THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2005 Volume 5, Issue 22

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO
4 5 6 31 44
Meganumber: 21
Jackpot: $24 Million

FANTASY 5
3 9 13 28 35

DAILY 3
Daytime: 1 5 4
Evening: 2 4 5

DAILY DERBY
1st: 05 California Classic
2nd: 04 Big Ben
3rd: 07 Eureka !

RACE TIME: 1:48.84

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site: http://www.calottery.com



NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

Jim Porcellato endured about 30 seconds of excruciating pain in October in Sooke, British Columbia, when he attempted to shut off a Bobcat construction vehicle but accidentally stepped on the floor lever that raises and lowers the vehicle's bucket, at the same time that he was, unfortunately, straddling the bucket. Porcellato, with one foot and his body's weight on the lever, had no leverage to stop the bucket, which as it moved, trapped his head and other leg. A co-worker rescued him, but the result was "many" lost teeth and the need for "hundreds" of stitches in his face, according to the Sooke News Mirror.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 342nd day of 2005. There are 23 days left in the year.

Twenty-five years ago, on Dec. 8, 1980, rock star John Lennon was shot to death outside his New York City apartment building by an apparently deranged fan.

In 1886, the American Federation of Labor was founded in Columbus, Ohio.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Untilled ground, however rich, will bring forth thistles and thorns; so also the mind of man."

St. Teresa of Avila
SPANISH CARMELITE NUN (1515-1582)

INDEX

Horoscopes
Hang out, Capricorn 2

Snow & Surf Report
Water temperature: **59°** 3

Opinion
Bush bucking back 4

State
Ticket-buyers bowled over 5

Business
A gift with benefits 8

National
Agents on the way 13

Comics
Laugh it up 16

Classifieds
Have some class 17-19

McCarthy clocking out as city manager

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — After running the city for the past six years, Susan McCarthy will get her life back once the sun sets today over the Pacific.

Thursday is the last day of work for McCarthy, who has served as city manager since 1999. McCarthy will be back in the office on Friday, however, to complete some final tasks, like packing up the rest of the boxes and firing off some final e-mails.

"I suppose I'll leave the keys and my badge, and fade into the sunset," she said.

Her final weeks and days have been busy — on Tuesday, McCarthy hired a new homeless czar, a position that is the first of its kind in Santa Monica. She's also been busy wrapping up loose ends before her replacement, Lamont Ewell, takes the helm on Jan. 14.

Beyond a Hawaiian vacation with her parents, McCarthy, 60, plans on sticking around Santa Monica during her first few months of retirement. She'll also be around when the Main Library opens its doors, as well as on hand in case Ewell faces any major stumbling blocks early on in his tenure. However, McCarthy believes it'll be important for Ewell to learn the job on his own.

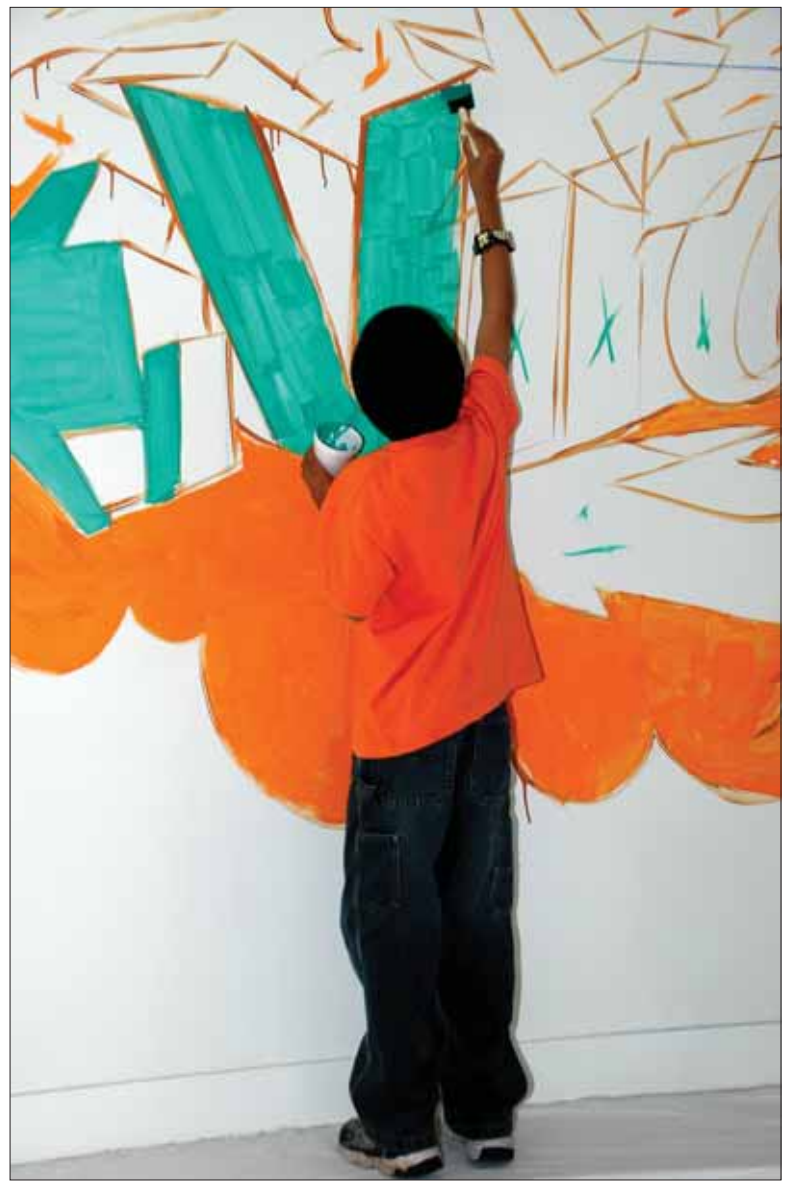
See CLOCKING OUT, page 7



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Outgoing City Manager Susan McCarthy packs her belongings Wednesday in her City Hall office. Today is the 23-year city employee's final day on the job.

Redshirt fresh man



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Ismael DePablo, 10, stretches high to paint on the mural at a teen graffiti workshop on Sunday. The mural painting was one of several activities sponsored by City Hall to officially open Virginia Avenue Park. A $48,000 party was staged to celebrate the park's re-opening on the heels of a $13 million renovation. See page 10 for additional photos.

LOCAL

Price is right in SM with sales tax growth

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITYWIDE — According to the numbers, things are looking up in Santa Monica.

City Hall's finance department's analysis of second quarter sales tax from 2005 shows an adjusted increase of 4.2 percent over the same quarter

See SALES TAX, page 11

A celestial send-off for SMC professor

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE — To many, retiring Planetarium Director Jon Hodge's reach has always extended beyond this world. With a recently discovered asteroid now bearing his name, it will remain there for perpetuity.

Hodge, currently on medical leave and set to retire from Santa Monica College, has been known for his fascinating and lay-friendly shows that have attracted tens of thousands of adults and children over the past 26 years.

Asteroid No. 18117, now called "Jonhodge," was discovered on July 5 at the Lowell Observatory in Arizona. Jonhodge is located in the main asteroid belt between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter.

Colleagues in the Earth Science Department organized the effort to have an asteroid named after Hodge. They recently presented him with a certificate to honor his

See JONHODGE, page 12



Photo courtesy

Jon Hodge, the retiring director of SMC's planetarium, looks skyward amid a recent presentation.



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HOROSCOPE

Hang out, Capricorn

Santa Monica Daily Press



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS The stars show the kind of day you'll Have:
★★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average ★★-So-so ★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★ A roadblock might cause a change in plans. Your gracious ways need to come out. Understanding will take you far — if you just use it! Smile about what you cannot change. Work on what can be transformed. Tonight: You might want to be invisible.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Though many of you might want to really get into it with a partner, consider this a no-win situation. Focus on the positives and what your long-term objectives are. You are a winner with groups and within meetings. Tonight: Go to a ballgame.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ Take the lead, even if others give you a lot of flak. You do well with individuals, especially a key person. Co-workers respond positively to your ideas, drive and leadership. Be sensitive to a relationship. Tonight: Make a must appearance, though don't be surprised by others and what they do.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★★ You will be asked to go beyond the routine to find answers, and answers you will find. Trust your strength and willingness to find the right solution. Dig up an expert or two. Someone really cares. Tonight: Say that you are tired if you are.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Work with others to achieve more of what you want. Though gregarious and social by nature, you will find that others respond better to your focused, individual attention. Someone you are around cares much more than you realize. Tonight: Make togetherness your theme.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Eventually, you might wonder where matters begin and where they end. Your caring and creativity peak in the next few days. You have a way of charming others. Tonight: Go along with another's plans.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★ All work certainly isn't the Libran ideal of the perfect day. However, you receive such positive feedback that ultimately you feel that your efforts are worth it. Keep communication flowing despite an uptight associate or situation. Tonight: Exercise stress away.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★★ Your imagination walks you through a difficulty. It also might have you winning the lottery. If that is the case, be careful just how wild you get. Risks are fine, but a sure-bet debacle isn't. Tonight: In weekend mode a bit early ... why not?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★ You deal with basics once more. You might express the fact that you are displeased in such a manner as to distance yourself from others. You might have to play kiss-and-make-up with several people as a result. Tonight: Fluff up the pillows with the weekend in mind.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★★ You dance to the tune of others with ease. Right now, throw off obstacles that might be self-created. If you do, you'll love the end results. Once you break through, everything — events and people — fall into place. Tonight: Hang out.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★ You might cause yourself a financial problem when you least expect it. See what happens, but be prepared to make your own decisions and not listen to a friend. Tonight: Laughter marks an interesting sharing.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★★ Your personality melts away someone's resistance. You have a lot more going for you than you realize. Let someone express what he or she feels and thinks. Consider your options with care. Tonight: You decide. Others follow.

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LOCAL

Nolte's drug history allowed as evidence

By The Associated Press

SM COURTHOUSE — A lawsuit by parents of a teenager who says she was raped during a party at Nick Nolte's home can include evidence of previous drug and alcohol use by the actor and his son, a judge has ruled.

Nolte's publicist has said the actor was not home during the party. However, the lawsuit claims he was negligent, contending that the home had "a long history of furnishing drugs and/or alcohol to minors."

The suit states the girl, then 15, was given the date-rape drug GHB and sexually assaulted at a party on Jan. 25, 2003.

Santa Monica Superior Court Judge Gerald Rosenberg on Tuesday said prior behavior is "certainly relevant" to the case. He denied a motion by defense attorneys to limit questioning of witnesses to what happened the night of the party.

A motion by attorneys for Nolte and his son argued that broader questioning was irrelevant to the case and would cause "unwarranted annoyance and embarrassment." Nolte's son, who was a minor at the time of the incident, was not named in the suit.

An after-hours call seeking comment from Nolte's attorney Tuesday night was not immediately returned.

A defendant in the lawsuit, Nicholas Woodring, was convicted last year of having sex with a minor.

Westside woman pleads guilty to human trafficking

By Daily Press staff

A West Los Angeles woman pleaded guilty on Tuesday to a federal human trafficking charge for bringing her niece into the United States and forcing her to work as a prostitute.

Alena Okhotina, a 35-year-old Russian national who entered the United States illegally, pleaded guilty before United States District Judge A. Howard Matz. Okhotina pleaded guilty to one count of trafficking into servitude, an offense that carries a potential penalty of 20 years in federal prison.

According to a plea agreement filed on Tuesday, in January 2003, Okhotina paid for a ticket for her 18-year-old niece to fly from Russia to Los Angeles, authorities said. When the teenager arrived in Los Angeles, she lived with Okhotina at her apartment. Soon after, Okhotina took possession of her niece's passport and told her that she would have to work as a prostitute, authorities said.

Okhotina coerced her niece to work as a prostitute by telling her that she would be arrested if she went to the police because she was here in the United States illegally. Okhotina also told the niece that if she left the apartment, or if Okhotina made her leave the apartment, she would have no place to stay and would be on the street, authorities said.

As a result of the coercion, the teenager engaged in prostitution in California and Las Vegas. Okhotina took the money that her niece received for prostituting herself.

"Human trafficking crimes such as this victimize the vulnerable people in our society," said United States Attorney Debra Wong Yang. "With the formation earlier this year of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area Task Force on Human Trafficking, we are honing our tactics for identifying and rescuing trafficking victims, as well as prosecuting those responsible for human trafficking."

Okhotina also admitted in her plea agreement that she obstructed justice by sending letters and making telephone calls from jail in which she attempted to influence how witnesses would testify at her trial in this case.

"Sex trafficking is one of the vilest forms of exploitation and the fact that someone would inflict this kind of suffering on their own flesh and blood is unconscionable," said Los Angeles ICE special agent-in-charge Loraine Brown. "ICE is working closely with the other members of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area Task Force on Human Trafficking to ensure that those who engage in this reprehensible practice are brought to justice

See TRAFFICKING, page 5

SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS

DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM

BEAR MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	CONDITIONS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	12"-12"	Thin Cover	0	0

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	CONDITIONS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	24"-36"	Packed Powder Machine Groomed Obstacles	61	16

MOUNTAIN HIGH

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	CONDITIONS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	12"-24"	Machine Made Hard Packed	7	4

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	CONDITIONS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	0"-1"	N/A	0	0

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	CONDITIONS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	12"-12"	Powder Packed Machine Made Machine Groomed	4	4

JUNE MOUNTAIN
CLOSED

SNOW VALLEY
CLOSED

CONDITIONS WATER TEMP: 59°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (3-5FT)

Thursday is when our next NW swell is due. As we mentioned in our reports since last week, the mean wave direction in the north Pacific has shifted in our direction, allowing systems in the Western Pacific to travel towards our region and bring us some surf. One such system, which peaked over Hawaii yesterday, will be hitting us on Thursday, bringing in some 280-290 degree WNW swell with 14+ second periods, and size around chest high.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

NW swell hits NCal, Central Coast Wednesday, SoCal Thursday...
Significant NW swell hits during the weekend...
Rain chances in the forecast...

MONDAY				
LOW TIDE:	N/A	1.6FT	1:29PM	0.3FT
HIGH TIDE:	6:33AM	5.7FT	7:35PM	3.8FT
TUESDAY				
LOW TIDE:	12:34AM	1.8FT	2:05	-0.3
HIGH TIDE:	6:59AM	6.1FT	8:21	3.8
WEDNESDAY				
LOW TIDE:	1:02AM	1.4FT	2:31	0.0
HIGH TIDE:	7:28AM	5.4FT	9:15	3.2
THURSDAY				
LOW TIDE:	1:37AM	1.2FT	3:04	-0.1
HIGH TIDE:	8:07AM	4.9FT	9:40	3.0
FRIDAY				
LOW TIDE:	2:06AM	1.1FT	3:41	0.3
HIGH TIDE:	8:41AM	4.3FT	10:09	2.9

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The Q Line

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The City Council has named Lamont Ewell as Santa Monica's new city manager. Since the appointment was announced, some people have expressed concern over an ongoing controversy over finances that surrounded Ewell during his time as city manager of San Diego. Council members say they are confident in their choice and that Ewell, who is not accused of any wrong doing, is not linked to the problems in San Diego.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, **"Do you support the City Council's choice for city manager? Why or why not?"**

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your responses in the weekend edition. Please try to 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



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bush isn't the evil-doer

Editor:

This letter was sparked out of three opinion articles I read, although not all information came from those pieces over the last two weeks. For the longest time George Bush has been accused of being a liar. How is it that Bill Clinton thought Saddam was developing nuclear weapons? And how is it that Bill Clinton signed off the Saddam regime change in Iraq in 1998? And now senators and congressmen are calling George Bush a liar.

Did they have the right to see the same information that both George Bush and Bill Clinton saw? Having now been in a war, not how do we get out but how do we win?

Wasn't it Jimmy Carter who made it illegal to murder a head of state? But now that 25 million people in Iraq have put their lives on the line, do we cut and run? More than 2,000 American soldiers have died. I've seen the photos of the flags and coffins north of the Santa Monica Pier attesting to this. Are we as a nation going to say, "not in my name?" But when Osama was offered up to Bill Clinton, and he refused to take him in, might that have stopped 9/11? Did you see any posters of him with Hitler-type facial hairs on it? Or when on Bill's watch the towers were bombed the first time, or how many embassies were bombed or how many other terrorist attacks? Does the press write how Bill Clinton gutted the intelligence community? How many more people died during his presidency due to his inaction or action. They call him "Teflon Bill," that naught better be "Roll over Bill."

Do we as a people steer our German cars and hold onto our glasses of French wine because we don't want to offend 1 billion of the world's people? During the Second World War, 8,000 G.I.s died on the sand in one day on an island held by the Japanese. Do we read their names on the Ted Koppel show? Do we print their names on the front page of a newspaper? Do we quit an "unwinnable war," because 1 billion people don't like us? Or are we being held hostage like the French and those images of masked men cutting the heads off of American businessmen? What is it going to take to wake up that we are in World War III? Do we know they bombed hotels in Jordan and tourist resort islands? They blew up trains in Madrid, Spain. Bombed a bus and subways in London. Stopped attacks in Australia or killed a filmmaker on the streets of Stockholm? Saddam has 300,000 bodies buried in Iraq, but George Bush not Saddam, is called the evil one. Did anyone tell J. Rockefeller not to go to Syria and tell them George Bush was going to attack? No, but in 2002 Senator J. Rockefeller went to Syria and told them George Bush was going to attack. All Saddam had to do was say, "come on in, look for weapons of mass destruction. I have none." Didn't he have enough time during his interview with Dan Rather to say, "I have none."

Two last things. The Constitution is a living document. You change it by amending it, not by whole cloth invention. There's nothing in the Constitution that gives you a right to privacy. And you know what that issue is and I don't want to state what that is. There is a Ninth Amendment to the Constitution that states, "all which is not written in the Constitution (my contract with the United States) shall be left to the States." And the United States is a Republic, where all men vote to give one man his freedom. Not a democracy where one vote over fifty percent wins. Not a mass rule.

Jonathan Metzger
Santa Monica

OPINIONS EXPRESSED are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned. Preference will be given to those that are e-mailed to editor@smdp.com. All letters must include the author's name and telephone number for purposes of verification. Letters also may be mailed to our offices located at 1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite 202, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

Bush bucking back by virtue of 'Victory' tour

NEWS ON THE EDGE

BY RON SCOTT SMITH



You want to talk about the buck not stopping here?

The buck never even so much as slowed down as it flew by the desk of the President of the United States in a heartbeat, where it was deftly redirected to the end of its line — right there at the feet of … John Murtha?

In a desperate attempt to defend his ill-conceived, ill-begotten war for which he was ill-prepared and for which the American public was ill-informed, George W. Bush has gone sick on the opposition party for agreeing with him based on the cherry-picked, blown up pre-war intelligence package he showed them. They voted to give him the authority to use force in Iraq and the rest is history, history that now includes what may turn out to be the most epic blunder America has ever stumbled into.

Some 2,200 soldiers have been killed in the struggle that appears to be yielding nothing so much as an Iran-style Islamic fundamentalist state that we identified as the source of our problem in the first place. Torture has become as American as apple pie and John McCain is forced to negotiate hard with the White House to get a watered-down measure through Congress that would at least limit its use.

Donald Rumsfeld has grown fond enough of the smell of White Phosphorous in the morning that he OK'd its use in the city of Fallujah in an effort to clean out the insurgency there in order to move forward with freedom and liberation. Fondly nicknamed "Whiskey Pete" in military circles, it's a bomb that, upon impact, spreads a cloud of chemical vapor so potent that it melts the flesh down to the bone of those who contact it. It does not discriminate between women or men or children or dogs. An odd way to liberate.

The Iraqis are grateful to the Americans though, because it does no damage to their clothes, and it is predicted that many well-dressed Fallujans will soon be handing flowers and candy to their liberators.

And now it's been revealed that one of the true hallmarks of liberty — the free press — is turning out to be not so free in the new, free Iraq. The United States government has contracted with a firm called the Lincoln Group to plant the newspapers of Iraq with pro-American stories, either by paying off the Iraqi journalists or by writing the pieces themselves — pieces that remind the citizens of Iraq of good things like just how many cars haven't yet exploded.

Nothing so much as paid advertisements masquerading as news, this is journalism the way Karl Rove likes journalism. In fact, the model for the Iraqi program was created right here in America, with the shameless purchase of the airwaves and column space of Armstrong Williams and others last year.

Rather than step up to the plate to take just a little responsibility for the madness, George W. Bush instead resorts to what he knows best, in fact, the only thing he appears to be competent at — that is, bashing political opponents in campaign-style settings. So he has hit the road on his "Plan for Victory" tour, dancing with the one who brought him to the ball, delivering a series of matinee speeches that drop the buck at the feet of (who else?) John Kerry.

He appears to be using the "I'm-not-the-only-one-who did-a-bad-thing" excuse favored by grade-schoolers. In case he's forgotten, he's the only one who is the President of the United States, the only one who could have, and did, unleash this hideousness. Meanwhile, Dick Cheney drops the buck at Bill Clinton's feet whenever he gets out of the bunker, Rumsfeld drops it on the doorstep of the liberal-biased New York Times for reporting American deaths, Condoleezza Rice on the broad shoulders of Murtha, the hawkish Pennsylvania congressman who has become the new and unlikely voice of the anti-war.

This wily bunch instinctively knows that if you spread the buck around enough, there will be no buck left to stop at the door of the hideout of the gang that couldn't shoot straight.

They apparently can't drive straight either. The official presidential emergency ambulance crashed into the rear of the official presidential communications vehicle in the motorcade coming home to the White House from Camp David on Sunday night, and that's just about how it's been going for these guys lately. The president, having learned his lesson from his botched Katrina response, was ready this time, and took charge at the scene of the accident. He was on the phone to FEMA within hours, and under the new and improved leadership of Michael Chertoff — no horse trainer he — FEMA was on the scene and had the fender bender under control by Tuesday morning.

(Ron Scott Smith can be reached for comment at edgeofthewest@aol.com.)

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STATE

Demand for Rose Bowl tickets are 'out of sight'

BY CHRISTINA ALMEIDA
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — There are about 88,000 tickets "available" for the 2006 Rose Bowl game, but you'd be hard pressed to find one.

The contest between top-ranked University of Southern California and No. 2 Texas is more than just a bowl game — college football's national championship is at stake and the local Trojans are an early 6.5-point favorite.

With half the total tickets designated for the two schools and thousands of others committed to sports conferences, sponsors and media, among others, thousands of fans are competing for a handful of seats available online and from various brokers.

The result? Demand is high, and prices are soaring.

"It's out of sight," said Mitch Dorger, chief executive of the Tournament of Roses, which will hold its 92nd Rose Bowl game in Pasadena on Jan. 4.

On Tuesday, the last public tickets for the game, about 1,000, went on sale through Ticketmaster. They sold out within five minutes.

The ticket crunch can be partly attributed to first-ever, revenue-sharing agreements with two ticket distribution companies.

The Tournament of Roses, which is prevented from selling tickets beyond the $175 face value, has entered into an agreement with PrimeSport, a subsidiary of RazorGator Interactive Group, which will resell the tickets as part of travel packages that start at $1,879 per person.

The packages include two night stays at a hotel, a ticket in an end zone and ground transportation.

RazorGator is also a sponsor of the Rose Bowl. Dorger declined to reveal specifics of the financial agreements.

The Tournament of Roses also allocated 2,500 tickets to The Ticket Reserve, which sold options to the big game. A Longhorn or Trojan who bought early could get away with paying as little as $100 above the regular ticket price.

"We had the tickets available, and it was a way to increase revenues for the game," Dorger said. "It was also an opportunity ... to give people who would not ordinarily have a chance to buy a ticket that opportunity."

It's the first time the Tournament of Roses has entered into these types of agreements, and sports consultant David Carter said it's one of the highest profile events to do so.

"They are certainly the wave of the future," said Carter, executive director of the Sports Business Institute at USC.

Carter, who does consulting for Rose Bowl stadium operations, said the arrangements allow the Tournament of Roses to ensure all the tickets are distributed and share in revenue previously hoarded by scalpers. Carter had no involvement in the revenue-sharing agreements.

But the days of face-value tickets could be over. There have been no box-office sales for the Rose Bowl. By tradition, 500 tickets were set aside for Pasadena residents last weekend.

"I can't recall seeing more jockeying for position for a game ticket than in the last few days," Carter said. "I was just recently reminded of how many friends and colleagues in the state of Texas whom I have lost touch with."

The Rose Bowl is a contractual sellout, with tickets earmarked for all sorts of groups. But the number of tickets could never be enough for a matchup that will produce an undisputed national champion.

Dorger noted that USC has been selling out its home games all season at the Los Angeles Coliseum, to the tune of some 90,000 tickets. For the Rose Bowl, USC received about 22,000 tickets for its donors, alumni, students and others.

"You can do the math," Dorger said. "Supply and demand."

On StubHub.com, tickets in the Texas end zone were selling for $1,050 apiece. Tickets near the 40-yard line were priced at $4,458.

With the "buy it now" feature on one eBay auction, two Rose Bowl tickets could be had for just under two grand.

USC donor Robert Avakian, who graduated from the USC School of Dentistry in 1954, said he's been promised four tickets from the university and couldn't imagine selling them.

"I've had 15 people call me," Avakian said. "They think I'm a ticket agency."

Westside human trafficker forced niece to be a prostitute

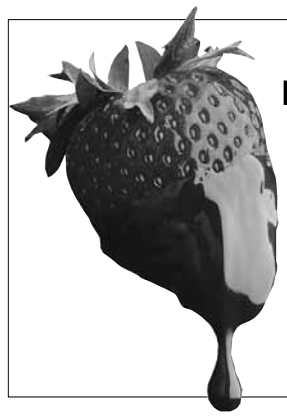
TRAFFICKING, from page 3

and pay the price."

Judge Matz is scheduled to sentence Okhotina on April 12. The government and the defendant have agreed that the sentence should be either 18 or 21 months in prison. The agreement takes into account the fact that Okhotina previously served more than 26 months in state prison after being convicted of pandering in relation to her niece's work as a prostitute.

This case is the result of an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of Inspector General for the United States Department of Labor, and the Los Angeles Police Department. The case was jointly prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office and the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice.

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Consultants came out on top in special election

BY STEVE LAWRENCE
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Tom Ross and Matt Rexroad picked a good time to form a political consulting company.

Their two-year-old Meridian Pacific Inc. was among at least 89 consulting firms — large and small — that came out winners in the Nov. 8 special election called by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Groups supporting or opposing the eight initiatives on the Nov. 8 ballot, all of which were rejected by voters, spent more than $14.1 million on consultants, according to an Associated Press review of campaign finance statements filed with the secretary of state. The spending spree was part of a $230 million-plus campaign blitz that could set a record for ballot-measure spending in a California election when final campaign spending totals are made available at the end of January.

The figures are only through Oct. 22, the cutoff date in the last pre-election spending reports filed by the ballot measures' supporters and opponents.

Veteran political consultant Joe Cerrell called the special election a "full employment act" for people in his profession.

"It's a windfall," he said. "Some people used to struggle between elections. ... Consultants on both sides have to thank Arnold."

Two campaign committees with close ties to Schwarzenegger, the governor's California Recovery Team and Citizens To Save California, paid more than $4.9 million to consultants.

That included at least $194,000 to DC Navigators, whose founders include Mike Murphy, Schwarzenegger's chief campaign strategist. Other consultants receiving money for the special election who are close to Schwarzenegger include Marty Wilson, Schwarzenegger's chief campaign fundraiser, who received $120,000, Richard Costigan, the governor's legislative affairs secretary, who was paid $40,000, and Rob Stutzman, Schwarzenegger's communications director, who was paid $13,932.

Costigan and Stutzman took leaves of absence from Schwarzenegger's administration to work on the campaign.

Ross, a former state Senate aide who formed Meridian Pacific with fellow legislative staff alumnus Rexroad in November 2003, said this year's special election also was a boost to his firm.

It was paid about $202,500 to promote ballot measures backed by Schwarzenegger, particularly Proposition 75, which would have made it tougher for public employee unions to raise campaign funds.

"We kind of have an interesting client mix of political candidates, initiatives or local ballot measures and commercial work" that can include advising developers on how to sell their projects to a community, he said. "If any one of them went away overnight, the firm would still be going on."

More than anything else, the election helped Meridian Pacific gain stature, he said.

Political consulting has been a growing business for decades.

The American Association of Political Consultants had only 45 members when it formed in 1969, said Cerrell, a pioneer in the field who founded Cerrell Associates Inc. in Los Angeles in 1966. Today there are 1,000.

In California, political consultants haven't had to struggle through much down time since 2001, the last year without a statewide election.

Besides this year's special election and the regularly scheduled campaigns of 2002 and 2004, California voters went to the polls in 2003 to recall Gov. Gray Davis and elect Schwarzenegger to replace him.

The major candidates for governor and groups fighting over two measures that also were on the recall ballot paid consultants more than $4.5 million that year.

Consultants are part of an "initiative industrial complex," said Robert Stern, president of the Center for Governmental Studies, a Los Angeles think tank that studies political campaigns and suggests ways to reform them. "It's a growth industry because there's money to be made."

Quite a bit of money. Campaign spending has increased dramatically in California over the last few decades.

Former Gov. Jerry Brown and his Republican opponent, Attorney General Evelle Younger, spent $5.7 million in their general election campaign for governor in 1978. Twenty-four years later, Davis, who was Brown's chief of staff, and Republican Bill Simon spent nearly $65.4 million in their race for governor in 2002.

Spending on other state races and ballot measure campaigns also has skyrocketed.

In 2004, groups fighting over 17 ballot proposals in California spent $253.6 million on their campaigns, the record at least until the final tally is compiled from this year's special election, according to the secretary of state's office.

California, with its heavy use of initiative campaigns that have no contribution limits, is a particularly attractive place for political consulting firms, Stern said.

"Everything pales in comparison in terms of California," he said. "This really is the new gold rush for consultants."

Candidates and ballot measure campaigns — particularly first-time ones — feel compelled to sign up consulting firms because "they turn to the experts, and the experts say, 'Hire us,"' Stern said.

The biggest campaign spender in this year's election was the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, which spent more than $3.7 million on consultants to try to pass Proposition 78 and defeat Proposition 79, the rival prescription drug discount measures on the Nov. 8 ballot.

Ken Johnson, the drug industry group's senior vice president, said the group, known as PhRMA, had to spend "an enormous amount of time educating people on the complicated health policy differences of the two different ballot measures," which both went down to defeat.

"Because of the sheer size of the state and the number of media markets it entails, it is an expensive state to undertake an education campaign through the media," he said in a statement defending the more than $76.5 million spent overall by the group.

McCarthy seeking new place in the sun

CLOCKING OUT, from page 1

"I've tried to set aside things that will be helpful," she said. "I am going to make myself scarce, but he will know where to find me."

McCarthy, who has worked for City Hall for 23 years, knows Santa Monica well. She's held positions in the cultural affairs department, worked her way up to the director of human resources department, served as assistant city manager and then onto City Hall's top job — City Manager.

McCarthy has overseen more than 1,000 employees within City Hall, managed the day-to-day operations of one of the most dynamic and diverse cities in the world, and handled a roughly $350 million annual budget.

Leaving arguably one of the most demanding and powerful positions in local government hasn't really sunk in yet — McCarthy has been too busy to think about it.

"I feel as if I haven't had a lot of time to indulge in feelings at this point," she said from her second floor office at City Hall on Wednesday, adding that today might be different as various employees say their good-byes. "It will take one hug or another to set something off."

If it doesn't happen today within the confines of City Hall, the emotions will most likely run high at a special, invitation-only farewell party planned for this evening. She'll also get to bid farewell to staffers one last time at City Hall's holiday party next week.

Despite that McCarthy has known for several months that she would retire today, it hasn't kept her mind from continually focusing on city business, even during her last few days on the job.

"I was up at 4 a.m. polishing silver last night," she said, adding she has spent a lot of time making lists. "You sometimes have to get up and do something mindless."

And what will she do with all of her spare time? Organize, of course.

"It's both a luxury and a hard decision of what do with your time ... obviously, I have a lengthy list of tasks to do," she said. "I have boxes of photos that need organizing, drawers to clean out, closets to sort out ... a lot of home improvement projects."

She also plans to spend some quality time with her husband, Kevin, and with her aging parents, who live on the East Coast. But because she's been so busy at City Hall, McCarthy hasn't made plans to travel to spend the holidays with family. Instead, she and Kevin will spend a quiet Christmas in Santa Monica.

McCarthy said she'll miss the staff at City Hall, who she described as "remarkably talented." She also will miss the morning conversations with her employees, catching up on their lives and hearing the latest news from them.

But she won't lose any sleep over missing the late-night City Council meetings, which can run well into the morning hours. Although she said she wouldn't be surprised if she tuned into a meeting or two on television, but it will be at her own leisure, through the city's archived webcasts.

To replace the mind stimulation of a daily job and brainstorming meetings with the staff, McCarthy, an avid reader, will continue to read (even the local press), as well as travel and possibly write.

It'll take time adjusting to living in the city, knowing that there are many things beyond her control now that she's retired. McCarthy admitted that the city's graffiti hotline and the wastewater department number are programmed into her cell phone, so when she spots excessive water use from a sprinkler or a recent tag on a city building, she's quickly on the horn to get the matter resolved.

McCarthy wonders if now, as an average citizen, she'll still be on the fast track for a response.

"My phone call might not get called back right away," she joked.

All kidding aside, McCarthy is confident that City Hall's customer service will remain at a high level — it was one of her top priorities and one of the aspects of her job that she's most proud of.

She's also proud that she, the staff and the City Council were fiscally responsible when Santa Monica enjoyed a strong economy in the 1990s. That revenue was invested and channeled into large capital improvement projects like the overhauling of Virginia Avenue Park, which opened last month, and the Main Library, scheduled to open in January.

Both projects are tremendous assets to the community, she said, adding that people are going to love spending time in the new library.

McCarthy believes that strategically acquiring property, particularly contiguous parcels, is important in keeping up with community needs, like the recent purchase of the old Fisher Lumber site, directly behind Memorial Park, at the corner of Olympic Boulevard and 14th Street.

There will be no shortage of work for Ewell, who was most recently the City Manager in San Diego, which is bankrupt due to a city employee pension debacle that occurred before his tenure. But at least he'll come into a city government that is financially well off and adequately staffed, which hasn't always been the case in Santa Monica — especially after the terrorist attacks in 2001.

"I'm really glad the new city manager is coming in to a resource situation that is not strained," McCarthy said. "It makes the work easier."

How to tackle the homeless problem here, as well as addressing downtown parking and traffic throughout the city will continue to plague elected officials and staff. Not that McCarthy hasn't been deeply rooted in many of those issues — plans to address them already are in place or are in the works, including overhauling the city's general plan which will guide how Santa Monica is developed for the next 20 years.

"We've got some pretty significant challenges on residents' minds," McCarthy said. "I wish I could have done more ... I think it's a great time for someone new to come in and help make Santa Monica a great place."







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Charitable gifts can benefit the giver, too



MIND YOUR BUSINESS

BY KIRK G. AGUER

With the holiday season just around the corner, now might be a good time to begin thinking about a year-end gifting strategy. Show your appreciation to those you love and to charities you admire while receiving tax savings and other benefits.

How do you develop a successful year-end gifting strategy? Here are a few suggestions:

■ Establish a clear goal for your gift-giving.

■ Compare the tax savings from different gifting options.

To help you start thinking about developing a strategy, we've provided some basic information about both individual and philanthropic gift-giving.

GIVING TO INDIVIDUALS

For 2005, under the annual gift tax exclusion you can gift up to $11,000 each to as many individuals as you choose. Gifts over this amount require filing a gift tax return and may incur a gift tax liability. If you are married and you and your spouse elect to split gifts, you can give each person up to $22,000 per year tax-free. Even though these gifts are not tax deductible for income tax purposes, neither you nor the recipient will have to pay income or gift tax when the gift is made. In addition, the gifted assets and all subsequent appreciation on the gifted assets are removed from your estate, thus potentially reducing future estate tax liabilities. Outright gifts are simplest, but you may also want to consider gifts in trust, gifts to 529 college savings plan and gifts to UGMA/UTMA custodial accounts.

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Most charitable gifts also provide you with a current year income tax deduction. There are several types of charitable beneficiaries, including public charities, pooled income funds, private foundations and donor-advised funds.

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■ Defer capital gains taxes. Typically, a charitable remainder trust is funded with highly appreciated assets such as stocks. Because of the tax-exempt status of the trust, the highly appreciated assets can be sold free of immediate capital gains taxes. Instead, the capital gains are carried out to the trust beneficiary as part of the regular distributions from the trust, and therefore are spread out over the whole term of the trust rather than being payable all up-front.

■ Increase diversification and cash flow. The resulting sale proceeds from the sale of a concentrated, highly appreciated portfolio can be reinvested in more diversified assets. You and possibly other family members will receive regular distributions from the trust for life or a term of up to 20 years.

■ Receive a current-year federal income tax deduction. The deductible amount is the net fair market value of the property placed in the trust minus the present value of the payments to be made to you and/or your beneficiary. The deduction, which is available only if your trust meets all IRS requirements, is calculated using mandatory Internal Revenue Code formulas, interest rate assumptions and life expectancy tables (or the term of the trust if it is a fixed number of years).

■ Reduce future estate tax liabilities. Assets transferred to a charitable remainder trust are not included as a part of your taxable estate. This could reduce future estate tax liabilities faced by your heirs.

Remember, a charitable remainder trust is irrevocable. Assets in the trust eventually pass to charity, not to your family. You should work with your tax and legal advisors so that a charitable remainder trust, or any other year-end gifting strategy, fits into your overall estate plan. If it does, you could potentially enjoy significant tax and economic benefits as well as leaving a lasting legacy to your favorite charity.

(Kirk Aguer is a financial advisor at Morgan Stanley. To reach him, call his Santa Monica office at (310) 319-5220 or e-mail kirk.aguer@morganstanley.com. Morgan Stanley DW Inc, member SIPC.)

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Printing digital photos easier, cheaper than ever

BY MAY WONG
AP Technology Writer

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Point. Shoot. Print. Getting a hard copy of your memories has never been easier.

Picture this: More than two-thirds of the estimated 17 billion prints from digital cameras made this year were created from the comfort of snap-happy American homes.

Another 27 percent came from the photofinishing services of retailers, where people either use the self-serve computer terminals at the counter or place their orders online for pickup later at the store.

The remainder, according to market researcher IDC, were delivered straight to consumers via online services that nowadays charge as low as a dime a print, not counting shipping costs.

In fact, while prices vary, market researchers say the retail route is generally cheaper than do-it-yourself inkjet printing.

Beyond these main options for getting pictures made are countless variations.

In Pennsylvania, proud parents can order pictures of their newborns from a photo kiosk before they leave the hospital. In Maine, customers can go to Cafe Click, one of the growing number of digital printing lounges that offer gourmet coffee and a kids play area.

With so many printing choices today — not to mention price cuts and promotions — shutterbugs often find choosing how to get a print in hand is the hardest part.

The method of printing will usually depend on how quickly you want to see the results, how many you want, how far you're willing to travel to get them, and how much you want to pay.

But this much is clear: "You have a lot more flexibility now than what you used to have with film where you always had to just drop it off," said Chris Chute, digital imaging analyst at IDC.

What's less obvious is what each of these options really costs.

The average price of printing a 4-by-6 at home is 27 cents, if you include the costs of photo paper and ink but not the printer, according to IDC. Special value bundles, such as the purchase of an ink cartridge and 100 sheets of photo paper, could bring the price down as low as 22 cents per print.

By comparison, the retail segment, which includes stores like Walgreen Co. or Costco Wholesale Corp., has an average price of 21 cents a print, said IDC.

For online photo services like Kodakgallery.com, Shutterfly.com or Hewlett-Packard Co.'s Snapfish.com, the average price is 30 cents, including shipping.

Yet cost isn't always the deciding factor.

Alexander Dyer of Bethlehem, Pa., likes the relaxing atmosphere, friendly service, free coffee and easy-to-use software at the DigiPrint Lounge inside Dan's Camera City store in nearby Allentown.

The 73-year-old retired executive goes there almost weekly, paying 29 cents apiece for standard-sized photos of his grandchildren, latest vacation, or beloved pet.

In fact, every worker there knows his West Highland terrier's name, Quincy.

Dyer spent part of Wednesday morning at the lounge ordering prints of his Thanksgiving family weekend and choosing a photo Christmas card starring Quincy.

Dyer has a computer at home but never bothered to try printing there, even though it's been three years since he got his first digital camera.

"Going to Dan's is just easier for me," he said. "And I find it's cheaper and faster to go to a place like that."

Still, printing at home has a key advantage: get prints anytime you want as long as you're willing to wait roughly 30 seconds to a minute for each print.

Inkjet printers that can produce decent photos can be found for as little as $99 nowadays, said Ed Lee, digital photography analyst at InfoTrends/CAP Ventures.

Common models that have more features sell for between $149 and $199.

Most newer printers will produce image quality comparable to what you would find at most retailers. And if you're willing to spend more on high-end archival photo paper, your prints from home might even technically outperform the ones from retailers, Lee said.

But if you're looking to do a lot of prints, say, more than a dozen, then sitting at home — waiting for the printing to complete, sometimes having to feed the paper by hand each time — isn't ideal.

Retailers can do big jobs quickly, and will do it in under an hour if you pay a bit more.

Many of them now let patrons upload their photos first from home for in-store pickup later, catering to those who would rather not deal with the risk of waiting in line at the photo counter.

If you're not in a rush and are willing to wait a few days for the prints, then online services could be the most convenient since they'll send your photos to your mailbox, or a friend's.

Keep in mind, however, that uploading a photo order to a Web site also takes some time — roughly a minute per picture if you have a broadband connection, or as long as 4 minutes per picture if you have a dial-up connection.

A decision might also depend on the medium of the prints.

Retailers and online photo services are making it easier than ever to create photo greeting cards from templates and are offering an ever-expanding list of photo-related gifts, from photo books and calendars to dog leashes, posters and mouse pads.

InfoTrends predicts retail photo printing will surpass home printing by 2010, as retail options continue to expand and prices drop even lower.

Companies like Lucidiom Inc., which makes the "APMs" or Automated Photo Machines found at Dan's Camera City and 14,000 other locations, are also tweaking the technology to make editing and printing photos as painless as possible.

Lucidiom's APMs, which can either print photos on the spot or serve as an ordering site for photo labs, are being installed not only at retail stores but also at hospitals and schools, said the company's chief executive, Steve Giordano Sr.

"Instead of you looking for the photo retailer, we're making it convenient just like an ATM now," he said.



SANTA MONICA BUSINESS BRIEFS

'Phishing' for tax refund information is bogus

By Daily Press staff

The Internal Revenue Service has issued a consumer alert about an Internet scam in which consumers receive an e-mail informing them of a tax refund.

The e-mail, which claims to be from the IRS, directs the consumer to a link that requests personal information, such as a Social Security number and credit card information.

The scheme is an attempt to trick the e-mail recipients into disclosing their personal and financial data. The practice is called "phishing" for information, IRS officials said.

The information fraudulently obtained is then used to steal the taxpayer's identity and financial assets. Generally, identity thieves use someone's personal data to steal his or her financial accounts, run up charges on the victim's existing credit cards, apply for new loans, credit cards, services or benefits in the victim's name and even file fraudulent tax returns.

The bogus e-mail, which claims to come from "tax refunds@irs.gov," tells the recipient that he or she is eligible to receive a tax refund for a given amount. It then says that to access a form for the tax refund the recipient must use a link contained in the e-mail. The link then asks for the personal and financial information.

The IRS does not ask for personal identifying or financial information via unsolicited e-mail, officials said. Additionally, taxpayers do not have to complete a special form to obtain a refund.

If you receive an unsolicited e-mail purporting to be from the IRS, take the following steps:

Do not open any attachments to the e-mail, in case they contain malicious code that will infect your computer. Contact the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 to determine whether the IRS is trying to contact you about a tax refund.

The IRS has seen numerous attempts over the years to defraud the public and the federal government through a variety of schemes, including abusive tax avoidance transactions, identity theft, claims for slavery reparations, frivolous arguments and more, officials said. More information on these types of schemes may be found on the criminal enforcement page at IRS.gov.

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Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

(Clockwise, from top left) The Santa Monica Marching Band plays at the re-opening of Virginia Avenue Park on Sunday; City Councilman Kevin McKeown gets the festivities started by cutting the ribbon; children help paint a mural at the park's 'Teen Graffiti Workshop'; Cousins Luis Romo and Ramon Romo spar during a Police Activities League fitness demonstration at the grand opening.

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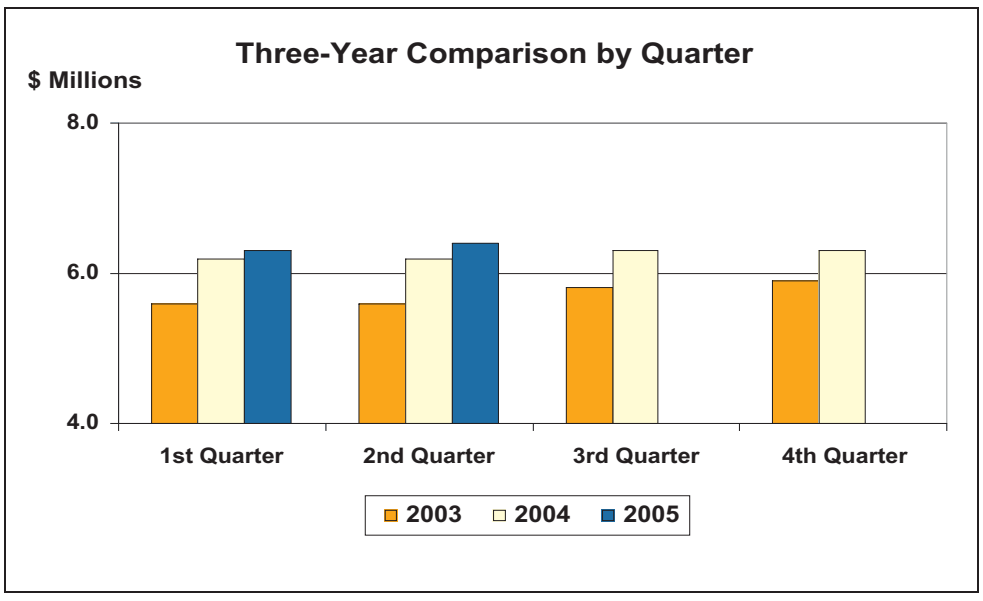
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Source: City of Santa Monica

Apparel, electronics a boon to retail sales

SALES TAX, from page 1

from 2004. Most major business groups in Santa Monica showed small to moderate increases when compared to the same period last year.

"Overall, sales tax revenues are growing at a moderate rate as the local economy continues its slow steady recovery mirroring the national and state economies," said Steve Stark, City Hall's director of finance. "There are continuing concerns regarding the national, state and local economies, including higher energy prices, the threat of higher inflation and higher interest rates, which could have impacts on the local economy and taxable sales in the future.

"We will continue to monitor the sales tax receipts throughout the fiscal year."

General Consumer Retail — the city's largest tax-generating business group — was essentially even with last year's totals. Sales tax revenue increases from apparel stores and electronic/appliance stores — such as the new Apple computer store on the Third Street Promenade — were offset by decreases from specialty stores, primarily due to a one-time adjustment the prior year.

Other sales tax revenue increases include: Restaurants and hotels by 3.9 percent; business and industry groups by 18.3 percent, primarily due to one-time adjustments; food and drugs by 7 percent; and construction by 4.8 percent.

Autos and transportation — the city's second largest tax-generating group — decreased by 12.8 percent due to a late distribution related to auto dealers. Actual receipts were effected by state delays in distributing payments from certain auto dealers. The impact of this is estimated to be approximately $240,000. Taking into account the late payment, the group was essentially flat with the same quarter last year.

Results from different geographic areas were mixed when compared to the same period last year. The Third Street Promenade experienced a 12.8 increase in sales tax revenue, primarily due to increases from apparel stores and specialty stores. The Ocean Avenue/hotel area increased by 19.3 percent, primarily due to higher restaurant sales.

Other areas showing increases were Colorado Avenue, at 10.6 percent, primarily due to a one-time payment related to prior activity; Broadway, 6.6 percent; Santa Monica Place, 2.7 percent; and the Airport area at 2.9 percent.

Santa Monica Boulevard was down 15.6 percent, but flat after adjusting for the delayed distribution by the state.

The next largest revenue-producing area — Wilshire Boulevard — was down 4.7 percent.

Ocean Park decreased 49 percent due to a one-time payment in the prior year.

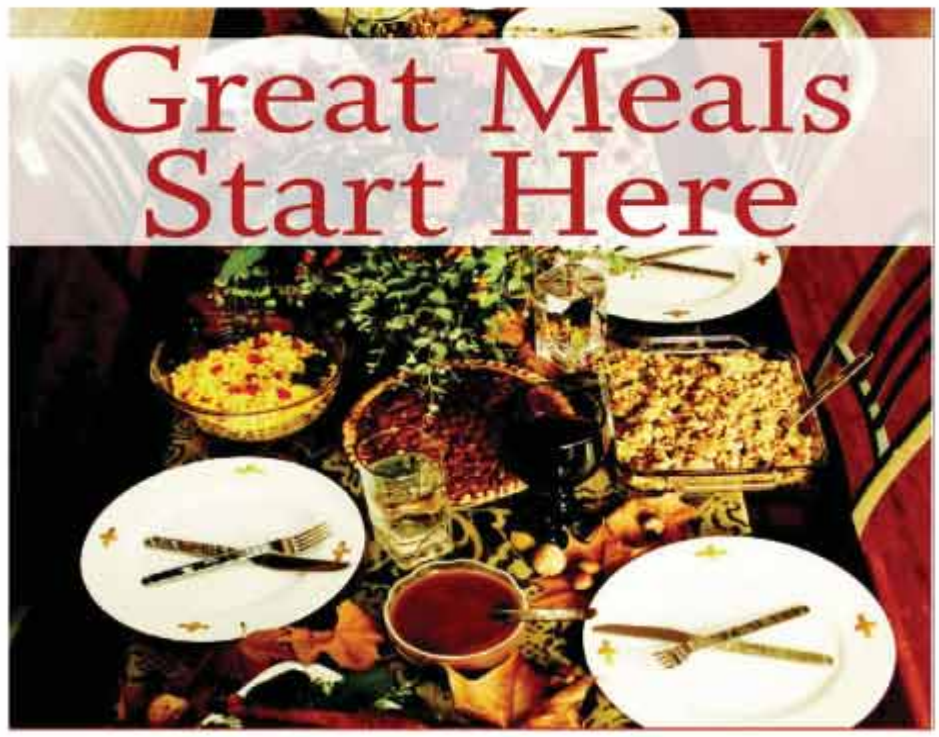
The Bayside District was down 7.3 percent, primarily due to business closures.

Other areas showing a decrease were Pico Blvd., Olympic Boulevard, Main Street, Lincoln Boulevard and Montana Avenue.

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LOCAL

Halley's Comet left behind fond memories for Hodge

JONHODGE, from page 1

educational efforts.

"I can't think of a more worthy individual to receive this eternal honor," said Vicki Drake, chair of the SMC Earth Science Department, which includes astronomy.

Officially, Hodge is being recognized for his "enormous contribution to the dissemination of astronomical and scientific knowledge to the general public, college students and schoolchildren," according to his colleagues.

For years, his shows have captivated audiences at SMC, UCLA and the Griffith Observatory.

SMC astronomy professor Simon Balm, knowing that Hodge was approaching retirement, decided he'd initiate the effort to name an asteroid in Hodge's honor.

Balm said the International Astronomical Union (IAU) is the organization responsible for ratifying asteroid names. Asteroids are typically named after those who have made contributions to science, but many bear the monikers of other famous people, such as the Beatles and Monty Python, Balm said.

Balm contacted Donald Yeomens — one of the world's foremost asteroid astronomers, who works at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena — to let him know SMC faculty wanted an asteroid named after Hodge.

Yeomens contacted an astronomer in Flagstaff, Ariz., who identified an asteroid he discovered that had yet been named and agreed to name it for Hodge.

The paperwork was submitted to an IAU office at Harvard University, in Boston, Mass., where it's been approved.

"I was completely bowled over," Hodge said, when he was presented the news. "I was, for once, speechless."

Colleagues said it's difficult to imagine Hodge speechless because his whole life has been devoted to talking. Over the years, he has talked to audiences about several universal subjects. His shows included catchy titles such as "Apocalypse Now: The Asteroid Risk," "How Big is Space?" and "This Alien Earth."

Hodge's public planetarium shows have been held on Friday nights and feature the "Night Sky" and other shows that change monthly. Hodge has also put on shows and lectured to thousands of SMC students and schoolchildren, tailoring his material to his audience, colleagues said.

"Jon's very charismatic and knowledgeable about the history of astronomy," said Gary Fouts, an SMC astronomy professor. "He could always direct us to what we needed."

Fouts said Hodge has 900 people on his e-mail list, those he's invited to upcoming shows.

After graduating from USC with a degree in medieval science, Hodge worked at the Griffith Observatory, starting in 1971. First, he was a guide, and later a lecturer. He took over as SMC's planetarium director in 1979 and continued to lecture at Griffith until it closed three years ago for renovations.

Hodge served on Griffith's curatorial committee, which has dealt with the design of new exhibits that will be on public display when the observatory reopens in 2006. He has also worked with UCLA, organizing popular public seminars.

Hodge has established himself in Southern California's active astronomical scene, bringing in guest lecturers to SMC from such organizations as Griffith, Cal Tech, UCLA and the Jet Propulsion Lab.

"I can't think of a more worthy individual to receive this eternal honor"

VICKI DRAKE
Chair, SMC Earth Science Department

He is also a member of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific and the International Planetarium Society.

"He knows everybody and everybody knows him," said John Mosley, program supervisor at Griffith, who has worked with Hodge for 28 years.

The planetarium was closed for nearly five years in the early and mid-1990s due to a reconstruction project. Then, shortly before the planetarium was to reopen, it was damaged and remained closed because of the 1994 Northridge earthquake. With a gift from the late John Drescher, the planetarium reopened in June 1997. It had new seats, a dome, projection system and other high-tech features.

Although the planetarium was closed for nearly five years, Hodge's illustrated lectures continued in an SMC classroom with no dip in attendance, colleagues said.

Hodge, proud of the new John Drescher Planetarium at SMC, also recalled other highlights of his career. Among them were the close approach of Halley's Comet to Earth in 1985 and 1986, the impact of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 on Jupiter in the early 1990s, and the Earth's close approach to Mars in August 2003.

"Halley's Comet brought out a huge number of people," Hodge said. "There were nights we'd have 300 people standing in line for SMC's rooftop telescope."



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STATE ❑ NATIONAL

Study: Living by a church helps keep drivers safe

BY MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP Business Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — The tranquility of a church apparently extends to the roads around it.

But anyone who lives near a restaurant might want to say a prayer before pulling out of the driveway, according to the findings of an unusual insurance industry study.

The report released Tuesday by Quality Planning Corp., a risk assessment firm owned by the influential Insurance Services Office, analyzed 15 million auto insurance policies and 2 million claims to map out traffic accidents severe enough to cause property damage.

The bottom line: Drivers living within a mile of a church are the safest — they're 10 percent less likely to crash than their fellow drivers, according to Quality Planning Corp., or QPC.

Alternately, drivers residing within a mile of a restaurant are 30 percent more likely to be in an accident, QPC said.

The San Francisco-based firm, formed 20 years ago, tallied the accident rates of motorists with homes near a wide variety of businesses and local landmarks.

Some of the report's findings weren't surprising. For instance, drivers who live near forests — typically remote areas with less traffic — are relatively safe (just 4 percent more likely to have an accident).

"By and large, your risks go way up when you are living closer to busy gathering points," said Daniel Finnegan, QPC's chief executive.

But some of QPC's other conclusions seemed counterintuitive. For example, motorists living near elementary schools wind up in more accidents than those living near a liquor store — 26 percent more likely versus 18 percent.

"There are usually a lot of people coming and going at schools and sometimes there are a lot of distractions, too," Finnegan said. "As the father of a rambunctious child, I can tell you that's (the equivalent) of two drinks."

Finnegan predicted insurers will draw upon the reports findings to recalculate their prices, producing in rate decreases for some drivers and boosting the premiums of motorists living in high-risk neighborhoods.

But the leader of a consumer watchdog group fighting for reforms to prevent home addresses from affecting auto insurance prices ridiculed the study.

"What's next? A study showing people on low-carb diets cause less accidents than pasta eaters?" asked Doug Heller, executive director of the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights.

Finnegan said several insurers already have contacted QPC about the report, but declined to identify them.

QPC's past reports have been bought by several major auto insurers, including Farmers Insurance Co., USAA Insurance, and regional affiliates of the American Automobile Association.

ZIP codes have affected auto insurance prices for decades. The insurance industry believes the practice more accurately reflects its loss risks, citing historical data that indicate drivers living in densely populated or crime-ridden area tend to file more expensive claims than motorists living in suburban areas with less theft and violence.

The reliance on ZIP codes means motorists with similar driving records and cars may pay vastly different prices for the same amount of coverage, depending on where they live.

Critics like Heller view the territorial influence on auto insurance prices as a thinly disguised excuse to discriminate against drivers living in minority and low-income neighborhoods.

A package of auto insurance reforms approved by California voters 17 years ago dictated that the industry's prices in the state be based primarily on driving records. But after years of staunch resistance, insurers won regulatory approval of a California pricing formula that continues to rely heavily on policyholder ZIP codes.

The QPC study concluded ZIP codes are too broad to serve as an accurate pricing gauge.

Heller agreed with that point, but described the rest of QPC's thesis as absurd.

"What happens to the likelihood of getting in an accident if you live near a church that serves Saturday morning pancake breakfasts?"

U.S.-Mexican border set to welcome 1,700 additional Border Patrol agents

BY ARTHUR H. ROTSTEIN
Associated Press Writer

TUCSON, Ariz. — The U.S. Border Patrol will add 1,700 new agents along the Mexican border this fiscal year, with Arizona getting more than 640 of them, the agency said. California will receive 352 new agents, Texas 452 and New Mexico 253.

"The personnel are absolutely key to our continued progress in gaining control of the border," said Border Patrol Chief David Aguilar. "In addition to this, of course, we will continue to build the infrastructure and continue to add technology."

Aguilar said Tuesday the number of agents in the Tucson sector will increase to 2,779 from 2,339 by the end of the fiscal year ending Sept. 30. The Yuma sector's total agents will rise to 757, up from 554.

For several years, the Tucson sector — one of the two in Arizona — has been the nation's busiest in the number of illegal immigrants crossing the border.

Aguilar said the 1,700 new agents will boost the agency's total from 11,268 as of two months ago to almost 13,000, some of whom will still be in training.

In addition, the Tucson sector will receive $35 million for added infrastructure, including vehicle barriers in the Ajo and Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation areas; improving roadways there and around Naco and Douglas; added stadium-type lighting on either side of Naco and Douglas, and additional heavy steel fencing in the Douglas and Naco areas.

Another $35 million has been allocated for work on completing another five miles of a 14-mile San Diego border fence — the bulk of the remaining project, though more still will be needed, Aguilar said.

The money for the new hirings comes from allocations in the fiscal 2006 appropriations bill for the Department of Homeland Security and from the fiscal 2005 Iraq war supplemental appropriations bill, Aguilar said in a teleconference and Sen. Jon Kyl's office announced in a news release.

Aguilar declined to say how many more agents he believes will be needed to secure control of the border, a goal that has eluded federal authorities despite a continual buildup that has nearly quadrupled the Border Patrol's agents over the last decade.



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NATIONAL

MiPiramide scheme warns Hispanics

BY JESSICA GRESKO
Associated Press Writer

MIAMI — Alarmed by the high rate of obesity among Hispanics, the U.S. Department of Agriculture on Wednesday released its first Spanish translation of the food pyramid, the government's handy guide to good nutrition.

"MiPiramide: Pasos Hacia Una Mejor Salud" is the counterpart to the USDA's "MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You." Among other things, "grains" have become "granos," and "meat and beans" are "carnes y frijoles" on the diagram of the major food groups.

The nation's Hispanic population is booming, and almost three out of every four adult Hispanics in the U.S. are overweight, according to a 2002 report in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Two out of three U.S. adults overall are overweight.

"Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the United States, especially in children and adolescents. Those statistics are even more alarming among Latin populations," Roberto Salazar, administrator for the USDA's food and nutrition service, said in Spanish at a news conference.

The government unveiled "MyPyramid" in April, overhauling the food pyramid first introduced in 1992.

The 1992 pyramid had food groups arranged in horizontal layers, with the foods that should be eaten more frequently along the bottom. The newer pyramid has categories of foods represented vertically in a rainbow of colors, and a running figure scaling the pyramid to represent the importance of exercise.

Now, all the new graphics and the USDA's site http://www.mypyramid.gov are available in Spanish, and handouts and other materials have also been translated.

In September, officials launched a version of the pyramid targeted at children, and the materials have also been translated into Braille. The government has no plans to translate the information into any other languages, Salazar said.

The announcement was made in Miami because of its large Hispanic population and its many Hispanic media organizations.

Scientists bark up right tree to solve dogs' DNA

BY MALCOLM RITTER
AP Science Writer

From the smallest Chihuahua to the biggest Great Dane, all dogs emerge from the same basic set of genes. Scientists announced Wednesday that they'd deciphered this doggie DNA and begun detailed comparisons between breeds and with humans.

The work should help researchers find genes that make dogs and people vulnerable to such illnesses as cancers, heart disease, cataracts, epilepsy, blindness and deafness. And it has already hinted that people may have fewer genes than scientists thought.

The work used the DNA of a female boxer named Tasha, said Eric Lander, director of the Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT and senior author of the analysis in Thursday's issue of the journal Nature. The DNA project was led by Kerstin Lindblad-Toh of the institute.

Tasha was chosen from more than 100 candidate dogs because her DNA looked especially amenable to the task of identifying its 2.4 billion chemical building blocks. But it turned out that any other dog would have worked just as well, Lander said.

The results are more complete than those announced in 2003 for the DNA of a male poodle named Shadow.

Scientists have also deciphered the DNA of mice, rats, chimps, chickens and of course humans, as well as many other organisms.

At the DNA level, two randomly chosen dogs differ by only about as much as two randomly chosen people do, yet the variation in appearance, size and behavior in dogs is "just mind-boggling," Lander said.

"How is it within one narrow gene pool you can produce Chihuahuas and Great Danes?" he asked.

Much of the answer involves differences in turning gene activity on and off, he said, and further study could help scientists understand what produces big differences in body plans between species.

The new work also identified signposts along the canine DNA that will help in finding genes that predispose dogs to certain diseases, some of which they share with humans. The dog genes should point the way to their human counterparts, Lander said.

In fact, it may be vastly easier to find disease genes in dogs than in people. Intensive breeding has left its mark in the dog genome so that finding DNA regions that contain disease genes "is like hitting the side of a barn," Lander said.

Such genetic research should benefit dogs and their owners, said William Truesdale, a board member of the American Kennel Club's Canine Health Foundation, which had put $2 million into the dog DNA project.

"We're trying to erase these genetic frailties" by screening dogs for disease genes prior to breeding, he said.

That effort is now in its infancy, but as more of those genes are uncovered they can be eliminated by breeding dogs that don't carry them, he said. And puppies can be tested to assure their owners that they won't get the associated diseases later, "like a Good Housekeeping seal," Truesdale said.

Dog DNA is already teaching several lessons about human DNA. For one thing, comparisons between DNA of dogs, humans and mice revealed elaborate controls on the activity of certain human genes active in early development, Lander said.

The three-way comparisons also showed that some genetic features found in humans but not mice aren't really unique to people, but also appear in dogs, he said. "The more species we look at, the more, frankly, we find that humans are not exceptional here," Lander said.

Researchers also estimated that dogs have 19,300 genes, almost all of them canine versions of genes found in people. Prior studies have indicated that people have about 3,000 more, but Lander said the dog analysis "is leading us to question whether those are in fact real human genes." Some proposed human genes, he said, are now "suspect" and may not be genes at all.

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INTERNATIONAL

Bush cites improved Iraqi economy to answer critics

BY DEB RIECHMANN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Defending his strategy in Iraq, President Bush said Wednesday that reconstruction has been "uneven" but spreading economic progress is giving people hope for a democratic future.

In particular, Bush cited Najaf, 90 miles south of Baghdad, and Mosul in northern Iraq — once the sites of some of the bloodiest battles of the war — as two cities where headway is being made, giving Iraqis more of a stake in their country's future.

"In places like Mosul and Najaf, residents are seeing tangible progress in their lives," Bush said. "They're gaining a personal stake in a peaceful future and their confidence in Iraq's democracy is growing. The progress in these cities is being replicated across much of Iraq. And more of Iraq's people are seeing the real benefits that a democratic society can bring."

Bush's speech was the second in a series of four to answer criticism and questions about the continuing U.S. presence in Iraq more two and a half years after the war started.

Bush is shouldering the lowest job approval rating of his presidency, and the latest series of speeches amount to a public relations campaign to respond to political pressure that has mounted as U.S. deaths have eclipsed 2,100. He and other administration officials are working to shore up slumping public support for the war in the run-up to the Dec. 15 vote in Iraq to create a democratically elected government that will run the country for the next four years.

While Bush talked about reconstruction projects and the reopening of schools, markets and hospitals, the upgrading of roads and the growth of construction jobs in the two cities, he also acknowledged that both cities still face challenges.

"Iraqis are beginning to see that a free life will be a better life," Bush said.

British Columbia officials denounce polygamous sect

By The Associated Press

VICTORIA, British Columbia — A polygamous group in southeastern British Columbia is offensive and abhorrent to Canadians, but the main concern is whether it is responsible for sex crimes, provincial Attorney General Wally Oppal says.

Oppal, a former judge who was elected in May, said Tuesday he has stacks of letters from people from across Canada about the town of Bountiful, where reports of sexual abuse of women and children have surfaced but have never resulted in a conviction.

"I got letters from one whole block in North Vancouver. Everybody in the block wrote to me," he said.

Oppal meets Thursday with Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff in Vancouver to discuss polygamy and options for pursuing the investigation, adding that prosecution likely will require the willingness of some members of the Bountiful community to testify.

"It's something that incenses a lot of Canadians," Oppal said. "The ideas that we are condoning this type of activity is something that's a matter of concern to Canadians. I'm concerned about it as well."

In 1947, four families from the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, based in Hildale, Utah, and nearby Colorado City, Ariz., founded Bountiful near Creston in southwestern British Columbia, just north of the Idaho Panhandle. The town has grown to about 1,000 residents.

According to the sect, which broke from the mainstream Mormon church after it renounced polygamy, plural marriage is essential for its members to be glorified in heaven.

A sex crimes investigation is being conducted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Oppal said.

"We need people who will come in and testify that there is evidence of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, sexual assaults," Oppal said. "Those are the matters of greater concern to me than the polygamy case and the polygamy issue."

Utah has taken civil action to seize property and file charges of welfare fraud against polygamists, but nobody in Bountiful collects welfare, he said.

"He (Shurtleff) wants to apprise me of certain things," said Oppal. "They've done things down there that may be helpful to us."

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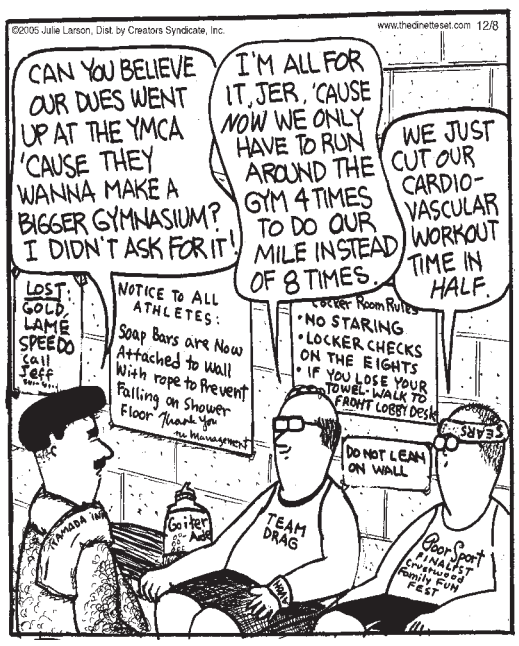


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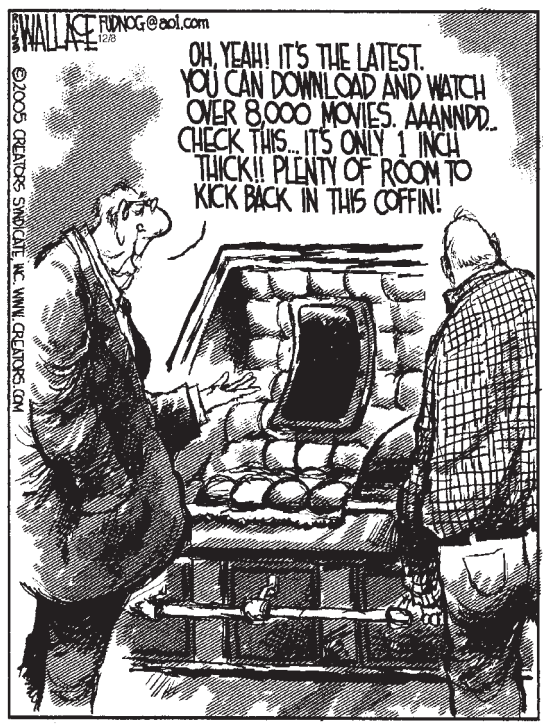
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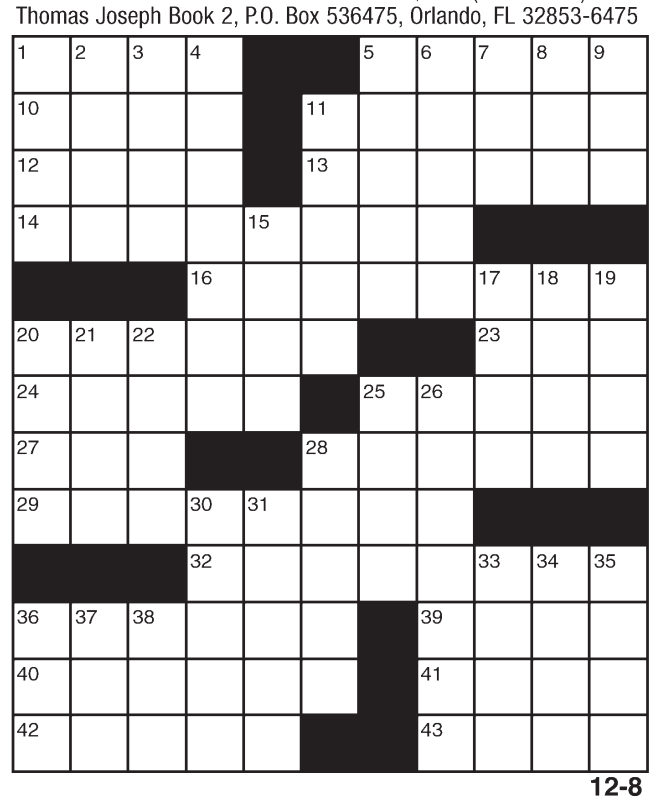
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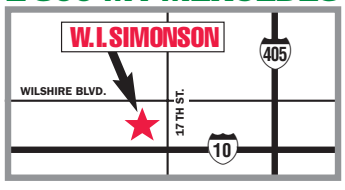
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