

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

SUPER LOTTO PLUS

17-18-22-39-42

Megamember: 1
Jackpot: \$13 million

FANTASY 5

5, 24, 30, 31, 36

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 1, 1, 7
Evening picks: 7, 4, 7

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 5, California Classic
2nd Place: 8, Gorgeous George
3rd Place: 1, Gold Rush
Race Time: 1:43.34



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Among the themed funeral settings available for families recently at U.S. mortuaries (at \$1,000 to \$3,000) (according to a September Associated Press report): bales of hay, wagon wheels, cacti, a cowboy boot and a plastic horse (for the loved one who was rodeo-oriented, at the Palm Mortuary in Las Vegas), and "Big Mama's Kitchen," with Crisco, Wonder Bread and fried chicken (for the loved one who was a fan of lavish feasts).



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I hate the outdoors.
To me the outdoors
is where the car is."

— Will Durst



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Miramar developers given some wiggle room

Blueprints for hotel expansion will be drafted in conjunction with City Hall staffers

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

COUNCIL CHAMBERS — Elected officials agreed Tuesday that City Hall's laws are too strict to govern the expansion of an historic hotel downtown.

The City Council voted 5-1 to negotiate what's called a "development agreement" with representatives of the Fairmont Miramar Hotel at Ocean Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard, giving both sides considerable flexibility.

For developers, it means possibly circumventing height restrictions and other limita-

tions. For City Hall, the agreement gives staffers some negotiating leverage to push for more affordable housing, parking and other benefits to residents.

Though the exact specifications of the additions are yet to be decided, developers have most recently proposed adding 200 hotel rooms, 20,000 square feet of retail space, dozens of affordable housing units and more than 100 public parking spaces. They also hope to open up the Ocean Avenue side of the hotel and feature more prominently the Moreton Bay fig tree, which dates back to 1889.

But Matthew DiNapoli, who represents the Miramar developers, said those and other specifications may change.

"The real work is ahead of us," he said Wednesday. "We need to sit down with staff and weigh (the community's input) against the



Del Pastrana/Daily Press

The Bay Moreton fig tree at the Miramar Hotel, planted in 1889, towers eight stories high.

appropriate development for that site."

Perhaps the most contentious feature of the proposal is the height of the additions. Though council members repeatedly stressed they wouldn't back a high-rise tower infringing on views of the ocean and bluffs, which was part of an earlier proposal, developers said they need to exceed City Hall's height restrictions for the project to be economical.

See MIRAMAR, page 5

Fishing for gifts



John Wood/Daily Press

Santa Monica residents Nelindra Grebler, 9, with guinea pig 'Flash,' and Johnnie Grebler, 6, with fish 'Beta,' pose with Santa Claus Wednesday evening at the eighth annual Pet Night at Santa Monica Place. By the end of the night, organizers said 153 pets mugged for the camera.

Man found with 24 kilos of coke sentenced

Landlord found the drugs

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN LA — The man who was found with more than \$5 million worth of cocaine in his Santa Monica apartment in October was sentenced Wednesday to seven years in state prison as part of a plea bargain.

And while the discovery was shocking to Amir Ali's neighbors, how the drugs were found was even more of a surprise.

It wasn't police who initially

found the drugs — it was Ali's landlord, who had entered his subterranean laundry room to investigate a water pipe burst in the basement. Apparently, there were several kilos stashed in boxes in the laundry room, which is connected to a detached garage that led to Ali's apartment.

The landlord immediately called police and a search warrant was obtained shortly after. Police found drug paraphernalia inside the apartment, as well as several thousand dollars.

See SENTENCE, page 6

Unocal to pay Santa Monica City Hall \$5M

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — The money keeps trickling in from defendants named in the biggest lawsuit ever levied by attorneys here.

Union Oil Company California has agreed to pay City Hall \$5 million for its role in contaminating Santa Monica's drinking water with Methyl Tertiary-Butyl Ether, assis-

tant city attorney Joe Lawrence said.

Unocal's settlement offer was unanimously approved by the City Council Tuesday, bringing City Hall one step closer to the end of a contentious, three-year legal dispute.

Lawrence said there are two, smaller oil companies that are expected to settle in the coming weeks for a total of \$800,000. That

See UNOCAL, page 6

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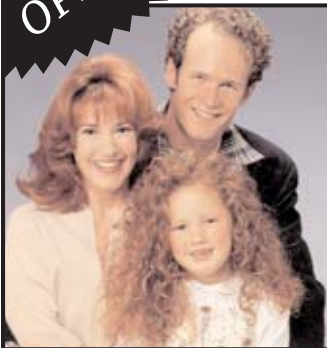
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HOROSCOPE

Plan your weekend, Capricorn



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

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

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Monday, October 13, 2003:

You have the ability to shake up your present universe, if that is what you choose. As a result, you might turn your life topsy-turvy. Use your unexpected moments of impulsiveness in a more creative manner. You can add to the quality of your life, at work and personally. Your career blooms, as does your personal life, after September 2004. You can have what you want if you remain steady. If you are single, many are attracted to you. Who you pick could be interesting and reflective of your issues. If you are attached, you might want to be more sensitive to your mate's needs and desires. TAURUS demands a lot from you.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ You still have a bag of tricks to save the day, wherever you are. The Moon in your sign continues to make this one of your power days. A group of friends could surprise you. Follow-through counts, which is one of your significant traits. Tonight: Discuss finances with a key person.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Hold back, even if you feel that a boss is outrageous. Trust that today might not be the best timing. You will want to talk through your feelings with someone you trust and understand. Just follow through on what you must do. Tonight: Nap and then decide.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Use the daytime to the fullest, when Lady Luck and surprising news team up together. Work as a group and a well-oiled machine with others. That interaction could be key to your success. Move now or prepare to wait awhile. Tonight: Take some time to yourself.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ With the support of a key associate, you meet another's demands, and happily so. If you would like to review a key question or matter, wait until later in the day, when others might be more amenable to that type of conversation. Tonight: Start thinking "weekend"!

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Keep taking in the bigger picture. You want to understand more of what is going on than just what's on the surface. You could be surprised and delighted by what comes out if you hang in this space. Be ready to assume more leadership. Tonight: Out or working late.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Be open to others and innovative techniques with your work. Though you might not think that what you hear will work, you could be most pleased. Look for shortcuts in your work and daily life. Save the late afternoon for calls. Tonight: Relax to music or a movie.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Others seek you out. Your ability to work with surprises is excellent, and you will get your share of them in the near future, as you shall see. Others seek you out for help and solutions. Make it your pleasure. Tonight: Indulge in some downtime with a loved one.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Dig right into work, accomplishing whatever you need to. You might find that calls from work are a bit distracting and add a different perspective to your day. Emphasize what you need to get done. Network and socialize later. Tonight: Go along with another's plans.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Remember, if someone reacts strangely, you might have given your share as well lately. Stay light, even if you are questioning some facts. Go with the moment and use spontaneity to your benefit. Tonight: Take a night off for yourself.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ You might want to deal with some basic personal matters, which will take you in a new direction, if you so choose. If you can from home, that might be the best solution. Otherwise, your mind wanders at work. Tonight: Think "weekend."

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Though natural to you, your unpredictability could be upsetting to others. Work with the moment and keep communicating your ideas. You don't want to blow someone off course unnecessarily. Tonight: Snacks with a favorite friend.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Take your time, even if you feel sure of yourself. There could be a snafu where you least anticipate it. Keep an even and steady course for now, mulling over an idea. In the late afternoon, start up talks. You could be pleased by what you hear. Tonight: Go to a favorite spot.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Luxury apartments open downtown

By Daily Press staff

A \$35 million apartment complex in downtown Santa Monica will open this weekend.

Two 48-unit apartment buildings will open in downtown Santa Monica on Sunday, the eighth and ninth projects developed by JSM Construction, Inc. on Sixth and Seventh Streets.

"We believe this new development further demonstrates that the residential shortage in Santa Monica can be solved with multi-family housing that transforms lackluster street downtown streets into an attractive environment," said Craig D. Jones, JSM president.

The buildings, "Livorno" and "Verona," are the latest additions to the "Santa Monica Collection," a portfolio of 430 apartment units built and developed by JSM in Santa Monica between Wilshire Boulevard and Colorado Avenue on Sixth and Seventh streets. Other completed buildings are the "Venezia," "Anacapa," "Amalfi," "Capri" and "Ravello." The firm's ninth downtown building is under construction on Sixth Street.

Designed by Santa Monica-based Killefer Flammang Architects, the new buildings have balconies, bay windows, decorative planters and treillage.

The rent price reflects the current Santa Monica climate. Rents start at \$2,195 for one-bedroom units and \$2,395 for two-bedroom apartments.

JSM is also building a new affordable housing project on the same block, the "Streza," which will be the ninth affordable housing project the firm has built in the city. It is planned for completion next summer.



Photo Courtesy

For rent: New complex to open.

SMC board has new leadership

By Daily Press staff



Margaret Quiñones

Margaret Quiñones has been elected chair and Carole Currey vice chair of the Santa Monica Community College District Board of Trustees for 2004. Their one-year terms began Dec. 1.

Quiñones, serving for the first time as chair, succeeds Herb Roney, and Currey fills the spot previously held by Quiñones. The officer posts rotate annually.

Quiñones was elected to the board in November 2000. Prior to that, she served eight years as a trustee on the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board, including one year as president.

A counselor at El Camino College in Torrance, Quiñones has had broad experience at community colleges and social service agencies. She also has been active in several professional and community organizations, primarily in education and Latino organizations.

An SMC graduate, she received her bachelor's degree in mental health research methods from California State University at Dominguez Hills, a master's in counseling psychology from the University of Southern California, and a doctorate in educational leadership from UCLA. She also was a fellow of the JFK Harvard School of Government.

Dr. Quiñones was the first Latina elected to the SMMUSD board and to the SMC board.

Currey, serving her fifth stint as vice chair, was elected to the SMC board in April 1979 and has served as chair four times.

A former member of the SMMUSD board, she has long been involved in a wide range of community and education organizations.

She was elected five times to the California Community College Trustees Board of Directors and served as president in 2001-02. She is also on the board of the

See BRIEFS, page 5



The swell is picking up steam, slowly but surely. Fun sets in Santa Monica and head-high waves up elsewhere in the bay.

OUTLOOK: Good news. The waves build, build, build into the weekend and we should have some double-overhead bombers by this weekend. Stay tuned.

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

Today the water is:

60°

Sunrise: 6:34 a.m.
Sunset: 4:46 p.m.

	LOW TIDE				HIGH TIDE			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	12:57	1.1	2:08	-0.9	7:15	6.7	8:23	4.5
SUNDAY	1:34	1.4	2:55	-1.4	7:51	7.0	9:18	4.4
MONDAY	2:12	1.7	3:44	-1.5	8:30	7.2	10:15	4.1
TUESDAY	2:53	2.1	4:36	-1.5	9:13	7.1	11:17	3.9
WEDNESDAY	3:38	2.4	5:33	-1.2	9:59	6.8	N/A	N/A
THURSDAY	4:31	2.8	6:34	-0.8	12:28	3.8	(10:50)	6.2
FRIDAY	5:43	3.1	7:40	-0.4	1:48	3.8	(11:51)	5.6

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The Q Line

To the relief of Santa Monica merchants, the City Council last week rejected a proposed law that would have restricted businesses on how much noise they can generate at certain times of the day.

While politicians said the law as proposed couldn't be passed because too little research was done, a new ordinance will come back to them after staffers do some more work.

Some question whether it's businesses making all of the noise in Santa Monica, or if it's just a fact of living in a con-

densed, high-traffic city. Others suggest that the current noise ordinance isn't even enforced adequately.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Is Santa Monica too loud? Who's making all the noise?"

Call (310) 285-8106 with your response before Thursday at 5 p.m. We'll print them in Friday's paper. Please limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.

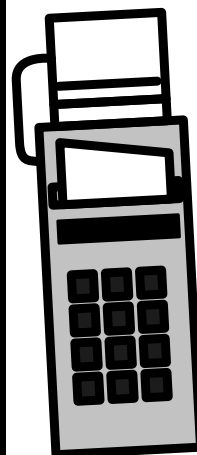
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OPINION

LETTERS

Smoker snuffed by beach goer

Editor:

I can only conclude that the reader who recommends that non-smokers "walk a yard upwind" (SMDP, Dec. 2, page 4) if bothered by another's cigarette smoke rarely goes to the beach. Any summer weekend at the beach, particularly at the popular pier area, will find people crammed together on blankets and towels barely a foot from each other. That others should get up and move their belongings or walk away whenever a tobacco addict chooses to enjoy their habit is ridiculous. He (and perhaps many others) would also see as an attack on their civil rights another suggestion I have: Ban radio playing on the beach. Many New York beaches do this and do not suffer an attendance diminishment. In this day of inexpensive walkmans, this should be no problem.

Sunny Kreis
Santa Monica

There's a good reason for picket lines

Editor:

Is it truly possible that anyone could be simultaneously so uninformed and yet opinionated ("Real men don't picket" SMDP, Dec. 2, page 4). Rather than advising others to "grow up" because they don't see an issue in the same light as herself, perhaps the woman who ranted against the striking grocery workers should consider taking a look at the issue from another point of view.

Benjamin Franklin stated over two centuries ago that "Nothing is less common than common sense." Case in point. Does anyone truly believe grocery clerks would forgo paychecks for two months and walk picket lines for an issue that boils down to \$5 a week? That's about 12 cents an hour. Moreover, do you think union leadership could mobilize their members to walk out and keep walking over 12 cents an hour? It would take years or decades for them to make up the difference in lost wages. No, the \$5 a week scam has been floated by corporate management types hoping the average person wouldn't think the issue through and just react emotionally like, well, she did.

Negotiating a contract is a serious and complicated business that union leaders take with the utmost seriousness. Rather than crying hysteria, she might consider the truth. Workers negotiate wages and benefits in exchange for their labor. Benefits are not something management has thrown in out of the kindness of their hearts over the years. They have been earned over the years by the hard work of millions of UFCW workers. Besides, health benefits are cheaper when thousands of people work together for a group rate. If each were to try to acquire the same benefits individually, the cost would be astronomical. Most of the benefits go not to the workers themselves, but to their children. Or should the children also be out on the street earning their keep?

That's how it was before unions. Children had the right to work 14-hour days for a dollar. Women had the right to work in sweatshops without proper lighting or ventilation. Men had the right to work until they dropped and were replaced by someone younger and stronger. Social Darwinism at its finest. Ah... the good old days. Robber barons and monopolies. Unbridled capitalism. And a life expectancy of under 50 years. But no one accused them of being wimps.

The truth is negotiators must balance their demands. Some of the remuneration comes in the form of wages. Some in pension plans. And some in benefits.

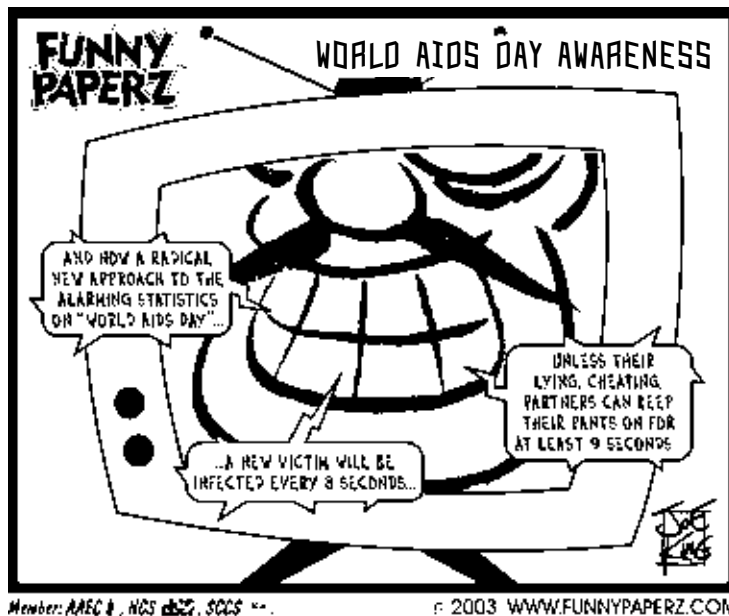
They're not a constitutional right but a hard-won right from past negotiations. Now management wants to change all that. And not because they can't afford it. Profits are up. They just don't want to, and they've said as much. For instance, they want to cap the workers' insurance payments on chemotherapy at \$20,000. If you know any cancer survivors, that's just about enough to extend your life long enough to allow you to wrap up your will and say good-bye to your children.

And in the interest of honesty, you and all readers should know I was a UFCW member for a decade while in high school and college — and a strike captain for Local 770 to boot. I am now the vice president of the Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers' Association, and chair of its negotiations team. So I actually know a little bit about these issues.

Far from being bullies, our friends and neighbors walking the picket lines today are in the vanguard for all workers as management everywhere looks to cut costs and boost profits. I mean really, what are medical and dental benefits for children compared to corporate profits?

Growing up is not synonymous with growing wise. You have to work at the latter — with or without benefit.

Marc Sanschagrin
Santa Monica



Iraq matchup: Donkey carts vs. smart bombs

NEWS on the EDGE

By Ron Scott Smith



■ "Take that. And that, and that," crack Pentagon strategists must be saying, as they intensify Operation Iron Hammer — their new "get-tough" campaign against insurgent forces in the streets of Baghdad — by dropping their most massive and expensive "smart bombs" on buildings known to be vacant. Officials say the newly demolished structures might have been used for anti-coalition strikes. Dana Robert Dillon, a senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, asked the question that begged to be asked, "If your intent is only to blow up the empty buildings, why not send in some engineers and blow up the empty buildings?" The Heritage Foundation is a conservative think tank, and must not realize it's no fun that way.

■ Meanwhile, those enemy insurgent

forces are fighting the most awesome military force in the history of the known universe from the back of carts being pulled by donkeys. A "war between civilizations" indeed. Not since a fully loaded and dominant American military in the 1800's laid waste to the original inhabitants of our own country have we seen such a stark one-sided example of might versus slght.

Yet slight becomes more and more of a problem — a deadly problem — with each passing day. Coalition soldiers killed in the month of November totaled 104, by far the most since the war began in March, and since "mission accomplished" was declared on the deck of an aircraft carrier by the Commander-in-Chief, dressed to the nines in a custom-tailored jet-fighter-pilot uniform. That Kodak moment brought to mind nothing so much as Michael Dukakis in his own battle gear — complete with funny-looking armored helmet — riding around on a Sherman tank to prove his toughness in the 1984 presidential campaign against Reagan. What the Bush guys thought was certain to be an image that could be used time and again in upcoming 2004 campaign commercials has turned on them. Democratic contender, Sen. John Kerry, D. MA., has

already rolled out the tortured Bush-as-fighter-pilot footage in one of his own campaign spots blasting the theatrical entrance, the posturing and the premature boasting.

■ Perhaps the President was trying to make up for that gaffe on his recent now-you-see-me...now-you-don't visit to a garrison of troops in Baghdad on Thanksgiving Day. It's a wonder they didn't fly him in on a Stealth Bomber. As it was, staying with the theatrical entrances thing, he flew in with all the lights out on Air Force One in the middle of the night, then was whisked off to the designated barracks, cloaked to the teeth in secrecy amidst the highest levels of security known to man.

At the company mess hall, the Commander-in-Chief held up a big roasted Turkey for all the world to see, said a few words to fire up the forces, had a few bites, then got the hell out of Dodge. Or dodged out of hell, as it were. He was whisked right back to his plane, kind of like a guy running for his life, and if the leader of the free world has to go into and out of there like that, well, what kind of nation has he liberated?

After the lights-out take off, he was safely on his way back home to the comfort of his Crawford, Texas ranch, for a make-up holiday dinner with the worried wife and two daughters,

leaving hell back there in the hands of the 18-year old sons and daughters of other Americans. Those brave young soldiers feasted on the turkey so generously served up by their highest commander, amidst visions of home — of girlfriends, buddies, families, dogs — before waking up with indigestion early in the morning to get back to the business at hand — building an unwilling nation into something more like us from behind the barrel of a gun, dodging death at seemingly every corner they come to.

To say, as Republican presidential historian Douglas Brinkley did, in full knee-jerk agreement with friends and foes of Bush alike, that "what the President did was show he was willing to put himself in harm's way, like the troops," is only a couple light years off the point. The guys in the 103rd Airborne don't get to sneak around in the dark with lights out. They might as well have bulls-eyes painted on their chests, as they most likely feel like targets in an arcade shooting gallery much of the time. And their stints are for 18 months, not two hours.

(Ron Scott Smith is on the edge somewhere. To reach him e-mail to EdgeoftheWest@aol.com).

LOCAL



Miramar expansion may exceed City Hall codes

MIRAMAR, from page 1

Buildings in that area can't be taller than 45 feet, or three stories, according to city code.

Asked how high he wants build, DiNapoli said, "We have no preconceived notions, as far as we're concerned. We're just starting to sit down now and start the real planning process. What we wanted to avoid was to guess at what the community wanted."

Community members, including members of the Wilshire-Montana Neighborhood Coalition, have fought against the expansion, specifically the 16-story tower proposed last year. Many also were against granting a development agreement for the project, saying it would effectively remove public input from the process, or interject it too late, when plans are complete.

Planning department director Suzanne Frick said the developers will be urged to do community outreach before drafting their plans, and reminded council members that any plan will return to the council for approval.

City Councilman Herb Katz cast the sole vote against sending staffers to negotiate the parameters of the project. Though he agreed a development agreement is appropriate for the site, Katz said he thought the remodel plans should be more detailed.

"It's nice that you want to do this, but I think it could be done much better," he said. "And I'm leading into the fact that before I'm interested in the city negotiating in some kind of a development agreement, I think the applicant needs to come back with ... a start of creativity and a real

sensitivity to what that whole corner and that hotel is all about."

He added that the whole reason height restrictions were put into effect in Santa Monica is because of the high-rise building just across Wilshire Boulevard, the tallest in town.

Only two members of the public spoke on the matter Tuesday. Both asked the council to hold Miramar officials to current zoning laws.

"I found myself thinking, 'Do we need a development agreement here?'" said Darrell Clarke, chair of City Hall's Planning Commission. "What could be built under the existing zoning in terms of height limits and everything would certainly provide an opportunity to make use of the empty land along Wilshire Boulevard and provide more of an enlivening pedestrian experience."

Clarke spoke after Art Harris, a former board member of the Bayside District Corp., the nonprofit charged with running downtown. Harris praised the retail space, parking and affordable housing components of the project, but said he was against a high tower at the site and worried that underground parking may disrupt the geology of the adjacent bluffs.

Council members generally agreed that the controversial tower should be scrapped. But they stopped short of saying how high the project should be allowed to go, pointing to the advantages residents stand to gain by giving developers some flexibility in dealing with City Hall's restrictions.

"It's a unique property and it's uniquely situated," said City Councilman Kevin

McKeown, referencing some of the charm of the 82-year-old hotel, built as a mansion in 1889 by silver miner and former State Sen. John Jones. The hotel has for years served as a celebrity getaway and meeting place for local and national leaders.

Mayor Richard Bloom said it was important to give the developers some flexibility because the site requires "vision," and planning codes are often "black and white."

"The positive side of zoning is we can

stop things in their tracks when we see them moving in the wrong direction," said Bloom, who later added, "This is not opening the floodgates to an extraordinary amount of development."

DiNapoli agreed. He said the Miramar is situated on a sensitive property that is better managed in a "cooperative manner."

"We are pleased with the outcome," he said Wednesday. "It was a step in the right direction — but it was a very small step, in that most of the work is ahead of us."



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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

Community College Leadership Development Initiative Foundation and has been appointed a lay member of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Board of Appeals.

She has served on the State Committee of Practitioners for Vocational Education, the Regional Workforce Preparation and Economic Development Act Advisory Group, and the Consultation Task Force on the Review of Participatory Governance.

Currey is a member of the Santa Monica Historical Society Museum Board of Directors and she serves on the advisory board of Family Service of Santa Monica. She also is a member of the National Women's Political Caucus and the League of Women Voters.

She currently teaches current affairs/history classes to older adults and high school diploma courses through the Culver City Unified School District's adult education.

Currey received her bachelor's degree in history of art and French from Northwestern University and a master's degree in teaching English from Columbia University Teachers College.

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LOCAL

Cocaine dealer out \$5M

SENTENCE, from page 1

"It was fortuitous police work," said Alex Kessel, Ali's Encino-based attorney. "If it weren't for that leaky pipe, they would have never found it. The short arm of the law got my client."

Stuart Powell, a prosecutor for the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, agreed, saying the arrest was a "total fluke."

Ali, a 24-year-old middle eastern Canadian national, was arrested by Santa Monica Police on Oct. 6 when they seized more than 24 kilos of cocaine in the laundry room. Ali, who lived in an apartment on 18th Street, between Arizona Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard, was facing up to 19 years in prison on charges of possession for sale of a controlled substance.

Ali wasn't home at the time of the incident, but he arrived shortly after, while police were investigating the scene. When he drove up and saw police, he fled, police said. Police were able to apprehend him shortly after.

Ali, who has no prior criminal convictions, is eligible for parole in 3 1/2 years. He will be deported to Canada by the Immigration and Naturalization Service as soon as he is released from prison. As part of the plea, Ali will not receive credit for the three months he has served since his arrest, Powell said.

It's unknown where Ali obtained the drugs since he refused to give police a statement. If his case had gone to trial, Ali still would have had no obligation to provide information regarding how and from whom he obtained the cocaine.

"The whole issue at trial would have been, 'Is it his dope?'" Powell said.

Kessel said he didn't believe the cocaine was Ali's but the issue in court

was whether he had control over it and if he knew it was there.

"That quantity of drugs just doesn't appear," he said. "He didn't talk about other people involved ... with this type of organization there are many links in the chain and often times they take the fall for the higher-ups."

**"It's a big shock
for a young man who's
never done any time.
He received a very fair
settlement."**

— ALEX KESSEL
Attorney

"He's not going to get the snitch jacket, which can be a big problem for his life and safety in prison," Kessel added. "He was not the owner, he was just storing it."

Powell said he is pleased with the deal, despite that he offered eight years but then compromised to a year less.

"He accepted responsibility early," he said. "He got out of it early."

Kessel said under the circumstances, Ali also was agreeable to the plea.

"It's a big shock for a young man who's never done any time," he said. "He received a very fair settlement."

A resident of the 12-unit condominium complex, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said Ali had just moved in a week prior to his arrest. Movers came last week to pick up Ali's belongings and shipped them to Canada, the resident said.

Cash payments top \$117M in MTBE lawsuit

UNOCAL, from page 1

leaves as defendant only Lyondell Chemical Co., which has refused to discuss any settlement.

"There are no negotiations with Lyondell," Lawrence said Wednesday. "It might very well go to trial."

Unocal's settlement brings the total amount of cash City Hall has received from the 1996 contamination of its drinking water wells by MTBE, a gasoline additive, to more than \$117 million.

In addition to the cash payments, three oil companies — Shell, ChevronTexaco and ExxonMobil — agreed last month to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up the MTBE contamination, which was caused when underground storage tanks leaked gas into the ground water.

A new treatment facility, the first of its kind, will be built specifically to clean up the city's water at the Charnock Well Field in West L.A., the city's main water source.

The settlement ensures that the oil companies will pay for all costs to construct, operate and maintain the treatment plant, which officials expect will clean the city's water supply by 2008. The costs could exceed several hundred million dollars.

City Hall's lawsuit was levied against 18 oil companies and manufacturers in 2000. The cash settlements will be used to cover out-of-pocket costs, and other city

**"Believe it or not, I think
this has been a shorter
process than it could
have been."**

— BOB HOLBROOK
City Councilman

needs, like continued water quality improvements and water security.

The City Council accepted \$4.5 million from Ultramar Ltd., while Atlantic Richfield Co. paid City Hall \$9.75 million. Conoco Phillips paid \$6 million and Conoco Inc. settled for more than \$4.5 million. Additionally, the three companies that will cover the cost of cleaning the water supply agreed last month to pay another \$92.5 million in cash to City Hall for the contamination.

City Councilman Bob Holbrook said he's gratified that the legal dispute appears to be nearing an end. He credited Lawrence and the other attorneys for doing solid legal work.

"Believe it or not, I think this has been a shorter process than it could have been," he said.



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STATE

Federal agents raid 'Hells Angels' sites across the West

By The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Federal agents raided Hells Angels motorcycle gang hangouts across the West Wednesday and made 55 arrests after a two-year undercover investigation into alleged violations of gun and drug laws.

A statement from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Los Angeles County sheriff said the 55 were all members or associates of the Hells Angels. The agencies also said about 50 firearms were seized.

The San Francisco headquarters of the Hells Angels gang was targeted, and other search and arrest warrants were executed in Southern California, Arizona, Washington state, Nevada and Alaska.

Agents arrested five people in Washington state at homes in Tacoma, Kirkland, Silverdale, Spokane and Wenatchee, said ATF spokeswoman Vera Fedorak in Seattle. Four arrests were made in Alaska, at three homes in Anchorage and one in Two Rivers.

Agents also searched three clubhouses in Spokane, Wash., and Anchorage and North Pole, Alaska, but made no arrests there.

The raids came before dawn, and the arrests were for drug trafficking, weapons charges, possession of stolen explosives and other crimes, Fedorak said.

Helmeted ATF agents raided the Hells

Angels headquarters in Sparks, Nev., making one arrest and confiscating several items. "This is just one part of a major operation going on throughout the day. Until that's concluded, everything we're doing is under seal and we really can't comment on it any further," agent Tom Cannon said.

One member of the club told KRNVTV the agents took mostly clothing and trophies.

Seven arrests in Arizona included the president of the group's Tucson chapter, the former president of the Mesa chapter and other chapter leaders, the ATF said.

The Northern California warrants resulted in 16 or 17 arrests, said Marti McKee, a bureau spokeswoman in San Francisco. She declined to say what agents were looking for, saying the supporting documents were sealed by court order.

Targets in Northern California included 29 search warrants and 24 arrest warrants in locations that included Richmond, San Jose and Santa Cruz County.

"San Francisco police did the entry and secured the scene," she said of the Hells Angels raid. "Now that they've taken care of that, ATF agents are going in to search."

More information on the raids will be released "once we've determined the court documents have been unsealed," McKee said.

Group rates ski resorts most environmentally friendly

BY ANNA OBERTHUR
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — For the second straight year, an environmentalist coalition has ranked resorts in the Sierra Nevada region as having the West's best average environmental score.

While California-Nevada resorts remain in the lead, all Western regions improved their scores in environmental friendliness, according to the Ski Area Citizen's Coalition annual report released Tuesday.

Ski areas in the Colorado-New Mexico region came in second, with Oregon-Washington following closely behind. Utah was fourth, and Idaho-Montana-Wyoming resorts ranked last, although all of those regions received a C average on their environmental scorecards.

Grades ranged from A to F.

California-Nevada resorts earned a B average. Overall, the coalition awarded 11 As and 21 Bs across the West. The three top scoring resorts were all in Colorado.

Skiers care about the environment, said Joan Clayburgh, executive director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance, one of the coalition's members.

"That's why we think it's important that skiers have this information," because it might make a difference in where they go to ski, she said.

Geraldine Link, director of public policy at the National Ski Areas Association, criticized the ranking system as arbitrary and unfair.

"The way I sum up this score card is, it's flawed ranking from a biased source," Link said. "They're not an independent third party by any means."

The trade association represents more than 300 ski area owners and operations

across the U.S.

The Colorado-based coalition of conservation organizations has been reviewing ski resorts' practices since 1999, although this is only the second year that it has ranked regions.

This year 76 ski areas were assessed. The coalition's Web site lists the 10 best and 10 worst ski resorts, according to specific environmental scorecard criteria.

Resorts lose points when they expand into undisturbed land, wetlands or endangered species habitat, or cut down old growth forests. They're evaluated on snowmaking and its drain on resources, water quality protection and energy and water conservation.

Using bio-diesel — a cleaner burning fuel that can be blended with diesel — to power trail groomers helped Alpine Meadows in Tahoe City, Calif. land a spot in this year's top 10.

That same practice was a factor in the Sierra Nevada's Northstar-at-Tahoe bringing last year's failing mark up to a passing grade, Clayburgh said.

Link said the coalition puts too big an emphasis on development, instead of focusing on the sustainability of a ski area.

The coalition sees development as a key area. According to the report, the number of trips America's 6 million downhill skiers make to ski areas has stayed essentially flat in the past 20 years, even as the resorts have expanded.

They're not opposed to development, they explain, but want ski areas to do it with minimal environmental impact.

The overwhelming majority of ski resorts are on public land, an important aspect of the coalition's motivation, Clayburgh said.

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STATE

Angelides begins attack on Schwarzenegger's budget plan

BY JIM WASSERMAN
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — With a multi-city barnstorming tour and plans to air television commercials across California, state Treasurer Phil Angelides launched a campaign Tuesday to fight Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's \$15 billion borrowing plan to ease the state's budget crisis.

While Schwarzenegger rallied support for his plan to balance the state's budget in Sacramento and San Diego Tuesday, Angelides criticized it as irresponsible, "morally repugnant" and a financial burden for future generations.

The Democratic treasurer borrowed from President Kennedy's 1961 inauguration speech, saying, "Instead of asking what we can do for our children, Gov. Schwarzenegger is asking what our children can do for us."

Angelides, who presides over the state finances and borrowing, has frequently criticized the Schwarzenegger plan inside the Capitol, urging legislative budget negotiators to reject the idea. His opposition, which includes appearances in Los Angeles, San Diego and Monterey, comes as lawmakers face a Friday deadline to put the borrowing plan on the March 2004 ballot.

Television commercials blasting the

plan and financed by Angelides' campaign committee and Hollywood producer and Democratic activist Stephen Bing, begin Wednesday in California's major metropolitan markets.

Angelides' blitz begins as lawmakers wrestle with loading more long-term debt onto a state that has already authorized borrowing \$32 billion for everything from building new schools and parks to affordable housing. Schwarzenegger wants voters to approve the \$15 billion in bonds to help balance the budget with borrowing instead of draconian budget cuts or raising taxes and to eliminate legal challenges to bonds the Legislature approved this summer. But it could also bog down future budgets as billions of dollars in interest payments become more than 7 percent of state's general spending and compete with other needs.

As he announced his tour, which brought to mind the kickoff of an expected run for governor in 2006, Angelides said borrowing to pay off a budget deficit, rather than cutting the budget and raising taxes, will eventually "crowd out the very

kind of investments we need in schools and transportation and parks that are the public fabric of our economic success."

Many Democrats also fear voters responding to Schwarzenegger's call will approve \$15 billion in deficit bonds next March, but reject \$12.3 billion in school construction bonds scheduled for the same ballot.

The treasurer noted he opposed a \$10.7 billion borrowing plan by former Gov. Gray Davis and the Legislature to balance this year's budget, saying it was bad enough to finance such a large amount across five years. But he criticized Schwarzenegger's vision to restructure that debt across 15 to 30 years and expand it as worse, saying interest payments would reach \$8 billion over 15 years or almost \$20 billion across 30 years.

Though Schwarzenegger campaigned vigorously against raising taxes and cut car taxes by about \$4 billion immediately after taking office, Angelides said California could ease much of its deficit by temporarily raising income taxes on households earning more than \$250,000 a year.

Governor, Democrats resolve little at closed door meetings

BY TOM CHORNEAU
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — After meeting with Assembly Democrats for an hour Tuesday, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said he was optimistic his budget package would be approved eventually.

"We had a terrific meeting," Schwarzenegger said after the closed-door meeting. But he left unanswered whether the Legislature would be able to make a Friday deadline for placing a bond financing plan and a spending cap proposal on the March ballot.

The new Republican governor wants to trim \$3.8 billion in spending from this and next year's budgets in the coming months but also wants to borrow up to \$15 billion this year to pay off the state's existing deficit. The borrowing would replace about \$12 billion in bonds already approved by the Legislature in the current budget — loans that have been challenged in court because the debt was not approved by the voters.

Schwarzenegger wants the bonds on the March ballot, but to make that happen, lawmakers must pass the proposal by a two-thirds margin by midnight Friday to give election officials time to print the ballots. He also wants voters to approve a spending cap that will impose hard limits on state agencies.

Democrats who control both chambers of the Legislature have not embraced any of Schwarzenegger's proposals. Instead, they're concerned his \$3.8 billion in cuts fall too heavily on the poor and disabled and that the spending cap would hurt programs in the future, especially education. Some, led by state Treasurer Phil Angelides, have attacked the \$15 billion bond plan, saying a 30-year repayment schedule will cost taxpayers \$30 billion.

The bonds included in this year's state budget would have been repaid over five years, not 30, which would save billions in interest payments.

Incoming Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, D-Los Angeles, wouldn't com-

ment on specifics of the meeting with Schwarzenegger but said the governor and legislators covered all aspects of the budget plan.

Calling it a "fruitful discussion," Nunez wouldn't say if any compromise plans were discussed.

Schwarzenegger left the meeting to fly to San Diego for a noontime rally aimed at generating support for the budget proposal. He has said he will travel up and down the state between now and Friday looking for support for his plan — an effort that has offended some Democrats.

But the statewide tour isn't aimed at "trying to jam the Legislature," Nunez said Schwarzenegger told the Democratic caucus.

Meanwhile, Angelides announced a television campaign and statewide barnstorming tour to derail Schwarzenegger's bond plan. Angelides plans stops in Los Angeles on Wednesday, San Diego on Thursday and Monterey Bay on Friday.

He said 30-second television commercials begin Wednesday in Sacramento, the Bay Area, Bakersfield, Los Angeles and San Diego. Angelides said he has raised \$350,000 so far for the effort, including money from his campaign fund and more from Stephen Bing, a Hollywood producer and Democratic activist.

He called it "just the start" of an offensive against the bond plan if the Legislature votes by Friday to put it on the March ballot. Calling it "an illusion" and akin to "kiting a check," he said, "This plan asks not what we can do for our children, but what our children can do for us."

In a conference call with reporters, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell added his concerns about the Schwarzenegger budget plan, noting that if the governor's spending cap is imposed schools would receive a cut of about \$2 billion next year.

Barbara Kerr, president of the California Teachers Association, added that Schwarzenegger had promised during the campaign to protect school funding. "This isn't protecting the funding," she said.

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Peterson pleads not guilty to charges he murdered wife

BY BRIAN MELLEY
Associated Press Writer

MODESTO — Scott Peterson pleaded not guilty Wednesday to charges of murdering his wife and their unborn son, nearly a year after her disappearance.

It was the second time that Peterson, 31, has answered the charges that could send him to death row. He denied the accusations after his arrest in April and was forced to face them again after a judge decided last month there was enough evidence for prosecutors to take the case to trial.

Judge Al Girolami set a Jan. 26 trial date and was expected to schedule a series of hearings for the defense to challenge wiretaps, the use of devices that tracked Peterson and cadaver-sniffing dogs used to search for Laci Peterson's scent in the boat her husband said he took fishing the day she vanished.

The defense said it would seek to move the trial out of Stanislaus County because of extensive news coverage. Last month, the judge asked both sides to research whether a jury could be selected in neighboring San Joaquin County and bused to the courthouse each day for trial.

Defense lawyer Mark Geragos, who is simultaneously representing Michael Jackson, also persuaded the judge to order prosecutors to return Peterson's pickup truck.

In court papers, prosecutors said they don't want to return the 2002 Ford pickup because they believe it was used in the murder of his pregnant wife and that he bled in the cab of the truck after the killing.

Stanislaus County District Attorney James Brazelton said he wants jurors to view the pickup truck as part of the crime scene because it was used to haul Laci Peterson's body to her husband's fertilizer warehouse and then to San Francisco Bay.

The defense wants the truck returned to Peterson's family because he faces mounting legal bills and continues to pay \$643 in monthly auto payments.

Laci Peterson, 27, a substitute teacher who was eight months pregnant with the couple's first child, was reported missing Christmas Eve when her husband returned from a purported fishing trip at the Berkeley Marina. Her remains and her fetus washed ashore a couple miles away in April.

The revelation in the court papers is noteworthy

because prosecutors never previously indicated that Scott Peterson was wounded during or after the killing and they have never stated where Laci Peterson was killed.

The mention that her body was trucked to Peterson's warehouse indicates she was probably killed at the couple's home, explaining why lawyers grappled at the preliminary hearing over a mop and bucket used to clean up the kitchen area in the couple's house.

During a preliminary hearing that included 11 days of testimony prosecutors never said where Laci Peterson was killed, how she was killed, when she was killed or why she was killed.

The charges Scott Peterson faces say she was killed Dec. 23 or the next day. Authorities believe her body was weighted down and sunken in the bay.

Brazelton said in the court papers that cement-like material was found in the bed of the pickup truck. A detective at the preliminary hearing said there was evidence Peterson fashioned several cement anchors using a bucket in his warehouse, but only one of those anchors was found in his boat.

Supreme Court looking at criteria for giving scholarships

BY ANNE GEARAN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — In a follow-up to its major ruling that allowed parents to use public tax money to send their children to religious schools, the Supreme Court is weighing whether governments can provide scholarships for some kinds of schooling but not for students who study theology.

The case the court was hearing Tuesday is in many ways the flip side of the emotional argument over school vouchers. The high court cleared the way for government-funded vouchers programs in 2002.

The latest case asks not whether governments can use tax money to underwrite religious education, as the voucher question did, but whether when money is available, it must be available equally.

The case concerns a former college student who won and then lost a merit scholarship offered by the state of Washington. Joshua Davey lost the money when he declared theology as his major.

Like 36 other states, Washington prohibits spending public funds at schools that are religiously affiliated. The bans, known as Blaine amendments, date to the 19th century when anti-Catholic sentiment ran high.

Davey and his backers say the state law is discriminatory and violates the Constitution's guarantee of freedom of religion. The state argues the policy did Davey no harm.

A ruling in Davey's favor could overturn Blaine amendments everywhere.

Davey's opponents at the Supreme Court have argued that the matter boils down to the states' rights to spend their money as they see fit.

The Davey case is one of two major church-state debates at the high court this year. The other concerns a California atheist who wants to strip the phrase "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance.

Davey has since abandoned his ambition for the ministry in favor of Harvard Law School, but said he is still bothered that the state seemed to slight his first choice.

"From my perspective it was very unfair and kind of

arbitrary," said Davey, a devout Christian.

"I was being told that that value wasn't important and wasn't worth the state's money."

The case began in 1999, when Davey qualified for a Promise Scholarship, a state-funded program for high-achieving students of modest means. The scholarship of about \$3,000 never came through, because Davey decided to study for the ministry at Northwest College in Kirkland, Wash.

Davey sued in federal court three years ago. The San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with Davey last year, finding that the state had no compelling interest in limiting what he could study.



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NATIONAL

Authorities say Ohio highway shootings are connected

BY JONATHAN DREW

Associated Press Writer

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Officials at an elementary school hit by a bullet last month are keeping students inside for recess this week after authorities linked the shooting to 11 others along a five-mile stretch of interstate, the superintendent said Wednesday.

Parents held their children's hands as they walked past police officers into Hamilton Central Elementary on Wednesday. Police announced Tuesday that they had linked the shootings, including one that killed a woman.

Superintendent Bill Wittman said he believes the shooting at the school was not meant to harm anyone because it happened overnight, but parents were nervous.

Michelle Maupin broke from routine and drove her daughter to school Wednesday. "We didn't put her on the bus because we felt it was too big of a target for whoever is doing this," she said.

At least four of the shootings were from the same gun,

Franklin County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Steve Martin said Tuesday. Although ballistics tests could not link the rest of the shootings along Interstate 270, investigators believe all 12 are connected, he said.

"We actually have 12 now with the school, and we're comfortable collectively that those 12 are linked," Martin said. He would not elaborate.

Authorities have received more than 500 tips, but would not speculate about who might be responsible and would not release the type of weapon.

"We think it's not good for us to put that information out," Martin said. "We don't want people to stop calling us because we put out that kind of information."

The shootings began in May along Interstate 270, the freeway that circles Columbus. Many were not reported until after Nov. 25, when 62-year-old Gail Knisley was killed by a bullet that pierced the side of a car driven by a friend.

Hamilton Central Elementary in Obetz, about two miles from the freeway, was hit Nov. 11. Local businesses have established a \$10,000 reward for information leading to an arrest.

The school sits along a rural road lined with pastures, three schools, a church and houses decorated with Christmas lights.

Customers at Hamilton General Store a half-mile from the school already had been sharing alternate driving routes, and Tuesday's news increased their fears, owner

Beverly Evans said.

"People are trying to figure out how to stay off 270, but now people aren't sure if that will keep us safe," Evans said.

Tiffany Ellis, 32, said her son's second-grade classroom faces the front of the school, where the bullet struck.

"It makes me angry to be honest with you, that I have to drive down the road worrying about getting shot," Ellis said.

At a gas station along the interstate about two miles from the school, emotions ranged from skittish to calm among drivers stopping to fill up.

"The odds are you're not going to get shot," said Tom Dixon, 56.

Richard Bailey, 32, disagreed. He uses I-270 each day to get to his job as a shipping manager at Rickenbacker Airport.

"I drive through with my cell phone in my hand every day," he said. "It scares me."

A driver and passenger were shot and wounded Tuesday while traveling on the Ohio Turnpike in Milan, about 90 miles north of Columbus. The driver was hospitalized in critical condition with a head wound, and the passenger was treated for a hand wound.

Trooper Brian Hann said Wednesday that one person was in custody but no charges had been filed. Authorities would not say if they believed there was any link to the shootings near Columbus.

Mushers sign up in record numbers for race

By The Associated Press

KENAI, Alaska — One record has already been set in next year's Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

For the first time, more than 100 mushers have signed up to run the race of more than 1,000 miles from Anchorage to Nome. The official number was 107, but one applicant has withdrawn.

"We've never seen these kind of numbers," said Joanne Potts, Iditarod race director. "We've never hit 100 before, so this is very exciting."

Potts said 97 mushers signed up to run last year and 81 actually started the race.

"We had 103 signed up as of the Dec. 1 deadline, but we have received entry fees from three others who called to say their paperwork was on the way."

The entry fee is \$1,850. It's likely a few more mushers will drop out by the time the race begins, Potts said, but she does not expect it to be many.

Almost half of the race applicants, 48, are rookies. Potts said 14 still must complete a qualifying race to be eligible, including Rachael Scdoris, a vision-impaired musher from Oregon who successfully lobbied to compete with special

accommodations — guidance by a musher who will communicate trail conditions with a two-way radio.

About 70 of Iditarod applicants are Alaskans. Four are former Iditarod champions.

Lance Mackey said he was looking forward to driving his team to Nome but he did not know why so many people signed up.

"I've been trying to figure that out myself," Mackey said. "There's only 27 signed up for the Yukon Quest, so what gives?"

"I think it may be something to do with the notoriety or the race and the size of the purse, but I really don't know why there's so many."

The purse for the Iditarod is higher this year. Last year the race paid \$68,571 for first place. Potts said she was unable to state the exact amount of the purse this year.

Of the 106 mushers signed up, only about one-third are competitive mushers, Mackey said. Another third still are entered to gain experience and the rest are people looking for adventure, he said.

The ceremonial start of the 2004 race is March 6 in Anchorage. The official restart will take place a day later in Wasilla.



briefs

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At press time, MTA mechanics remain on strike. No Metro bus or rail service is operating until further notice, affecting thousands of riders. We greatly regret the disruption this work stoppage is causing and offer these suggestions for alternative transportation:

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Other Transit: Many locations can be reached via DASH, Foothill Transit, Big Blue Bus or other local carriers, all of which are operating normally or with expanded hours. All of these transit providers have agreed to accept MTA passes during the strike. For routing, use the Trip Planner at metro.net or call these carriers directly.

All Metrolink trains are operating normally. Metrolink also will accept MTA passes during the strike. In addition, Metrolink is running a "Red Line Special" bus from Union Station to serve downtown LA.

Carpools: Riders can find out about carpools and vanpools near their homes or workplaces by clicking on the "Ridesharing" link at metro.net or by going directly to the RideMatch.info site.

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NATIONAL □ INTERNATIONAL

Israeli officials disappointed by 'Geneva Accord' meeting

BY JONATHAN M. KATZ

Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM — Israel reacted with disappointment Wednesday after U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell confirmed he will meet with organizers of an informal Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty.

The comments by Zalman Shoval, an adviser to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, was the latest expression of Israel's stiff opposition to the meeting, seen as a U.S. gesture toward the "Geneva Accord" that Sharon has denounced.

On Tuesday, Israel's vice premier said it would be "mistake" if Powell goes forward with the meeting.

Shoval, a former ambassador to Washington, conceded that Israel cannot prevent Powell from meeting with Geneva Accord's Palestinian and Israeli authors, but said the effort would be counterproductive.

"I think the decision that Secretary Powell must make is ... what the American interests are," Shoval said in a phone interview from Italy.

"America wants to promote the 'road map' and those people in Geneva ... want to go in a different path," he added. "Therefore I think it won't be very helpful."

The Geneva Accord outlines concessions

by Israel that Sharon's government has opposed in the past — including removing most settlements from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and dividing sovereignty in Jerusalem, claimed by both sides as their capital. The accord also severely limits any return of Palestinian refugees to lands in Israel, which has brought condemnations from some Palestinian leaders.

The "road map" is a formal U.S.-backed peace plan that Israel and the Palestinians have accepted in principle as a basis for negotiations. The road map, which envisions an independent Palestinian state by 2005, leaves open to negotiation the specific issues addressed in the Geneva pact.

The White House on Wednesday said Powell was free to meet with the Geneva authors but underlined its commitment to the road map.

"The path forward toward peace in the Middle East is the road map," spokesman Scott McClellan said, adding that "The secretary of state will make determinations about who he meets with."

U.S. gestures toward the Geneva plan have been seen as an implicit criticism of Sharon's hard-line stance toward the Palestinians. Powell on Tuesday confirmed he would meet with the Geneva accord's authors on Friday.

"I don't know why I or anyone else in the U.S. government should deny ourselves the opportunity to hear from others and who have ideas with respect to peace," Powell said at a news conference during a visit to Tunisia.

He added that the meeting "in no way undercuts our strong support" for Israel and the road map.

"It is as though the French foreign minister were to meet (American) Indian chiefs who claimed to have been dispossessed of their land, and who were now getting organized with money provided by the Cuban ruler Fidel Castro," read an editorial in Hatzofeh, a newspaper affiliated with the National Religious Party.

On Tuesday, Israeli Vice Premier Ehud Olmert said Powell would be "making a mistake" to meet the organizers, led by former Israeli Cabinet minister Yossi Beilin and Palestinian minister Yasser Abed Rabbo.

"I think he is not being useful to the process," Olmert told Israel Radio. "I am certain of his friendship (to Israel), but I would cast doubt on his judgment in this matter."

The Geneva Accord was launched at a gala ceremony in the Swiss city on Monday. It was the result of more than

two years of talks between former Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, working in private capacities.

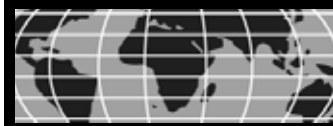
Sharon described the agreement as subversive. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat praised the deal, but has stopped short of explicitly endorsing it.

Militant Palestinian groups denounced the accord and called the Palestinian negotiators "traitors," objecting to concessions over the so-called "return of return" of Palestinians who fled or were driven out during the 1948-49 war that followed Israel's creation, and of their descendants.

Palestinian negotiators returning to Gaza from the Geneva ceremony were confronted by about 200 protesters Wednesday.

The crowd, which included several armed men, chanted slogans and threw stones at the car of Palestinian legislator Hassan Asfour. Asfour, who did not attend the Geneva meeting but supports the accord, was not injured.

The agreement proposes borders between Israel and a future Palestinian state close to Israel's borders before the 1967 Mideast war, giving the Palestinians almost all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and part of Jerusalem.



WORLD BRIEFLY

Should war criminals strike deals?

By The Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — U.N. judges, handing down a tough 27-year sentence against a Bosnian Serb who pleaded guilty, raised a fundamental question: Are plea bargains appropriate for heinous war crimes?

As part of a deal with prosecutors at the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal, Capt. Momir Nikolic changed his plea to guilty and gave crucial testimony against his commanders and others accused of war crimes.

Prosecutors had recommended a 15-20 year sentence and dropped charges of genocide in exchange for a guilty plea on persecution, a deal the judges treated with some disdain.

In the end, he was sentenced to 27 years in prison for his role in the massacre of more than 7,000 Muslims in Srebrenica in July 1995.

Making deals with suspects has been an issue of debate since the tribunal was created in 1993 to prosecute violations of the war crimes conventions in the Balkans. In the first years, prosecutors refused to consider deals.

But facing a heavy caseload and a 2010 deadline for closing the tribunal, they have been more receptive to plea bargains, especially if the defendant agrees to testify in other trials.

Appeals court deciding fate of terrorist

By The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — In a case with far-reaching implications for the war on terror, an appeals court is hearing arguments on whether the government should be barred from seeking the death penalty for Zacarias Moussaoui because it refused a judge's order to produce al-Qaida witnesses for his defense.

Three judges from the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Wednesday will conduct separate open and closed proceedings, the latter to discuss classified matters concerning al-Qaida prisoners the defense wants to question.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema has sided with Moussaoui, accused of conspiring in the Sept. 11 attacks, on several crucial pretrial rulings. Those rulings are the basis for to the government's appeal.

First, Brinkema issued two separate orders that would allow the Moroccan-born French citizen access

to three al-Qaida prisoners held abroad.

The government refused to make the captives available, citing national security. To punish the prosecutors, Brinkema eliminated any evidence that could link Moussaoui to the suicide hijackings and barred the death penalty in his case.

Sniper accomplice 'asked for help'

By The Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE, Va. — Lee Boyd Malvo didn't say he was afraid of John Allen Muhammad when they visited Muhammad's family a few months before last year's sniper attacks, but he wrote a letter seeking a way to escape his "situation," Muhammad's first wife testified.

Carol Williams told jurors Tuesday during Malvo's capital murder trial that she saw Muhammad and Malvo during their visit to Baton Rouge, La., in the summer of 2002, and that Muhammad introduced the teenager as his son.

Williams said she became concerned when Malvo wrote a letter to her 17-year-old niece, "asking for help to get out of the situation that he was in." She said she and her sisters met to discuss what they could do to assist, but that she thought Malvo and Muhammad had left Baton Rouge by then.

Malvo's lawyers are presenting an insanity defense, contending that Muhammad brainwashed Malvo to help him carry out the sniper attacks around the nation's capital in October 2002.

Muhammad was convicted last month of capital murder and a jury recommended the death sentence. Malvo also faces the death penalty if convicted.

Proposal still raises mercury concerns

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Bush administration proposal to reduce mercury emissions would allow power plants to trade emission credits, prompting concerns among critics that it could create mercury "hot spots" still harmful to public health.

The draft proposal would differ radically from the one offered by the Clinton administration three years ago which would regulate mercury as a toxic substance through the use of "maximum achievable technology" at each of nearly 500 coal-fired power plants.

The latest EPA proposal would essentially cap mercury emissions from coal-burning power plants nationwide at 34 tons a year by 2010, a reduction of 30 percent from current levels, according to a copy of the document obtained by The Associated Press.

Emissions would be cut to 15 tons — a 70-percent reduction — by 2018.

Mercury is a persistent substance that affects the nervous system and is especially dangerous for pregnant women and children.

Wildfire bill ready for Bush's signature

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It took three years and the destruction of 3,600 California homes to get it passed, but a bill aimed at curbing the threat of devastating wildfires is ready for President Bush's signature.

The Senate passed the bill by voice vote on Nov. 21 less than an hour after the House approved it, 286-140. Bush was expected to sign it into law at a White House ceremony Wednesday.

For three years, a deadlock in the Senate had prevented the passage of legislation intended to speed forest treatment. But 15 raging fires driven by Santa Ana winds through Southern California prompted Democrats to compromise on the bill.

The measure streamlines the approval process for projects to cut excess trees out of thick, overgrown forests or stands of trees killed by insect infestation.

Sean Cosgrove, a forest expert with the Sierra Club, said some good may come from the increased spending on forest treatment, but there is bound to be unnecessary logging in roadless areas and wildlife habitat as the timber companies try to harvest valuable old-growth trees.

Execution hits high court

By The Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — The death row appeal of a Spanish citizen convicted in a 1994 triple murder has reached the state's Supreme Court, a case that is drawing attention from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

The fate of Pablo Ibar has become a focal point for Spanish citizens' passionate opposition to the death penalty. Spaniards have raised \$150,000 in his case and a delegation of Spanish senators visited him in prison before watching his lawyer argue their case Tuesday.

Ibar, 31, was born in South Florida to a Spanish national and only took Spanish citizenship after being convicted in 2000 of taking part in the fatal shootings of Casimir Sucharski, Sharon Anderson and Marie Rogers.

COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



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ACROSS

- 1 Music genre
- 5 Roger and Demi
- 11 Orchestra member
- 12 Unacquired
- 13 Silent performer
- 14 Anne Rice protagonist
- 15 Energized
- 17 Guitarist Paul
- 18 Pie nut
- 22 Copiers
- 24 Get a goal
- 25 Humor
- 26 Kitten cry
- 27 Poseidon's realm
- 30 Irene of "Zorba the Greek"
- 32 Rodeo rope
- 33 Wing
- 34 Chinese food veggies
- 38 Dr. Seuss character
- 41 Car part
- 42 Mystery
- 43 Give over
- 44 Penitent one

- 45 Kin of PDQ

DOWN

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- 5 Salsa choice
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- 9 H lookalike
- 10 Match part
- 16 Superman symbol
- 19 Psychologist's studies
- 20 Scope
- 21 Word in a way
- 23 Print measure
- 28 Convey
- 29 Generic
- 30 Sunday seat

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Yesterday's answer

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- 30 Sunday seat
- 31 Llama's cousin
- 35 Actor Sharif
- 36 "M*A*S*H" star
- 37 Ooze
- 38 Red or Black
- 39 Tiny worker
- 40 "O Sole —"

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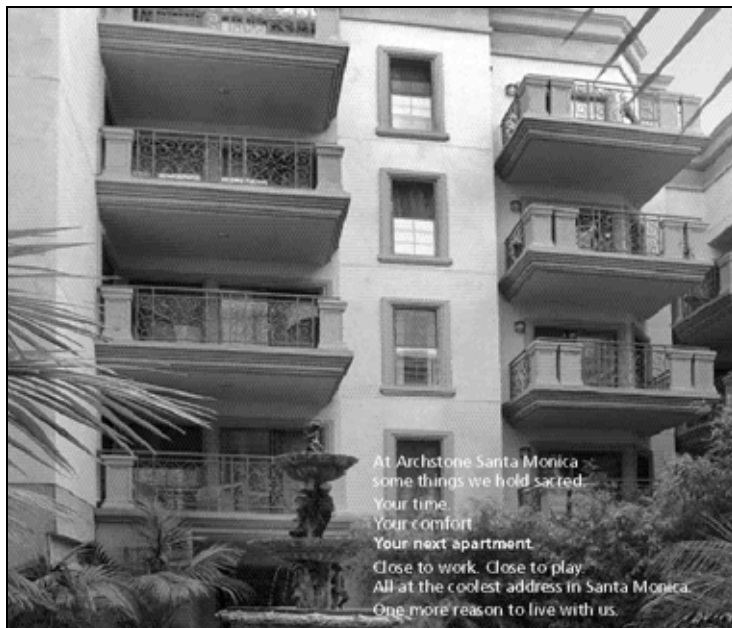
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Sony vice chairman named 'most powerful woman'

By The Associated Press

■ **LOS ANGELES** — Sony Pictures vice chairman Amy Pascal tops this year's list of The Hollywood Reporter's 100 most powerful women in Hollywood.

The list is part of the trade publication's 12th annual celebration of the top 100 women in motion pictures, television, music and other entertainment industries.

"Amy Pascal has developed a knack for producing projects both big and small, intimate dramas and all-out popcorn fare," said Christy Grosz, executive editor, features at the trade publication and editor of the Women in Entertainment Power 100 issue. "Not only has this given her an interesting slate every year, but her creative sensibilities and financial acumen have made her the first stop for some of Hollywood's biggest talent."

Celebrities on the list include talk-show host Oprah Winfrey (6); Julia Roberts (13); "Harry Potter" novelist J.K. Rowling (55); Madonna (67); Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen (84); and Screen Actors Guild president Melissa Gilbert (89).

Stacey Snider, the chairman of Universal Pictures, repeated as the No. 2 most powerful woman on the list. She was followed by Nancy Tellem, president of CBS Entertainment (3); Sherry Lansing, Paramount Pictures chairman and last year's winner (4); Gail Berman, president of entertainment at Fox Broadcasting (5); Winfrey (6); Nina Jacobson, president of Buena Vista Motion Pictures Group (7); Susan Lyne, president of ABC Entertainment (8); Dana Walden, president of 20th Century Fox Television (9); and Judy McGrath, president of MTV Networks Music Group (10).

■ **LONDON** — Keith Richards has criticized his old friend and fellow Rolling Stone Mick Jagger for accepting a knighthood.

In an interview published in the December issue of the music magazine "Uncut," the Stones' guitarist was quoted as saying, "I thought it was ludicrous to take one

of those gongs (awards) from the establishment when they did their very best to throw us in jail," in a reference to his and Jagger's '967 conviction on drug offenses, later overturned on appeal.

"Just as we were about to start a new tour, I thought it sent out the wrong message. It's not what the Stones is about, is it?" he said. "I told Mick, 'It's a ... paltry honor.'"

"He defended himself by saying that (Prime Minister) Tony Blair insisted that he took the knighthood. Like that's an excuse. Like you can't turn down anything. Like it doesn't depend how you feel about it."

Jagger, 60, said Tuesday that his busy touring schedule has finally allowed him to collect his award from Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace on Dec. 12.

The 59-year-old Richards, who was once briefly imprisoned for allowing marijuana to be smoked in his home — another conviction that was later overturned — said he doubted he'd ever be offered a similar honor.

"Because they know what I would've said ... they knew I'd tell them where they could put it," he said.

■ **LONDON** — Comedian and actor Billy Connolly eschewed his normally zany attire for a somber black top hat and tails Wednesday when he went to Buckingham Palace to receive an award from Prince Charles on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II.

Connolly was made a Commander of the British Empire, or CBE, for services to entertainment from Prince Charles, whom he said had commented on his smart dress.

"Usually when he sees me I've got breeks on — you know those Scottish corduroy breeks (trousers) that come to the knee with woolly socks, or I'm in a kilt," Connolly told reporters after being given the honor.

"I normally look like an unemployed window cleaner," the Scottish comic added.

Last year Connolly painted his goatee purple to become the face of the National Lottery, but for the awards ceremony had returned to his natural gray to

match his shoulder-length curly hair.

The 6'-year-old is a former shipyard welder who got into show business playing banjo in a folk duo. His intros became longer than the songs, and he turned to standup comedy.

His most notable film role was as Queen Victoria's servant John Brown in the 1997 film "Mrs. Brown." He's also in the new Tom Cruise film "The Last Samurai."

■ **COPENHAGEN, Denmark** — Bryce Howard, the 21-year-old daughter of director Ron Howard, will likely replace Nicole Kidman in Danish director Lars von Trier's next two films that make up the trilogy he started with "Dogville," the film's producer said Wednesday.

Howard, who's shooting M. Night Shyamalan's new movie, "The Village" with Joaquin Phoenix, William Hurt and Sigourney Weaver, is negotiating a contract with von Trier, said his producer, Vibeke Windelov.

"We are currently getting the last pieces to fall in place," she said. "These are only details so I am very confident that she will be on the team" when shooting on "Mandalay" starts March 1 in Sweden.

Von Trier's Depression-era fairy tale "Dogville" generated excitement at this year's Cannes Film Festival but didn't win a prize. Some found the three-hour film about sadism in small-town America too long and torturous.

Kidman couldn't continue in the trilogy because of scheduling conflicts with "Mandalay."

The eccentric Danish filmmaker has won a string of prizes at the Cannes festival, including the Golden Palms in 2000 for "Dancer in the Dark" with French icon Catherine Deneuve and Icelandic pop star Bjork.

"Lars picked Bryce Howard because of her fantastic radiation," Windelov said, adding she and von Trier believe she "will become a big star."

The little-known actress appeared in her father's 1995 movie, "Apollo 13," and in his 2000 film, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" with Jim Carrey.

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