

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

Where's the money?

Neighborhood group board remains tight-lipped on its finances

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

The finances of a neighborhood group are still unclear despite the resignations of several board members and a legal case against it demanding that its records be produced.

Ocean Park Community Organization's chairman, Rick Laudati, hasn't fulfilled requests from members for the past three years of financial records. The lack of action has raised questions throughout the community.

A suit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court by OPCO member Tom Fuller in September remains unanswered. Laudati, as well as other board members, decline comment on where OPCO's money is.

Suspicious OPCO members are unsure

if there has been any malfeasance. But as time goes on without action, their curiosity has grown.

"It's the strangest thing ... the longer they delay and refuse to cooperate the more suspicious it becomes," said Gary Clouse, an attorney representing Fuller. "We'll get to the bottom of this. It's just a matter of time."

One board member, Susan Love Loughmiller, isn't talking. She has threatened a lawsuit against the Daily Press over the paper's reporting of the issue. Loughmiller, who was recently appointed after three board members quit last month, e-mailed the newspaper her warning.

She attended an OPCO board meeting last Thursday and declined comment on the pending complaint. She has said in the past it's over inaccuracies.

Laudati has refused to publicly talk about the finances, saying the Daily Press hasn't given the board a fair opportunity

See OPCO, page 7

Proper notice of OPCO meetings questioned

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Members of a neighborhood organization say trying to keep tabs on its activities is difficult.

Some members of the Ocean Park Community Organization say they are frustrated because they rarely know when the board meets. Routinely, the agenda for an upcoming meeting is set and posted on OPCO's Web site just hours before the event.

That was the case last week when the OPCO board met Thursday. Some members who aren't on the board didn't know where and when to show up. The Web site,

See NOTICE, page 7

Santa Monica politics takes walk off its own pier

Appointment removes former City Council candidate from board

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Talk about running for City Council and losing it all.

Abby Arnold did.

Arnold, a former Santa Monica City

Council candidate, lost at the polls on Nov. 5. Then, less than two weeks later, her appointment to the Pier Restoration Corp. wasn't renewed by the City Council.

Was she the target of political retaliation?

The answer may lie in an unusual pre-election split among Santa Monica's ruling party — Santa Monicans for Renters Rights.

Council members appointed Josefina Santiago Aranda, a fellow candidate who was passed over by SMRR as one of its

See POLITICS, page 8

The scene of the nativity



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Top: Katherine Williamson leads the Pilgrim Lutheran School Honor Choir in Christmas songs as one guest listens curled up in a blanket on the ground at Palisades Park on Sunday. The park has been lined with displays of Santa Monica's nativity scene for the past 15 years telling the story of Jesus' birth. It was erected over the weekend for this year's holiday season.

Bottom Left: Eddie Kendrix, minister of music for the Calvary Baptist Choir, takes singers onto a higher level and a higher note.

Bottom Right: Pastor Rob Scribner leads dozens of people in prayer during the opening ceremony of the nativity scene.

Girls named 'cutest couple,' say it's a sign of the times

BY MARTHA IRVINE
AP National Writer

CRETE, Ill. — Their story has played out like the name of a popular lesbian movie: "The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love."

It started last month, when the girls —

longtime high school sweethearts — were voted "cutest couple" by their fellow seniors at Crete-Monee High School in the suburbs south of Chicago.

Administrators balked, at first. Then several students walked out of class to

See COUPLE, page 10

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Your efforts make a difference, especially concerning new information, deadlines and/or distant folk. You surprise yourself. There might be no stopping you as you tear through calls, paperwork and bottom-line issues for others. Tonight: You could go to the wee hours.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Consider your options surrounding your family and loved ones who might be way too demanding. Nevertheless, the unexpected does occur with a boss, who might be tightening his or her attitude, if not his or her purse strings, at the most unexpected time. Tonight: Smile, and the world is your oyster.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Take your time, especially if you don't feel as steady as you normally do. Consider options that you normally wouldn't if you felt up to snuff. Delegate. Ask for help. Sort through what must get done. Stay on top of your needs. Tonight: Step back.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Groups will be unusually successful if you work with a tendency toward being a little too buoyant for the moment. Understanding more of what you need and want helps a partner respond. Ask, and expect to receive. Think positively. Tonight: Where the groups are.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Others look to you for advice. You have a strong sense of what might work, depending on your needs and desires. Others surprise you with their decisions and actions. Work with strong directives, whether you like it or not. Tonight: Work as late as need be.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Keep your eye on the big picture, even with a difficult boss or associate. You cannot change this person, but learning to work with him or her could be important. Try to imagine what it is like being him or her. Suddenly, a new approach evolves. Tonight: Get into some holiday music.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Build on your relationship with associates and loved ones. Reach out for others. All your actions create waves, some of which you might not be ready to handle. Deal with each person in the most caring way possible. Tonight: Go for togetherness.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Others storm your office as your popularity builds to a new level. A partner or colleague could be threatened by what is going on. Learn how to juggle your many different demands with sensitivity to others and your priorities. Tonight: Don't get too carried away.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Others drop a lot in your lap, and you're left holding the bag. Know when to say you have had enough. Reactions could be strong, but you do need to follow through on what you believe is a priority. New perspectives knock on your door. Tonight: Spontaneity rules.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Where others might be floored by information and a related situation, you find that your ingenuity solves the problem. Recognize when your buttons have been pushed. Schedule special time for a child or loved one. Tonight: So what if it is Monday?



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Deal with others. You might not exactly like what you hear, but you understand what is expected of others. A child or loved one could be unusually demanding. Express more interest in family and domestic patterns. Tonight: Order in.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Say what you feel, no longer holding back. Your understanding can and will make a considerable difference in your dealings, especially as you might hear something that could be a bit shocking. Loosen up with a family member. Tonight: Stop at a favorite spot.



QUOTE of the DAY

"Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in a hospital dying of nothing."

— Red Foxx

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LOCAL



Wolfgang writes



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Laura Lindsey, who last week successfully cooked Wolfgang Puck's recipe of chocolate soufflé, tortilla soup and chicken pot pie from his new book, "Live, Love, Eat! The Best of Wolfgang Puck," hands the chef a stack of books to sign for his admirers. Puck was on hand Sunday at his cafe on Montana Avenue to autograph his book.

Playhouse short on funds

By Daily Press staff

The Santa Monica Playhouse needs more than stocking stuffers this holiday season.

The theater group is \$60,000 short of what it needs to raise by January in order to continue in its 11-month quest to buy the Fourth Street theater it has been renting for more than four decades.

"I wish it were more positive," said Sandra Zeitzew, a theater spokeswoman. "We are hoping some holiday and community angels will be able to dig a little deeper in their pockets this holiday season and give the gift of enduring theater to the community."

Under a deal by the landlord of the building, local attorney Jules Kievits, the theater company must meet regular predetermined fundraising benchmarks in order to stay in contention for buying the theater.

The Santa Monica Playhouse has been told its rent will be increased to more than \$12,000 a month starting next January, but the venerable theater group can barely pay the \$10,000-a-month rent for its prime downtown location on Fourth Street between Wilshire Boulevard and Arizona Avenue.

However, Kievits isn't viewed as the villain. He is giving the theater group 18 months to raise \$400,000 to buy the building. Every six months the group must reach fundraising milestones, or risk losing it all.

So far the theater has raised more than \$90,000. The city has pledged it will kick in \$75,000 if the theater raises \$125,000 on its own.

Donations have been pouring in from around the world, and the theater has been putting on benefit performances and conducting fundraising drives. For the past year, the theater has been able to meet its benchmarks, but unless more donations start to roll in, theater officials worry they won't make next month's deadline of \$150,000.

"We are at a critical moment in Playhouse in that we are short of our goal of raising enough funds to keep the deal alive for us to buy the building," Zeitzew said.

Donations, which are tax deductible, to the Save The Playhouse fund at Santa Monica Playhouse can be sent directly to Santa Monica Playhouse 1211 4th St., Santa Monica, CA, 90401, or call (310) 394-9779 ext. 555.

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.

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	Monday	Tuesday	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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The Q-Line

As the new year approaches, many Santa Monicans have begun thinking about their New Year's resolutions and setting goals for themselves. And now that our political leaders — some old and some new — have been sworn into office, they are thinking about what their priorities for 2003 will be.

This week, Q-Line wants to know,

"What should your elected leaders focus on as their goals for the upcoming year?"

Call (310) 285-8106 with your response before Thursday at 5 p.m. We'll print it 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

A Christmas list

Editor:

I've been a very good boy this year and would like to ask Santa Claus Monica for the following things:

1. Clean streets devoid of the stench and crimes of our never-ending homeless "citizenry,"
2. The right to add onto, demolish or do anything I damn well please to my own property without the self-appointed "historical police" sticking their noses in my business,
3. An end to the lie that rent control is for the "low-moderate income people" by means of testing EVERYONE that currently resides in a rent control apartment and then publishing the results,
4. A City Council that is truly representative of the people (not just the SMRR and unions),
5. An end to the '60s, cum-bah-yah, can't-we-all-just-get-along, we-are-the-world, rent-control-living losers that populate our city,
6. Dismantle the Parking Enforcement Department (check that, dismantle the "Revenue Collection Department"),
7. Oh yeah ... and, peace on Earth, good will towards mankind, blah, blah, blah ...

Tony Street
Santa Monica

The poor need fluoridation

Editor:

I am a family physician working at the Venice Family Clinic. Dental caries, or

tooth decay, is extremely prevalent in our patient population, affecting both children and adults. Sadly, our patients lack health insurance and generally are unable to afford dental care. As a result, the severity and extent of their dental problems is much worse than in the general population. One of the most common reasons that our homeless patients visit the clinic is to try to obtain a referral for free dental care. Unfortunately, we run out of funds for this service almost as soon as it is made available. Children, who would benefit the most from water fluoridation, don't get regular dental care because their families can't afford it and often can't access the few services that are available to them.

Water fluoridation prevents cavities. I'd like to also clarify that fluoride is an element that is found naturally in many water supplies. In fact, the initial concept of water fluoridation came about when it was noted that people in communities where naturally occurring fluoride levels were high had very low levels of dental caries.

In medicine, we have learned that prevention works better than treatment. This is especially applicable in the case of dental disease. Water fluoridation is safe, effective and inexpensive. It is supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Medicine and the American Dental Association. Locally, the Los Angeles County Public Health Department has long advocated for countywide water fluoridation. This vital public health measure has already been implemented around the country and 50 years of scientific evidence has validated its safety and benefits.

I encourage those who are concerned about the safety of fluoride to speak with their doctor, dentist or other trusted health-care professional.

Anne Arikian, MD
Staff Physician
Venice Family Clinic

We the People need to speak up and change the country



It's the Christmas season again. And the shoppers are out in droves. Yet, there are people in this very city who have no one to celebrate this or any holiday with. These are people who have been cast aside and told that because of their present situation they are not worth the time or effort to be loved or cared about. These are the very people who have been categorized and labeled for the past months for political and financial gain.

Now that the elections are over, the Bill Bauers and Tony Streets can climb back under their rocks and rest easy. These are the people who would rather see a person starve than give them a crumb from their tables and throw away the leftover food. These are the same people who helped to stifle the living wage law with lies and

deceptions. These are the same type of people who would rather give big corporations tax breaks than money to the education and well-being of our children. These are some of the same types of people who are in Washington right now making decisions for the American people that are destroying the very fabric of this once great and powerful nation.

And what are "We the People" doing about this? What kind of a message are we sending to these types of people? Our very sheepishness and compliant attitudes keep them in power and give them power to take away the things that we hold dear in our lives. If you look at the United States now, and compare it to the pre-gren jelly bean eating presidential times, it has gotten worse not better. We have children killing each other in the schools and on the streets. And the very fabric of the family structure, on which much of our society is based, is almost completely gone. Divorce and single parent families have now become the norm. And what are we doing about it?

Yes, there are some who speak out, but the majority of us are so use to it all that we accept this as the norm when it is not. The ones who suffer most are the chil-

dren; they are the ones who are going to inherit this country and what are we giving them? A country that has no guarantees of stability in the workplace or social structure? A country that tells its citizens that profit is more important than the human beings who make those profits a reality for the employer?

It's a wonder that our children even want to be a part of this type of country. I know many of the ones who hang out on the Promenade think this country is screwed up. And we wonder why drug abuse and sex is so high among the junior high and high school level kids these days. It's the very values that we want them to have that society as a whole is losing. And the way the country is heading now, the degeneration of the youth is going to get worse.

There are more and more kids winding up homeless and being forced to grow up fast or die out here. We, as adults, have to become more responsible in this and start speaking out more to show the "powers that be" that We the People control the country, not some special interest group or some corporate-backed lobbyists. We the People need to take this country back from those who have no interest in the

future of this democracy or the common man who MAKES the money for the corporations. We the People need to start making a difference and showing the might of the majority rule. And it starts right here in our own backyards, here in Santa Monica.

We the People should show these Rush Limbaugh clones that, as human beings, we have the power to change our society and make it better than it is. That we have the best interest of this city, county, state and country on our minds and in our hearts. We the People have to stand up for what we believe in, not for something that will benefit only the 1 percent. That 99 percent is more than 1 percent should be obvious to anyone who has half a brain. Yet 1 percent controls 99 percent in this country. Thomas Jefferson said that the Constitution should be "washed in blood" every 20 years. Well, a peaceful revolution has to happen in this country, and it all starts at home.

Charles Springer, who is homeless and lives in Santa Monica, is a regular columnist.

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LOCAL



Santa comes to town



Carolyn Sackarison/Daily Press

Santa Claus made several appearances throughout Santa Monica on Sunday, handing out candy canes to children. He rode on a Santa Monica Fire Department truck with a police escort to the Third Street Promenade, just one of his many stops.

Gavel II Gavel

From the people's court in the Santa Monica Courthouse

By John Wood

Listener loses suit against station

Political broadcaster KSMI Radio won a lawsuit last week brought by a supporter who said the station borrowed funds from his credit card, taking \$2,500 over and above his \$4,000 in donations.

The claim, made by longtime listener and frequent caller Hamed Amirsoleymani, was tossed out by Judge Pro Tem Caroline Welch after Amirsoleymani failed to prove the Santa Monica-based station had taken any additional money.

Behroz Nazer, the station's owner, described Amirsoleymani as a regular caller and contributor who became enraged when deejays at the political station, which is dedicated to ending terrorism and promoting democracy in Iran, stopped giving Amirsoleymani air time.

"When he started to defame religions and curse at people, we had to tell him to stop, which he found very offensive," Nazer told the court. "I said, 'Look, this is a radio station. You can't just come on the air and say anything you want. We have to protect and abide by the rules of the FCC. It's a privilege, not a right.'"

Amirsoleymani said he was contacted and asked for a \$2,500 loan on the station's behalf. Amirsoleymani admitted he never spoke directly with Nazer about the loan.

"It was a verbal agreement," said Amirsoleymani, who said the employee told him the station was going through rough financial times.

Haddia Nazer, CEO of KSMI, testified her station only received \$4,000 in donations and there was never a discussion of a loan.

"All of his contributions were during times of fundraising," she said.

Contractor prevails over elderly woman's claim

Charges of elderly abuse brought against the owner of Mar Vista Roofing Company by an 82-year old Santa Monica woman were denied by a judge last week.

Lil Vonlossberg failed to prove she was abused by Patrick Farrell and was ordered to pay the contractor treble damages on the \$85 roof repair job he performed in September.

Vonlossberg told the court she mistakenly paid the contractor with a check from a closed account. When the check bounced and Farrell returned to collect payment, Vonlossberg said he suddenly grew violent.

"He was abusing me and cussing at me and kicking my furniture," Vonlossberg testified, who later decided not to pay for his work, telling the court she doubted Farrell had performed the job at all.

"He came over, went up the ladder, came down and said I owed him \$85," said Vonlossberg, who claimed her handyman did the work, not Farrell. "(Farrell's) charging me for something he didn't do."

But Farrell told a different story.

See GAVEL TO GAVEL, page 6



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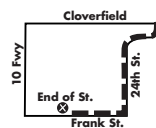
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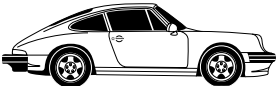
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LOCAL

Fun in the SoCal snow



Associated Press/Zoological Society of San Diego

Kalluk (Ka-look), the San Diego Zoo's male juvenile polar bear frolics in some of the 18 tons of snow created by the zoo for its resident polar bears, Saturday. It is all part of Zoo's holiday festivities, Jungle Bells, which runs through Christmas eve. Snow will be blown into the Polar Bear Plunge exhibit next weekend as well.

GAVEL TO GAVEL, from page 5

He said he went to Vonlossberg's property and spent nearly an hour personally repairing a crack to her roof. When Vonlossberg's \$85 check bounced, Farrell said he returned to find a confused and rambling woman.

"She was arguing with herself, saying, 'You don't think I can't pay this? I have more money than you,'" Farrell said. "Then suddenly she said, 'I'm not going to pay you a dime.'"

Four days later, Vonlossberg told Farrell's secretary she had no intention of paying the \$85 bill and challenged the contractor to sue her, Farrell testified.

Not only did Farrell file a \$1,000 lawsuit, he also filed a lien on Vonlossberg's property. Farrell later conceded he was actually only owed \$475.26, an amount he reached by adding treble damages on the bounced check to costs he said his company incurred while trying to contact Vonlossberg.

"If ever there was a pin-up case for treble damages, this is it," Farrell said.

Angered at the way she had been treated, Vonlossberg counter-sued the contractor for \$5,000 for elderly abuse.

"He said he's going to take everything I own," Vonlossberg told the court. "I got so nervous I could sit down and cry. I don't need this."

Commissioner Donna Groman, after taking the matter under submission, found in favor of Farrell for \$255 plus court costs, exactly three times the amount of the bounced check.

Investor dodges debt

Real estate investor William Haines, of Playa del Rey, was court-ordered last week to pay up on a \$2,000 debt owed to West Los Angeles resident William Caskie.

Caskie told the court he loaned Haines \$2,000 in March 2000 for a property deal in Mexico, with the promise that Haines would return \$4,000 just three weeks later.

"He needed the cash so desperately, he offered to pay me back \$4,000," Caskie told the court. "I didn't ask for (the additional \$2,000)."

When the payment deadline came, Caskie said the money never came and Haines — who did not appear in court — couldn't be reached.

Months later, he said he was contacted by an associate of Haines' who said Haines was "having trouble" with the Mexican government. The associate promised a check would arrive no later than October 2000.

But the money still didn't come, so Caskie filed a lawsuit against Haines in small claims court.

Commissioner Donna Groman ruled against Haines for \$2,544 — which equals the amount of the loan plus interest charges over the past 20 months and court costs. She did not award Caskie the extra \$2,000 he claimed was owed to him.

Blue Cross ordered to help patient

After misprocessing a half dozen of Shirley Raskind's bills, Blue Cross was ordered to make sure the Los Angeles woman received the money she was owed by physicians.

Raskind sued Blue Cross of California for \$758, claiming she'd been forced to pay that amount over her plan's \$4,000 out-of-pocket maximum, and in addition to a \$1,500 deductible.

Suzanne Fogel, a representative from Blue Cross, admitted the insurance giant had mishandled six of Raskind's bills, but said Raskind's physicians had the money, not Blue Cross.

"We paid too little to the provider, and told the provider (Raskind) owed more than she did," explained Fogel, who said Blue Cross has since paid the physicians.

But Raskind had already paid the bills. And she told the court neither her physicians nor Blue Cross was being cooperative.

"Every time I call, there's no response," Raskind said. "They just pass the buck all over the place."

Judge Pro Tem Donna Goldstein scolded the insurance company for expecting Raskind to collect from physicians who have been paid twice. She continued the case to January and ordered Fogel to personally ensure Raskind is reimbursed — either from the physicians or, failing that, from Blue Cross itself.

LOCAL



Community organization under fire over records

OPCO, from page 1

to comment. He hasn't said why he won't abide by increasingly strident requests for financial records from his organization's members, despite several requests from the Daily Press.

OPCO missed its deadline to respond in court to Fuller's complaint, complicating its legal landscape. OPCO had 30 days to respond to the Sept. 17 complaint. It hasn't done so, putting OPCO in technical default.

"Default means they are not allowed to participate in the proceedings," Clouse said.

Fuller attended the OPCO meeting Thursday to introduce himself to the four new board members who were appointed this month after others quit over the secrecy issue. He plans to proceed with the complaint that formally asks that the 2000 and 2001 financial records be released. He also requested the 2002 documents be given to him on a monthly basis.

Laudati has given Fuller a copy of an Internal Revenue Service's letter stating that the organization has tax exempt status.

"The good news is that they are getting their act together," Fuller said.

OPCO was formed in 1978 as a community organization for the Ocean Park neighborhood as a nonprofit corporation. Under California law, it's required to provide its membership with financial records, according to the complaint.

One of OPCO's functions is to review development projects and recommend to the Planning Commission and City

Council that they be approved or denied. Some board members who have resigned said they fear a lack of protection from legal liability should the organization's legality be questioned.

Board members Audrea Golding Bitler, Ted Winterer and Elan Glasser attempted to work out a resolution with the board to get the finances released. But they resigned in November out of frustration that no progress had been made.

Mario Fonda-Bonardi told the Daily Press earlier this month that OPCO has been slow to respond to Fuller's request, first made in August 2001, because the organization hasn't had an accountant in many years. He said it takes time to get paperwork together because its board members have time constraints.

Earlier this year, Bob Loftus, Joe Pipersky and Bill Sunblad resigned over the financial questions.

When Fuller got involved in OPCO in early 2001, he asked to review the accounting books and finances, as well as a list of the organization's current membership.

In his written request to Laudati in June 2001, Fuller said he was concerned about an apparent discrepancy between the number of reported members compared to the small amount of membership fees collected.

It's unclear how much money OPCO has collected from its members, how many members there are and what the dues structure is. Some estimates put the organization's membership between 200 and 500.

Members can't find meeting

NOTICE, from page 1

which is the only place where the agenda is posted, showed there was a meeting, but a time and location wasn't given until an hour in advance.

Four community members attended the meeting on Thursday.

"Nobody knows when these meetings are and nobody comes here," OPCO member Lance Schmidt told the board, adding that he's frustrated that meetings continue to get canceled.

At one point, OPCO chairman Rick Laudati interrupted Schmidt, who has been a critic of OPCO in recent months, by asking him if he had anything constructive to say. Schmidt requested that

OPCO members be given more notice about its meetings.

Gaile Price, a new board member who attended her first formal meeting on Thursday, said she thinks notice of board meetings should go further than OPCO's Web site and e-mail list.

"I think it's important to take our information out of our stream," she said.

Laudati said the issue can be discussed in the future.

At the end of the meeting Thursday, Laudati and other board members went into closed session. When asked by the Daily Press what the board would be discussing, Laudati and other board members declined comment.

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LOCAL

Aranda, Arnold both interested in council run

POLITICS, from page 1

endorsed candidates for City Council. SMRR originally endorsed Arnold in a move that opened a rarely-visible split within the party.

During the August SMRR convention, three council members — Richard Bloom, Mike Feinstein and Ken Genser — distributed a letter urging SMRR members to endorse anyone but Arnold.

And Feinstein — who was mayor at the time and is an Aranda supporter — openly criticized Arnold during the campaign for not being strong enough on rent control and affordable housing issues to carry the SMRR banner. He also accused

**“It’s an odd coincidence.
Josefina showed an
interest and I thought
she would be good.”**

— KEN GENSER
Santa Monica City Councilman

her of stealing the SMRR convention by stacking it with her supporters.

Officially, council members — including the same ones who blasted Arnold — claimed term limits prevented her reappointment to the PRC, a nonprofit organization that oversees the Pier. Last year, the City Council voted that all board and commission members be limited to two three-year terms. Arnold had been on the PRC board since 1995.

But term limits on the PRC can be overridden if five City Council members vote to confirm the appointment — and there are five SMRR members serving on the City Council.

City Clerk Maria Stewart contacted Arnold during the election campaign to ask if she still wanted to be considered for another PRC term. Arnold said she didn’t want to bet everything on winning a seat on the City Council. So she told Stewart to add her name to the list of candidates.

Stewart said calling Arnold and offering her the chance to be considered for another term was a mistake.

“It shouldn’t have happened,” she said. “We miscalculated the amount of time she had already served.”

But when it became clear Arnold couldn’t be considered, no one bothered to tell her. She infers that move — or lack of it — might have been a political snub, since five council members could override the term limit.

“It sure looks that way,” she said. “They have in the past left people in there for years on expired terms, but they seemed in a hurry to get me out.”

Arnold said she wanted to continue working on the PRC, where she had helped balance the Pier’s books and set the corporation on a new fiscal path that made it less dependent on revenue from corporations and more community-based.

Arnold also had been central to the search for a new executive director of the Pier.

“I would have liked to have served a few more months at least to fulfill those jobs,” she said. “Even if you don’t want to give someone another term, there is a history of giving them some extra time to complete the work they have been doing.”

“I was still getting over the election and a couple of my peers on the Pier board said they would be talking to council members in my behalf to try to get me back on, but I had no idea it would happen this quickly,” Arnold added. “It had been on the agenda for months.”

Some council members claimed the switch had nothing to do with the City Council election. It was all about getting new faces on the PRC, they said. The group has historically had little turnover until recently, after it shuttered locally-owned Boathouse restaurant in favor of bringing in the Bubba Gump restaurant chain.

“It’s an odd coincidence,” said Genser, the council liaison to the PRC. “Josefina showed an interest and I thought she would be good.”

Until last year, the majority of the PRC’s 11-member board had been serving since the mid 1980s. The City Council approved a plan in 2000 that would rotate out members who have served the longest and be replaced with new people.

However, some City Council members delayed the new appointments in the summer of 2001, citing that unfinished business needed to be cleared before the old members were removed. Some officials, including Feinstein, said the old members were kept on long enough to get a lease signed with Bubba Gump and force the Boathouse off the Pier.

Aranda said she is enthusiastic about serving on the PRC, though it wasn’t her first choice, or even her second or third.

“I would have loved to be on the women’s commission, but unfortunately there wasn’t a position open,” she said. “So I looked at the numerous ones available and most of the ones that were my top interests were not available at the time, and that’s when somebody suggested the Pier.”

Aranda said while she is well-known in the Pico neighborhood for her community work, she felt a need to get involved in citywide issues as well. It also won’t hurt to have commission service on her resume if she decides to run for City Council again, she said.

“One of the I think biggest concerns of residents of the community (during the City Council election) was that I hadn’t been on a commission before,” Aranda said. “So I think I should definitely be part of a commission, and maintain a commitment to the entire community; not just the Pico community, which is where I live and where I’m most involved.”

Arnold said she has no plans to curb her interest in the Pier or any other issues in Santa Monica in which she’s been involved over the years. She said if running for City Council still makes sense in two years, she’ll be ready for another race.

“I’m not going anywhere. I live here, and I have my role in the community,” Arnold said. “I have plenty to do as an activist.”

STATE



Movie studios sue companies that sanitize DVDs

BY GARY GENTILE
AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES — Hollywood studios have fired back at video rental stores and technology companies that allow consumers to watch films that have been altered to remove nudity, violence and foul language.

Eight major studios, which own the copyrights to the films, filed a lawsuit Friday in federal court in Denver, backing legal action by movie directors who claim the editors violate copyright laws.

The studios also charge that the companies violate trademark law when they rent or sell an altered movie in the original packaging.

In August, CleanFlicks of Colorado, a dealer associated with Pleasant Grove, Utah-based CleanFlicks, filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Denver asking the court to rule that what they do — rent and sell edited movies — is legal.

The Directors Guild of America fired back in September with a countersuit, claiming that editing the films to make them more "family friendly" violates the creative vision of the director and misrepresents their work.

CleanFlicks uses a proprietary software system to sanitize the films. Individual video stores buy copies of video tapes or DVDs from the studios, then send them to CleanFlicks in Utah where they are edited and sent back for sale or rental.

A company called ClearPlay, also based in Utah, sells software that can be downloaded on a computer that mutes foul language or skips over objectionable scenes when a DVD is played on a computer.

Directors asked the movie studios to join the case because they hold the actual copyrights.

"People can take that product and do whatever they want to do at home. I can buy a dozen golf balls, paint them blue and sell them on eBay for a profit if I want."

— JOHN DIXON
President of CleanFlicks

Friday's lawsuit complains that the film sanitizers charge as much as \$20 more for films that have been edited and asked the court to stop the practice.

"They intend to protect their copyrights and trademarks vigorously," said Jonathan Zavín, an attorney representing

Warner Bros., The Walt Disney Co., Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Universal Studios, Twentieth Century Fox, Paramount and DreamWorks.

CleanFlicks, and several similar companies that filed the original suit, argue

that the law allows consumers to alter or change any product they purchase.

"People can take that product and do whatever they want to do at home," said John Dixon, president of CleanFlicks. "I can buy a dozen golf balls, paint them blue and sell them on eBay for a profit if I want."

The sanitized films are gaining popularity because Hollywood continues to make ever more violent and sexually explicit movies, the companies argue.

"For the studios to join in this suit is Hollywood hypocrisy at its worst," said Bill Aho, chief executive of ClearPlay. "Two years ago, studio executives went before a presidential commission saying they support tools to help parents deal with movies. Now that the tools exist, they go to court to get them banned."

Court urges lawmakers to change pursuits law

By The Associated Press

SANTA ANA — An appeals court has urged California lawmakers to change the state's policy on high-speed police pursuits, saying the existing law amounts to a "get out of liability free" card.

The 4th District Court of Appeal in Santa Ana issued its challenge last month in an opinion involving a Westminster police officer who chased a stolen car through a high school campus in 1995. The suspect's car slammed into a trash bin and struck an innocent bystander who was gravely injured.

"We urge the Legislature to revisit this statute and seriously reconsider the balance between public entity immunity and public safety," the court stated in its opinion. "The balance appears to have shifted too far toward immunity and left public

safety, as well as compensation for innocent victims, twisting in the wind."

Under existing law, officers do not have to prove they were following a formal pursuit policy. They only have to show the department had an adequate policy in place.

As a result, the justices said they had no choice but to rule against the family of the man who was struck during the Westminster pursuit, even though they believe the officer acted improperly.

The Nov. 26 ruling comes amid growing scrutiny of police chases, which according to federal statistics have killed 541 people in the last 10 years in California. Of those victims, 181 were innocent bystanders.

Earlier this month, a 3-week-old boy in Los Angeles lost his left arm when a suspect sped through a red light and crashed

into the infant's vehicle.

The Westminster lawsuit was brought by the family of Khuong Van Nguyen, who was seriously brain-damaged in the accident and spent three years in a hospital until he died. "A decision like this, or the comments surrounding the decision, is a good heads-up that departments need to pay attention," said Newport Beach Police Chief Bob McDonnell, president of the California Police Chiefs Association.

However, McDonnell stressed it's a delicate balance between not being able to pursue criminals and weighing the risks of doing so.

"Clearly, if they open up liability for all pursuits, that will have a chilling effect on whether or not to allow the crook to run, and essentially give them good reason to. That's the danger," he said.

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NATIONAL

Church lawyers raise estimate of insurance coverage

By The Associated Press

BOSTON — The Boston Archdiocese has at least \$90 million in insurance coverage to pay claims of approximately 500 alleged clergy sex abuse victims, according to a published report.

The figure would bolster the arguments by lawyers for the roughly 500 alleged victims that the archdiocese could pay the claims without resorting to bankruptcy protection.

An archdiocese spokesman said Sunday that bankruptcy is still being considered an option.

"It's something among other ways of trying to come to a resolution of all this, but we have not said it is no longer a consideration," said the Rev. Christopher Coyne.

The \$90 million figure was reported in a Boston Globe story published Sunday, citing attorneys and others

involved in determining the amount of coverage available. The archdiocese's principal lawyers had previously estimated that \$25 million to \$45 million would be available to pay claims.

Kemper and Travelers, the archdiocese's two insurers during the years most of the abuse took place, have balked at paying the claims, partly on grounds that the archdiocese broke its contracts by recklessly moving dangerous priests into new assignments.

J. Owen Todd, Cardinal Bernard Law's personal attorney, told a judge last month that he would seek a court order to force Kemper and Travelers to honor the policies.

Lawyers for the alleged victims have until Friday to specify the amount of their claims against the archdiocese, which have been estimated at \$100 million.

Uncertain whether it could count on the insurance

money, the archdiocese has floated the idea of a Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing.

Attorney Roderick MacLeish, whose firm represents about half of the alleged victims, said the \$90 million figure was good news.

"That is more than what we'd been told of before, and if it were made available it would help in resolving these claims," he said.

The news comes as Bishop Richard G. Lennon, newly appointed apostolic administrator for the archdiocese after Law's resignation Friday, is trying to get a handle on the financial crisis he's inherited. He is expected to be briefed on settlement talks as soon as this week.

MacLeish agreed Saturday to postpone a deposition of Law scheduled for Tuesday, but said he would not "stand down" from releasing more documents detailing abuse.

Young lesbian couple find acceptance among schoolmates

COUPLE, from page 1

support the girls.

It is a drama that, for a time anyway, awakened this sleepy town, lined with antique shops, churches and cafes, and still surrounded by corn fields.

In the end, the girls' parents — though a bit shell-shocked — agreed to let a photograph of the couple appear in the school yearbook.

Last week, district superintendent Roberta Berry wrote a letter praising the students at Crete-Monee High: "I am proud to say that while other schools continue to address issues such as alienation, bullying and hate crimes, we have a student body that not only accepts each others' differences, but also celebrates them."

Upset, some parents and community members have called to complain and written letters to the editor of local newspapers.

But others are supportive — a sign, students say, that times are changing.

"This isn't 1952 anymore. I think people need to realize there are different people everywhere," says Rachel Urban, a 17-year-old Crete-Monee senior. "If 15-

and 17-year-olds are mature enough to handle this, the rest of the country can."

There are other examples of students supporting their gay, lesbian and bisexual peers. In 1999, an openly gay high school student in San Anselmo, Calif., was elected homecoming king. Last year, a lesbian from Ferndale, Wash., was elected king at her prom.

Meanwhile, students at an increasing number of schools are forming gay-straight alliances to support one another — and more school districts are training teachers to work with gay students.

That's all happened at Waltham High School in Waltham, Mass., where school nurse Nancy Ryan oversees the gay-straight alliance. Still, she says, the school has a long way to go in helping its lesbian and gay students feel safe.

"I don't think they fear for their physical safety," she said. "But I think they still are hearing things that make them uncomfortable and make them afraid to come out."

It is, for example, still common for students at many schools to use the word "gay" to describe something they don't like. And "fag" remains a common slur,

teachers and students say.

A 2002 report by the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network, a nationwide group of students, parents and teachers, notes that only nine states and the District of Columbia have some form of protection for students, based on sexual orientation and gender identity — California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

The lack of protection, students and others say, makes it that much harder to come out.

At Crete-Monee, officials and even students have chosen not to reveal the names of the "cutest couple" girls, whose parents didn't know they were dating until the vote.

"The girls are understandably overwhelmed and so are their families," school district spokeswoman Sue Rossi said.

Choosing senior "bests" is a long-standing tradition for Crete-Monee seniors. Each year, they cast their votes for everyone from the "most likely to succeed" to "most likely to shock us at our reunion."

While there were three or four senior

couples who'd been together through a good chunk of high school, the majority voted for the girls.

Classmates say it was done with sincerity.

They say the girls — popular students who are active in sports and other extracurricular activities — can often be seen holding hands in the school's hallways.

"I think people voted for them because they're so open about their relationship — and how good it is," says Danielle Cheatom, a 17-year-old senior. "They're actually in love and care about each other."

Adds Nick Renfro, another 17-year-old senior: "They really are the cutest couple."

Renfro was among about 60 students who protested last month outside the school, fearing that administrators would withhold the girls' photo from the yearbook.

Several students were suspended for two days for taking part in the protest.

Maris Formas, a 17-year-old senior, says the issue brought students to the forefront who'd never been class leaders before.

"The teachers are amazed at our dedication," she said. "I was, too."

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INTERNATIONAL



Yasser Arafat rejects al-Qaida aid and support

BY GREG MYRE
Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat demanded Osama bin Laden stop using the Palestinian struggle for statehood as a reason for the al-Qaida terror network's attacks, in an interview published Sunday, while Israel said it will bar Arafat from traveling to Bethlehem for Christmas for a second straight year.

"I'm telling him (bin Laden) directly not to hide behind the Palestinian cause," Arafat said in an interview published in the London Sunday Times.

Bin Laden "never helped us, he was working in another completely different area and against our interests," Arafat said.

Arafat denounced the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States and the Palestinian leadership has sought to distinguish between its fight with Israel and al-Qaida's terror campaign.

The Israeli government, in turn, has sought to link its conflict with the Palestinians to the U.S.-led fight against al-Qaida. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, blaming Arafat for more than two years of Mideast violence, has tried to persuade the United States that Palestinian terrorism is in the same category as al-Qaida terrorism, but the U.S. government has not gone along.

Last month al-Qaida claimed responsibility for twin terror attacks against Israelis in Kenya, calling the attacks a "Ramadan greeting" to the Palestinian people, referring to the Muslim holy month. The statement was seen as an attempt to win support for the terror network in the Arab and Muslim world, where resentment of Israel's conflict with the Palestinians is high.

Recently the Israelis claimed that al-Qaida members had infiltrated into the Gaza Strip, but the Palestinians hotly denied that.

Arafat aide Ahmed Abdel Rahman said, "We are not fighting the entire world, civilization and people. We don't want our just cause to be used as a cover by Sharon and his government to continue their escalation — as though if the U.S. is

fighting al-Qaida in Afghanistan, so Israel is fighting al-Qaida in Palestine."

Meanwhile, the decision to ban Arafat from Bethlehem emerged from the Sunday meeting of Israel's Cabinet, said an Israeli government source, who spoke on condition of anonymity. At the session, Israel's military commander said his troops would remain in Bethlehem through the Christmas holiday.

The Palestinians, who take great pride in hosting the Christmas services in Manger Square that attract Christian pilgrims from around the world, sharply criticized the Israeli move.

"The Israeli decision ... is a violation of their promises to the American administration, the Vatican and the pope," said Nabil Abu Rdeneh, Arafat's spokesman. "All the excuses that they give are lies and are rejected."

The Israeli decision to bar Arafat was seen as part of the ongoing Israeli effort to keep the Palestinian leader isolated at his battered West Bank headquarters in Ramallah, just north of Jerusalem. During several sieges of the compound this year he was not allowed to leave, and officials have often hinted that if he left the country he might not be allowed back.

Arafat is a Muslim, but since returning from exile and becoming head of the Palestinian Authority, he regularly attended the Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, beginning in 1995.

Last Christmas, Israel prevented Arafat — whom it blamed for failing to prevent terrorist attacks — from traveling the 12 miles from Ramallah to Bethlehem.

Bethlehem is heavily dependent on tourism, particularly during the Christmas season. Visitors pack Manger Square, just outside the Church of the Nativity, which was built in the 4th century to mark the spot where tradition holds that Jesus was born.

The Mideast conflict has kept most foreign tourists away for the past two years, and Palestinian Christians say Israeli travel restrictions make it difficult for them to reach the town. Low-key services are planned, and turnout this year is sure to be small.

Israel's security agencies continue to receive warnings about possible Palestinian attacks coming from Bethlehem, just south



Associated Press/Zoom 77

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon speaks during a meeting in his Jerusalem's office Sunday. According to Israeli officials, the Israeli Cabinet decided Sunday that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will not be allowed to travel to the West Bank town of Bethlehem for Christmas celebrations for a second straight year.

of Jerusalem, and withdrawing the troops would leave Israel more vulnerable, the Israeli officials said.

Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon, the military chief of staff, told the Israeli Cabinet that troops will maintain full control of Bethlehem over Christmas, but will allow Christian religious services to take place in the town, where the 30,000 Palestinian residents are about half-Christian and half-Muslim.

Israeli soldiers have occupied Palestinian cities in the West Bank for most of the past six months in an attempt to halt, or at least limit, Palestinian suicide bombings and other attacks.

In Bethlehem, Israeli troops entered in June and pulled out in August, citing its relative calm. However, the soldiers stormed back into Bethlehem on Nov. 22, a day after a suicide bomber came from the town and blew himself up on a Jerusalem bus, killing 11 people.

In other developments, three Palestinian residents of east Jerusalem were indicted Sunday for allegedly planning to ambush Sharon's security guards as they headed to

work at the prime minister's Jerusalem residence, according to court records.

In another court case, three members of a Palestinian cell were sentenced to multiple life sentences Sunday for orchestrating attacks that killed 35 people.

In Nablus, AP photographer Nasser Ishayeh and Associated Press Television News cameraman Abdel Rahman Khabeisa were detained by Israeli troops for five hours, along with four other Palestinian journalists working for foreign media. They were covering a clash between Israeli troops and stone-throwing youths.

Israel's army spokesman's office said the group of journalists were violating the curfew in the city by being outside without press accreditation. Israel's government withdrew press accreditation from Palestinian journalists a year ago.

In the Gaza Strip, Palestinian security officials said seven houses were demolished and two teenage sisters seriously injured when tanks and bulldozers moved into the outskirts of Rafah, a few yards from the Jewish settlement of Morag. An Israeli army spokeswoman did not immediately comment.

If Venezuela's Chavez is pushed out, what next?

BY CHRISTOPHER TOOTHAKER
Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela — When opposition leaders get together to plan their strategy for ousting President Hugo Chavez, they usually spend their meetings sitting around a table screaming at each other.

Some call for Chavez's immediate resignation. Others demand a popular referendum. Still others want general elections.

"Nobody is really in control. People are shouting, trying to get their message across," said a person who has attended several meetings, speaking on condition of anonymity.

If opposition leaders can't agree among themselves, it could be difficult for them to rally Venezuelans around a contender capable of beating Chavez at the ballot box — even if the opposition gets its way and forces early elections.

Already at least half a dozen politicians have emerged as potential candidates against the president, who still commands 30 percent approval ratings.

Each would offer a clean break from Chavez, a leftist former paratrooper, and would move Venezuela's foreign policy away from Cuba and toward Washington. Each would remove the army from civil duties Chavez has given them, such as painting schools and fixing roads. Each would restructure Chavez's extensive programs designed to help Venezuela's poor majority.

The strongest following is for Enrique Mendoza, governor of central Miranda state. Wearing baseball caps

backward and faded jeans, Mendoza mixes informal charm with a record of efficiency.

A recent survey by the Caracas-based Datanalisis polling firm gives Mendoza 63 percent of the vote in an imaginary race against Chavez. Pollsters interviewed 1,000 people in two major cities during Nov. 11-19. The survey had a margin of error of three percentage points.

Close behind Mendoza are Julio Borges, a congressman who acted as a judge resolving neighborhood disputes in a popular television show, and Henrique Salas Romer, a former governor who lost against Chavez in 1998 elections.

Before Chavez's landslide victory, Venezuela had 40 years of government alternating among three centrist political parties that presided over the riches of an oil boom — and the devastation of an oil bust.

Chavez's challengers condemn his visits with Libya's Moammar Gadhafi, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, and his close personal friend Fidel Castro of Cuba.

A new government would likely establish a different foreign policy by strengthening ties with officials in Washington, who Chavez has irked with his "revolutionary" rhetoric, while distancing Venezuela from U.S. enemies like communist-led Cuba.

Shortly after taking office, Chavez played a key role in persuading members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to cut production and boost oil prices. That was a major reversal for Venezuela, which traditionally wanted to produce more, even if that drove prices down.

Under new leadership, the need to create jobs and increase government revenue could prompt a break with OPEC, leaving Venezuela free to produce and export as much oil as it wants. Oil accounts for 70 percent of export revenue and roughly half of government revenue.

But first, the opposition needs to clarify how it intends to bring down Chavez. On that there is little unity.

Proposals range from a constitutional amendment to cut the president's term from six to four years, to a nonbinding referendum on his rule that might encourage him to resign.

Others believe the best tactic is the pressure of the current general strike, which has paralyzed the economy. More than 1 million people rallied Saturday night in the opposition's biggest march yet.

"Some people are carrying signs reading 'Elections Now!' while others yell 'Resign Now!'" Those are two completely different situations, and I'm not sure people realize that," said Antonio Gil Yepes, president of the Datanalisis polling firm.

While opposition politicians fight for the spotlight and hash out their differences, Chavez is calling on strike leaders to "move from protest to proposal" — meaning to come up with a unified plan for change.

His government has tried to capitalize on the differences within the Democratic Coordinator, the umbrella organization of opposition groups, to present their lack of unity as ineptitude.



SPORTS

Palmer overcomes struggles to win Heisman

BY ANDREA SZULSZTEYN

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — The way Carson Palmer finished last season, he had no reason to even think about the Heisman Trophy.

Southern California went just 6-6 in coach Pete Carroll's first year, which ended with a 10-6 loss to Utah in the Las Vegas Bowl. Palmer, criticized for not living up to his considerable potential, ended the season with 39 career touchdown passes and 39 interceptions.

So of course he didn't make anyone's "Heisman watch" list entering this season, and he wasn't even regarded as the best college quarterback in Los Angeles.

Not only did he eclipse UCLA's Cory Paus, Palmer and USC had a brilliant season, culminating with an Orange Bowl berth for the Trojans and the Heisman for their resurgent quarterback.

The 6-foot-6, 230-pound senior won college football's most prestigious individual honor Saturday night, and it wasn't really close: He received 242 out of 811 first-place votes and 1,328 points overall — 233 more than Iowa quarterback Brad Banks.

"I still can't believe it," Palmer said. "I wasn't expecting it. Going into my senior year, I just wanted to go out with a bang and get back to a big bowl. I don't know when it's going to sink in. It's been a whirlwind."

Penn State running back Larry Johnson finished third,

followed by two Miami teammates: running back Willis McGahee and quarterback Ken Dorsey.

Palmer, who is the first West Coast player to win the Heisman since USC tailback Marcus Allen in 1981, won every region but the Midwest, disproving the notion of an "East Coast bias" among Heisman voters.

The Trojans (10-2) will play Banks and the Hawkeyes (11-1) in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 2. Palmer enters the game having completed nearly 63 percent of his passes this season for 3,639 yards and 32 touchdowns with 10 interceptions.

His biggest performance, the one that might have helped the voters make up their minds, came in the regular-season finale against Notre Dame. Palmer passed for 425 yards — the most ever against the Irish — and four touchdowns in the Trojans' 44-13 victory.

Early in the season, though, USC struggled and started 3-2. In a 27-20 loss at Kansas State, Palmer went 18-of-46 for 186 yards and a touchdown. But over the final eight games, Palmer put up sensational numbers: 2,676 yards and 27 touchdowns, with only seven interceptions.

"I knew we would have a great year," Palmer said. "I don't know if I expected the Orange Bowl, but I knew we would blow it up this year. We started off slow, and at one point we realized we couldn't lose another game. We kept rolling and rolling and finished off with a bang."

It's no coincidence that his success came in the second year for Carroll and offensive coordinator Norm Chow. Palmer feels more comfortable in the system, and Chow

used his players' abilities to make everything click.

Chow won the Broyles Award last week as the nation's top assistant coach. In Chow's offense, Palmer set seven Pac-10 records and 23 Southern Cal marks for passing and total offense.

"Coach Chow is tremendous," Palmer said. "He shaped our offense around me and understood our strengths and weaknesses. He is the one of the keys to our success this season."

Carroll has seen Palmer mature during the last two seasons.

"It's been a tremendous season for Carson to elevate his game, elevate our team," Carroll said recently. "Now that he's a fifth-year senior, he's cashed in on all the experience. There's nobody who can play better in the country."

Palmer's first four seasons at USC were a struggle, and he said he was "dumb and naive" for thinking he'd go to the Rose Bowl every year. The Trojans never met the expectations, and Palmer was only mediocre. USC was 16-16 in the games he started before this year.

"Going through that has made me stronger, made me a better person," Palmer said. "It's been the best thing for me. I never thought about leaving, I love it here. I kept telling myself, 'If I love this place so much when we're losing, imagine how fun it's going to be when we're winning.'"

He's got the Heisman. He's got the Orange Bowl. And now he doesn't have to imagine anymore.

Dolphins beat Oakland Raiders, keep Gannon in check

BY STEVEN WINE

AP Sports Writer

MIAMI — While Ricky Williams played only a supporting role Sunday, plenty of Miami Dolphins had a big day — even Dan Marino.

Relying on six defensive backs and a fierce pass rush, Miami slowed Rich Gannon's pursuit of Marino's NFL record for yards passing in a season and limited the league's top-ranked offense to 218 yards in a 23-17 victory.

Jason Taylor had three of Miami's five sacks, giving him a sack in a team-record seven consecutive games, and Patrick Surtain's interception ended Oakland's final bid for a comeback. Gannon threw for just 204 yards, and needs 676 in the final two games to break Marino's record of 5,084 set in 1984.

"Dan should be happy," Taylor said. "I'll have to call him to buy me a bottle of wine."

With the victory, Miami (9-5) tied the Raiders (9-5) for the best record in the AFC with two regular-season games to go.

Williams totaled a relatively modest 101 yards rushing, ending his streak of consecutive 200-yard games at two. But Chris Chambers caught seven passes for a career-high 138 yards, and Cris Carter made his first touchdown reception since coming out of retirement.

"We knew coming out we were going to have to make some plays in the passing game," said quarterback Jay Fiedler, 7-1 this year as a starter. He threw for 237 yards and directed a 97-yard touchdown drive, the Dolphins'

longest since 1989.

By snapping the Raiders' five-game winning streak, the Dolphins took sole possession of first place atop the AFC East. They're a half-game ahead of New England, which plays Monday night at Tennessee.

The Dolphins won their fifth consecutive regular-season game against Oakland, and won for the 15th time in their past 16 regular-season games against the AFC West. The Raiders retained a one-game lead in the West.

"We've got a chance to see these guys again, because they have an outstanding team," Miami coach Dave Wannstedt said.

Miami played mostly with six defensive backs, even on first down, and the approach limited Gannon and the NFL's top passing attack to 162 net yards. Gannon completed 17 of 31 attempts and had at least three passes dropped, including a potential touchdown throw that Tim Brown failed to catch.

The Dolphins limited Brown and Jerry Rice to three catches apiece for 30 yards.

"We were trying everything," Raiders coach Bill Callahan said. "They were physical. They were aggressive. They maul you on the line of scrimmage. They've got shutdown corners. They can blanket you. They did an excellent job."

To compound matters, Gannon said, the audio feed to his helmet from the sideline didn't work properly half the time. That complicated offensive coordinator Marc Trestman's attempts to send in plays.

"I had to run over a lot and read Marc's lips," Gannon said. "We had all sorts of problems."

Two fourth-quarter turnovers sealed the Raiders' fate. Brown fumbled on a punt return when hit by Trent Gamble, setting up Olindo Mare's third field goal, a 41-yarder with 2:28 left. Surtain then stepped in front of Rice to intercept a long pass by Gannon and clinch the win.

"It was a play someone had to make, and I was fortunate to make it," Surtain said. "To hold those guys to one touchdown is a phenomenal feat."

The Raiders were without starting cornerbacks Charles Woodson and Tory James, both hurt, and Miami threw deep more than in any game this season. Fiedler went 21-for-32, with completions of 40, 29 and 29 yards to Chambers.

Carter made a one-handed catch for a 5-yard touchdown reception, his first with the Dolphins and the 130th of his career. Oakland had the ball for less than nine minutes in the second half.

"I knew they were going to be gearing to stop the run," he said. "I just wanted to bang away and hopefully eat up some time."

Taylor set the tone for the defense by sacking Gannon on the second and third plays, each time forcing a fumble that Oakland recovered.



Ray Santana/Associated Press

Jason Taylor (99) hits Oakland's Rich Gannon from behind Sunday, as the Raiders meet the Dolphins in Miami at Pro Player Stadium.

Packers take down 49ers on the road

BY GREG BEACHAM

AP Sports Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — The Green Bay Packers know a few things about beating the elements.

Brett Favre passed for 201 yards in a steady downpour, and the Green Bay defense stopped one last rain-soaked drive at its own 11 with 22 seconds left as the Packers beat the San Francisco 49ers 20-14 on Sunday.

Ahman Green ran for 90 yards and a touchdown, and Donald Driver caught a TD pass as the Packers shrugged off the pelting rain and swirling wind of Candlestick Park to score 17 points in the second half while holding San Francisco scoreless in the fourth quarter.

The Packers (11-3) have seen much worse than a little rain — the icy cold and wind of their playoff victory over San Francisco last January, for example. Green Bay won its third straight while limiting the Niners' offense to 263

total yards and earning homefield advantage in any possible playoff meeting between the teams.

After Ryan Longwell's 28-yard field goal with 4:41 left, Jeff Garcia drove the 49ers for their 26 to the 11 before throwing three incompletions, including a low throw under pressure to Eric Johnson on fourth down.

Both teams already clinched their divisions and playoff berths with victories in recent weeks.

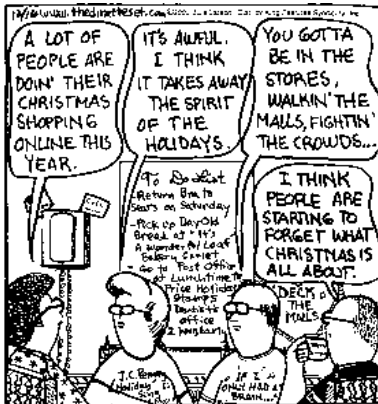
While some of Green Bay's worries on offense abated in the second half, the NFC West champion 49ers (9-5) again looked bad while losing for the third time in five games. San Francisco lost at Candlestick Park for the third time this season after losing just once at home last season.

Terrell Owens caught eight passes for 75 yards and a touchdown — which he punctuated with a pompom-waving celebration — but the 49ers struggled to move the ball. Owens caught his career-best 100th pass of the season, but he faced double coverage on the final plays.

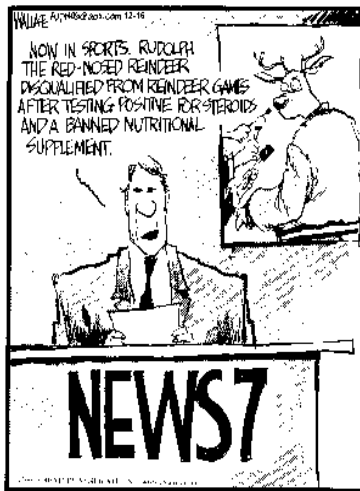
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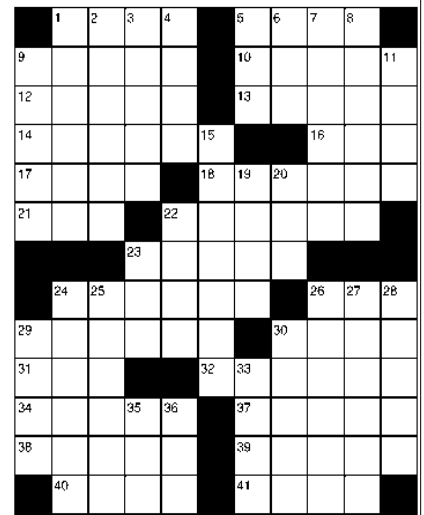
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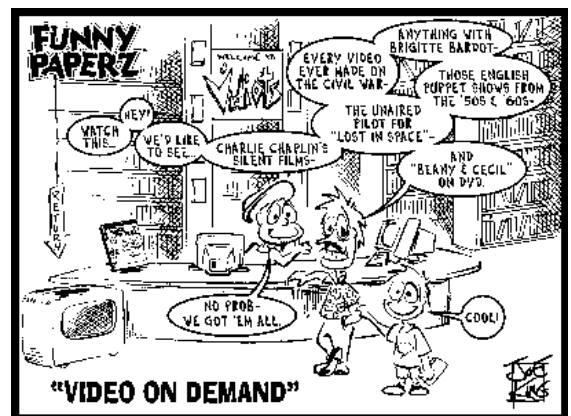
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

Man wins a seven-year-old lawsuit

■ In September, Robert Rozenhart, now 56, won his 7-year-old lawsuit against Skier's Sportshop (Edmonton, Alberta) for injuries suffered on his maiden attempt to in-line skate, which came after a Skier's employee tried unsuccessfully to tell Rozenhart not to venture out until the store's instructor arrived to help him. Rozenhart skated away anyway, and was on a downward incline when he first realized he did not know how to stop.





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SANTA MONICA SCENE °CALENDAR EDITION

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2002

TODAY'S EVENT

The annual Santa Monica Nativity Scenes is on display at Palisades Park along Ocean Avenue near Arizona. The 14 lighted scenes with life-size figures depicting events surrounding Christ's birth will remain on display through January 1. For more information please call (310) 453-4445.

Toddler Time, 10 a.m. Barnes & Noble at the Promenade and Wilshire. (310)260-9110.

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 Strutters, a FREE program sponsored by UCLA Healthcare's 50-Plus Program! Walking programs for adults 50 or older looking for safe, low-impact exercise in a comfortable environment. The Santa Monica Strutters meet Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from 8 a.m. To 10 a.m., at Santa Monica Place, Fourth St. and Broadway Ave. in Santa Monica.

Senior Suppers - Discounted meals for people AGE 55 or older are served daily, from 3:30 p.m. To 7 p.m., in the cafeteria at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center, 1250 16th Street in Santa Monica. \$3.69 Info only: (310)319-4837.

Harvelle's Blues Club present Sports Happy Hour, 5pm to 8pm. 100 inch movie screen with high definition LCD projector, JBL surround sound, drink specials, \$3.00 Happy Hour Buffet. 1432 4th Street. Between Broadway and Santa Monica Blvd. (310)395-1676

Conversations with God study group in Santa Monica every Monday night 7-8:30 pm, sequentially exploring and implementing the concepts of the "with God" books authored by Neale Donald Walsch. Meets in an ocean front condominium, donation \$5. For further information call Grant at (310) 399-8982.

Unurban Coffee House presents Hot Topics Night hosted by Ali every Monday evening. Signup is at 8pm. Open panel discussion and open forum. 3301 Pico Blvd. (310)315-0056

TUESDAY

The annual Santa Monica Nativity Scenes is on display at Palisades Park along Ocean Avenue near Arizona. The 14 lighted scenes with life-size figures depicting events surrounding Christ's birth will remain on display through January 1. For more information please call (310) 453-4445.

Ongoing support groups for people 55 and older. Current openings in, So, What Are You Going to Do With the Rest of your Life? Tuesdays, 10:00 to 11:30am. Center for Healthy Aging, 2125 Arizona Avenue. Sliding scale fee. Not drop-in groups. Phone interview required. Call Information and Referral. (310)576-2550.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS AT SMC'S EMERITUS COLLEGE. Santa Monica College offers free bereavement support groups in the summer session through it's Emeritus College, a widely praised program designed for older adults. Two support groups will meet Tuesdays on an ongoing basis. One group will meet from noon to 1:50 p.m. and the other from 7 p.m. to 8:50 p.m. For information and registration, call Emeritus College at (310) 434-4306.

Crossroads Schools in Santa Monica invites local musicians (grades 3-7) to join orchestra rehearsals. Rehearsals are ongoing and are held each Tuesday of the school year, from 3:15 to 4:15. Students may join at anytime. Cost is free, students must bring their own instruments. 1714 21st Street, SM. For more information please call (310)829-7391

Santa Monica College Emeritus College Band invites adult musicians who play a band instrument to join the band. Rehearsals are held each Tuesday evening in the Band room at Lincoln Middle School, 14th and California Streets from 7pm to 9:15pm, Concerts are given during the year. For more information call (310)474-5271.

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



BACK PAGE

Transgender activists make headway in the battle against bias

BY DAVID CRARY

AP National Writer

NEW YORK — Violence against their disparate community persists; so do legal setbacks. Yet these are heady days for transgender activists as they strengthen their lobbying efforts and gain civil rights protections in city after city.

"We have a lot of work to do, but we are winning," said Mara Keisling, an activist from Harrisburg, Pa., who is helping establish a new transgender-rights center in Washington.

The past year, for the movement, has been one of pronounced highs and lows.

On the downside, transgender people last month commemorated 25 members of their community killed during the previous year in what activists considered to be hate crimes. Among the latest victims was a 17-year-old Californian born as Eddie Araujo but buried as Gwen, in makeup and black lace gloves, after being beaten and strangled at a party in October.

Activists also seethed over a federal judge's ruling in September that a trucker fired because he wore women's clothes after hours was not protected by the federal law against sex discrimination. The married trucker, Peter Oiler, was dismissed by the Winn-Dixie grocery chain after telling a supervisor he occasionally went out in public dressed in wig, makeup and women's clothes.

Offsetting those developments, transgender-rights advocates won an unprecedented series of political victories this year. The governing councils of 14 cities and counties — including Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, New York and Philadelphia — voted to include transgender people among the groups protected by local nondiscrimination laws.

In no previous year had more than six jurisdictions taken such action, according to the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition. It says seven counties, 44 cities and

two states — Minnesota and Rhode Island — now have explicit civil-rights protections for transgender people in housing, employment and other areas.

"This is the best year we've ever had," said Sarah DePalma, a Houston-based activist. "Where we are still lacking is at the state level, but it's always been our goal to work from the local level up."

Despite defeat in the Oiler case, transgender people are making gains in the workplace. One notable example: Lt. Brienne Lunan, formerly Brian Lunan, remains an officer in the Bexar County sheriff's department in San Antonio, 20 months after the sheriff said Lunan's male-to-female transition would not jeopardize her job status.

Another positive development, transgender activists said, is improved relations with major gay-rights organizations.

"Some in the gay community still think they should have nothing to do with us, that we hurt their cause, but they're becoming fewer and fewer," DePalma said.

One of the most influential gay-rights groups, the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign, bolstered its standing with transgender activists this year by commissioning what it said was the first national survey of public attitudes toward transgender people.

The survey found majority support for the rights of transgender people to attend school and hold most jobs, but not jobs as elementary school teachers or day-care workers. Roughly one-third of the respondents said being transgender is morally wrong.

Human Rights Campaign spokesman David Smith said he was optimistic that gay-rights and transgender activists — though sometimes differing on tactics — could work in tandem to increase public understanding of their causes.

"We're all united about what the goal is, and that's equality under the law," he said.

Keisling said the improved relations with gay-rights groups coincided with an increasing sense of political

self-reliance among transgender activists.

"The public understands more and more clearly that we exist," said Keisling, a male-to-female transsexual who co-chairs the Pennsylvania Gender Rights Coalition. "What they don't see is that there is still a lot of violence towards us, and a lot of discrimination. Most people mistakenly think almost everybody is protected by nondiscrimination laws." The transgender community is diverse, with the common denominator that its members, by and large, feel they were born the wrong sex. It encompasses transsexuals, cross-dressers, and people who live as members of the other gender but — unlike transsexuals — don't undergo surgery.

Conservative groups opposed to gay-rights legislation also oppose moves to codify transgender rights, but they do not equate the two movements.

John Paulk, gender-issues analyst for the Christian ministry Focus on the Family, said transgender people have a treatable mental disorder and don't constitute a group that merits specific civil-rights protections.

"Where do you close the door to other mental problems?" Paulk asked. "Can someone say, 'I'm schizophrenic, I should have my own bathroom'?"

Use of public bathrooms and showers is a perennially thorny issue for transsexuals; opponents of transgender rights often raise the specter of men dressed as women using women's bathrooms. Numerous businesses and colleges have addressed the matter by providing some one-person, unisex bathrooms.

"It's frustrating that this issue has become so prominent," said Paisley Currah, a Brooklyn College political science professor who heads the Transgender Law and Policy Institute.

"Some politicians will support a transgender rights law, and yet don't want a transsexual in their bathroom," she said. "There's this absurd fear there will be men who cross-dress to go into bathrooms and rape women."

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