

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

SUPER LOTTO PLUS

20, 26 36, 6, 46

Meganumber: 29

Jackpot: \$27 million

FANTASY 5

21, 26, 27, 28, 36

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 9, 8, 3

Evening picks: 8, 5, 4

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 09, Winning Spirit

2nd Place: 01, Gold Rush

3rd Place: 02, Lucky Star

Race Time: 1:42.39



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Britain's Industrial Christian Fellowship of religious scholars complained in September that people's prayers go disproportionately for teachers and nurses and said it would distribute a set of prayers for the underblessed financial sector under the heading "When did you last pray for your stockbroker?" And in November, the Saudi government set new restrictions on the export of sand, fearing that increased needs of its neighbors (in the reconstruction of Iraq and in Bahrain's reclamation projects into the Persian Gulf) will create a shortage.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I used to be Snow White, but I drifted."

— Mae West (1982 - 1980)

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Got myrrh?



Ross Furukawa/Daily Press

Nativity Scene co-chairman Hunter Jameson admires the scene with his wife Carla after the traditional holiday display's opening ceremony on Sunday. Despite the rain, more than 90 residents came out to celebrate in prayer and song the annual unveiling of the story of Jesus' birth and early childhood. The 14-booth exhibit, which will be displayed until Jan. 1, runs along the west side of Ocean Avenue, from Arizona to Santa Monica Boulevard, and is illuminated through the night for viewing.

Matter of trust: Cops reach out to community

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

PICO NEIGHBORHOOD — Police officials are trying a new approach in attempts to better connect with residents, particularly in this eastside neighborhood, where gunshots seem to ring throughout the streets on a regular basis.

High-ranking Santa Monica Police officials met with members of the Pico Neighborhood Association this past Thursday to explain a neighborhood community policing plan that is designed to unite the two sides and give them a better

understanding of the challenges they face.

Even though the SMPD has been using the community policing model in the neighborhood for more than a decade, it's taking it to another dimension by putting lieutenants directly into the neighborhoods.

PNA board members reluctantly listened to the new plan and said what's being done currently is not enough because people in the neighborhood don't trust police. They want a coalition comprised of

See COPS, page 7

Former Raiders player to stand trial for arson

Smith allegedly set fire to consignment store

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

LAX COURTHOUSE — The February fire that gutted Simply Sofas on Lincoln Boulevard was ignited by oversized water jugs filled with paper and gas, then thrown through a window, police and fire officials testified Friday.

The papers, however, were packed too tightly and didn't fully burn. And when investigators unfolded the paper scraps, they found a collection of bills and other correspondence pointing to Anthony Wayne Smith, a former player for the NFL's Raiders who's being held in custody. He was charged with arson this summer for allegedly starting the fire, which caused \$3.3 million in damages.

That testimony, along with other evidence presented at a preliminary hearing last week, convinced Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Katherine Mader

that there's enough evidence to proceed with Smith's trial. Smith, 36, who is being held on \$1 million bail, is expected to stand trial in February or March.

A standout defensive end for the LA and Oakland Raiders in the 1990s, Smith has been in custody since his July 15 arrest. He faces one count of arson for allegedly setting fire to Simply Sofas, a consignment furniture store in the 2300 block of Lincoln Boulevard. If convicted, he could spend more than a decade in prison.

During Friday's preliminary hearing, Santa Monica police and fire investigators took the stand, describing in detail the fire and the ensuing search for the suspected arsonist. Smith had reportedly sold antique items on consignment at Simply Sofas until his relationship with owner Marilyn Nelson deteriorated in January over a business dispute in which Smith thought he was owed between \$400 and \$1,400.

During the investigation,

See ARSON, page 5

Rent board welcomes suggestions on 3304

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — A public hearing is scheduled for next month to discuss proposed changes to a controversial rent control law, officials decided last week.

The law, which makes it legal for landlords to charge part-time tenants market-rate rents, is being

challenged in court by wealthy tenant and real estate investor Robert Bisno.

A judge last month stayed the law pending trial next year, saying it may be illegal because it allows landlords to set the higher rent level. Members of the Santa Monica Rent Control Board on

See RENT, page 6

Hole for the holidays: Saddam is snagged



SADDAM HUSSEIN

BY CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — U.S. troops captured a haggard Saddam Hussein in a cramped hole near one of his sumptuous palaces Sunday, a humiliating fate for one of history's most brutal dictators. A U.S. official

later said Saddam had been moved to another country, and the Dubai-based Arab TV station Al-Arabiya said he was taken to Qatar.

The man who waged and lost two wars against the United States and its allies was armed with a pistol when captured in a Styrofoam-cov-

ered underground hide-out, but did not resist, the U.S. military said. In the broadcast images, he resembled a desperate fugitive, not an all-powerful president who had ordered his army to fight to the death.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we got

See CAUGHT, page 11

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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Monday, Dec. 15, 2003:

You reach out for others more than ever this year. Your finances will be a prime focus; you'll come up with many different moneymaking ideas. A boss or someone who cares about you starts becoming more of a team player. Together you'll become invincible once you decide on a course of action. A partner or loved one easily could close down because he or she is jealous of the attention you are giving your work. If you care about this relationship, give your sweetie the extra time he or she needs. If single, you might not be ready to form a relationship until fall. You will meet more people at that time and have a greater selection. VIRGO often acts as an authority figure.



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Pace yourself at an easy level. You can count on getting a lot done in a precise and efficient manner. Speak your mind to a boss. Stay on top of conversations. You present a different point of view, and in an appropriate way. Tonight: Put your feet up.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Reach out for others, especially someone who might not have your level of get-up-and-go. This person appreciates your sensitivity to his or her mood right now. You might not realize how much of a difference you make. Tonight: "Playful" is the word.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Remain anchored in what you do. Expenses could go overboard, whether you realize it or not. A partner comes through for you, whether with ideas or just plain old help. You might want to handle a personal matter differently. Tonight: Put your feet up.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Listen to what another person says to you. Feedback gives you new insight and takes you in a new direction. Be open to others who really care about you. Conversations give you a lot of information. Tonight: Get together at your favorite haunt.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★ You might want to discuss finances with greater insight and knowledge. You keep a lot to yourself, adding to the pressure of the moment. You have many great ideas; let others help you by pitching in with their suggestions. Tonight: Pay bills and revise your budget, if need be.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Your smile wins the day. Others are interested in what you say. Be careful, as you have someone around who might have stronger feelings than you would like. Use caution with this person, as you don't want to hurt his or her feelings. Tonight: So what if it is Monday?



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ How you see a situation could change considerably if you remain open to a difficult and rigid boss. You might not be comfortable with this person, but once you start brainstorming, you will like the end results. Let others know how much their opinions mean. Tonight: Sit back and relax.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Where your friends are might be where you want to be. Listen to feedback from a distance, even if it has been a long time coming. Discussions revolve around a key question. Get as much feedback as possible. The more ideas, the better. Tonight: Go out and do what you want.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Deal with others, especially someone who's controlling the purse strings. You might want to curtail your interaction here or separate what's yours from what's his or hers. You really do know what is best for you. Tonight: Your treat.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Talk and express yourself in a more bountiful manner. You like what you hear in return, even if you find a partner a bit difficult. This person might be holding back or closing down, as he or she is so sensitive. Tonight: Read between the lines.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Togetherness seems to be the theme of the day, be it at work or at play. You might want to reveal much more than you have in a long time to a key partner. Take some time off together to run some holiday errands or attend an event. Tonight: Snuggle in.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Reach out to others if they don't find you. Discuss what you want for the long term with those who could be part of making it happen. You might be talking about a Christmas project, or you might be talking about work. Tonight: Say "yes" to a special invitation.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Get festive with Samohi's winter concert

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica High School is getting into the holiday spirit this week. The Samohi music department will present a winter concert at Barnum Hall on the high school campus Tuesday at 7 p.m.

The holiday show will feature performances by the string, concert, chamber and symphony orchestras. Under the direction of conductor Joni Swenson, award-winning young musicians will play a selection of classical works including "Fantasia on a Theme," "Dvorak Symphony 8" and "Scheherazade." A festive percussion ensemble will perform during intermission.

Pre-ordered tickets are \$5 for adults, \$3 for children, students and senior citizens, and may be reserved by calling (310) 395-3204 ext. 407. Tickets also may be purchased for \$7 at the door on the night of the performance.

Santa Claus painting the town red

By Daily Press staff

Santa Claus is coming to town and Santa Monica's firefighters and police officers are leading the way.

Santa and his public safety helpers will be distributing good cheer and thousands of candy canes on Saturday, Dec. 20, as part of the 12th annual "Candy Cane Drive," and everyone is invited to join in the celebration.

Santa's scheduled stops are as follows:

10:45 a.m.-11:15 a.m. Douglas Park — California Avenue and 25th Street
11:30 a.m.-12 p.m. Christine Reed Park — California Avenue and Lincoln Boulevard

12:15 p.m.-12:45 p.m. Third Street Promenade/Santa Monica Place at Broadway
1:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m. Marine Park — Marine Street and 17th Street

1:45 p.m.-2:15 p.m. Clover Park — Ocean Park Boulevard 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.

SM resident donates \$1M to university

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica resident Robert Bellano has donated more than \$1 million to California Lutheran University as part of a campaign to fund scholarships, endowment and a new athletics complex.

Prima Consulting Group has been retained to assist the Thousand Oaks-based liberal arts university with its \$80 million capital campaign, "Now is the Time."

In addition to scholarships and endowment, the campaign will provide funds for the development of an athletics complex on Cal Lutheran's North Campus.

"We are looking forward to helping Cal Lutheran develop relationships with people who are interested in supporting the university and advancing higher education in Southern California," says Demetri Argyropoulos, President and CEO of Prima Consulting Group.

Generate school funding by buying gems

By Daily Press staff

An arts and jewelry sale tonight at a private home will raise money to buy trees for the Santa Monica High School campus.

From 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., at the home of Nicola and Gavin Scott, 250 23rd St., the sale will include such items as: Precious gems jewelry by Tasha and Barbara Starnier; Iconic jewelry by Ani Young of Hawaii, presented by Susan Brenner; Cast gold and silver, precious and semi-precious jewelry by Tzipora Hoynik; Pearls and semi-precious jewelry floating on silk by Nicola Scott.

surf report

Look for 4- to 6-foot, shoulder-high sets, with occasional over-heads of approximately 9 feet. Overall, conditions look poor.

OUTLOOK: On Tuesday, look for 3- to 5-footers, waist- to head-high sets. Fair to good conditions, improving heading into the week.

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

Today the water is:

58°

Sunrise: 6:59 a.m.
Sunset: 4:53 a.m.

	LOW TIDE				HIGH TIDE			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	4:26	3.1	6:42	0.1	1:15	3.4	(10:46)	5.2
SUNDAY	5:40	3.3	7:32	0.3	2:17	3.6	(11:37)	4.8
MONDAY	7:31	3.2	8:23	0.6	3:07	3.9	12:47	4.3
TUESDAY	9:21	2.8	9:14	0.8	3:45	4.2	2:21	3.8
WEDNESDAY	10:40	2.0	10:04	1.1	4:20	4.7	4:00	3.6
THURSDAY	11:39	1.1	10:52	1.3	4:54	5.3	5:24	3.6
FRIDAY	(12:30)	0.1	11:39	1.6	5:30	5.9	6:35	3.8

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The Q Line

U.S. officials and its allies celebrated the capture of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein over the weekend. Hussein was discovered in a cramped hole near one of his sumptuous palaces, a humiliating fate for one of history's most brutal dictators.

During the arrest of Saddam, U.S. troops discovered "descriptive written material of significant value," a U.S. commander told The Associated Press. He declined to say whether the material related to the anti-coalition resistance.

Saddam, who waged and lost two wars

against the U.S. and its allies, could face trial before a new Iraqi tribunal for war crimes. Many feel his capture could have a detrimental effect on the insurgents resisting occupation.

Will the coalition's capture of Saddam Hussein turn the tide in the war with Iraq?

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



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LETTERS

Schools must share the wealth

Editor:

I know it may be discouraging for some parents who know full well that making a donation to their child's school means that some of the money will be distributed to other schools in the name of equity. I am a teacher at one of those schools that would benefit from this proposal. I see a group of caring and active PTA members and families who just can't compete with the money north of (Wilshire) Boulevard. I don't have a classroom aide at my Title I school. However, I know parent donations supplement aides, art teachers, science specialists, etc. at other school sites in the district. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't want to teach anywhere else. It's just that our students don't have the same opportunities and programs that others do. Our kids are all members of the Santa Monica/Malibu community too. Shouldn't we, as a community, help all children succeed? Shouldn't all children have the opportunity to have supplementary programs, classroom supplies and aide support?

Mary Anna Noveck
McKinley School
5th grade teacher

SM not taking brunt of homelessness

Editor:

While it seems at times that Santa Monica is overrun with people who are homeless and much has been said and written about our city's response to the problem, there is a new report out that puts some of the impressions of despair into perspective. The report, titled "Homeless in LA: A Working Paper for the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Los Angeles County," was released last week by the Economic Roundtable. The full report is available online at <http://www.bringlahome.org/reports.htm>.

The report describes characteristics of the homeless population in Los Angeles County in 2002. It provides data on age, sex, ethnicity, family structure, marital status, disability, citizenship, educational attainment, wage and salary income, occupation, causes and duration of homelessness, mobility and more. It also estimates how many homeless people have mental illness, are veterans, have HIV/AIDS, have a history of domestic violence and are youth or emancipated foster youth.

Some of the findings may be surprising to those who think Santa Monica is a Mecca for transients because of our approach to providing some benefits to those without homes. Some of the highlights of the report are:

- An estimated 78,600 people are homeless in LA County on any given night and 253,918 are homeless over the course of one year.
- South Los Angeles has the largest share of homeless residents — 33 percent, while the westside has the smallest share — 2 percent.
- Los Angeles County has become a seedbed of homelessness for other regions, sending out 50 percent more homeless people than it receives.
- Homelessness lasts less than a year for 95 percent of the annual homeless population.
- Two-thirds of homeless welfare recipients are in families, one-third are single.
- 17 percent of homeless adults report a history of active military service. This is

nearly double the 9-percent rate for the rest of the county.

So, despite the claims of some Santa Monicans, it seems that we have a smaller percentage of homeless people in our area than the rest of the county. We are actually exporting, rather than attracting people who are homeless. Homelessness is a temporary state for the vast majority of people, rather than a "profession," and many of those who are not housed are people who have given service to protect and defend our country. In other words — you.

■ 5,000 homeless people in the westside area is still a lot. It is a big problem. But if there are some in our community whose compassion for homeless people has been exhausted, perhaps this new information will give them reasons to rethink their intolerance to support programs that help people who are down, but not out, get back on their feet again. Such programs will never be able to fully "cure" homelessness. That is a much bigger problem that is a manifestation of many societal and personal failings. But they do have a positive impact on many who find the support they need to regain their dignity and find a place to call home. Meanwhile, these figures show that we in Santa Monica aren't being asked to do more than our share to resolve a countywide problem.

I hope your full enjoyment of your blessings this holiday season includes a good measure of generosity of spirit that embraces those who find their blessings harder to count.

Alan Toy
Santa Monica

Better in prison than Santa Monica

Editor:

Yesterday, I read the News of the Weird by Chuck Shepard (SMDP, Dec. 11, page 1)

I am very upset, shocked and appalled. A terrorist who committed such a heinous crime — killed 270 innocent people — now enjoying such a luxurious "retirement" in a four-room suite in England. It means he has free breakfast, free lunch, free dinner and free medical attention. Let's see on the other side, what happened with me? In Budapest, Hungary, in 1946, then I was a 17-year-old student and boy scout. The Soviet KGB arrested all the boy scouts. They were real sadistic beasts. They tortured me. I was in the KGB dungeon for three months. In that cell, there was nothing, no chair, no mattress, no towel — so I slept on the floor. I got twice meals daily, breakfast and dinner. No midday lunch. What was our crime? We sent letters to the Boy Scouts Movement's World Headquarters in London.

In 1956, we had a big uprising against the Soviet tyranny. Hungary is not Kuwait, therefore, no free countries helped us. When the freedom fight was crushed down I had to flee to the free Austria. I was 27. I have been living here in Santa Monica for 46 years. Now I am 74 and I must continue to work. I cannot afford to retire. I am living in a small one-bedroom apartment with my wife. Yes, one bedroom and not a four-room suite. And the rent is \$1,100 per month. I can't find an affordable retirement community. I would be very happy to live in Glasgow's Barlinnie prison.

That would be an ideal retirement. Now the last period of my life is totally dark.

Laszlo Makay
Santa Monica

Tuning out homeless won't make them go away



"As I write these recollections, I feel the streets calling my name, and I am reminded of the Wolfman portrayed in old movies. At night, when the moon was full, his body and soul was possessed by demons; he was powerless to prevent becoming a beast of the night or otherwise. I keep writing in my journal. I believe that something good might come out of all that has happened to me, something useful for all those who were not homeless. Most people shun the homeless. They don't notice the homeless are growing in numbers. Unlike the buffalo of the past, they

will not simply disappear. Why don't we put them out of their misery? Well, to most people they're not even human, they're just litter, animated refuse left on the streets and sidewalks of the world.

Well, world, it's time to turn on your TV sets, time to watch the Wheel of Misfortune for the Homeless. Let's spin. Go ahead, Homeless Guy, spin the wheel of misfortune! Clickity-clackity-click. Where, oh, where will the wheel stop? Will it be a beating from another homeless person? Will it be jail or county hospital or death? Oh, too bad. It won't be a trip to Hawaii or a brand-new car. Click! Look at that! Good fortune for a homeless contestant is not being hassled for a week or so, and that's as good as a Picasso. (A Picasso is a painting, you masterpiece of despair) Applause, please. Everyone, you must applaud!

Come on, all you cool and collected people. It's only Rock 'n' Roll. Get a grip! You're safe. Just give the poor beggars a dime or quarter. They're just there for the

ride, they won't hurt you. They're just aimlessly wandering. Sooner or later, they'll find Nowhere Land, and when they do they'll be no trouble at all. Think to yourself for a moment, were they ever human? Did they have parents? A wife and children? Or do you think they were put on display for you to stare at, so you can feel horror and disgust? What do you think?

I wonder, too, sometimes. The homeless weren't born that way. They didn't just appear at age 20 or 30. Some people think I was hatched under a rock at age 45, that I just appeared with no past, and no future. They think I'm a leper, an outcast from society. Click! Oh, I see, they turned off the TV so they don't have to listen to this any more, but I won't quit writing! One day, like Howland Owl's shout, my words will be heard.

Only those that have walked in my shoes can know how I felt, after a year and a half — still felt. It's maddening. You fight to keep sane, all the time certain you will fall victim to insanity or suicide. It's

a struggle to find food, or bathe. Tormented, I prayed for help, but like the good book says, "God only helps those who help themselves."

This is an excerpt from a book by a homeless author named Jay Brady. The title is "Home Sweet Homeless". He has documented the plight of homelessness in his travels throughout the Southwest and Santa Monica. It is a very powerful book with an excellent portrayal of homelessness. He is working on his second book now. I am trying to get Midnight Special to pick it up, but you can e-mail me if you wish to purchase a copy. I think if you read this book you will be very enlightened as to the reality of homelessness and see that it shows that not all of who are homeless are without talent and worth to society.

(Charles Springer is a freelance writer and artist living and working in Santa Monica. He can be reached at Chaz_59@yahoo.com)

LOCAL



Defense pokes holes in case against ex-Raider

ARSON, from page 1

SMPD Sgt. Robert Amada said he went to Smith's home in Marina Del Rey, where he lives with his wife and two children. He said Smith, at first, was defensive and thought Nelson had pointed investigators in his direction. But when Amada showed Smith photocopies of the mail with his name on the envelopes that were found inside the water jugs that started the fire, Smith's tone changed, Amada testified.

"He put his hand on the counter, dropped his head, and began to weep and sob," Amada testified. "He said, 'I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.'"

Despite that testimony, Michael Houchin, Smith's lawyer, maintained his client's innocence. He poked holes in the prosecution by questioning the investigators about other possible suspects and sources where the pieces of mail that bore Smith's name and address could have come from.

"The defense is, Mr. Smith had nothing to do with it," Houchin said after the trial, adding that Smith used old pieces of mail

along with newspaper and other papers to package various items he brought to the store to sell. Those items may have been put into a dumpster near the window where the plastic water jugs were thrown in, Houchin said.

Also expected to be a part of Houchin's defense is that a worker at Simply Sofas was fired just months before the fire for soliciting private interior design business while doing deliveries for the furniture shop. That worker was upset and may have had a motive to start the fire, Houchin said. What's more, Houchin said he plans to show that several, smaller fires had been set in neighborhood dumpsters before the Simply Sofas fire.

Houchin said there also is an eyewitness who talked to a security guard on the night of the fire and told police that a "skinny" man broke the window at Simply Sofas and threw the jugs in. Smith stands 6'4" tall and weighs 320 pounds, according to sheriff's records.

Finally, Houchin said the five-gallon water jugs used to start the fire were the same kind used inside the store, but dif-

ferent than the 2.5-gallon jugs used at home by Smith.

"I can see why they think it's Mr. Smith," Houchin said after the hearing. "I can also see why the evidence points away from Mr. Smith."

Smith, dressed in an orange prison suit and handcuffed to his seat, sat quietly next to Houchin through the proceedings. Though he didn't speak during the trial, Smith asked the judge afterwards if his wife could bring to the jail XXXL-sized thermal underwear for him to wear. Jail workers told Smith he could only get the long underwear if a judge ordered it and the items were brought in a sealed package, Smith said.

Houchin added, "He's freezing his fanny off" before Judge Mader agreed to assist.

Throughout the proceedings, Smith's wife, a family friend, and a religious leader from St. Augustine's By-the-Sea, an Episcopal church in downtown Santa Monica where the Smiths regularly attend, sat in the courtroom.

Smith's wife declined to comment. But

friends and colleagues have described Smith as a family man who regularly volunteered at area schools and youth sports organizations. They said there is no way Smith would start a fire — especially over such a small business dispute.

Earlier this year, Smith was denied a reduction of his \$1 million bail, which was set high because of the millions of dollars in damages the fire caused. That bail reduction hearing was handled by his former attorney, Ted Yamamoto. About six weeks ago, Smith fired Yamamoto and hired Houchin to defend him. Yamamoto contends he was let go because Smith didn't like his private investigator.

Houchin just finished a highly publicized case defending Angelina Rodriguez, 35, of Montebello. A jury last month recommended Rodriguez be executed for allegedly poisoning her husband to collect his \$250,000 life insurance policy. Houchin was assigned that case by lottery, because he belongs to an organization of attorneys that defend death penalty cases.



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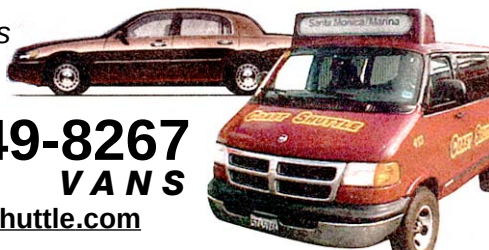
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LOCAL

Board's 3304 changes called 'hasty reaction'

RENT, from page 1

Thursday discussed amending regulation 3304 so that the board itself would be able to set the new rent level.

"Staff is making a proposal to attempt to address the court's concerns," rent board attorney Doris Ganga said.

How much to charge part-time tenants would be determined by one of two methods. If the rent of one or more similar units in the same complex had been raised in the past three years, the average of those increases would be used. If not, the increase would be based on the market-rate rent charged for comparable apartments nearby, with some flexibility provided for amenities.

The amended law would allow either party to appeal the amount of the rent increase and the implementation of any decision would be stayed pending a final decision, Ganga said.

Allan Abshez, attorney for Bisno, blasted the board for considering the change. He was the only member of the public to speak.

"We have somewhat of a mess now because people's rents have been increased, some people have been displaced, the court has decided the regulation was invalid from the time it was initiated," he said, adding, "It seems to us that this is really rather a very hasty reaction to the court's ruling. It will not salvage regulation 3304, and it will simply

cause more disruption and litigation."

Bisno stands to lose thousands of dollars each month if the law is upheld. Though he lives in an exclusive enclave of Beverly Hills, he also keeps a rent-controlled penthouse apartment at the Shores towers south of Ocean Park Boulevard, according to documents filed at City Hall by his landlord Douglas Emmett & Co.

With rent control, Bisno pays just over \$1,000 for his two-bedroom apartment. But similar units command nearly \$5,000 on the open market, Douglas Emmett officials have said.

Abshez criticized the board for supporting the law, which he said doesn't promote affordable housing and may even be illegal because it hasn't been approved by voters.

"The board should not become further enmeshed in this controversy, which does nothing to further affordability," he said. "It does nothing for tenants. It just puts money in landlords' pockets and it was not my understanding that that was the board's business."

City Hall officials disagree.

Mary Ann Yurkonis, the rent board's administrator, pointed to various previous actions by the board to change the amount of money charged to tenants, like after the 1994 earthquake, when widespread apartment damages led to reduced rents.

The rent control board voted unanimously to hold a public hearing on the matter Jan. 8.

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LOCAL



Police planning to keep door open for residents

COPS, from page 1

community members, police officers, city officials and clergy formed that will address the violence, as well as misperceptions that some residents have of police.

"In the past few years, there have been problems. Families feel they have been harassed and unfairly treated. We want to sit down at the same table, discussing the issues," said PNA member Irma Carranza. "We feel it's essential to work with the police department in a positive way."

That's exactly what the SMPD plans to do, said Chief Deputy Phil Sanchez. There are three lieutenants assigned to the Pico neighborhood who serve as emissaries for SMPD Chief James T. Butts Jr. Taking the community policing model a step further, officers will meet with community members to discuss the issues, work toward solutions and keep communication open and constant.

"Any police department relies on trust, and relationships are built on trust," Sanchez said. "They have to be in order to be effective."

Before the neighborhood community policing model, a beat officer and community relations officer regularly met with residents. But those officers didn't have the resources and the ability to create change to assist their concerns immediately because decision-making had to go through the SMPD chain of command. With the new program, lieutenants will be working directly with the citizens and are able to make decisions without having to engage in the bureaucratic process.

"We will hear the concerns directly from community members," said SMPD Lt. Frank Fabrega. "We are part of management and have the ability to make decisions to bring about change."

Maria Loya, a PNA board member, and others said they think the SMPD's tactic of identifying parolees and those on probation through its close relationship with the Department of Corrections is bordering on harassment.

"It creates a division in the community," she said. "Sweeps and those tactics aren't part of a community policing model ... they need to rethink their tactics and their approach."

She pointed to earlier this summer when shots were fired in five separate incidents within a month in the Pico neighborhood. Based on its own investigation and information provided by parole and probation officers, SMPD conducted several searches within the neighborhood that resulted in the arrests of six people for parole and probation violations. They were sent back into the prison system and in some of the searches weapons were recovered.

It's a tactic that the SMPD believes is effective and, despite criticism from some in the community who say it's unjust or unfair, police defend their policies.

PNA board member Gina deBaca said the result is that families are targeted by gang members when the parolees are scooped up by police and their arrests are publicized in the media.

"That's why a coalition is important, to see what the community is going through," she said.

Fabrega, who attended Thursday's meeting, said he is anxious to get the dis-

cussions underway. More than anything, he plans to listen to the group's concerns and then work toward addressing them.

"We look forward to working with all the neighborhoods in the southeast section of Santa Monica," said Fabrega, who is assigned to the southeast region of the city, which extends east of 11th Street and south of Olympic Boulevard to the southern city limit. SMPD Lts. P.J. Guido and Ray Cooper also are assigned to the area.

Fabrega said both sides need to look at how to make the neighborhood more safe.

"They need to understand that trust is a two-way street," he said. "We are here to work with the community. We all need to sit down and be accountable for our behavior and actions."

The neighborhood community policing model was first used last year as a pilot program on Main Street. Police quickly learned that issues concerning residents and merchants changed from block to block — one segment on the north end had concerns about the homeless, others had concerns about traffic, lighting and noise.

"As you move through the community, the issues will change back and forth," Fabrega said.

Police presence in the Pico neighborhood is higher per capita than anywhere else in the city. A substation there has four full-time officers and a sergeant, all specially trained in gang culture, as well as in prevention and enforcement.

In addition to the substation, regular patrols are done throughout the neighborhood by police. After violent crimes occur, those patrols are increased.

In the past five months, according to Sanchez, the SMPD has initiated 1,188 contacts with residents in the neighborhood and responded to 1,322 calls for service — 2,510 contacts total. There has been more than 3,000 hours of enforcement by officers assigned to the area, 2,278 hours of overtime and 61 hours of air patrol, via helicopter, in the neighborhood in the last five months.

PNA board member Wes Terry said despite beefed up enforcement and community policing, the violence — particularly at 17th Street and Delaware Avenue — continues. He said while the police and the community are responsive to the recent gunshots, city officials have remained silent.

"In the past two months, we've seen a lot of action and I see nothing from the (city council) saying they are going to do something," he said. "We have this ongoing violence ... it's only a matter of time before a child is killed or an innocent bystander ... it's time to do something different."

Loya said she left the meeting encouraged and optimistic about building a new relationship with the SMPD, but also added that the initial phase of it will be difficult because the trust has to be formed.

"I hope it's more than just talking about it and using community policing as a public relations move, but actually implementing it," she said. "The fact that they are talking about it is a good first step."

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STATE

Napa Valley wineries try to pocket 'pink dollars'

BY MICHELLE LOCKE

Associated Press Writer

ST. HELENA — They were a small Napa Valley winery with a well-regarded product but a slim advertising budget. So, Merryvale Vineyards decided to try something different — reach out to gay consumers.

Strategically, that makes sense. Going after the "pink dollars" of gay and lesbian consumers could help producers chase away the doldrums of a world wine glut, marketing experts say.

Still, there are some caveats: Rule No. 1, there's no such thing as "gay" wine. Rule No. 2, if you're going to market to a particular demographic, you'd better not be pushing plunk.

"First and foremost, you've got to make good wine," says Felipe A. Barragan, co-owner of the Chateau de Vie bed and breakfast in Calistoga and a Merryvale customer.

Historically, wine companies — unlike the beer and spirits industries — have aimed most of their advertising dollars at the mainstream, and that hasn't changed. Still, over the past five years or so there has been a small but persistent trend of marketing wine to gays, a development that is taking on new significance with the sales pressures of the glut, a slow economy and attractively priced imports.

"The challenge right now for wine

companies is there are so many brands that it's not good enough that they simply be just another label on the shelf. They want to find a situation where they can have the almost undivided attention of the consumer," says Paul Wagner, owner of the Napa-based Balzac Communications & Marketing.

Marketing to the gay community can be successful; Wagner says research has shown gays and lesbians — estimated to have billions in buying power — are likely to buy from companies that support their community.

Still, a producer won't get far if they're perceived to be pandering. No one likes to be talked down to.

"People here are not into gimmicks. They know what quality wine is," says Ken McDonald co-owner of Friendly Spirits in San Francisco's predominantly gay Castro district.

Successful selling to a niche community means getting to know its members, supporting their causes and researching their tastes. Just slapping "gay friendly" on company literature won't do it.

"There's definitely those businesses that get that there's a lot of money out there to be had, but they're not doing the homework that Merryvale has," says Barragan.

Merryvale's decision to reach out to gay consumers, made at the instigation of pro-

prietor Jack V. Schlatter and President Peter K. Huwiler, is part sales strategy, part social statement. "It's not just a marketing thing, it's also a community outreach," says marketing director Jean DeLuca.

Merryvale began about a year ago by contacting the gay community and supporting various causes with fund-raisers and other events, including some gay themed celebrations in the winery's historic cask room.

For their advertising campaign, they took their mainstream ads and tweaked the copy a bit — an ad showing a tableful of candlelit diners was framed by the slogan, Celebrate. Come out to Merryvale.

"We want to get across that we get it," says DeLuca.

One outfit taking a no-holds-barred approach to marketing is the gay owned Rainbow Ridge Wines, a small winery launched in March 2003 with a wine made from Alicante Bouschet, a red wine grape.

Co-owner Dennis Costa says he and partner Tom Beatty picked the relatively obscure grape because "we wanted to go after something that's a little different, just like we are."

Rainbow Ridge's Alicante Bouschet, which got a 91 rating from Wine Enthusiast this summer is "fruit forward with a fabulous finish — and we mean it," Costa says with a chuckle.

Still, he adds, Rainbow Ridge, which recently brought out a chardonnay, is just

as interested in selling to straight drinkers.

"People say, 'Oh, gay wine.' And we go, 'No. It's just a good wine made by a gay owned company,'" Costa says.

Judging the success of going after the gay market can be difficult, since money knows no orientation.

Still, wineries say they see results. At Clos De Bois, marketing director Ruth Souroujon says she's received hundreds of positive e-mails in response to a winery ad running in gay publications that shows a field of vines being irrigated, with the rising mist creating the effect of a rainbow, a symbol of gay pride. A low-key message at the bottom of the picture notes the company's support for the NAMES Project and AIDS Memorial Quilt.

The feedback also is positive at Merryvale, where same-sex couples have joined the wine club. Occasionally, DeLuca is asked if she worries about a backlash.

"I don't know what there is to worry about," she says. "We're not saying that we're gay, we're not saying that the owner's gay or the president's gay. We're saying that we're gay welcoming and anyone who's uncomfortable with that — OK, fine."

"Throughout history, the spirit of community has thrived on good food and wine and friendship," says DeLuca. "We want to include the gay community in the Napa Valley celebration."

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NATIONAL



Furry Christmas: Pets getting into holiday spirit

BY MICHELLE RUSHLO

AP Business Writer

PHOENIX — This is clearly not the Manchester terrier's idea of fun.

Held in the gloved grasp of "Santa Paws," Nikki is trying to wriggle free, ears back, pointed nose waving to and fro.

A photographer's assistant squeaks a yellow duck-shaped toy and Nikki's owner, Cheryl Siewert, coos encouragingly to get the black-and-brown pooch to hold still. He obliges only momentarily, but Siewert is all smiles.

The photo with jolly Ol' Saint Nick, who is actually an animal shelter volunteer in a red suit and white beard, has become an annual tradition for Nikki, whose five photos hang in ornaments from Siewert's tree. "We take these pictures so we can know just how cute they can be," she said.

Siewert isn't the only one giving her pet the holiday treatment once reserved for human family members. Pet supply stores, which have enjoyed strong growth even in the soft U.S. economy, are doing a booming business in holiday and seasonal gifts for pets as owners stock up on sweaters, antler headbands, jingle bell collars and other holiday items.

"This year, it's just proliferating beyond anything," said Bob Vetere, the chief operating officer of the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association. "It's just exponential. It's beyond anything we've ever seen before."

Americans are expected to have spent \$31 billion on their pets this year, including veterinary services, food and supplies, according to APPMA, an industry group. That's up from \$17 billion in 1994, with a market that continued to grow during the economic downturn.

The industry doesn't track numbers of holiday-themed products, but Vetere said the number and variety have grown substantially in the last few years.

The gift giving isn't confined to December either, he said. "You can't believe the stuff they have for Valentine's Day. It seems like it's just any excuse for a pet gift."

When San Diego-based Petco surveyed its customers online, it found more than 85 percent said they would buy their pets a holiday gift. Sixteen percent said they would spend more than \$100.

Americans are "adding their pets to their gift lists," said Alisa Bartmess, the cat-toy buyer for Phoenix-based PetsMart.

Pet supply companies say increasing numbers of pet owners think of themselves as "pet parents," meaning they treat their dogs and cats more like family than critters.

Siewert and a string of pet owners who had their dogs' photos taken at a PetsMart store in north Phoenix agreed.

"He's an only child," said Rosemary Connell of her German shepherd mix Bosco. She and her husband, John, brought the puppy in for obedience school and a Santa photo since it's Bosco's first Christmas with them.

The Phoenix couple said Bosco gets the family treatment from extended members of their family too, with some relatives in New York shipping gifts for Bosco.

Even some reluctant pet owners concede they have started treating their animals like family.

"I didn't want a pet, but now that we have one ... I'm growing attached to him," said Norma Shipp, who came from nearby Cave Creek to see Santa Paws with her three children and a fluffy 4-pound Maltese clad

in a blue sweater.

Apparel — ranging from red Santa suits to collars with red and green lights — are among the season's most popular purchases, said Kevin Drouse, a PetsMart store director.

And the number of choices keeps growing, said Shawn Underwood, a Petco spokesman. The variety of antlers, Santa hats and sweaters has grown dramatically in recent years, he said.

Even upscale retailers have begun offering apparel for the holidays. British clothier Burberry offers \$225 lamb-swool check collar dog coats in its holiday catalogue. Ralph Lauren sells \$95 cashmere sweaters in four colors and a toiletry collection that includes dog cologne.

Not all dogs are fond of being well-dressed in holiday sweaters or other decorative items, Don Cowan, director of Petco corporate communications, acknowledged.

"Some of these things we do for ourselves. Let's be real," he said. "We, humans, tend to like our pets to look nice."

But pet supply sellers are offering a variety of other holiday gifts that dogs and cats might find more appealing, ranging from plastic candy canes full of dog biscuits to animal-shaped catnip toys with Santa hats.

Petco's Underwood said all this holiday gift-giving is even affecting people who don't have pets. His company's stores see an increase in the number of gift cards sold around the holidays, and the company suspects they're being purchased by family and friends as gifts for other people's pets.

"What do you buy for the pet who has everything?" he said.

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NATIONAL

Centrist Democrats finding themselves stuck in middle

BY WILL LESTER
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Times are tough for centrist Democrats.

Their favored candidate, Joe Lieberman, is struggling in his presidential bid. Movement co-founder Al Gore just backed the man they most fear, Howard Dean. Ralph Nader may launch a third-party bid. And economic signals are pointing up for President Bush.

In the 1990s, centrists were riding high as Bill Clinton, a card-carrying member of the Democratic Leadership Council, occupied the White House and seemed to have perfected a political balancing act of holding onto the Democratic base while taking a few perennial Republican cudgels, such as welfare, off the table.

Now, the top Democrat is Dean, a fierce opponent of the Iraq war who has promised to roll back all of Bush's tax cuts. In May, leaders of the DLC suggested that the former Vermont governor is an elitist liberal in the tradition of George McGovern and Walter Mondale. Their memo said that wing of the Democratic party is "defined principally by weakness abroad and elitist interest-group liberalism at home."

In this challenging political climate, party centrists worry that Democrats are on the verge of suffering collective amnesia.

"What I can't understand is why our party won't heed the lessons of the one Democrat elected and re-elected to the White House in six decades," said Al From, founder and chief executive of the DLC.

Republicans are all too eager to criticize Dean for his stance against the war and Bush's tax cuts, and for signing a civil-unions bill during his tenure as governor — policy stands that appeal to the Democratic base.

Centrists are quick to point out that the two Democratic candidates whose campaigns were directly aimed at the party's core voters, McGovern in 1972 and Mondale in 1984, lost 49 states apiece.

After the 1984 loss, party activists such as From and key party leaders developed a strategy to move the Democratic Party

toward the political center. It helped get Clinton elected twice before Gore set a more populist tone late in the 2000 race. Then came the 2004 campaign.

"The idea that you win elections in the middle is going right out the window," said James Campbell, a specialist in presidential campaigns at the University of Buffalo-SUNY. Democratic candidates like Lieberman, Dick Gephardt and — to a lesser extent — John Edwards and John Kerry, who have tried to position themselves in the political center on the war and on Bush's tax cuts, have struggled to gain traction with voters.

Despite fears the GOP will paint Dean as too liberal, he has a gubernatorial record of balancing Vermont's budget and supporting gun owners' rights. And Dean's campaign manager Joe Trippi said the centrists may be missing the point of Clinton's success.

"You could make the argument that Bill Clinton winning elections might have something to do with him being one of the most gifted politicians and communicators ever, regardless of his positions," Trippi said.

Dean's candidacy is bringing new voters into the process who could strengthen the party in this election and in future years, Trippi said, adding that Dean's success raising money through the Internet will help him compete with overwhelming spending by the Bush campaign.

Still, some centrists believe Dean's style is a throwback to past Democratic campaigns that have alienated swing voters.

"We spent two decades in the political wilderness because the middle class didn't trust us with their values or their taxes," said Bruce Reed, a former Clinton aide who is president of the DLC. "I, for one, don't want to go back there."

Democratic candidates have to actively remind voters they share their values on everything from faith to families, added Sen. Evan Bayh, the DLC's chairman.

"It's a combination of things," said Bayh, D-Ind., "that leads people to conclude that 'Democrats just don't understand folks like us.'"

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WORLD BRIEFLY

United Europe talks break down

By The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — A summit to forge a constitution for a united, post-Cold War Europe collapsed this past weekend after leaders failed to agree on sharing power within an expanded European Union.

The deal-breaker was a proposal to abandon a voting system accepted in 2000 that gave Spain and incoming EU member Poland almost as much voting power as Germany, which has a population equal to those two countries combined.

European leaders sought to minimize the damage, saying talks would resume next year, but the debacle leaves the EU in turmoil as it prepares for one of the greatest challenges in its 46-year history — accepting new members from the former Communist east.

The failure scuttles, for the time being, the EU's plan for a new president, foreign minister and a greater profile on the global stage to rival that of the United States.

It also raised doubts about the bloc's future direction and fears over its cohesion. French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder spoke of a core group of countries pressing ahead with closer integration — a scenario others warned would divide the union.

U.S. hopes troops won't take money and run

By The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Faced with the desertion of nearly half the new Iraqi army, the U.S. military is thinking about raising the pay scale for Iraqi soldiers as it trains more to join the force, the commander of U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq said.

U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez said the major reason for the defections of Iraqi soldiers was pay, specifically allowances for married soldiers who were struggling to support their families on \$60 a month.

Of 700 soldiers originally in the new army, only 400 are left.

Sanchez said a separate, 550-member force drawn from militias affiliated with Iraqi political parties was being trained to fight insurgents in Baghdad. The unit, he

said, was part of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and would work under the command of the 1st Armored Division, the U.S. military unit in charge of the Iraqi capital.

The new unit, whose members were recruited as individuals rather than party militiamen, has been under discussion for months between major political groups and the U.S.-led occupation authorities. The rationale behind it is that coalition forces, who are fighting Saddam Hussein loyalists, would benefit from the experience of those who have fought the ousted dictator in the past.

Scientists warn of horrific worldwide flu

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — As bad as this year's flu season is, it hasn't brought the worldwide outbreak known as a pandemic. But experts warn that a pandemic is coming, it's just a question of when.

Many Americans haven't experienced the overwhelming crush of patients at hospitals and doctors' offices and the widespread fear a flu pandemic could bring. And by historical pattern, Dr. Greg Poland of the Mayo Clinic said it's about time for the next one.

There have been three in the past 100 years, igniting in 1918, 1957 and 1968. There's no way to predict when the next one will appear.

It's all up to a virus that is variable and fickle, constantly changing its genetic makeup, and the time when it hits upon a combination that lets it take off worldwide is a "roll of the genetic dice," said Dr. William Schaffner of Vanderbilt University.

It's estimated that in the industrialized nations alone, the next pandemic is likely to send 1 million to 2.3 million people to the hospital and kill 280,000 to 650,000, according to the World Health Organization. Its impact will probably be greatest in developing countries.

'Willy' finally free

By The Associated Press

OSLO, Norway — For kids, Keiko the killer whale was the charming hero of "Free Willy." For biologists, he

was the focus of fierce debate on whether captive animals could be returned to the wild. Keiko, who died of pneumonia this week, never strayed far from humans, keeping company with them in a Norwegian fjord to the end.

Keiko's apparent love of human company — and his popularity — frustrated handlers' dreams that he would one day leave them in search of food on his own. Millions of dollars were spent trying to teach him to survive, but he didn't bond with other whales, apparently feared swimming under ice and died less than two years after he was freed.

Keiko's handlers noticed on Thursday he had become listless, and the six-ton orca died Friday afternoon despite veterinarians' efforts to save him.

"It was pretty sudden," his animal care specialist, Dane Richards, told The Associated Press. He said Keiko's handlers went out to check on him during a late afternoon blizzard and he was still alive. Two hours later, he had died.

Afghans begin hammering out constitution

By The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Delegates assembling from every corner of Afghanistan this weekend faced tough debate in hammering out the first post-Taliban constitution, the bedrock of what Afghans hope will be a better life after years of war.

Under intense security, some 500 representatives — from village mullahs to Western-educated exiles — must work out the role of Afghan women, Islam's place in politics and the sharing of power in a nation accustomed to fighting over it.

The constitutional loya jirga, or grand council, which opens on Sunday, is a key step in the two-year drive to stabilize the country under an empowered central government, and will lead to landmark national elections planned for June.

While all the delegates have arrived without reported incident after last-minute elections in the provinces, the U.S. military has warned that Taliban militants plan to disrupt the gathering.

The strength of the presidency appears the most contentious issue. U.S.-backed President Hamid Karzai favors a strong chief executive while opponents have pushed for a prime minister who would share power.

Karzai this week said he would not run in next year's elections if a strong prime minister's post is created.

Bush: 'In Iraq, a dark and painful era is over'

CAUGHT, from page 1

him," U.S. administrator L. Paul Bremer told a news conference. "The tyrant is a prisoner."

"He was just caught like a rat," said Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierno, whose 4th Infantry Division troops staged the raid. "When you're in the bottom of a hole you can't fight back."

During the arrest of Saddam, U.S. troops discovered "descriptive written material of significant value," another U.S. commander told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity. He declined to say whether the material related to the anti-coalition resistance.

Saddam, who could face trial before a new Iraqi tribunal for war crimes, was defiant when top Iraqi officials visited him in captivity hours later — people at the meeting said he refused to admit to human rights abuses.

Saddam will now "face the justice he denied to millions," said President Bush, whose troops and intelligence agents had been searching in vain for Saddam since April. "In the history of Iraq, a dark and painful era is over."

U.S. officials declined to specify Saddam's whereabouts on Sunday, but made clear he faces intensive interrogation — foremost, what he knows about the ongoing insurgency against the U.S.-led occupation, and later about his regime's unconventional weapons programs.

The raid by 600 soldiers and special

forces took place Saturday night at a farm in Adwar, 10 miles from Saddam's home town of Tikrit, less than three hours after the pivotal tip was received from an Iraqi.

The informant was a member of a family close to Saddam," Odierno told reporters in Tikrit. "Finally we got the ultimate information from one of these individuals."

After a helicopter took Saddam to Baghdad, U.S. officials brought in former regime officials, including deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz, to confirm Saddam's identity, a U.S. official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

Whether Saddam's capture would curtail the insurgency was unclear. Bush cautioned that more anti-coalition attacks were expected, and Odierno said the lack of communications equipment in the hide-out indicated Saddam was not commanding the resistance.

Eager to prove to Iraqis that Saddam was in custody, the U.S. military showed video of the ousted leader, haggard and gray-bearded, as a military doctor examined him. In Baghdad, radio stations played jubilant music and some bus passengers shouted, "They got Saddam! They got Saddam!"

In northern Kirkuk, eight people were killed and 80 wounded by shots fired in the air during celebrations of the capture, said hospital official Shehab Ahmed.

"I'm very happy for the Iraqi people. Life is going to be safer now," said Yehya Hassan, 35, of Baghdad. "Now we can start a new beginning."

But some residents of Adwar recalled fondly how Saddam used to swim in the nearby Tigris River and bemoaned the capture of the leader who donated generously to area residents.

"This is bad news to all Iraqis," said Ammar Zidan, 21. "Even if they captured Saddam Hussein, we are all Saddam Hussein. We want freedom and independence from the Americans."

Saddam was captured almost five months after his sons, Qusai and Odai, were killed July 22 in a gunbattle with U.S. troops in the northern city of Mosul. Coalition officials hoped the sons' deaths would weaken the Iraqi resistance; instead the guerrilla campaign escalated.

In the latest attack — before Saddam's capture was announced — a suspected suicide bomber detonated explosives in a car outside a police station Sunday morning west of Baghdad, killing at least 17 and wounding 33, the U.S. military said. Also Sunday, a U.S. soldier died while trying to disarm a roadside bomb south of the capital — the 453rd soldier to die in Iraq.

Saddam was one of the world's most-wanted fugitives, along with Osama bin Laden, the leader of the al-Qaida terrorist network who has not been caught despite a manhunt since November 2001.

The United States put a \$25 million bounty for Saddam, as it did for bin Laden, but it was not known immediately if anyone has a claim to the money. Lt.

Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top U.S. military commander in Iraq, said he could not give any information on the reward.

U.S. troops found Saddam hiding in an underground crawl space at the walled compound, Odierno said. The entrance to the hide-out — covered with Styrofoam, rugs and dirt — was a few feet from small, mud-brick hut where Saddam had been staying.

Saddam was "very disoriented" as soldiers brought him out of the hole, Odierno said. A Pentagon diagram showed the hiding place as a 6-foot-deep vertical tunnel, with a shorter tunnel branching out horizontally from one side. A pipe to the concrete surface at ground level provided air.

Two other Iraqis — described as low-level regime figures — were arrested in the raid, and soldiers found two Kalashnikov rifles, a pistol and \$750,000 in \$100 bills.

Sanchez saw Saddam overnight and said the deposed leader "has been cooperative and is talkative." He described Saddam as "a tired man, a man resigned to his fate."

"He didn't seem apologetic. He seemed defiant, trying to find excuses for the crimes in the same way he did in the past," said Adel Abdel-Mahdi, a senior official of a Shiite Muslim political party who, along with other Iraqi leaders, visited Saddam in captivity.

COMICS

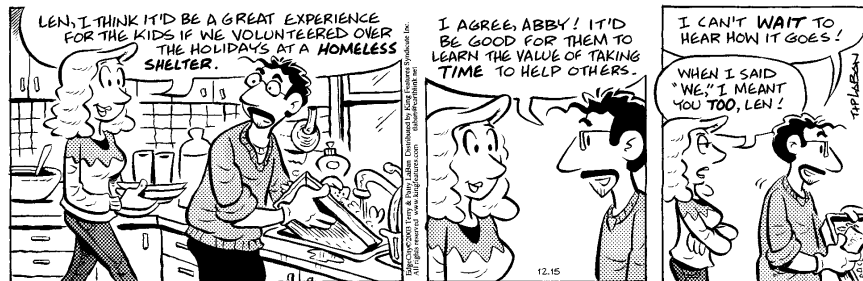
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- 5 Sketched
- 9 Struck from copy
- 10 Flowers for Valentine's Day
- 12 Having debts
- 13 Open a bottle
- 14 Exhibited
- 16 Simile center
- 17 Destroy
- 18 Occur
- 21 Hotel amenity
- 22 Oil container
- 23 Slogan
- 24 Picky
- 26 Scoundrel
- 29 Geometric diamonds
- 30 Major —
- 31 Atmosphere makeup
- 32 Slopes regular
- 34 Central
- 37 Deport
- 38 Because of
- 39 Trees with needles

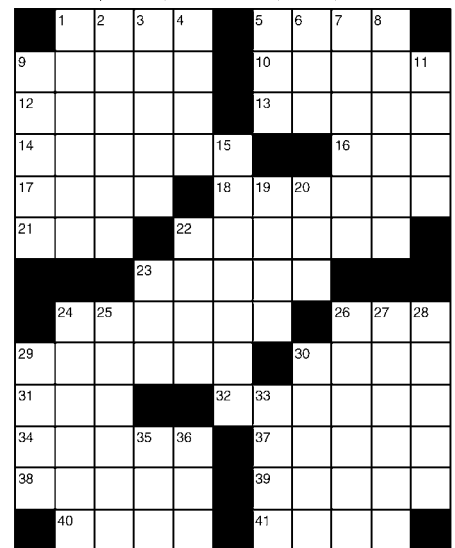
DOWN

- 40 Ask for divine help
- 41 Exam
- 1 Assured
- 2 "Twelfth Night" role
- 3 Bolshevik leader
- 4 Border
- 5 Joanne of film
- 6 Guitarist Wood
- 7 Getaway
- 8 Sneaky one
- 9 Portals
- 11 Bridge
- 15 Doodad
- 19 Pretentious
- 20 Paid player
- 22 Block-head
- 23 May honoree
- 24 Bar exercise
- 25 Jack of rhyme
- 26 Spring birds
- 27 Charm
- 28 Big books
- 29 Foray
- 30 The South
- 33 Maintained
- 35 Greek letter
- 36 Singer Orbison



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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Former Fugee gets a bit Grinchy at Christmas show

By The Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — During a Christmas benefit concert at the Vatican, Grammy-winning singer Lauryn Hill launched into an unscheduled tirade against priests who abuse children, according to news reports Sunday.

Hill read a statement criticizing the church and its leaders during the Saturday night concert, where she was a featured performer.

Several Italian newspapers on Sunday ran translations of the statement, which was delivered in English. They quoted her as saying there was "no acceptable explanation for defending the church."

"I realize some of you may be offended by what I'm saying, but what do you say to the families who were betrayed by the people in whom they believed?" La Repubblica newspaper quoted her as saying.

There was no immediate response Sunday to calls seeking comment from Hill's label, New York-based Columbia Records.

Prelates in the audience included Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the pope's vicar for Rome and the head of the Italian bishops' conference, and his deputy, Monsignor Rino Fisichella. The pope did not attend. The Vatican said Sunday it had no comment.

Hill, a former member of the rap trio the Fugees, set a record for female artists in 1999 when she won five Grammy awards for "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill."

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — Country singer Dolly Parton's book program, which she started seven years ago to inspire preschoolers to read, has reached a milestone with delivery of its millionth book.

Parton was on hand Friday when her Imagination Library gave a copy of "The Little Engine That Could"

to the parents of 1-year-old Cana Waynick of Danville, Ala. Children start receiving books at birth and continue through 60 selections until age 5.

Parton launched the library in 1996 to promote reading among children in Sevier County, the rural community where she grew up in the Great Smoky Mountains. Today, 206 communities in 35 states participate in Imagination Library.

The Grammy-winning singer and actress attended one-room schoolhouses and was the first in her family to graduate from high school. She says she has always enjoyed reading, even though she didn't like school.

"Mama could read," Parton said. "She went up to the eighth grade. She got married when she was in the eighth grade. Daddy didn't go to school. Mama read the Bible to us all the time, and I am sure that's why I started reading."

LOS ANGELES — An actress has sued rapper Snoop Dogg and MTV over an episode of the television show "Doggy Fizzle Televizzle," in which she claimed she was unwittingly made to appear as if she were naked and engaging in sexual relations with another actor.

In a lawsuit filed this weekend, Doris Burns accuses Snoop Dogg, whose real name is Calvin Broadus, and MTV of breach of contract, fraud, invasion of privacy and defamation. She is seeking unspecified damages.

A spokeswoman for MTV, which produced and aired the show, said the company does not comment on pending litigation. Messages left over the weekend for Snoop Dogg's attorney were not returned.

Burns alleges that during the filming of a scene for the sketch comedy show hosted by Snoop Dogg, the show's producers wanted it to appear that she was having sex with an actor playing her husband.

According to the suit, she refused. But she did agree to wear a tank top and underwear and hold the hand of the actor while sitting on the bed.

When the show aired Aug. 31, the episode looked very different because her torso and both actors' hands were blurred, according to the suit.

MCDONALD, Pa. — Residents of this tiny Pittsburgh suburb want to honor songwriter Jay Livingston, co-writer of the popular Christmas song "Silver Bells," with a historic marker at his boyhood home.

Livingston was born Jacob Harold Levinson in 1915 and stayed in McDonald, which had been a booming oil town, through high school.

Local historian Blanche Slates said Livingston's signature tune, which describes a downtown Christmas shopping scene, almost had a different name.

"The original name was supposed to be 'Tinkle Bells,'" Slates said. "But his wife told him the word 'tinkle' has bad connotations."

Livingston and his partner, Ray Evans, wrote several songs and movie scores including "Mona Lisa" from the 1950 movie "Captain Carey USA" and "Silver Bells" — the duo's biggest seller — which first appeared in the 1951 Bob Hope movie "The Lemon Drop Kid."

Livingston, who died at age 86 in 2001, also wrote "Que Sera Sera" for the 1957 film "The Man Who Knew Too Much," and the well-known television theme songs for "Bonanza," "Mister Ed" and "The Bugs Bunny Show."

A decision by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission on whether to put a historical marker at Livingston's boyhood home on Station Street is expected in the spring.

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