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Meganumber: 16
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13 14 25 29 32

DAILY 3

Daytime: 7 2 2

Evening: 6 1 5

DAILY DERBY

1st: 09 Winning Spirit

2nd: 10 Solid Gold

3rd: 06 Whirl Win

RACE TIME: 1:42:40

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPARD

A man's body was found by divers in the Pend Oreille River near Newport, Wash., on Sept. 25; sheriff's deputies estimate that he was carrying about 40 pounds of beer (a satchel full around his body, plus cans in his pocket), but said they would wait for an autopsy before commenting. And a 25-year-old driver was killed in St-Joachim, Quebec, on Sept. 24 when another car veered into his lane and hit him; police said the deceased was within his own lane but was distracted, in that he was apparently at the time engaged in sexual intercourse with a female passenger. (Having intercourse while driving, said a police spokesman, "makes driving that much more dangerous.")

TODAY IN HISTORY

Five years ago: Two-hundred and eighty people were killed when a ferry caught fire and foundered off the coast of eastern China's Shandong province.
One year ago: President Bush signed a \$401 billion defense authorization bill. The president then traveled to Fort Carson, Colo., where he paid tribute to the sacrifices of U.S. troops in Iraq.
A jury in Virginia Beach, Va., sentenced John Allen Muhammad to death for the Washington-area sniper shootings.
A fire at a Moscow dormitory for foreign students killed 43 people.
Hall of Fame pitcher Warren Spahn died in Broken Arrow, Okla., at age 82.

INDEX

Horoscopes

Follow your friends, Cancer 2

Surf Report

Water Temperature: 60° 3

Opinion

Soul survivors 6

State

Now you're talking turkey 8

National

Don't have a cow 10

Real Estate

Insurance a must 12

International

Peace in crosshairs 19

Comics

Tickle your funny bone 20

Classifieds

Ad space odyssey 21

Merchant sent to federal prison for chemical leak

Miller in disbelief following series of events

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

OCEAN PARK — When armed FBI agents stormed his garage shop last year, Santa Monica furniture stripper Michael Miller never imagined he'd be sent to federal prison.

Miller, investigators noted, smiled as agents cordoned off his Main Street shop and hauled off boxes of evidence, as if he didn't take seriously the burns suffered by a sewer repairman working below his shop.

Miller contends he was smiling nervously, unable to believe he was suspected of illegally dumping toxic chemicals. Now more than a year later, Miller is still in disbelief of how what he characterized as a trace leak of harmless rinsewater led to hard time.

"I'm basically a poster child of everything that's wrong with our

judicial system right now," said Miller, 41, a Santa Monica native who grew up north of Montana Avenue. "It's mind-boggling what's going on."

At issue in the case are controversial mandatory sentencing guidelines imposed by the federal government, which many view as too rigid. The guidelines are currently being challenged in two cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. Also at issue are Miller's claims that his unintentional leak couldn't have caused the injuries suffered by sewer worker Vincente Valenzuela, and questions raised about Valenzuela's work conditions.

FBI agents arrested Miller in March of 2003, after Valenzuela fell into cardiac arrest and suffered severe burns while working in the sewer below Stripper Herk, Miller's furniture-stripping business on Main Street.

Authorities charged Miller with three felonies, including one for

See TOXIC, page 4



John Wood/Daily Press

Furniture stripper Michael Miller on Tuesday stands above a drain in his Main Street shop where a toxic chemical seeped into the sewer system. Despite cementing the drain shut, Miller must still serve one year in federal prison.

Simpson saga continues as court seizes ID

By The Associated Press

SM COURTHOUSE — A memorabilia collector was ordered Tuesday to turn over O.J. Simpson's press credentials from the 1984 Olympics in another tiny step toward satisfying a \$33.5 million award in a lawsuit that found Simpson liable for the slayings of his ex-wife and her friend.

The order was issued after a closed-door court hearing to determine whether Simpson is hiding assets from the family of Ron Goldman, who was slain with

"I've said this so many times, I've said it to Fred's face in debtor hearings: 'If I have to work to pay them, I won't work.' It's that simple. So, I'll just play golf every day."

— O.J. SIMPSON

Nicole Brown Simpson in 1994.

Real estate agent and collector Alfred Beardsley underwent about 30 minutes of questioning by

attorney Peter Csato, who represents Goldman's father, Fred.

Santa Monica Superior Court Judge Gerald Rosenberg then

ordered Beardsley to turn over the press credentials, which Simpson wore as an Olympics commentator for ABC-TV, by Dec. 14.

A criminal court jury acquitted Simpson of murder charges in 1996 after a televised trial that captivated the nation.

Goldman's parents and his estate, however, were awarded \$33.5 million after a civil jury found Simpson liable for the deaths, but the judgment has gone largely unpaid.

Michael Brewer, an attorney

See O.J., page 5

Wanted transient couldn't bluff way out of arrest

By Daily Press staff

POLICE HDQTRS. — A homeless man wanted by authorities was arrested by local police Tuesday

after they found him camping in the Palisades Park bluffs.

At 8:45 a.m., Curtis Lyle Fitch, 34, a transient, who was a parolee at large and wanted for assault with a

deadly weapon, was arrested for a parole violation. He was taken to the Santa Monica Jail. There is no bail.

Officers located several people in the bluff area, which is against Santa

Monica law. The City Council earlier this year passed a law that forbids people from sleeping or camping in the bluffs, directly below the park — an area frequented by transients.

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LOCAL

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Donner blitzin' straight to the top

By Daily Press staff

One of Santa Monica College's top administrators is outstanding.

Or so says the Community College Business Officers Organization. Tom Donner, J.D., Santa Monica College's executive vice president of business and administration, has been named the national "Outstanding Chief Business Officer of the Year" by the Community College Business Officers Organization.

The award comes less than a month after Donner had been named winner in CCBO's Region 2, which is California. CCBO represents business operations of community colleges in the U.S. and Canada.

Donner was selected from the 17 regional winners and was named Nov. 17 at the organization's annual conference in Charleston, S.C.

Donner has been the chief business officer at SMC since 1976. He chartered the college's fiscal plan through the aftermath of Proposition 13 tax reform and helped develop a strong international student recruitment program to supplement state funding.

He served as interim president of SMC from October 1994 to July 1995. He formed and led a creative team to tackle the rebuilding of permanent facilities damaged by the 1994 Northridge earthquake, laying the groundwork for Federal Emergency Management Agency funding of the science, library and business buildings and other reconstruction projects.

He also negotiated the establishment of satellite sites for the college at Santa Monica Airport and several other locations throughout Santa Monica.

Donner received a bachelor of science in finance and his MBA from California State University, Long Beach. He holds a Juris Doctorate degree from Southwestern University and is an active member of the California State Bar.

Get kids off their duffs this holiday season

By Daily Press staff

The holidays are the most difficult time to maintain a fit and healthy lifestyle in the Santa Monica area. Just as adults try to watch their waistlines, their mouths water over pumpkin pie. While the focus in December is always on adult weight gain, sometimes parents forget that children are equally at risk.

"Kids can also struggle with weight gain after indulging in food and desserts high in calories and fat," explained Matt Hendison, vice president of marketing for My Gym Children's Fitness Center, a renowned children's fitness centers. "With the rise in childhood obesity, it's essential that parents help their children to get off the couch and on the move."

Hendison offers fitness tips for Santa Monica-area kids this holiday season.

■ Walk while you shop. It's gift-giving season, so when you're at the mall, make sure your child is walking everywhere. Eliminate the stroller if your child is old enough to walk.

■ Play with your child. Most kids are on holiday break so take them outside to a playground or in your backyard. Throw and catch, play tag or hopscotch. Build a sand castle or a snowman.

■ Exercise with your kids. Studies prove that if you let your children see you keeping fit, they will want to do the same.

■ Exercise while doing chores. Holidays can be a busy cleaning time.

■ Wash or put away the dishes.

■ Fold laundry.

■ Sweep or vacuum the house; mop.

■ It's cold outside, so build a fire. Have kids stack or carry in wood for building fires.

■ Marketing and cooking is a must during the holidays. Have kids help carry the groceries, from the car to the house. While you're cooking, ask your kids to get involved.

■ Holidays are a happy time, so laugh. Laughing burns calories and builds stomach muscles.

My Gym Children's Fitness Centers offer a wide variety of physical early learning/pre-gymnastics classes. Named one of Entrepreneur Magazine's fastest growing franchises in 2003, My Gym currently has more than 130 locations in the United States and several international locations. For more information about My Gym, visit www.my-gym.com.



SURF REPORT

On Wednesday, a modest mix of NW swell and old SW'er bumps up best NW exposures a bit. Northern LA spots see mainly knee-waist high waves with plus sets at top NW breaks. The South Bay is also in the 2-3' range, with chest high sets at best NW breaks in the north half of the bay. Look for a slow drop on Thursday. Light and variable wind on Wednesday morning, turning W by the afternoon.

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

Today the water is:

60°

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	11:03	2.1	11:02	0.4	5:12	4.9	4:33	4.4
SUNDAY	(12:03	1.4)	11:43	0.7	5:46	5.3	5:42	4.3
MONDAY	N/A	N/A	12:47	0.7	6:16	5.7	6:40	4.3
TUESDAY	12:19	1.1	1:29	0.2	6:44	6.0	7:31	4.1
WEDNESDAY	12:50	1.4	2:06	-0.2	7:11	6.1	8:18	4.0
THURSDAY	1:18	1.8	2:41	-0.4	7:36	6.2	9:01	3.9
FRIDAY	1:45	2.1	3:16	-0.5	8:02	6.2	9:43	3.7

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The **Q**Line

The Santa Monica City Council earlier this month discussed how many street performers should be allowed on the pier at any one time. The discussion turned into a larger debate about the atmosphere on the pier. Some elected officials think the pier should be quieter than it is today, with the idea that it should be a place to reflect and take in the natural beauty surrounding it.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "How do you envision the Santa Monica Pier in the future?"

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

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Federal sentencing guidelines go before high court

TOXIC, from page 1

illegally dumping methylene chloride into the sewer.

Those charges were later reduced, and Miller pleaded guilty in July to a misdemeanor charge for unwittingly letting the chemical seep into the sewer and a felony for keeping sealed, 55-gallon barrels of the toxic substance at his business for longer than the 90 allowable days. In keeping with minimum federal guidelines, U.S. District Judge R. Gary Klausner last month sentenced Miller to one year in prison.

Alan Rubin, Miller's attorney, was taken aback.

"The reason that came out that way was the judge didn't follow the comment in the guidelines that said for negligence, a downward departure may be warranted," Rubin said. "How could Congress have sincerely believed that you should get the same sentence for a felony as a misdemeanor? It was crazy to me."

Miller, too, was shocked. He must turn himself in by the end of the year and has yet to secure a slot in a minimum-security prison for white-collar criminals. Even if he does secure an opening in one of the preferred prisons, Miller may be kept in the prison system's general population during processing.

"There should be some kind of a safety

net for dudes like me," he said. "But the judge bangs his gavel and I'm headed to a federal facility. It's freaking bananas."

Assistant U.S. Attorney William Carter, who had pushed for an 18-month sentence, called the sentence strong.

"The judge obviously felt that what Mr. Miller did was very serious and posed a threat to his employees and the neighborhood, and therefore imposed what I would consider a significant sentence for someone who has no prior criminal convictions," he said Tuesday.

Klausner, who was appointed to the bench in December of 2002 by President George W. Bush, declined to discuss Miller's case and said he wouldn't comment on the controversial federal sentencing guidelines until after the Supreme Court makes a decision on them. With the guidelines in limbo, law experts said federal judges are in a difficult position.

"It is a bit of a mess for federal judges," said former federal prosecutor Laurie Levenson, a 15-year law professor at Loyola Marymount University. "There are many federal judges that have just held off on sentencing until we get a decision from the Supreme Court."

Beyond the controversy over mandatory sentencing guidelines, Miller maintained that a slight rinsewater leak from his shop couldn't have caused Valenzuela's injuries. Lawyers agreed the

concentration of methylene chloride found on Valenzuela's clothing was just 29 parts per million, adding it takes 200 parts per million to cause injury. A stronger concentration of a chemical called "acetate" was found on Valenzuela's clothing that didn't come from Stripper Herk, he added.

"When it was all over, they came back with a big fat 'Oops, what do we do now?'" Miller said.

Carter disagreed sharply, adding Valenzuela had third-degree burns covering more than half of his body.

"Methylene chloride acts the same way as alcohol," he said. "You can dip your hand in alcohol or rub alcohol on your arm and it evaporates real quickly, and you get that cool sensation ...

"If you're in an open space, methylene chloride is going to evaporate quickly off your skin, but if you're soaking in it in a confined space where there is no evaporation, you're going to get burned, and that's what happened to Mr. Valenzuela," he added.

As to the felony charge over illegally storing the 55-gallon barrels, Miller said he feels duped for telling the truth. When investigators sifted through his shop, Miller admitted he had let about 20 barrels accumulate over several months, because it is expensive to have them carried off and he was struggling to make ends meet. Had he told the investigators the 20 barrels had accumulated in the previous 90 days, the backlog may have been considered legal, Miller suggested.

"The drums were there," said Miller, an avid fisherman who added he would never knowingly pollute the ocean. "I didn't put them in the trash. I didn't dump it ... It was in a sealed, certified container out in the open.

"I wasn't trying to hide anything."

According to Carter, only a fence covered with ivy separated the barrels from the shop's residential neighbors.

"These wastes were stored right next to an apartment building," he said. "There were over 20 drums, they weren't labeled with anything and they'd been there over 90 days. That was the government's concern."

Rubin and Miller suggested Valenzuela's

injuries were exacerbated by unsafe working conditions. They said he wore jeans and a T-shirt, but no breathing apparatus, adding the exit from the 36-inch sewer line he worked in was blocked by equipment.

City officials said an inspection of sewer contractor BH-Garver, the firm that hired Valenzuela, was conducted by the office of Occupational Safety and Health Administration, but added they didn't know its results.

"Whatever recommendation came out, that's between OSHA and BH-Garver," Santa Monica City Engineer Tony Antich said Tuesday. "If we were to seek hiring a contractor in the future, we would ask the question, in the future, 'Have there been any violations?' And, if so, what had been the outcome of that."

Officials from BH-Garver did not return calls. Carter said he didn't investigate the claims, because even if true they wouldn't have changed the fact that Miller negligently discharged the chemical. Meanwhile, Valenzuela has also filed a lawsuit against Miller in civil court.

The FBI was first tipped off to Miller by Gary Welling, a wastewater specialist from City Hall who had cited Miller in the past. In 1992, when Miller managed but didn't own the now-28-year-old shop, he was cited for dumping methylene chloride into the sewer after the city first switched to a policy of recycling. The following year, he was cited for letting a backlog of the barrels accumulate.

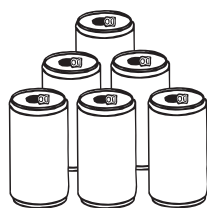
Miller said the 1992 citation was the first he'd heard of the policy change, and said he let barrels stack up in 1993 for the same reason he did 10 years later, a lack of money.

On Tuesday, Miller said he will spend the next several weeks preparing to turn himself in to authorities, and confronting myriad details associated with leaving his work and home. Though he feels mistreated by a rigid system, Miller said he realizes he made a mistake.

"I'm going," he said. "I've got no choice."

"I am wiped out," Miller added. "Mentally, financially, physically — I'm ruined. I have absolutely no clue how I'm going to survive this thing."

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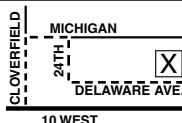
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LOCAL



‘The Juice’ lets loose on paying off his penalty

O.J., from page 1

representing Goldman’s mother, Sharon Rufo, will question Beardsley on the same issue on Dec. 14.

Brewer said he and Csato believe Simpson is earning undisclosed income from autograph signings that should go toward fulfilling the award.

Recent tabloid reports that Simpson hid valuable memorabilia in a Northern California storage fueled their suspicions, said Csato, who had a copy of the tabloid article in the courtroom.

Brewer said Ron Goldman’s parents have collected only about \$500,000 through an auction of property seized at Simpson’s former home in the Brentwood section of Los Angeles. Simpson, who now lives in Florida, has an NFL pension and an annuity, both of which cannot be touched, Brewer said.

“I think there’s been some information that Mr. Simpson may not have been above board in relation to his business assets,” Brewer said outside of the Santa Monica Courthouse. “He’s living in Florida in a relatively nice, comfortable lifestyle. He’s got to step up to the plate and settle these judgments.”

Simpson, on his way to play golf, reacted with anger when asked about the allegations.

“I’ve said this so many times, I’ve said it to Fred’s face in debtor hearings: ‘If I have to work to pay them, I won’t work,’” Simpson told WSVN-TV in Miami on Tuesday. “It’s that simple. So, I’ll just play golf every day.”

Beardsley set up an autograph-signing last month for Simpson at Frank & Sons Collectibles in Industry, Calif., about 20 miles east of Los Angeles. The event was canceled in part because Beardsley was hospitalized.

Beardsley declined to say outside court whether Simpson was to be paid for the signing, but said that was the only event he had set up for the former football star.

“I’m not the only one being dragged into court and I won’t be the last,” said Beardsley, who did not have an attorney present. “This is far from over.”

It was not the first time attorneys have tried to collect on the judgment.

About seven months ago, the Goldman family hired an attorney to recover money they thought Simpson was getting for autographs in St. Louis, Mo., Brewer said. But Simpson said, when confronted, that he was signing autographs for free, Brewer said.

The family’s attorneys believe Simpson “earned money and may have secreted it out of St. Louis,” Brewer said.

It was unclear how much the Olympic press credentials were worth, but Csato said outside court that Beardsley told them about “other tangible properties of substantive value” belonging to Simpson that Beardsley may be able to lead them to. Csato declined to elaborate.

Csato also said he was aware of Simpson property recovered last month from a Hanford, Calif., storage unit that had been turned over to the Kings County Sheriff’s Department. A tabloid report said that Simpson’s friend and former agent, Mike Gilbert, turned over the property after stashing it for the athlete since 1997.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Government can't read between the lines

Editor:
How can we attain the No Child Left Behind goal when the state's budget (SB1113) this year provides 70 cents per child for school library books and materials? The budget has gone from \$28.89 per student in 1999 to 70 cents per student in 2004.
As a school library media teacher, I have been in students' homes where there were no books, magazines, computers or encyclopedias. What can we buy for 70 cents that will help these students succeed in school? Apparently, our government decision-makers do not buy books or they would know that one book costs an average of \$25. This cut fosters illiteracy. Is this what we want, a generation of non-readers? Isn't there a better way to balance the state budget?

Ann McKechnie
Library media teacher, Santa Monica High School

Family fights back after loss of brother

Editor:
A tragic and all too often deadly disease, diabetes, touches millions of American families. Although the cause is still unknown, diet and genetics are believed to play a part. Like a car accident, it can strike a family out of the blue — just like it struck ours and our brother Christopher. No one is immune.
Christopher John Lotz was special in so many ways. He had a beautiful face and contagious smile that could brighten anyone's day, but alone he suffered greatly with this disease. Despite medical help, Christopher lost his battle as a result of complications from diabetes on Dec. 17, 2001, just three weeks after our family Thanksgiving dinner. He was only 37 and was awaiting the birth of his first child.
Watching anyone endure the battle of diabetes brings a sadness we would wish upon no one. As a brittle diabetic, Christopher required many items like test strips, needles and insulin. He struggled on a daily basis to maintain his health. Additionally, diabetics suffer other issues which may include a shortage of funds to purchase supplies, sugar lows or highs which give the appearance of drunkenness, blurred vision, slurred speech and, subsequently, work days become sick days. Family arguments may increase since the stress level can prove constant. When this disease comes upon you or your loved ones, life is never the same.
In honor of Christopher and his 2-year-old son, little Christopher Blake Lotz, our family has made a personal commitment to bringing awareness of the devastation diabetes reeks on a person. At this time of year when the rush of the holidays can consume us, we want to remind everyone it's not the material possessions in our lives that matter, but the time spent with family and loved ones that is important. Even though diabetes has already stolen our precious brother, we remain hopeful, vigilant and dedicated to educating others about the dangers of diabetes and to help fund programs

like the Junior Diabetes Research Fund (JDRF). Although new treatments are being developed, when your loved one dies, it's all too late.
On Nov. 26-27 we will honor our commitment to the fight against diabetes by extending special holiday discounts and sharing life-saving information regarding diabetes at our retail location, Jewel Box Frames (3100 Wilshire Blvd.) We invite all Angelenos to join us as proceeds from the two-day event will be donated to the JDRF. Donations to the JDRF will also be gratefully accepted and forwarded.
We know change is on the way. We only hope and pray it comes very soon.
In memory of our brother, Christopher John Lotz — who is forever loved and missed every day.

Deborah and Kathleen Lotz
Santa Monica

Mall redevelopment plan full of hot air

Editor:
From the shifting sands of Santa Monica politics comes the diversionary tactic of offering its residents the inflated promise that when the hyper-developed, super-commercialized, monster Macerich "compound" is built to supplant the old Santa Monica Place, we will be a wealthier, happier community.
How is it possible that the city can afford to give serious consideration to such lofty goals as building a massive goliath downtown, complete with 21-story towers overlooking our coastline, when it can't yet manage to care for, or deal with its 2,000-plus homeless population? Or maintain adequate affordable housing? Or build public restrooms for the hundreds of people who already patronize downtown Santa Monica? When the city says it wants to see more diversity in the community, is that just another way of saying they want to see more rich people replacing us, the middle class, and the working poor? Is it a way of saying they want more commercialism at the expense of less community. Can you say special interests?
Do we residents want to speak up now, or do we want to wait until we are forced to move out of the community because of overly commercialized interests, and an artificially inflated economy? While the middle class are being edged out of Santa Monica, and the poor and homeless are being given the brush off, (can you say gentrification?) the rich folks are lining up to pay \$3,000 a month plus, in rent. Just who is going to be paying for what? And who will really be getting the benefit of such a massive redevelopment plan? More residents need to get involved with our city's planning process, and soon, or we are going to find ourselves being priced right out of our neighborhoods by some very tall demands.

Ms. Justin L.B. Gagnon
Santa Monica

Democrats must stay the course to retain its soul



INCITES
BY ED SILVERSTEIN

When the election smoke cleared, the GOP had scored a decisive victory. Republicans had made gains in the House and Senate, and Bush remained in the White House like a tenacious mold.
Pundits quickly weighed in: The voters had chosen Bush on moral issues. Doom-sayers slid out from beneath their rocks to declare the Democratic Party dead.
Then came Democratic panic: Frenzied hand wringing and finger pointing, maybe even a little soul searching. Pols, pollsters and other personages began wondering out loud if the party should break with gays or minorities, possibly even drop the right to choose from its platform. Others suggested that the blue staters would never win until they stopped viewing religious evangelicals as a bunch of redneck dolts. All felt that a change was needed.
Wrong.
The whole brouhaha over these so-called moral issue voters is little more than a myth. This group, about 29 percent of those who voted, corresponds nearly exactly with the number of evangelical

Christian voters.
Their so-called moral values are little more than a code for pandering to their beliefs. This would include putting judges on the Circuit and Supreme Courts that are so extreme that they would set America back nearly 100 years. Government-sanctioned gay bashing also is on top of their Christmas wish list as is their demand for prayer in the schools. And some of the religious schools that they would like funded with tax supported school vouchers are so extreme that they are virtually indistinguishable from Pakistani Madrasases.
So how do you fight a group that falls into line better than the Rockettes? You don't. Wait them out. Already their policies are self-destructing. Abstinence-only programs, which fail to teach children about contraception, have already led to an increase in teen pregnancies and abortions, as well as sexually transmitted diseases. And the insistence by these evangelicals and fundamentalists that evolution is a theory and that strict creationism be taught in the schools — after prayer of course — may be the only legitimate proof that humans have not evolved.
Besides, even if the Democrats ran Jerry Falwell there is about as much chance of these voters going for a Democratic Presidential candidate as the NRA throwing their support behind Barbara Boxer.

And let me state for the record, the Democratic platform is more inclusive and more representative of Americans. Sure, abortion is a divisive issue and gays drastically overreached when they pushed same-sex marriages, but most Americans still support some form of abortion rights, as well as civil unions for gays. And when you present the Democratic Platform point by point, the vast majority of Americans are supportive.
Further, the Democratic Party is far more family orientated and morally superior. For instance, the Democrats believe in better pay and benefits for middle-class workers. The Republicans support cheaper prices for products manufactured overseas and sold at mega stores like Wal-Mart who provide few benefits to their workers. And would families prefer to breath cleaner air, or have higher dividends from their coal and energy stocks while suffering health problems that will cost more than \$170 billion and result in 30,000 premature deaths a year? Or how about tort reform that limits frivolous lawsuits versus draconian reform that lets greedy automotive, power, tobacco and other companies put profits over our safety. And would Jesus rather have decent health insurance for every man, woman and child, or massive tax breaks and perks for health insurers, drug companies and the rich?
The Democrats do not need a new plat-

form. What they need is an ability to communicate their existing one.
The Democratic message has been drowned out by a Republican echo chamber that has been 30 years and billions of dollars in the making. Their supporters now control local and national newspapers, radio networks and television stations throughout the country. What they can't own they try to influence through bogus think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute, or through underhanded surrogates like the Swift Boat Commanders.
To remain viable the Democrats must focus their energies toward creating their own media juggernaut. Because once the Democrats are able to effectively disseminate their message, as well as poke holes in the flimsy Orwellian sound bites that Republicans substitute for policy, voters will return to the party in droves.
But in order to succeed the Democrats must stay the course. Should they abandon their core values in order to attract more conservative voters then they will simply become a party without a soul. In other words: Republicans.

(To reach Ed, e-mail him at edsincites@aol.com).



Hype over the hybrids makes buyers lose gas



COMMON SENTS

BY CAROLE ORLIN

(Editor's note: This is the second column in a two-part series. The first column appeared in the Nov. 22 edition.)

Once I made up my mind that a hybrid was the right type of car for me to purchase, I began to actively look around at the available hybrid choices. My enthusiasm quickly turned to concern.

My attention was initially directed to Honda and Toyota: The current automakers of available hybrids. The existing choices seem to have serious limitations for someone like myself, who would want this car to be my primary, family vehicle. The two-seat Honda Insight and the five-passenger Honda Civic and Toyota Prius hatchback are not realistic for someone who regularly transports children, a dog, groceries and regular home purchases. Perhaps I got spoiled for a number of years with my Jeep SUV. In any event, for informational purposes, I contacted Toyota. First, I was told that the Toyota Prius has a waiting list of six to eight months. More interesting, I discovered that Toyota was offering its seven-passenger Highlander SUV as a hybrid. In the summer of 2004, this was promoted as reaching the market in early 2005. Now, I am told that it will not be available until June 2005. There is no way to order one or to get on a real waiting list to purchase one next summer. Ah, but Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A. is going to also offer the first luxury hybrid SUV with its RX400h. Originally projected to be available in the fall 2004, the date got pushed forward to November, then December, and is currently projected for April 15, 2005. It is amazing to me that, according to Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A., by the end of August they had received orders for more than 9,000 RX 400h's, more than any vehicle in the 15-year history of its Lexus brand. In spite of this unprecedented demand, it's only set to produce 24,000 of these SUV's per year. I am told by a local Lexus dealership that Lexus will make this 20 percent of the RX mix. Eight out of 10 RX's will not be hybrids.

That brought me to Ford Motor Company with its new Ford Escape hybrid. Not only have they created the first hybrid from a domestic manufacturer, and the first to offer all-wheel drive, but they have produced the first-ever hybrid SUV. Wow. I thought this would be the perfect fit for me: A hybrid SUV, the right size, the right price — from about \$27,000 — and the right time. Here is a hybrid that has actually been produced and test driven by some of the proper consumer organizations. The early performance results were reported as very positive. The only possible negative I saw was reference to the test vehicle as being "pricy" at almost \$31,000. This could be partially offset by a "clean-fuel vehicle" tax deduction of \$2,000 (until Dec. 31, 2005. Then it will become \$500 for 2006, after which the deduction will not apply). So, where do I go to test drive the Ford Escape SUV hybrid, and purchase, or order one if I am satisfied? Well, here is the catch. Although they are "produced," they are not

exactly available at your local dealerships. Ford has scheduled to produce a total of 20,000 of these hybrids during this year. If you want to put your name on a waiting list, with a \$500 deposit, you will be called when one does appear. At a local Ford dealership, I was told there were about 130 names on the list. When you reach the top of the dealer's list and you are called, you have to decide whether the one that has become available is to your liking. If not, you go to the bottom of the list. Obviously, you have no say as to color, options or price. Through a fluke, I had an opportunity to see the Escape hybrid the other night. It is obvious that the manufacturer has fully loaded these initial vehicles to solidify its profit. When you couple this with the dealer mark-up of \$5,000, a charge simply for the privilege of buying this "hot" item, you quickly get to a non-negotiable price of \$36,000 — without tax and tags, which add about another 10 percent. Even in my present state of mind and need, it is almost impossible to rationalize driving off in a Ford Escape at nearly \$40,000. Finally, if I want to order one that has the color and options of my choosing, they will place the order now but can't insure any date of arrival. They advise that it's not likely to be any time before April 2005.

Well, at this point, I am not certain which direction I may take on the road to acquire the right vehicle for me. Maybe I haven't had enough time to adjust since the recent elections. Perhaps I have a case of "blue-state" skepticism that has been reinforced in this post-weapons-of-mass-destruction era. The kind of demand that seems to surround the sale of hybrid vehicles doesn't match the very slow and limited production of the vehicles. When a particular model is only being produced in numbers of about 20,000 in the entire country, I can't help but compare and contrast those numbers to last year's total U.S. automobile sales of 16.7 million autos, according to Polk. General Motors Corporation — the largest auto manufacturer with sales last year of about 5.6 million autos in North America — made a stunning announcement in early 2003 that it would produce 1,000,000 hybrid vehicles by 2007. However, it appears that they will not have their first hybrid available for sale until 2006.

In looking over this entire hybrid experience, I am sensing that something doesn't add up. This really feels like a parallel to the way the auto manufacturers crushed the sale and development of electric vehicles in the late 1990s and early 2000. Or, it could be linked to the way we seem to be diverted and manipulated into believing that research and development of hydrogen fuel cells is going to take us down the illusive "hydrogen highway." There is an economic reality that continues to stare me in the face. The enormous power and wealth of auto manufacturers and the oil companies are naturally driven by increasing and unreasonable, if not unconscionable, profits. The George W. and George H.W. Bush administrations, along with many of our elected officials at the national and state levels, do not appear to be looking out for the lowly consumer. The continuation of our energy policies is costing all of us dearly.

(Carole can be reached at Carole-orlin@yahoo.com).

GUEST COMMENTARY BY GARY HULL

Give thanks for most American of holidays

Thanksgiving is designed to celebrate, not faith, but thought and production.

Thanksgiving celebrates man's ability to produce. The cornucopia filled with exotic flowers and delicious fruits, the savory turkey with aromatic trimmings, the mouth-watering pies, the colorful decorations — it's all a testament to the creation of wealth.

Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday, because this country was the first to create and to value material abundance. It is America that has been the beacon for anyone wanting to escape from poverty and misery. It is America that generated the unprecedented flood of goods that washed away centuries of privation. It is America, by establishing the precondition of production — political freedom — that was able to unleash the dynamic, productive energy of its citizens.

This should be a source of pride to every self-supporting individual. It is what Thanksgiving is designed to commemorate. But there are those, motivated by hatred for human comfort and happiness, who want to make Thanksgiving into a day of national guilt. We should be ashamed, they say, for consuming a disproportionate share of the world's food supply. Our affluence, they say, constitutes a depletion of the "planet's resources." The building of dams, the use of fossil fuels, the driving of sports utility vehicles — they insist — are cause, not for celebration, but for atonement. What if, they all wail, the rest of the world consumed the way Americans do?

If only that were to happen — we would have an Atlantis. For it would mean that the production of wealth would have multiplied. Man can consume only what he first produces. All production is an act of creation. It is the creation of wealth where nothing before existed—nothing useful to man. America transformed a once-desolate wilderness into farms, supermarkets and air-conditioned houses, not by taking those goods away from some have-nots, nor by "consuming" the "world's resources" — but by reshaping valueless elements of nature into a form beneficial to human beings.

Since human survival is not automatic, man's life depends on successful production. From food and clothing to science and art, every act of production requires thought. And the greater the creation, the greater is the required thinking.

This virtue of productiveness is what

Thanksgiving is supposed to recognize. Sadly, this is a virtue rejected not only by the attackers of this holiday, but by its alleged defenders as well.

Many Americans make Thanksgiving into a religious festival. They agree with Lincoln, who, upon declaring Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863, said that "we have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven." They ascribe our material abundance to God's efforts, not man's.

That view is a slap in the face of any person who has worked an honest day in his life. The appropriate values for this holiday are not faith and charity, but thought and production. The proper thanks for one's wealth goes not to some mystical deity but to oneself, if one has earned that wealth.

The liberal tells us that the food on our Thanksgiving plate is the result of mindless, meaningless labor. The conservative tells us that it is the result of supernatural grace. Neither believes that it represents an individual's achievement.

But wealth is not generated by sheer muscle; India, for example, has far more manual laborers than does the United States. Nor is it generated by praying for God's blessing; Iran, for example, is far more religious. If the liberal and conservative views of wealth are correct, why aren't those countries awash in riches?

Wealth is the result of individual thought and effort. And each individual is morally entitled to keep, and enjoy, the consequences of such thought and effort. He should not feel guilty for his own success, or for the failures of others.

There is a spiritual need fed by the elaborate meal, fine china and crystal, and the presence of cherished guests. It is the self-esteem that a productive person feels at the realization that his thinking and energy have made consumption possible.

Come Thanksgiving Day, when some success-hating commentator condemns America for being the world's leading consumer, tell him that he is evading the underlying fact: that this country is the world's leading producer. And then, as you sit down to dinner, celebrate the spiritual significance of the holiday by raising a toast to the virtue of your own productive ability and to America's productive giants, past and present.

(Dr. Hull is co-editor of The Ayn Rand Reader and is a senior writer for the Ayn Rand Institute in Irvine. The Institute promotes the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead).



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STATE

Gobble, gobble, gone? Turkeys stage comeback

BY DAISY NGUYEN

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — It's a turkey with a proud heritage, so much so that gourmet cooks seem to be flocking to poultry farms this Thanksgiving season to buy one.

Mary and Rick Pitman say the phone at their Fresno-area farm has hardly stopped ringing since summer. The questions are always the same: Is there still time to reserve a heritage turkey for Thursday's Thanksgiving feast?

"There's such a huge demand for these turkeys, I've never seen anything like it," said Mary Pitman. This despite a heritage bird's higher price — anywhere from \$3 to \$7 a pound — compared with \$1.40 a pound for a factory-farm raised turkey.

Consumers with discerning palates say it's a small price to pay for a bird they find tastier and more flavorful than the modern, mass-produced turkeys found in supermarkets. People from as far away as Florida have been calling Sylvia Mavalwalla's farm in Petaluma to order one, and those who live nearby insist on driving straight to her ranch to pick up a fresh bird.

With word about heritages spreading, the Pitmans say they expect to sell 6,000 birds this year, 5,000 more than last year when they first started raising them. Mavalwalla said she will sell 110, up from 45 last year.

About 274 million turkeys were raised in the United States in 2003, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and most of them were mass-produced Broadbreasted White turkeys.

A census conducted in 1997 by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy found only 1,335 heritage turkeys in the country. This year, about 20,000 were raised, according to Slow Food USA, which launched a campaign in 2001 to reacquaint Americans with the birds.

Preservationists believe revived interest in eight varieties of turkeys such as the American Bronze, Bourbon Red and Narragansett will help keep the food supply diverse and save the breeds from extinction.

"When talking about certain animals being raised for food, if no one eats them then they become endangered," said Erika Lesser, executive director of Slow Food USA. "You ensure their survival by consuming and ensuring demands for them."

People who want to try a heritage bird

may have missed out this year if they haven't already ordered, but Lesser says they can reserve early for next year. That way farmers can plan the year's stock.

Heritage turkeys take eight months to fully develop, while a commercial turkey has about a 3-month life span. The Broadbreasted White turkeys were developed in the 1950s to come to market faster and fatter, and they've lost the ability to run, fly and breed naturally.

The Pitmans say their turkeys are fed a high-protein grain diet and are given four times as much roaming space as factory-raised turkeys. As a result, their live weights range from seven to 20 pounds, compared with 27 pounds for an average Broadbreasted White.

Heritage turkeys are also more "animated and social" than Broadbreasted Whites, says Mary Pitman, who raises both.

"When you go out there, they follow you whereas other birds would run away from you," she said. "When you get excited, they get excited. And they're beautiful, they have intense bronze, purple feathers."

Farmers say it is worth the added time and money it takes to raise them.

"I wouldn't do it if I wasn't making a profit," Mavalwalla said.

For Pitman, raising the birds is also part of a personal crusade. She switched to eating pure foods two decades ago after she began developing allergies and her body couldn't digest processed food.

"I feel strongly about the way my turkeys are raised because of my own health," she said.

For people like her, who need to pay close attention to what they eat, a company called Heritage Foods USA even offers a way to trace the origins of their turkey.

By ordering with the company's online service, a consumer can log on to a live webcam and watch the birds being raised.

"It's hard to rely on labels in this day and age," said Patrick Martins, who created Slow Food's turkey campaign before founding Heritage Foods. "This offers a way to connect the consumer to the farmer."

For those who just want to go to the store and buy one, many upscale markets such as Bristol Farms in Southern California and Berkeley Bowl Market-place in Berkeley have also picked up on heritage turkeys' surging popularity and are now selling them.

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The Q Line

STATE BRIEFS

Agents have coke and a smile

By The Associated Press

ONTARIO — A suspected drug dealer was arrested and 268 pounds of cocaine was seized during a narcotics task force raid.

The cocaine is worth \$2.4 million.
A dozen agents from the Inland Crackdown Allied Task Force and officers from the California Highway Patrol served a search warrant Saturday night at a north Archibald Avenue apartment, task force leader Orlando Lopez said Monday.
“It looked like it was a stash location for drugs and cash,” Lopez said. “There was a money counter, a lot of rubber bands and packaging material.”
Adalberto Lara, 24, was arrested and booked for investigation of possessing cocaine for sale.

Activists want to sink boating center

By The Associated Press

VENTURA — Environmentalists filed suit against the Board of Supervisors in an effort to stop the county from building a \$6.2 million boating center at Channel Islands Harbor.
The Environmental Defense Center filed the lawsuit on behalf of the Beacon Foundation over the board’s Oct. 19 decision to amend an 18-year-old growth plan for the Oxnard harbor’s west side.
The foundation said Monday that building the facility would eliminate park land, disrupt a heron rookery and lead to traffic congestion. The group prefers a scaled-back center located on the harbor’s east side.
The supervisors amended the 1986 public works plan in an effort to satisfy the California Coastal Commission, which refused to approve the boating center project in February. The public works plan never mentioned a boat- ing center, so the commission instructed the county to update the document to include it.
The commission is expected to consider the project again in January or February.
But the Beacon Foundation alleged in the Superior Court suit that the amendment doesn’t comply with state environmental laws and is inconsistent with the public works plan’s existing environmental protections.
“Rather than consider alternatives and compromises, three members of our Board of Supervisors are fixated on their project or no project,” Beacon president Vickie Finan said in a statement Monday.
Supervisors Steve Bennett, Kathy Long and Judy Mikels voted for the amendment. Supervisors John Flynn

and Linda Parks voted no.
Bennett said that the board made a decision based on the best interests of all Ventura County residents and he dismissed Beacon’s claim that the western location was a bad idea.

SMASH up to the task at hand

By The Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO — Growing gang problems has the county considering revival of its street hoodlum task force.
It was the mid-1990s success of the San Bernardino’s Movement Against Street Hoodlums, nicknamed SMASH, that led to its demise. It drew personnel from the Sheriff’s Department, District Attorney’s Office, Probation Department and Police Department.
Law enforcement wants it revived.
“We have a serious need in our county for gang pre- vention, and the reason SMASH came back around was that the separate agencies didn’t have the manpower,” sheriff’s Sgt. Phil Brown said.
A July report by the San Bernardino County Gangs and Drugs Task Force showed gang homicides up 25 per- cent in 2003 over the previous year and nearly 70 percent from 2001.
With more than 11,000 gang members in San Bernardino County and some 9,300 free on probation or parole, the county spends at least \$25 million a year for detention of gang members in county facilities or the California Youth Authority, the report said.
Plans to resurrect SMASH will be reviewed next month, Brown said.
Fontana police Chief Larry Clark said SMASH was so successful that his department used the model when it created its own unit. He said a countywide response would be more effective.
“The whole SMASH philosophy was to allow for a large contingent of trained individuals to help out,” Clark said. “I think it’s a benefit, not only to our community but the entire county.

Ramble on: Words thrown out

By The Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO — A Long Beach woman charged with killing a Crestline man nearly eight months ago was freed after a judge ruled her rambling statements to detec- tives cannot be used against her.
Lilia Chavez, 52, was arrested for murder on April 3 after she allegedly told detectives she struggled with David Edwards, 47, outside his home and shot him to death near the front door of his mountain community home.

“They should have advised her of her right to remain silent and her right to an attorney,” defense attorney Mark Werksman said Monday.
Chavez, who was in the mountains to attend a retreat, had wandered from her car and was disoriented when she was found near Edwards’ Jupiter Way home. There is no apparent connection between her and the victim.
Deputy District Attorney Lewis Cope dismissed the murder charge against Chavez after Superior Court Judge Marsha G. Slough decided the defendant’s statements could not be used against her.
The judge agreed with Werksman who argued detec- tives should have read his client her Miranda rights before they interrogated her.
Detective Derek Pacifico, who interviewed Chavez, refused Monday to discuss the case.

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Cattle producers enjoying another banner year

BY JULIANA BARBASSA
Associated Press Writer

FRESNO — After several lean years, California cattle ranchers are enjoying their second consecutive year of record beef prices, a trend pushed by the nation’s high-protein diet fad and a limited supply of beef.

While ranchers say they’re likely to bring more cattle to market next year, the high-price trend is expected to continue as demand increases in overseas markets. For consumers, it has meant higher prices for steak, ground beef and roast, but no one seems to mind. Demand remains high.

“We’ve been in this business for 70 years, and I’ve never seen prices this good,” said Jay Robinson, who grazes 200 head of Angus cattle east of Fresno.

He breeds and sells calves, and has seen calf prices go from \$589 in 2003 — itself a record year — to \$744 in

2004. There are about 10,000 cattle ranchers like Robinson in California, who produce about 5 percent of the nation’s beef cattle.

A case of mad cow disease discovered in Washington state in December 2003 and a subsequent ban on U.S. beef exports in other countries sent a shiver through the cattle ranches of California’s San Joaquin Valley.

Nervous cattle producers imagined collapsing prices and frightened consumers, a fear that was at least partly realized: Beef exports dropped 82 percent, U.S. Department of Agriculture analysts said.

That statistic proved merely a blip, however, to the overall market. Americans watching their waistline by cutting carbs and turning to meat-heavy diets gave an unprecedented boost to the industry.

The consumer demand also came at a time of restricted supply, further escalating the price of beef products.

Ranchers who had thinned their herds during the late

1990s because of low returns and a persistent drought are only now building up the size of their herds.

In the meantime, they’re enjoying seeing the price of beef go from \$67.04 per hundred pounds in 2002 to an average of \$84.97 per hundred pounds this year. That’s enough to wash away debt from the lean years, Robinson said.

Superior Stampede, one of the largest cattle-marketing companies in the country, shipped 385,000 head of cattle in October — a record for the Visalia-based company. The price increase is welcome, but hasn’t been generous enough to make cattle ranchers rich, said Chris Nelson, manager of the company.

“We’ve had a lot of hard years, a lot of drought,” he said. “The ranchers really deserved this. They needed it.”

Industry analysts predict the prices will hold at least until next year, when the number of cattle will begin climbing again.

Don’t have a cow! Disease tests come back negative

BY JOHN HEILPRIN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — No sign of mad cow disease was found in an animal the Agriculture Department had singled out for further tests, officials said Tuesday. Initial screenings last week had raised the possibility of a new case of the disease in the United States.

A more definitive test at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, came back negative, the officials said. The announcement was a relief to the U.S. beef industry, which is still trying to recover from the nation’s first case of the disease last December.

The department said it ran a “gold standard” test twice. Officials did not say where the cow came from or

why it was suspected of being diseased.

“Negative results from both ... tests make us confident that the animal in question is indeed negative,” the announcement said.

The initial screenings had produced what officials said were “inconclusive” results, but just the possibility of a second case had rattled cattle producers, meatpackers and hamburger chains.

Julie Quick, an Agriculture spokeswoman, said the department would provide no further information about the suspect cow since the test results came back negative.

It has been less than a year since the first case of mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, was found in the United States. The disease attacks an animal’s nervous system, and food contaminated with BSE

can afflict people with variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a rare illness that is usually fatal.

A Canadian-born Holstein was found infected with BSE last December at a slaughterhouse near Moses Lake, Wash. More than 40 countries almost immediately cut off imports of U.S. beef and more than 700 additional cattle in Washington state, Oregon and Idaho were killed as a precaution. Exports account for about \$3.8 billion of America’s \$40 billion a year beef industry.

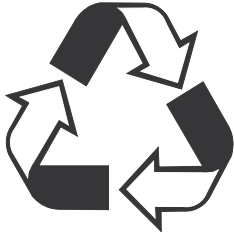
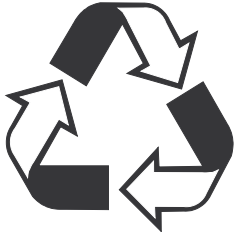
The first case led authorities to broaden the number of animals screened for the disease and to further restrict what animal parts can be used in cattle feed. Some of those parts, such as the brain, spinal cord and small intestines, have the highest risk of contamination.

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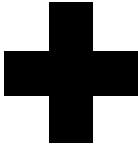
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NATIONAL



Jurors acquit stripper, lover in casino murder

BY ADAM GOLDMAN

Associated Press Writer

LAS VEGAS — A former stripper and her lover were acquitted Tuesday of murdering casino heir Ted Binion, who prosecutors say was drugged and suffocated in a plot to steal his fortune of buried silver.

Defendant Sandy Murphy wept on her lawyer's shoulder while co-defendant Rick Tabish stood and nodded as the verdicts were read.

Murphy, 32, and Tabish, 39, were found guilty of lesser charges of conspiracy to commit burglary and/or larceny, burglary and grand larceny in a plot to steal a \$7 million cache of silver bars and coins Binion had buried in the desert.

Each could face up to 16 years in prison. Clark County District Judge Joseph Bonaventure set sentencing for Jan. 28.

The seven-man, five-woman jury deliberated fewer than four days before acquitting Murphy and Tabish on felony charges of murder, robbery and conspiracy to commit murder and or robbery. The packed courthouse erupted in gasps when the verdicts were read.

Outside the courthouse, Murphy expressed relief and said she was looking forward to spending the holidays with her family in California.

"I'm a little overwhelmed," she said. "I'm a little disappointed, of course, but I'm a true believer in justice. This has definitely restored my faith in the system."

Tabish, hugging his tearful father in

the courtroom, said, "This murder thing is behind me. ... we're done with it."

Tabish was to be returned to state prison on other charges, while Murphy remained free on \$250,000 bond. Her lawyer, Michael Cristalli, said that after serving four years in prison, Murphy should be eligible for probation when she is sentenced.

It was the second trial for Murphy and Tabish, who were convicted in 2000 in a sensational trial that drew international attention.

Tabish was sentenced to 25 years to life and Murphy 22 years to life after a jury decided against life in prison.

Their original murder convictions were overturned on appeal by the Nevada Supreme Court, which ruled in July that Bonaventure made a mistake in not forcing prosecutors to try an extortion case against Tabish separately. Justices said the extortion evidence unfairly prejudiced the first jury.

During the six-week trial, prosecutors portrayed Murphy as Binion's greedy girlfriend who was having an affair with Tabish, a former contractor from Missoula, Mont., and a friend of Binion.

Prosecutors said the two hatched a plot to kill Binion by forcing him to ingest lethal levels of heroin and the anti-depressant Xanax and then suffocated him to hasten his death. He was found dead at his home on Sept. 17, 1998.

Defense lawyers argued Binion, a longtime heroin addict, died of an accidental overdose.

Advocates worry new law will lead to slaughter of wild horses

By The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Wild horse advocates say they're worried that healthy horses rounded up on the range could be sold for slaughter under a herd-thinning measure Congress passed over the weekend.

The legislation lets wild horses older than 10, or those that have unsuccessfully been put up for adoption three times, be sold without limitations at local sale yards or livestock facilities.

"I would expect under this law we're going to have far higher numbers of horses going to slaughter," said Howard Crystal, attorney for the Fund for Animals. "If someone under this program can now buy 300 horses and ship them to a slaughterhouse people will start making money."

Chris Heyed, a policy analyst with the Society for Animal Protective Legislation, called it "a systematic attack on wild horses."

The bill removed from federal law a clause that no wild free-roaming horse or burro could be sold or transferred for processing into commercial products. It also clarified that it is not a crime to sell an aging horse for slaughter, Crystal said.

Sen. Conrad Burns, R-Mont., chairman of the appropriations subcommittee that funds the Bureau of Land Management,

placed the measure in a 3,000-page year-end spending bill after consulting with Sens. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., and Harry Reid, D-Nev., Burns spokeswoman Jennifer O'Shea said.

"We've got to get the number of animals down to appropriate management levels and keep them there, but do it in a way that doesn't bankrupt us," Burns said in a statement. "This language is a step in the right direction."

Lawmakers have expressed frustration with the BLM wild horse program. Costs have gone up as more horses have been taken off the range and placed in government-run holding facilities.

Giving the BLM the authority to sell the horses could solve agency budget problems and let it continue gathering thousands of wild horses from public lands. The agency manages herds in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming.

BLM spokeswoman Celia Boddington declined to comment on the congressional action.

The BLM spends about \$6.8 million a year, or \$465 per horse placed in a long-term holding facility.

The bureau plans to reduce wild horse populations, which reached an estimated 42,000 in 2000, to below 30,000 by 2005.

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CHECK OUT THE HOROSCOPES ON PAGE 2!

Real Estate

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Why homeowner's insurance is a necessity



**BUYING
AND SELLING**
BY BRENT PARSONS

Although it's not illegal to own a home without homeowner's insurance, most lenders require that you carry homeowners insurance or they won't lend you the money to purchase the home.

In addition, it's an important protection for your investment. A standard policy usually includes coverage for the structure of your home, your personal belongings and liability protection.

Things to know when shopping for homeowner's insurance:

Insurance can be expensive. Make sure you spend enough time shopping for insurance to ensure that you get the best value for the best price. Different companies offer different policies and coverage. By contacting several companies, agents, or even the California Department of Insurance, you can determine the price range you should be in for insurance for your home. Once you have narrowed your search down to three companies, get price quotes.

How to narrow it down

One of the things that will be important to you should you need to file a claim against your insurance is the service provided. This includes response times, their customer service attitude while you are dealing with a claim, and the people

that they send to your home. Check around with friends and neighbors to find recommendations for companies that you should look into.

To find out if you are purchasing good insurance that will be around for the long run, check the agency's rating on AM Best or Standard & Poors. These companies rate the financial stability of the insurance companies. The better the rating, the better the chance that the company will be able to pay out if there is a catastrophe.

www.ambest.com
www.standardsandpoors.com

Several ways to lower your insurance costs:

1. Raise your deductible. If you raise your deductible, you will lower your payments because you take away the insurance company's liability for smaller claims. Insurance companies receive a lot of claims for water damage that is over the clients' deductible, but under \$1,500. By submitting these small claims, you are raising your rates in two ways. First, you are increasing the number of claims that you have and thus, making you less insurable. Second, you are costing the insurance company money for these small claims and they will raise their rates to cover the costs.

2. Don't include the price of the land in your rebuilding costs. If your house is totally demolished, chances are the land will still be there. So, the price of the land should not be included in the rebuild price.

3. Consider purchasing your different types of insurance, such as

auto, through the same agent or company. Often times you will receive a multiple policy discount.

4. When you conduct large replacements in your home, such as plumbing, roofing, etc, contact your insurance company to see if they have discounts for certain materials.

Insurance for condos

Often times we hear tragic stories about condo owners who didn't have their own insurance policy and suffered a loss. When you purchase a condo, make sure that you have two policies. The first is the condo "master policy" that covers the common areas that you share with the rest of the building owners. The second is an individual policy that covers your personal belongings and your separate interest in the building.

What to do before a claim

One of the most important things that you can do before you have a claim is to take a thorough inventory of your belongings. This includes jewelry, appliances, electronics, etc. Write down the purchase location, make, model, and serial number if you have one and keep it in a location outside of your home. Having an up-to-date home inventory will help you settle your claim faster and verify losses for your income taxes. It also will help you determine the correct amount of insurance to carry.

(Should you have any questions or need a referral for a good insurance company, call Brent Parsons or Thomas Khammar at (310) 863-7643).

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Sold	265 21ST PL SANTA MONICA 90402	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,509	List Price: \$1,725,000
11/16/2004	Lot Size: 7,600	Sold Price: \$1,725,000
Sold	632 SAN LORENZO ST SANTA MONICA 90402	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,247	List Price: \$1,495,000
11/18/2004	Lot Size: 5,532	Sold Price: \$0
Sold	1036 CENTINELA AVE SANTA MONICA 90403	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 2,672	List Price: \$1,595,000
11/15/2004	Lot Size: 9,000	Sold Price: \$1,800,000
Sold	947 18TH ST #1 SANTA MONICA 90403	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 2,856	List Price: \$1,050,000
11/17/2004	HOD: \$490	Sold Price: \$1,050,000
Sold	1528 BERKELEY ST #1 SANTA MONICA 90404	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,512	List Price: \$639,000
11/16/2004	HOD: \$184	Sold Price: \$651,000
Sold	519 CALIFORNIA AVE #306 SANTA MONICA 90403	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,234	List Price: \$758,000
11/19/2004	HOD: \$271	Sold Price: \$752,000
Sold	123 GEORGINA AVE #2 SANTA MONICA 90402	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 2,105	List Price: \$1,295,000
11/18/2004	HOD: \$474	Sold Price: \$1,285,000
Sold	2652 29TH ST #4 SANTA MONICA 90405	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,690	List Price: \$649,000
11/19/2004	HOD: \$225	Sold Price: \$725,000
Sold	2016 EUCLID ST #17 SANTA MONICA 90405	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,082	List Price: \$439,000
11/17/2004	HOD: \$330	Sold Price: \$476,000
Sold	404 SAN VICENTE #204 SANTA MONICA 90402	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 845	List Price: \$455,000
11/17/2004	HOD: \$325	Sold Price: \$475,000
Sold	1319 HARVARD ST #3 SANTA MONICA 90404	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,890	List Price: \$749,500
11/16/2004	HOD: \$275	Sold Price: \$733,000
Sold	201 OCEAN AVE #P1901 SANTA MONICA 90402	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 0	List Price: \$1,249,000
11/16/2004	HOD: \$670	Sold Price: \$1,120,000
Sold	2325 KANSAS AVE #19 SANTA MONICA 90404	
Santa Monica	SqFt: N/A	List Price: \$385,000
11/19/2004	HOD: \$198	Sold Price: \$375,000
Sold	810 STANFORD ST #3 SANTA MONICA 90403	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,605	List Price: \$799,000
11/17/2004	HOD: \$325	Sold Price: \$799,000
Sold	1325 CENTINELA AVE #2 SANTA MONICA 90404	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 1,957	List Price: \$765,000
11/15/2004	HOD: \$375	Sold Price: \$752,500
Sold	631 BAY ST SANTA MONICA 90405	
Santa Monica	SqFt: 820	List Price: \$519,000
11/17/2004	HOD: \$250	Sold Price: \$497,000
Sold	2325 KANSAS AVE #3 SANTA MONICA 90404	
Santa Monica	SqFt: N/A	List Price: \$369,000
11/19/2004	HOD: \$198	Sold Price: \$359,000
Sold	2325 KANSAS AVE #4 SANTA MONICA 90404	
Santa Monica	SqFt: N/A	List Price: \$359,000
11/19/2004	HOD: \$198	Sold Price: \$359,000

THOMAS KHAMMAR AT GEORGE CHUNG REALTORS:
(310) 863-7643 thomas1@georgechungrealtors.com

Information received as per the MLS on 11/22/04. Not all transactions may have been represented by George Chung Realtors.



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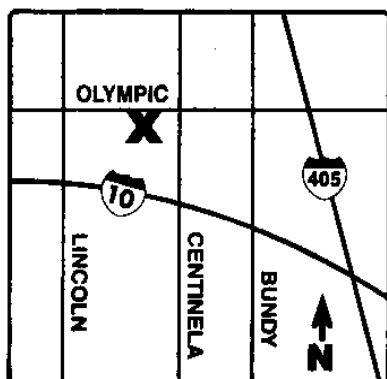
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Holiday warmth can spark unwanted fires



DAYS ON THE MARKET

BY JODI SUMMERS

Thanksgiving is quickly approaching, which means the holiday season is officially upon us. Enjoy, be merry and be sure that your family and home are safe.

As fabulous and festive as holiday trees and holiday lights can be, they also increase the chance of fire in your home. The United States Fire Administration reports that holiday fires cause more than \$500 million in damage, and injures an average of 2,000 individuals during each Christmas holiday season. Stay safe. Here are some ideas to minimize the risk of fire.

OUTDOOR DECORATIONS

Begin your jolly holiday decorating by using lights that are especially for outdoor use. Be wary about overloading electrical outlets, particularly if your electrical system hasn't been upgraded in the past few decades. Hide extension cords so no one treads on them, and critters don't chew on them. A little red pepper spread along the cords will keep animals away from your electrical lines.

Think about putting your lights on a timer so that they're glowing during evening hours, but off during the day and when you sleep.

You can't predict when we're going to have another round of Santa Ana winds and palm fronds will be flying. Avoid problems with your lights and decorations being blown into dangerous positions. Be sure your lights are well-fastened.

YOUR HOLIDAY TREE

Find a fresh Christmas tree, not one that's been sitting on the lot for three weeks. See that needles are supple and hold firmly to the branch. A good test is to jiggle the tree or thump the trunk on the ground to see if lots of needles fall off.

Once you choose your tree, cut several inches off the bottom, like you do with fresh flowers, to help the tree better absorb water and stay moist.

Place the tree in an appropriate stand that holds it firm. Double check to see that the location is away from heating sources, which will dry out your tree more quickly. Don't let the tree and gifts block the doorway or other strategic exit points, in case you need to make a quick escape.

Water your tree regularly — the goal is to keep the water level at least two inches above the base of the trunk. This will keep your tree from drying out too quickly. Be

sure all light cords are away from the water.

When decorating your tree, use indoor lights and review the manufacturer recommendation regarding the number of light sets that can be strung together.

Before stringing the lights around the tree, check old lights and electrical decorations. See that there are no worn wires, broken bulbs or loose connections. If any decorations seem at all questionable, replace them.

Keep electrical cords away from high traffic areas, but make it easy to switch the lights on and off, or put them on a timer, so that you can turn your tree off when you are away or sleeping.

Don't overload your electric outlets.

If you use an artificial tree, be sure it's fire resistant. If it's a metal tree, avoid using electric lights.

As careful as you are, make sure the kids are even more careful.

FIREPLACES

Avoid asphyxiation, creosote build-up or barbecuing the squirrel that got caught in the chimney by having it inspected and cleaned by a professional. Creosote comes from brining wood. It builds up in chimney flues and can cause fire. Minimize creosote build-up by quieting smoldering fires. Always check to see that the flue is open before you start a fire. Avoid smoked stockings. Be sure any decorations you place around the fireplace are not flammable. Using a screen will help you avoid flying sparks. Fire screens are an excellent damage deterrent. See that there's a spark arrester on your chimney.

CANDLES

Make sure burning candles rest in a steady container, where they can't be knocked or blow over. Do not leave candles unattended. Check to see that candles are not near drapes, or other quick-light decorations. As you are well aware, keep candles, matches and lighters out of reach of children.

The start of the holiday season is an excellent time of year to check smoke detectors and replace holiday batteries.

Here's one additional holiday safety idea that has nothing to do with fires — be wary about putting manufacturers' boxes from desirable big-ticket gifts like TVs, DVDs and TIVO's in the trash right after you open presents. Thieves case neighborhoods, and may pick a house that they can tell received good gifts.

(For your real estate needs, e-mail Jodi Summers @ jodis@boardwalkrealty.com or call (310) 309-4219).



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When signing the lease, be sure to lean on friend



IN YOUR SPACE
BY CHRISTINA S. PORTER

I recently contacted a client of mine to discuss the renewal of her lease. Her response was that she felt that she could get a better deal if she handled it herself. I appreciated her honesty. On the surface this way of thinking makes sense, no brokerage fees for the owner to pay, making

a better deal for the tenant. However, committing to a lease is not something to take lightly. A lease, or a lease renewal is an enormous financial commitment, and many times, may be your largest. It's not just "renting" space. When you sign a lease, you are committing to the "total value" or "aggregate value" of the monthly rent you pay over the term of the lease. You are entering into a legal contract and should seek expert advice. In most leases there are monetary obligations not included in the monthly rent and a variety of non-monetary commitments to consider. When you are an existing tenant in a

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Location	Type	Date Leased	Sq. Ft.	Price
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1510 11th St	Office	11/20/2004	750	\$2.00/fs
2601 Ocean Park Blvd	Office	11/17/2004	2,248	\$2.10/fs
3420 Ocean Park Blvd	Office	11/19/2004	1,431	Negotiable *
3435 Ocean Park Blvd	Office	11/19/2004	1,511	\$1.85/mg
3435 Ocean Park Blvd	Office	11/19/2004	985	\$1.90/mg
620-632 Santa Monica Blvd	Retail	11/20/2004	528	\$4.00/nnn
620-632 Santa Monica Blvd	Retail	11/20/2004	609	\$4.00/nnn
320 Wilshire Blvd	Office	11/20/2004	2,104	\$2.25/mg
320 Wilshire Blvd	Office	11/20/2004	613	\$2.25/mg
320 Wilshire Blvd	Office	11/20/2004	1,485	\$2.25/mg

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building and have, or don't have, an option to renew, owners, or owner's brokers if they're smart will start talking to their tenants early, some of them even assuring the tenant a better rate if they don't involve a broker. There are many reasons for this and the obvious, and to a tenant the seemingly only one, is that they don't want to pay a commission. In a "landlord's" market you may be forced into that position. The current office leasing market is without a doubt a "tenant's" market. The truth is that there are many aspects of a lease that are negotiable, or not, depending on market conditions. Informing a tenant about the market conditions is not the responsibility of an owner or an owner's broker, unless of course the owners' broker is acting as a "dual agent," then the rules change. It's important to make sure that you receive expert advice from a commercial real estate broker who knows your area and product type (office, retail, industrial) and is on your side, exclusively. Many times you can find a broker who is more specialized and negotiates leases for specific industries, like law or medical space. The point is, you take your car to a mechanic, you go to a dentist, and you go to an attorney for legal advice;. Don't underestimate the power you give away when you sign a lease. In the end, a skilled commercial real estate broker will almost always save you money. Some might even give you a guarantee. But remember, you must always consult an

attorney regarding the legal ramifications of the terms and conditions set forth in a lease. On the same note, it's imperative to find one that has experience in real estate law and practices in your neck of the woods. As much as we know and sound like we know, most brokers are not attorneys and are not formally trained to advise you in the legal subtleties of a contract. Why have both? It's a broker's job is to structure the deal competitively and an attorney's job is to make sure the deal structured by the broker is legally sound. Because of the current leasing environment, now is the time to start negotiations on the re-leasing of your space. If you have more than two or three years left on your current term it might be premature but don't assume that it is. Vacancy rates are high and owners should be very interested in any kind of a commitment — some might prefer a short term lease in anticipation of higher lease rates. I recommend that you get the longest term you can if you intend to stay in business that long. Rates will go up. It's really a "win-win" situation: You as a tenant may be able to re-negotiate a better rate and the owner of your building gets a better night's sleep. (Christina S. Porter is in the business of leasing and selling office and industrial buildings. She can be reached at (310) 806-6104 or cporter@naicapital.com)



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NATIONAL



For Hispanic women, Quinceanera a big day

BY MARIJA POTKONJAK

Associated Press Writer

MESA, Ariz. — On a sunny Saturday fall afternoon, Estefany Pelaez stepped out of her Chandler home ready to start a new phase of her life. She was dressed in an ivory floor-length gown and her dark curls, topped by a tiara emblazoned with the number 15, cascaded down the back of her petite frame.

"Que preciosa," murmured family and friends, gathered on the front lawn waiting to see the Chandler High School sophomore. Also waiting: A Hummer limousine that would take Estefany and her court of tiny "damas" and "chambelanes" to St. Anne's Catholic Church in Gilbert.

"I'm so proud of her," said Alfredo Pelaez, Estefany's father. "This is a big step for her."

This was Estefany's quinceanera, her 15th birthday. The occasion is celebrated throughout Latin America and Hispanic communities in the United States. It marks, for young Hispanic women, the transition from girlhood to womanhood. The festivities include a church service and a party that is a cross between a Sweet 16 and a debutante ball. The term quinceanera refers to both the young lady being celebrated and the event. It comes from the Spanish words for 15, "quince," and years, "anos."

Like so many coming-of-age rituals celebrated in the United States such as the Jewish bar mitzvah or the Roman Catholic confirmation, the quinceanera has at times been branded materialistic. Too much party, not enough coming of age.

But the Pelaez family and St. Anne's are part of a backlash against the materialism associated with the quinceanera celebration.

"Many people think the Mass is just the complement for the quinceanera," said Lorena Pelaez, Estefany's mother. "The most important (part) is the message the parish priest gives to the quinceanera about growing up."

Out on the front lawn, Estefany stood in the middle of her own red carpet moment. Professional and amateur photographers captured her every move. Estefany's court, comprising little girls and boys in honor of the family's Guatemalan heritage, preceded her into the limousine.

Still, the chaos was controlled. The event was the culmination of six months' worth of planning that entailed five trips to Los Angeles for the decorations and four trips to Nogales, Mexico, for Estefany's dress. The pressure to pull off a successful quinceanera is immense and often compared to that of a wedding.

"It's a huge deal," Alfredo said, pointing out that his wife had to take three tranquilizers to calm her nerves.

Initially Alfredo wanted to give his only daughter a practical gift for her 15th

birthday — a car. Alfredo reasoned that the family would spend the same amount of money either way.

But Estefany and her mother said no way. This tradition was too important to the family.

"I only turn 15 once," Estefany said.

Alfredo eventually gave in.

"Friends said to me, 'In the future, you're gonna say you should have done it,'" Alfredo said. "It's definitely worth it."

The limousine pulled up to St. Anne's just before 1 p.m. St. Anne's is one of a few Catholic churches in the Phoenix area to conduct the quinceanera Mass.

"So many parishes don't even do it anymore," said the Rev. Stephen Schack, associate pastor at St. Anne's. "I see it as an opportunity to reach not only the young girl but the families, too."

Church officials also see the quinceanera celebration as an opportunity to strengthen not only the Hispanic community as a whole, but also its ties to Catholicism.

Estefany's court preceded her into the San Juan Diego Chapel. Each dama, or maid of honor, carried a tiny bouquet and held hands with her chambelan, her escort. When her court was seated, Estefany entered accompanied by her parents. She took her seat of honor, and Schack began the Mass in Spanish.

After tooling around town in the Hummer limousine with her friends, Estefany arrived at Jacobson Elementary School in Chandler. Family and friends dined on fajitas and awaited her entrance.

Trumpets sounded and the curtains opened to reveal Estefany on the gym stage. As the song "Nina Bonita" filled the air, she descended the stairs into a cloud of smoke. The entrance was more rock star than debutante.

Estefany took the arm of her escort and cousin, Brian Pelis, and the couple walked to the center of the gym where Estefany's parents waited with a chair. Her brother carried a pair of shoes on a pillow. Her father took the shoes, knelt and put them on his daughter's feet. These higher heels symbolize her transition from girl to woman. To the sound of Strauss' "Blue Danube," Estefany and her father danced the first waltz of the night as the damas and chambelanes danced in a circle around them.

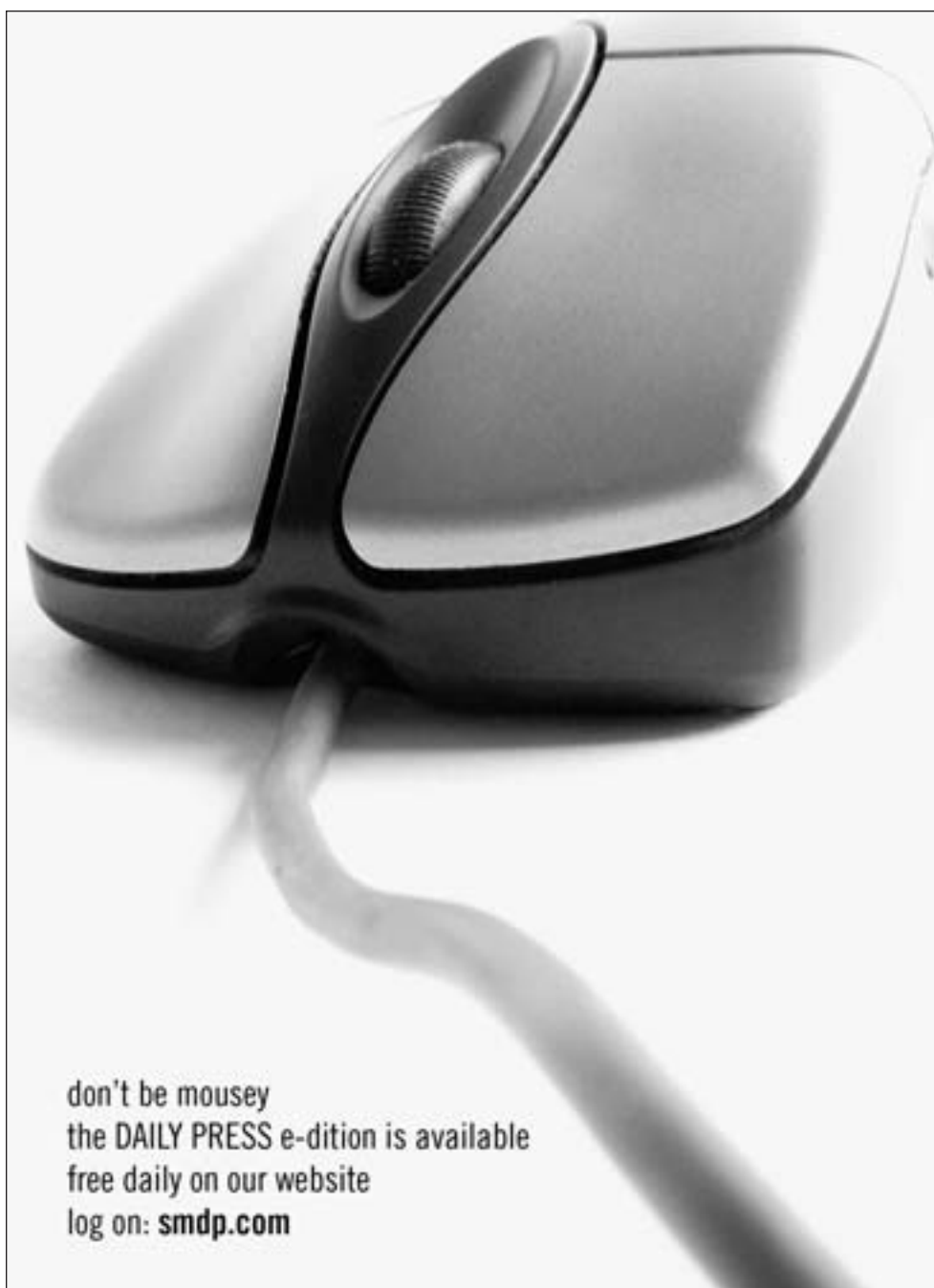
Pulling off such a lavish party is a huge stress on many families, emotionally and financially. Many families reach out to relatives and friends for help. The Pelaezes relied on close relatives who helped pay for the dress, decorations, food, music and gifts.

Jose Umul, Estefany's uncle, said he bought her dress to "inspire her to have a quinceanera. This is a very important tradition for us," he said. "We don't have too much money to celebrate, but this is an opportunity to get the whole family together."



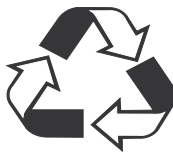
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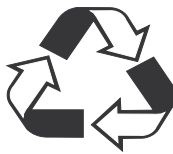


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Santa Monica Daily Press





Solar farms dishing out possible power solution

By The Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A remote Sandia National Laboratories office is working with a private firm to develop huge farms of solar dishes, working out technical and manufacturing problems.

Solar farms with up to 20,000 dishes each could produce enough electricity to compete with so-called peaking power stations, saving customers money during times of heavy electrical use, said Sandia engineer Chuck Andraka. Peaking stations use natural gas to meet power demands when coal and nuclear plants don't provide enough energy.

"Peaking power with natural gas can cost from 10 cents to 30 cents or more per kilowatt-hour," Andraka said. "We can't compete with coal or nuclear, which are in the 3 cents to 5 cents range, but we think

we can make solar farms that produce energy at about 6 cents per kilowatt-hour."

Sandia and Stirling Energy Systems Inc. are working out details of a revenue-sharing agreement, which should be finished by the end of the year, Andraka said.

"We're kind of like a technology incubator for them," he said. "We're teaching them how to attack the technology like Sandia. It's more of a scientific approach. A lot of the time in industry, they put Band-Aids on products to get them out the door because there's a rush for profits. We look at the system first and analyze it and maybe go a little bit more slowly."

Sandia is helping solve the problem of synchronizing thousands of solar dishes economically. Engineers have set up a test field of six three-story-tall dishes on a remote area of Sandia to work out bugs on a small scale.

"We have one older solar tower we have to shut down sometimes because an owl nests there," Andraka said. "That's OK, though, those things could actually be real-world problems for remote dish fields."

Stirling Energy Systems believes it can be ready to start building its first solar farms in two to three years, said Bob Liden, company executive vice president and general manager. Andraka expects it to be about three years before a 20,000-dish solar field can be built.

"This is the perfect type of electricity generation for the Southwest," Liden said. "It's a renewable resource, it's pollution free, and the maintenance of a solar farm is minimal."

Sandia engineers are working on how to make a field of solar dishes work together — not as easy as it sounds, Andraka said.

"In the very early morning the dishes

shade each other, and that will certainly affect a large field," he said. "Also, these things start up using an electric generator. If 20,000 of those went on at the same time, you'd damage the power grid."

Staggering start times a minute apart for 20,000 dishes won't work because it would be dark before the last ones cranked up, Andraka said.

"What we need to do is find a way to start these things up a millisecond apart, so they don't hurt the power grid but they come up in a timely fashion," he said.

Sandia also is starting to figure out how the dishes will talk to a central computer system, Andraka said.

Once the bugs are worked out in the six-dish field, Sandia and SES probably will expand to a field of 100 or more dishes to continue testing, Andraka said. That probably will occur next year.

Canadian Cabinet to review B.C. offshore oil and gas moratorium

By The Associated Press

VICTORIA, British Columbia — The Canadian Cabinet will review a 32-year-old moratorium on oil and gas exploration off the British Columbia's north coast, a delegation of Cabinet ministers from the province has been told.

Spokesmen for federal Natural Resources Minister John Efford and for Industry Minister David Emerson, the political minister for British Columbia, said the Cabinet will consider the issue at an unscheduled time but soon.

Three members of the provincial Cabinet, including Energy Minister Richard Neufeld, were in Ottawa to ask that the moratorium be lifted. Both the provincial legislature and the Canadian parliament are controlled by the Liberal party.

The British Columbia officials met with Emerson, Environment Minister Stephane Dion and representatives of Natural Resources Canada held four days after the release of a federal report by energy expert Roland Priddle, who wrote that 75 percent of the people who partici-

pated in hearings in the province this year opposed lifting the moratorium.

Neufeld said he was disappointed, asserting that the report didn't make any solid recommendations or break new ground.

Environmentalists fear oil and gas exploration could threaten the sensitive north coast ecosystem, especially around the Queen Charlotte Islands.

During a question period in parliament Monday, a New Democrat from northern British Columbia, Nathan Cullen, said the federal government should retain the off-

shore moratorium.

Efford said the government would review Priddle's report and two others on the issue before making any recommendations.

A separate report in February by the Royal Society of Canada found there were few scientific barriers to oil and gas exploration off the province's north coast, near the Alaska panhandle, but added that strict regulations should be adopted.

An aboriginal report released last week said 100 percent of northern Indians oppose lifting the moratorium.

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INTERNATIONAL



Conference leaders shift focus to Mideast peace

BY SALAH NASRAWI

Associated Press Writer

SHARM EL-SHEIK, Egypt — The coming Palestinian elections provide an opportunity to revive the Middle East peace process, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Tuesday, adding that Israel is ready for such a step.

Annan spoke after talks on the peace process with Secretary of State Colin Powell and the top Russian and EU diplomats on the sidelines of an international conference on Iraq.

The conference issued a final statement giving significant support to Ayad Allawi, the prime minister installed by the United States, by backing a "resolute" crackdown on "terrorism" in Iraq.

Much of the focus was turned to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, as Powell, Annan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana discussed the Jan. 9 elections for a Palestinian Authority president to replace the late Yasser Arafat.

Before coming to this Red Sea resort on Monday, Powell met with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, assuring them that President Bush intends to advance the peace process in his second term. Israeli leaders, who boycotted Arafat, told Powell they would ease travel restrictions on Palestinians to facilitate voting.

"We are all encouraged," Annan said after Tuesday's meeting, adding the U.N. would provide election monitors.

"There is an opportunity to move ahead with the road map," Annan said, referring to the peace plan sponsored by the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia. "We believe the Israeli government is also ready."

The host of the Iraq conference, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, said the Israeli-Arab conflict was as much a threat to the region as the insurgency in Iraq.

"Efforts to achieve stability in Iraq cannot be separated from strenuous efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East," Aboul Gheit said in an opening address.

The conference, which began Monday and ends Tuesday, brought together Iraq's six neighbors — Iran, Syria, Turkey, Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia — plus Egypt and other Arab countries, the United States, China and bodies such as the Group of Eight and the European Union.

The final statement suggested that even opponents of the U.S.-led war recognized the need to contribute to its reconstruction.

"It is a world duty to save Iraq from its tragic situation," Aboul Gheit said.

The 20 nations attending the conference condemned "all acts of terrorism in Iraq," as well as kidnappings and assassinations of foreign and Iraqi civilians, including aid workers, diplomats and

journalists.

It urged Allawi's government to deal "resolutely" with terrorism but to avoid excessive force and hurting civilians.

Some in the Arab world view the insurgency in Iraq as a legitimate resistance to U.S. occupation, and many Arabs have been angered by Iraqi deaths in fighting with U.S.-led forces.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari defended the U.S.-led forces in Iraq. "The contribution of the multinational force is essential to help secure necessary conditions for voting and to support our security forces in stabilizing the country," he said.

Iran and Syria voiced criticism of the U.S.-led campaign against the insurgents. Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa said while his government condemns terrorism, "we cannot overemphasize the need to refrain from shelling civilians, destroying cities and killing innocent people."

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi also criticized "the use of excessive force and bombing of towns." But he also condemned the insurgent attacks and kidnappings, saying "such acts will help prolong the presence of foreign troops in Iraq."

With the Iraqi government setting a Jan. 30 date for a crucial election, Zebari said his government was committed to holding "full, free and fair elections across the country for the first time in our history."

The final communique urged the interim government to meet peaceful groups from across the political spectrum before the elections to encourage broad participation in the vote.

Bahrain told the conference it was willing to host a meeting of all Iraqi factions. Zebari told reporters his government had not yet considered the proposal.

"In principle, there is no objection. However, we believe that the best place to hold a reconciliation meeting is in the capital Baghdad," Zebari said.

The conference has steered away from setting a deadline for withdrawing U.S.-led forces from Iraq. The final communique, though, does say the mandate of foreign forces is "not open-ended."

The conference's final statement called on Iraq's neighbors to "intensify cooperation" to control their borders against the infiltration of would-be insurgents, a top demand of the Baghdad government. Allawi told The Associated Press on Monday that neighboring countries had not pulled their weight against the insurgency.

Powell told reporters he discussed the issue with his Syrian counterpart, and that Washington would provide Damascus with information that should be pursued.

"The Syrians have taken some steps recently, but we think there's a lot more they can do," Powell said.

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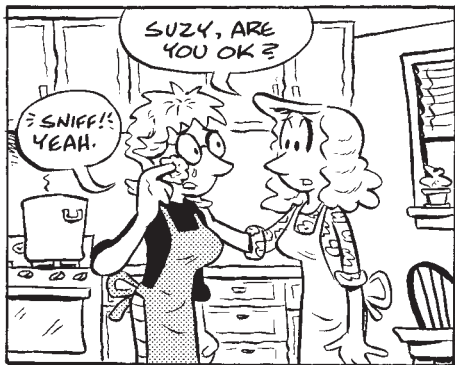


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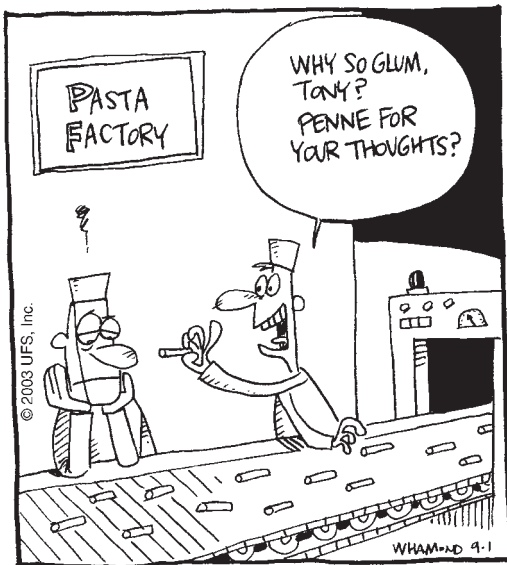
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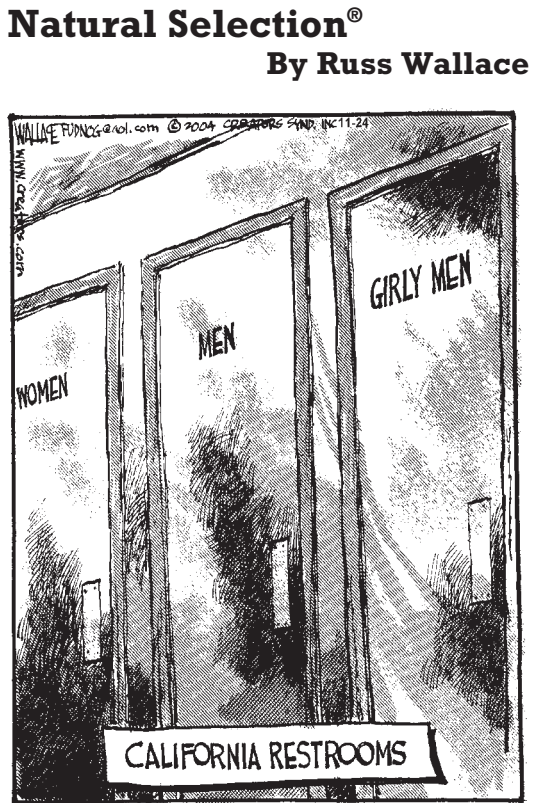
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6 mos./6 mo. arm 2.75%
1 mo./1 mo. arm 1.125%

*Rates subject to change

Some of our Our Lending Partners:



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Rob Schultz, Broker

LICENSED CALIFORNIA BROKER #01218743



*Pacific Ocean Properties
is proud to announce Craig Sellers
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