

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

1 7 10 28 40
Meganumber: 2
Jackpot: \$21 Million

FANTASY 5

9 14 17 18 27

DAILY 3

Daytime: 2 4 3
Evening: 7 1 2

DAILY DERBY

1st: 08 Gorgeous George
2nd: 04 Big Ben
3rd: 02 Lucky Star

RACE TIME: 1:45.27

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPARD

Public Servant: The school superintendent of Beverly, Mass., William H. Lupini, decided to leave that \$130,000-a-year job in May and take the \$148,000-a-year job as school superintendent in Brookline, Mass. However, since Brookline's school year did not start until July, and since Lupini perhaps felt there were no other "school superintendent" jobs available covering the interim month of June, he applied for \$2,332 in unemployment compensation for that month, as reported in the Beverly Citizen newspaper.

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1777, France recognized American independence.
In 1830, South American patriot Simon Bolivar died in Colombia.
In 1939, the German pocket battleship "Graf Spee" was scuttled by its crew, ending the World War II Battle of the River Plate off Uruguay.
In 1944, the U.S. Army announced it was ending its policy of excluding Japanese-Americans from the West Coast.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Intellect alone is a dry and rattling thing."

ILKA CHASE
AMERICAN AUTHOR

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City planners not down with high-rise plans

Discussion of a development moratorium put on hold, but officials agree Santa Monica Place plans need work

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — The city's Planning Commission, a regulatory body that has the ear of elected officials, indicated early Thursday it will oppose controversial plans to redevelop Santa Monica Place mall and dramatically alter the local skyline.

The plans call for five office and residential towers sprouting up from the current mall's 10-acre site, with three reaching 21 stories high. Only one other building in Santa Monica stands that tall, the white high-rise tower at Wilshire Boulevard and Ocean Avenue.

Planning Commissioners said the plans were hatched with little public input and agreed developer Macerich Co. should be denied the permission to proceed.

"They can continue to listen to the community, which I feel should have been done in the first place," commissioner Jay Johnson

said. "I think that's the other major area of confusion here ... I suspect that the process has not been as public as it otherwise should have been."

A proposal by the Santa Monica Democratic Club to temporarily stall all large developments in the city was tabled until Jan. 5. On that date, the commission also will take a formal vote on the mall plans, something they waited to do until legal and other implications could be examined more closely. All but one of the commissioners openly criticized the project in its current configuration.

Earlier in the lengthy meeting at City Hall, which began Wednesday evening, an attorney for the mall urged the commission to back the project in its formative phase. He said mall officials would gather community input and remain flexible on contested aspects of the redevelopment.

See **HIGH HOPES**, page 6

New suspect adds wrinkle to Harris case

Alonzo Taylor is a three-strike criminal already behind bars; Olympic medalist remains in custody

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

LAX COURTHOUSE — Authorities have identified a second suspect in the kidnappings of an elderly Santa Monica woman this fall, giving new hope to a former Olympic athlete jailed in connection with the violent crimes.

DNA recovered from the kidnapper's hat and shirt belongs to Alonzo Taylor, 40, a three-strike criminal who also stands accused of stealing a car in East Los Angeles two weeks after the 75-year-old resident of Sunset Park

was kidnapped for the second and last time, police records show.

The revelation was welcomed by 1984 Olympic silver medalist Danny Harris, 39, who has spent the last month in custody, charged with seven felony counts for the kidnappings. Trained bloodhounds led police to Harris using the scent from the kidnapper's hat and shirt. Subsequent laboratory tests revealed the items contained the DNA of Taylor, who claimed not to know Harris.

Lawyers said new lineups would be conducted with the second suspect. Three eyewitnesses

positively identified Harris, including the victim, the victim's neighbor, who chased the kidnapper away with a handgun, and a nearby resident who saw the kidnapper shed his shirt as he fled.

Taylor and Harris, who both are black, share physical traits. Taylor stands at 6 feet 4 inches and weighs 218 pounds. Harris is 6 feet 1 inch tall and weighs 200 pounds, according to Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department records.

Harris, who is being held in lieu of \$1.44 million bail, faces seven felony counts for allegedly twice kidnapping the elderly woman, stealing from her, and threatening to kill her and burn down her house. The incidents occurred on

Oct. 18 and Nov. 4. Taylor was arrested Nov. 17 in East Los Angeles by California Highway Patrol officers and his bail was set at \$100,000, according to the records.

Despite the new DNA evidence, prosecutors have refused to drop the charges against Harris, pointing to eyewitness testimony and the possibility that Harris may have been acting with the aid of an accomplice.

This past summer, Harris moved into the Clare Foundation off of Lincoln Boulevard, a nonprofit organization that assists recovering drug and alcohol addicts. He was barred from the Olympics in 1996 after testing positive for ille-

See **KIDNAPPING**, page 7

In Nick of time



John Wood/Daily Press

Santa and Mrs. Claus pull up to the SMPD's Police Activities League building at 14th Street and Olympic Boulevard on Thursday afternoon. Organizers expected between 400 and 500 youths at the pre-Christmas celebration to participate in various crafts and receive skateboards, board games, jewelry and other gifts courtesy of ol' St. Nick.

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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS The stars show the kind of day you'll have:

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



ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★ You might worry far too much. Don't make this momentary characteristic contagious. Keep it to yourself, even if it means isolating yourself. Listen well to a loved one who has a lot to share. Tonight: Make your work a top priority.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★ Others do reversals that could cause a change of plans. You could get upset, but on the other hand, you might be delighted by your restructured plans. Think in terms of clearing out the door and having a good time. Tonight: Where you are, the party is.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ Work with a misunderstanding and don't take someone's comments personally, even if he or she adds that touch of confusion. Be more in touch with your feelings about a boss or an older relative. You don't want to sabotage this tie. Tonight: A force to be dealt with.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ You might be overly nervous or uptight about what you need to complete. Just dig in and ignore calls and knocks on your door. You might be a bit overwhelmed, but you will get the job done. Reach out for someone at a distance or an expert if you need to. Tonight: Split work and town if you can.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ A child or loved one raises the roof or does something that doesn't please you. You can start a conflict or let it go. Be smart and play it easy. By all means, don't take this person's actions personally. Relate on a one-on-one level. Tonight: How 'bout quality time with someone special?

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ You might not mean to misunderstand someone, but the end results might not be pleasant. Try to sort through a problem. Confirm a meeting or instructions. Don't stress yourself out. Just be yourself. Let feelings flow. Tonight: Accept an invitation.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ Don't trust everything you hear. In fact, you might want to check information that heads your way. Do research and dive into your work. Someone might be exaggerating. Don't buy any items involved with communication. Tonight: Get your favorite munchies on the way home.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★★ A financial decision might be off or too much of a risk. You are in a wild mood and might take action anyway. Play it safe, even if you don't want to. Call it an early day, if you can, and leave work. Socializing is your forte. Tonight: Let your magnetism speak.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Your thoughts might not be on work or your job. You might be concerned about a person and/or domestic matter. Confirm meetings, communication and plans in general. Don't allow a misunderstanding to get to you. Tonight: Head on home.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★ Your instincts might confuse you. Be realistic and practical. Ask questions and confirm meetings. You might be making mountains out of molehills. Relax and reach out for others. A walk during lunchtime could relieve some stress. Tonight: At a favorite spot.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ A friendship could cost you a lot more than you had anticipated. Be careful. If someone disappoints you, don't make judgments and don't act out. Balance your checkbook before you head out the door. Work on being sensible. Tonight: Play Santa.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★★ Your smile helps others get over a misunderstanding. A boss could be overly demanding or challenging. Confirm what he or she wants. Try to avoid confusion or a misunderstanding. Be gracious while others stress out. Tonight: Do what you want.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS



Photos Courtesy

Members of the Santa Monica Elks Club pose alongside the winners at the Drug Awareness Awards Dinner. The students were charged with expressing why they don't do drugs through essay writing and video presentation. Essay winners are at top and bottom right. Video contest winners pose at bottom left.

Elks say 'yes' to kids who just say 'no'

By Daily Press staff

The Santa Monica Elks Club awarded several members at the Drug Awareness Awards Dinner for their entries in the "Why I don't do drugs" essay and video contest.

Six winners were picked out of more than 60 entries for the essay contest, while two pairs of contestants took home video contest honors.

Lisa Meinhart, lodge chairperson, and Grady Sain, co-chairman, presided over the competition.

Essay winners were Joey Armaswalker (fourth grade); Raequel Ledezma (fifth grade); Joey Leyba (sixth grade); Quentin Nicholas (sixth grade); Noelle Robinson (seventh grade); and Amber Alexander (eighth grade).

Video contest paired-winners were Matt Faziu and Tyler Abbott; and Erick Prins and Louis Coles.

First-place entries will subsequently be submitted for a district competition.



SURF REPORT

Friday will be a big day!
Look for 5-7 ft., head-high to 2 ft. overhead sets, occasionally 10 ft., and fair-good conditions.

The powerful new WNW'er takes over on Friday, then fades slow over the weekend. More WNW waves move in next week. The powerful new WNW (275-300) swell will steadily fill in, putting lots of exposures in consistent head high to overhead surf and best breaks in double overhead waves with bigger sets.

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	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	1:21	2.0	3:04	-1.5	7:43	7.0	9:36	3.9
SUNDAY	2:04	2.1	3:52	-1.7	8:26	7.2	10:30	3.9
MONDAY	2:50	2.3	4:42	-1.6	9:12	7.1	11:27	3.9
TUESDAY	3:42	2.5	5:35	-1.4	10:02	6.8	N/A	N/A
WEDNESDAY	4:42	2.6	6:29	-0.9	12:27	3.9	10:56	6.2
THURSDAY	5:59	2.8	7:26	-0.4	1:30	4.0	1:57	5.5
FRIDAY	7:35	2.7	8:22	0.1	2:32	4.3	1:10	4.8

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The Q Line

It's been suggested that the vacant RAND building across from City Hall should be converted into a homeless shelter instead of being torn down, and made into a park and other governmental facilities.

City Hall owns the property and spends about \$2 million on homeless services each year. Some have suggested that City Hall should redistribute that money into its own shelter. The idea is that the shelter would provide transitional housing and would be

tied to work and educational programs, as well as addiction and mental illness programs.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Is this a good idea? Why or why not?"

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your response in the weekend edition. Please limit your comments to less than a minute. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.



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OPINION



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Smooth criminals over there in City Hall

Editor:

The City of Santa Monica is criminal.

I received a letter in the mail from the city of Santa Monica informing me of a parking violation that took place on Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2004. The fine was \$47. It was interesting to receive that notice since I have not been in Santa Monica for some years. I live in Redlands, which is about a two-hour drive from your beach community. Immediately, I thought it was a mistake, which it was.

Fortunately, the city has a Web site that I was able to link up and appeal this "violation." Obviously, it was some kind of mistake. I don't know how they issue such citations in Santa Monica, but I appealed on its Web site, figuring I'd receive word that everything would be fine.

Instead, I received another letter from the city that informed me that they had conducted an "initial review" and that it "was confirmed the citation was properly issued and valid."

This, of course, is unbelievable. Is this the way Santa Monica funds its city operations, by ticketing people who don't even come to the city, conducting an "initial review" and, lo and behold, finally conclude that everything's good at their end? Meanwhile, I'm left to pay this incredible and unfair citation.

Withholding payment would be tragic. Liens would be placed on any automobile transactions through the DMV.

I must, of course, pay the fine in full before any court date. By paying, then appearing in court, I would have to take a full day off work, come to Santa Monica — where I'd probably get another citation — then find out I'd lose my appeal. The whole thing would probably cost me far in excess of the \$47.

Incidentally, the cited truck in question is registered to my wife who, it can be proven, was teaching school at Crafton Elementary in Redlands on the date and time. But the city of Santa Monica isn't interested in such evidence. They just want their money. My question, once again, is how much money does this city make by falsely issuing phony citations?

The city of Santa Monica is criminal.

Obrey L. Brown
Redlands, Calif.

Big man took care of kids under big top

Editor:

I thought the readers of the Santa Monica Daily Press should know about the generous donation made by Normand Latourelle on behalf of his Cavalia to the children of our Police Activities League. This Friday, 30 P.A.L. kids and staff will have the opportunity to see this magical harmonious encounter between man and horse that will set their imaginations running wild. While the show itself will be a part of the Santa Monica landscape however briefly, the visions these kids will experience under the Cavalia big top will no doubt last a lifetime.

Steve Heineman
Board Member, Santa Monica Police Activities League

Don't let our legacy be an 'Unreasonable Age'



HERE'S THE THING

BY LARA M. BROWN, Ph.D.

We have much to celebrate this holiday season.

We're living in the information age — all manner of scientific data and historical facts are no more than a few mouse clicks away. We've begun unlocking the mysteries of the human genome, as well as the planet Mars. We've made significant progress in world poverty. And democracy, as a form of government, has triumphed over communism. Some futurists have suggested that we are entering the next Enlightenment.

But I have become convinced over the past few months that we are living in a time where most are overwhelmed by the changes that both technology and globalism have brought us. Rather than being dazzled by the advancements, most are just dazed from too much information.

Many feel as though they need to possess attention deficit disorder or some type of autism to be able to cope with the constant stream of change and information coming their way. This, by the way, is not crazy. We all need time to assimilate new knowledge: Focus and ritual are important for human beings.

Most people, though, are coping by retreating into rigid patterns that are familiar. Denial, either of the societal changes or of the bombarding information, is providing solace to a great many.

As a result, demagogues and hyperbole have come to rule our world, and we're living now more in the Dark Ages than in the Age of Aquarius.

According to a recent report on CNN, there are nearly 100 million evangelicals in America. Many believe that the Rapture will occur in their lifetime, and that most scientific advancements — like stem cell research and birth control — are the equivalent of rejecting God and his plan for the universe. Many right-wing conservatives talk of being good Christians, yet they consider everyone who is not with them, against them, demonizing and patronizing all indiscriminately.

Meanwhile, in blue America, far-left liberals continue to worship all things politically correct — be they material or spiritual, irrespective of their actual worth — like a yoga mat made from recycled materials or a Buddhist figurine purchased on Rodeo Drive. Many talk about promoting peace and tolerance around the world, yet they berate conservatives for being both ignorant and malevolent.

The airwaves are filled mostly with vitriol, cynicism and conspiracy theories. Both liberals and conservatives espouse paranoia and suspicion with equal fre-

quency, and they seem to share a similar disregard for the consequences of their words.

When I tune in, I find myself thinking that "the bridge to the 21st century" has become a tunnel through the center of the earth. It should be called the Unreasonable Age — when rationality is possible, just not desirable, and even worse, it isn't profitable.

The media has decided that catering to moderates or those individuals seeking reasonable dialogue doesn't make enough money. They've come to the conclusion that the only way to get and keep people's attention is to excite their extreme emotions — anger, fear, love and hate.

Whether it's news or entertainment, they seem to believe that the number of people who tune in is directly related to a show's emotional extremity or experiential intensity. They may be right — both Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" and Mel Gibson's "The Passion" made a great deal of money and caused a sensation among the true believers on both sides of the aisle.

The political parties have joined in with equal delight because the emotional intensity has increased both of the bottom lines they watch — the number of votes and the total amount of contributions. Ideologues also are flush with their revival — the best-selling political non-fiction books (with the exception of the Clintons' who are still novelty factors) released last year were written by extremists from each party.

Here's The Thing:

Our government was founded on the premise that compromise is good. Checks and balances are built into our system so that no one — not a majority, not a minority — is powerful enough to do anything alone.

My wish this holiday season is that we can tone down our rhetoric and find our reason, and that we learn to praise compassion above correctness because we are all prone to err. My wish is that we recollect that moderation in all things is what the philosophers tell us leads to happiness.

The United States of America is unique, and it's my hope that her people will begin to cherish her history, as much as their own opinions.

"It was a thing hardly to be expected, that in a popular revolution the minds of men should stop at that happy mean, which marks the salutary boundary between power and privilege, and combines the energy of government with the security of private rights." — Alexander Hamilton, Federalist Paper No. 26.

(Lara M. Brown, Ph.D., is a political scientist from Los Angeles, and is teaching this semester in Arkansas, at Hendrix College and UALR. She can be reached at larambrown@aol.com)

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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

OPINION



Lapping up the embodiment of Christmas past

PISTACHIO PERSPECTIVE

BY SUSAN ANN CONNOR



There he was. Right before my very eyes. The fellow who I believed for my first eight (or was it 18?) years was a master of magic. He could make my world rock out loud. And he's probably the reason I didn't pout and was good for goodness sake ... particularly after Thanksgiving, when his mythical face was grinning everywhere.

I had just boarded the mall escalator when I spotted the delightful dude sitting on his throne. There were no kids with wish lists around, only a little girl playing peek-a-boo with him.

When I was a child, I stood in line for hours just for a minute or two on his lap. Chatting with him was like a slice of heaven. One year, after our brief visit, I thought we were so close that he might even stop by

and take me for a spin on his sleigh, with Rudolph at the helm. I have to say I was disappointed when that never happened, but I understood he had other obligations.

Memories of those days flashed before me as the escalator continued to climb. Jingle bells rang everywhere. Sounds of "fer sure" footsteps on our rooftop resurfaced. And visions of sugar plums were doing more than dancing in my head. So it was as if by osmosis, or a mere desire for a short date with Mr. Claus, that upon reaching the top of the escalator, I quickly proceeded back down.

Part of the motivation, I think, for directing myself to the simulated North Pole was to regain the wonder. The day before had put me into a festive funk. 'Tis the season to be jolly, but regardless of where I was, most everyone seemed to be jolly-less ... as if bah-hum-bug were the three words for the holidays, rather than ho-ho-ho. If Santa had been checking his list, there would have been plenty on the naughty side and not enough on the nice.

At one point, I heard one stressed shopper call another stressed shopper a not-so-

nice name. Losing interest in shopping, I tip-toed out of the store and headed home to revert to catalogs and online bargains. Sheesh, I thought, we all may need to slow down and smell the eggnog, or perhaps figure out exactly what figgy pudding is. Make it. Share it. And taste it to see what all the fuss was about.

I was determined today would be different. Revisiting Santa's lap seemed a great, yet odd, way to get started. But why not? I may never have the inclination again. Besides the guy looked grandfatherly, which helped. It definitely made the endearing factor much more plausible.

As many know, Santa Claus has very amalgamated roots. Just to track a bit of his legend, he's a blend of: Nicholas, the Turkish saint from the 4th century, who was known for his magnanimity toward others of varied backgrounds; Yuleketid, the bearded human form of the Norse God; Odin, who came to earth and distributed coins and bread to the poor; and Kriss, Kringle which in old German was Christkindlein, or Christkindl, meaning the Christ child. The one theme that seems

to run through all these gentlemen is generosity of spirit.

So, with no other wonderment seeker in line, I marched right up, smiled and sat on his knee. He actually twinkled and smiled back at me. There was a warm, then uncomfortable moment of silence, until Santa's helper inquired if I wanted a picture. "Yes, I would," I answered without hesitation. After she snapped what will become a favorite photo, Mr. Claus spoke.

"And what would you like for Christmas?" he asked, playing along.

"Peace," I said. "Oh, and um ah ... a Plasma TV."

"Well, we'll see what we can do about those requests. Both of them are a tight fit into my vehicle, but we'll work on it."

Thanking him, I found it quite appropriate to tug on his beard. It was real, all right. And so was the magic I remembered from Christmas' past. Wishing one and all a magical holiday season. Falalala ... lalalala ...

(Susan Ann Connor can be reached at pistachiocolumn@aol.com).

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St. Augustine By-The-Sea Episcopal Church
1227 Fourth Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401
Re: Kristine Johnson Fountain of Joy

7 Deadly Mistakes That Will Cost You Thousands When You Sell Your Home

WESTSIDE – A new report has just been released which reveals 7 costly mistakes that most homeowners make when selling their home, and a 9 Step System that can help you sell your home fast and for the most amount of money.

This industry report shows clearly how the traditional ways of selling homes have become increasingly less and less effective in today's market. The fact of the matter is that fully three quarters of homesellers don't get what they want for their home and become disillusioned and – worse – financially disadvantaged when they put their home on the market.

As this report uncovers, most homesellers

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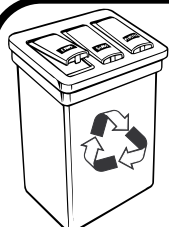
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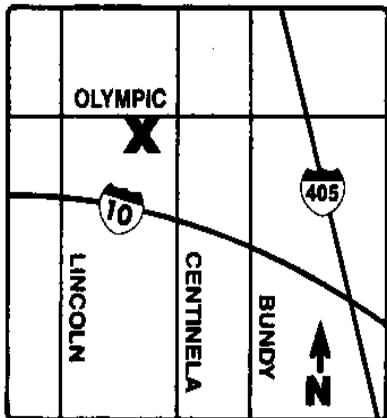
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LOCAL

Council to discuss plans for mall site on Jan. 25

HIGH HOPES, from page 1

"We have already received valuable input, including a clear concern regarding the height of the towers," said attorney Dale Goldsmith, reading a letter from Macerich executive Randy Brant. "We have always intended to be flexible regarding many key project features, including the height and configuration of the housing units, and to shape the project through the public process."

Brant reiterated that sentiment on Thursday evening.

"We came up with the starting point. We presented a plan that we believe was responsible," he said. "Anything is possible, as long as the economics make sense for all concerned."

Two members of the public spoke out on the matter, offering diverging views on the Macerich plans, which include 300 condominiums, 150 apartments, nearly 560,000 square feet of retail, 80,000 square feet of office space and several acres of public open space.

Local peace activist and sticker salesman Jerry Rubin urged the commission not to have a knee-jerk reaction, adding officials should approach the plans rationally and not support a "divisive and fearful moratorium." Ellen Brennan, a board member for the Pier Restoration Corp., which manages the Santa Monica Pier, had harsher words for the Macerich plans.

"I consider this to be the most outrageous insult to the sensibilities of Santa Monica ever to come down the pike," said Brennan, who suggested the mall project be limited to a height of four stories. "If this were to go forward, it's the end of Santa Monica as we know it."

Amid their discussions, all but one of the commissioners said they thought Macerich should be asked to start anew with their plans for redevelopment of the mall.

"Having heard that it's 24 or 25 stories, it gives me grave concern," said Planning Commissioner Gwynne Pugh, who later said he would not vote on the issue because of a conflict of interest. "Just send it back to the developer and say, 'start again.'"

Planning Commissioner Darrell Clarke said he didn't like the way the development discussion began. He felt it shouldn't be a given that all the various housing, retail, office and other components be included in whatever plans are ultimately approved.

"I don't want us to be in a position of saying, 'The tall thin towers are too tall. Revert to the original concept of a big block

that is 80 feet tall and covers the entire block, minus a street through the middle,'" said Clarke. "We need to look at the overall, as far as what is appropriate for this site, and not assume anything, as far as so many square feet, so many units, etcetera."

Planning Commissioners Barbara Brown, Arlene Hopkins and Julie Dad, who also is president of the Santa Monica Democratic Club, agreed. That left Planning Commissioner Terry O'Day, who said he wanted to learn more about the plans before making a decision.

"There's a lot of tradeoffs to achieve these goals. We can't have everything," O'Day said. "I'm inclined to see this project as a whole and consider all these issues."

Brown said there was no need to study the proposal in detail.

"I don't need to see it, frankly," she said. "I don't need to know what it is, because whatever it is, with that kind of a drastic departure from our current standards, I just cannot imagine how the council could ... direct staff to proceed with a development agreement."

A development agreement, which allows developers to skirt city codes in exchange for certain benefits, would be needed in this case because of the proposed height of the towers. The current height limit for downtown is six stories, according to Planning Director Suzanne Frick.

The Planning Commission's final recommendation will be forwarded on to the City Council, which is scheduled to discuss the mall plans on Jan. 25.

In the meantime, Brant defended the way Macerich presented its plans.

"Being accused of not actively pursuing public input is true, from the standpoint that we haven't yet done it," he said. "It was always our plan — and I might add this was based on guidance from city staff — to present the plan to the city, then to council, hoping to achieve a nod from council to study the plan. At that point we would begin the public process."

"It was never our intention to go around the Planning Commission or the citizens of Santa Monica, or the citizen groups of Santa Monica," Brant added. "That seems to be the misunderstanding."

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LOCAL



New police lineup could prove key to Harris' fate

KIDNAPPING, from page 1

gal substances and has struggled with a cocaine addiction for years.

At a court hearing this week, family members claimed that Harris had recently put his life back together and was doing well. Joyce Harris, his sister and an administrative assistant in the state court system, said Danny Harris had been to her Compton home just weeks before his arrest and had taken out her children to buy them new clothes and other gifts. Another Harris sister, nursing assistant Wanda Burns, said she expected him at her San Bernardino home for Thanksgiving and was surprised when he didn't show up.

"He didn't do this," added Burns, outside the courtroom. "Danny was clean. He was good. Everyone was proud of him."

Joyce Harris said her brother was ordered by a judge this past summer to live at Clare after authorities cited him for riding a train without a ticket and found he had an outstanding warrant. That warrant was related to an earlier incident when Danny Harris was on drugs and stole items from her, Joyce Harris said.

Still, Joyce Harris said her brother turned a corner in his life months ago and was clean. A former football player for Iowa State and track star who excelled in the 400-meter hurdles, Danny Harris worked as a personal trainer at Better Body Maker on Santa Monica Boulevard and also received royalty payments from

a series of fitness tapes he made for athletes and children.

It was colleagues that worked on those tapes who finally alerted the sisters that Danny Harris was in jail. The home telephones of both sisters block unlisted or collect calls, and Danny Harris couldn't get through from jail, they said.

When the sisters finally saw Danny Harris this week it was through a bullet-proof glass window separating a holding cell from the courtroom. Danny Harris, hands bound and wearing a blue, jail-issue jumpsuit, repeatedly mouthed "I didn't do it" and shook his head as his sisters sobbed.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Katherine Mader agreed to delay a preliminary hearing in the case until the new lineups are conducted. Matt Huey, Danny Harris' public defender, said he was hesitant to proceed with the preliminary hearing because it would force prosecutors to build a case against Danny Harris that they would be unlikely to back away from.

Huey is hopeful the new police lineups will exonerate his client. A preliminary trial for Harris has been set for Dec. 28.

"He's frustrated, he's angry, he's at a loss — as am I," Huey said. "He thinks it ought to be dismissed, and it's not ... The next step is I'm continuing my investigation, but mainly we're trying to set up a live lineup."

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Entertainment

WHAT'S PLAYING...

THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU

Filmmaker Wes Anderson's fourth feature is the ne plus ultra of whimsical cerebation, and fans of his work will no doubt be lifted into the empyrean.
Starring: Bill Murray, Angelica Huston, Owen Wilson, Cate Blanchett

OCEAN'S TWELVE

When taken — not too seriously — as a pastiche of beautiful people, exotic places, groovy tunes, and loosely comic set pieces, this sequel is a snazzy delight.
Starring: Julia Roberts, Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Catherine Zeta-Jones

BLADE: TRINITY

Third installment in a series running two films too long is the latest cacophonous calamity to roll off the action flick assembly line.
Starring: Wesley Snipes, Jessica Biel

CLOSER

The sum of this tragicomedy's competing parts adds up to the best-looking portrait of moral depravity on the big screen this year.
Starring: Julia Roberts, Jude Law, Natalie Portman, Clive Owen

HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS

This devastating love story disguised as a kung fu flick is one of the year's most astonishing cinematic achievements.
Starring: Takeshi Kaneshiro, Andy Lau, Zhang Ziyi

ALEXANDER

Oliver Stone has depicted a hero so shaken and internally conflicted, that it's hard to imagine him being the legendary ruler he was.
Starring: Colin Farrell, Angelina Jolie

NATIONAL TREASURE

This sprawling treasure hunt is cacophonous, eye-popping and unabashedly devoid of nuance. Despite a promising high concept, the best that can be said about it is it could have been worse.
Starring: Nicolas Cage, Diane Kruger

BAD EDUCATION

An uneven stab at film noir in which director Pedro Almodovar indulges cross-dressing fetishes, maligns child-molesting priests and celebrates French New Wave cinema.
Starring: Gael Garcia Bernal, Fele Martinez

BRIDGET JONES: THE EDGE OF REASON

Feels a lot like premeditated cock-up, filled with uneven sitcomish set pieces, credulity-stretching conveniences and humor that is as flat as its buxom, chain-smoking heroine isn't.
Starring: Renee Zellweger, Colin Firth, Hugh Grant

FINDING NEVERLAND

As moving a motion picture as we're likely to see this year, and — as the movie poster contends — one that is sure to unlock even the most immured imagination.
Starring: Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet

KINSEY

Kinsey's history is nimbly recounted, and bristles with fun and, on occasion, arresting poignance. Captivating cinema that feels particularly relevant in these retrogressive times.
Starring: Liam Neeson, Laura Linney

Carrey can do it

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Count Olaf, the evil uncle in “Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events,” is mean. Responsible for three kids (after their parents are killed), he smacks them. He slave-drives them. He takes their inheritance. And yet ... he’s lovable. In a gross, disgusting, disfigured, histrionic sort of way. Who else but Jim Carrey could play this guy? The rubbery actor manages to infuse even the most evil characters with charm. Carrey answers queries about the film, fame and the joys of playing a really mean “f**ker.”

QUESTION: You play Count Olaf, who is a pretty bad actor ...

JIM CARREY: I don’t know why they called me. I’m insulted, frankly.

Q: Was it a challenge to be bad at something you normally strive to be good at?

JC: It’s really fun, because when he makes choices you don’t have to do any research whatsoever. The thing about it is, he’s always Olaf underneath it all. And I love the idea that he thinks the children are stupid enough to never recognize him in a million years.

Q: We all have a strange relative similar to Count Olaf. Did you base him on a particular family member?

JC: Well, some of us are that strange relative. The weird thing is, Olaf wound up looking a lot like my dad.

Q: You employ all sorts of interesting techniques for scaring children in this film. Was there anything they wouldn’t let you do?

JC: There’s a moment where Count Olaf slaps one of the kids, and there was a question of whether or not to have that in the movie. I said, “You know what, Bambi dies, dudes.” Most movies that really connect with people have some kind of tragedy involved, and some kind of pain involved. I want to be entertaining, but the bottom line is that Olaf is a f**ker.

Q: Did your family turn to you for entertainment?

JC: For years, I was the entertainment. It was almost a slavery situation. I’d get a knock in the middle of the night and my parents would say, “Get your tap shoes on, there’s company!”

Q: What do you do to stay grounded?

JC: I have a royal inauguration for myself every morning before I leave the house [Laughter]. Look, I know we try to mythologize everything in Hollywood, so everything is blown out of proportion. As far as I’m concerned, what I do is I make movies that make people feel good for, like, two hours. That’s my thing in life, and I’m okay with that.



Photo courtesy

Jim Carrey is a self-described mean “f**ker as Count Olaf in “A Series of Unfortunate Events.”

A Christmas tale for the Grinch in all of us

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Finally, after year upon year of offering up nothing but yuletide pap, somebody in Hollywood came up with the clever idea of making a Christmas movie over-the-hill, childless, unmarried Grinches can love ... and, thankfully, Tim Allen isn’t anywhere to be found. Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus!

It’s “Lemony Snicket’s a Series of Unfortunate Events,” director Brad Silberling’s inspired adaptation of the wildly popular kids’ book series that ‘tis a hell of a lot more naughty than nice. In the gothic, Tim Burton-meets-Charles Dickens universe Silberling and his design team has created, Jim Carrey is

in his element as the sinister and waggish Count Olaf, distant uncle to a trio of orphaned siblings called the Baudelaires. The ghoulish-looking Olaf is a failed actor with designs on doing-in his young charges and making off with their large inheritance. It’s just the sort of over-the-top role that suits Carrey’s singular histrionics, but he isn’t alone in carrying the darkly humorous day.

Meryl Streep is splendiferous as the Baudelaire’s unstable Aunt Josephine, and the kids themselves are no slouches either — especially Emily Browning as the eldest child, 14-year-old Violet. Jude Law is here too — as the voice of narrator Lemony Snicket.

(Rated PG for thematic elements, scary situations and brief language. Running time: 107 minutes)

‘Aviator’ and DiCaprio soar to dizzying heights

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

‘Tis the season for making lists, so please allow this tiny bit of indulgence: Of the 30-plus films M a r t i n

Review

Scorsese has directed in his long and illustrious career, his latest — “The Aviator” — ranks below “Taxi Driver” and “Goodfellas,” but above such noteworthy fare as “Mean Streets” and “Gangs of New York.” For the record, it is the second-best biopic Scorsese has helmed, behind the exalted “Raging Bull.” As for

“Aviator” star Leonardo DiCaprio, well, that’s easy — his portrayal of the late maverick magnate Howard Hughes stands out as the finest work the 30-year-old star (yes, 30 ... Leo’s all grewed up) has done to date.

This gorgeously composed, nearly three-hour-long saga is set in the first half of the 20th century and chronicles the most prolific period of Hughes’ storied life, when he spearheaded a revolution in both the aviation and film industries. Hughes was a towering figure in his day — a dashing billionaire playboy with an unquenchable thirst for adventure, who would ultimately succumb to

mental illness and become a recluse. DiCaprio’s pitch-perfect rendering is the stuff Oscar nominations are made of, and he’ll almost certainly get the nod along with co-star Cate Blanchett, who makes for a fantastic Katherine Hepburn. Stellar support is provided by Kate Beckinsale as Hughes’ playmate Ava Gardner; John C. Reilly as the mogul’s top business advisor, and Alec Baldwin — who keeps getting better with age — in the role of visionary PanAm CEO Juan Trippe.

Scorsese is on top of his game, too, incorporating cutting edge technology with old-school know-

how to create what may very well be his most visually arresting movie. Along with screenwriter John Logan (“Gladiator”), the director has done a masterful job of condensing a vast story and revealing the true character of one of the most towering figures in American history. This one ought to be on everyone’s list this holiday season.

(Rated PG-13 for thematic elements, sexual content, nudity, language and a crash sequence. Running time: 169 minutes)

Eastwood’s latest film a knockout

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

It just seems to get better and better for Clint Eastwood. The 74-year-old Hollywood legend’s latest drama, “Million Dollar Baby,” which he also directs, packs a mean punch to the heart.

The film, which stars Eastwood (Frankie Dunn), Morgan Freeman (Scrap) and Hilary Swank (Maggie Fitzgerald), opens Dec. 15, and is a painful lesson of how life can be so harsh and yet so fragile. It’s an inspiring story of realizing your dreams, drawing from hope and human sacrifice.

In the wake of a painful estrangement from his daughter, boxing trainer Frankie Dunn has been unwilling to let himself get close to anyone for a very long time — then Maggie Fitzgerald walks into his gym. In a life of constant struggle, Maggie’s gotten herself this far on raw talent, unshakable focus and a tremendous force of will. But more than anything, she wants someone to believe in her. Dunn begrudgingly agrees to take her on. The two come to discover that they share a common spirit that transcends the pain and loss of their pasts, and they find in each other a sense of family they lost long ago. Yet, they both face a battle that will demand more heart and courage than any they’ve ever known.

You’ll feel like a fly on the wall watching this one — Eastwood’s talent in keeping it real keeps the story unraveling fight after fight, struggle after struggle. Based on a short story from the collection “Rope Burns” by F.X. Toole., the way “Million Dollar Baby” plays out, it might as well be a documentary because it seems so true to life.

(Rated PG-13 for violence, some disturbing images, thematic material and language).



Swank hits it hard in ‘Million Dollar Baby’

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

With one Best Actress Oscar already on her mantle (“Boys Don’t Cry”) and a Golden Globe nomination for her mesmerizing performance in “Million Dollar Baby,” it’s clear Hilary Swank has come a long way from her early days in L.A. when she was 16 and living inside her car.

“How lucky am I?” Swank asked rhetorically, of working with Clint Eastwood (he plays her trainer, Frankie Dunn) and co-star Morgan Freeman. “I actually joked saying, ‘God, where do you go from here? I might need to retire.’”

Swank said she identified with Fitzgerald more than any character she’s ever played.

“I grew up in a trailer park, she grew up in a trailer park,” she said. “I was this young girl who had a dream, and I was determined and driven and focused. I have that connection with Maggie because Maggie has a line in the movie where she says, ‘This is the only thing I have felt good doing.’ This (acting) is the only thing I ever felt good doing.”

Swank threw herself into the preparation for her role as Fitzgerald, a struggling but determined boxer. Swank is no stranger to pushing herself physically — she swam in the Junior Olympics and ranked fifth in Washington state for gymnastics — but she found out quickly that boxing would test her mettle. Training for three months prior to shooting the film, Swank worked out four and a half hours a day.

“Boxing is the most intense workout you can ever experience,” Swank said, adding she gained 19 pounds of muscle.

Swank, who would like to focus on motherhood in the upcoming years with husband Chad Lowe, said that while “Boys Don’t Cry” lifted her into the spotlight, she’d like to be cast in a comedy, where she started her career. “(Producers) come to me to with (dramatic roles) because the movie they know me from was so intense and so serious.”



Photo courtesy
Hilary Swank portrays an up-and-coming boxer in “Million Dollar Baby.”

by F.X. Toole., the way “Million Dollar Baby” plays out, it might as well

Freeman sets tone in re-teaming with Eastwood on ‘Baby’

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Morgan Freeman joins Oscar winners Clint Eastwood and Hilary Swank in “Million Dollar Baby,” which is based on a short story from the collection “Rope Burns” by F.X. Toole.

The film is directed by Eastwood and narrated by Freeman. The drama centers around boxing trainer Frankie Dunn (Eastwood) and upcoming fighter Maggie Fitzgerald (Swank). Freeman plays Scraps, the manager of Dunn’s Los Angeles boxing gym.

Freeman, who started his career playing “Easy Rider” in the children’s TV show “The Electric Company,” has had plenty of roles since then, most memorably in “Shawshank Redemption,” which he also narrated. He hasn’t been on the screen with Eastwood since he co-starred with him in “Unforgiven” in 1992.

The 67-year-old Mississippi resident recently sat down to talk about “Million Dollar Baby” and re-teaming with Eastwood.

QUESTION: What was it like working with Clint again?
MORGAN FREEMAN: “If I had my druthers, twice a year, I would do a picture with Clint and the rest of the time, just gloat.”

Q: What makes Eastwood such a great filmmaker?
MF: “He is so hands-off. He’s directing the picture, he’s not directing you. You’re a collaborator. That’s how he operates the whole thing. That’s his strong suit for everybody. He’s a class act. He’s quiet. He’s in absolute control of the set and he’s quick.”

Q: How do you feel about doing narration?
MF: “I love it. You’re kind of the source of the film. You set the emotional tone for it.”

Q: What’s your favorite movie of all time and why?
MF: “That’s a hard one. But I’m thinking more and more that it’s ‘Moulin Rouge,’ the one with (director) Baz Luhrmann. Smoke a J and sit down and watch that movie. Everything about it is outstanding. The cutting, the editing. I’ve never seen anything done that well.”

Q: You were athletic growing up?
MF: “I was on the sand lot. I was great at football. I was marginal at basketball. I was always the 97-pound weakling growing up. I went to the Air Force when I was 18 years old and I weighed 137 pounds.”

Q: Have you had a lot of films you wish you hadn’t done?
MF: “I’ve had a lot of those ... these big acting films that don’t have scripts. Those films never succeed. You have to have a script. You can’t be handing out pages every time you go to work in the morning.”

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21 AND OVER

‘Spanglish’ a bit episodic, but still pleasant enough

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Cultural integration, yearning for acceptance, and the challenges of bringing up children are the central themes of James L. Brooks’ flawed but pleasant new dramedy, “Spanglish,” the story of a single mother from Mexico who becomes the housekeeper for a wealthy Southern California clan. Brooks is one of the best in the business at harvesting fresh perspectives on the human condition, and this time out he employs language barriers, income gaps and disparate cultural mores to lay bare the souls of his colorful cast of characters. The film is rife with Brooks’ signature acerbic wit and he manages to engender empathy even, to

minimal degree, for Tea Leoni’s grating Beverly Hills housewife, Deborah Clasky. But “Spanglish” suffers from several glaring digressions from realism, and the presence of the unlikable Deborah is ultimately a big, fat negative. Flor (Paz Vega) is a drop-dead gorgeous domestic who Deborah inexplicably hires on the spot, even though it’s hard to imagine anyone so neurotic and insecure paying temptation to hang around the house. Flor can’t speak a lick of English, but that doesn’t stop her from instantly connecting with the Claskys — particularly patriarch John (Adam Sandler), the only top chef in LA without at least a passing knowledge of Spanish. Like Flor, John’s good people — too good, in fact, for Deborah, whose early mid-life crisis (and the affair that comes with it) threatens to destroy what was presumably once a solid

household. When circumstances conspire to force the very private Flor to bring her 12-year-old daughter Christine (Shelbie Bruce) into the Clasky mix, the two families’ destinies collide and are forever changed. Brooks is still a TV guy at heart and “Spanglish” is typically episodic. That’s not a bad thing overall, but there are a few stand-alone sequences that almost grind the film to a halt. Good thing Brooks has the venerable Cloris Leachman on hand to jumpstart things — she’s a hit as Deborah’s flighty, warm-hearted mom. Sandler, too, is on the mark playing a character with just enough contradictions to keep our attention riveted.

(Rated PG-13 for some sexual content and brief language. Running time: 131 minutes)

‘Phoenix’ fails to rise to occasion

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

In this unobjectionably hokey remake of the 1965 popcorn flick of the same name, mysterious nerd Elliott (Giovanni Ribisi) convinces his fellow plane crash survivors that the only way to avoid death in the scorching Gobi desert is to rebuild their tattered aircraft and fly, fly away. Dennis Quaid stars as Frank Towns, a world-weary fly-boy who rediscovers his mojo when the chips or, in this case plane, is down. The crew of misfits includes the very pretty Tyrese Gibson (“2 Fast, 2 Furious”) as a cocky young co-pilot, the even prettier Miranda Otto (“The Lord of the Rings”) as – no kidding – a hard-bitten oil rig roustabout, and Hugh Laurie (from the Fox series “House”) as a shifty corporate bootlicker. As far as plot and character development, there are few, if any, surprises in “Flight of the Phoenix.” This one’s all about the action, and the actors have grasped that and have fun with it. Director John Moore (“Behind Enemy Lines”), while remaining remarkably faithful to the spirit of the original, incorporates newfangled special effects to generate several impressive sequences. The conspicuous lack of conflict and true peril prevents us from investing much energy worrying about the fate of our heroes. If there’s ever a doubt where this one’s headed, one need only recall the film’s title.

(Rated PG-13 for language, action and violence.)

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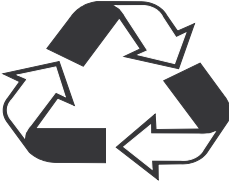
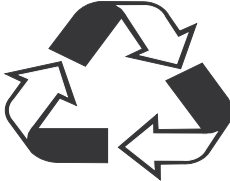
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NATIONAL



American prophet's birthday renews debate over his legacy

BY RICHARD N. OSTLING
AP Religion Writer

To loyal Mormons, Joseph Smith Jr. was an American prophet whose creed is preparing for Christ's Second Coming. To skeptics, he was a reprobate impostor — if a remarkably successful one.

Now as Smith's Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints prepares to celebrate the bicentennial year of his birth Dec. 23, 1805, the occasion will certainly renew debates over one of America's most important — and wooliest — religious careers.

The oft-persecuted Smith was hounded out of New York, Ohio and Missouri, tarred and feathered, jailed and accused of serious crimes. He repeatedly alienated close associates.

In Illinois, he ruled a theocratic city-state as prophet, mayor, chief judge and commander of a 5,000-man militia. In 1844, he was secretly anointed an earthly king while campaigning for the U.S. presidency. When Smith had officers pillage an opposition newspaper, he was arrested, then murdered by a mob.

Smith's prophethood was founded upon his report that, in 1827, an angel gave him golden plates inscribed in an unknown language and buried near Palmyra, N.Y. The plates told the history of Indians' ancient ancestors, who had migrated from Israel and were visited by Jesus. Smith said God miraculously empowered him to under-

stand the language and dictate the Book of Mormon, after which the angel retrieved the plates.

Employing similar means, Smith revised — and in his view corrected — large sections of the Bible. He also produced writings attributed to biblical Abraham and 134 revelations of his own as latter-day scripture.

Both Mormons and non-Mormons still argue over Smith's authenticity.

Just last Sunday, a church tribunal in Utah disfellow-shipped Grant Palmer, a retired teacher and executive for classes the church provides to high school and college students, because his "An Insider's View of Mormon Origins" says evidence for Smith's claims is "either nonexistent or problematic."

Palmer's publisher, Signature Books, marked the bicentennial with Dan Vogel's equally skeptical "Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet," which contends that Smith wrote the Book of Mormon from his imagination and life experiences.

Church bicentennial doings include an authorized Book of Mormon publication by secular Doubleday — though last year's University of Illinois Press "reader's edition" is more useful for non-Mormons.

Other upcoming events: a Library of Congress symposium; volume one in the vast "Joseph Smith Papers" series; and a new Smith film for visitors to the church's Salt Lake City headquarters.

Go ahead and have a cow, man

BY SHANNON DININNY
Associated Press Writer

SUNNYSIDE, Wash. — Sergio Madrigal watched in despair as federal officials hauled away his 449 calves to be killed after the nation's first case of mad cow disease was discovered in a nearby dairy cow.

A year later, Madrigal looks out at his rebuilt herd and smiles — just one of many signs that American ranchers suffered few long-term ill effects from the cow that ruined Christmas 2003.

Beef prices are high, and so are spirits. "I'm at another level now," Madrigal said in Spanish through a translator, as he sat in his kitchen after tending his herd now numbered at more than 500 calves.

But what a year it's been for the country's \$44 billion cattle industry.

Weeks of fear and uncertainty followed the announcement last Dec. 23 that the nation's first case of mad cow disease had been found in a Mabton, Wash., dairy cow.

More than 60 countries closed their borders to U.S. beef products — everything from live cattle and cuts of beef to pet food and frozen potatoes prefried in beef fat.

Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman announced sweeping regulatory changes intended to bolster confidence among consumers and trading partners. She also increased the number of cattle to be tested to determine the prevalence of the disease, formally known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Federal authorities killed more than 700 cattle in three states as a precaution, including Madrigal's calves. One

calf in the herd had been born to the infected cow weeks earlier but was not tagged and could not be identified, so the entire herd was killed.

Many of the calves were just one week shy of being sold. "Before that, I was thinking I was going to have a nice Christmas. After that, I spent nights awake," Madrigal said. "It was the first time to ever have that situation in the United States, and I didn't know what to expect."

Madrigal, 35, said the Agriculture Department paid him fair market value for the calves in January before shipping them offsite to be killed. It took him five months and hundreds of miles in travel to fully rebuild the herd, but he learned valuable lessons.

"Now I keep control of what I'm being sold. I receive a number for each cow, and I make sure all have ear tags. Everything else is the same — the hard work is the same," he said with a smile.

Already, his herd is larger than it was before mad cow disease was discovered down the road. And U.S. consumers barely missed a beat following the discovery.

Cattle prices were at a record high last fall before the mad cow announcement, at 97 cents per pound, up from the 2002 average of 67 cents per pound. They remain high now at about 85 cents per pound.

"That's probably been the most reassuring things that's happened over the past year," said Jan Lyons, president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, an industry group representing cattlemen, processors and meat packers. "Before the BSE event on Dec. 23, we really had no way of gauging what might happen. Now, we have a historical perspective."

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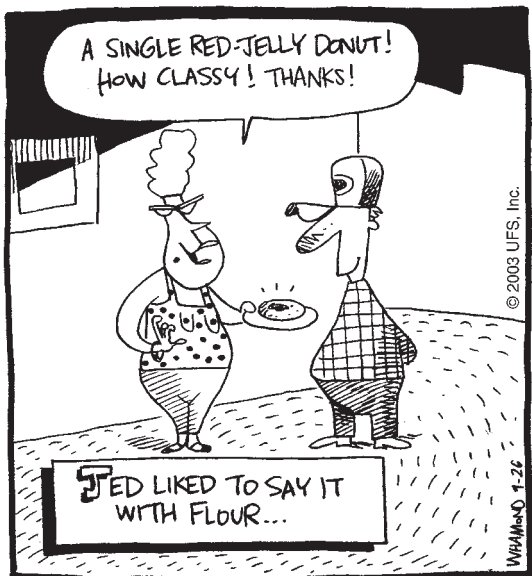
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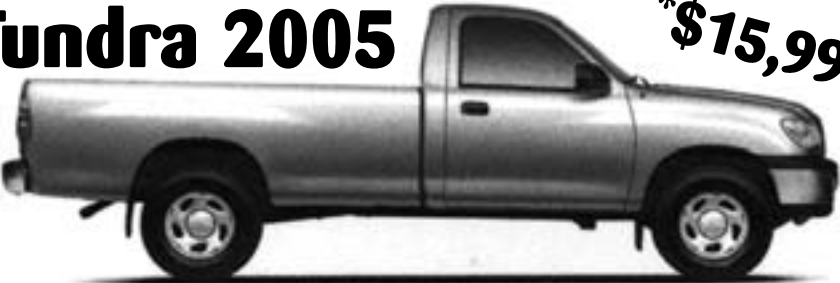


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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Actor Grant booked as judge in literary contest

By The Associated Press

LONDON — Organizers of the Whitbread Book of the Year Award have named Hugh Grant to the panel of judges for the 2004 prize.

Sponsor Whitbread PLC announced Wednesday that the 44-year-old star of “Four Weddings and a Funeral” and “Notting Hill” would join a panel that includes broadcasters Trevor McDonald and Mariella Frostrup, lawmaker Michael Portillo and Lord Hattersley, a former deputy leader of the Labour Party.

On the award’s Web site, Grant — who studied English at Oxford University — cited Kingsley Amis’ “Lucky Jim,” Philip Roth’s “Portnoy’s Complaint,” Vladimir Nabokov’s “Invitation of a Beheading” and “The Idiot” by Fyodor Dostoevsky as his favorite books.

The annual Whitbread Book Awards were established in 1971 and are Britain’s longest-running literary competition. They are open to residents of Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

Winners in each of five categories — novel, first novel, biography, poetry and children’s book — will be announced Jan. 6. One of the five, selected by Grant and his fellow judges, will win the \$58,000 book of the year prize on Jan. 25.

Previous celebrity judges have included model Jerry Hall and actor Ralph Fiennes.

DALLAS — Motley Crue singer Vince Neil is accused of knocking out an employee of a Dallas nightclub after a disagreement over sound levels during a concert.

An arrest warrant for misdemeanor assault was issued Wednesday for Neil in the fight at Gilley’s Dallas during an Oct. 30 show.

Gilley’s soundman Michael Talbert was knocked unconscious by a punch allegedly thrown by Neil that pushed him to the floor. A CAT scan showed a mild concussion, Talbert told The Dallas Morning News for a story in Thursday’s editions.

According to a police report attached to the warrant, the singer motioned for more guitar volume but bolted across the stage as Talbert adjusted it. The affidavit said Neil jumped onto the soundboard, kicked at Talbert, then punched him in the face.

The soundman was knocked unconscious for about 45 seconds, the warrant said.

Motley Crue members have announced a reunion tour that will bring the band to Nokia Theatre in Grand Prairie on March 17.

Dallas police and prosecutors said if Neil doesn’t contact them about the warrant, they probably will wait to act on it when he returns to the area.

Police had given the 43-year-old singer a criminal-trespass warning before he left the club and headed to Houston for a Halloween show.

SHANGHAI, China — Former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham is starring in a public service television announcement that urges Chinese to show more love and care for children stricken with leukemia.

Beckham, wife of England soccer captain David Beckham, is appearing in a 60-second TV spot with 10 young Shanghai leukemia patients, the Shanghai Daily said Thursday, citing the Shanghai Charity Foundation.

“What Victoria displays to the public is not only her personal charm as an international superstar but also the image of a loving mother,” spokesman Ma Zhongqi was quoted as saying.

Ma said his foundation, which has raised about \$120 million for some 50 charity projects, hoped to invite other international celebrities to participate in events.

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