christian baby blood libel or "Protocols of Zion Elders." Aren't those pathological accusations of the same sort? Strange that Liz Peel did not bring it up.

I respect the freedom of speech for everyone. Unfortunately, when I see that newspapers give the tribune to "not anti-Semitic" letters like the one by Liz Peel, I feel that the deadly "spirit of Saint Louis" is still alive, and I am getting scared. And I will fight so no one to be forced to exercise the Right of Return.

Yehuda Leibman
Santa Monica

Street design a turn-off

Editor:

I read in today's paper (SMDP, Oct. 26, page 1) that the city is voting for \$148,000 to improve the streets, sidewalks, etc. I hope they are not employing the idiot who designed the turn-off on Cloverfield and Pico (going south). That is one of the most hazardous turn-offs I have ever seen. At night you might run up onto the divider if you don't know it's there. It is only second in stupidity to the roundabout on 26th Street and Washington Avenue.

Perhaps the new City Council will find someone who is knowledgeable about traffic.

Harold H. Starr
Santa Monica

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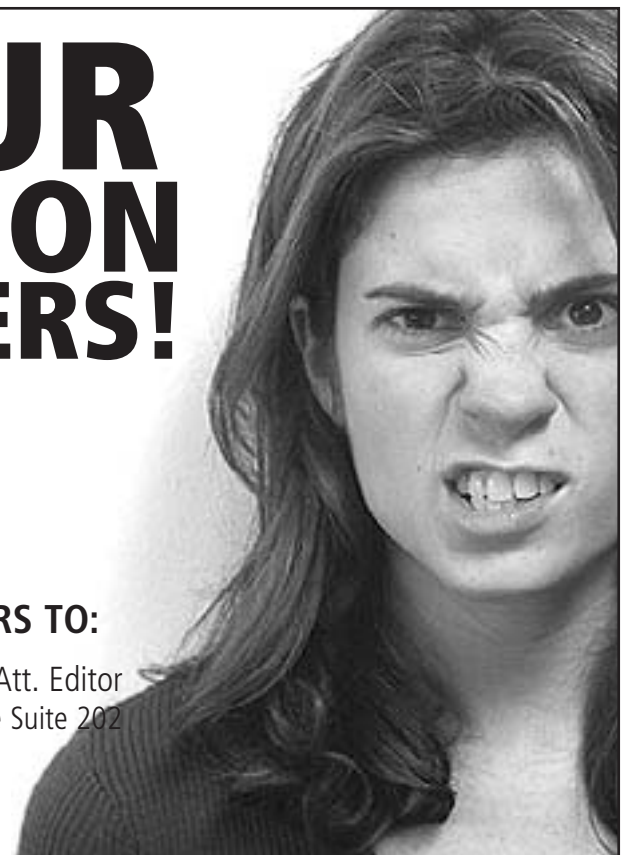
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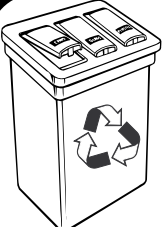




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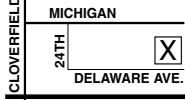
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STATE

Calif. settles electronic voting suit for \$2.6M

BY RACHEL KONRAD
AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — California Attorney General Bill Lockyer announced Wednesday a \$2.6 million settlement with Diebold Inc., resolving a lawsuit alleging that the company sold the state and several counties shoddy voting equipment.

Although critics characterized the settlement as a slap on the wrist, Diebold also agreed to pay an undisclosed sum to partially reimburse Alameda, San Diego and other counties for the cost of paper backup ballots, ink and other supplies in last week's election. California's secretary of state banned the use of one type of Diebold machine in May, after problems with the machines disenfranchised an unknown number of voters in the March primary.

Faulty equipment forced at least 6,000 of 316,000 voters in Alameda County, just east of San Francisco, to use backup paper ballots instead of the paperless voting terminals. In San Diego County, a power surge resulted in hundreds of touch-screens that wouldn't start when the polls opened, forcing election officials to turn voters away from the polls.

According to the settlement, the North Canton, Ohio-based company must also upgrade ballot tabulation software that Los Angeles County and others used Nov. 2. Diebold must also strengthen the security of its paperless voting machines and computer servers and promise never to connect voting systems to outside networks.

"There is no more fundamental right in our democracy than the right to vote and have your vote counted," Lockyer said in a statement. "In making false claims about its equipment, Diebold treated that right, and the taxpayers who bought its machines, cavalierly. This settlement holds Diebold accountable and helps ensure the future quality and security of its voting systems."

The tentative settlement could be approved as soon as Dec. 10.

The original lawsuit was filed a year ago by Seattle-based electronic voting critic Bev Harris and Sacramento-based activist Jim March, who characterized the \$2.6 million settlement as "peanuts."

March, a whistle blower who filed suit on behalf of California taxpayers, could receive as much as \$75,000 because of the settlement. But he said the terms don't require Diebold to overhaul its election servers — which have had problems in Washington's King County and elsewhere — to guard them from hackers, software bugs or other failures.

The former computer system administrator was also upset that the state announced the deal so quickly. Several activist groups, computer scientists and federal researchers are analyzing Nov. 2 election data, looking for evidence of vote rigging or unintentional miscounts in hundreds of counties nationwide that used touch-screen terminals. Results are expected by early December.

"This settlement will shut down a major avenue of investigation before evidence starts trickling in," March said. "It's very premature."

A Diebold executive said the settlement would allow the company to spend more money on improving software and avoid "the distraction and cost of prolonged litigation." Diebold earnings plunged 5 cents per share in the third quarter because of the California litigation, which could cost an additional 1 cent per share in the current quarter.

Diebold shares closed Wednesday at \$53.20, up 1.22 percent from Tuesday in trading on the New York Stock Exchange.

"We've worked closely with California officials to come to an agreement that allows us to continue to move forward," Diebold senior vice president Thomas W. Swidarski said in a statement. "While we believe Diebold has strong responses to the claims raised in the suit, we are primarily interested in building an effective and trusting relationship with California election officials."



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STATE BRIEFS

Jury finds Marine guilty

By The Associated Press

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — A jury of Marine Corps officers on Wednesday found a major guilty of maltreatment and dereliction of duty in connection with the death of an Iraqi prisoner but acquitted him of the most serious charge of assault and battery.

Maj. Clarke Paulus stood formally and showed no reaction as the jury foreman read the verdict following about six hours of deliberation at the base north of San Diego. His parents and wife stood behind him.

After the verdict was read, he turned and touched his mother's hand. His wife left the courtroom in tears.

Paulus faces dismissal from the Marine Corps and up to a year in military prison instead of the 1 1/2 years he could have received if convicted on all charges.

Judge Col. Robert Chester declared a recess following the verdict and at the request of the eight jurors began the sentencing phase of Paulus' court-martial. It was expected that the jurors will reach a decision late Wednesday.

Holding back tears, Paulus stood before the jury and apologized to both the Marine Corps and to his family, some of whom attended the hearing.

Bullet train maps unveiled

By The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — California High Speed Rail Authority officials unveiled a tentative map of routes for the proposed statewide bullet train on Wednesday — a plan that includes a 120-mile, nonstop stretch between Bakersfield and Fresno.

That Central Valley section of the line, which was recommended by the authority's staff, bypasses Visalia despite the city's pleas for a stop.

The 700-mile system, with 200 mph-plus trains, would cost about \$35 billion and carry as many as 68 million passengers a year by 2020. Voters will decide a bond measure in 2006 to pay for part of the project. Construction on major parts of the electric train system could start in 2008.

Visalia officials, bothered by the thought of the state's major transportation project zooming by at 200 miles per hour, asked that the city not be dropped from the map.

The city was slighted in two ways — two routes from Fresno to Bakersfield had been considered, with one running through Visalia and the other through Hanford, in Kings County to the west. The staff recommended that the rail follow the Hanford route, but also suggested that the 120-mile stretch run nonstop.

Visalia City Councilman Jesus Gamboa asked the High Speed Rail board consider that the populations of Tulare and Kings counties are growing at a faster clip than the rest of the state.

Supreme Court weighs 24-year-old case

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Wednesday considered whether a California jury that sentenced a convicted killer to death had properly taken into account his religious conversion, which a prosecutor incorrectly contended was irrelevant.

In a 24-year-old case, most of the justices seemed to agree that the California prosecutor was wrong to make that assertion about William Payton and that a trial judge should have corrected the prosecutor. But the justices were divided over whether the errors made a difference in sentencing.

"The prosecutor stands there and twice said, 'You can't legally consider this evidence,' and the judge never corrects it. Why isn't this a reasonable likelihood of error?" Justice David H. Souter said.

But Justice Stephen G. Breyer said justices only can overturn the death sentence if it was unreasonable given all the evidence presented at trial. "That's the harder question for me," he said.

The case involves California's appeal of a lower court ruling setting aside Payton's sentence in the 1980 rape and stabbing death of Pamela Montgomery of Garden Grove, Calif.

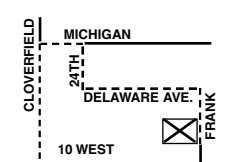
In trying to sway jurors to spare Payton's life, defense lawyers said Payton had made a sincere commitment to God after committing the crimes and was a model inmate who could help others through a prison ministry.

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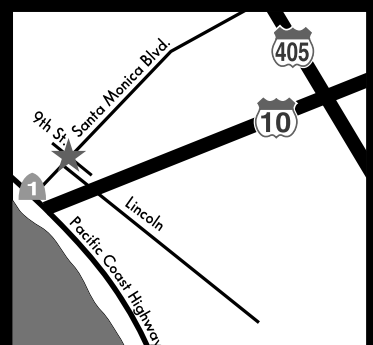
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Entertainment

What’s playing ...

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ALFIE
Remake is lighter in tone, decidedly more farcical than the original. Law’s a movie star who’s awfully easy on the eyes and boundlessly talented. Starring: Jude Law, Susan Sarandon

RAY
An instant inductee into the pantheon of great biographic movies. There isn’t a moment in the entire picture in which we’re not convinced Foxx IS Ray Charles. Starring: Jamie Foxx, Regina King, Kerry Washington

BIRTH
Even a mildly disappointing third act twist cannot mitigate the intensity of “Birth,” which ranks among the year’s best. Starring: Nicole Kidman, Lauren Bacall

SAW
Gratuitously violent, unoriginal and entirely too loud. Proof that atmospherics and gore alone do not a compelling serial killer thriller make. Starring: Cary Elwes, Danny Glover

IT’S ALL ABOUT LOVE
As the designated interpreters of the director’s scattershot musings, Phoenix and Danes are hopelessly lost. Starring: Joaquin Phoenix, Clare Danes

THE GRUDGE
Americanized version of a commercially successful, albeit humdrum Japanese horror flick is silly rather than chilling. Starring: Sarah Michelle Gellar

SURVIVING CHRISTMAS
It’s entirely likely star Ben Affleck will come to rue this wreck even more than last year’s notorious flop, “Gigli.” Starring: Ben Affleck, James Gandolfini

SIDEWAYS
A fantastic movie from Alexander Payne, who may very well be America’s most provocative cinematic storyteller. Starring: Paul Giamatti, Virginia Madsen

UNDERTOW
The cast imbues every scene with genuine emotion, working within the confines of a rich, intense narrative. Starring: Dermot Mulroney, Jamie Bell

SHALL WE DANCE?
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

Renne Zellweger beefs it up for ‘Bridget Jones’

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

In “Bridget Jones, The Edge of Reason,” the sequel to the 2001 hit, Academy Award winning actress Renee Zellweger returns to the role that earned her first Oscar nomination. To play the pleasantly plump Brit, the svelte star once again added several “fat units” (as her character characterizes calories) belying up from a size 6 to a size 14. Zellweger, whose credits include “Chicago,” “Jerry Maguire” and “Cold Mountain,” has since shed the extra weight. And she took time out recently to shed light on being Bridget Jones.

QUESTION: What, besides potential box office success, went into the decision to revisit this character?

RENNE ZELLWEGER: There was a lot of trepidation for me in approaching this project, because I love this character and I love the books and I love the experience we had on the first film. I didn’t want to compromise that experience in any way by doing something that wasn’t necessary. As a lover of film, I find that most follow-up films are not motivated from a creative place, and I wanted to be certain that this one — because the characters are so special — was substantial enough to stand on its own as a film.

Q: What do you love most about Bridget Jones?

RZ: She has this beautiful purity, this innocence to her that comes out in everything that she does. She’s childlike in her movement. It’s not self-aware or manipulated, so anything goes. I love that it’s allowed with this character. That it’s appropriate with this character.

Q: Tell us a little bit about working with your co-stars, Colin Firth and Hugh Grant?

RZ: As you can imagine, it’s a really nice day at the office. They’re both so smart and so funny, and they care so much about the integrity of what it is they do. To come together and collaborate with people who care so much about what we’re bringing to life makes for a really memorable experience.

Q: Was there any apprehension about packing on the pounds again to play Bridget?

RZ: The physical transformation was non-negotiable in my mind. It’s imperative, and without it, it wouldn’t be an authentic revisitation of this character. Then to me, creatively, I don’t see what the point would be. If you’re not going to be the character, then why approach it at all?

Q: What steps did you take to ensure that you weren’t simply repeating what you did in the first film?

RZ: I had to look at Bridget and think about how she might have grown, and how she might be different at this stage in her life. Then I had to decide how to implement showing those changes and where. To take a character and try to keep the essence of the character that’s familiar, and yet show how she’s grown, is an entirely new challenge.



Bridget Jones cleans up her act; is a bore

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

It’s scary out on the edge of reason. I know this because part two of the suddenly-sucky “Bridget Jones” series drove me there, where I struggled for quite some time to think of a single logical, rational or intelligent excuse for the existence of this galling sequel. Eventually, it dawned on me: There’s plenty of box office milk left in this cow. Speaking on behalf of men everywhere, I admit that the first film was, um, wonderful (there, I said it). But this one, well, this one does its predecessor a disservice and feels a lot like premeditated cock-up, filled with uneven sitcom mishap set pieces, credulity-stretching conveniences and humor that is as flat as our buxom, chain-smoking heroine isn’t. And speaking of the ciggies, for the most part, they’re gone. So too, are a great deal of the more colorful four-letter words the old Bridget (Renee Zellweger, then and now) bandied about with delightful abandon. The new model Jones is still paunchy, yet considerably less indecorous than before — an unfortunate metamorphosis, to be sure.

She no longer longs to shag bad boys like Daniel Cleaver (Hugh Grant), who’s back again delivering the film’s few genuinely clever gags. Daniel’s left the publishing world to become a TV personality on the very same network where Bridget works — go figure — only he isn’t around all that much, and Bridget’s too consumed with stiff boyfriend Mark Darcy (Colin Firth) to care anyway. The plot revolves around Bridget’s insecurities about her relationship with Mark. After six whole weeks of dating, he’s yet to pop the question, AND he’s been spending an awful lot of time with a comely young colleague (Jacinda Barrett). Being not-so-understandably out of sorts over all this, the accident-prone Bridget gets herself into one mess after another: At a black-tie dinner, on the slopes of the Alps, and — the film’s nadir — in a Thai prison, where she teaches her English-challenged cell mates how to sing and dance like Madonna. It’d been better had she instructed them on the Three S’s — swearing, smoking and shagging. But then, there simply isn’t anything better than the original to be found this time around.

(Rated R for language and some sexual content. Running time: 108 minutes.)

‘After the Sunset’ sets

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

For anyone fool enough to venture into the theater, this aimless Brett Ratner-helmed heist flick is sure to inspire thoughts of better things to do after the end credits roll. “After the Sunset” isn’t so much a bad film as it is a wholly unoriginal and unnecessary one. Surely the world doesn’t need another weak Elmore Leonard knock-off populated with one-dimensional characters engaging in humdrum high jinks ... hell, it hasn’t even been a year since the release of the “The Big Bounce.”

Fifty-one-year-old Pierce Brosnan, sporting a perpetual five o’clock shadow, is the latest lucky star to benefit from Hollywood’s incongruous insistence on pairing “mature” males with much younger leading ladies — in this case, the sultry Salma Hayek as Lola, Max’s life partner in crime. Max and Lola steal impossibly valuable booty, to the great dismay of their bumbling nemesis, FBI agent Stan Lloyd (Woody Harrelson). Months after they pull off a jewel heist that inexplicably leads to Stan’s suspension from the Bureau, he locates the deceptive duo in the Caribbean, where they are seemingly enjoying a very comfortable early retirement. Ah, but a cruise ship bearing a priceless Napoleon diamond is docked within eyesight of the couple’s beachfront abode, and Stan is convinced Max means to make the most of this highly convenient coincidence. It’s unclear whether Stan means to catch a thief and regain credibility with his bosses, or if he wants in on Max’s action, but there’s no mistaking Ratner’s objective: To travel the well-worn path of least resistance in a genre that in recent years has been stretched beyond bearable limits.

(Rated PG-13 for sexuality, violence and language. Running time: 100 minutes.)

Depp, Winslet master 'Finding Neverland' flick

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Next month marks the 100th anniversary of the stage debut of James Matthew Barrie's masterpiece, "Peter Pan." It's hard to imagine a more transcendent tribute to that milestone than director Marc Foster ("Monster's Ball") and screenwriter

David Magee's fantastic adventure, "Finding Neverland." With his mesmeric performance as the pedomorphic playwright, Johnny Depp makes yet another strong case that he is indeed American cinema's most versatile talent — his Scottish accent is flawless. Kate Winslet also is up to task as the young widow whose

boys are the inspiration for Barrie's cultural phenomenon, which sparked a revolution in children's literature.

The pressure is on Barrie (Depp) after his play, "Little Mary," flops on the London stage. His loyal producer Charles Frohman (Dustin Hoffman, clearly enjoying himself) can ill afford to lose his shirt again, and Barrie's icy wife (Radha Mitchell) is growing increasingly dissatisfied with his aloof behavior. Clearly bored with indulging the straight-laced tastes of polite society in Edwardian England, Barrie spends his days in the delightful Kensington Gardens with his dog Porthos, searching for inspiration. It arrives in the form of Sylvia du Maurier (Winslet) and her four sons — one of whom, the too-serious Peter (an excellent Freddie Highmore), becomes the

namesake of Barrie's celebrated imp. While Barrie spends more and more time playing make-believe with Sylvia and her brood, his marriage falls apart and rumors of infidelity (and worse) swirl. But real-world strife cannot abate the author's capacity to conjure his imagined place of wonder, Neverland ... that is, until Sylvia develops a foreboding cough. Shortly thereafter, the ticking alligator comes calling, and the theater gets real dusty (sniff, sniff). "Finding Neverland" is as moving a motion picture as we're likely to see this year, and — as the movie poster contends — is sure to unlock even the most immured imagination.

(Rated PG for mild thematic elements and brief language. Running time: 101 minutes.)

'Kinsey' gets kinky

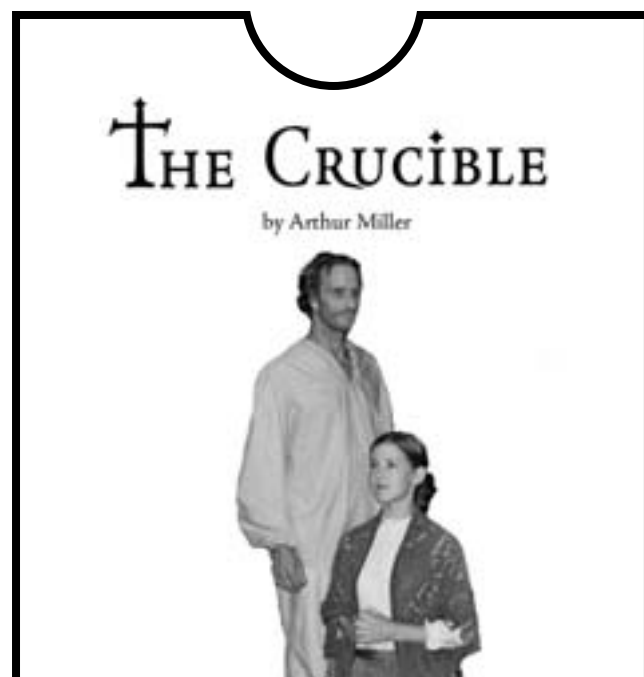
BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

From Bill Condon, the Academy Award-winning author who penned "Gods and Monsters" and "Chicago," comes a biopic about the late Indiana University Professor Alfred Kinsey, whose exhaustively researched 1948 tome "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male" was an international sensation that sparked a sexual revolution.

Liam Neeson and Laura Linney deliver categorically meritorious performances as the good doc — or Prok, as Kinsey was nicknamed — and his remarkable wife Clara. Kinsey's research associates and fellow sexual adventurers are brought to life with great aplomb by the always-interesting Peter Sarsgaard, Chris O'Donnell playing refreshingly against type, and Timothy Hutton, who doesn't seem to work nearly enough to satisfy discriminating moviegoers. This is a hot-button project sure to spark debate, but thankfully Condon never allows moralizing to get in the way of snappy storytelling. Kinsey's history is nimbly recounted, and bristles with fun and, on occasion, arresting poignance. John Lithgow is superb in a limited role as Kinsey's oppressive old man.

(Rated R for pervasive sexual content, including some graphic images and descriptions. Running time: 118 minutes.)



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Tahoe resorts hope to attract destination skiers

BY TOM GARDNER
 Associated Press Writer

OLYMPIC VALLEY, Calif. — Gliding down the mountain above the ski runs in the Squaw Valley cable car, it's easy to imagine the snow-covered buildings nestled below as a tiny village under the Christmas tree.

A few miles to the south, the gondola at Heavenly Mountain Resorts overlooks perhaps the most picturesque alpine lake in America as it slips past the hotel-casinos at Lake Tahoe's south shore.

The ski runs haven't changed all that much, but the surroundings have. Sierra resorts don't just want to be a place people want to go to. They intend to be a place people don't want to leave.

"The owners of these resorts are trying to position them as not just weekend resorts, but as destination resorts where guests are more likely to stay for longer periods of time," said Will Marks, an analyst with JMP Securities.

Heavenly, which was bought in 2002 by Vail Resorts Inc. from American Skiing Co., has teamed with Marriott International Inc. to transform the once tawdry south shore of Tahoe into a blend of time shares and upscale shopping and dining.

Some 30 miles to the north, Intrawest Corp. has joined

with privately held Squaw Valley to develop a growing village of condos, shops and restaurants.

While other resorts in the Tahoe Basin are expanding their lodging and upgrading their facilities, Heavenly and Squaw have emerged as the region's leaders, according to Marks, who researches all three of the public companies.

"I think Intrawest and Vail have proven over the last several years that by investing capital in their resorts they are increasing their market share," he said.

The developers take different approaches to achieve the same goal.

At South Lake Tahoe, Marriott had to build amid crisscrossing city streets, including U.S. 50, which bisects the town. Intrawest had the base area at Squaw to play with and developed a more European village, with pedestrian-only cobblestone streets meandering amid the shops and condos.

A study is underway to analyze the effects of redevelopment on the economy of South Lake Tahoe, but numbers are mixed. The Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority says the Tahoe basin attracts 2.2 million visitors a year, 1.3 million of them to the south shore. The South Lake Tahoe room tax collection in June was up 5 percent, while rooms rented were down 3.3 percent from the previous June.

Adam Aron, chairman and chief executive officer of

Vail Resorts, said that two years ago, just before his company bought Heavenly, the resort sold 830,000 lift tickets. This past year, the number was up to 965,000.

"That's a big growth and that's showing that the people who visit Lake Tahoe, who live in a 3-4 hour radius of here really are responding to the quality improvements that we're making," he said. "What we said was we were going to bring Colorado-style skiing to Lake Tahoe, and so far, we have been rewarded."

Vail, Marriott and a coalition of local government groups have committed \$250 million to replacing the T-shirt shops, tattoo parlors and mom-and-pop motels on the California side of the state line with resorts, upscale boutiques and restaurants and a multiplex cinema. All are centered on Heavenly's centerpiece gondola, which whisks skiers and sightseers 2.4 miles from the Marriott lodges at the base close to the 10,082-foot top of the mountain in 12 minutes.

Intrawest also plans to invest a quarter of a billion dollars in its four-phase development of condos, shops and restaurants, offering resident skiers lifts a few steps from their doors at the site of the 1960 Winter Olympics. Squaw has invested \$30 million over the past decade on its lifts, restaurants and other amenities.

At Tahoe's south shore, the gondola has replaced the dreary bus ride from the motels to Heavenly's rustic base station, where ski boots clumped on wooden floors and the restaurant menu was heavy on burgers, fries and chili.

"If one were a dispassionate observer of Heavenly only two years ago, you'd have say that the lift network was antiquated, the restaurants were uninspired, the bathrooms on the mountain were nauseating and just in the two years, we've already invested \$25 million to clean up and improve Heavenly," Aron said.

Now, at the base, it's Wolfgang Puck, Kalanis Restaurant (Hawaiian for Heavenly), the improvisational grill of FiRE + iCE, with its European outdoor cafes surrounding the wintertime fire pits — and the ubiquitous Starbucks.

Squaw has one of those, too, along with outdoor shops, a mixture of restaurants, a wine store and even a hardware shop for do-it-yourself condo owners.

If tourists at the south shore don't choose the lodgings on the California side of the line, there are the hotel-casinos on the Nevada side, a two-block walk from the gondola.

At Heavenly, with runs on both sides of the state line, chief operating officer Blaise Carrig said the resorts and the hotel-casinos have joined to aggressively market Tahoe as both a summertime destination and a skier's Mecca.

"We're probably about equally challenged," Carrig said. "Them with Indian gaming and us with just the competition for skiers that we see within the resort area. I think the casinos see that they really have to be marketing all of Tahoe."

Nineteen ski resorts surround the Lake Tahoe area, all offering attractions for skiers and riders — location, price, challenge. Heavenly and Squaw aim to appeal to more than the daytrippers from the Bay area or Reno by offering a second home on the hill.

Both The Village at Squaw Valley and Marriott's two properties at the south shore — Marriott Grand Residence Club and Marriott's Timber Lodge — emphasize stone, wood and fireplaces. The theme is alpine rather than casino kitsch.

Pamela Fowers, a chiropractor from the Sacramento, Calif., area fell in love with Grand Residence when she and her husband stayed there with her sister and her family. She and her husband now own two 13-week interests, one a single bedroom and the other a two-bedroom when they have guests or their teenage children bring a friend.

"Lake Tahoe is my heaven on earth. We love to ski, the kids snowboard. We ski during the day, we're in the village at night. We like to eat and shop and I'm looking forward to more stores."

Phase I of The Village at Squaw Valley — 139 condominiums — sold for a total of \$73.6 million in five hours at prices ranging from around \$300,000 to more than \$1.6 million. Marriott Grand Residence Club offers fractional ownership options of 5 to 13 weeks ranging from around \$100,000 (5-weeks, one-bedroom) to \$340,000 (13-weeks, two-bedroom), depending on the residence type, interest purchased and the view. Marriott's Timber Lodge is weekly. Nightly rentals are available at both resorts.

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STATE

Schwarzenegger a phenomenon

BY JIM WASSERMAN

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — One year ago, Arnold Schwarzenegger became California's 38th governor, and the Hollywood actor-turned-politician remains a phenomenon — theatrical, unbridled, radiating power and raw confidence.

The governor smokes giant cigars, calls state government "a mastodon frozen in time" and raises money by the bushel basket. He whips out old movie lines to make points. He cheerfully mocks opponents in the state Legislature as "girlie men" — and in this most political-ly correct of states, he gets away with it.

Swept into office on a wave of enthusiasm for his reform platform, Schwarzenegger got 48 percent of the vote in a field of 135 candidates to oust former Gov. Gray Davis in a recall election — and embarked on an aggressive agenda.

As a Republican who ousted a Democrat, he promised to improve California's business climate and remove barriers to job growth. He said he would bring an end to the partisan gridlock that has dominated the Capitol and break the hold of special interests, while opening the doors of government to the voters.

In a word, he promised to do things differently, and most of all, solve the state's fiscal crisis.

Now, as a rookie in the nation's most powerful governor's office, Schwarzenegger rides some of the highest approval ratings of any governor in California history, and more, a majority of voters say they're optimistic again about California. "The Natural," a serious political journal calls him.

"Fantaaastic," says Schwarzenegger.

Yet the 57-year-old governor is a mass of contradictions. He calls himself the "people's governor," but tilts fiercely toward big business. He promised to "sweep out" special interests, yet accepts more of their money than Davis did. And despite his popularity, 12 of the 16 candidates he pushed for legislative seats on Nov. 2 lost.

As Schwarzenegger marks his first 12 months in office Wednesday, even his staff calls some of his campaign promises, including pledges to usher in a new era of openness at the statehouse, a work in progress.

In cultivating the Schwarzenegger image, his administration has been characterized by tight control over information, and even as the governor talks about open government he frequently ducks reporters. The research and drafting of the governor's California Performance Review, a sweeping study on government reform, was conducted behind closed doors, and those who worked on it signed confidentiality agreements.

Yet at the same time, his backers say Schwarzenegger has had only a year to fulfill his promise to upend a Sacramento culture where "contributions go in, the favors go out."

The governor has "established a trust with Californians ... and he has been open," said his spokeswoman, Margita Thompson. "Does he think more needs to be done? Absolutely, and he intends to do more next year."

While certainly much has changed in California since Schwarzenegger took office, some argue that in key policy areas of state government — especially how tax money is spent — voters are getting a bad sequel.

"Schwarzenegger has succeeded in some areas — restoring a sense of confidence is probably the biggest thing," said Edmond Costantini, professor emeritus of political science at the University of California, Davis. "But when it comes to the budget, it's really a lot of smoke and mirrors. In some ways, when the history books are written, some will write that he really missed an opportunity to come to grips with our budget problems."

"We have more debt than we did a year ago and several new forms of debt," added Jean Ross, executive director of the California Budget Project, a liberal-leaning nonprofit that evaluates the impact of state spending on low- and middle-income families. "We are just pushing off our problems into the future."

Schwarzenegger makes no apologies for his first budget, anchored by a \$15 billion loan that refinanced much of the state's deficit. He says the borrowing buys the state time to find longer term solutions. And so far, Wall Street has largely agreed, as all three of the nation's big rating agencies have upgraded California's credit from record lows, even while bankers are keeping a wary eye on the horizon.

He's heartened conservatives by repealing a \$4 billion car tax and holding the line against new taxes. He's encouraged liberals by proving himself friendly to the environment, stem cell research and rights of domestic partners.

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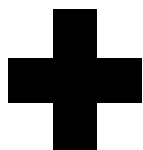
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NATIONAL

Off-road vehicle misuse overwhelming rangers

BY STEVE LIPSHER

Associated Press Writer

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo. — Improbably, the 35-foot recreational vehicle had negotiated its way around several road-blocking boulders, up a steep dirt hill and past a trench known as a “tank trap” meant to stop such excursions into the forest.

With the vehicle perched on the top of a rise overlooking a meadow choked with beaver ponds and willows, the RV’s inhabitants — a half-dozen unshaven men in blaze-orange enjoying a hunting camp — said they didn’t realize they had done anything wrong.

“This has obviously been closed,” forest ranger Mike Kenealy calmly explained at the camp on a recent morning. “You can see people have been driving around (the barriers), but it doesn’t make it OK for you to drive around it.”

Kenealy is among an overwhelmed and overextended cadre of rangers fighting the increasing problem of illegal off-road vehicle use on national forests and other public lands, which typically is at its worst during hunting season.

“The problem comes particularly when suddenly

someone shoots an elk back up in there, and they don’t want to pack it out on their backs,” Kenealy said of hunters who head into the high country each autumn. “Many folks decide to take an ATV (all-terrain vehicle), especially if it’s open terrain, then they tear up the meadows.

“With the technology of the quads and ATVs today, you can go almost anywhere, crawl up trees.”

Quads are four-wheel all-terrain vehicles. While a wayward recreational vehicle deep in the backcountry is a strange exception, the growing illegal use of off-road vehicles has been deemed by Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth as one of the greatest threats to forest health across the nation by carving new trails and contributing to erosion and the spread of noxious weeds.

“I’ve noticed quite a bit of that,” said hunter John Montoya of Colorado Springs, legally parked in his pickup just off a road on a recent weekend near Glenwood Springs. “I haven’t seen any ATVs, but there’s a pretty good ATV trail over there, and every day it gets a little thicker. It’s a problem.”

In the grassy meadow ahead of him, a muddy two-track clearly displays the telltale cleated tracks of knob-by tires; 300 yards away, another group of hunters has

illegally driven several pickup trucks to a camp secluded by an island of trees.

“I get comments from people saying: ‘I’ve been driving up there for 40 years, and now you’re hassling me?’” Kenealy said after citing one of the drivers in the group as a token punishment. “My response is: ‘Well, sir, 40 years ago, there were three of you. Now, there are hundreds and hundreds of you.’”

In fact, the number of off-road vehicles registered in Colorado has ballooned from 11,744 in 1990-91 to 88,988 in 2003-04, according to the state Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation.

As more ATV riders take to the woods, more complaints pour in to public-land managers about noise, vegetation damage, erosion, and webs of new trails and braided pathways.

“I personally believe — and I know the agency believes — that off-highway use is a bona fide form of transportation and an acceptable way for people to enjoy the national forest,” Kenealy said. But, he added, that use ends at the end of the road — a point that is merely a suggestion to some riders of ATVs, dirt bikes and rock-climbing vehicles.

“Six years ago, a single vehicle went off there, just to see what they could do,” Kenealy said, pointing to an illegal track running parallel to a smooth dirt Forest Service road in the Fourmile Creek drainage. “You can still see it.”

Finding the culprits, however, is a needle-in-the-haystack scenario. Kenealy estimates rangers catch as many as 10 percent of the violators, but he acknowledges that each ranger is assigned such a large territory that a lawbreaker’s chances of getting nabbed are pretty small.

“There aren’t enough people on the ground to enforce even the basic rules,” said Scott Kovarovich, director of the Natural Trails and Waters Coalition, a Washington-based environmental organization. “Right now, nationally, there’s one law enforcement officer for an average of 452,000 acres. There’s no cop on the beat out there.”

In some situations, rangers have been unable to track down culprits who drove from private property onto public land because no legal routes exist to the areas where the off-road use is occurring. And when they do find violators, the punishment is light: Rangers may cite violators and even confiscate their vehicles, but a ticket carries a maximum penalty of only \$75, and seizures are rare because the Forest Service generally has no place for impoundments and officials don’t want to assume liability.

Even gates across closed roads haven’t stopped the problem, as ATV riders simply have walked their machines under them or figured out ways around them.

“We were finding people with trucks were just backing up to standard-sized gates, putting a ramp over the gate and dumping their ATVs,” Kenealy said, pointing out a spot where a second gate had been installed 100 yards farther down a closed road.

“I’ve had two instances with people driving around with oxyacetylene torches in the back of their trucks. We’ve had gates cut. We’ve had gates blown up with dynamite. We’ve had them pulled out, bent over — you name it.”

Under a new policy now in place in the White River National Forest and being considered nationwide, routes are closed to motor vehicles unless specifically designated as open, a subtle but significant change from the historic stance that areas were open unless specifically designated as closed.

Vehicles are allowed as far as 300 feet off designated routes, however, and those trails can appear permanent after just a few vehicle treads, giving those who follow the impression that they can go an additional 300 feet in a never-ending game of linkages, especially when damage from just a single off-road vehicle can appear as a viable path.

Dennis Larratt, president of the Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition, acknowledges that a few bad actors have tarnished the image of ATV users, and he encourages riding only on legal trails in part out of fear of losing access to large areas of public land.

“Oftentimes, it’s just the sight of somebody being where they’re not supposed to be that is enough to cause problems for us. I can’t say it always causes problems in terms of resource damage. I can say it causes problems in terms of image,” he said.

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INTERNATIONAL



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat dead at 75

BY RAVI NESSMAN

Associated Press Writer

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Yasser Arafat's body was being flown back to the Mideast for funeral services after French and Palestinian officials honored him Thursday with a ceremony befitting a head of state.

Arafat's widow, Suha, stifled sobs as the Palestinian flag-draped coffin of her 75-year-old husband was carried off a military helicopter to an official French aircraft. The aircraft then left for Cairo, Egypt, where funeral services will be held Friday.

Arafat, revered as the champion of Palestinian statehood and reviled as a terrorist, died Thursday morning, spreading spasms of grief among Palestinians and rekindling calls for new peace talks with Israel.

Arafat's death marked a turning point in modern Middle East history, leaving the Palestinians without a strong leader for the first time in four decades and arousing fears of a chaotic power struggle that could lead to fighting in the streets.

The PLO elected former Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas as its new chief, virtually ensuring he will succeed Arafat as leader of the Palestinians, at least for an interim period.

The Palestinian legislature also swore in Parliament Speaker Rauhi Fattouh as caretaker president of the Palestinian Authority until elections can be held in 60 days, according to Palestinian law.

Arafat died at 3:30 a.m. Paris time (9:30 p.m. EST Wednesday) at a French military hospital. Neither his doctors nor Palestinian leaders said what killed him.

"He closed his eyes and his big heart stopped. He left for God but he is still among this great people," said senior Arafat aide Tayeb Abdel Rahim, who broke into tears as he announced Arafat's death.

A wave of grief quickly swept across the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Thousands ran into the streets, clutching his photograph, crying and wondering how they would survive without the man who embodied their struggle for statehood.

"He is our father," Namia Abu-Safia, 48, said sobbing in the Jebaliya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. "He is Palestine."

Black smoke from burning tires rose across the Gaza Strip and gunmen fired into the air in grief. Palestinian flags at Arafat's battered compound here were lowered to half-staff. Somber music played on the radio, church bells rang out and Quranic verses were played for hours over mosque loudspeakers.

The Palestinian Cabinet declared 40 days of mourning for Arafat, and the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Gaza, a militant group linked to Arafat's Fatah movement, decided to change its name to the Martyr Yasser Arafat Brigades.

Israel quickly moved to seal off the West Bank and Gaza Strip and increased security at Jewish settlements.

Arafat's health began deteriorating last month. Palestinian officials initially insisted he had a lingering case of the flu, but they grew increasingly concerned when he did not recover.

He was rushed to France on Oct. 29 for emergency medical treatment, marking the first time in nearly three years he left his compound. The image of the ailing leader being evacuated on a Jordanian helicopter convinced many Palestinians he would never return alive.

Arafat's body was taken from Percy

Military Training Hospital and placed aboard a French army helicopter for a short flight to Villacoublay military airfield outside Paris and a small ceremony involving French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, Foreign Minister Michel Barnier and Suha Arafat.

The coffin, borne by eight Republican Guard pallbearers past an honor guard, was draped in a Palestinian flag.

Hundreds of mourners lining the streets outside the hospital shouted, "From Paris to Jerusalem, we are all Palestinians!" as the helicopter took off.

The body was flown to Cairo for a Friday morning funeral service attended by foreign dignitaries. Egypt frantically prepared for the service in a military club north of Cairo and a short procession led by a horse-drawn carriage. Security forces at Cairo's airport and elsewhere in the city were put on maximum alert for the arrival of the dignitaries.

After the service, Arafat's body will be flown to his Ramallah compound for burial.

The Israeli military said all West Bank Palestinians would be allowed to attend, though they would have to pass through checkpoints. Only VIPs will be permitted to come from Gaza, a military official said, adding that Israel had information that terror groups would use the funeral to plan an attack.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who has shunned his longtime nemesis as a conniving terrorist and obstructionist, said his death can serve as a "historic turning point in the Middle East" and expressed hope the Palestinians would now work to stop terrorism. In a sign of the enmity the two men shared even in death, Sharon refused to mention Arafat by name.

Insisting that with Arafat at the helm it was impossible to discuss peace with the Palestinians, Sharon pushed forward with his "unilateral disengagement" plan. Israel will evacuate the Gaza Strip next year and continue building a West Bank barrier to separate Israelis from Palestinians.

Israeli officials have said Arafat's death would have no effect on the plan. And, since Arafat steadfastly refused to groom a successor, it was unlikely any Palestinian leader would emerge in the near future with the clout to make a peace deal with Israel.

Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian foreign minister, called on Israel to resume implementation of the U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan, saying Israel had used its dislike for Arafat as an excuse for avoiding obligations to withdraw from West Bank towns. Israel says the Palestinians failed to meet their plan obligation to crack down on militants.

President Bush described Arafat's death as a "significant moment" in Palestinian history and expressed hope the Palestinians would achieve statehood and peace with Israel.

"During the period of transition that is ahead, we urge all in the region and throughout the world to join in helping make progress toward these goals and toward the ultimate goal of peace," he said.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said Arafat "led his people to an historic acceptance and the need for a two-state solution."

That was something "we must continue to work tirelessly to achieve," Blair said.

Former President Carter called Arafat "a powerful human symbol and forceful advocate" for the Palestinians.

French President Jacques Chirac paid his respects at the hospital shortly after

noon Thursday. He hugged Suha Arafat before leaving.

Suha Arafat, with whom Arafat had a daughter, initially restricted access to her husband and publicly accused the Palestinian leadership of trying to usurp his powers. But the dramatic dispute was resolved after top Palestinian officials flew to France to check on their leader.

Chirac eulogized Arafat as a "man of courage and conviction," but others were more tempered, reflecting the vastly different images of the Palestinian leader.

"Yasser Arafat's life stands for the varied and tragic history of the Palestinian people and the Middle East as a whole," German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said. "In it were reflected many people's hopes for peace, but time and again also their disappointments and setbacks."

The Palestinians had demanded Arafat be buried in Jerusalem on the disputed holy site that once held the biblical Jewish temples and now holds Al Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest shrine.

Israel refused, fearing a Jerusalem burial would strengthen Palestinians' claims to a city they envision as a capital of a future Palestinian state.

The Palestinians agreed to bury him at his compound here, the muqata, battered and strewn with rubble from repeated Israeli raids. They plan to line his grave with soil taken from the Al Aqsa Mosque compound, said Ahmed Ghneim, a Fatah leader, and he is to be interred in a cement

box so his body can be moved to Jerusalem when the opportunity presents itself.

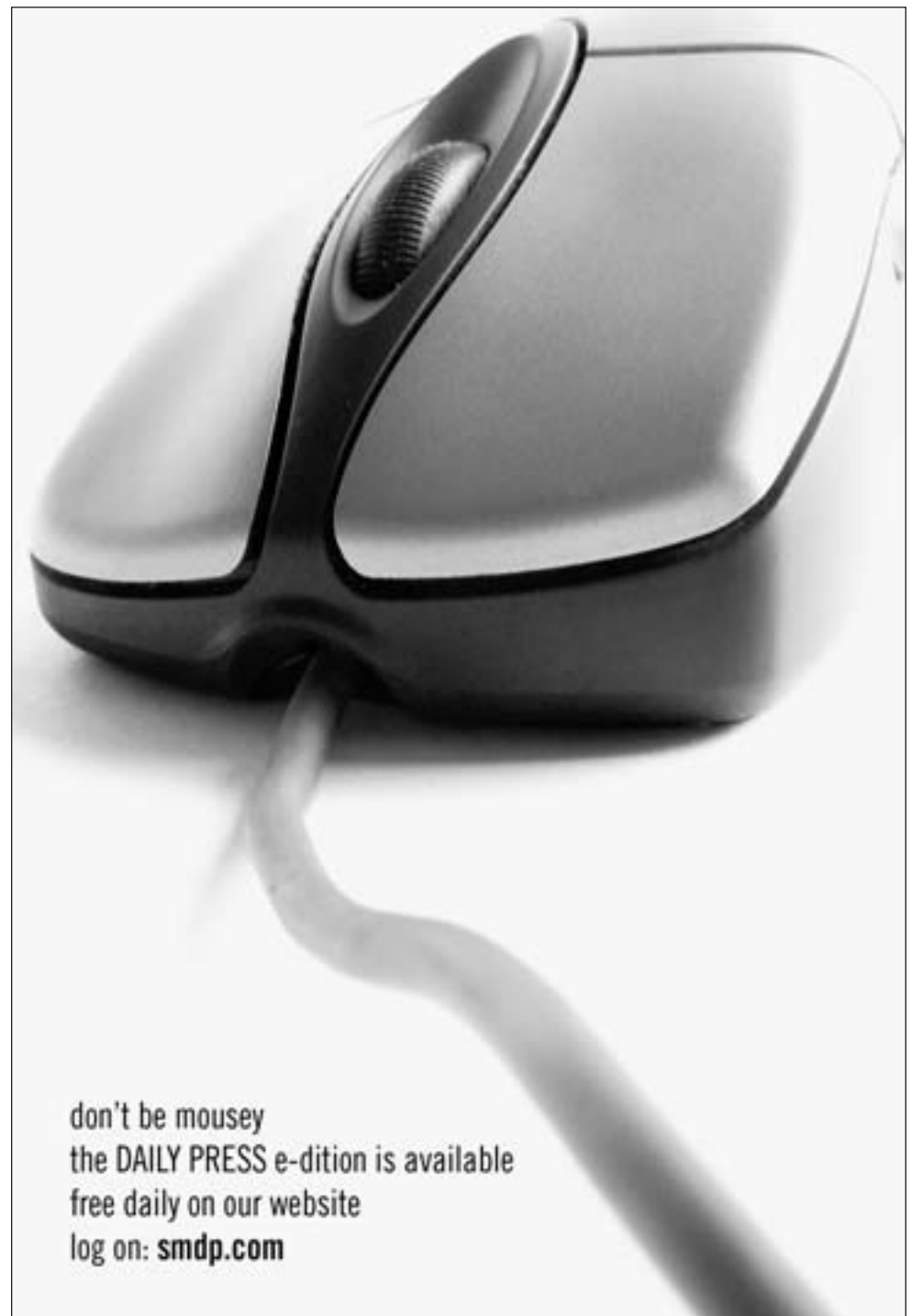
A visual constant in his checkered keffiyeh headdress, Arafat kept the Palestinians' cause at the center of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He fell short of creating a Palestinian state, and, along with other secular Arab leaders of his generation, saw his influence weakened by the rise of radical Islam in recent years.

Revered by his own people, Arafat was reviled by others. He was accused of secretly fomenting attacks on Israelis while proclaiming brotherhood and claiming to have put terrorism aside. Many Israelis felt the paunchy 5-foot, 2-inch Palestinian's real goal remained the destruction of the Jewish state.

Arafat became one of the world's most familiar faces after addressing the U.N. General Assembly in New York in 1974, when he entered the chamber wearing a holster and carrying a sprig.

"Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun," he said. "Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand."

Two decades later, he shook hands at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on a peace deal that formally recognized Israel's right to exist while granting the Palestinians limited self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The pact led to the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize for Arafat, Rabin and then-Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.



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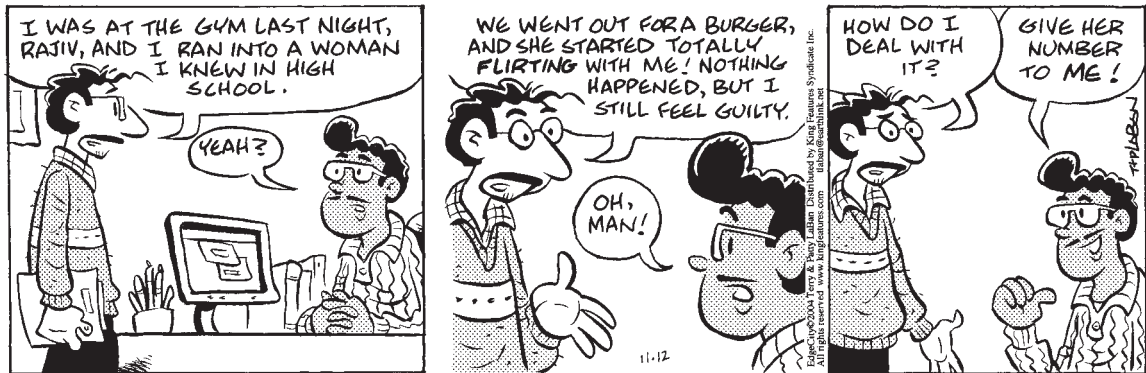


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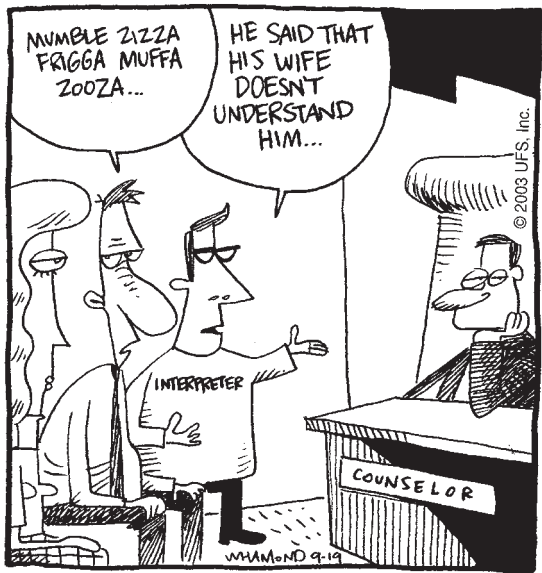
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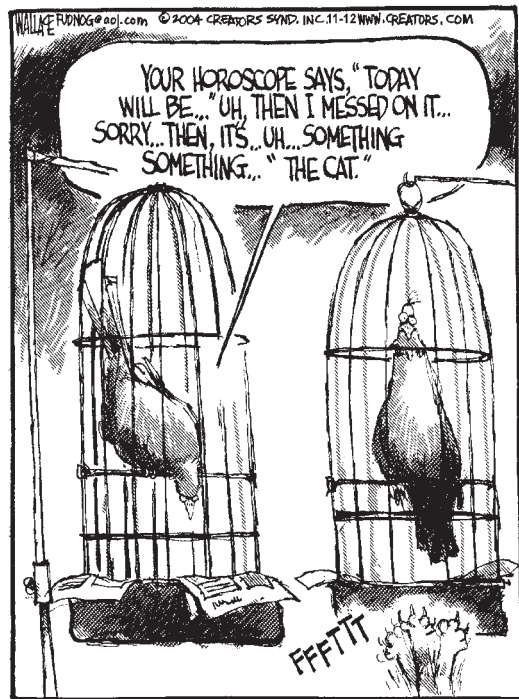
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 - 46 Not live
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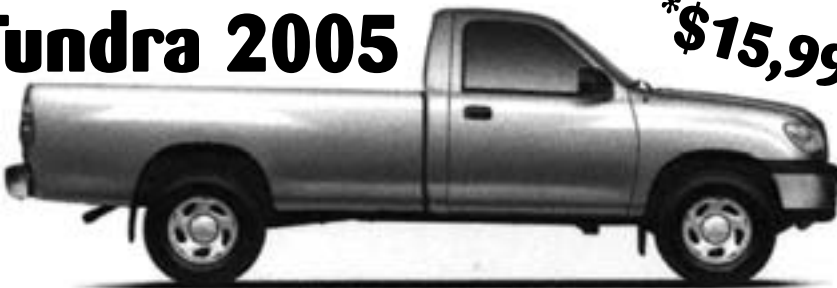
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Actor Hugh Grant says he's through with the screen

By The Associated Press

LONDON — Hugh Grant says he's lost interest in acting and is heading into retirement.

Grant, who plays heartthrob Daniel Cleaver in "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason," was quoted Thursday by the Evening Standard's Metro magazine as saying film acting is a "miserable experience."

"It's so long and boring and so difficult to get right," Grant said.

"I am sort of semiretired," he said. "I keep thinking I'm going to write a brilliant script."

Grant, whose screen credits include "Four Weddings and a Funeral," "Notting Hill" and the first "Bridget Jones" movie, gained international notoriety when he was caught in a car with Hollywood prostitute Divine Brown in 1995.

The 44-year-old actor, who took his new girlfriend, heiress Jemima Khan, to this week's London premiere of "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason," told the magazine he didn't feel pressure to settle down.

LONDON — If Renee Zellweger has grown tired of playing Bridget Jones, British fans would like to see an English star in the role.

Kate Winslet, 29, was the most popular choice to replace Zellweger if she turned down a part in a third installment, according to a fan vote published Thursday.

"Fight Club" actress Helena Bonham Carter was among other British actresses getting votes.

Zellweger, 35, played the role of the chubby, chain-smoking, chardonnay-swilling British TV journalist in the 2001 film "Bridget Jones's Diary" and its sequel, "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason," which had its red-

carpet premiere in London this week.

"Titanic" star Winslet took 41 percent of the vote in a survey by Sky Movies, a pay TV channel. Reese Witherspoon, 28, was the second most popular choice in the vote by 3,476 viewers, followed by "Friends" star Jennifer Aniston.

Producers haven't said whether they plan a third film. The "Bridget Jones" movies are based on two novels by Helen Fielding.

Asked at this week's premiere if she would take on the role a third time, Zellweger said: "You tell me if Helen Fielding writes another book. People have responded to Bridget with a lot of affection."

TOKYO — Arnold Schwarzenegger is an old pro at promoting stuff in Japan. He's pitched beer, instant noodles, even "energy drinks." Well, he's back. And the Japanese are still eating him up.

Opening a four-day California trade and tourism blitz with a food fair at a glitzy hotel, California's governor was the toast of Tokyo.

"I feel like Japan is my second home," he told a packed ballroom Thursday, with two dozen TV cameras rolling. The actor-turned-politician noted that he's visited Japan in the past to promote everything from the Special Olympics to bodybuilding — not to mention his more lucrative product endorsements.

"But today I'm here for the most important reason of all," he said, to "promote, market and sell California."

Schwarzenegger was speaking at the Taste of California food fair, which featured a cooking performance by three U.S. chefs using California products.

He was scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi Friday and with representatives of

the auto and electronics industries throughout the visit, which ends Saturday.

Greeted at the airport by thousands of Japanese movie fans on Wednesday, Schwarzenegger — called "Gov. Shuwa" here — said he was in Japan to represent the people of California, not his films.

Either way, his appeal was hard to deny. "He's a phenomenon like none of us has ever seen before," said Mike Gallagher, president of Citypass and one of the businessmen on the California delegation. "I couldn't buy this kind of publicity."

SANTA MARIA, Calif. — Records from pricey retailers including Bergdorf Goodman and Nordstrom were among hundreds of pages of documents seized by investigators in Michael Jackson's child molestation case, according to court records released Wednesday.

The documents were seized as recently as Nov. 1 and mostly within the past two months. No detail about their contents was released and it was unclear how they related to the case.

They were from various banks and credit card companies, cellular phone and gasoline companies, and retailers including Bergdorf Goodman, Banana Republic and Nordstrom.

Search warrant inventory records are among the many court filings that have been kept secret in the case. A lawyer for the media filed a legal brief last month calling for Superior Court Judge Rodney Melville to release more official information.

Jackson has pleaded not guilty to child molestation, conspiracy and administering an intoxicating agent, alcohol.

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