

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

'Buyer beware' in local grocery stores

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Santa Monica grocery shoppers should check the fine print on anything advertised as "on sale," officials say.

The warning comes in the wake of city findings that a Santa Monica outlet could be systematically overcharging its customers. Pavilions on Montana Avenue, which is owned by Vons Companies, Inc., is said by the city attorney's office to have charged customers more at the check-out line for products than what was advertised on price tags.

Six of 20 items spot-checked last year were incorrectly scanned and resulted in overcharges, according to criminal charges filed after an Oct. 31, 2001 investigation by the Los Angeles County Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures.

The overcharges apparently happened because Pavilions didn't remove price tags of "on sale" items when sale prices expired. A customer who subsequently bought the item would be charged more than he expected because the "sale price" shown wasn't good any more.

An investigator chose some items that were advertised as on sale, but where the offer had expired between one and three days earlier, said Deputy City Attorney Eda U. Suh.

Vons attorney Fred DiBernardo said it's not the grocery store's fault when customers don't read the tag to determine if the sale has ended. Store employees remove the tags as quickly as they can so as not to confuse customers, but not all of them are removed the day the offer expires, DiBernardo said.

Expiration dates are often listed in very small print on the tags.

"Between 8,000 and 9,000 items go on sale every week in Vons for club card members," DiBernardo said. "Sometimes they don't get removed right away. The tag may still be up even though the sale price has expired."

It's up to the customer to make sure she knows what she's buying, he added.

"It's no different than a coupon you pull out of a newspaper," he said. "Consumers are astute, they know what they are buying. But the city attorney and some others think the consumer is stupid."

Suh, the city's lawyer in the case, argues that advertising any item as on sale when it isn't is misleading. The store shouldn't put the burden on customers to check every price — especially when it is wrong, she said.

"You end up overcharging consumers because you don't want to pay their

See VONS, page 6

Consumer watch

Cashing in for Christmas



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

Santa Monica Elks Dan Checcoe, Sue Hansson, Ken Lady, and Doug Elders count change they raised in the Red Kettle Drive competition. Local social service groups collected change from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday to see which group can raise the most money. Though not all the money had been collected by press time, the event typically raises more than \$10,000 for the Red Cross.

Santa Monica Ford's family legacy no longer

Prominent local family ends ties to dealership

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Santa Monica Ford has been owned and operated by one family for more than five decades.

But because it's too difficult to do business here, the Harding family has handed over keys to someone else, they say.

Last month the Hardings and part-owner Bob Carlan sold off their stake in the dealership to Carlan's son-in-law Ron Davis, a career car salesman who previously owned a used car dealership in Orange County.

While neither side is revealing the sales price, Mark Harding — who worked at his father's dealership for more than 25 years — said Davis received a substantial loan from Ford Motor Co.'s Dealership Development Program, which has been helping establish more Latino and black-owned dealerships.

The arrangement leaves 53-year-old Davis, who is Latino, as the dealership's

sole owner.

"It's not a partnership, but Ford Motor Co. is my bank," Davis said. "I put up money, they put up money and they put me here as the operator."

Mark Harding was in line to purchase the dealership franchise from his father, who at 76 years old, was looking forward to retiring and traveling. Mark Harding decided against the purchase and last year took a job at his brother, Chris Harding's, law firm.

Mark Harding said while he wanted more than anything to run the family business, he said owning and operating a dealership in Santa Monica was too risky for his taste.

"We are talking about significant investment and money for a franchise," he said. "We are talking about a significant problem for me and my family if it didn't work out, and I didn't need that risk."

While Santa Monica is home to some of the busiest car dealerships in the Los Angeles region, car lot owners say the city has made it nearly impossible for them to expand their businesses and increase the

See FORD, page 7

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified board picks Latino leadership

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

For the first time, the leadership of Santa Monica-Malibu Unified school board will be all Latino.

At its meeting Thursday, the school board elected Maria Leon-Vazquez as its president and Jose Escarce as its vice-president. Each will serve one-year terms.

"Despite the money issues in our district, we need to stay focused on our educational programs and continue with our efforts to close the achievement gap for all students," said Leon-Vazquez, who for the past year served as the board's vice-president.

Superintendent John Deasy thanked Leon-Vazquez for her tireless service in working with a group of concerned parents called Mothers for Justice, who earlier this year raised concerns alleging the school district punishes its minority students far more than other students.

Leon-Vazquez helped spur communication between the school district and the group, which led to an ad hoc committee that is currently investigating and rewriting how the school district responds to disciplinary infractions, Deasy said.

The school board also welcomed its new members — Emily Bloomfield, Oscar de la Torre, and Shane McCloud. Julia

See SCHOOL BOARD, page 6

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HOROSCOPE

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

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

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Use the daylight hours to further a key cause or to handle some major events. Loosen up with a friend as well as those around you. You frequently jump to conclusions. Make an additional effort toward someone close. Understand what someone is really saying. Tonight: Your treat.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Use the daylight hours for errands or clearing out a problem. You might want to take a stab at completing holiday errands. If possible, find time for a nap or something else you really want to do. Stick to your budget. Tonight: You feel renewed.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★ Others seek you out, though you might want to play. Actually, you could have plans that involve just you. You might not know how to say that to someone close. Pick and choose your words carefully, unless you want to spend a few days alone. Tonight: Do your thing.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Handle a responsibility early on, which might be going in to work early or visiting with an older friend or loved one. Understand that you have limited energy. Take a nap if you need one. You won't be any good to anyone otherwise. Tonight: Where the parties are.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Head out the door, especially if you have a large amount of errands to complete or a special plan for the day. Meet someone halfway, which is the fairer thing to do. Realize what someone key means to you. Tonight: A must show.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Work with others, especially someone you put on a pedestal. A discussion surrounding a loved one or partner could make life easier. Understanding helps you move past what you consider an unnerving situation. Tonight: Do something that takes little effort.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Others seek you out. You get feedback from many different people, some of which you might not care to hear. Avoid heavy uproar with a child or loved one. Use your ingenuity and creativity to avoid a problem. Schedule some quality time with a loved one. Tonight: Togetherness works.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Dig into work, and you'll get the job done. The amount you can accomplish might awe someone. You have a lot more dynamic energy than many. Save people happenings for later in the day. Tonight: Toss yourself into the social whirlwind.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Use the daylight hours to express your innate playfulness and happiness. Your ability to understand someone else could make a big difference. The unpredictability of a close person in your life delights you. Tonight: For once, slow down.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Hang at home and get some holiday must-do's done. You find that someone close will share a great deal quite suddenly. Take your time making decisions that involve this person. Schedule more people-type events later on. Tonight: Let the good times in.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Make an effort toward others. Check in with a neighbor. Do something special for a sibling. Be spontaneous yet caring. A child might need some help understanding a recent event. You're in a position to facilitate this process. Tonight: Head home early, if possible.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★ Carefully scan your budget and what remains to be done. You don't want any sudden surprises. Others respond to your efforts, though a family member could have a case of the bah humbugs. Don't push someone. Tonight: Make that extra effort.

QUOTE of the DAY

"A single sentence will suffice for modern man: He fornicated and read the papers."

— Albert Camus (1913-1960)

Santa Monica Daily Press

Published Monday through Saturday
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LOCAL



Ongoing celebration



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

A visitor walks past a lone Menorah that still stands on the Third Street Promenade even though Hanukkah has ended.

Police nab two for auto theft

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica Police arrested two men on Thursday after they were pulled over in a stolen car.

At 2:45 p.m. two SMPD motor officers observed a 1986 Oldsmobile sedan with no license plates traveling eastbound on Colorado Avenue near the 1700 block of Centinela Avenue, police said.

Officers stopped the vehicle and immediately noticed that the ignition and steering column had been tampered with. Also, the vehicle didn't have keys and pliers were used to start the vehicle, police said.

The driver, Charles Ray Spratley, 35, of Compton, produced a California identification card to officers while his passen-

ger, Charles Sanders, a 37-year-old transient, took off on foot.

Police set up a perimeter in the surrounding area and with the help of surrounding police agencies, a K-9 unit and the Hawthorne Police Department's helicopter, Sanders was found in the backyard of a home about two blocks away from where the stolen car was.

Spratley was arrested on scene for grand theft auto and outstanding warrants. Sanders was arrested in the 1700 block of Carmelina Avenue in West LA at 5:54 p.m. They were taken to Santa Monica Jail and booked for grand theft auto. Spratley's bail is set at \$30,000 and Sanders' bail is set at \$20,000.

surf report

Information compiled by Jesse Haley

The surf has been epic this week, from the strong mix of northwest and west swell in the water to the beautiful December weather. Winds have been low and shape has been very decent; some admittedly mushy waves on high tides, but what do you expect?

Swell starts to fade, but leftover activity should provide plenty of good surf. We'll rely on a mix of west, northwest and minor southwest pulses. New northwest is due this weekend.

Expect most breaks to lose some height this afternoon, but dawn patrol sets should still be cranking as tides approach low.



Today's Tides:

High-	5:55 a.m.	4.93'
Low-	12:51 p.m.	1.03'
High-	6:33 p.m.	3.40'
Low-	11:56 p.m.	1.60'

Location	Saturday	Sunday	Water Quality
County Line	3-4'/Fair	3-4'/Fair	A
Zuma	3-4'/Fair	3-4'/Good	A
Surfrider	2-4'/Fair	3-4'/Good	B
Topanga	2-3'/Fair	3-4'/Good	B
Breakwater	2-4'/Fair	2-4'/Fair	A
El Porto	2-4'/Fair	2-4'/Fair	A

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Santa's coming to town

By Daily Press staff

Santa Claus is coming to town and Santa Monica's firefighters and police officers are giving him a lift.

Santa and his public safety helpers will be distributing good cheer and thousands of candy canes as part of the 11th annual "Candy Cane Drive" on Sunday, Dec. 15.

Santa's scheduled stops are:

10 a.m.-10:30 a.m., Douglas Park — California Avenue and 25th Street.
11 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Christine Reed Park — California Avenue and Lincoln Boulevard.
11:30 p.m.-12 p.m., Third Street Promenade/Santa Monica Place at Broadway Avenue.
1:45 p.m.-2:15 p.m., Marine Park — Marine Street and 17th Street.
2:30 p.m.-3 p.m., Virginia Park — Virginia Avenue and 22nd Street.
3:15 p.m.-3:45 p.m., Clover Park — Ocean Park and 25th Street.

Santa Monica children are encouraged to look and listen for the lights and sirens of the public safety vehicles, while parents are encouraged to bring their cameras.

For more information, call the Santa Monica Police Department's Community Relations Office at (310) 458-8474.

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OPINION

LETTERS

Consumer feels he's getting ripped off

Editor:

Regarding the legal problems now confronting Pavilions, I can attest that the repeated scanning "errors" uncovered by government investigators are just the tip of the iceberg. As a customer who has shopped there once a week for many years (having no car and it being the only market in my neighborhood, I have little choice), virtually every time I patronize the place there is at least one error on my register receipt — and not just a simple "scanning error." The discounts for specials available by using one's Pavilions card frequently don't get credited. I have NEVER experienced a scanning error that was in my favor. It's always in the store's favor.

And it gets worse. The Pavilion store's amazing specials generally become available on Wednesday. On countless occasions, I've gone in on a Thursday or Friday only to find the door buster item unavailable. If I go on Thursday and it's not there, the reason is "the shipment hasn't come in yet." And if I go on Friday and it's not there, the reason is "we sold out."

The management may offer a substitution, but it's never of the quality that the sale item is purported to be. For example, unavailable Zacky boneless chicken breasts, a quality item, will not be there. And the customer will be offered Manor House boneless chicken breasts, a brand that is not of Zacky quality.

It's just little things, but they add up. A deodorant, for example, may be listed as "two for \$5" in the weekly Pavilions flier. However, on the shelf will be a big yellow sale sticker announcing the product is "on sale" for \$3.50, with a blurb announcing that is "a dollar off" the regular price. When I divide \$5 by two, I don't get \$3.50. But evidently Pavilions does.

But now, thanks to a sharp government investigation, those glory days of taking advantage of Santa Monica consumers with impunity will soon, one hopes, be history.

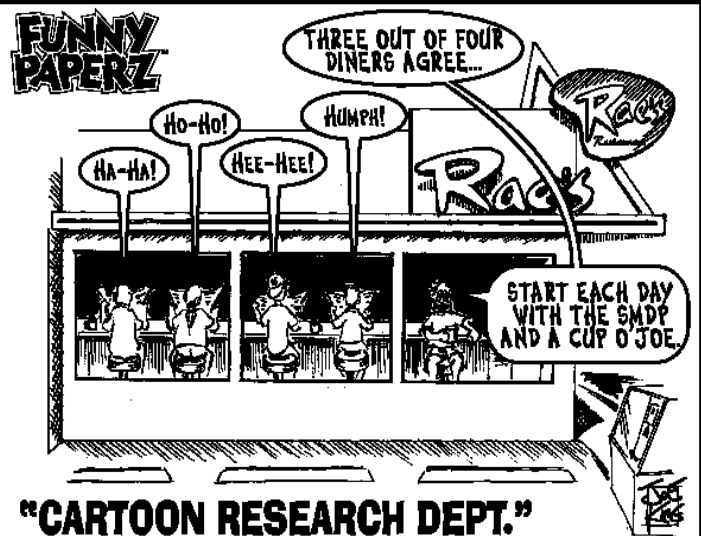
Julian Maltese
Santa Monica

Springer, get a job

Editor:

I have only one thing to say to Charles Springer: Get a job! It is apparent from your column (runs on Mondays) that you are sufficiently articulate and intelligent to hold gainful employment. So Charles, start working, get off the streets and stop wasting our scarce social service resources that are so desperately needed by others.

Ed Silverstein
Santa Monica



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Elections would be better left to a game of chance



MODERN TIMES

By Lloyd Garver

Waterford, California may go down in history as the site that inspired real and meaningful electoral reform in this country. What happened there last week could change the way elections are held all over the country — maybe all over the world. Last month in Waterford, two mayoral candidates — Charles Turner and Pat Fisher — tied with 546 votes. Because the town had no special rules set up to handle ties, California law calls for the winner to be decided by chance.

On Dec. 5, they brought out a deck of cards, shuffled, and then the candidates cut cards. Turner drew a queen of diamonds, and Fisher a 10 of hearts. (Another close election). So, Mr. Turner became the mayor, and Mr. Fisher

remained a private citizen.

No costly run-off elections, no appeals to the courts, just a cut of the cards. What could be fairer?

In fact, the process in Waterford was so pure, so unencumbered by spin doctors, so removed from smear tactics and dirty campaigns that we should think about using this method for elections the first time around — not just for run-offs.

Considering how few Americans vote, most people obviously don't believe it matters who wins our elections. How often have you heard (or said), "I don't care who wins. They're both no good?" If we don't really see the difference between candidates, if we don't care about their policies, if so many people don't even bother to vote, why not save all that time, money, and energy used for elections and just bring out the deck of cards?

Think about it in terms of the last Presidential election. If they had just cut cards, we never would've heard of a hanging chad. We wouldn't have had to see those maps of red and blue states over and

over again, or watch attorneys on both sides twist the law like a pretzel. We wouldn't have had to watch Republican politicians pretending to be comfortable in cowboy hats and Democratic politicians pretending to be comfortable, period.

If both candidates know that the winner is going to be determined purely by chance, neither of them would be tempted to lie during the campaign. There would be no reason to bad-mouth the other candidate. They could tell us what was in their hearts and minds on every issue without worrying that it might cost them the election. We could start having honest and clean campaigns!

I know what you're thinking — the television networks won't want to give up all that drama. I'm way ahead of you. We get Regis Philbin or the star of one of those shows like "American Idol" or "America's Sexiest Naked Person," to be the host of the High Card Presidential Selection Ceremony. Do it in Las Vegas, the home of games of chance. Throw in some dramatic music and a few close-ups

of the candidates' sweaty foreheads, and the ratings will be sky high.

Another advantage to adopting the high card selection election is that those people who are too busy to take 15 minutes to vote every few years would not have to feel guilty about it. Those who care about politics and government could no longer call the non-voters irresponsible. No more arguing among co-workers or family members, no more heated political discussions. The whole country would be united as one big group of apathetic people completely uninvolved in the electoral process. Actually, I guess that's not that big of a change from the way things are now.

Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, including "Sesame Street," "Family Ties" and "Frasier." He has also read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSnews.com's opinion page and can be reached at smdp@lloydgarvermoderntimes.com.

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 sack@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.

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COMMENTARY



'Twas an electronic night before Christmas

(This is a poem about Internet addiction. It is written by a struggling single mom, who has but a Christmas help request on her Web site. The 44-year-old, single mom of three; ages 8, 6 and almost 2, struggles with Fibromyalgia, having to get around on the bus since August when their vehicle broke down and was basically too old to repair.)

"Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house,

Not a TV was off, nor a computer, nor mouse;

The family was hooked up electronically, everywhere,

In the bedroom, the kitchen, even the bathroom had a Gameboy in there.

The children were not nestled all snug in bed,

And mom had visions of tire and fatigue, dancing in her head.

The baby, in the crib, was watching fishie's swim west,

He wasn't even near settling down to a good night's rest.

When out in the living room there arose such a clatter,

Brother was cussing, we all rushed to see what was the matter.

To his horrible indignation, he said with a roar,

"I hate this computer," as he slammed out the door.

The picture on the monitor only showed bright blue space,

Worry and concern were growing on my Dad's pale face;

When, what to his suspicious eyes should appear,

But an error has been fixed window, so he grabbed another beer.

The house was not ready for Santa at all,

Piles of dirty laundry were stacked, on the floor in the hall.

The refrigerator had no turkey or ham, not a bite,

Because Mom hadn't got groceries, she'd had a glitch on her Web site.

Yet kitty cat slept contentedly in his bed, all curled up,

And Rover the dog, snored away like a cute little pup.

I said, "Now Momma! Now Daddy! Big Sis, and Big Bro!

This is not the way Christmas is suppose to be,

I want you to know!

Now dash it and darn it! This electronic stuff has to go!"

I was fuming, I was angry as ever,
I cried big tears, and I yelled, "Santa

won't come,

I just know he won't, no never,"

But then, in but a twinkling, and in quiet pursuit

We heard Christmas music and saw Santa, in his beautiful red suit.

He was driving his sleigh, through an awesome snowstorm,

But it wasn't outside, it was someplace quite warm.

He was covered in fur, from his foot to his head,

And he twinkled and was animated as so were the reindeer he led;

White trimming around his fat belly twinkled, and toys piled up on his sleigh,

It made me chuckle with laughter to see him this way!

The end of a stylus he held tight in his fist,

And marked off each stop on his computer generated list.

His droll little mouth was drawn up in a grin

That went almost unseen beneath the beard on his chin.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his chores

And dropped a wrapped package right on the screen window floor.

Then piling them all up, like the game we know as Tetris,

He jumped back in his sleigh, and crumpled up his list in his fist.

I sprang from my chair in front of the TV,

With my hands on my hips, I said, "You guys, listen to me!

They all squinted at me through droopy eyelids,

As if saying to themselves, what's the matter with this kid?"

Just then I heard Brother jump up from his computer chair,

He clapped and he cheered, and jumped to his feet,

"I beat him, I won, It was Santa Claus that I beat."

"I got the high score," he said with a smile,

"As I disgustingly glared at him, all the while."

"That's it," I said, "I have reached my breaking point.

I am going to Sue's house, I am leaving this crazy electronic joint.

They don't have a computer, no Internet there,

I'm going to find people with a normal Christmas to share."

Laurie Meade can be reached at laurie@you2cansellonline.com.

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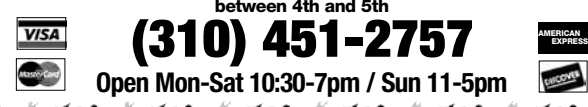
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LOCAL

Case against Vons set to go to trial in February

VONS, from page 1

employees an extra hour to go check the tags and remove them," she said. "All they have to do is hire more people."

"It's a very tough situation because consumers do rely on the sales tags," Suh added. "And for Vons to take this position that they don't want to pay their employees to check the tag is wrong. Customers can't assume what they read on the tags is correct."

Lona Luckett, a senior trade practice analyst for the Better Business Bureau in Southern California, said consumers should always pay attention to what they're charged. She suggests watching the cash register screen that displays the price of each item as it is rung through.

"If the sale is over, the grocery store should make attempts to remove the tag," she said. "But people need to pay attention to what they are buying."

Pavilions' policy is that a customer can get a refund if he or she later finds they paid for an item that was rung up at a higher price than listed. However, bottles of wine can't be returned, according to state law. Some of the largest "club card" discounts at grocery stores — not just Pavilions — occur on bottled wine.

The City of Santa Monica filed similar charges against Vons in 1998. A Superior Court judge then dismissed the charges, DiBernardo said.

"I don't know why they are trying this case. They lost it two years ago," he said. "It's an identical case."

Suh argues it's a brand new case because it stems from new offenses.

Santa Monica Superior Court Judge Bernard Kamins agreed last week when he denied Vons' motion to dismiss the charges based on the doctrine of "collateral estoppel." Vons unsuccessfully argued that the City can't prosecute the case because a judge in 1998 acquitted Vons in the similar case. An administrative hearing officer in Ventura County earlier this year found Vons hadn't violated the business and professions code. Vons argued the city is now and in the future precluded from bringing charges against it in similar cases.

But Kamins last week ruled that Vons

should go to trial. It's set for Feb. 6, 2003.

The city says Vons has been charged several times with the same violations and has either pled guilty or no contest in front of judges.

However, DiBernardo said the grocery store has never been found to be a repeat offender.

"It's a very tough situation because consumers do rely on the sales tags. And for Vons to take this position that they don't want to pay their employees to check the tag is wrong. Customers can't assume what they read on the tags is correct."

— EDA U. SUH
Deputy City Attorney

"There has not been one of these cases that Vons has been found guilty in," he said.

DiBernardo has his own feelings on why the city is targeting Vons.

"The city is shopping for a new verdict because they didn't like the first one," he said. "Maybe the Santa Monica City Attorney doesn't have any other significant cases and has a large budget ... maybe they suffer from TMM (too much money)."

The Vons Companies, Inc. is charged with six counts of violating the business and professions code for charging higher than the posted price on sale items. Vons also is charged with one count of violating of the business and professions code for disseminating false and misleading advertisements.

Whatever the legalities of who's responsible, the advice for customers remains: Read the fine print.

School board focus is cuts, downsizing and budget woes

SCHOOL BOARD, from page 1

Brownley, who for the past year served as school board president, was re-elected.

Pam Brady, Brenda Gottfried and Tom Pratt left the board after certifying the election results and saying good-bye to their colleagues.

Due to a tremendous decline in the amount of money given to the school district from the state and the failure of a proposed \$300 parcel tax at the ballot box, the school board is facing one of its toughest budget situations in more than a decade, officials said.

The board must guide the school district this year through a series of budget cuts that may likely include down-sizing and discontinuing some educational programs, officials said.

At the same time, board members say they must make cuts without decreasing the quality of education provided in the school district, which boasts strong test scores.

"I think, as we have heard tonight and at many other times, we as a community will find a way to pull through this," Leon-Vazquez said.

Both Leon-Vazquez, who lives in Sunset Park, and Escare, a north of Montana Avenue resident, were elected in 2000 and are serving four year terms.



LOCAL □ STATE



Cross on Christian extreme surf shop causes rift in city

By The Associated Press

SAN CLEMENTE — The city's fight over Christian surf shop owner Richard Landingham's 10-foot cross is still up in the air — at least in the mind of its owner.

As a symbol of his faith and a memorial after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Landingham erected the cross on top of his LAP Extreme surfboard shop. It stood there, painted red and illuminated at night, with little notice until January, when someone complained.

The city investigated and told Landingham he needed a building permit for the cross. In April, city officials told him they now considered the cross to be a sign, illegal under the city ban on rooftop signs, and he was told to take it down.

Landingham refused, and the city filed misdemeanor charges claiming Landingham had violated the sign ordinance and lacked building permits for both the cross and the business sign outside his shop.

"The only reason I went to court was because they told me I had to take down my cross, which was my faith," Landingham said. "As a Christian you have the right to show your faith, but I guess in the city of San Clemente you don't."

Jurors were asked Thursday to decide, among other things: Is a cross a sign, and thereby banned? Or is it a religious symbol and therefore exempt?

The jury came back with a mixed message: the panel deadlocked and couldn't decide whether Landingham violated the sign ban, but jurors did convict him of failing to get permits for the cross and business sign.

Landingham could be sentenced to six months in jail, but he believes the cross can stay.

"I'm going to go home and say a prayer and thank God for letting me keep my cross up," Landingham said. "The cross gets to stay forever, which is what we were fighting for."

Not so fast, Deputy City Attorney Anthony Beaumont said.

"He greatly misunderstands the result in court today," the prosecutor said, noting Landingham must still get a city permit. "I don't know when the end of the story's going to happen."

When he is sentenced next week, Landingham said he hopes the judge will also provide a court order that the city grant him permits for the cross and the business sign.

New dealership picketed shortly after changing hands

FORD, from page 1

number of vehicles they can store.

City officials have said if the dealerships are allowed to expand, they believe there would be a significant impact on nearby residential neighborhoods. Expansion would eat up multi-family housing space, increase competition for already scarce parking, and worsen traffic congestion, they say.

However, car dealerships are the top sales tax revenue source for the city, and without healthy dealerships, city finances would flounder. The juxtaposition has created tension between dealership owners, elected officials and city staff.

Councilman Mike Feinstein has been trying to bring residents and dealership owners together to forge a compromise that both sides can live with.

"As elected officials, it's our responsibility to protect the residents' quality of life," Feinstein. "But at the same time many of these dealerships are family-owned franchises, which are exactly the kind of business we want to encourage."

Mark Harding said he tried to explain the complications of the business to Davis before he bought the franchise.

"Santa Monica is a place you have to experience to understand," he said. "You can't really accurately tell someone about it."

Davis said he hears the message about doing business in Santa Monica loud and clear.

"I think you'd have to be from Mars to not hear stories about how the city deals with business here," he said. "But I'm new here now and I have limited experience with the city and I look forward to a very positive experience with them."

Still, Davis was surprised to have his first dealings with city officials only weeks after he assumed control of the

dealership. Two weeks ago, the Los Angeles Sierra Club and Mayor Pro Tem Kevin McKeown protested in front of the Ford dealership. They want the car manufacturer to build more environmentally conscience cars.

Mark Harding and other dealership owners have said they were disappointed that an elected official would welcome a new dealership owner to town by protesting the kinds of cars being sold — a decision the small dealership owner has little control over.

"I think you'd have to be from Mars to not hear stories about how the city deals with business here."

— RON DAVIS
Santa Monica Ford dealership owner

"It's like they've got their political view and they're taking it out on the little guy," he said. "Why not protest the regional Ford office or take it to Michigan?"

McKeown defends his decision to participate in the protest. He said the group knew Davis had been hand-picked by Ford to run the dealership and saw a strong tie between Davis and Ford Motor Co. He said the picketing wasn't aimed at hurting the dealership.

"It was meant to encourage Ford to seize a very profitable marketing opportunity in our environmentally friendly city," he said.

Davis said he understands the Sierra Club's position, but wonders how he fits in.

"It seems a strange way to welcome a new business to town, and I might have wished they could have waited a month before doing it," he said. "But I can understand."

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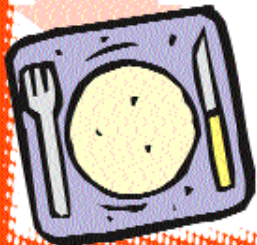
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STATE

Alcoholic drink tax may be used to fund trauma centers

BY ERICA WERNER
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — A 5-cent tax should be added to alcoholic beverages and used to reimburse emergency centers for treating patients injured in alcohol-related accidents or violence, state Sen. Gloria Romero said Thursday as she announced a bill that would levy the fee.

Romero, D-Los Angeles, said the estimated \$500 million the measure would raise annually would help compensate for cuts the state's health care system is facing as a result of a budget deficit that's expected to top \$21 billion.

In suggesting a first round of cuts last week Gov. Gray Davis proposed slashing \$2 billion from health and welfare programs primarily for the poor — the second-biggest area of proposed cuts behind education.

"I cannot imagine a California where there are no emergency departments or trauma care centers, and increasingly that is the case in California," Romero told a news conference outside White Memorial Medical Center in Boyle Heights. "Our lives depend on these. I think that 5 cents on a serving of alcohol to help offset fees is reasonable and fair, it's good for California."

Alcohol is a factor in 32 percent of California car crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety administration.

But alcoholic beverage industry officials, who worked to defeat a similar bill that Romero introduced toward the end of the last Legislative session in August, said most drinkers behave responsibly and it's unfair to single out an industry they believe is already overtaxed.

"Raising taxes will not deter alcohol abusers, it will simply further penalize responsible spirits drinkers," said Lisa Hawkins, spokeswoman for the Distilled Spirits Council.

Romero's measure, which she introduced during the special legislative session on the budget that began this week in Sacramento, is also likely to face opposi-

tion from Republican lawmakers, who have said they will oppose tax increases.

Romero has structured the program as a fee assessment, rather than a tax, and it would therefore require only majority votes from both houses of the Legislature to pass and land on Davis' desk.

"I think that 5 cents on a serving of alcohol to help offset fees is reasonable and fair, it's good for California."

— GLORIA ROMERO
State senator

The Alcohol-Related Emergency Services Reimbursement Act of 2003 would require the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control to collect 5 cents from liquor wholesalers doing business in California for each 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits, 12 ounces of beer and five ounces of wine they sell to retailers.

The money would go into a trust fund to be administered by the Department of Health Services. The department would distribute the funds to emergency rooms, trauma centers and emergency medical professionals to reimburse them for caring for victims of emergencies caused by or resulting from ingestion of alcohol.

The bill calls on the Health Department to establish criteria identifying such emergencies. The department would also work out the procedures by which hospitals and others would apply for the money.

Romero was surrounded at the news conference by doctors, nurses and community leaders supporting the bill.

"We need help and we need it now. This is a reasonable proposal. This is something we all have to have, we have to keep the doors open," said Dr. Brian Johnston, medical director of the emergency department at White Memorial.

'Dairy Queen' comes to SoCal to launch new company mascot

By The Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON — Should the round-headed guy from Jack in the Box or Dan the Del Taco guy be looking over their shoulders?

In an effort to update its image, Dairy Queen is filming nearly a dozen humorous commercials and plans to roll out a new company mascot next year to join its veteran Curly Top ice cream figure, say officials of the Minneapolis-based company, who were in town this week to oversee the commercials' filming.

"It's an exciting year with new products and the campaign celebrates the newness and uniqueness," Michael Keller, Dairy Queen's marketing vice president, said Wednesday as filming got under way at the Dairy Queen in this town 50 miles east of Los Angeles.

Dairy Queen Chief Executive Officer Chuck Mooty said the company hopes the new campaign will show the venerable fast-food company has "more to offer than ice cream products."

Last year, Dairy Queen launched a new concept called DQ Grill and Chill to showcase both its ice cream products and expanded menu.

Company officials say the ad campaign will unveil still more new products and themes. They declined to elaborate.

Dairy Queen chose the Bloomington restaurant, Keller said, because of Southern California's favorable weather and the store's modern design.

"We did some modifications for the filming like removing some older signs, and we brought in a lot of landscaping to dress the place up for the owners," he said.

STATE



Legal tuff slows North Coast's broadband rollout

BY KAREN GAUDETTE
Associated Press Writer

EUREKA — Lured to California's North Coast by its affordable housing and leisurely tempo, graphic designer Jim Nelson figured he could run his business with a high-speed Internet connection available almost anywhere in tech-friendly California.

But thanks to a legal spat between the state transportation department and the phone company, he and thousands of others in this redwood-studded paradise have discovered that the only thing slower than their pace of life is their Internet connection.

Nearly two years after they were told high-speed Internet access was on the way, most people living beyond "the redwood curtain" on California's far North Coast still can't get a provider to deliver reliable broadband computer connections.

The latest problem stems not from the sour economy or crumbling telecom companies but a legal tuff between SBC Pacific Bell and the state Department of Transportation over the cost of laying fiber-optic cable along 21 miles of U.S. Highway 101.

Despite hundreds of letters from businesses, schools and institutions in Eureka and other towns stranded on the wrong side of the digital divide, residents say Gov. Gray Davis and the state Public Utilities Commission have been of little help.

"It just perpetuates this myth that we're in the boonies and we don't matter," said Nelson, who is stuck with a pokey dial-up connection.

Some broadband services are available in this community about 250 miles north of San Francisco. The problem is that the data — along with all voice traffic — must be funneled through a microwave antenna on its way to the backbone of the Internet.

SBC has committed more than \$21 million to fix the bottleneck by laying 178 miles of fiber optic cable that can handle more data more reliably. The lines would connect Eureka to northerly neighbors as well as to Santa Rosa and the rest of the world.

But the phone company is stuck on the last 21 miles, which happens to be where Highway 101 snakes through towering redwood trees.

Caltrans has charged SBC a \$2 million encroachment fee. The phone company says it usually pays just a fraction of that for similar access, and that paying \$2 million would set an expensive precedent for future infrastructure upgrades, said Dave Miller, a Pacific bell spokesman.

**"It just perpetuates this myth
that we're in the boonies and
we don't matter."**

— JIM NELSON
Graphic designer

Caltrans spokesman Dennis Trujillo says the agency has levied similar permit fees on other companies, covering costs for environmental checks and ensuring motorists' safety during construction.

Meanwhile, the North Coast suffers with limited broadband or slow dial-up connections.

"We don't care who's right, who's the good guy, who's the bad guy," said J. Warren Hockaday, director of the Greater Eureka Chamber of Commerce. "We just want the technology here."

Economists say broadband networks that can swiftly transmit large loads of data can give isolated communities a real shot at staying viable, improving educational and business opportunities for younger generations.

"You can do an airline reservation center in the smallest community in Northern California just like you can in downtown San Francisco, and it's a cheaper place to live," said Claiborn Craig, a spokesman for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Swifter, enhanced access is a top goal for Eureka, population 30,000, where the economy is in transition from fishing and logging to tourism and retail. Humboldt County's median household income was just \$30,426 in 2000, compared with \$47,500 for California.

"This impasse is a failure on so many levels. For 20 or 30 years we have been told by state and federal officials we have to change the way our economy operates," said

Kristin Roach, program director of the North Coast Small Business Development Center.

Education is key, but slow connections mean students and teachers in California's northernmost counties have limited access to online college prep courses, the state's digital library and distance learning opportunities because of slow connection speed.

"They are limited in the resources they can access to interact with other schools," said Jon Sapper, director of work force programs at the Humboldt County Office of Education. "This is a community issue that impacts business, economic development and education."

In Eureka, Nelson has to wait as long as an hour for an average work order to trickle into his computer, paperwork that could arrive in minutes or seconds with a high-speed connection.

"I often end up asking clients to send me files on disk, which is somewhat embarrassing when someone in Idaho has the bandwidth," Nelson said.

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NATIONAL

Researchers: Kindergartners getting suspended frequently

BY MARYCLAIRE DALE
Associated Press Writer

PHILADELPHIA — One hit a pregnant teacher, another exposed himself and another stabbed a classmate with a pencil.

They've all been suspended from school this year. And they're all kindergartners.

In the first four months under new schools chief Paul Vallas, 33 kindergartners have been suspended from Philadelphia public schools, up from just one during the same period last year.

"The goal is to get the parents in," said Gwen Morris, who oversees alternative education for the 200,000-student district. "What it says is, we have a uniform policy that everyone will be held to."

The U.S. Department of Education does not break down school suspensions by grade level, but several researchers said they see anecdotal evidence that the youngest schoolchildren are being suspended more frequently.

Morris believes suspensions, combined with counseling and other measures, are an effective tool in the city's crackdown on school violence. None of the kindergartners has been suspended a second time, she said.

"The time they spend at home together is clearly a time for them to figure out why this is happening," Morris said.

Walter Gilliam, a child psychologist at Yale University's Child Study Center, said he doubts young children make the connection between an action in school and the ensuing suspension, which can last up to 10 days.

"Ten days is a lifetime to a 3-, 4- or 5-year-old," said Gilliam, who is working on a study of preschooler suspensions. "They can't even fathom 10 days. It's like waiting for Christmas."

"I think it's a bad move, because it absolves the school from feeling that it's necessary to deal with that problem

within the school building. You push it out to the community, you push it out to the family home, and that's where it started to begin with," Gilliam said.

Gilliam is studying suspensions in Connecticut, where 311 kindergartners were suspended in 1999-2000, about 92 percent of them out-of-school suspensions.

Gilliam said 79 percent of Connecticut's kindergarten suspensions went to boys, and about half involved allegations of physical violence, sexual harassment or verbal threats.

Nearly 52 percent of the suspensions went to black kindergartners, 35.2 percent to Hispanics and 12.1 percent to whites, he said.

"Those percentages do not match the demographics of

Connecticut," Gilliam said, echoing criticism from the Rev. Jesse Jackson and others that zero tolerance policies and other disciplinary codes are disproportionately applied to minorities.

Among the Connecticut kindergartners, three-quarters of the suspensions went to students from the lowest socio-economic rung, Gilliam said.

That suggests to Peg Oliveira of Connecticut Voices for Children that low-income students are not getting high-quality preschool.

The pre-kindergarten experience probably isn't preparing them for what they need to do before they get to kindergarten," said Oliveira, whose child-advocacy group has researched the issue.

Woman who has been comatose since 1990's must remain on feeding tube

BY RACHEL LA CORTE
Associated Press Writer

CLEARWATER, Fla. — A woman who has been in a coma-like state for over a decade will continue to have a feeding tube until an appellate court decides her case, a judge ruled Friday.

Circuit Judge George Greer stayed his Nov. 22 ruling that Terri Schiavo's husband could have her feeding tube removed Jan. 3, saying she must be kept alive until the 2nd District Court of Appeal reviews the case.

The 38-year-old has been in a coma-like state since suffering a heart attack in 1990 that temporarily cut off oxygen to her brain.

Her husband and guardian, Michael, says Schiavo's condition is irreversible and she wouldn't want to be kept on life support. But her parents, Bob and Mary Schindler, want the feeding tube kept in place, saying their daughter

reacts to them with tears and smiles and could be rehabilitated with new, aggressive therapy.

Schiavo's feeding tube was removed for two days last year on an earlier order from Greer, but another judge ordered it reconnected. Greer reheard the evidence earlier this year and again ordered the tube removed.

The Schindlers' attorney, Pat Anderson, argued Friday that if the judge didn't stay that order, Terri could die before the appeal was heard.

Bob Schindler said Friday that he was happy that the stay was issued.

"It gives us time for the appeal," he said.

Michael Schiavo's attorney, George Felos, argued that the stay would only prolong a situation Schiavo wouldn't have wanted to be in.

"Each day this case goes on, it's another day she's force fed against her will," he said.



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INTERNATIONAL



U.S. urges democratic solution in Venezuela

BY BILL CORMIER
Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela — Beating drums and blowing whistles, supporters of President Hugo Chavez surrounded the government palace Friday, drawing accusations from the opposition that they were forming a human shield to protect their embattled leader.

Opposition protesters were also back on the streets Friday, the 12th day of the crippling general strike they launched in a bid to oust Chavez and his leftist government. The strike — which urges either early elections or Chavez's resignation — has paralyzed the world's fifth-largest oil exporting nation, a key U.S. supplier.

Increasing pressure on Chavez to call an early vote, the White House said it wanted an electoral solution to the crisis and warned of more violence if sluggish negotiations between the two sides do not pick up their pace.

"We urge a peaceful, democratic, constitutional and politically viable electoral solution to Venezuela's crisis," the White House said in a statement. Spokesman Ari Fleischer expressed support for mediation efforts by the Organization of American States.

Asked about early elections, Chavez said Friday he wouldn't stand in the way of a constitutional amendment, but said Congress would have to approve it — as would voters, in a referendum. The opposition has rejected such a drawn-out process, demanding immediate elections.

Chavez said the strike was being broken, and denounced the opposition's daily marches.

"Hopefully, they will move from protest to proposal," he told journalists at the Miraflores presidential palace.

Outside, hundreds of Chavez loyalists rallied to commemorate eight months since the president's return to power after an April 12 coup by dissident military officers.

Cheering and lofting posters of Chavez in military regalia, many of his supporters wore the red beret that was their leader's trademark as an army paratrooper who staged a failed 1992 coup — and as the candidate who swept presidential elections four years ago.

His support remains strong, especially among poor Venezuelans.

"The Venezuelan people need Hugo Chavez to lead them until 2021 or even longer. He has liberated the poor," said Lucia de Cardoza, a 67-year-old woman at the rally. "We will be revolutionaries until death. Dead or alive, I will stand by my president."

But a growing number of Venezuelans, including many who voted for Chavez, are disillusioned by a troubled economy and political turmoil.



Silvia Izquierdo/Associated Press

Venezuelan army soldiers guard a closed gas station in Caracas, Venezuela on Friday. The station was closed due to the lack of gas. The nationwide general strike entered its 12th day.

"This is no longer a strike. This has become civil resistance," said opposition marcher Denise Carbonell. "We are not going to leave the streets."

Fears of confrontations between the two sides increased after police used tear gas to break up a clash between pro- and anti-Chavez groups late Thursday. There were no reports of serious injuries. On Dec. 6, three people were killed and 28 injured in a shooting attack on an opposition rally.

Opposition-aligned newspapers called the pro-Chavez rally a "human shield" to protect the president. Vice President Jose Rangel warned of a plot to assassinate Chavez.

"There are expert sharpshooters here who are hunting the president to eliminate him at any moment," he told the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio*.

Chavez opponents launched the general strike Dec. 2, demanding a nonbinding referendum on his presidency, which ends in 2007. Chavez refused, and the opposition now says it will end the strike only if he calls general elections.

Chief mediator Cesar Gaviria, secretary general of the Organization of American States, indicated negotiations were not producing results. "The sides are not close to finding a solution," he said.

Bracing for the worst, Colombia said it was increasing border security in expectation of an exodus as many as 10,000 Colombians who work just over its eastern border with Venezuela.

Standard & Poor's Ratings Services downgraded its long-term foreign currency rating for Venezuela from "B-

minus" to "CCC-plus" because of "political polarization" and "economic paralysis."

Venezuela's crude oil output had fallen to 550,000 barrels a day, a sixth of the 3 million barrels a day it is estimated to produce in normal times, a source close to the state oil company told Dow Jones Newswires.

Chavez said most workers at the monopoly were against the strike. But the president, who on Thursday fired four dissident oil executives, said he would fire any others who "go into rebellion."

"If 80 percent of them have to go, then 80 percent of them will go," Chavez said. "If we have to bring in technicians from other countries, so be it."

Chavez had arrested the captains of two striking tankers. But on Friday, a judge freed Capt. Atilio Bermudez after determining he committed no crime.

Supermarket shelves emptied and long lines formed outside banks and pharmacies as people stocked up, fearing worse to come. Opposition leaders predicted impending shortages of gasoline and electrical blackouts.

International efforts continued to head off violence. The permanent council of the Organization of American States held an emergency meeting in Washington to consider a request from Chavez's government for "support for Venezuelan democracy."

Oaxaca, Mexico defeats McDonald's

BY JULIE WATSON
Associated Press Writer

OAXACA, Mexico — Considered by many to be Mexico's culinary capital, this city took on McDonald's and won, keeping the hamburger giant out of its colonial plaza by passing around tamales in protest.

Not everyone is rejoicing over Oaxaca's victorious food fight. Many say the bitterly poor state can't afford to turn down potential employers, much less slam the door on an international company.

City officials decided this week to prohibit the golden arches from doing business under the historic stone archways of Oaxaca's 16th century central plaza, also known as the zocalo. The battle has divided this picturesque community between those who want to preserve its cultural identity and others who simply want a job.

It's not the only fight in Mexico against a well-known U.S. name. Protesters in the wealthy resort city of Cuernavaca, in the mountains outside Mexico City, are calling for an international boycott of Costco after the retail giant began tearing down a historic casino and cutting down trees to build a wholesale center.

McDonald's boasts that a new restaurant opens somewhere in the world every four hours, but in many countries the invasion of American fast food has prompted protests.

In Oaxaca, the fight was led by Mexico's most famous living artist, Francisco Toledo. During their four-month campaign, Toledo and his supporters plastered the proposed restaurant location with signs reading "No McZocalo" and "We don't want McDollars" while handing out traditional Oaxacan tamales and atole — a thick drink made of corn starch — to passers-by.

Opponents collected close to 10,000 signatures against McDonald's in a region famous for its cuisine, including its thick, chile-based mole sauces often served over chicken.

Like many Mexican cities, the zocalo is the community's showcase for both its treasures and its troubles. Lined by cafes where tourists pass the day sipping the region's coffee and hot chocolate, the leafy square hosts everything from folk dances to campaign speeches.

Teachers have packed into it to protest low wages, jockeying for space next to Zapotec and Mixteco Indians selling their traditional weavings and pottery. Loxica Indian women lived on a section for nearly five years to demand the release of husbands accused of being guerrilla fighters.

Elderly women wearing hand-woven black and white shawls hawk bags of spicy grasshoppers outside the city's ornate, baroque cathedral.

"This place is not for McDonald's," said Toledo, a quiet, easygoing man who helped form a historic preservation group six years ago. "This is a sacred space."

Poor, abused, ignored, Haiti's street children endure daily struggles

BY IAN JAMES
Associated Press Writer

LES CAYES, Haiti — On the edge of town, dozens of boys congregate below a statue of Jesus. It's their home as they scratch out lives on the town's littered streets noisy with trucks and motorcycles.

Forced from their homes by poverty and broken families, the children load and sweep buses for meager tips. They don't attend school, their clothes are ragged, and fellow citizens largely regard them as a nuisance.

"I don't know my age," says a barefooted Jean-Claude George, who has the body of a 10-year-old but the gaze of a man who has known years of suffering. "I've been on the street a long time."

Like others among the children who sleep on buses or near the white statue, Jean-Claude fled an abusive home in the countryside for this town on Haiti's southern coast, 100 miles from the capital of Port-au-Prince.

He earns small change on the buses to pay for food and shoes, but the sandals often disappear in the company he keeps.

"The other kids keep an eye on me all night," he says. "Once I go to sleep, they steal them."

Street children struggle in cities around the globe, from Sao Paulo to Bombay. But in this Caribbean nation, the Western Hemisphere's poorest, the problem of homelessness among children is especially severe.

Some experts say the situation has worsened in recent

years amid Haiti's political turmoil. Thousands of children wander the cities, looking for odd jobs, begging or stealing to eat.

President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former Roman Catholic priest, has tried to make children's issues a cornerstone of his presidency, but government efforts have failed to bring the children off the streets.

In 1986, before he was president, Aristide founded the Family Is Life orphanage.

His political involvement eventually made it a target for opponents. In 1991, the same year he was ousted in a coup, five children died in a suspicious fire at the facility. In 1992, some children were wounded when Aristide opponents stormed the building and began shooting.

The orphanage eventually closed in 1999 amid protests by orphans who said promises of jobs weren't kept.

Dominique Esperant, the former regional head of the social affairs ministry in Les Cayes, hopes to put street children back on the political agenda.

"Everyone seems to think the best way to deal with this is to kick these kids out of town," Esperant says. "I believe they can become good citizens like anyone else if someone is there to help them out."

Frustrated by a lack of government funds, Esperant is trying to raise money independently to start a center to house street children.

He meets with the children below the statue of Jesus, drawing a crowd as he writes their names on a list. At last count, the list had 57 names.



SPORTS

The Oakland Raiders' defense is coming together

BY DAVE GOLDBERG

AP Football Writer

After being eliminated from the playoffs in the Massachusetts snow last season, the Oakland Raiders want to spend the playoffs at home.

All they need to do is to keep winning. "I don't think there's anyone in this locker room who wants to go back East and play in the snow or have the possibility of playing anywhere back East at all," says offensive tackle Lincoln Kennedy.

The Raiders play in the East this week, at Miami. So at least the Oakland players won't have to dress for snow.

The Dolphins are favored by a point-and-a-half. Perhaps that's because the Raiders have won five straight and might be due to lose. Perhaps it's because Ricky Williams has become the first running back with consecutive 200-plus yard games since Earl Campbell in 1980. Perhaps it's because Jay Fiedler is back at quarterback.

But the Raiders are coming together on defense.

In last week's 27-7 win in San Diego, they held LaDainian Tomlinson to 57 yards on 18 carries after Tomlinson ran for 220 yards against Denver the week before. Tackles John Parrella and Sam Adams should make it harder for Williams than the Bears and Bills did.

■ RAIDERS, 24-21

Green Bay (plus 3 1/2) at San Francisco
Two division winners playing for home-field advantage should they meet in the playoffs. The 49ers do NOT want to go to Lambeau Field, where they lost in last sea-

son's playoffs.

■ 49ERS, 24-22

New England (plus 2) at Tennessee (Monday night)

The Titans have won seven of eight, the Patriots five of six.

■ TITANS, 24-23

Indianapolis (minus 2 1/2) at Cleveland
If Dwayne Rudd hadn't thrown his helmet in Week 1, the Browns would be leading the AFC North.

■ COLTS, 28-24

Kansas City (plus 4) at Denver
The Chiefs have scored 49 points in each of their last two games. The Broncos have lost three straight overall and three straight at home.

■ BRONCOS, 57-49

Tampa Bay (minus 8) at Detroit
The Bucs have never won in temperatures under 40.

The game is indoors.

■ BUCS, 27-3

Washington (plus 7 1/2) at Philadelphia
Quarterback change No. 5 for Spurrier. Patrick Ramsey, if anyone's counting. He'll see lots of blitzes.

■ EAGLES, 31-3

Carolina (plus 8 1/2) at Pittsburgh
"I'm going to expect to start until he tells me I'm not," says Tommy Maddox, whose three turnovers accounted for three Houston touchdowns when the Steelers held the Texans to 47 yards of offense and still lost. "He" is Bill Cowher and he has Maddox on a short leash.

■ STEELERS, 47-3

Seattle (plus 9) at Atlanta
Vick rebounds.

■ FALCONS, 37-21

San Diego (plus 3) at Buffalo
Climate shock for the Chargers.

■ BILLS, 27-25

New York Jets (minus 6) at Chicago
The way the schedule breaks this week, the Jets could be in a three-way tie atop the AFC East.

■ JETS, 20-13

Dallas (plus 5) at New York Giants
The banged-up Giants seem to be able to beat the Cowboys and Redskins with the likes of Cato Serwanga and Ralph Brown.

■ GIANTS, 20-14

Minnesota (plus 7) at New Orleans
The Vikings almost won a road game last week for the first time in two years. Almost.

■ SAINTS, 31-23

Baltimore (minus 3) at Houston
Dom Capers is the best expansion coach in NFL history.

■ TEXANS, 13-12

Arizona (plus 10 1/2) at St. Louis
A homecoming for the Cardinals. Marc Bulger is back for St. Louis.

■ RAMS, 21-10

Jacksonville (minus 3) at Cincinnati
What does it say about the Jaguars that they're favored by only 3 points?

■ JAGUARS, 33-28

■ **LAST WEEK:** 7-9 (spread), 10-6 (straight up)

■ **SEASON:** 103-100-5 (spread), 132-75-1 (straight up)

L.A. Lakers awash in losses, barbs from O'Neal, Bryant

BY BETH HARRIS

AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — Brian Shaw knows things have soured with the Los Angeles Lakers. It's not the 14 losses in 23 games or lingering at the bottom of the Pacific Division or the inability to win three games in a row.

He can tell by looking at Shaquille O'Neal.

"When Shaq is quiet and reserved, then something is wrong," Shaw said.

And O'Neal has been mostly silent, except for blaming his teammates for what he perceives is their lack of effort.

It's another sign the three-time champions remain in a funk, unable to put together a winning streak, play reliable defense or stop criticizing each other.

"We've been through everything but losing, and we're not handling it well," Shaw said.

Bright spots, such as a 27-point, fourth-quarter rally to beat Dallas, followed by a solid win over Utah, have been overshadowed by losses and laments.

"Maybe some of our role players' confidence was waning a little bit, but that's what Shaq and I have to do as captains," Bryant said. "Our confidence doesn't waver. We believe that we can win and keep the team competitive."

Heading into the weekend, the Lakers start a string of seven games against opponents who made the playoffs last season. It culminates Christmas Day, when they play Sacramento for the first time since nearly getting knocked out of the playoffs by the Kings last season.

O'Neal has criticized his teammates twice in 11 games since his return from toe surgery.

"Talk to the (guys) that ain't doing nothing," he said after Tuesday's loss at Golden State. "Don't talk to me."

A week ago, O'Neal said he wanted "eight guys out there with me who want to play."

Both times, O'Neal communicated his gripes to reporters rather than confront his teammates. Bryant tossed similar barbs a month ago and briefly imposed the silent treatment on the supporting cast.

"That was pretty drastic," Shaw said.

During practice, O'Neal and Bryant talk basketball with their teammates. Behind closed doors, their silence has been deafening.

"They've kind of been going off and doing their own thing, which is their pre-

rogative," Shaw said.

"Maybe they feel like that's a way to get the rest of the guys motivated, but the role-playing guys are doing exactly what we've done over the past three years, and it's the same guys that won three championships with them. That's why we're not going to get caught up in it," he said.

While the finger-pointing may affect younger players such as rookies Kareem Rush, Jannero Pargo and Devean George, it's merely annoying to Shaw and other veterans such as Derek Fisher, Rick Fox and Robert Horry.

"You want people to come to you and talk to you face-to-face if they have a problem with you," Fisher said. "Everybody has different ways of motivation. You have to be able to take those things if you aren't in that type of power position."

Coach Phil Jackson said he hasn't observed the off-court interactions by O'Neal and Bryant with their teammates, although he noticed the two superstars playing together against Golden State "at the exclusion of some of the other guys."

But he's too busy trying to integrate the younger players and get more scoring punch from the bench to worry about the sniping.

"We have to win 50 games. We have to work harder now than we ever have in regular season games," Jackson said. "When we get over .500, we'll feel a lot better."

Losing has provoked talk of roster changes, but Jackson insists he's sticking with what he has. The Lakers are over both the salary cap and the luxury tax, which make trades unlikely.

So far, Jackson has made little use of veteran shooter Tracy Murray and Rush, who were both acquired in the summer. Murray didn't see action in nine games, and Rush has only played more than 20 minutes once.

"We're still in the process of blending people," Jackson said. "Defensively, we're just not there. We've got to get our screen-roll defense together, we've got to get our rebounding together and we have to make our stops count."

Jackson noted that since O'Neal returned Nov. 22, the Lakers' opponents have averaged 10 points more than they did when he was out.

"If he's the reason for it, then he's got to anchor our defense," Jackson said. "Last year, we were first in field-goal defense and 3-point defense. This year we're not there. That tells you something."

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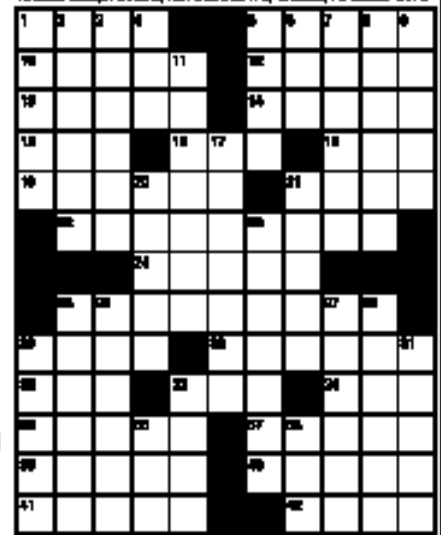
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 - Quest
 - Harry Potter's foe
 - Deep pink
 - Swim naturally
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 - Rebuilt
 - Shade source
 - Fix player
 - Blind shade
 - Wed in secret
 - Tattooed lady of song
 - Solitary sort
 - Consumed
 - Cursed
 - Do some modeling
- DOWN**
- Reporter's coup
 - Reflex studier
 - Familiar with
 - German article
 - Uses a ray-gun on
 - Before, to
 - Byron
 - Heaton
 - Late
 - Wide-awake
 - Demand
 - Breast-bone
 - Heaton
 - film
 - Main-tenis
 - Filbom-straw
 - Slickly
 - yellow
 - Oriental robe
 - Response to "Why?"
 - Flowers
 - Stripa
 - Macbeth, for one
 - On this spot
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 - Puppy sound

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UNO	
IRONAGE	RHO
TRUER	GALAS
LETME	AGILE
ETHOS	LOPES

Yesterday's answer

- Heaton
- film
- Main-tenis
- Filbom-straw
- Slickly
- yellow
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

Man wins \$1M in fastest drilling contest

■ After five months of nightly practice, Jonathan Smith of Delaware, Ohio, beat 16 finalists (out of 50,000 entrants) for the \$1 million DeWalt power-screwing championship by drilling five screws in less than seven seconds (Phoenix).

■ Only a \$1,200 first prize was offered, however, in November's international championship of the World Rock Paper Scissors Society (Toronto).

■ At an annual judicial conference, Taiwanese judges voted 49-11 that oral sex, without intercourse, should not be a legal ground for adultery (Taipei).

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Classified Advertising Conditions : **REGULAR RATE:** \$2.50 a day. Ads over 15 words add 20¢ per word per day. Ad must run a minimum of twelve consecutive days. **PREMIUMS:** First two words caps no charge. Bold words, italics, centered lines, etc. cost extra. Please call for rates. **TYPOS:** Check your ad the first day of publication. Sorry, we do not issue credit after an ad has run more than once. **DEADLINES:** 4:00 p.m. prior the day of publication except for Monday's paper when the deadline is Friday at 4:00 p.m. **PAYMENT:** All private party ads must be pre-paid. We accept checks, credit cards, and of course cash. **CORRESPONDENCE:** To place your ad call our offices 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, (310)458-7737; send a check or money order with ad copy to The Santa Monica Daily Press, P.O. Box 1380, Santa Monica, CA 90406 or stop in at our office located at 1427 Third Street Promenade, Ste. 202. **OTHER RATES:** For information about the professional services directory or classified display ads, please call our office at (310)458-7737.

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Call Angela at the Santa Monica Daily Press
310.458.7737 ext.101

CLASSIFIEDS



Be in the middle of it all!

Professional office space available on the Third Street Promenade.



950 square feet of office space conveniently located downtown, a walk away from shops, restaurants and the beach. Bright office space with high ceilings, natural light, two large private offices and a spacious reception area. Quiet location with a shared kitchen. New paint and carpet. Parking. Available now.

Call (310) 458-7737 ext. 104

SANTA MONICA SCENE °CALENDAR EDITION

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2002

TODAY'S EVENTS

Farmer's Market every Wednesday and Saturday. 9am to 2pm, Arizona between Second and Fourth Streets. Come and enjoy one of the largest and best farmer's markets in California!

The Santa Monica Red Cross will host a Big Holiday Boutique today from 9am to 5pm at 1450 11th Street (between Broadway and Santa Monica Blvd.) Local artisans will come together to sell their unique handmade creations just in time for the holidays. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the American Red Cross of Santa Monica.

Lost Angels will have a holiday photo fundraiser from 10am to 7pm at Ultra House on the Third Street Promenade. (between Wilshire and Arizona) Pets and people welcome. \$20.00 donation per 8 x 10 photo pose with the Angels. For more information (310)260-3301.

Maurice Sendak Days. Saturday, December 7 and 14. 11am to 2pm, Third St. Promenade. Skirball Cultural Center will promote its installation of works by Maurice Sendak by hosting costumed Sendak characters to meet and greet children. To complement the event, Barnes & Noble will host a reading of Sendak's works for children.

Weekly Storytime, 11:00 a.m. Come to Barnes & Noble for Saturday readings with the kids! Call 310-260-9110 for more information.

Dodd Art Gallery showing Dafne Nesti "Paintings" and Dodd Jolsapple "New Works". Nov. 17th through Dec. 16th, 5pm to 8pm, 1650 20th Street, Santa Monica. For more information please call (310) 828-5825.

Santa Monica High School Theater Arts Department presents Romeo & Juliet. Friday and Saturday nights at 8:00pm. November 22nd through December 21st. \$10.00 for students, children, and seniors, \$15.00 for adults. Humanities Center Theater at Santa Monica High

School, 601 Pico Blvd. For more information please call (310)458-5939.

Puppetolio! presented by the Santa Monica Puppet & Magic Center. All ages, 3 and up. This musical revue features marionettes, ventriloquism, magic and more. Shows are always followed by a demonstration, Q & A, and a tour of the Puppet workshop and Museum. Saturdays and Sundays at 1pm and 3pm. Wednesdays and Holidays at 1pm. Seats are \$6.50. 1255 2nd Street in Santa Monica. Reservations/Information (310)656-0483. www.puppetmagic.com

MAGICOPOLIS presents HOCUS POCUS! (Fish Bones Choke Us). The stage explodes with a colorful mix of Magic, Special Effects, Sleight of Hand, Comedy and Music that's sure to delight audiences of all ages. At MAGICOPOLIS, 1418 Fourth Street, Santa Monica. Fridays & Saturdays at 8pm, \$20. Saturday & Sundays at 2pm, \$15. For tickets call 310-451-2241.

Santa Monica College - Emeritus College presents Scenes From Theatre. Performances by members of the theater production class. Santa Monica College Concert Hall, 1900 Pico Blvd., 1:30pm. Admission is FREE!

The Red Ribbon Squares, Santa Monica's official square dance club, invites you to enjoy an evening of plus level square dancing, alternating with round dancing, with an A-1 tip during break time. We dance every Saturday at Marine Park from 7:45pm to 10:30pm. Pre-rounds begin at 7:15pm. Admission is \$5 for dancers, including refreshments. Spectators are free. For more information, please call (310)395-3383

The Empty State Theater at 2372 Veteran Ave. in W. Los Angeles proudly presents: "The Fortune Room Lounge Show" A musical improv show featuring the "Stella Ray Trio" and "The Lucky Players". Every Saturday night at 10:00 p.m. Admission is \$10.00, drinks included w/admission. Lots of parking! For information or reservations please call (310)470-3560.

MOVIE °GUIDE

LOEWS CINIPLEX BROADWAY CINEMA

1441 Third St. at Broadway
Empire (R) 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00. **Solaris** (2002) (PG-13) 11:30, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30.
About Schmidt (R) 12:15, 1:15, 3:15, 4:15, 6:15, 7:15, 9:15, 10:15

MANN CRITERION

1313 Third St.
The Ring (PG-13) 12:45, 3:45. **Punch-Drunk Love** (R) 11:45, 2:15, 4:45, 7:30. **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets** (PG) 12:00, 3:30, 7:00, 10:45. **Extreme Ops** (NR) 12:15, 10:05. **Friday After Next** (R) 2:45, 5:00, 7:45, 10:30. **Adaptation** (R) 11:00, 12:30, 2:00, 4:00, 5:00, 7:15, 8:00, 10:15, 11:00.

AMC THEATRE SM 7

1310 3rd Street
Analyze That (R) 11:15, 1:40, 4:20, 7:30, 10:00. **Die Another Day** (PG-13) 12:45, 4:10, 7:20, 10:25. **Drumline** (PG-13) 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 9:45. **Maid in Manhattan** (PG-13) 11:30, 1:20, 2:15, 4:05, 5:15, 7:10, 8:00, 9:50, 10:35. **Star Trek: Nemesis** (PG-13) 11:00, 11:45, 1:50, 2:35, 4:45, 5:30, 7:45, 8:30, 10:40, 11:30.

LANDMARK NU-WILSHIRE

1314 Wilshire Blvd.
Bowling for Columbine (R) 1:30, 4:15, 7:30, 10:15. **Far From Heaven** (PG-13) 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30.

LAEMMLE MONICA

1332 2nd St.
Real Women Have Curves (PG-13) 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00. **Rabbit-Proof Fence** (PG) 12:15, 2:40, 5:05, 7:30, 9:55. **Frida** (R) 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:05. **Evelyn** (PG) 1:00, 3:20, 5:40, 8:00, 10:15.

AERO THEATRE

1328 Montana Ave.
Bloody Sunday 5:00 **Secretary** 7:30, 10:00

ER-0117 67001P 21428 14X