

FREE**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2001****Volume 1, Issue 31**

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Andrew H. Fixmer/Special to the Daily Press

Citizens gather at Douglas Park after walking from St. Anne's Catholic Church on Monday evening to show solidarity and remember the teenagers who died over the few past years.

Hundreds gather for peace

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER

Special to the Daily Press

With joined hands and signing peace hymns, more than 250 residents marched Monday night to show solidarity for youth non-violence.

The peace rally and ensuing candle light procession from St. Anne's Catholic Church on Colorado Avenue to Douglas Park on Wilshire Boulevard was designed to bring awareness to the multiple tragic teen deaths the city has experienced in recent years.

Last month, Deanna Maran was stabbed to death at a party in West Los Angeles. At the beginning of the school year, a recent Olympic High School graduate was shot in Venice. And last year three Santa Monica-Malibu Unified high school students died tragically, one from suicide.

"Will we not let our children die violent deaths," said Santa Monica-Malibu Unified Superintendent John Deasy to residents at the peace rally. "This is a beginning to show our children that we believe in them and that we are listening."

Community leaders spoke to residents gathered at St. Anne's at a peace rally before the candle light vigil began.

"We want to honor the youth. The youth that have been slain or died tragically," said Ft. Michael Gutierrez. "At the same time we want to send a message of peace."

City police officers blocked intersections as the procession crossed through Santa Monica streets. High School students came out in great numbers, joining

hands and singing.

"We definitely care about what's happening and we want to talk about it," said Justin Brownstone, president of the Santa Monica High School student body. "The entire school has been deeply affected by Deanna's death."

Other students, concerned with Maran's death, marched in hopes of preventing further losses.

"I'm here because I hope this will bring people together," said Maria, a high school student who did not want to give her last name. "By coming together like this, I hope we can send a strong message."

Initially, the idea for the vigil started at a small meeting of high school parents shortly after Maran's murder. The group wrote letters to many community organizations citywide to help plan and participate in the vigil.

"We're here to show our support to the families and friends of the victims," said Police Chief James T. Butts, Jr., who walked in the procession with about a half-dozen police officers. "We want to be supportive."

The march had been planned only for the past 10 days, formally it has existed only since last Friday.

"There was an urgency to bring this together quickly," said Kathy McTaggart, an event organizer. "We didn't want to lose any momentum."

The police department says overall crime is down citywide. The recent teen deaths have all occurred outside of Santa Monica. And, according to police, violent crime — including gang activity — is down in the Pico neighborhood.

See VIGIL, page 3

City asleep at the wheel with car dealerships

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER

Special to the Daily Press

Car dealers may drive right out of town if the city doesn't kick it into gear soon.

Automobile dealerships in Santa Monica are in open rebellion and if the city cannot mend relations quickly, many are threatening to move out completely. They say the city has placed too many restrictions on them and as a result, it's become too difficult to do business in Santa Monica.

"I think we've screwed them to no end. They need some regulatory placed on them, but we have swung that pendulum so tight that we're choking them off."

— **HERB KATZ**
City councilman

Tonight, Mayor Michael Feinstein will propose that the city look at creating an auto mall stretching between Lincoln and 11th Street, between Colorado and Olympic, a one-block-by-three-block area that currently consists

See DEALERS, page 3

Comedian back to work since jail

By the Associated Press

Self-deprecating humor seemed to suit comic Paula Poundstone, who is engineering a comeback after legal troubles landed her in jail and drug rehabilitation.

The Santa Monica resident told the audience at the Rio Theatre in Santa Cruz, "It's kind of strange to see this many seats not in a circle," referring to her sixth-month stay at the Promises rehab facility in Malibu.

Poundstone was performing for the first time since she pleaded no contest to felony child endangerment and a misdemeanor charge of inflicting injury upon a child. She recently completed court-ordered drug rehab and was placed on five years' probation.

"This is my first night performing since I've been a criminal," the 41-year-old comic said during the two-hour performance detailed Monday by the Los Angeles Times.

In exchange for her plea, prosecutors dropped three counts of lewd acts upon a child.

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LOCAL



Parking at center of dealerships' complaints

DEALERS, from page 1

of old manufacturing facilities. Right now, the majority of car dealerships are lined up along Santa Monica Boulevard, east of Lincoln.

"What we are trying to do is amend the scope of the work we do on (dealership) standards to include the option to go outside of the district as well as along Santa Monica Boulevard," said Feinstein. "Some repair services, for example, would be better located in an industrial area away from residences."

But the process of building a mall for the dealerships would take years. Many dealerships risk losing their franchises if they do not expand soon.

"Even though the dealerships would love to be in an auto mall with freeway access, it wouldn't pencil out," said Len Sheridan, owner of Sheridan Toyota and chairman of the automobile dealers task force.

"First it would take years to build and the city would need to acquire the (current industrial) properties with eminent domain," he said. "And (dealerships) either own our lots or have long leases. The economics in all probability will not pencil out."

Auto dealerships are big business for the city, bringing in the single highest source of tax revenue. Annually, dealerships generate about \$10 million for the city, which consists of about 3 percent of the entire city budget, according to Sheridan.

Some council members believe the city may be cutting off the hand that feeds it if it doesn't start working with the dealerships.

"I think we've screwed them to no end," said Councilman Herb Katz. "They need some regulatory placed on them, but

we have swung that pendulum so tight that we're choking them off."

When dealerships first complained to the city about parking and regulation problems, the council asked for a report outlining their grievances and detailing the changes they proposed. The 200-page document took two years to produce and cost more than \$100,000.

But just before the dealerships were about to submit their findings, the city council enacted preferential residential parking near their businesses from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m.

"Before we could submit our report, the city council took action," said Sheridan. "So before ever reading this costly report, which they asked for, they acted. It is a very sore point with us (dealerships)."

The Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce sued the city, claiming that preferential parking infringed on the rights of businesses, but the chamber lost the first round in court and has appealed.

"We don't think the chamber's lawsuit is helpful," said Feinstein, "but sometimes the path we take is circuitous."

Now many of the residential streets remain empty during the work day. Sheridan and other dealerships must make their employees park by the beach and take a shuttle to work.

Sheridan said the city won't let him build more parking. He said he bought a lot one block away from his dealership for a parking deck, but the city said it would only consider his plans after he brought his dealership, built in the 1950's, up to current dealership standards. Yet it is difficult to determine what those standards according to the city's ambiguous code, Sheridan said.



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Len Randell and Bud "Cigar" Wakeling roll out the balls at Douglas Park's lawn bowling track on Sunday. The sport, which is cross between shuffleboard and Bocce ball is a long standing tradition in Santa Monica.

"It was so costly, it was prohibitive," he said. "In the end, I had to sell the lot and now it's sitting vacant."

Feinstein said the city understands that the dealerships are suffering. He said the city has commissioned a study of the dealerships' report by its own experts and

they are making progress.

"We are moving smartly, taking a systematic approach that is hopefully going to relieve stress on neighborhoods and small businesses," he said. "We hope to promote livability in the neighborhoods and prosperity for businesses in the city."

Poll shows widespread California support to expand funding for arts

BY JIM WASSERMAN
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — By a wide margin, Californians believe the arts are important in their lives and merit an increase in public funding, says a new poll commissioned by the California Arts Council.

The survey of 1,200 statewide residents revealed that 78 percent of Californians would pay \$5 more in state taxes if money goes directly to the arts. Women and college graduates were the most likely to pay extra, survey results indicated.

Eight in 10 of those surveyed said that arts improve children's academic performance, while 91 percent believe arts are as or more important than sports.

Adam Gottlieb, spokesman for the arts council, said of the results, "It's obviously an early Christmas present for the arts."

Echoed CAC Deputy Director Paul Minicucci, "We were all elated."

The first-of-its-kind survey showed support for the arts is greater than previously thought, Minicucci said. Results showed that 90 percent believed that state government should fund the arts, while 68

percent agreed the arts are as important as academics.

Another finding: Seven of 10 surveyed had attended a performing or visual arts event during the past year.

The results, sent to Gov. Gray Davis, state legislators and arts organizations, are part of a campaign to prove that arts funding should not be expendable during economic downturns. The survey noted that government agencies often consider arts funding a frill or luxury.

A majority of those surveyed said arts are important to education and the economy.

The survey polled residents between 18 and 69 years old in phone conversations lasting 15 to 20 minutes. It also conducted six two-hour focus groups of eight or nine participants from Aug 20 through Aug 30. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percent.

Minicucci, who sat in on focus groups, said, "I had never seen that kind of energy and commitment. People in those rooms were talking about their kids. There was a passion there."

A combined \$87,000 grant from the David and Lucile Packard and James Irvine foundations paid for the survey.

Student deaths bring community together

VIGIL, from page 1

"But youth violence in our community affects all of us. This isn't about one neighborhood, or social group or ethnic group," said Oscar Delatorre, a Pico neighborhood activist. "If you look around, this group is a cross-section of our entire community."

After the vigil reached Douglas Park,

there was a brief ceremony and the city had organized Big Blue Buses to take marches back to St. Anne's free of charge.

"This was a grassroots response — the immediate stimulus was a tragic student death at a party, but it's not just that," said McTaggart. "It's a response to all the loss we have experienced in this school district over the past few years."

Drkoop.com to shut down

By the Associated Press

SANTA MONICA — Troubled Internet company drkoop.com Inc. said Monday it is closing and will liquidate its assets.

The site, started in Austin, Texas, in 1997 by former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop and others, had hoped to find new financing. But the company said Monday it has run out of money and will declare bankruptcy.

The company said it will ask a court-appointed trustee to sell its assets to satisfy its creditors. Shareholders, who have seen the value of the stock plunge from \$45 soon after it went public, to pennies per share before it was delisted earlier this year, will likely not receive anything, the company said.

In July, the company agreed to pay \$4.25 million in cash to settle lawsuits filed by investors who claimed drkoop.com made false promises.

The high-profile failure leaves

WebMd and Medscape as the major online health information sites on the Web.

Drkoop.com failed in large part because it relied solely on advertising for revenue, unlike its competitors, which sold services to business customers, analysts said.

Ultimately, health related sites suffer from a lack of perceived credibility on the part of consumers, according to Stacey Rich, an analyst at Jupiter Media Metrix.

Rich said studies show that about 68 percent of Web users do search for health content online, but do so too infrequently to support a site reliant on advertising revenue.

She said consumers also trust information offered online by their own physicians. Companies such as Medem, the for-profit arm of the American Medical Association, are helping doctors launch their own Web sites with articles provided by third-party companies.

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STATE-NATIONAL

Traffic to be resolved with multi-million proposition

BY DON THOMPSON
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gray Davis on Monday proposed spending \$892 million on 109 projects to cut commuting time and ease traffic congestion.

His proposal for the 2002-2003 budget year includes:

— Eight Route 99 improvement projects adding a total of 35 freeway lane miles;

— Expanding 19 intercity rail projects on the Capitol, San Joaquin, and Pacific Surfliner corridors, and the Metrolink rail lines;

— Eight projects on Route 101 between Sonoma and Los Angeles counties; and

— Five projects on Route 91 between the Inland Empire and Orange County.

The money comes from funds dedicated to transportation projects and can't be spent for other uses, said Business, Transportation and Housing Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet.

The money does not come from the state's general fund, which has been hard-hit by a downturn in the California economy and problems repaying money the state borrowed to pay for electricity on

behalf of three cash-strapped utilities.

The federal Interregional Transportation Improvement Program funds are in addition to the \$5.3 billion Traffic Congestion Relief Program Davis announced during his first year in office, and \$636 million in 2000 ITIP funding.

The record three-year capital improvement program is one of the largest in the nation and will create thousands of construction jobs in addition to cutting commuting times, said Contreras-Sweet.

The California Department of Transportation budget is 50 percent larger than it was three years ago, and is twice as large as any other state, said Caltrans Director Jeff Morales. The state also spends about \$1 billion a year to maintain its transportation network.

Much of the spending proposed Monday is focused on the state's key commuting and trucking routes, interconnections between highways and mass transit hubs, and helping rural communities that have less transit money, Morales said.

The list of projects nominated by Davis must be approved by the California Transportation Commission after a series of hearings. Approval is expected by April.

Concern over alcohol-related deaths growing in Montana

BY BOB ANEZ
Associated Press Writer

HELENA, Mont. — Loose laws and a cowboy culture that condones drinking behind the wheel are being blamed for a disturbing fact in Big Sky country: People on Montana's roads are more likely to die in alcohol-related crashes than motorists in almost any other state.

Last year, Montana had the nation's second-highest rate of alcohol-related traffic deaths, trailing only Mississippi.

"There's a cultural element in Montana that drinking's OK and drinking and driving's OK. It's been around for a long time," said Bill Muhs of Bozeman, whose daughter was killed by a drunken driver 11 years ago.

Driving in the Big Sky State is a necessity. Montana, the fourth-largest state in area, is 300 miles from the Wyoming state line to the Canadian border. Driving the 550 miles across Montana is like going from Portland, Maine, to Richmond, Va. — a trip that goes through eight states.

For more than three years during the 1990s, Montana drivers were allowed to go as fast as they wanted as long as it was "reasonable and proper" based on traffic, road conditions and weather. It was only two years ago that speed limits were added to the state's 70,000 miles of highway.

Montana has resisted lowering its legal blood-alcohol limit from 0.10 percent to 0.08 percent, as more than half the states have done.

And unlike 34 other states, Montana allows open alcoholic-beverage containers in vehicles outside cities, which means drivers can — and do — have a beer while they cruise the long highways. It is a practice lawmakers have been unwilling to ban.

"In your rural areas of the West, there's an attitude that drinking is a right and you

should be able to drink and do whatever you want to do," said Mona Sumner, clinical director of the Rimrock Foundation rehab center in Billings.

Last year in Montana, population 902,000, a total of 110 people died in alcohol-related traffic accidents. Over the past seven years, the death toll has averaged just over 100 a year.

The rate of alcohol-related traffic fatalities in Montana last year was 12.19 deaths per 100,000 residents, just behind Mississippi at 13.32. In 1999, Montana had the nation's highest alcohol-related traffic death rate per 100 million miles traveled, at 1.05.

Drunken-driving penalties in Montana range from a minimum of a \$100 fine and 24 hours in jail for a first conviction to a \$10,000 fine and 13 months in prison for a fourth conviction. A first-time conviction results in the loss of a driver's license for six months — with exceptions available for work — and requires enrollment in an alcohol-treatment program.

Muhs, vice president of a local chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, wants such changes as tougher penalties, a ban on open containers and a drop in the legal limit to 0.08 percent.

Montana Attorney General Mike McGrath and Al Goke, chief of Montana's Traffic and Safety Bureau, question whether lowering the legal limit will do much good, since the average blood-alcohol level of those arrested is 0.17 percent.

Gov. Judy Martz, whose former top policy adviser pleaded guilty to negligent homicide in a drunken-driving crash that killed the state House majority leader this summer, said she has no problem with banning open containers and getting tougher on repeat offenders. But she, too, acknowledged doubts about whether lowering the legal limit will make much difference.



NATIONAL □ INTERNATIONAL



\$20 billion package for war on terrorism considered

By the Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate and House negotiators neared a deal Monday on a \$20 billion anti-terrorism package heeding President Bush's demands for spending restraint but devoting more than he wanted to domestic security and rebuilding from the Sept. 11 attacks.

Aides were hoping to shake hands on the outlines of an agreement that leading lawmakers could approve on Tuesday. Doing so would clear the major remaining hurdle to Congress finishing its must-pass spending legislation and adjourning for the year, which leaders hope to do by week's end.

The emerging package's \$20 billion price tag would be a win for Bush, who repeatedly has threatened to veto anything more expensive. He has said the measure provides enough money for now for the

war in Afghanistan and the battle against terrorism, and that he will seek more early next year if necessary.

Thanks to White House pressure, Democrats lost efforts in recent weeks to push packages through the House and Senate that were worth at least \$15 billion more.

Yet the mix of spending the bargainers were discussing — described by officials familiar with the talks who spoke on condition of anonymity — was tilted more toward Democrats.

It would cut the \$7.3 billion for the military that Bush wanted to roughly \$3.5 billion to \$4 billion, the officials said. The Democratic-controlled Senate provided \$2 billion for defense.

In addition, a bit less than \$8.5 billion would be set aside for domestic security programs, and about the same amount would be provided for the New York and

Washington areas, where jets smashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Western Pennsylvania, where a fourth jetliner crashed, would get a small portion of those rebuilding funds.

The exact defense figure would depend on whether money for the National Guard and rebuilding of the Pentagon were counted as spending for the military, and how much was provided for those efforts, the officials said.

Bush had proposed spending \$4.4 billion for domestic security and \$6.3 billion for the affected communities. The Senate had approved \$8.5 billion for domestic security and \$9.5 billion for New York and Virginia.

The tentative package would include \$2.5 billion for public health and counter-ing bioterrorism, about \$1 billion more than Bush proposed.

The anti-terrorism package is attached to a \$318 billion measure financing the Defense Department for fiscal 2002, which began Oct. 1. Most House-Senate differences in that bill have already been resolved.

The \$20 billion for anti-terrorism programs is half the \$40 billion that Congress approved just days after the Sept. 11 attacks. Bush controls half the total, but the new legislation must be enacted detailing how the other half will be spent.

All \$40 billion was to come from what was once a projected federal surplus for this year. White House and congressional officials now expect a deficit this year, the first since 1997.

Congressional leaders also plan to complete two remaining spending bills this week. One covers health, education and labor programs, the other foreign aid.

Super Bowl and political events may commence in NYC

BY SHANNON MCCAFFREY

Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — In a show of support for this stricken city, Congress could be convening in New York next year for the first time in two centuries.

The lawmakers aren't alone: The U.S. Conference of Mayors has moved some of its winter meetings to New York; political parties are weighing 2004 conventions here; New York and Washington are under consideration for the 2007 Super Bowl; and the International Olympic Committee is considering New York for the 2012 Summer Games.

The groups all want to show solidarity with the city, which bore the brunt of the Sept. 11 attacks, and breathe life into its struggling economy.

"It's optimistic news that keeps us going," said Cristyne L. Nicholas, president and chief executive of NYC & Company, the city's tourism agency. "It helps us with this labor of love that we're all doing."

The city lost an estimated 125,000 jobs and its economy took an \$83 billion hit as a result of the Sept. 11 attack, according to the New York City Partnership & Chamber of Commerce.

New Orleans Mayor Marc Morial said the mayors' conference decided to move half of its January meeting to New York "to show our support for this remarkable city, its people, and their new mayor." The 300 mayors will split their time between Washington and New York.

"I think it would be superb for the city."

— HERMAN FARRELL
Democratic chairman

Over the weekend, NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue said sites near New York and Washington should be considered for the 2007 Super Bowl, despite a league policy limiting the game to indoor stadiums if held in the North. The potential candidates are Giants Stadium in New Jersey and FedEx Field, the Washington

Redskins' home in Landover, Md.

The idea of a one- or two-day congressional session in the Big Apple sounded farfetched to many at first but has gathered momentum: Rep. Charles Rangel's resolution has 232 co-sponsors in the House, more than half of the chamber's 435 members.

"It would be one of the most exciting weekends that we ever had in New York as we get our spirits back," the Harlem Democrat said. "Flags would be flying, plays would be playing, baseball parks would be open, fashion shows would be glittering."

Rangel, who got the notion from an editorial in the New York Daily News, said House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., is interested but has concerns about logistics. Rangel's staff is talking to the House sergeant at arms to see what kind of security, costs and other issues would be involved.

As for the political conventions, Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg has pitched the idea of a GOP convention to the White House, and state Democratic Chairman Herman Farrell said he has lobbied Democratic National Chairman Terry McAuliffe to have New York be host of the party's convention.

"I think it would be superb for the city," Farrell said.

18 al-Qaida soldiers caught and bound

By the Associated Press

TORA BORA, Afghanistan — Heads bowed and hands bound behind their backs, 18 al-Qaida fighters captured in the fall of Tora Bora were paraded in front of reporters Monday as Afghan tribal soldiers and U.S. special forces hunted Osama bin Laden and what's left of his fleeing army.

There was no word on where bin Laden might be following Sunday's capture of the mountain caves where his terrorist network made its last major stand in Afghanistan.

At least 200 foreigners loyal to al-Qaida were killed in battles culminating nine weeks of attacks by American warplanes and eastern alliance ground forces. Hundreds were believed on the run in eastern Afghanistan, and reports varied as to how many had been captured.

Pakistan says it has arrested at least 88 fleeing al-Qaida members in recent days. Bracing for further attempts to breach its border — just a few miles from the fighting — Pakistan moved more troops to the frontier to bolster the helicopter gunships and thousands of soldiers charged with cutting off escape routes.

An additional 18 captured al-Qaida,

many weeping, were led down the mountainside on mules by Afghan tribal fighters as snow fell.

Earlier, tribal leaders paraded the filthy prisoners before journalists in a village. Some limped. Others had bandaged heads. They said nothing as armed guards pushed them into a dusty yard in a valley where opium poppies once bloomed.

Some had their arms tied behind them with red nylon ropes. One who wasn't restrained tried to hide his face with a bandaged hand. Others stared vacantly. Reporters were barred from asking questions.

About 200 villagers stared. Manoghul, 23, cradled an AK-47. "When they were fighting us they were very proud men. Now they are weak. They cannot even look at us," he said.

It was unclear what would happen to the prisoners. Commanders alternately spoke of handing them over to U.S. authorities or letting Afghanistan's interim government, which takes office Saturday, deal with them. U.S. Marines in southern Afghanistan have built a prisoner-of-war facility capable of holding 300 people.

The tribal eastern alliance, helped

by American commandos and U.S. airstrikes, said they had routed al-Qaida from the battered country.

But U.S. leaders said victory would not be declared until bin Laden is caught. And for now, no one knows where he is or what he's been doing.

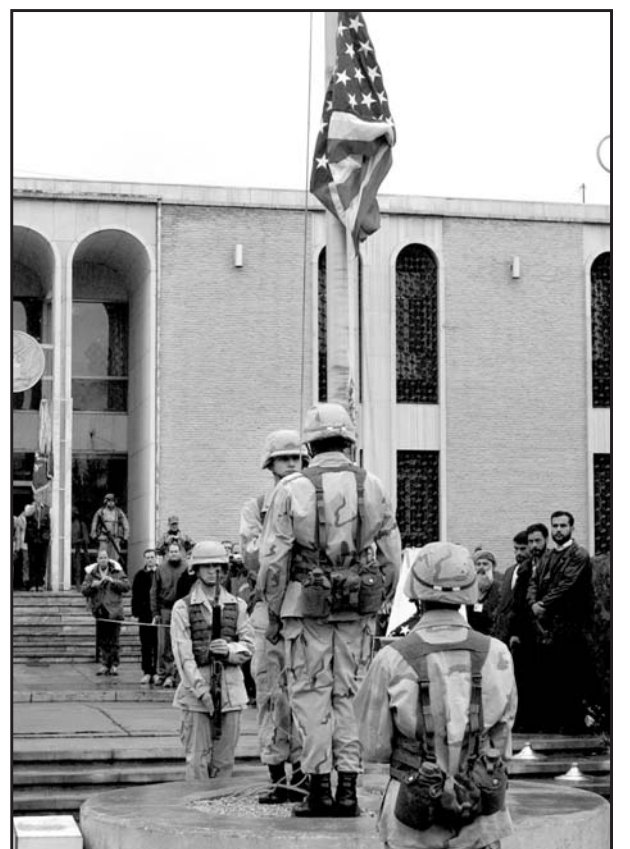
"Anybody's guess," Rear Adm. John Stufflebeem, deputy operations director for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in Washington.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld told reporters Monday en route to Brussels, "Until we catch him — which we will — we won't know precisely where he's been." Rumsfeld briefly visited Afghanistan on Sunday.

Bombing by American warplanes could be heard in the Tora Bora region Monday morning, tapering off by afternoon.

Stufflebeem told reporters, "There are still isolated pockets of al-Qaida fighting in this area, so we're not done yet." He estimated between 1,000 to 2,000 al-Qaida had been in the White Mountains at the start of fighting.

Some tribal fighters said U.S. special forces were working with them as they searched the caves and tunnels left by fleeing al-Qaida loyalists. Others complained they received no help.



Associated Press

U.S. Marine Cpl. Christopher Brussard from Sumrall, Miss., left, and U.S. Marine Sgt. Vernon Pitts from Philadelphia, Penn., right, raise the American flag at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul on Monday. The Embassy has been abandoned since 1989. The flag is the same flag taken down from the Embassy on Jan. 30, the same year.

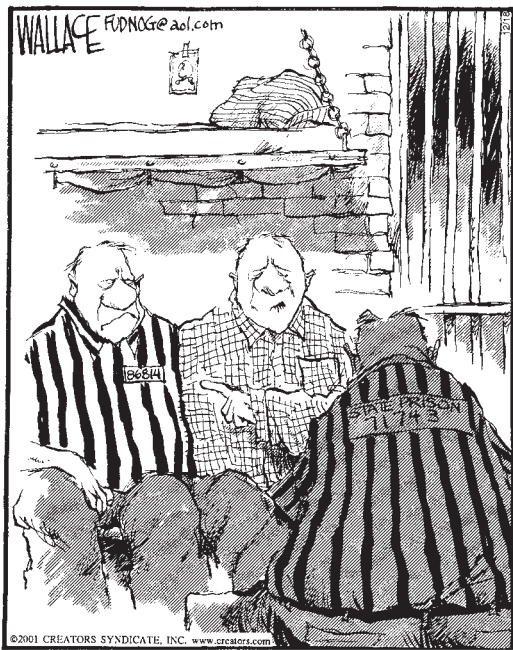


COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



Natural Selection® By Russ Wallace



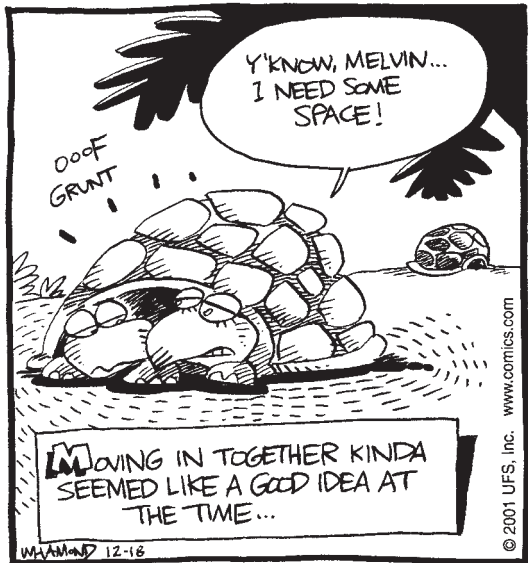
"He robbed a store. I didn't do anything."



by TERRY & PATTY LABAN



Reality Check® By Dave Whammond



Speed Bump® By Dave Coverly



CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Tough puzzle
 - 6 Bed boards
 - 11 Sufficient
 - 12 Hooded snake
 - 13 "Two Tahitian Women" painter
 - 15 Furthermore
 - 16 Umbrella part
 - 17 Boot part
 - 18 Wild
 - 20 Explorer John
 - 23 Rescued
 - 27 Skunk's weapon
 - 28 Goose egg
 - 29 Kind of children's book
 - 31 LBJ, for one
 - 32 King with the golden touch
 - 34 Use a stool
 - 37 Knight address
 - 38 Beast of burden
 - 41 "Le Château Noir" painter
 - 44 Concur
 - 45 Band-leader Shaw
 - 46 Musical sounds
- DOWN**
- 1 Hemingway nickname
 - 2 Mideast nation
 - 3 Tater
 - 4 Building wing
 - 5 Rue
 - 6 Sees the seas, in a way
 - 7 Fireplace sight
 - 8 Border on
 - 9 Jazz combo
 - 10 Rational
 - 14 Broadcast
 - 18 Public meeting
 - 19 Takes it easy
 - 20 Beat walker
 - 21 Fuss
 - 22 Jazz variety
 - 24 Baffle
 - 25 Historic time
 - 26 Put on
 - 30 Zodiac sign
 - 31 Fictional swinger

DECO	PITT
PERON	ERRED
ALONE	PEONY
NUDIST	JOE
EXEC	REWARD
LED	DIVANS
FIBER	
BRAKES	HAT
QUEBEC	JADE
URN	AMAZON
ALAMO	OPART
DATED	PARES
PAGE	ENDS

Yesterday's answer

- 19 Takes it easy
- 20 Beat walker
- 21 Fuss
- 22 Jazz variety
- 24 Baffle
- 25 Historic time
- 26 Put on
- 30 Zodiac sign
- 31 Fictional swinger
- 33 Conk out
- 34 Tiff
- 35 "Othello" villain
- 36 Rotate
- 38 Picnic pests
- 39 Agitated state
- 40 Takes in
- 42 Grant's foe
- 43 Exist

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46						47			

12-18

STUMPED?

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Wrapped up in religious beliefs

• Ultra-Orthodox Jewish authorities ruled in October that their priests could not ride on airliners taking off from Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv without getting into hermetically sealed body bags for the few moments that the plane passes over the cemetery in Holon (reasoning that impurities emanating from the cemetery had to be blocked out). El Al said it wouldn't permit passengers, for safety reasons, to wrap themselves like that, but Swissair announced it would make a slight route adjustment so that its planes could avoid the cemetery.

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BACK PAGE

Article on Nevada mining town leaves people miffed

BY SCOTT SONNER

Associated Press Writer

RENO, Nev. — The outcry over a national magazine article dubbing Battle Mountain the “armpit of America” cost a local newspaper editor her job and stunned the article’s author, who insists he’s fond of the rural Nevada mining town.

Lorrie Baumann, former editor of the Battle Mountain Bugle, said she was fired after local merchants outraged over her cooperation with The Washington Post Magazine threatened to pull advertising from the twice-weekly, 1,700-circulation newspaper.

“I lost my job because of this,” Baumann told The Associated Press last week. Baumann said she wouldn’t say more until she meets with a lawyer.

Residents were upset by comments attributed to Baumann in the magazine’s Dec. 2 humor piece in which she generally agreed with the unflattering label of the rural northeast Nevada mining town of about 5,000.

“Sounds about right,” she said in the article written by Gene Weingarten. “I think a quick drive around downtown will answer any questions that might be lingering in your mind.”

Bugle Publisher Lee Denmark, who also publishes the Humboldt Sun in Winnemucca, said Baumann’s departure from the paper was a personnel matter and he would not comment. He said local reaction to the article was varied and that he found “large segments meanspirited

and unnecessary.

“Some people were outraged. Some thought it was humorous. At this point, I think most of them want to try to figure out a way to capitalize on the publicity,” he said.

Barry Smith, editor of the Nevada Appeal in Carson City, offered similar advice in an editorial Friday: “Don’t get mad. Make a profit.”

Critics, including a U.S. senator, said the article unfairly poked fun at Battle Mountain as a desolate, backward community inhabited largely by hicks and lacking in any real history, culture or entertainment beyond drinking and gambling.

“This is a very hurtful article,” Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., told the Elko Daily Free Press. “Think how this makes the kids who are going to school there feel.”

But over the course of the 6,000-word article, Weingarten appeared to undergo a transformation in which he closes with newfound respect for the resourcefulness of the townspeople, their local pride and dedication to their children.

“I’ve been going about this all wrong,” Weingarten wrote toward the end. “This isn’t about architecture, roads, weather, cultural opportunities. ... It’s amazing what you can discover when you start to look in the right places.”

In fact, the article’s headline states: “Why not the worst? We promised to find the armpit of America. Turns out it’s only about five inches from the heart.”

It’s the path Weingarten took to get there that upset the locals, ridiculing the

town’s big white letters on a mountain-side, “BM,” and its annual man-mule race, not to mention the local brothel.

The magazine cover features a photograph of the Battle Mountain Shell station sign with the “S” burned out — HELL.

The cover says, “Nowheresville USA” and “Worst Place in America” and Weingarten explains how Battle Mountain beat out places like East St. Louis, Ill., Elizabeth, N.J., Branson, Mo., Fargo, N.D., and Scranton, Pa.

“Take a small town, remove any trace of history, character or charm,” the article said.

“Allow nothing with any redeeming qualities within city limits — this includes food, motel beds, service personnel. Then place this pathetic assemblage of ghastly buildings and nasty people on a freeway in the midst of a harsh, uninviting wilderness, far enough from the nearest city to be inconvenient, but not so far for it to develop a character of its own. You now have created Battle Mountain, Nevada.”

It didn’t help that Baumann acknowledged in print that part of her agreement to work at the newspaper included assurances she didn’t have to live in Battle Mountain. She lives 50 miles away in Winnemucca.

Weingarten, who grew up in the South Bronx and had never visited Nevada before his assignment, said he was “stunned” by Baumann’s firing.

“I’m horrified,” he said by telephone from Washington D.C.

“Near as I can tell, he fired this woman for telling the truth and expressing an

honest opinion. I don’t think this is a great moment for American journalism.”

Weingarten said he has received about 100 e-mails and letters from the Battle Mountain area and former residents. He estimated they were divided “50-50,” pro and con.

He read one that said the author “should be shot.”

“I would have to say I got more vicious mail from Scrantonians for merely mentioning their city in the story than I got from Battle Mountain,” he said, laughing.

Lander County District Attorney Hy Forgeron, a 30-year resident of Battle Mountain, questioned in an opinion page column in the Elko paper “why did the Post feel it was necessary to travel outside its own city to find ‘the armpit?’”

“After all, didn’t I recently read that D.C.’s homicide rate is tops in the U.S. and its drug-related crime also at or near the top? ... I wouldn’t live in Washington D.C. if you gave me title to the whole place.”

Weingarten said the Battle Mountain Chamber of Commerce requested 50 copies of the magazine and many residents who wrote recognized the underlying theme of the article.

But others “misunderstood what the ultimate message of the story was, which is that you can’t define a place by what material things it lacks,” he said.

“You define a place by the contents of the people’s hearts. It seems to me it doesn’t take a real careful reading of the story to understand I came away with a fond feeling for Battle Mountain.”

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