

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

FANTASY 5

1, 25, 12, 9, 36

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 9, 4, 6

Evening picks: 8, 1, 5

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 5, California Classic

2nd Place: 10, Solid Gold

3rd Place: 8, Gorgeous George

Race Time: 1:41.44



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Cyril Kendall was easily convicted in August in New York City for swindling the American Red Cross and another organization out of \$160,000 for family grief counseling over a "son" who "died" in the World Trade Center attack. There are no official records that the son ever existed, although Kendall presented some documents that government experts termed poor forgeries. The grief counseling (\$425 an hour) was spent entirely at a "company" that did not exist, but of which Kendall admitted that he was the sole employee (thus paying himself to counsel himself and his family).



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"As for me, except for an occasional heart attack, I feel as young as I ever did."

— Robert Benchley



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A rider emerges Thursday from the Big Blue Bus' 'Winter Wonderland' on Arizona Avenue in downtown Santa Monica. The bus, specially wrapped with a holiday motif, is the latest in a tradition of cool winter rides from the bus company.

Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Big Blue Bus riders finding selves in wonderland of snow

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

BUS BARN — The Big Blue Bus is inviting riders to Giddy Up, Giddy Up, Let's Go.

The local transportation company is putting the wraps on the holiday season this year with "Winter Wonderland," the latest version of its much-anticipated win-

ter-themed rides. "Winter Wonderland," which will operate until Jan. 1, is "wrapped" in a special periwinkle blue vinyl. Its design of snowmen, snowflakes and the revised words to the popular holiday song "Sleigh Ride" (with "bus" inserted for "sleigh") was created by the Big Blue Bus.

Decorating buses during the holidays

See BIG BLUE BUS, page 7

Hotel workers allege they were forced into union

Four Points employees file charges after labor contract gets green light

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN — Six workers from the Four Points Sheraton Hotel filed federal labor charges Thursday against union leaders and hotel managers, alleging they were coerced into organizing.

The charges were filed with the National Labor Relations Board, a federal agency that polices labor law. The workers allege they were repeatedly bribed and intimidated by organizers from the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 11.

Labor leaders denied any wrongdoing. They called the terms of a union contract that was hashed out with hotel managers and affirmed by workers in a vote last Saturday as "extraordinary."

"The wage increases they're getting there are more than they've seen in 20 years," said HERE organizing director Kurt Petersen, adding workers will have lighter workloads,

See CHARGES, page 6

Cops close streets, lock down school during manhunt

By Daily Press staff

PICO NEIGHBORHOOD — A portion of an east-side neighborhood was temporarily closed off and an elementary school locked down Thursday afternoon as police combed the area for an armed man wanted in connection with a reported burglary.

Santa Monica Police responded to a call at 12:36 p.m. from a woman who said a man armed with a handgun was in her home in the 1900 block of High Place, one block from Edison Elementary. The victim had fled her house, telling police the suspect was still inside.

The SMPD's special entry team performed an extensive search of the home and neighborhood. Described as a Hispanic man, 25-to-35 years old with a heavy-set build and mustache, the suspect remained at large.

Police arrived at the scene in less than a minute after the initial call, then set up a perimeter and closed off Virginia Avenue between Cloverfield Boulevard and 27th Street.

Edison officials were told to keep children inside the school while police searched the area. However, there was never any danger to the children, according to the police.

Investigators were still at the scene of the alleged burglary Thursday night gathering possible evidence.

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HOROSCOPE

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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 wherewithal to accomplish a lot this year, especially professionally. Pay raises and promotions become strong possibilities. Know what you want, and you are likely to make it so, especially professionally. Your horizons grow and expand after September 2004. If you are single, an opportunity comes your way that might encourage you to change that status. Look to fall 2004 for this person. If you are attached, your relationship will bloom with nurturing and your sixth sense helping you to zero in on what your sweetie wants. TAURUS works well with you.

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★ Use gentleness, even in the midst of confusion. Others appreciate being given the benefit of the doubt right now. You might even think a friend is a bit loco, but spend some time talking to him or her before concluding that you're right. You might change your mind. Tonight: Treat another to Friday-night festivities.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ You might be king or queen for a day, but the boss doesn't know it. You might have a difficult time letting him or her know, but by your easy, charming manner, you put everything back in balance. During a discussion you might need to assume a solemn tone. Tonight: As you like it.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Knowing when to lie back and say little separates you from the losers. You might be jolted by news that heads your way, but a casual conversation with a loved one or friend later helps you understand what you're hearing. No grand announcements today. Tonight: Zoom on home.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ Aim for what you want, though an associate might undermine you unintentionally. Keep an easy tone in a discussion in the late afternoon, explaining to this person just what happened and how you feel about it. Talking about it could prevent this problem from happening again. Tonight: Start the weekend in style.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ You star, whether you want to or not. Others look to you for leadership and direction. You might be inclined to be fairly easygoing, embodying a laissez-faire attitude. Others might want more structure. Thank goodness the weekend is coming. Tonight: A force to be dealt with.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Read between the lines with someone who might be a bit upset or airy-fairy about an idea. Work as a team to add more structure here, and you both will be happier. Others need to understand where you're coming from. Tonight: Explore a new spot.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Work with one person at a time, and you'll get excellent results. You might be surprised by another's idea, though you might not be able to funnel it into a practical use. Talk and brainstorm, and you'll find a solution. Tonight: Togetherness works.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ Others knock on your door and express what they want. You might find a close friend or associate a bit vague. Could it be that you don't want to hear what he or she is saying? Think in terms of where the other is coming from. Tonight: Out there.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ You might be overwhelmed by what gets dropped in your lap. Evaluate possibilities more carefully. Just because you think a random idea is impossible doesn't mean that it is. A discussion with an associate helps you see the other side. Tonight: Do something ultimately relaxing.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Others seek you out. Spark up conversations with your opinions and humor. You might not be as focused as you need to be about a money matter. A partner has some stern opinions. Listen to another point of view. Tonight: Spice up an old relationship by re-creating your first date.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Home becomes your focal point — where you want to be. You might take the day off at the last minute. You need some "dream" time to recharge your creativity and energy. If at work, you might be overwhelmed by what is on your plate. Tonight: Stay close to home.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ How you say what you think could make all the difference in how others receive your thoughts, ideas and wishes. A child or loved one could be overly serious. You might not be able to "tease" this person out of his or her mood. Tonight: Celebrate Friday at your hang out.

Santa Monica Daily Press

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Santa Monica-Malibu teachers at head of class

By Daily Press staff

Twenty-three elementary and secondary school teachers from the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District achieved National Board Certification in 2003, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The percentage of teachers passing certification on their first attempt was 66 percent — nearly double the national rate.

"NBPTS celebrates and congratulates all teachers who went through the rigorous National Board Certification process," says Board Chair Roy E. Barnes. "This impressive achievement is widely recognized at the national, state and local levels as a benchmark for teacher quality."

National Board Certification is the highest credential in the teaching profession. Certification is achieved through a rigorous performance-based assessment that takes between one and three years to complete, and measures what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. According to the NBPTS, assessment is a process that forces teachers to demonstrate how their activities, both inside and outside of the classroom, improve student achievement.

The NBPTS is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan and non-governmental organization. The majority of members are classroom teachers.

The following teachers completed the rigorous National Board certification process: Amy Beeman-Solano (Santa Monica High School — Samohi), Michael Burnett (Samohi), Heather Calahan (Samohi), Martha Durán-Contreras (formerly Will Rogers Elementary, currently principal at John Muir Elementary), Julie Erb (Malibu High School), Judy Franklin (McKinley Elementary School), Gretchen Gies (Lincoln Middle School), Deborah Granof (Webster Elementary School), Heather Hoekman (Malibu High School), Lorraine Horn (Samohi), Christi Hovest (Point Dume Marine Science Elementary School), Tristen Jones (Will Rogers Elementary School), Katy Lanza (Malibu High School), Bridgette Leonard (Malibu High School), Monica Mora (Malibu High School), Eric Paul (Roosevelt Elementary School), Steve Reifman (Roosevelt Elementary School), Bryan Sanders (Samohi), Susan Stivers (Lincoln Middle School), Susan Suomu (McKinley Elementary School), Amy Teplin (formerly Will Rogers, currently District Literacy Coach), Michelle Welford (Samohi) and Amelia Zimmermann-Wolff (Malibu High School).

Winterlit presents film fest for tykes

By Daily Press staff

Winterlit Theater will offer a free children's movie each Tuesday on the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. The flicks will run through Christmas week.

The films and television shows will be shown on a 20-foot outdoor screen — with a hot chocolate vendor nearby.

Winterlit Theater, on Dec. 9, will open with Porchlight Entertainment's "Jay Jay the Jet Plane Holiday Specials." Children can meet Jay Jay the Jet Plane character. Disney's "Rolie Poli Olie: Olie's Winter Wonderland," "Winnie the Pooh: Seasons of Giving" and "Winnie the Pooh: Very Merry Pooh Year" will follow.

"SpongeBob SquarePants," "Blues Clues," "Dora the Explorer" and "Oswald" will be screened Dec. 16.

On Dec. 23, Winterlit presents classic "Christmas Animations" — including "Howdy Doody's Christmas," "A Christmas Carol Tales from Dickens," "Jack Frost" and "The Santa Clause."

Winterlit Theater is a production of the Bayside District Corporation in conjunction with Santa Monica Film Festival. Proceeds from the event help benefit The Cancer Relief Fund.

For more information, contact Bayside District Corporation at (310) 393-8355 or visit downtownsm.com.

Clippers take ball and run with it at St. Joseph Center

By Daily Press staff

The LA Clippers scored big this Thanksgiving, at least in the eyes of needy individuals and families.

Coaches and front office management from the NBA's Clippers served Thanksgiving

surf report

A mixture of fading W wind swell, holding SW swell and building NW swell. Many areas see 2-3' surf, with some shoulder-high sets at best combo breaks. New WNW swell will have long period forerunners showing on the more northern beaches by sundown.

OUTLOOK: The real meat of the new WNW swell will build throughout the day on Saturday and looks biggest by the afternoon when some spots see 5-8' surf. The good spots see sets in the double-overhead range and the standout deep-water breaks see some even bigger sets.

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

Today the water is:

59°

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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dinner to homeless men and women last week at St. Joseph Center's Bread & Roses Cafe, while players and other staff members surfaced at the administration building to distribute more than 300 turkeys, bags of food and stacks of clothing to families in need.

The Clippers have been distributing meals and groceries through the center for the past 13 years.

"These Clipper people are tremendous," says Maria Alderete, coordinator of volunteers at St. Joseph. "To take the time out of their busy lives to come down here and get involved is an inspiration to all of us."

Among those serving up heaping plates of turkey with all the trimmings were seven Clippers executives, including Elgin Baylor, vice president of basketball operations, and Christian Howard, vice president of marketing & broadcasting. Among the players handing out turkeys and groceries were Chris Wilcox, Melvin Ely and Bobby Simmons.

"The Los Angeles Clippers' generosity continues to build a bridge between the caring and the less fortunate," states Rhonda Meister, SJC executive director.

St. Joseph Center provides emergency services, child care, case management, employment training and senior services for over 8,000 men, women and children each year, with 11 programs and services on eight sites in Venice, Santa Monica and West Los Angeles.



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LETTERS

Calling all couch potatoes

Editor:

The benefits of activity, particularly walking/jogging are well known. To this end, the Santa Monica Track Club, in conjunction with the American Cancer Society (Santa Monica Relay for Life Program), have formed a "walking/jogging" group open to anyone, at any age and fitness level.

There is no charge for this program. We offer walking/jogging technique instruction, as well as coaching as to the mileage amount per week, frequency and regularity.

We currently meet four times per week — 4 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 9 a.m. Sunday at San Vicente Boulevard and Ocean Avenue in Palisades Park. This is an invaluable opportunity for anyone, particularly those who are sedentary and wish to embark on a fitness for life program.

Gerald Condon
Santa Monica

Bush playing games with American lives

Editor:

This week of Thanksgiving, for me, is also time of reflection. While one of the major things I am thankful for is the privilege of living in this great country, I also can't help but think of what might have been had we not been denied certain leadership by assassin's bullets.

This was the week that John Kennedy was killed, and since it is the 40th anniversary of that event, the media has been running documentaries about Kennedy, his presidency and his family.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis, it was amazing to see Robert and John Kennedy together, struggling mightily to keep this country out of war. While his joint chiefs of staff were vehemently urging the president to bomb Cuba, John Kennedy was steadfast in his belief that there was another way, a peaceful solution. Thank God. There were, as they found out later, over 700 nuclear missiles in Cuba, and had he listened to the joint chiefs of staff, bombing Cuba, 90 miles from Florida, would have caused a nuclear holocaust.

Can you imagine George W. Bush in the same situation? We probably wouldn't even be here. Mr. Bush has put America in a profoundly dangerous position and it seems as though he isn't even bright enough to be aware of it. Either that, or he simply doesn't care. All he cares about is making sure his fat cat friends get all the tax breaks they need, despite the deficit it causes. As Ed Silverstein pointed out in "Incites" (SMDP, Nov. 26), this is why he will veto all money for national security as he has no intention of adding to the deficit his tax cuts have already caused. His disdain for what peace-loving Americans think and what most of the Western world thinks is deep. And that disdain is what is so frightening for me. This guy is a loose cannon, playing very dangerous games with American lives.

And after viewing and/or listening to the transcripts from the Cuban Missile Crisis and Mr. Nixon's tapes of his Watergate situation, a pundit once said that you could readily see who was the statesman and who was the politician. Nixon was clearly no statesman, and I'm afraid what we presently have in the White House is no statesman either. I'm afraid the last statesman the Republicans can claim is Abraham Lincoln, who, if he were alive today, would never even be nominated by the present-day Republican party.

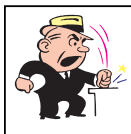
Back before November of 1963, the feeling of being an American was a wondrous thing. We weren't perfect, but we were on the road to a kinder, gentler America. We had Freedom Riders. We had the Peace Corps. We had a young, vital man in the White House who pursued peace over invasion. We were optimistic and proud to be Americans. We were proud that the country was moving in a direction that was fairer, more humane.

I hope next November, a man or woman will be running for the highest elected office in the United States who will not be a war monger, who will not rob the poor

See LETTERS, page 5



Throwing money at homeless issue just fuels the fire



MY WRITE

By Bill Bauer

The death of a transient in Santa Monica a few weeks ago could be dismissed as another unfortunate incident.

But it's only one more in a long string of deaths and tragedies involving our homeless.

Want to assign blame? Start with a dysfunctional homeless services system and a city leadership blinded by the light from their halos.

A couple of liquored-up transients got into a donnybrook Thursday evening, Nov. 13. Afterwards, one of the combatants, Bobby Ray Capps, was jumped by a friend of his opponent bent on retaliation.

During the melee, Capps hit his head on a pole and was sent to a local hospital, where his wound was stitched up. By Sunday morning, Capps had died — probably as a result of his head injury. The other pugilist was later arrested and charged with manslaughter.

The Santa Monica Daily Press reported that the victim and his brother had lived

along the freeway for about seven years and that the two had been homeless in Santa Monica since 1991.

Homeless here for 12 years? Living under a freeway overpass since 1996? Where are Santa Monica's vaunted social services?

I'm willing to bet a sack lunch that these three were all regulars at the nearby Ocean Park Community Center's Access Center at 1616 Seventh Street where those truly in need, as well as the drug addicts, alcoholics, the mentally and physically impaired and those who have just "given up" seek help.

There, anyone can receive a free brown-bag lunch, check their mail, hang out and receive basic services for years on end with no questions asked.

A surprising number of transients have been on our streets for a decade or longer, living a free life aided by service providers that respect their clients' anonymity and desire to be left alone.

Thousands of homeless utilize city-subsidized services annually. They also take advantage of the dozens of weekly, private-sector food giveaways in our public parks.

These are the magnets that bring 'em here and keep 'em here.

Assaults, injuries and death among the homeless are commonplace. And let's not forget the mentally impaired, who drift

from food line to drop-in center in a perpetual twilight zone.

Meanwhile, service organizations often exploit the myth that "more services get more people off the street" when soliciting for donations. The problem is that many of these services attract and enable more transients. And they contribute indirectly to the crime, dirt, fear and hostile environment that has become Santa Monica.

The Georgian Hotel is one of Santa Monica's finest — a grand dame that recently celebrated its 70th anniversary with a "gala charity fundraiser aimed at getting people off the street."

In the SMDP (Nov. 10, 2003), the hotel's general manager, Paul Hortobagyi, stated, "The homeless drive our business into the ground. Tourists are often put off guard by panhandlers and vagrants who engage in antisocial behaviors."

He's right. The Georgian's front terrace is prime territory for panhandlers pestering hotel visitors. Nevertheless, Georgian management still hosted a fundraiser for the Ocean Park Community Center, whose multi-million dollar budget enables the very vagrants Hortobagyi complains about.

Hortobagyi told me, "After years of complaining about the problem (that did no good), we thought maybe we would

change our direction and get on the right track by helping out for a change."

I laud Hortobagyi for his efforts, but history tells me that tossing more and more money at the problem is heading down the wrong track and makes things worse.

As Santa Monica's reputation as "the place for services" spreads, the gulf between the numbers coming here and those who actually "get off the street" widens. The situation becomes even more unattainable.

Until City Hall and its tax-subsidized providers reform the "social service continuum" by cutting off freeloaders, there will be more deaths, more misery and more "walking dead." Inevitably, it's a matter of time before a resident or child is killed. Who'll take the blame then?

To the business community and rest of you whose misplaced compassion contributes to a bad situation, the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce saw the light and wisely curtailed its homeless advocacy.

Learn from a 20-year history of more vagrants, more money, more services more problems and more deaths. It's time to get real and stop believing myths.

(Bill Bauer is a longtime Santa Monica resident and a freelance writer).

OPINION



LETTERS

LETTERS, from page 4

and middle class to give to the rich, and who will lead us in the direction abandoned 40 years ago. I will vote for that person.

And it will not be George W. Bush

Marilyn Brennan
Santa Monica

Nice people know where to draw the line

Editor:

Jill Renton sounds like she is from another planet ("Real men don't picket" SMDP, Dec. 2, page 4). Can 70,000 people be crazy? The issue is not \$5 and \$15 per employee. They would end up paying about 50 percent of hospital bills. They gladly would they pay a lousy 20 bucks. The title of your letter should read: "Real nice people don't cross picket lines. Selfish, inconsiderate, neurotic, ill-advised, not nice people (do)." What goes around comes around. It could be Jill next, walking the line.

Jataun Valentine
Venice

The QLine

Readers sound off on noise in Santa Monica

This past week, Q-line asked:

"Is Santa Monica too loud? Who's making all the noise?"

Here are your responses:

■ "I don't know who is making the noise, but I know what is making the noise: Leaf blowers; lawn mowers; motorcycles; police, fire and ambulance sirens; trash-collection trucks; loud car stereos and mufflers; construction; airplanes flying in and out of Santa Monica Airport; kids on skateboards; auto horn-blowing; and an inebriant who staggered out of a bar on Wilshire Boulevard recently at 2 a.m. and shouted "Hee Ha" two times at the top of his vocal range."

■ "I don't think that Santa Monica is too loud. I don't know where everyone hears all these noises. The only time I hear any noise is when I walk on the Promenade. Where I live, or where anyone else lives, in Santa Monica, I don't hear any noise. I don't know what everyone is talking about."

■ "One example of too much noise in Santa Monica are the musicians who are currently playing outside of the Johnny Rockets Restaurant on the Third Street Promenade. One of the charms of Johnny Rockets is their '50s-style music that plays inside, and these musicians clearly interfere with that."

■ "There are a lot of planes in the sky, day and night, in Santa Monica, especially those little ones. You can really hear them."

■ "Santa Monica is too loud. I think it's especially too loud on the Third Street Promenade where you have performers with amplifiers blasting music out. Sometimes people want a little peace and quiet."

■ "I think the City Council did a good job in turning down the noise ordinance. It was Draconian and would have affected a lot of the bars and clubs unfairly, for example, the Gas Lite in Santa Monica. I

want to say kudos to the City Council for not letting the noise ordinance through."

■ "Urban noise has been around since about the 13th century. Would you think that the Cathedral of Notre Dame was not built by all those stone masons working away and annoying people in the urban environment? The same thing applies today to auto body shops and merchants who must make noise in order to be in business. It's just part of the urban environment. I would say that Santa Monica does do a good job regulating the noise is does give off. The Santa Monica Airport has the best noise-reduction program of any airport in the nation.

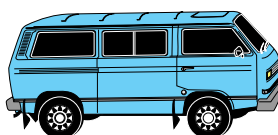
If we do implement a noise ordinance in Santa Monica, we should model it after L.A.'s, rather than drafting our own from scratch."

■ "First of all, the amount of helicopters that fly over the city contribute to the noise problem, especially the news helicopters — the helicopters that fly 100 feet above the beach — and the police helicopters, which do nothing. Also, motorcyclists who rev their motors and go about 60 mph up your street. Last, is those oversized car stereos which you hear going "thump, thump, thump" at 2 a.m. waking everyone up."

■ "Santa Monica has overgrown to such a large extent that I don't think that anything can be done about the noise level. The worst contributors are those vehicles with those dreadful, nerve-racking back-up beepers, the police and ambulance sirens — which sound like WWII is going on all day in Santa Monica — and the noisy motorcycles. Something should be done about those. They roar around our city day and night. All I can say is 'heaven protect our hearing and our sanity.'"

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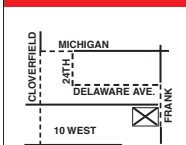


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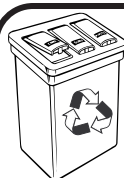
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LOCAL

Feds will investigate hotel workers' charges

CHARGES, from page 1

receive better health benefits and a paid half-hour lunch under the 18-month contract. "It's a remarkable agreement."

Union dues are \$37 a month.

Four Points, at 530 Pico Blvd., was the most recent Santa Monica hotel targeted by labor organizers, who have pledged to work towards unionizing all of Santa Monica's large hotels. Currently, Four Points, Loews Beach Hotel, the Viceroy and the Fairmont Miramar have a union presence.

Thursday's charges came from workers Jesse Gomez, Maria Ibarra, Frederico Iorgulescu, Raul Morales, Maria Redon and Jose Yanez. They allege union boosters supplied them with money and gifts in exchange for support. They also allege that a number of workers who first pledged union support later revoked that support. They also accuse hotel managers of recognizing a union that's not backed by the majority of workers.

The workers hope their charges will ultimately lead to having the union invalidated at Four Points by an NLRB judge.

"These were the only six employees who dared to defy or sort of stand up to this ongoing campaign by union officials," said Justin Hakes, a spokesman for the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, a nonprofit organization that represents workers against unions throughout the country.

Petersen, who denied all the charges, said the anti-union sentiment reflects the residue of an intense campaign waged by managers at the hotel in prior years. He called the Right to Work foundation a right-wing outfit bent on hurting workers nationwide.

"Their mission is to kill the labor movement," Petersen said. "Fortunately, they're kind of a gnat on a wall and meaningless in the grand scheme ... So we're not exactly concerned about this."

He added that a handful of workers revoked their votes and they were not counted in last Saturday's vote. He said about half of the workers voted in the election and about 90 percent of those favored the union.

The Saturday election was held after a several-month process of gathering signatures from workers who support the union. Hotel managers agreed earlier this year to allow labor organizers into the hotel.

It's a process called a "card check election," because labor organizers gather signature cards from workers one at a time. It is considered by labor groups a much easier way to win the support of workers than a single-day election and, therefore, it has drawn criticism from groups like the Right to Work foundation, which calls it a "top-down organizing effort," meaning once managers agree to let the union in, workers are essentially powerless against it.

Tony Bisceglia from the NLRB said the charges will be investigated and a pre-

liminary announcement will likely be issued in the next several weeks. If the charges have merit, a complaint will be filed by the labor board and, if the case cannot be resolved, it will be heard by an administrative law judge.

"These were the only six employees who dared to defy or sort of stand up to this ongoing campaign by union officials."

— JUSTIN HAKES

Spokesman,
National Right to Work Legal
Defense Foundation

Hundreds of charges each year are filed with the NLRB, but merit is actually found in less than half of those, Bisceglia added.

While the dispute between the workers and their managers plays itself out with the labor board, Danny Feingold, a spokesman for Santa Monicans Allied for Responsible Tourism, said the majority of workers at Four Points are ecstatic over the recent union contract there. SMART is leading the drive for a "living wage" law in Santa Monica and is expected to present a proposed ordinance to the City Council in January.

"Clearly, the hotel — the Four Points — and the workers at the Four Points, have shown a way to the future of labor relations in Santa Monica, which is to work together for their mutual benefit," he said.

What \$37 a month buys ...

Workers at the Four Points Sheraton on Pico Boulevard on Saturday formally accepted a labor contract negotiated by union organizers and hotel managers.

The terms include:

- Free family health insurance for full- and part-time employees
- Pension plan
- Average 20 percent wage increase
- Half-hour paid lunch break
- Housekeepers clean fewer rooms
- Immigration protections

Source: Kurt Petersen, organizing director, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 11.





Payback: DA office has \$400k for fraud victims

By Daily Press staff

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office is trying to locate victims of a 53-year-old Los Angeles woman, who more than a decade ago stole more than \$3 million, to return a portion of their lost savings.

Deputy District Attorney Allan Fork said the DA's office has won an appeal to repay the estimated 120, mostly Korean, victims who were defrauded by Linda Park Ableman when she served as president of two companies — CitiEscrow and 1031 Exchange — between September 1989 and May 1990.

After eluding authorities and thwarting investigations for years, Ableman pleaded guilty last year to one count of grand theft and nine counts of money laundering. She agreed to repay \$400,000 to victims. However, when Ableman was sentenced to three years in state prison, the

trial court judge ordered the DA's office to pay the \$400,000 to the Escrow Agents Fidelity Corp., which insures escrow companies.

The DA's office appealed and the high court recently reversed the trial court, ordering the \$400,000 be repaid to CitiEscrow and 1031 Exchange customers who had lost their deposits or investments.

Victims must contact the DA's office by Dec. 31 to file a claim. A restitution hearing is scheduled for Feb. 1.

Ableman was hired by her sister, Nancy Murakami, in 1986 to work at CitiEscrow and 1031 Exchange, a deferral accommodation service that allowed clients to defer capital gains tax under section 1031 of the Internal Revenue Code.

In June 1988, Ableman bought almost all of her sister's stock and then forced her sister and her sister's

business partner, Christine Chung, out of the business, prosecutors said. Ableman in September 1989 took over the company.

Soon after Ableman assumed control, the Department of Corporations started investigating complaints about CitiEscrow. A financial audit revealed shortages. Escrow companies are required by law to have an outside agency do monthly internal audits, but all the records mysteriously disappeared, impeding investigation of CitiEscrow and 1031 Exchange, Fork said.

Ableman later filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy for CitiEscrow and 1031 Exchange, and then filed Chapter 7 bankruptcy for herself after she fled to Hawaii to avoid repaying the stolen money, prosecutors said. After years of investigation by several agencies, Ableman was charged with grand theft and money laundering. She pleaded guilty to all charges. Her 10-year prison term would be reduced if she repaid \$400,000, which she did, Fork said.

Some victims were repaid in full by the Escrow Agents Fidelity Corp. through the bankruptcy trustee, Ronald Durkin. However, more than 100 victims never fully recouped their losses. Victims must contact the DA's office at 213-580-3322 or 213-580-3200 to request a claim form, which must be returned to the district attorney's office no later than Dec. 31. Whatever money is not claimed will be paid to EAFC as the secondary victim under the Financial Code, Fork said.

'Wonderland' drives home holiday spirit

BIG BLUE BUS, from page 1

has become a tradition at the bus company, which unveiled the popular "Candy Cane" bus several years ago. That edition, where the bus was painted red and white, with red leather seats inside, became explosively popular, said Dan Dawson, a Big Blue Bus spokesman.

"People went berserk over it," he said. "The response was unbelievable."

After a few years in operation, the Candy Cane bus was eventually retired because of its age. Last year's holiday bus was created in response to the looming war in Iraq. Entitled "Love, Peace and Joy," it was painted gold with adhesive white doves along the side.

"It didn't get that great of a response," Dawson admits, adding this year's theme was designed to evoke the memories of childhood. "This year, we wanted to do something different."

The wrap job for the Big Blue Bus this year cost \$6,400, but because of budget constraints, bus officials found an advertiser to underwrite part of the cost.

The Hollywood-based company "Imagic," which specializes in bus wraps, slapped on the digitally printed sticky plastic in one day. Imagic representative Julian Swain, who added that most of the company's business is in movie promotions on buses, said it took two weeks to process and print the image into four-foot wide strips.

Bus wrapping has become more popular over the years, particularly because it costs more to paint them, Swain said. The wrap job for the Big Blue Bus this year cost \$6,400, but because of budget constraints, bus

officials found an advertiser to underwrite part of the cost. Radio station KOST 103.5 paid for more than 50 percent of the cost in exchange for advertising along the side of the bus.

And while city officials are cautious of letting the operation become too commercial, they were willing to allow a small logo to be put on the side of the bus, Dawson said.

The "Winter Wonderland" bus will operate all routes within the Big Blue Bus' 51-mile service area. Call customer service at (310) 541-5444 to find out when and where bus riders can find the "Winter Wonderland."

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Entertainment

For reasons not explained, 'Last Samurai' falls short

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

"The Last Samurai" is a fine example of what happens when all the elements of epic filmmaking are precisely fused: Sure-handed direction from Ed Zwick ("Glory," "Legends of The Fall"), resplendent performances by Tom Cruise and Ken Watanabe, breathtaking visuals courtesy of celebrated cinematographer John Toll, and an easily accessible story about a man unwittingly thrust down a treacherous path towards redemption. And while it is surely an entertaining film, there's something a bit too familiar about "The Last Samurai" to anoint it one of the year's best.

'Honey' has two left feet

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Jessica Alba stars as Honey Daniels, a product of the inner city who gets discovered shimmying in a nightclub, becomes the hottest hip-hop dance sensation since J-Lo, only to give it all up to save a group of underprivileged kids from themselves. Inspirational (or condescending, depending on what side of the tracks you hail from) as that may sound, "Honey" is a silly dance movie with two left feet, so clumsy it can't stop tripping over itself. The profoundly pretty Alba is a capable enough actor who does a decent job keeping Honey sweet, but not too saccharine, but she's about as believable a product of the Bronx streets as 50 Cent would be playing Hootie Johnson's golf buddy. And it doesn't take a seasoned professional dancer to realize you don't become a high-paid music video choreographer, literally, overnight without sleeping with SOMEONE first!

The man who would-be slept with, but isn't, is Michael Ellis (David Moscow), the IT video director for the likes of hip-hop superstars Missy Elliott, Ginuwine and Jadakiss (all of whom make cameos and provide tracks for the soundtrack). Ellis not only gives Honey her big career break, he introduces her to a world of parties chock full of playa-pimps and high-priced bubbly. But despite her burgeoning career, impressive social calendar and a sorta-kinda romance with a local barber (Mekhi Phifer), Honey's heart is with the young kids from the dance class she teaches at a rundown rec center. First and foremost among them is a precocious little tyke named Benny (pint-sized rapper Lil' Romeo). After Benny gets pinched selling weed, Honey decides the only way to save him and the other impossibly cute at-risk youths is to open her own dance studio in the 'hood. Her plan is embraced by everyone from Missy Elliott to a benevolent loan officer from the bank who gladly forks over the dough to finance the studio, convinced that with Honey leading the way, it's only a matter of time before the Crips and the Bloods trade in their colors and guns for tap shoes and ballet slippers.

(Rated PG-13 for drug content and some sexual references.)

Originality has to count for something, after all, and Zwick's account of a 19th century battle for the soul of Japan (and a man's battle to find his soul) is highly derivative of antecedents such as "Dances With Wolves" and "Unforgiven." And unlike those superior films, "The Last Samurai" takes one too many liberties "reinventing" the past, apparently on the dubitable grounds that it's OK to tinker with a culture's history as long as it's not our own.

Tom Cruise, striking the movie star pose he's purposefully avoided the past few years, plays Captain Nathan Algren, a soulless veteran of the brutal Indian campaigns of the Ole' Wild West who's lost in a haze of liquor and regret. For reasons that are never explained, the Emperor of Japan seeks out the mid-level Army officer to come to Tokyo to train conscripts to kill the fearsome Samurai who stand in the way of progress. Boasting that "for \$500 a month, I'll kill anyone you want," which seems odd, given that he's supposedly torn up over the "Injuns" he was forced to slaughter — Algren packs up his troubles and sails for Japan. Once there, he and his ill-prepared troops are summarily overwhelmed by the Samurai and, for reasons not fully explained, Algren's life is spared. (Perhaps they want to keep him around for a sequel.) While tucked away with the Samurai and their kin in one of those tiny mountain villages that are all the rage among production designers, Algren strikes up a friendship with the leader, Katsumoto (Watanabe), and develops an appreciation for the values and codes of the ancient line of warriors ... as well as for his comely hostess, Taka



Ken Watanabe and Tom Cruise in "The Last Samurai."

(Japanese model, Koyuki).

With the evil imperialistic Americans and their Japanese counterparts setting upon Katsumoto's tribe, Algren must choose between duty to his country and his deep connection to his new pals and their honorable way of life. If you've seen the trailer or have even the faintest idea of how Hollywood action heroes operate, you know which path he chooses. Of course, history tells us that the Samurai did disappear in the 19th Century. But nowhere in any history books will you find an account of a dashing

American warrior with movie star good looks who not only joined the ranks of the Samurai, but became the best of the best. An argument can be made that "Samurai" is just a movie and therefore not beholden to facts, but would that argument hold up if someone tried to make a Civil War epic about Robert E. Lee surrendering to Jackie Chan? Come to think of it, that sounds like a great idea for a comedy. Maybe I should get Jackie's agent on the phone ...

(Rated R for strong violence and battle sequences. Running time: 144 minutes)

Cruise in control during filming of 'Samurai'

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Twenty-two years ago, Tom Cruise made his film debut in "Taps," embarking upon an extraordinary journey that has led him to the summit of showbiz success. Legions of devoted fans have followed Cruise every step of the way, from his breakthrough performance in 1983's "Risky Business" to Academy Award-nominated turns in "Born On The Fourth of July," "Jerry Maguire" and "Magnolia." His latest film, "The Last Samurai," is just the sort of epic that the Academy voters love, and will likely net Cruise his fourth (and best yet) chance at a coveted gold statuette.

While Cruise is certainly one of the most recognizable celebrities in the world, he is that rare matinee idol who also commands the utmost respect of the critics and his peers. His love life has been the subject of much speculation in the tabloids, but over the years Cruise has steadfastly avoided discussing either his divorce from Nicole Kidman or his current relationship with actress Penelope Cruz. He's more than willing, on the other hand, to talk about his movies.

Question: What was it that touched you so much about this script?

Tom Cruise: The code of the Samurai: Bushido ("the way of the warrior"). When I read it, it aligned with what I believe, what I strive for in my life, and that hit me. Samurai is just eternally cool and the culture is something. It's always been enigmatic to



Penelope Cruz and Tom Cruise at the premiere of "The Last Samurai."

me. Then I met with Ed (Zwick, the director) and saw his enthusiasm and vision for this film ... and (I was) going, man, I want to go on this ride with you. Where are we going to go with this?

Q: So from beginning to end, how much of a personal journey was it for you?

TC: Big. It was big, because any time you start looking at life from another culture's point of view, another person's point of view, it's very exciting and it's enlightening. Also, the physical journey and the character development happened at the same time. We're talking about a year of developing this character and working with it. Working with the Japanese actors — that was very fulfilling. Seeing those performances come to life.

Q: Was it a big adjustment, working with a largely Japanese cast and crew?

TC: They were very generous, very giving, and supportive and validating as to the history and the work that we've done, and helpful to me with the swordplay and giving me confidence.

Q: The physical demands of the role were incredible and quite dangerous. Were you ever scared?

TC: (Laughs) At first I was thinking, how am I going to do this? What's gonna happen? First, I worked by myself, building up my arm strength and flexibility. Then we started introducing other guys coming in, and they were swinging at me, and OK, we were going hard because you've got to go full speed. I thought, wow. And then (stunt coordinator) Nick Powell built me up to where I had total spatial awareness of the guys behind me. Even at that speed it felt slow to me when we were going through it. If someone made a mistake, or a misstep, I had good awareness of where they were. That's what martial arts gives you, that kind of awareness, where things to other people seem to be happening fast, but to you, it's in slow motion.

Q: In what ways has making this movie changed you?

TC: It's given me an opportunity to really see the things that, for me, are spiritually important, and to explore and express the kind of humanity that I feel is important today. And it was right there. It was perfect.

STATE



Workers' comp rates appear on the decline, still fall short of goal

BY STEVE LAWRENCE

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — California's workers' compensation insurance rates are trending downward for the first time since 1998, a sign the costly system has "turned the corner," state Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi said this week.

But the average 3.6 percent decrease is far below the nearly 15 percent drop in so-called pure premium rates that he recommended in November.

Garamendi said 95 workers' comp insurers, representing about 75 percent of the California market, had announced rates that will take effect in January.

Of those 95 firms, 69 plan to reduce rates, 16 are standing pat and 10 are raising rates. The decreases range from about a half percent to nearly 29 percent. The State Compensation Insurance Fund, which has more than half the California workers' comp market, announced an average cut of 2.9 percent.

Increases range from a third of a percent to more than 25 percent.

Overall the changes averaged out to a 3.6 percent decrease, Garamendi said.

He characterized the drop as a dramatic change from recent years, when California employers were hit by annual increases of about 20 percent or more, and said it was a "clear sign" that cost-cutting legislation approved by lawmakers earlier this year was working.

Besides generating the cuts, the legislation also wiped out the need for a potential 12 percent rate increase in January, he added.

"We are no longer on the up escalator with California workers' comp rates," Garamendi said at a news conference. "We have stopped and we're now on the down escalator and we need to go down several floors before this process is completed."

He said he would push lawmakers to adopt additional cost-saving changes in the 90-year-old workers' comp system and would pressure insurers to cut their rates even more.

"We will certainly be looking at the filings in great detail and questioning the insurance companies as to their situation and why they didn't achieve more," he said. "And frankly we will put pressure on the insurance companies to get the job done."

But he said the small average drop in rates didn't demonstrate the need to give him the power to roll back excessive workers' comp insurance charges, saying that could reduce competition and boost costs by discouraging more workers' comp insurers from writing policies in California.

Asked why the rate cuts weren't bigger in light of Garamendi's recommended reduction, Nicole Mahrt, a spokeswoman for the American Insurance Association, said insurers first needed to close a \$12 billion hole in their reserve funds.

"These reforms that came out of the 2003 session are helping us fix the reserving problem we had and helping us to slowly start reducing premiums," she said.

Allan Zaremberg, president of the California Chamber of Commerce, said the rate filings demonstrated that there were "some true cost savings in the reforms enacted earlier this year."

But he said lawmakers should adopt sweeping legislation backed by the chamber and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to make additional cuts.

"We are no longer on the up escalator with California workers' comp rates."

— JOHN GARAMENDI
California insurance commissioner

"Workers' compensation costs have risen 136 percent in the last four years on average, with some companies experiencing 200 percent and 300 percent increases, causing businesses to lay off employees, shut their doors or move to neighboring states," he said. "The status quo is simply unacceptable."

Opponents say Schwarzenegger's plan goes too far and would harm injured workers while actually boosting some employer costs.

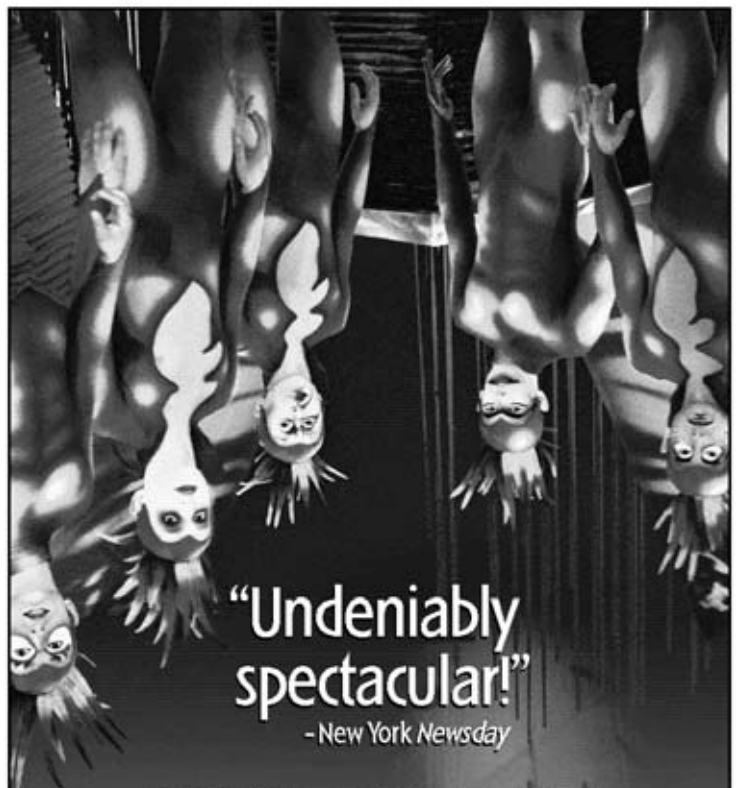
Richard Wooley, legislative chairman for the California Applicants' Attorneys Association, which represent injured workers, said lawmakers should let this year's reforms work before adopting more changes.

"More insurance rate decreases will follow in mid-2004 as other companies announce their rates," Wooley said. "The governor is proposing changes to our workers' compensation system that eliminate the constitutional right of injured workers to full medical treatment."

Garamendi proposed in November that insurers slash their so-called pure premium rates by 14.9 percent, saying that the bills approved earlier this year, if properly implemented, would justify that reduction.

The pure premium rate is what it costs an insurer to process and pay claims, and doesn't take into consideration an insurance company's other expenses, profits and reserves. The rates announced Wednesday include those other factors, Garamendi said.

The State Compensation Insurance Fund, a quasi-state agency, said not all of its customers would see a rate reduction in January because a rate increase that took effect last July 1 had not yet been applied to policies that are renewed in the first half of the new year.



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NATIONAL

What's good for goose is good for the economy

BY JEFF BARNARD
Associated Press Writer

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — A group of 104 economists, including two Nobel Prize winners, sent a letter this week to President Bush and Western governors saying that policies that harm the environment also harm the economy in the long run.

"Those who promise that workers, firms and communities tied to environmentally harmful activities can avoid these pressures if only the environmental laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, were set aside raise false hopes," the letter said. "Even if such laws were repealed, the costs of environmentally harmful activities will continue to rise and jeopardize the economic outlook for affected communities."

The letter said the economic importance of agriculture, logging, mining and commercial fishing have diminished steadily, both in terms of numbers of jobs and levels of pay. As the population increases, habitat for fish and wildlife shrinks and many native species face extinction.

"Reversing the trend becomes more expensive over time," the letter said. "As ecosystems are degraded, they provide fewer economically valuable services, such as cleansing the water in streams, and communities therefore must provide replacement services with water-treatment plants."

Government subsidies of irrigation, logging, livestock grazing and mining prop up activities that could not survive in efficient market conditions, the letter said. Artificially low costs for roads, water and pollution create false impressions of the cost of urban sprawl, according to the scientists.

White House spokesman Ken Lisais said the Bush administration had a strong agenda for improving and preserving the environment.

"This administration is committed to improving our environment, our air quality and water quality, protecting our land and building on the progress made over the last decade," he said.

Drafting and circulating the letter among the economists spread across the nation was coordinated by Ed Whitelaw, a University of Oregon professor of economics and president of ECONorthwest, an economic consulting firm that has done work for environmental groups, and Ernie Niemi, also of ECONorthwest.

"It is precisely the policies we see threatening economic growth in the West that are promoted as stimulating jobs and income and so on," Whitelaw said in a telephone interview from his office in Eugene. "There is definitely a disconnect between the professionals who study this stuff day in and day out and those who are implementing the policies, even though each of the two groups purports to serve the same purpose, economic prosperity."

Ridge looking at technology for keys to stop smugglers

BY ANABELLE GARAY
Associated Press Writer

PHOENIX — The use of unmanned aerial vehicles and other technology could help curb smuggling on the U.S.-Mexico border, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said this week.

Ridge said such technology could reduce illegal immigration and cut deaths among border-crossers. Many migrants die of heat exposure and in accidents while crossing the harsh Arizona desert.

"I can't tell you when it will be deployed but if it fits operationally with our goals it will be deployed and we'll find resources to get it," Ridge said of the unmanned aerial vehicles.

Ridge visited Phoenix to discuss the government's efforts to crack down on migrant smuggling, a business that's getting more violent as drug dealers move into the lucrative business of sneaking people into Arizona.

Officials linked the fatal shootings of four people on an Arizona interstate last month to smugglers fighting over undocumented immigrants that were kidnapped by a rival gang.

Investigators also think the November deaths of three men found bound and shot execution-style in the desert west of Phoenix also are related to people smuggling.

At Fort Huachuca in southern Arizona, Ridge and a group of Arizona leaders had been scheduled to watch demonstrations of military technology.

U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officials were commissioned to study whether technology used in the battlefield can be adapted for border enforcement, Ridge said.

"If we can interdict more aggressively and more completely and use technology, we'll save lives and do a better job of enforcing our laws," he said.

"I can't tell you when it will be deployed but if it fits operationally with our goals it will be deployed and we'll find resources to get it,"

— TOM RIDGE
Homeland Security Secretary

Ridge met with state and local police officials in Phoenix, part of the nation's underground hub in migrant smuggling, to discuss the crackdown.

"Different jurisdictions, different uniforms but all engaged in combating one of the most vicious forms of criminal activity — and that is human trafficking," he said.

Ridge wouldn't say whether he supported a guest worker program proposed by three Arizona Republicans as a way of offsetting the massive influx of undocumented immigrants.

A record 151 people died while illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border through southern Arizona during the last year. Those migrants account for about 44 percent of immigrants who perished along the Mexican border while making the illegal trek into the United States.

Illegal immigration also has been linked to numerous violent crimes in Arizona, as rival smugglers battle over migrants sometimes held for ransom.



WORLD BRIEFLY

Israelis, Palestinians talk cease-fire

By The Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel will scale back its military operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip if the Palestinians pledge to halt attacks on Israel, a senior defense official said Thursday as Palestinian militant groups gathered in Egypt for talks.

Deputy Defense Minister Zeev Boim's comments, which came a day after Israel said it had thwarted a suicide bomb attack on a school, were the clearest statement yet that Israel would respond favorably to a cease-fire offer.

Negotiations between various Palestinian factions in Cairo were being mediated by Egypt and were aimed at achieving some sort of truce in exchange for a halt by Israel of targeted killings of militant leaders and raids on Palestinian population centers.

"If the Palestinians agree to a cease-fire in Cairo, it's certainly not out of the question that Israel will agree to restrain its military activity," Boim told Israel Radio.

Saudi officials arrest bombing suspect

By The Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Saudi police manned sandbagged checkpoints across the capital and guarded western compounds after a suspect in a recent suicide car bombing was arrested amid new warnings of possible attacks on foreigners here.

The Saudi Interior Ministry, in charge of the kingdom's police, issued a statement saying a suspected

Islamic militant was arrested with a cache of weapons and "pamphlets inciting terrorist acts." It said the man was captured a week ago but that his identity would not be revealed to protect the investigation.

The cache seized with the suspect included a SAM-7 surface-to-air missile capable of downing a plane at low altitude, 20 high explosive hand grenades, 89 electrical detonators, blocks of explosives, six booby-trapped mobile phones, three computers and Saudi currency worth \$354,000.

The arrest was the first in the bombing of the Muhaya housing compound in the capital Riyadh on Nov. 8, which killed 17 people and wounded more than 120.

Archbishop's mansion on the block

By The Associated Press

BOSTON — The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston has put the archbishop's mansion — one of the symbols of its prosperity — on the market to help pay for an \$85 million settlement with victims of clergy sex abuse, a church official said.

The church will sell the opulent mansion on its Brighton grounds as well as more than 27 acres of surrounding land, according to the Rev. Christopher Coyne, a church spokesman. The stately three-story mansion built in the 1920s has been used as a residence by the last four archbishops, but new Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley announced shortly after his installation in July that he would not live in the building. O'Malley moved to a South End apartment behind the Cathedral of the Holy Cross.

The mansion and land was recently assessed at nearly \$14 million, but real estate experts say the land could fetch up to \$20 million.

The sale of the residence helps fulfill O'Malley's promise that no collection plate money will be used to pay for the record settlement.

Instead, O'Malley presented a plan to the archdiocesan Finance Council on Wednesday in which the church would take out short-term loans to fund the settlement and then pay back the lenders with proceeds from the sale of the Brighton property and insurance money.

Search yields no sign of UND student

By The Associated Press

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — The man accused of kidnapping a college student from a mall parking lot was in a North Dakota jail following his arrest in Minnesota, while a massive search effort failed to turn up any sign of the missing woman.

Some volunteers were left in tears this week as their search for 22-year-old Dru Sjodin came up empty. But family members continued to express confidence that the University of North Dakota student will be found alive.

"I just know she's alive and we're going to get her," Sven Sjodin, Dru's older brother, said Wednesday evening, after about 1,700 volunteers searched fields, ditches and outbuildings in Grand Forks County of North Dakota and Polk County of Minnesota.

Alfonso Rodriguez Jr., a three-time convicted rapist, is accused of kidnapping Sjodin from the parking lot of a Grand Forks shopping mall on Nov. 22.

Rodriguez, 50, was arrested Monday in Crookston, Minn., about 30 miles from Grand Forks, where he lives with his mother. He waived extradition to North Dakota on Wednesday. Police have declined to talk about evidence in the case and the criminal complaint has not been made public.

DID YOU KNOW?: Gerald Ford, whose given name was Leslie King, was the first U.S. president to not be elected president or vice-president.

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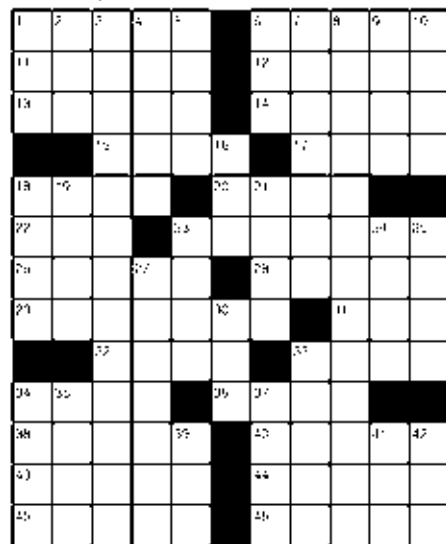
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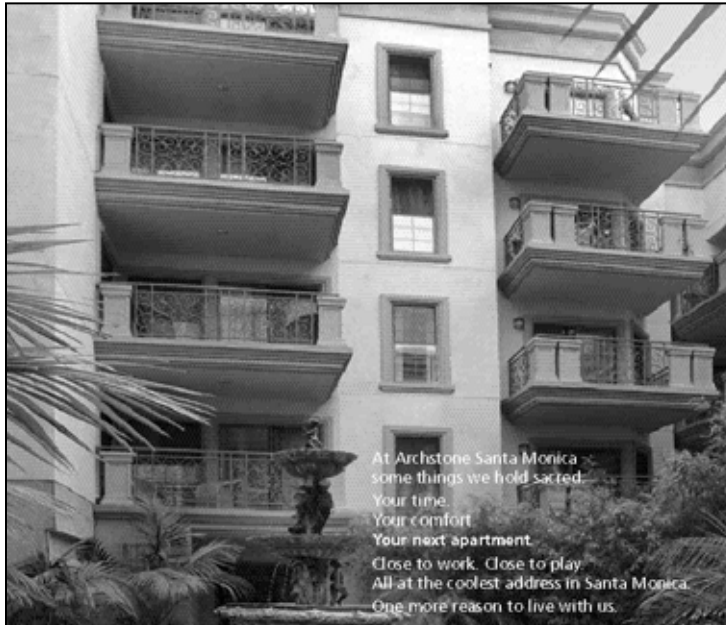
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Manilow won't let faith diminish his Christmas spirit

By The Associated Press

■ **NEW YORK** — Barry Manilow grew up Jewish in Brooklyn, but he's had a longtime love of Christmas music. He's recorded two albums of holiday songs, which he'll perform from Friday night on A&E's "Live by Request."

"It's holiday music, really. It's not religious music," Manilow told The Associated Press. "What I love about the holidays is families getting together, people giving to each other, stopping, smiling, hollering at each other."

But Manilow said the show, airing live from 8-10 p.m. EST, will mark the first time he and his band will perform these songs live.

"We're gonna cross our fingers," the 57-year-old said this week, laughing. "I'm going to rehearse right now. We're rehearsing 40 songs. We'll be ready for anything they throw at us."

And if someone calls in or sends an e-mail wanting to hear "Mandy" or "Weekend in New England" or another of Manilow's hits?

"It's a Christmas special, so maybe they won't put that call through," he joked, though he acknowledged that he might give in if there's a clamor for his old favorites.

The singer also will make a cameo Dec. 11 on NBC's "Will & Grace," which he called "the funniest show on television." In the episode, ultimate Manilow fan Will (Eric McCormack) waits in line for tickets to his concert.

■ **BATON ROUGE, La.** — The judge who accepted rapper Mystikal's guilty plea to sexual battery shouldn't be allowed to sentence him because he has seen an "inflammatory" videotape of the assault, his lawyer says.

The rapper, whose real name is Michael Tyler, had been scheduled for sentencing Wednesday, but it was put off until Jan. 15 after a hearing on attorney David Bourland's complaint.

Judge Tony Marabella refused to step down, saying Bourland's request is groundless.

Tyler, 33, and two bodyguards pleaded guilty in June to sexual battery, which has a maximum 10-year prison sentence.

They'd videotaped themselves in forced sex acts with Tyler's hairstylist. The woman said Tyler accused her of stealing \$80,000 worth of his checks and told her he wouldn't go to police if she did something "degrading," according to prosecutor Sue Bernie. The woman has denied stealing money.

Bourland said he and the bodyguards' attorneys would argue to withdraw the guilty pleas next month.

■ **DALLAS** — The Dallas Symphony Orchestra's music director says he'll leave the organization when his contract expires in 2006, but will remain music director emeritus and conduct occasional concerts.

Andrew Litton, who's been director since 1994, said this week he wants to spend more time developing television shows about music for children as well as conducting opera.

Earlier this year, the 44-year-old took on additional jobs as principal conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic in Norway and artistic director of the Minnesota Orchestra's festival, Sommerfest.

"Twelve years is a long time," Litton told The Dallas Morning News, "and I feel like we're at a place now where I'm leaving when everybody's feeling good. I didn't want to leave when people would say, 'Thank goodness he's leaving.'"

Litton has hired almost one-third of the Dallas orchestra's musicians and led them on three European tours and in four concerts at Carnegie Hall. The director and the DSO also collaborated on 23 music CDs, including symphonies by Gustav Mahler and Dmitri Shostakovich. Litton has led the DSO in annual summer residencies at the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival in Colorado.

Fred Bronstein, who took over as president of the Dallas Symphony Association last year, said the DSO

will form a search committee in early 2004. Guest conductors for the next two or three seasons will be chosen with an eye to possible successors to Litton, with a new music director ideally in place by fall 2006.

■ **NASHVILLE, Tenn.** — Terri Clark, Ronnie Dunn, Del McCoury and Joe Nichols are among the guests scheduled to pay tribute Dec. 13 to country music duo the Louvin Brothers at the Grand Ole Opry.

Dierks Bentley, Rebecca Lynn Howard, Rhonda Vincent and Jon Randall also will appear, along with surviving member Charlie Louvin.

Charlie and Ira Louvin scored several country hits in the 1950s including, "When I Stop Dreaming," "I Don't Believe You've Met My Baby," and "Hoping That You're Hoping."

The duo broke up in 1963, and Ira Louvin died in a car crash two years later.

The brothers were inducted into the Grand Ole Opry in 1955 and the Country Music Hall of Fame last year.

■ **WELLINGTON, New Zealand** — Naomi Watts is the prime candidate to play King Kong's female friend in Peter Jackson's remake of the 1933 classic movie, New Zealand media reported this week.

"It's looking OK" for Watts to sign a contract to play Ann Darrow, Fay Wray's role in the original film, Jackson told Wellington's Dominion Post newspaper.

Jackson met Watts in London in October to show her some designs for the remake of the movie, to be shot against a stylized period backdrop of New York City, the newspaper said.

"She got really excited and it was great. Naomi's the only person that we've really approached because she's becoming so eagerly sought after by everybody," the director said.

Watts' films include "Mulholland Drive," "The Ring" and the new movie "21 Grams."

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