

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

Local schools may close to cover budget deficit

Option is one of many superintendent proposes

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

It's come to this: Eviscerate academic programs and lay off more than 130 employees, or close school for two weeks.

That's the choice Santa Monica-Malibu Unified District Superintendent John Deasy delivered to the school board Thursday in response to a proposed \$3.4 million shortfall in state funding for local schools, which by law must be absorbed by June 30.

To cope with the funding loss, Deasy proposes that the school board file a waiver with the state board of education requesting that it be allowed to cut 10 days from the 180 days public schools that are mandated to stay open to qualify for state funding.

Deasy recommended that school should close for one week and then every Friday for five weeks.

By closing schools for two weeks this year, the district could save \$3.1 million by not paying its employees. That way it could avoid laying off employees and eliminating non-mandated programs, like art and music.

"I recognize the educational harm done by such a measure," Deasy said, "yet the result will be that all employees return to their full position, and all students return

to a full set of programs and services."

It appears that even though the teacher and non-teacher unions haven't seen a formal proposal for closing school, they reluctantly support the idea because it's better than losing jobs, officials said.

Making budget cuts is becoming

See DEFICIT, page 5



John Deasy

Budget solutions require state flexibility

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

State officials say it's possible that laws can be circumvented — all you need is a waiver.

The local school district may ask for a waiver so it can close school for 10 days this year to cope with a \$3.4 million reduction in state funding. However, state law requires that schools be open for 180 days to receive money from the state.

The state's Department of Education is being inundated with requests from California school districts to be exempt from certain state laws, said Nicole Winger, a state DOE spokeswoman.

"The main issues are about closure or staff reductions," she said. "Those are the general areas people are looking at."

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified District Superintendent John Deasy asked the school board on Thursday to consider closing the district's schools

See BUDGET, page 6

Judge delays fraud case of wedding photographer

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

A judge has postponed the court proceedings of a local photographer accused of fraud.

Santa Monica Superior Court Commissioner Roberta Kyman on Wednesday granted three extra weeks to photographer Juli Anne Armitage to enter her plea because she is filing for bankruptcy.

Armitage, a wedding photographer, has been charged by the Santa Monica City Attorney's Office with 17 counts of fraud for allegedly promising wedding

photography packages, but not providing the goods.

Armitage gave Kyman an emotional plea to postpone the arraignment because she is going through bankruptcy proceedings both professionally and personally.

The photographer said since her business is not operating, she has been evicted from her Santa Monica studio space.

Only after the results of bankruptcy will the court know if Armitage, 38, can be awarded a public defender, which she has applied for, or if she must pay for an

See CASE, page 6

An attentive audience



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

Seagulls and pigeons appear to watch a street artist paint and sell his portraits on the Santa Monica Pier Thursday afternoon.

Playboy centerfolds becoming less curvaceous, study shows

BY EMMA ROSS
AP Medical Writer

LONDON — The curves of Playboy centerfold models have gradually flattened out over the last 50 years, giving way to a more androgynous look, European researchers suggest.

Analyzing every Playboy centerfold since the first one in 1953, they found the models' weight hadn't changed much over time, but busts and hips had diminished, while waists had become less tapered.

The study, published this week in the traditionally lighthearted Christmas edition of the British Medical Journal, does not offer much interpretation of the trend and experts warn against jumping to conclusions.

Does it mean the male idea of female attractiveness has changed over time — that men now prefer a less curvaceous woman, despite their protests that "heroin chic" is not sexy?

Or were the evolutionary scientists who theorized that curves symbolized fertility and that the most reproductively successful females were those who were able to store surplus energy in their curves wrong?

Or have humans now evolved beyond such primitive judgments as the ability to make it through famine?

Or is it simply that Playboy is now out

of touch with what men find attractive?

"It's difficult to disentangle cause from effect," said the study's leader, Martin Voracek, a psychology researcher at the University of Vienna in Austria. "All I can say is that attractiveness is not that simple and is not constant over time."

"If Playboy didn't reflect ideals of attractiveness, they wouldn't still be around, so it must be that many men find this shape attractive," Voracek speculated.

However, Adrian Furnham, a professor of psychology at London University who has conducted research on judgments of female attractiveness, was not so ready to draw conclusions.

"I would have thought that to make any deductions would be highly dubious. Some years ago Playboy was the touchstone, but there are now dozens of these things around," he said. "You'd need a whole range of magazines from different countries which showed a consistent pattern. Then, I think, you could start worrying about an explanation, but until then it's just a bit of fun."

It's not as if the Playboy centerfolds are indistinguishable from bony catwalk models, Voracek said, "but at least over the last 15 years or so, there is some sort of converging trend."

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★★-So-so ★-Difficult



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★ Pace yourself; recognize that you only have so much energy. Last-minute errands might have you running here and there. Establish your limits, and you will be less likely to fry your nerves and overwhelm yourself. Tonight: At home. Relax over a hot apple cider.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ Others express their needs. Feel free to add your two cents. Join friends or associates and call this an early day. A get-together for the holidays or finishing off your errands will make you smile. Your gentle and caring nature wins someone over to your camp. Tonight: Enjoy the holiday season.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ Others want to hear from you, though they might not agree with your thinking. Forge ahead while keeping a clear eye on spending and what must be done. Demonstrate your unique thinking. A celebration could be quite spontaneous. Tonight: Deal directly.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ Keep up the good work, knowing that you will achieve what you want. Creativity and a good heart meet. Others sense your good intentions and vibes. Take an opportunity that seems too good to say "no" to. Romance and children highlight the scenario. Tonight: Play away.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★ Know when it's appropriate to say little. Your intuition concerning a domestic matter could make a substantial difference in upcoming events. Your good nature needs to manifest itself with family or a loved one. Tonight: Do your thing.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ Friends point, but only you can decide to follow their suggested direction. Join others. Go where people are, even if you don't know them. You will not do well alone. Socialize and flirt till your heart's content. Know what you want. Tonight: Where the action is.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ A take-charge attitude backfires, especially when it impacts your gift-giving. An office party or some other prestigious get-together gives you plenty of time to strut your stuff. Others might see through some of your "show." Tonight: Out and about.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ Remember the intrinsic message of the season, and express it in a manner that others can and will hear. Music feeds the mood, as do all the holiday get-togethers. Put yourself in a place where you can relish what is happening. Tonight: Make a dream real.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ Make an effort toward a partner or loved one. Express more of what you feel when discussing your relationship or an upcoming event. Loosen up and enjoy your life by allowing someone to become more intimate. Tonight: Nestle in under the mistletoe.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Others want to offer you the world, so it seems. What's stopping you from enjoying yourself with those near and dear to you. Your emotions become intense in the next few days, but know how much someone really wants you as a part of his or her life. Tonight: The only answer is "yes."



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Pace yourself, and you'll accomplish much more than you thought possible. Loosen up with a difficult boss or parent. You aren't going to change him or her. Pursue a situation by keeping your nose to the grindstone. Tonight: Finish off Santa errands.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ Your understanding takes you in a novel direction, permitting a change. News from a distance might impact you in a new and somewhat different way. Add more sparkle to your life and the season. Touch base with a long-forgotten friend. Tonight: Let magic happen.

CLARIFICATION — Chamber of Commerce officials wish to clarify a story that ran on Dec. 19. Although the report stated that chamber officials wanted to "oust" Santa Monicans for Renters Rights as the ruling party in City Hall, the chamber says its not necessarily anti-SMRR.

And it has not been decided how the chamber will decide to endorse candidates.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Holiday sobriety checkpoint

By Daily Press staff

The Santa Monica Police Department will be conducting a Driving under Influence Checkpoint on Saturday, December 21. The checkpoint will be operated during nighttime hours at an undisclosed location in the City of Santa Monica.

The holiday season is typically associated with travel and celebration, and it is one of the highest periods for alcohol-related traffic deaths. Santa Monica police have selected this period to bring this public awareness campaign to help prevent tragedies caused by drinking and driving.

Police chief James Butts Jr. said, "It's our goal to make this holiday season one of the safest seasons ever for those visiting and shopping in Santa Monica."

MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) believes sobriety checkpoints are one of the most effective tools to detect and deter drunk drivers. "Our roadways must be free from the threat of alcohol-impaired drivers," explained Tina Pasco, executive director, MADD-Los Angeles. "Highly publicized sobriety checkpoints alert motorists to stay off the roads or designate a non-drinking driver to avoid a drunk driving arrest." Pasco added, "Checkpoints also provide an opportunity to remind motorists to buckle up because seat belts are the best defense in a drunk driving crash."

Public opinion polls show strong support for sobriety checkpoints. A 1990 U.S. Supreme Court ruling established the constitutionality of such stops for DUI enforcement and deterrence. Studies show a reduction in alcohol-impaired driving where checkpoints have been used.

Special opportunities to give

By Daily Press staff

A number of charitable events will be taking place in Santa Monica Place and on the Promenade leading to the Christmas Holiday, which include:

■ CHIPS for Kids Toy Drive: Bring new, unwrapped toys to Center Court of Santa Monica Place through December 21. Your gifts will be distributed to disadvantaged or hospitalized children in the Los Angeles area. The event is sponsored by the California Highway Patrol;

■ Toys For Tots: Toys for children are being collected at Citibank at 429 4th St.;

■ Westside Food Bank Holiday Food Drive: Donate non-perishable food items in Center Court of Santa Monica Place through December 24. The drive is sponsored by the Big Blue Bus and Westside Food Bank;

■ Salvation Army Angel Tree: Donate holiday gifts to help local children in need by taking an angel with a child's name, age and gift wish from the "Angel Tree" located on level 1 of Santa Monica Place in Macy's Court through December 23rd. It is sponsored by the Salvation Army.

In addition to these events, free gift wrapping is available on the Promenade.

Montana Avenue Branch Library reopens

By Daily Press staff

The Montana Avenue Branch Library, 1704 Montana Ave., has reopened to the public following major renovations. Branch library hours are 12 noon to 9 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturday. The Montana Avenue Branch phone number is (310) 829-7081.

Major features of the Montana Avenue Branch Library improvements include construction of a new community multipurpose room, a new space for young adults and remodeled children's area. Also, a new service desk, added wiring for information technology, new carpeting, interior and exterior painting, restoration of the patio and landscape improvements.

The Fairview Branch Library, located at 2101 Ocean Park Blvd., will reopen to the public in early January 2003. Renovations to the Fairview Branch will include the addition of a small adult reading room, additional wiring for online services, new carpeting, painting inside and out and new landscaping.

Killefer Flammang of Santa Monica are architects for the branch renovation projects that were made possible through passage of a library bond issue by Santa Monica voters in 1998.

For more information, the public can check the library's Web site www.smpl.org or call general information at (310) 458-8600.

surf report

Information compiled by Jesse Haley

New northwest swell is due today. We should see good sized surf as it builds this afternoon, peaking in the evening.

Saturday size will hold in the shoulder- to head-high range at exposed breaks. Sunday things are expected to mellow slightly as swell should begin to decline.

Full moon was Thursday so tides are fairly extreme. Low tides are dropping to negative while highs hit over six feet.

Regardless, the waves are good enough that even the county's 72 hour rain advisory can't keep surfers out of the water.

Up to date beach ratings are not currently available, but you can be sure the water is far from clean. So ask yourself if it's worth it, are great waves worth risking some moderate skin irritation?

Rumor of the day: The last swell was so good it started attracting pro surfers back to Santa Monica Bay. A trusted source said he saw a few pros catching rides at the Venice Pier Thursday morning.



Today's Tides:

Low-	2:26 a.m.	2.38'
High-	8:43 a.m.	6.14'
Low-	4:11 p.m.	-0.76'
High-	10:47 p.m.	3.53'

Location	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Water Quality
County Line	4-6'/Fair	4-6'/Fair	3-5'/Fair	N/A
Zuma	5-7'/Fair	5-7'/Fair	3-5'/Fair	N/A
Surfrider	2-3'/Fair	2-3'/Fair	2-3'/Fair	N/A
Topanga	4-5'/Fair	4-5'/Fair	3-4'/Fair	N/A
Breakwater	5-7'/Fair	5-7'/Fair	4-6'/Fair	N/A
El Porto	5-7'/Fair	5-7'/Fair	4-6'/Fair	N/A

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The Q-Line

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it, after years of having fluoride in their city water supplies. At this point in history, the fluoride pushers have to go after new accounts for all the ones they are losing. Has fluoride done more harm than good to our nations health? Claims are

See Q-LINE, page 4

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■ “The City Council should do something about the homeless.”

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Leonard Peikoff founded the Ayn Rand Institute, which promotes the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead. Send comments to reaction@aynrand.org.

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LOCAL



School district appears to be headed for hard times

DEFICIT, from page 1

almost routine at the district as the state copes with its massive budget deficits.

Before the school year started, the district cut \$2 million from its budget. Then after the failure of a proposed parcel tax increase at the ballot box on Nov. 5, it had to cut another \$1.5 million.

Now Gov. Gray Davis is proposing to cut double the amount of funding for public schools, including Santa Monica, which now has few options left, Deasy said.

"It's draconian, but you have to figure out how we cut," Deasy said. "It's an enormous amount to cut in such a short period of time, but we have no choice."

Even though the mid-year budget cuts are bad, the worst news is yet to come, Deasy said. Closing school for 10 days will only get the district through this budget year. Next year's budget situation is predicted to be far worse, Deasy said.

When Davis proposes his budget for the next fiscal year in January, Deasy said the school district will likely lose another \$11 million in state funding on top of the reductions made this year.

And with the announcement this week that the state budget deficit has ballooned by another \$7 billion, the outlook for public schools across the state looks more bleak each day, officials said.

That means by next school year, the district must find a way to do without at least \$18 million in state funding, which comes to about 20 percent of the district's \$90 million budget.

"The state has fully abdicated its constitutional responsibility to public education," Deasy said.

Without any increased funding, the school district would be forced to eliminate all administrators except for principals at each school and cut \$1 million in special education and other contracted services.

The district also would have to decrease \$1 million of general fund spending, reduce non-mandated programs by \$1 million, eliminate 60 teaching positions and 60 other school district positions and eliminate \$1 million in programs and services, like extracurricular activities and sports programs.

"I get the sense most Californians don't know what's really about to hit them," Deasy said. "And I think we have the same situation here in Santa Monica."

Since the state is not willing to pay for educating its children, Deasy said it's time to throw out the rule book and come up with some unorthodox solutions to the budget problems.

He said all state employees and offices should be closed and furloughed for two days this fiscal year, which would close the deficit. The county offices of education should be drastically down-sized, and the savings should be put back into local education, he said.

The state needs to place a moratorium on adding new components of its state testing program, Deasy said.

"I can't see expanding state testing when we can't even afford to keep the children in school to learn what they need to pass the state tests," Deasy said.

Deasy also wants the state to allow school districts to increase elementary classroom sizes to roughly 24 children without losing state funding, which is

predicated on schools keeping those numbers below 21 children in kindergarten to third grade classrooms.

He also wants the same percentage cuts being forced upon local public school districts to be applied to the state office of education and each county office of education.

Vehicle licensing taxes, reinstating the 9 and 10 percent income tax brackets and increasing taxes on alcohol and cigarettes should all be considered for raising money for schools, Deasy said.

"I get the sense most Californians don't know what's really about to hit them. And I think we have the same situation here in Santa Monica."

— JOHN DEASY
SMMUSD Superintendent

The state also needs to suspend making local school districts pay the increased retirement fees into the state pension plan, CALPERS, and rolling back workers' compensation benefits for at least one fiscal year.

But just to maintain the school district's current programs and services, Deasy said a new parcel tax in Santa Monica will be required. A task force has been assembled to write a ballot initiative for a June 3 special election.

The new parcel tax will seek far less than the proposal that died in the November election. Property owners will be asked to pay \$144 more annually and business may be asked to pay \$675 more, whereas the past parcel tax asked every property owner to pay \$300 more.

Under the new proposal, the school district would raise between \$7 to \$8 million annually for six years from taxpayers, while the past parcel tax would have raised more than \$9 million annually for 12 years.

Even if the new parcel tax succeeds, the school district must raise another \$3 million in revenue on its own, Deasy said. That means charging more in fees and collecting more in rent from properties the district leases out.

Santa Monica and Malibu, the two cities in the school district, would be asked to contribute more to the school district, Deasy said.

Currently, Santa Monica gives the school district \$3 million and Malibu kicks in \$270,000. But those cities are facing budget problems of their own.

Assuming there are no more funding reductions, the parcel tax proposal passes and the cities donate more to the district, even then Deasy said the school district could only sustain the current proposed reductions for a few years.

"We could absorb this initially," Deasy said. "But in no way will we be able to sustain this kind of reduced funding for a long time."

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LOCAL

Lack of money makes school officials inventive

BUDGET, from page 1

for an entire week and then every Friday for five weeks. That way, the district wouldn't have to pay employees and would not run the risk of having to lay off hundreds of employees and reduce academic programs.

The move would require approval from the state board of education, which approves waivers from local school districts that are looking for exceptions.

In the past, most districts have asked permission to use state money for things it wasn't intended for. Now, most school districts are asking about shutting their doors to cope with the staggering loss of state funding, Winger said.

And since the budget deficit seems to grow exponentially on a weekly basis, there hasn't been too much talk among state board of education members about whether decreasing the required number of school days is an option.

"At this stage, it's all anecdotal," Winger said. "We can't say if there is a wave of support, but we have heard of many different ideas and proposals, and closing schools has been one of them."

It takes about one to two months for a waiver request from a local school district to be heard by the state board, Winger said.

Winger said there are other ways for school districts to save money. She recommends not to spend anymore money on things like textbooks and other school supplies, as well as paring down the hours of non-teaching staff.

"It remains to be seen what will need to be done once the budget is proposed."

— NICOLE WINGER
State DOE spokeswoman

But school districts won't truly know what types of drastic measures may be needed until Gov. Gray Davis and the Legislature agree on how much funding will be cut this year and next year for education, she said.

"There's a lot of creative ideas being proposed," Winger said. "It remains to be seen what will need to be done once the budget is proposed."

Photographer says city is making matters worse

CASE, from page 1

attorney on her own. She is scheduled to appear in court on Jan. 23, 2003.

"This is all I have done for the past 15 years," said Armitage, wiping away tears.

The complaint against Armitage, which was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, lists 17 separate couples who claim the photographer collected about \$2,000 from each of them, but didn't provide photos of their weddings or never showed up to the wedding at all — an allegation Armitage denies.

Armitage said she went to every wedding and provided each couple with contact sheets, which show all the photos she took. The couples selected the photos they wanted to include in their photo albums, but because of personal family problems, she was unable to put the albums together, Armitage said.

"I know I'm in the wrong," she said on Wednesday. "I mean, I am late."

If convicted of all 17 misdemeanor counts, Armitage faces a maximum penalty of 17 years in jail and \$17,000 in fines.

Armitage said the city attorney's office is making matters worse for her and her clients.

On Oct. 1, the city attorney's office seized Armitage's negatives and computer hard drives as evidence in the case against her. Because the city won't return her belongings, Armitage said she cannot complete the work for her clients.

"Instead of helping the situation, they have made it 100 times worse," she said.

Deputy City Attorney Adam Radinsky said Armitage had plenty of opportunity for more than a year to make good on the

wedding contracts.

The alleged fraud took place from 2000 to 2002.

"It doesn't make sense to blame the city now for not being able to finish her work," he said. "There were any number of times when she could have made good on these contracts and she didn't."

"It doesn't make sense to blame the city now for not being able to finish her work. There were any number of times when she could have made good on these contracts and she didn't."

— ADAM RADINSKY
Santa Monica Deputy City Attorney

Armitage has lived and worked in Santa Monica for the past eight years, she said. While she has taken photos of local homes for real estate companies and head shots for actors, she said the bulk of her jobs were for weddings. Her other clients have included the City of Santa Monica, the Big Blue Bus, W.I.S.E. Senior Services, Coldwell Banker Realty, Fred Sands Realty, UCLA Medical Center, Time Warner and Capital Records.

STATE



Golden Globe nominations announced in Beverly Hills

BY ANTHONY BREZNICAN
AP Entertainment Writer

BEVERLY HILLS — The movie musical "Chicago" received a leading eight Golden Globe nominations Thursday, while the film version of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "The Hours" got seven and the comedy "Adaptation" had six.

Along with "Chicago" and "Adaptation," a comedy of in-jokes about its writers' attempts to fashion its screenplay from the nonfiction book "The Orchid Thief," movies competing for best musical or comedy were the Dickens classic "Nicholas Nickleby," Hugh Grant's "About a Boy" and the surprise hit "My Big Fat Greek Wedding."

Besides "The Hours" — a story about three women whose lives are linked to Virginia Woolf's novel "Mrs. Dalloway" — the contenders for best film drama were the Jack Nicholson road-trip saga "About Schmidt," director Martin Scorsese's "Gangs of New York," the fantasy sequel "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers" and Roman Polanski's "The Pianist."

In television, perennial award nominees "The Sopranos" and "The West Wing" competed again for best drama along with "Six Feet Under," "The Shield" and "24." TV comedy nominees were "The Simpsons," "Will & Grace," "Sex and the City," "Curb Your Enthusiasm" and "Friends."

Meryl Streep received two film nominations, competing with "The Hours" co-star Nicole Kidman for best dramatic actress, and in the supporting actress category for "Adaptation."

Other dramatic actress nominees were Salma Hayek for "Frida," Diane Lane for "Unfaithful" and Julianne Moore for "Far From Heaven."

"To get lost in the creative aspect of the job, that is the reward itself. I never thought this would happen," said Lane, who played a woman who betrays her husband with a sensuous affair.

Nicholson's turn as a bedraggled widower in "About Schmidt" earned him a dramatic actor mention, along with Leonardo DiCaprio as a con artist in "Catch Me If You Can," Daniel Day-Lewis' crime lord in "Gangs of New York," Michael Caine's weary journalist in "The Quiet American" and Adrien Brody as a musician evading Nazis in "The Pianist."

"It was a tremendous journey both physically and emotionally," Brody said. "I immersed myself in a state of isolation, went on extreme diet. ... I lost 30 pounds and I'm kind of thin already. And I had to learn to play Chopin so there was a lot. And I had to do that in basically six weeks."

Nicolas Cage's role as screenwriter Charlie Kaufman and his fictional twin brother in "Adaptation" placed him against Grant in "About a Boy," Kieran Culkin in "Igby Goes Down," Richard Gere in "Chicago" and Adam Sandler in "Punch-Drunk Love" in the comedic or musical actor category.

Besides Renee Zellweger and Catherine Zeta-Jones in "Chicago," nominees for actress in a musical or comedy were Nia Vardalos in "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," Goldie Hawn in "The Banger Sisters" and Maggie Gyllenhaal in "Secretary."

"I'm so excited you have no idea," Zellweger said.



Jean-Marc Bouju/Associated Press

Producer Dick Clark, left, and Hollywood Foreign Press Association President Dagmar Dunlevy announce the nominations for the 60th Golden Globes awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills Thursday.

When she saw the film scoring other multiple nominations "across the ticker at the bottom of the television screen, my head almost popped off," she added.

"I just called my parents and they're so savvy about this right now," said Vardalos, who based most of "Wedding" on her own family's exploits. "My father said ... 'Is it like the Oscars?' I said, 'Uhh ... yes.'"

Directing nominees were Scorsese for "Gangs of New York," Peter Jackson for "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers," Stephen Daldry for "The Hours," Spike Jonze for "Adaptation," Rob Marshall for "Chicago" and Alexander Payne for "About Schmidt."

In a blur between reality and fiction, Kaufman was credited along with his fictional twin brother "Donald" in the screenplay category for "Adaptation."

"The movie, even though there's this very complicated structure to it, our hope was always that even if you weren't interested in that, the movie would play emotionally, that these characters ... are trying to find something to connect to," Jonze said.

Also nominated: Bill Condon for adapting the stage musical "Chicago," David Hare for "The Hours," Todd Haynes for "Far From Heaven," and Payne and Jim Taylor for "About Schmidt."

"Every musical in the world has the weight of the world on its shoulders," Condon said. "With two in a row (after 'Moulin Rouge'), maybe it's a trend."

Kathy Bates in "About Schmidt," Cameron Diaz in "Gangs of New York," Queen Latifah in "Chicago" and Susan Sarandon in "Igby Goes Down" joined Streep in the supporting actress category.

Supporting actor nominees were Chris Cooper for "Adaptation," Ed Harris for "The Hours," Paul Newman for "Road to Perdition," Dennis Quaid for "Far From Heaven" and John C. Reilly for "Chicago."

Golden Globe nominees are chosen by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association's roughly 90 members, who cover Hollywood for overseas publications. The awards are in 13 movie and 11 television categories, and will be awarded Jan. 19 during a live telecast on NBC.

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STATE

Credit rating cut due to \$35B deficit projection

BY DON THOMPSON
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Standard & Poor's dropped its ratings on California bonds Thursday, in reaction to Gov. Gray Davis' projection that the state faces a \$34.8 billion budget deficit.

The new projection is "a sharp increase" from a \$21 billion deficit predicted by the state's Legislative Analyst just a month ago, the rating agency said.

"The increased gap poses an enormous test for the state compared to the size of its annual budget," Standard & Poor's said in its announcement.

The agency dropped its rating on \$23.5 billion in general obligation bonds from "A+" to "A", the state's commercial paper program to "A-2" from "A-1", and the state's \$6.4 billion of general fund lease-backed debt from "A" to "A-".

However, the agency said the outlook for the bond rating is stable.

It said it will review the impact of pos-

sible cuts on local governments and school districts as more details of those cuts becomes available.

Davis' proposal for \$10.2 billion in midyear budget cuts "can represent only a partial solution to the state's long-term structural budget problems," the rating agency said.

Fitch Ratings Vice Chair Claire G. Cohen said Thursday she was "just stunned" at the sharp increase in the state's projected debt in just a month.

California could face a cut in the current Fitch rating of double-A negative as well, she said in an interview with Dow Jones Newswires.

Moody's Investors Service, like the others, is waiting for state officials to detail their budget plans, said Ray Murphy, a senior credit officer at the company and its lead analyst for the state.

But he said Moody's is likely to wait for Davis to submit what by law must be a balanced budget to the Legislature on Jan. 10.

San Diego authorities break up insurance fraud

By The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — An insurance adjuster has been arrested for allegedly approving more than \$700,000 worth of bogus claims for the deaths of two fictitious children. Authorities were seeking two others who allegedly filed the claims.

Gaylan Sweet, 34, an Allstate insurance claims adjuster, was arrested Wednesday in San Diego, according to the District Attorney's office.

Sweet, along with Leigh Anne Sanders, 32, of San Diego and Ruther Brown, 33, of Oklahoma are accused of filing bogus insurance claims with Northbrook, Ill.-based Allstate Corp. over the last two years.

Brown received a \$500,000 payout earlier this year for the death of his 11-

year-old imaginary child, Ruther Jr., authorities said. Sanders received \$210,000 two years ago for the death of her nonexistent son, Timothy.

The claims detailed traffic accidents that never occurred on streets that do not exist and included bogus eyewitness accounts and fake police reports, authorities said.

Warrants have been issued for the arrest of Brown and Sanders.

Kion Gould, 33, also was arrested Wednesday, according to The San Diego Union-Tribune. His alleged role was unclear.

The four suspects are associated with each other but authorities aren't clear on their exact relationships, said prosecutor Terry Cannon. The three men played basketball together for years, Cannon said.

Proposed gang injunction is latest in L.A.'s war on gangs

BY PAUL WILBORN
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — A Northeast Los Angeles street gang with a history of crime and violence dating back to the 1940s is the target of the city's largest-ever gang injunction announced Thursday by the City Attorney's Office.

Under the proposed injunction, identified members of the Avenues Gang could be arrested on misdemeanor charges if they are seen together in public. Gang members caught riding together could lose their cars, City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo said.

The gang injunction, which covers 9.7 square miles of warehouses, working-class homes and apartments, is the city's latest salvo in a war on street gangs. There are currently 13 active gang injunctions in Los Angeles, said Martin Vranicar, who heads the city attorney's gang unit.

Homicides in Los Angeles are up 11 percent over last year, and city officials

claim gang violence is behind at least 50 percent of the murders. Mayor James K. Hahn declared war on gangs earlier this month. Police Chief William Bratton appointed a 35-year police department veteran to head a new gang suppression effort.

For Delgadillo, the gang injunction has personal meaning.

"I grew up in the area where the Avenues Gang has preyed upon and terrorized East Los Angeles residents for generations," he said.

Delgadillo called the injunction, which must be approved by a judge next month, "a vital tool in taking back the streets of our city."

Myriam Magana, who lives in the Glassell Park area covered by the injunction, said gangs have terrorized the neighborhood and marked it with graffiti for years.

"It's difficult for the young kids who live here," she said.

But Magana called the arrests a first step that should also include intervention efforts and job programs.

NATIONAL



Jury finds Wal-Mart had employees work unpaid overtime from 1994-1999

BY WILLIAM MCCALL
Associated Press Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. — Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, forced employees in Oregon to work unpaid overtime between 1994 and 1999, a federal jury found Thursday in the first of dozens of such lawsuits across the country to come to trial.

A separate trial will be held to decide how much Wal-Mart should pay in damages.

More than 400 employees from 24 of Wal-Mart's 27 Oregon stores had sued the retailer, accusing it of violating federal and state wage laws.

"I guess, basically, we are disappointed with the verdict. Wal-Mart has a strong policy of paying its associates for all the time they work," said spokesman Bill Wertz. "We would emphasize that this ruling affects only approximately 350 workers out of 15,000 in Oregon."

The lawsuit was filed by Carolyn Thiebes and Betty Alderson, who worked in managerial positions at Wal-Mart stores in the Salem area.

The lawsuit claimed managers got employees to work off the clock by asking them to clean up the store after they had clocked out and by deleting hours from time records.

"We would emphasize that this ruling affects only approximately 350 workers out of 15,000 in Oregon."

— BILL WERTZ
Wal-Mart spokesperson

It also said Wal-Mart reprimanded employees who claimed overtime. Workers felt forced to work after clocking out because managers assigned them more work than they could complete in a regular shift, the plaintiffs said.

Wal-Mart conceded during opening

arguments Tuesday that some off-the-clock work occurred but said company policy expressly prohibited it.

Wal-Mart, a \$218 billion company, employs 1 million workers in 3,250 stores in the United States.

The verdict came after the close of the stock market. Wal-Mart finished the day down 22 cents at \$50.16 on the New York Stock Exchange.

Thirty-nine other class-action lawsuits are pending against the company in 30 states. Those suits, from California to New York, involve hundreds of thousands of workers seeking tens of millions in back pay.

Previously, Wal-Mart settled two similar overtime cases in Colorado and New Mexico.

The company reportedly paid \$50 million two years ago to settle an off-the-clock lawsuit covering 69,000 workers in Colorado, and it recently settled for \$500,000 a case involving 120 workers in Gallup, N.M., said one of the plaintiffs' attorneys.

Authorities say lab made Ecstasy tablets by the million; engineer arrested

BY DAVID B. CARUSO
Associated Press Writer

PHILADELPHIA — Authorities found a lab buried deep in a mountain-side that they said could easily fill orders for a million tablets of illegal club drug Ecstasy.

Prosecutors said engineer Duane Michael Policelli built the lab inside two giant metal tanks buried beneath the long driveway of a home he dubbed "The Citadel."

Policelli, 51, was arrested Dec. 12 and charged with participation in a corrupt organization, illegal manufacturing, possession and distribution of Ecstasy and criminal conspiracy. If convicted on all counts, he

faces up to 70 years in prison.

Policelli's lawyer, Brian Monahan, declined to comment. He has said that Policelli, who is free on \$100,000 bail, regretted any embarrassment he caused his family.

Investigators said Policelli had been making the drug for at least two years.

"We believe he was supplying up and down the East Coast," said Kevin Harley, spokesman for Attorney General Mike Fisher. "If he needed to fill an order for a million pills or tablets, we believe that, based on the amount of chemicals found and the equipment he had, he could easily fill that order."

At a news conference Wednesday in Allentown, Fisher displayed photographs of the bunker discovered about 25 miles away.

Concealed beneath boulders and behind a hidden door, the lab had electricity, plumbing, a pill press and automated machinery, state narcotics agents said. Authorities said Policelli had stored chemicals at a defunct garment factory in Roseto.

Ecstasy got its start in urban dance clubs and raves in the 1990s and has since spread to middle America. Once almost exclusively imported from Europe, the pills are increasingly being made in clandestine labs through-

out the United States, drug enforcement agents said.

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NATIONAL

Twelve indicted in alleged money-laundering scheme

By The Associated Press

SEATTLE — A federal grand jury indicted 12 people on money-laundering charges for allegedly helping to funnel more than \$12 million to Iraq in violation of sanctions imposed during the first Bush administration.

The indictment, unsealed Thursday, alleges that between April 2000 and January 2002, a ring of people throughout the United States collected money and sent it to a company called Alshafei Family Connect, based in the Seattle suburb Edmonds.

The company, owned and operated by Hussein Alshafei, an Iraqi native and naturalized U.S. citizen, then shipped the money to London and other overseas cities and eventually to Iraq, the indictment alleges.

Alshafei was to appear before a U.S. magistrate in Seattle later Thursday.

The indictment includes one count of conspiracy to launder money and 34 counts of money laundering. It charges people in Dallas, Phoenix, St. Louis, Nashville, Tenn., Roanoke, Va., London,

Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Iraq.

Investigators say the money was sent from U.S. cities, including New York and Seattle, and then on to England, India, Canada, Brazil, Taiwan, Egypt, Jordan and the UAE.

The funds eventually were forwarded to a business in Iraq called Al-Nour Trading, run by a man whose last name is Fakher and whose alias is Abu Haider, the indictment says.

Others who have been arrested are scheduled to appear in other districts. John Harding, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office here, said he did not know how many were in custody.

In addition to Alshafei and Fakher, the indictment names: Ali Mohammad Ali Abbas of Jordan; Haider Amer Fakher of Iraq; Hashim Mohsin Almosawi of Everett, Wash.; Abdulilah Hamid Daoud of London; Ahmed Fayadh Kathe of Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Salam Said Alkhursan of Dallas; Kaalid Amen of St. Louis; Ali Noor Alsutani of Nashville, Tenn.; Ali Almarhoun of Phoenix; and Malik Almaliki of Roanoke, Va.

Prison outlet is a unique place to shop for holidays

BY ARTHUR H. ROTSTEIN
Associated Press Writer

TUCSON, Ariz. — So you're still looking for that last-minute, perfectly unique Christmas something for a loved one?

Forget Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Target or Wal-Mart. For anything from scrimshaw to a birdhouse built with license plates, the one truly different shopping place in Arizona is the Arizona State Prison Outlet in Florence.

"The prison outlet also has everything from picnic tables to articles of clothing," even a handcrafted leather rifle case costing several hundred dollars, said John Spearman, assistant director of Arizona Correctional Industries.

That's the self-supporting division of the state corrections department established to provide inmates work training and experience, reduce corrections costs and enable inmates to help make restitution.

The outlet, open daily between Thanksgiving and Jan. 1, offers customers the work of inmate-artisans and artists. You can find jewelry, paintings, greeting cards, handmade wallets, leather vests or novelty T-shirts.

Customers can spend from a few dollars for personalized license plates to several hundred for a painting.

You can also buy a Christmas tree from the 1,000-acre prison farm.

Or maybe you'd like models of Old West wagons. They're sold assembled for \$20 or in kits for \$10, produced through a prison-factory cottage industry, Spearman said.

The outlet is a forum for Arizona inmates who have handcrafted an article and will allow Arizona Correctional Industries to put it on sale. It's one of a handful of artisan programs operated by state prison systems, Spearman said.

Inmates receive 75 percent of the price that customers pay at the outlet; ACI

keeps the rest for overhead.

"The prison outlet has served a very useful purpose in terms of providing a means for inmates to stay occupied inside the prison and generate funds for themselves so they're not indigent and can provide some support for themselves and their families," Spearman said.

"The prison outlet also has everything from picnic tables to articles of clothing."

— **JOHN SPEARMAN**
Arizona Correctional Industries,
assistant director

Over the last three years, ACI has returned \$5 million to the state's taxpayers; last year alone, it generated revenues of \$17.5 million and recorded a net profit of \$400,000.

Its programs have paid inmates between 40 cents an hour and minimum wage, and inmates contributed \$133,000 to the state victims compensation fund, returned \$100,000 to the state alcohol abuse and treatment fund and paid \$200,000 in taxes.

A number of prisoners at the privately run Corrections Corporation of America facility in Florence are artisans from Alaska specializing in scrimshaw, or ivory carving.

But a number of other things are unique because of who has made them, Spearman added. Particularly popular are birdhouses made with defective license plates manufactured in the prison's industrial yard. The walls are made from two license plates, decorated with shake shingle roofs.

INTERNATIONAL



Security council meets



Suzanne Plunkett/Associated Press
U.N. chief weapons inspector Hans Blix, right, and Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, answer questions after Security Council consultations at U.N. headquarters in New York, Thursday.

Venezuela's Supreme Court orders temporary halt to strike

BY JAMES ANDERSON
Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela — Venezuela's Supreme Court ordered a temporary halt Thursday to an oil industry strike that has crippled exports from the world's fifth-largest petroleum producer and strangled domestic gasoline supplies.

The court issued the order while it considers the legality of the work stoppage, which is part of an 18-day-old general strike against President Hugo Chavez. The strike has stopped oil exports from this key U.S. supplier and sent global prices above \$30 a barrel.

However, it was doubtful the court could force workers back to their jobs.

Felix Rodriguez, director of production at the state-owned oil company, asked for the court order in a motion arguing the work stoppage threatened national security. Venezuela is losing \$40 million a day in oil export income and could be forced to tap into its \$15 billion foreign reserves.

The court said it will hear arguments within four days. In the meantime, it ordered striking workers and executives at the state-owned oil monopoly Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A., or PDVSA, to resume work immediately.

Venezuelan and foreign tankers are idle, refineries are closed or operating at minimum levels and crews and dock workers are refusing to handle oil and non-oil cargos.

Oil production was down to 370,000 barrels per day — compared with 3 million barrels before the strike. Some oil executives fired by Chavez claim production is 200,000 barrels per day.

A spokesman for dissident oil executives said they would disobey the Supreme Court ruling. Strike leaders cite a clause in Venezuela's constitution allowing citizens to rebel against a government they consider undemocratic.

"We won't go to work until the government decides to hold new elections," Alfredo Gomez told The Associated Press.

Chavez ordered soldiers to oil installations two weeks ago to prevent sabotage,

pressure workers to return and force gasoline deliveries.

Gomez alleged soldiers were "making people work at gunpoint" and many strikers feared for their safety if forced to return.

The court ruled Thursday as gasoline shortages reached a critical stage. Most filling stations turned away motorists and officials said gasoline stocks were nearly empty.

Angelina Martino, president of the Association of Gasoline Retailers, said 70 percent of gasoline stations in the Caracas area were empty.

PDVSA president Ali Rodriguez insisted the government was working to guarantee supplies for "many days."

Long lines formed at the few open stations.

"I am annoyed because they (the strikers) are creating unnecessary chaos," said Claudio Cedeno, a 52-year-old truck driver.

In Washington, Secretary of State Colin Powell said the United States was concerned about "the possibility of violence and deep political unrest and social unrest."

"Both sides have been acting in a rather intransigent way," Powell said.

Chavez's government is trying to keep Venezuela's transportation and economic infrastructures going and prevent more food shortages.

The government warned it will fine businesses hoarding supplies and will temporarily seize trucks, boats or aircraft to feed people if needed. But it insisted there were no plans to declare martial law.

The government also said it was opening a "megamarket" of food and other basics this weekend in Caracas.

The strike has curbed natural gas production intended for Venezuela's steel and aluminum industries. Vandals sabotaged an electrical substation in the eastern state of Anzoategui, temporarily cutting power to a natural gas plant, the state news agency Venpres said.

Opposition leaders called the strike Dec. 2 to demand Chavez call a nonbinding referendum on his rule, which they say has devastated the economy and polarized the nation. Chavez refused.

Strike leaders now demand early elec-

Rebels take leading city in Ivory Coast's West

BY CLAR NI CHONGHAILE
Associated Press Writer

DUEKOU, Ivory Coast — Rebels captured the leading city in Ivory Coast's coffee-rich west on Thursday and vowed to continue their push until they reached the commercial capital, the key to controlling what had been West Africa's most stable and prosperous nation.

As government soldiers fled, French Foreign Legion troops moved in force toward the rebels, ready for orders to intervene in a war threatening devastating impact on the region as a whole.

"What is clear and certain is that if ... the rebels advance, we will get those orders," said Capt. Hubert Dunant.

Around him, Legionnaires 50 miles outside the rebel-captured western city of Man readied anti-tank missiles, rocket-launchers and heavy machine guns.

Ivory Coast's war erupted with a failed coup attempt Sept. 19 and quickly saw rebels seize the northern half of the country, their main support base. Rebels are angered by what they say is minority persecution by President Laurent Gbagbo's southern-based government.

West African leaders' attempts to broker peace was eclipsed by fighting in the west in recent weeks — including the battle for Man, 50 miles west of the border with Liberia.

The government denied rebels had taken Man, but residents and Western military officials confirmed that insurgents had seized the city of 135,000 residents after a day and night of fighting. Government soldiers gave up the city's airport without a fight, Western military officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"We have taken control of Man," insurgent commander Felix Doh told The Associated Press by telephone from the city. "There are still pockets of resistance, and we'll be taking care of them soon."

When the conflict started three months ago, northern rebels had said they wanted Gbagbo to resign, but after the capture of Man, the commander made clear they wanted far more.

"Our objective is to get to Abidjan and control the whole country," Doh declared. The government dismissed that.

"It doesn't matter what their objective is — they can't win Abidjan," Ivory Coast army spokesman Lt. Col. Jules Yao retorted. "That doesn't scare us in the least."

Residents of Man reached by telephone said fighters there were from Ivory Coast's western neighbor Liberia, whose entry into the conflict alarmed regional

leaders and civilians.

Fighters from Liberia — many of them swaggering free-lance gunmen left over from that nation's 1990s civil war — are seen as ill-disciplined and often drug-crazed, with a penchant for brutality.

"The rebels are raping women, and stealing everything," said Elizabeth Bohoussou, resident of another contested western city, Danane. She was fleeing rebel territory Thursday in a truck loaded with men, women and children.

"It's Liberians," she said.

Liberia, led by former warlord Charles Taylor, is battling a 3-year-old rebellion of its own. West African leaders' prime fear has been seeing Ivory Coast follow Liberia into bloody anarchy. The spilling of fighters across the border has sharply heightened that fear.

While Taylor's government is currently under international sanctions for supporting rebels in Sierra Leone and elsewhere, Liberia denies any role in the Ivory Coast rebellion.

"As a responsible government, we want to see our neighbors in peace," Information Minister Reginald Goodridge said in Monrovia, Liberia's capital.

It was unclear if Liberian fighters would have joined the war out of political or ethnic allegiances with Ivorian rebels, or simply for loot.

In the wake of Thursday's rout, government troops fled by the hundreds in trucks, pickups and armored vehicles. Weary and dusty, they trailed their artillery behind them.

French forces moved up, advancing 30 miles toward the rebels to stop outside the city of Duekoue, south of Man. They took up what Adj. Alexander Geddes called a "stop-point" should the order come to halt the rebel advance.

France already has more than 1,000 troops in Ivory Coast and is building to a force of 2,500. Those forces — initially charged with protecting their nationals and other foreigners and overseeing a ceasefire — are taking an increasingly muscular role in the former French colony.

West African leaders late Wednesday approved deployment of an expected 1,500-strong regional force to join the French in trying to restore the shattered ceasefire. The West African force is due Dec. 31.

Ivory Coast has been the linch pin of West Africa, with a key port, cocoa and coffee fields that give jobs to millions, and a skyscraper-lined commercial capital, Abidjan, that serves as regional headquarters for countless international businesses.

tions, which Venezuela's constitution does not allow, or Chavez's resignation. The constitution says a recall vote may be held halfway into Chavez's term, or next August.

Chavez's popularity has plunged since his 1998 election and 2000 re-election. But he still enjoys some of the highest approval ratings among Latin American leaders, VenEconomy magazine reported. His base is Venezuela's poor, who comprise 80 percent of the 24 million people.

Chavez claimed victories this week with declarations of support from the military. The Organization of American States and foreign governments have urged Venezuelans to find a constitutional solution to the crisis.

There were signs of a possible settlement. A group of pro-Chavez lawmakers proposed a constitutional amendment allowing for elections next year, El Nacional newspaper reported. The amendment would cut the president's term from six to four years, said pro-Chavez lawmaker Guillermo Palacios.

The government also said it would accept a Supreme Court ruling on Wednesday ordering it to return control of the Caracas police to Mayor Alfredo Pena, a Chavez critic. Chavez seized the department in November, saying a labor dispute jeopardized public safety and the department routinely repressed government protesters.



SPORTS

No Titans in Pro Bowl, but Bengal, two Texans make it

BY DAVE GOLDBERG

AP Football Writer

NEW YORK — The Tennessee Titans were snubbed for the Pro Bowl on Thursday despite sharing the AFC's top record.

The Philadelphia Eagles, leading the race for the NFC's top playoff seeding, had the most Pro Bowlers with seven, including three-fourths of their secondary. San Francisco and Miami, two other division leaders, each had six.

But the Titans, leading the AFC South at 9-5, were ignored in voting conducted in thirds: one-third by players, one-third by coaches, and one-third by fans on NFL.com.

"I'm quite sure a lot of players on this team deserved it, but that's how it works," Titans quarterback Steve McNair said. "We don't have any control over that. This is how it works. But it's a team thing now

for us. To solve all this, we just got to go to the Super Bowl and win it."

The expansion Houston Texans had two players chosen, and the one-victory Cincinnati Bengals had one, fullback Lorenzo Neal, who used to play for the Titans. The other teams without players chosen were .500 or worse: Cleveland, Detroit and Arizona.

"That we're 11-3 helps," said Philadelphia cornerback Troy Vincent, who was selected along with cornerback Bobby Taylor and safety Brian Dawkins. "The team success gives you momentum, and defensively we've been playing well."

The selections cover two generations. Oakland wide receiver Jerry Rice was chosen for the 13th time at age 40, the first time he's made it since 1999, when he played with the 49ers. Raiders safety Rod Woodson, 37, was chosen for the 11th time.

At the other end of the spectrum were

22-year-old Atlanta quarterback Michael Vick and 22-year-old Jeremy Shockey, the New York Giants' tight end and the only rookie chosen.

Among the possible selections overlooked were McNair, who has carried the team to eight wins in its last nine games, and New England QB Tom Brady, the Super Bowl MVP.

But Drew Bledsoe, who was traded to Buffalo after being replaced by Brady, did make the team. The other two AFC quarterbacks were Rich Gannon of Oakland and Peyton Manning of Indianapolis.

Manning's favorite target, record-setting Marvin Harrison, also made the AFC team. Harrison already has set a single-season NFL mark with 127 catches.

"It's obviously something I'm very proud of," said Bledsoe, who has led the Bills to a 7-7 record after they won just three games last season. "I'd like to have

a few more wins, because that would certainly sweeten this. You want to be playing for that championship at the end. But it's a great honor and I'm proud to be a part of this team."

One of the Eagles not chosen was quarterback Donovan McNabb, who broke his right ankle Nov. 17 and probably will not return until the playoffs. The three NFC quarterbacks were Vick, Green Bay's Brett Favre and San Francisco's Jeff Garcia.

Favre's selection was his seventh. The two Texans chosen were both veterans, defensive tackle Gary Walker and cornerback Aaron Glenn. Both were among the high-salaried players chosen in the expansion draft.

Miami's Ricky Williams, traded by the Saints to make room in the backfield for Deuce McAllister, made the AFC team. McAllister made the NFC team.

The game is Feb. 2 in Honolulu.

Broncos try to keep up playoff drive by beating Raiders

BY DAVE GOLDBERG

AP Football Writer

Denver was 6-2 when Oakland came to town for a Monday night showcase Nov. 11. The Raiders won 34-10, and the Broncos also lost three of their next four games before rebounding to beat Kansas City last week.

On Sunday, the Broncos visit Oakland. If the Raiders (9-5) win, they'll be in great position in the AFC West, and Denver (8-6) will be close to elimination from the playoffs.

Oakland, which had a five-game winning streak broken in Miami last week, is a four-point favorite.

If this is a reprise of the first game, the Broncos are in trouble — they allowed Rich Gannon to throw for 352 yards. Until last week in Miami, when he was held to 204 yards passing, Gannon had a good shot at breaking Dan Marino's single-season record of 5,084.

"He has just an unbelievable feel for what's going on," said Denver coach Mike Shanahan, who thinks Gannon should be the league MVP. "If you give him time, he's going to pick you apart,

which he's done the majority of the year. You've got to keep him off-balance and you've got to out-execute him."

The Broncos probably can't hold down Gannon the way the Dolphins did. But Brian Griese could have more success against the Raiders' banged-up secondary. Charles Woodson, one of the NFL's best cornerbacks, says he'll play this week despite a broken right leg that's kept him out of the last two games.

So this could be a shootout.

■ **RAIDERS, 34-28**

Pittsburgh (plus 4 1/2) at Tampa Bay (Monday night)

Jon Gruden isn't worried about home-field advantage for the playoffs. But playing at home will help his defense in this one.

■ **BUCS, 17-7**

New York Giants (plus 5) at Indianapolis
The Giants moved last week from the brink of elimination to legitimate contention.

They move back this week.

■ **COLTS, 22-16**

Cleveland (plus 3) at Baltimore
The winner might have a legitimate shot at winning the AFC North.

■ **RAVENS, 16-14**

Tennessee (minus 3) at Jacksonville

The Titans are the AFC's best team right now.

■ **TITANS, 24-20**

Miami (minus 3) at Minnesota (Saturday)
Cris Carter returns.

■ **DOLPHINS, 27-22**

New York Jets (plus 4) at New England
The Jets are resilient, if nothing else.

■ **PATRIOTS, 21-20**

Philadelphia (minus 6 1/2) at Dallas (Saturday)
The Cowboys are usually tough at home. But have they given up?

■ **EAGLES, 20-3**

San Francisco (minus 4 1/2) at Arizona
The Cardinals are trying. The 49ers are just about locked into the NFC's fourth seed.

■ **49ERS, 27-25**

Detroit (plus 11) at Atlanta
It's hard to see the Falcons blowing this one.

■ **FALCONS, 30-13**

New Orleans (minus 7) at Cincinnati
See above.

■ **SAINTS, 34-13**

Buffalo (plus 6 1/2) at Green Bay
At least the Bills won't suffer from weather shock.

■ **PACKERS, 31-20**

San Diego (off) at Kansas City
The Chiefs need a Priest (Holmes) to win this one.

■ **CHARGERS, 27-20**

Houston (plus 6) at Washington
Houston GM Charley Casserly was fired by Dan Snyder.

■ **TEXANS, 12-11**

St. Louis (plus 1) at Seattle
Marc Bulger to 7-0?

■ **RAMS, 24-23**

Chicago (plus 3) at Carolina
John Fox has done a good job with very little.

■ **PANTHERS, 20-19**

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

■ **SEASON:** 110-109-5 (spread), 142-81-1 (straight up)

Yao Ming offers NBA a shot at world's largest market

BY MARTIN FACKLER

Associated Press Writer

SHANGHAI, China — The two dozen junior high students playing hoops on the outdoor courts at the Nike Basketball Garden share a dream and a hero.

They want to play in the NBA, just like Houston Rockets rookie Yao Ming.

"Someday, there'll be no Americans left in the NBA," said 12-year-old Xing Tao, who joined his school's team two weeks ago after watching Shanghai's own Yao in a televised NBA game.

"The players will all be Chinese, like Yao!"

To China, Yao is a hometown superstar who helped pry open the doors of the world's premier basketball league to Chinese players. To the NBA and companies such as Nike and Reebok, the 7-foot-6 center offers an opening of a different sort — into the world's largest untapped market.

Excited about reaching 1.3 billion potential fans, the NBA more than doubled the number of its games broadcast in China this season. The total will be up to 170, 30 involving the Rockets.

The first regular NBA game aired in China in 1989.

Yao's NBA debut against the Indiana Pacers in October, carried by government-run China Central Television,

reached 287 million households. By contrast, there are only about 105 million TV households in the United States.

That game might have been a bit of a letdown to Yao's fans: He played just 11 of the 48 minutes, had two rebounds and didn't make a basket in a loss.

Compare that with his performance Wednesday night, also against Indiana: 29 points, 10 rebounds and six blocked shots. "This was one of the most exciting games I've had," Yao said after Houston's 95-83 victory.

The NBA has to be excited about his on-court success. Maturing with each game, it seems, he's averaging 12.7 points and 7.7 rebounds, quite solid for a rookie. And he leads the league in shooting percentage (59.9).

The league recently opened an office in Beijing and already had one in Hong Kong, plans to start a Chinese-language Web site and fan magazine, and is working with a Chinese travel agency to put together package tours to the United States for NBA games.

"Yao Ming has brought the NBA closer to the Chinese," said NBA spokeswoman Cheong Sau Ching, who is based in Hong Kong. "One of them has now made it to the NBA. That makes the dream seem achievable for other people in China."

Ski high



Alessandro Trovati/Associated Press

Marco Sullivan, of the USA, is airborne during training for the World Cup downhill race in Val Gardena, Italy, Thursday. He clocked the eighth fastest time during practice.

COMICS



The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



Natural Selection® By Russ Wallace



CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Bridge
- 5 Hind's mate
- 9 Beeper
- 11 Distant
- 13 Steamed
- 14 Pop's wife
- 15 Yale player
- 16 Tin-based
- 18 Gives
- 20 Ruby of film
- 21 Went like the wind
- 22 Self's support
- 23 Actor Beatty
- 24 Wrestling win
- 25 Skater Eldredge
- 27 Surrounds
- 28 Pitching stat
- 30 Does the news
- 32 Joplin field
- 34 Mine yield
- 35 Neck wrap
- 36 Bar order
- 38 Lewman News
- 39 Pasta choice
- 40 Finishes
- 41 Announces

DOWN

- 1 Caught sight of
- 2 Room for entertaining
- 3 Continually
- 4 Take in
- 5 Football's George
- 6 Alca or Ladd
- 7 Perry Como hit
- 8 British party
- 10 Took it easy
- 12 Aspect
- 17 TV's Koppel
- 18 Served perfectly
- 22 Painter Joan
- 24 Speak loudly
- 25 Laconic
- 26 Wise answerer
- 27 Spider
- 28 Maroon
- 30 Divisions
- 31 Tennis star
- 33 Crushed
- 37 Mermaid home



Yesterday's answer

edge city

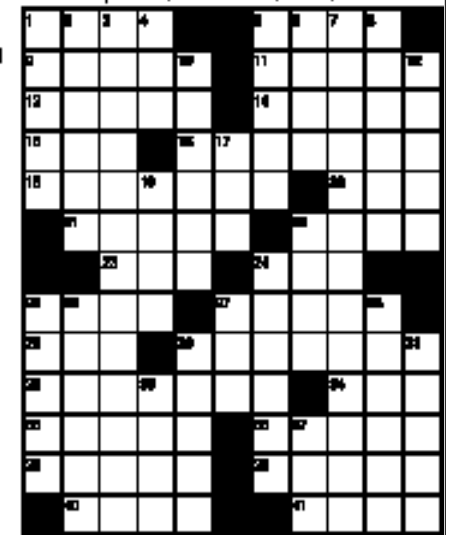
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

Workers pay off debt with sperm donations

Conscientious workers at the ARO Campulung plant in Romania offered in October to help pay off the company's debts by selling their sperm to a fertility clinic in the city of Timisoara, at the equivalent of (U.S.) \$50 a session. Said the plant's union leader, "We have found (a solution) that even the best economists have never thought of." (However, to pay the equivalent (U.S.) \$20 million debt in full would require 400,000 sessions, or 400 sessions for each of the 1,000 males at the plant.)

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SANTA MONICA SCENE °CALENDAR EDITION

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2002

TODAY'S EVENTS

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

Santa Monica High School Theater Arts Department presents **Romeo & Juliet**. Friday and Saturday nights at 8:00pm. November 22nd through December 21st. \$10.00 for students, children, and seniors, \$15.00 for adults. Humanities Center Theater at Santa Monica High School, 601 Pico Blvd. For more information please call (310)458-5939.

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

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

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

SATURDAY

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

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

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

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

Music Showcase. **UnUrban Coffeehouse**. 3301 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica, (310)315-0056.

MOVIE °GUIDE

LOEWS CINIPLEX BROADWAY CINEMA

1441 Third St. at Broadway
Empire (2002) (R) 3:00, 10:30. **About Schmidt** (R) 12:15, 1:15, 3:15, 4:15, 6:15, 7:15, 9:15, 10:15
Two Weeks Notice (PG-13) 11:30, 12:30, 2:00, 4:30, 5:30, 7:00, 8:00, 9:30.

MANN CRITERION

1313 Third St.
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (PG) 11:30, 3:15, 7:05, 10:30. **Adaptation** (R) 12:30, 3:45, 7:10, 10:20. **Treasure Planet** (PG) 12:00. **The Hot Chick** (PG-13) 2:30, 5:00, 7:45, 10:10, 12:35. **Gangs of New York** (R) 11:15, 3:00, 7:00, 10:40. **Narc** (R) 11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00, 12:30. **The Wild Thornberrys Movie** (PG) 11:45, 2:15, 4:45, 7:30, 9:50.

AMC THEATRE SM 7

1310 3rd Street
Analyze That (R) 11:35, 1:50, 4:30, 7:15, 9:45. **Die Another Day** (PG-13) 10:25, 1:20, 4:25, 7:30, 10:35. **Drumline** (PG-13) 11:25, 2:10, 5:00, 7:55, 10:45. **Maid in Manhattan** (PG-13) 11:45, 2:30, 5:15, 8:00, 10:40. **Star Trek: Nemesis: with Captions** (PG-13) 11:15, 2:00, 4:50, 7:40, 10:30. **The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers** (PG-13) 10:20, 11:00, 2:15, 3:00, 6:15, 7:00, 10:15, 11:00.

LANDMARK NU-WILSHIRE

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

LAEMMLE MONICA

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

AERO THEATRE

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



BACK PAGE



Stealing from the police

By The Associated Press

MISHAWAKA, Ind. — A man accused of stealing a police car from an officer who was pursuing him has been arrested.

Authorities said a North Liberty police officer was pursuing a van Dec. 9 following a reported burglary in St. Joseph County when the driver bailed out near a church.

When the officer left his car and chased the man on foot, he circled around the church and stole the squad car, authorities said.

The officer had left the keys in the ignition and the engine was running, said North Liberty police Chief Steve Michael.

The man fled into LaPorte County at speeds over 100 mph and again eluded pursuit.

Investigators believe the man then broke into a home in LaPorte and called for a cab, but the dispatcher became suspicious and called police.

Police went to the home and surrounded it after finding the squad car in the garage, but the man was no longer there when officers entered the house.

Investigators believe he fled on a bicycle that was later found outside a YMCA in LaPorte.

Timothy Hurley, 35, of South Bend, was arrested Saturday in a mobile home park in Mishawaka after a woman reported a suspicious vehicle to police.

Hurley was being held without bond Tuesday on charges of trespassing and resisting law enforcement.

He was expected to face burglary and other charges in LaPorte County.

Mailing back stolen goods

By The Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A thief with a conscience mailed back a gold wedding band and earrings to the jewelry store where he or she stole them 34 years ago.

A letter to Sartor Hamann Jewelry accompanied the traditional woman's wedding band, size 7, and a pair of pearl earrings with gold posts, tiny diamonds and dangling pearls.

"Enclosed are two items that I stole from you in 1968. I'm very sorry and I should not have taken your property," it said. "The pieces belong to you NOT me. I was wrong and I want to apologize for my actions."

Store owner Don Hamann said the letter that arrived Tuesday did not have a signature. The only telltale sign was a Boys Town, Neb., postmark.

"It's kind of interesting," Hamann said. "What must have gone through the person's mind after what, 34 years?"

The package provided few clues. The 18-karat gold ring appeared worn even though it had been polished, he said.

The earrings on close examination appeared to be costume jewelry, a brand the store normally wouldn't carry.

It was the first time Hamann could remember a stolen item being returned voluntarily.

A determined candidate

By The Associated Press

ST. ANN, Mo. — A tent near a nativity scene in this St. Louis suburb isn't part of the Christmas decorations. It's the temporary home of alderwoman Carrie Cavazza.

Cavazza is running for mayor and wants to garner the extra 3 to 5 percent of the vote that often goes to the candidate named first on the ballot. She's been camping out in a tent since December 11 to be ready for filing that begins at 8 a.m. Tuesday.

"I just want the people of this community to know that I really want to be mayor for them," Cavazza, an eight-year alderwoman, said. "I've lived here all my life, and I want to make the city even better."

Inside her tent, Cavazza has a TV and heater, although she joked that on one cold night she considered climbing into the manger display to keep warm.

City Clerk Rhoda Womack said it has been a tradition in St. Ann to camp out to be first on the ballot. Still, "I think Carrie may have set a new record," Womack said.

Pigs destroy house

By The Associated Press

ROYAL OAK, Mich. — Hundreds of guinea pigs did so much damage to a house that authorities called in a demolition crew to raze it.

The owner had given more than 440 guinea pigs free run of his house in a prosperous subdivision of brick ranch houses near Detroit. On Monday, a demolition crew leveled the three-bedroom house and hauled away the rubble.

A social worker who intervened on behalf of the owner's family first told officials about the infestation. The owner had lived in the house for 15 years.

The rodents were crawling through every room as well as in the walls, duct work and furnace, said city building department spokesman Robert Hudson. Urine had soaked through the subfloors into the basement.

"The guys went in with the fire department, and they had to wear full respiration gear like they would wear at a fire," Hudson said. "I stood by the door and my eyes were burning."

The owner fed the animals from plastic children's swimming pools and laid sheets down on the floors to collect the waste, which he would haul out to the backyard.

City officials said they know little about the homeowner, now believed to be living in assisted care.

The social worker placed almost all of the guinea pigs with pet stores and the humane society, Hudson said.

It was the day before Christmas
and me full of worry, because I had to find the perfect gift in a hurry. The stockings were hung on brass holders with care, in hopes that Paykel had that one gift with flare. I know they have handmade novelty gifts, they even have that east iron doorstop for my cousin Cliff.

There doors flung open as I was running out of time, but of course Paykel had the perfect wind chimes. They also have yummy jams and "hoi" jellies, and even the gift that would make you holler "Whoa nelly!"

The owner, a jolly man himself, wrapped up my gifts, the last from the shelf. With a twinkle in his eye he sent me on my way, and wished me and mine a very happy holiday.

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