

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

State cuts worsen city's existing hard times

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

City Hall expected the state's budget mess to have local impact, but it wasn't expected to be this bad.

At an interview last week, Santa Monica City Manager Susan McCarthy and Finance Director Mike Dennis sat down to explain the intricacies of how the state's \$30-billion deficit would hurt Santa Monica.

"For the cities, I think the worst is yet to come," said McCarthy.

The state may not give Santa Monica about \$5.3 million in redevelopment bond money guaranteed to it under law. However, because of the depth of the state's budget crisis, almost all of the funds the city gets from the state could be taken back to be used for closing the deficit.

For now, McCarthy said she is just glad Gov. Gray Davis hasn't proposed taking a larger bite out of property, sales and vehicle taxes from the cities. That would have far greater implications, she said.

"If that happened, it could affect jobs and services in a very serious way," McCarthy said. "But even if we're not too badly hurt this time around, we're going to feel it the next time."

"Santa Monica doesn't live in a protective bubble. All that stuff is happening here, too."

— SUSAN MCCARTHY
Santa Monica City Manager

When the state was in a difficult budget situation in 1992 to 1994, the Legislature approved shifting property tax money to education, which transferred \$3.5 million from Santa Monica to its school district.

By doing that, the state maintained its

See CUTS, page 6

Celeb activists warn N.Y. council of bank's actions

BY LUKAS I. ALPERT
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — A group of Hollywood celebrities and other activists has sent a letter to City Council members in New York — where Washington Mutual Bank recently expanded operations — alerting them to the savings and loan's role in the building of a housing development they call an "environmental disaster" on undeveloped land near Los Angeles.

"We want to call attention to the fact that when Washington Mutual came to Southern California, they promised to be good neighbors, but now they are going ahead with an environmental disaster," director Rob Reiner, who heads the coalition of those opposed to the project at Ahmanson Ranch, said Sunday.

The Seattle-based Washington Mutual, which is the nation's largest savings and loan, acquired New York-based Dime Bancorp Inc. last year.

The bank plans to build 3,050 homes on the ranch, which sits on a hilly stretch of oak savanna and grassy plains that straddles the border of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

In addition to homes, it would include schools, a library, two golf courses, a hotel and 400,000 square feet of commercial and office space.

A spokesman for Washington Mutual, Tim McGarry, said the bank inherited the development project when it acquired HF Ahmanson and Co. in 1998.

"We thought the project was a good one and decided to proceed with it," he said.

The project has been one of the most widely scrutinized in California history and is an issue for planners looking to address a lack of housing and for opponents of urban sprawl.

The letter — signed by Leonardo DiCaprio, Julia Louis Dreyfus and Martin Sheen, among others — said the development would bring 45,000 cars into the 3,000-acre area every day, threatening five endangered species, adding to pollution and desecrating an Indian burial ground.

McGarry called the letter "laughable" and said the project received local approval many years before Washington Mutual became involved.

"It has been fully upheld by the California courts and is in line with environmental law," he said.



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Rev. Maurice Chase, far right, hands out dollar bills to homeless people standing in line at Palisades Park Wednesday afternoon.

Priest enriches homeless one dollar at a time

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

The line starts forming early at the intersection of Arizona and Ocean avenues in Palisades Park when Father Dollar Bill is in town.

Hundreds of homeless wait hours at a stretch to shake hands with retired Roman Catholic priest Maurice Chase, who, along with a solid handshake and some small talk, hands out crisp one-dollar bills.

Chase, 83, has been coming to Santa

Monica for nearly a decade, standing at the same spot in the park every other Wednesday starting at 3 p.m. He sometimes hands out nearly a thousand dollars at a time.

While Chase occasionally gives \$5 or even \$20 to some of the neediest, everyone in line gets at least one dollar note, which has earned him the street name Father Dollar Bill.

"My biggest thing is to give people hope," Chase said. "The big thing about

See FATHER, page 5

Attempted murder suspect in Pico stabbing is arrested

By Daily Press staff

A male Hispanic was arrested for attempted murder Saturday morning after a person was stabbed in the Pico neighborhood.

The incident occurred in the area of 12th Street and Pico Boulevard, where Santa Monica police responded to a call regarding a stabbing that took place around 8:28 a.m. When officers arrived, they located the victim who had sustained numerous stab wounds to the upper body. The victim was transported to a local hospital and listed in stable condition.

Officers spoke to witness at the scene, and during the preliminary investigation, an officer stopped a possible suspect in the area of 17th Street and Olympic Boulevard. The suspect was arrested and transported to the Santa Monica Jail.

The suspect has been identified as Jaime Vasquez, 24, a male Hispanic, of Los Angeles. He was booked for attempt murder and his bail was set at \$500,000.

Anyone having additional information is encouraged to contact the Robbery/Homicide Unit of the Santa Monica Police Department at (310) 458-8451.

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

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Build toward better situations rather than feeding existing problems. Let go of a recurring hassle, especially at this time of year. Use your abilities to gracefully move past an immediate hassle. Reach out for a close associate. Unexpected events trigger excitement. Tonight: Finish off all you can.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★ Take in another perspective. Be aware of news that heads in your direction. Important information drops in your lap. You might want to take action immediately. Your intensity mixes well with last-minute holiday errands. Tonight: Head on home.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ Perhaps you are one of the people who left your errands to the very last moment. Tension builds in a new direction. You wonder what your limits are as you deal with so many last-minute requests. Could you be Santa, loading his sleigh? It feels like it! Tonight: Move along.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★ You cannot stop someone from reacting. Keep reaching out for those you care about in between squeezing in a last-minute errand or two. You will tend to play down your financial instincts. Don't, if you possibly can. Deal with a partner's financial pressure. Tonight: Wrap last-minute gifts.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ You're flying high. Others cannot stop you, even if they try. Encourage your immediate circle to toss cares to the wind and start enjoying themselves to the max. Fortunately, this is the only time of year you can play Santa or an elf, walking down the street. Tonight: Whatever makes you smile.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ Realize your limits when dealing directly with someone who is close to you. Though you might have had enough of someone pushing you, say so nicely. Remember that everyone is under pressure. Work with the status quo. Understand others. Tonight: Do something ultimately for yourself.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Keep reaching out for others. Discussions surround possibilities. Don't get too stuck in here and now thinking. Start wishing upon star. Think Santa. Try for what might seem impossible. That's more like it. Tonight: Start swapping presents with friends.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Take the lead, especially as you might find something that someone else might forget. Your ability to understand and cover all your bases simultaneously gets you through a harrowing moment or two. A boss demonstrates his or her gratefulness. Tonight: A must show.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ Take in an overview, and you could be quite pleased at what emerges. You think one thing, when clearly someone else thinks another. Work with associates to come to terms with a changeable situation. Tonight: Go caroling.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Others seek you out, perhaps excited about the gift he or she wants to share with you. Make the impossible possible. Don't simply slam doors on others. Listen to their suggestions. Consider your potential options. Tonight: Spend special time with a friend.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ Others certainly run with the ball. Don't make it a big thing; rather, go along. Your time to exercise your independence and different thoughts will come soon enough. You'll find yourself heading in your own direction later on. Tonight: Go along with plans.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ You might not always be ready for everything you hear. Some unanticipated news throws you off course. Stay steady, even if it means handling a situation in a more serious manner. Consider your later alternatives carefully. Tonight: Handle last-minute details.



QUOTE of the DAY

"When turkeys mate, they think of swans."

— Johnny Carson

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LOCAL



Gavel II Gavel

From the people's court in the Santa Monica Courthouse

By John Wood

Used Mercedes costs dealership

Marina Auto learned a costly lesson in used car warranties last week when it was ordered to reimburse a Pacific Palisades man, who claimed the dealer sold him a lemon.

The letter of Steven Howard's contract with Marina Auto allegedly did not protect damaged parts in his 1987 Mercedes, but Howard argued the dealer should still pay because it intentionally misled him and covered up damages that quickly became evident.

Just four days after buying the used Mercedes in April 2002, Howard said he began to smell diesel fumes. His mechanic said the car needed new hoses, but the dealer said the cost of new hoses wasn't covered by the warranty.

Another four days later, Howard said the car stopped running completely. Again, the dealer suggested a temporary fix that was not covered by the warranty. It worked, but shortly thereafter, the entire transmission fell apart and Howard spent \$960 to have it repaired, he testified.

Howard said Marina Auto refused to cover any of these expenses. The dealership said the temporary repairs weren't covered by the contract, and later, when transmission work was required, Howard said they told him the warranty had expired.

Howard grew frustrated.

"I think this outfit has an obligation. If there is a known defect with the car, I don't think they can sell you the car," he told the court. "They clearly knew something was wrong with the car and they didn't tell me."

A representative from the dealer explained that at the time the transmission was finally replaced, Howard's warranty had expired. He denied any wrongdoing.

The judge also heard testimony from an independent mechanic brought by Howard who said any observant car shop would have quickly realized the transmission was on its way out.

Commissioner Donna Groman ruled against Marina Auto for \$1,967 plus court costs, the full amount Howard was seeking for repair expenses.

Storage sellout

Los Angeles man Matthew Cole will not be reimbursed for what he said was more than \$5,000 worth of his belongings sold from his Stor-It Self Storage "locker" in Marina del Rey.

Cole sued Craig Lyons, the owner of the storage center, saying he wasn't given proper notice that the \$41 monthly fee for his 64-cubic-foot rental space was several months overdue. Instead, Cole claimed, the storage center went ahead and sold his belongings, which he valued at over \$5,000, the maximum small claims amount.

A slightly unkempt Cole apologized to the court for not being prepared or clean-shaven, explaining his car had been stolen the night before the trial and he had been unable to get into his apartment.

In his car, Cole claimed he had documentation supporting his case — receipts, letters, a list of the items in question and a letter demanding a stop to the sale. Without these papers, Cole struggled to shoulder the burden of proof against the storage company.

Cole explained the \$41 monthly fee was on "automatic charge" from his mother's credit card. He said he wasn't notified there was a problem with the billing until two weeks before the contents of the unit were sold, on November 19, 2001. The last payment had been made June 20 of that year.

When he learned of the impending sale, Howard said he called and wrote the storage company, pleading with them not to sell his belongings. It didn't help.

But Kim Alton, area manager for Stor-It's parent company, brought documents showing they had sent one notice when the fees were 10 days late, a preliminary lien

See GAVEL TO GAVEL, page 6

surf report

Information compiled by Jesse Haley

Weather reports are promising continuing scattered showers, and swell forecasts are showing decreasing activity in the water today.

A new northwest swell is due today, but its angle has too much north to it.

The steep northwester will miss all but the stand out LA County surf spots.

It will mix with remnant west-northwest swell for waist to chest high waves in north county. South Bay is expected to see slightly less size, most sets breaking at waist level.

Water pollution is still at high level due to continual rains, so consider that a risk.

LA County Public Health's official rain advisory is effective through Tuesday December 31st.

This Tuesday sees more of the new northwest swell, but with a small decrease in size thanks to further fading of the old west-northwester.

Most breaks remain in the two- to three-foot range at best.

Location	Saturday	Sunday	Water Quality
County	2-3'/Fair	2-3'/Fair	N/A
Zuma	2-3'/Fair	2-3'/Fair	N/A
Surfrider	1-2'/Fair	1-2'/Fair	N/A
Topanga	1-3'/Fair	1-3'/Fair	N/A
Venice	2-4'/Poor	2-4'/Poor	N/A
Porto	2-3'/Fair	2-3'/Fair	N/A

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California is dealing with a major budget crisis. The state is in the red by over \$30 billion, and in Santa Monica, as well as other cities and towns, public educators are feeling an excruciating financial pinch as a result. But some educators wonder if the public really understands or cares about the dire situation at hand.

So this week, Q-Line wants to

know:

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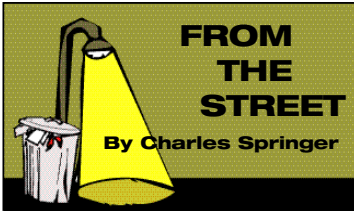
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OPINION

If everyone else can ask Santa for things, why can't I?



Dear Santa Claus,

I would like to have certain neo-conservative individuals gain a heart with which to better facilitate compassion. That they might be able to see that the over the past 20 years of this type of thinking has caused more harm than good in this country. That they might see that human beings of all types and forms have a right to exist and live in this country

anywhere they choose.

That this is their right under the Constitution of the United States. That they do not have to live in heavy drug- and gang-controlled neighborhoods and risk their lives and the lives of their own children. That rich and poor can co-exist side by side in harmony and even learn a thing or two from each other.

That these people learn from those of us who are most affected by this type of thinking; learn that it's not what you have materially that makes you a person, but what you have in your heart that makes us human and separates us from the animals. And that compassion and understanding is the key to the survival of humankind as a whole. That we are all in this boat together and should not do things to sink it.

That all human beings should be at peace with each other and no one is any

better than his or her neighbor in this country. That no matter what you have, we are ALL the same and no one is elite. I wish that the ones who speak harshly about the homeless situation would be able to experience it fully to appreciate the extremes we, as homeless, go through on a daily basis.

I wish that we could all make the money we need to have housing and that the landlords see that these INFLATED rents imposed upon those of us who can't afford it only harm everyone, and even themselves in the long run. I ask that those of us who don't have what we need to get our lives together get it, and become productive members of society. And that those of us who cause problems for the whole of the homeless population realize that they are only hurting themselves with the insults and sexual harass-

ment on the Promenade.

I wish that those of us who are on the streets who need help in getting better employment receive it, and those of us who need medical care have it. I wish that the people of this country as a whole would reclaim the country from the corporate types who have usurped control of this country from the people. I wish that our country would take care of its own instead of trying to dictate how others rule their country.

And last, but not least, I wish all who have read my column, whether you agree with me or not, a very, merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

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

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

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LOCAL



Rich and famous help priest

FATHER, from page 1

my little ministry, I'm looking them in the eye and I'm saying you have dignity."

The idea for what Chase does came from Mother Theresa, he said. At an hour-long talk he had with the nun, who is known for her work with the poor, Mother Theresa told Chase the best way to connect with the downtrodden is to "lay your hands upon them."

"She said lay your hands on them and touch them," Chase said. "That's how you connect with them."

Since that day, Chase can be seen casually throwing his arm over the shoulder of some of the most unkempt of the homeless. Everyone at least gets a handshake, and he asks how the person's been doing since the last time they spoke.

Some of the toughest looking in the crowd will melt in his presence, shedding their facade and weeping as they tell him about their troubles. For his part, Chase will hug them and hold them close before offering his blessing and giving them some cash.

A few months ago, a woman — who asked her name not be used in this story — approached Chase and coldly asked for her dollar bill. The woman's face looked like she had just boxed twelve rounds with Mike Tyson. Chase asked what happened.

"Nothing," she said sternly. "I must have fallen down."

"That must have been some spill," Chase responded.

Then the tears started to trickle down her puffy red cheeks. Chase pulled her close while she cried, tenderly consoling her.

"I don't know what I'm gonna do," she sobbed. "My boyfriend hits me, but I live out here and there's no place to go. What can I do? Where can I go?"

Holding her all the while, Chase told her there were ways out of her relationship and people she could go to. He asked her if she knew where to go and what to do, and she nodded.

He then reached into a different pocket from where the dollar bills were kept and handed her a much larger bill. She looked at him puzzled.

"Use this to get yourself a place to stay tonight," he said. "Then decide what you have to do."

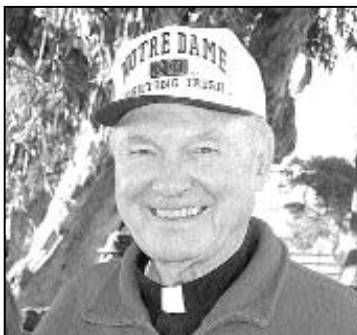
She nodded and walked away almost in a daze, blending in with another crowd that had formed around a charity handing out food nearby.

Months later, Chase said he didn't remember the encounter, but said he sees many people every week in downtown Los Angeles, where he also hands out his dollar bills, as well as Santa Monica, and they just need someone to listen.

"I hug them if they want to be hugged, and I embrace them when they tell me about someone who died in their family," he said. "Why they come, it has nothing to do with the money. The money gathers a crowd. How could I minister to people if they didn't come?"

Chase is not without his critics. Some say the dollar he gives only allows the homeless to live on the streets longer instead of helping them rise up from poverty. Others say the dollar he gives goes straight to buying drugs and alcohol.

Indeed, a small industry has formed around Chase's line. After getting their dollar bills, there are men walking around Palisades Park willing to exchange three cigarettes or a shot of whiskey for the people's newfound wealth. More than a



Rev. Maurice Chase

few take them up on their offer.

Chase doesn't hold anything against the people who use the dollar to buy a few cigarettes or a shot. He said if that's what makes them feel good and gives them hope, then it doesn't bother him.

But he said most use their dollar wisely. Chase said there have been many incidences where people have used the money to wash their clothes, to buy a second-hand pair of shoes or to pay for bus fare.

"It's a gift," he said. "And when you give someone a gift, you don't know what they are going to do with it."

"I know some of them use it to buy a drink, but I like to have a drink sometimes at night, too," Chase added. "So why would I begrudge some poor old soul the same dignity?"

Others suggest instead of handing out bills, Chase should hand out hot meals along a food line, or donate his money to charities that feed the homeless and provide them with social services.

But Chase counters those services are already being offered.

"Food is being taken care of in Santa Monica and downtown," he said. "Down on Skid Row they can have four breakfasts, four lunches and four dinners. If I gave them a meal ticket, they'd throw it away."

"My dollar bill, a lot of them use it to go to McDonalds and buy themselves a couple of cheeseburgers when they get tired of the stuff being served on the food lines," he said.

As a career fundraiser for Loyola Marymount University, Chase made contacts with the rich and famous that he now uses to fund his dollar-bill ministry. They include Bob and Dolores Hope, Los Angeles billionaire Eli Broad, Gregory and Veronique Peck and the deceased Frank Sinatra and his widow, Barbara.

Every year Chase said he raises nearly \$100,000 for his Skid Row charity, and not all of it comes from the rich and famous. He writes to every donor on a regular basis keeping them up to date on his activities and raising more money for his work. Most of his money comes from small-amount checks, he said.

All the time spent raising money pays off when he sees hope in the faces of the poor he helps, Chase said. There's a passage he quotes from the Bible where Jesus says, "When you've done it to the least of men, then you've done it to me."

"I shake hands with Jesus 3,000 times a week in downtown Los Angeles and at least 300 times a week in Santa Monica," Chase said. "I go down there and spend 10 hours standing on my feet, and I come back with my body sagging, but my spirit is soaring because I see Jesus in the eyes of 3,000 people a week."

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LOCAL

Service cuts, fee increases lay ahead for residents

CUTS, from page 1

constitutional obligation to education without having to raise taxes to pay for it, Dennis said.

However, during the last decade of economic prosperity, that money was not returned. Now, if the state chose to do a similar shift, it would have an even greater impact because the cities are already short funds, McCarthy said.

Davis may understand that, but the result has been that nearly 57 percent of the proposed \$10-billion mid-year budget cuts could be taken from public education.

To deal with the \$3.5 million in proposed funding reductions from the state, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified Superintendent John Deasy has recommended closing schools for 10 days.

That option, which would require state approval, could save the district \$3.1 million by not having to pay its employees. It would also spare the district from eliminating positions and eviscerating academic programs.

Knowing that, McCarthy said the state must find a way to fund the schools while at the same time not taking more from the cities.

"This is a tough time for schools, and nobody is arguing that," McCarthy said. "But (shifting funds) had a serious impact back then, and it would have a tremendous impact now on municipal services and positions."

Davis is proposing rolling back taxes in other areas. For example, a tax approved by California voters in 2000 on gasoline was intended to help fund road repairs, which had typically generated \$300,000 for Santa Monica.

In the first round of budget cuts, Davis rolled that money back to \$240,000, so the city lost \$60,000. And then earlier this month, he eliminated giving the city any of the tax dollars altogether. Those funds represented about 10 percent of the money the city annually spent fixing its streets.

To deal with similar reductions of state funds last year, the city instituted a 3 to 5 percent reduction in every department and made enough cuts to actually finish the year with nearly \$2 million in surplus.

Making those kinds of cuts this year is not an option, McCarthy said. She said the types of cuts required need policy direction from the City Council and residents.

This year City Hall is asking the council to raise taxes and fees in addition to cutting programs and services, McCarthy said.

"It's going to probably take a combination of both to pull us through this," said Dennis. "We are going to prepare a list of all the recommended places to make cuts and all the places the city could raise its revenues, and present that to the City Council."

"And with input from residents, they will have to decide how we move forward," he said.

Compounding the shortfall in state funding is a budget deficit based on a slowdown of the local economy. Taxes from hotel rooms and from restaurant and retail sales have decreased.

Meanwhile, the city's costs have soared. Health insurance benefits and payments into CALPERS, the state employee retirement system, have skyrocketed within the last year.

The result has been that predicted budget gaps have swelled for next year. Previously, Dennis had said the city could be facing an \$8.2-million deficit next year and as much as \$16 million the year after that.

However, he said those numbers could become worse if the economy doesn't pick up even mildly, and if Sacramento takes away much of the city's funding.

Since then, the economic news hasn't been improving, McCarthy said.

"All you have to do is be a newspaper reader to know we are all in a bad economic situation," she said. "Santa Monica doesn't live in a protective bubble. All that bad stuff is happening here, too."

GAVEL TO GAVEL, from page 3

notice, a lien notice and an auction notice, as mandated by state law.

Commissioner Donna Groman took the matter under submission but ruled moments later, finding that Cole had failed to meet the burden of proof against Stor-It Self Storage. He will not be reimbursed for court costs.

A hefty two-month bill

A Los Angeles renter who sued her ex-landlords for allegedly withholding \$800 from her will not be reimbursed, even though she lived in the Marina del Rey apartment for only two months before finding a new place.

Kiran Krishnamurti admitted she sacrificed her \$1,575 deposit to break her year-long lease on the rental but said her landlords, Sarlo Management, went too far.

She sued them for \$800, claiming she was owed \$600 in pro-rated rent for moving out early and another \$200 for damages she said Sarlo falsified.

Krishnamurti said the management company agreed to reimburse her \$600 for moving out of the apartment on September 15, 2002, two weeks before the end of her last month, but later reneged their offer.

When she received a list of damages she'd caused, she said she was charged \$750 for chipped paint and holes in the wall.

"I was never told I couldn't hang pictures," she said, adding that the apartment was filthy when she moved in. "I cleaned that apartment from top to bottom."

Representatives from Sarlo told a different story. They said the apartment had been "completely remodeled" before Krishnamurti moved in, with "no expense spared." Even though they did not bring pictures of the damages, they said they were amazed the place could be so trashed after only two months.

Commissioner Donna Groman took the matter under submission, later ruling against the renter. Krishnamurti will not be reimbursed for court costs.

FIND OUT YOUR FORECAST IN TODAY'S
HOROSCOPE'S ... PAGE 2

STATE

A concerned community



Chris Carlson/Associated Press
Sean Iqbal, bottom left, Louai Jalabi and Ashraf Ibrahim say their evening prayers during an emergency townhall meeting of the Council on American-Islamic Relations of Southern California over new INS registration requirements, Friday, in Buena Park, Calif. Hundreds of Middle Eastern men and teens were detained in California this week after implementation of a special registration program of male visa holders age 16 and older from countries considered high risk for terrorists.

Muslim-American leaders call Patriot Act threat to democracy

BY LAURA WIDES
Associated Press Writer

LONG BEACH — The USA Patriot Act passed in response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks constitutes the biggest threat to democracy in the United States, Muslim leaders and activists charged Saturday at a Muslim-American convention.

The denouncement came days after vocal protests were held over the detention of hundreds of Middle Eastern immigrants who voluntarily registered with the Immigration and Naturalization Service under new federal guidelines.

Speakers called on the American public to challenge the Patriot Act, which they called an unconstitutional law that violates basic civil liberties.

They also urged the roughly 1,500 people in attendance at the Muslim Public Affairs Council convention to demand the media provide diverse perspectives on the potential war with Iraq to complement the official government stand.

"The Patriot Act is the biggest attack on democracy in America right now," said council board chairman Omar Ricci during his opening remarks at the two-day annual conference at the Long Beach Convention Center.

The Patriot Act, which was approved in October 2001, gave the government new powers to obtain personal information about U.S. citizens in an attempt to stop future terrorist attacks. The law allows the government to detain aliens deemed threats to national security and hold them without public acknowledgment. It also has given federal law enforcement agencies greater wiretap authority, access to student and library records and new Internet wiretap powers.

Bryan Sierra, a spokesman for the U.S. Department of Justice, defended the Patriot Act as "an incredibly valuable tool in the war on terrorism."

"Ultimately, the question of civil liberties and what infringes on the Constitution is a matter for the courts to decide," Sierra said in a telephone interview from Washington. "But the ultimate goal here is liberty and safety and the security of Americans."

Council board member Gasser Hathout said the Patriot Act was part of a history of attacking civil rights during wartime. He cited the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 that made it illegal to criticize then-President John Adams, and said civil liberties also came under fire in the 1950s via the House Un-American Activities Committee and in the 1960s when the FBI launched investigations into civil rights and Vietnam activists.

"I'm calling on people not to surrender their civil rights," Hathout said after a morning panel. "They are not mutually exclusive things, security or civil rights."

Hathout said he had statistics showing that since the Patriot Act was approved, the number of federal subpoenas of phone and Internet records have been doubling every month and have reached into the thousands.

Despite the recent detentions and the fear it has spawned among Middle Eastern immigrant communities, Hathout urged the crowd not to be cowed into silence about the restrictions of their civil liberties or the potential war with Iraq.

Several speakers noted that recent newspaper polls show Americans remain skeptical about war with Iraq, but they said that if people want to affect public policy they must do more to make their voices heard.

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STATE

Home-schooling parents face questions over methods

By The Associated Press

RIVERSIDE — California's outgoing education chief is attempting to crack down on parents who home school their children on their own by exploiting a loophole in the state's education code.

Under California law, students who do not attend public schools can only be educated three ways: by enrolling in a private school, learning at home from parents guided by a credentialed teacher, or being taught by a credentialed tutor.

Many home-schooling families, however, have found a way around those requirements. Knowing that private schools do not require their teachers to be credentialed, some parents have declared their homes to be private schools.

The state Department of Education is now warning that the longtime practice stretches the law to its breaking point.

Delaune Eastin, outgoing state schools superintendent, said children taught at home without guidance from a credentialed teacher are considered truant. Eastin, whose term expires in January, has asked state senators to consider reworking the law so it reads more clearly.

"The department does not believe that the Legislature intended this situation when they instituted this section of the education code," Eastin's spokeswoman, Nicole Winger, told The Riverside Press-Enterprise.

But parents who home school their children without help from a certified teacher insist they're not acting illegally and question the motives of state officials.

"Each student that's not in school, they don't get money for them," said Terry Hager, of Yucaipa, who teaches her three children under an umbrella private school called Cornerstone Christian School that enrolls 150 students, all of them home-schooled by parents. "We choose as parents to teach at home because we feel we do a better job."

Although attempts to regulate the growing number of home-schooled children nationwide have often resulted in controversy, the issue re-emerged in California in August when the Department of Education revised its private school registration procedures.

In a memo sent to private schools, including those made up of home-schoolers, the department said that the paperwork the schools used to file with their county education offices would need to be sent directly to the state instead.

The memo also reiterated the state's position that uncredentialed parents may only teach their children at home with a credentialed teacher's supervision.

In response, home-schooling advocates accused Eastin of harassing home-schoolers and trying to root out the practice.

"If the superintendent really cared about kids being well prepared, more kids would get home schooled," said Assemblyman Ray Haynes, R-Riverside. "Home-school kids consistently outperform public school kids."

In a recent visit to Riverside County, where more than 650 private schools registered with five or fewer students last year, Eastin agreed that home-schooling parents do not need credentials.

But to ensure educational equality, "they must have a relationship with a credentialed teacher. You must follow the state curriculum," she said.

Incoming state schools chief Jack O'Connell said he wasn't yet familiar with California's home-schooling rules, but has always urged parents who want to home school to work with their local school districts.

Sherman Garnett, child welfare and attendance coordinator for the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, said guidance from a credentialed teacher guarantees that home-schooled students receive a well-rounded education.

"All kids in the state of California have to have algebra. If a parent is having a problem with a concept, they can discuss it with a teacher," he said.

But Hager, the Yucaipa home-schooling parent, said parents can make good teachers whether or not they hold credentials. She buys curriculum from home-schooling bookstores and attends a home-schooling parent support group.

"I feel very competent (about teaching), Hager said. "It's not about knowing everything, it's about finding it out."

Fears have immigrants hitting the road home for the holidays

By The Associated Press

SANTA ANA — More immigrant families that travel home to Mexico for the holidays are driving instead of flying because of concerns over terrorism and heightened airport security, according to travel agents and residents in Southern California.

This Christmas season, the Mexican government expects to issue 240,000 temporary permits to automobiles entering the country, about 20 percent more than last year, according to Mario Perez, the Los Angeles representative for Paisano, a public program that assists travelers.

To prepare for the influx, the government in Mexico has added about 600 border workers, double the usual number, Perez said.

Scared by the events of Sept. 11, thousands of immigrants from Mexico canceled their annual flights home last year.

This year, many of them intend to resume the holiday tradition of celebrating Christmas with relatives across the border.

But while the Mexican government estimates that more than one million people living in the United States will return to the country this holiday season, the events of Sept. 11, 2001 are affecting the preferred mode of travel.

Some travelers worried about airport security or their own immigration status are opting not to fly, particularly people from places like Orange County who feel that heading to Los Angeles International Airport just isn't worth it.

"The airport revisions are making people nervous," said Marcela Prado, a Santa Ana travel agent whose office has seen a 40 percent drop in holiday ticket sales. "People would rather go to Tijuana and fly, or go in a car. Either way is less expensive and less hassle."

NATIONAL



Tests show reactors could withstand jetliner impact

BY H. JOSEF HEBERT
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Tests using engineering models support the nuclear industry's arguments that a reactor could withstand a direct hit by a jetliner, an industry-sponsored report says.

While the tests by engineers independent of the industry provide valuable data, federal regulators briefed on the findings say they are waiting for completion of their own tests before drawing conclusions.

The vulnerability of the 4-foot-thick concrete containment domes of reactors to an airborne attack has been of major concern since the Sept. 11 attacks.

Reactors are designed to withstand many natural disasters, from hurricanes

to earthquakes. They never were designed specifically to be protected against a direct hit by a large aircraft such as the planes flown into the Pentagon and World Trade Center.

Findings to be released this week conclude that if a Boeing 767-400 jetliner, fully loaded with 28,980 gallons of fuel, were flown directly into the center of a reactor at 350 miles an hour, the plane would not penetrate the structure.

"The analysis indicates that no part of the engine, the fuselage or the wings — nor the jet fuel — entered the containment building," says the report prepared by two consulting firms for the Electric Power Research Institute at the request of the nuclear industry.

The computer analysis evaluated both a direct impact on the containment structure of one of the plane's engines and "the global impact" of the entire aircraft mass on the structure.

The analysis concluded that damage would be limited to "some spalling" — crushing of material — of the concrete but with minimal penetration.

A summary of the report, provided to The Associated Press on Sunday from industry sources, produced no detailed test calculations but said conservative assumptions were used.

For example, the computer runs assumed a fuel-loaded aircraft, making a direct hit at the exact center of the containment building where impact

forces would be greatest.

It assumes use of a Boeing 767-400 because that wide-bodied jet best represents the commercial aircraft fleets, and the report used a speed of 350 mph because that is believed to be the speed at which two jetliners hit their targets on Sept. 11.

Higher speeds would make an aircraft too hard to control at low altitude and make a hit on a reactor extremely difficult, especially by an inexperienced pilot, the study said.

The tests were conducted by ABS Consulting, which specializes in quantifying losses from natural and manmade hazards including fires, earthquakes and missile impacts; and ANATECH Corp., a San Diego engineering firm that specializes in evaluating structural failures.

The sponsoring Electric Power Research Institute, based in Palo Alto, Calif., is a nonprofit energy research consortium of the electric power industry. After the Sept. 11 attacks, the Nuclear Energy Institute asked the consortium to develop the study.

Separate tests on reactor vulnerability to an aircraft crash, details of which are classified, are under way at the government's Sandia National Laboratory and elsewhere, a spokesman for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission said.

William Beecher, how-

ever, said he could not comment on the industry tests without referring to classified information involving the government tests. The spokesman said commission officials have been briefed on the industry findings.

Nuclear industry critics have noted that reactor design and security requirements never have taken into account the possibility of a deliberate strike of a reactor by a hijacked jetliner, and past studies have provided conflicting data.

A computer analysis conducted in 1982 by the Energy Department's Argonne National Laboratory did not rule out penetration of a reactor containment by an aircraft hit. If penetra-

tion occurred, that report said, burning jet fuel "would lead to a rather violent explosion" within the dome.

Recently, 19 nuclear experts, many of them long associated with the nuclear industry, cited a 1988 test at the Sandia laboratory that they said made clear a containment shield would withstand a jetliner crash.

But reliance on the 1988 Sandia test, which involved a much lighter F-4 Phantom fighter, also has been the subject of dispute. Skeptics have noted it was not designed to measure the strength of the structure, which was set up so that it could move upon impact and did move several feet, which reduced the impact force.

A fallen soldier



Daniel Maurer/Associated Press

U.S. soldiers in the cargo bay of a C-17 military cargo plane stand around the flag-draped coffin of a killed U.S. soldier before it is carried from the plane by a honor guard at the Ramstein Airbase, Germany, early Sunday. The paratrooper of the 82nd Airborne Division died Saturday after unidentified men in the eastern Afghan town of Shkhin fled and opened fire on the American troops who were observing them.

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NATIONAL

Nurses in Hawaii hospitals spending holidays on strike

BY MATT SEDENSKY
Associated Press Writer

HONOLULU — The plea "Nurse!" still brings someone running in Hawaii hospitals. But not David Haga or 1,400 other nurses — more than 10 percent of the state's nursing staff — who are spending the holiday season on strike.

"I'm willing to sell my home, my car, whatever I have to do to maintain the strike," said Haga, 43, who has worked in the intensive care unit at Kuakini Medical Center for 12 years.

The three-week-old walkouts at Kuakini, Queen's and St. Francis medical centers in Honolulu make up one of the biggest health care walkouts in the country this year.

As in disputes at hospitals elsewhere, the Hawaii nurses are demanding contracts that restrict mandatory overtime and protect their benefits, issues they say will ultimately allow them to better serve the sick. They say that under the current conditions, they routinely work 12- to 16-hour days and their hospitals are critically understaffed.

Hospital administrators have agreed to some wage increases, but insist staffing rule changes are needed to save money.

Gov. Linda Lingle said Friday that she does not feel public health and safety are threatened and she does not want to step into the labor dispute. However, Lingle offered to meet with a small group of nurses after about 400 of them marched into the Capitol chanting "nurses, nurses, nurses."

A few union registered nurses have crossed picket lines, but strikers say morale and unity remain high. At Friday's rally, nurses wore elf and Santa hats and a four-piece brass band played Christmas songs under the banyan trees.

Many said they looked forward to enjoying their first Christmas off in many years, even if there weren't any presents.

"Our cause is noble and we need to continue to stick together," said Leslie Garamella, who has been a nurse for 26 years, the last 14 at Queen's. "You may not have many gifts to give, but you have each other, you have your integrity."

All three hospitals have hired replacement nurses from the mainland and shifted administrative RNs to patient care. Strikers also pitched in for at least one emergency. On Dec. 17, three nurses left the picket line at St. Francis to assist in a kidney transplant operation because specialized replacement nurses weren't available.

So far this year, there have been 18 nurses' strikes nationwide involving 5,600 nurses, from as few as five at an Iowa clinic to about 1,500 at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, said Suzanne Martin, a spokeswoman for United American Nurses, the labor arm of the American Nurses Association.

In Hawaii, the sticking points in negotiations mostly involve benefits.

Officials of the Hawaii Nurses Association said they turned down a contract proposal from Queen's last week because it did not adequately address retirement benefits or the reassignment of some nursing duties, a move they fear could lead to staffing cutbacks.

Queen's nurses also are fighting "paid time off," a policy of pooling vacations, sick leave and holiday time. Nurses say that would require them to use up vacation time if they catch illnesses from their patients. Hospitals say it would reward nurses for good attendance and minimize abuse of sick leave.

Nurses at the three hospitals earn about \$20 to \$38 an hour. Officials at Queen's have said their proposal offered a 21 percent salary increase over three years.

"This is not about wages. It has never been about wages," Queen's nurse Bill Richter said. "It has always been about the nurses ability to care for patients and do so safely."

No talks have been held at St. Francis since nurses went on strike. Union officials said the one-year contract offered there was lacking in every area, including a 4 percent pay raise. The latest offer at Kuakini failed to include sufficient retirement benefits and restrictions against mandatory overtime, union officials said. Talks with the other two hospitals broke off last week.

Smokies land owners donate 700 acres for preservation

BY DUNCAN MANSFIELD
Associated Press Writer

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — More than 700 acres bordering the Great Smoky Mountains National Park will remain natural and undeveloped thanks to a Christmas gift from the land owners.

Lamar Alexander, Tennessee's new senator and former governor, and several of his neighbors are giving away millions of dollars in development rights to preserve the forested tract.

"We have been acquiring this land for 25 years in order to protect this scenic view of the Smokies and to create a buffer zone to protect the park," Alexander said. "We hope others will want to do the same."

The gift, announced Sunday, is the largest private donation of its kind, both in size and value, in Tennessee, said Randy Brown, executive director of the Foothills Land Conservancy.

The conservation easement covers 769

acres between the Foothills Parkway and the southwestern edge of the park, some 30 miles south of Knoxville. It will provide a development buffer as much as two miles wide along two miles of the park's 70-mile border in Tennessee.

"It is beautiful ... quiet as a church," Brown said.

The Smokies range over a half million acres in Tennessee and North Carolina. It is the country's most visited national park with nearly 10 million visitors a year.

The property will continue to be owned by Alexander and his associates, but the right to subdivide it will be transferred to the Foothills Land Conservancy and The Conservation Fund.

Alexander grew up in Maryville and has a mountain home in Millers Cove. Other landowners in the deal include Sandy Beall, founder of the Ruby Tuesday restaurant chain and proprietor of the Smokies resort Blackberry Farm.

INTERNATIONAL



Saddam's chief advisor says let inspectors do their job

BY NADIA ABOU EL-MAGD
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — American and British officials are rushing to judgment about Iraq's weapons report and should wait for U.N. arms inspectors to do their job, Saddam Hussein's chief scientific adviser said Sunday.

Amir al-Saadi complained that Secretary of State Colin Powell and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw based their criticisms on "old, rehearsed reports" from the previous "discredited" arms inspection program in the 1990s.

Al-Saadi said Iraq had answered many of the leftover questions in its report or in personal interviews with arms inspection teams that returned last month.

He listed two examples concerning nuclear weapons and production of nerve gas, saying Iraq proved it had answered questions being raised anew by the United States or Britain.

In one case, he said, tests were performed in the United States that showed spent Iraqi missiles contained traces of the gas but that later independent tests by French and Swiss labs found no such results.

He accused Powell and Straw of ignoring Iraq's replies and making judgments before the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission could fully examine the Iraqi report.

"Why don't they let the specialized organs of the United Nations get on with their task?" he asked at a televised news conference. "Why interfere in this rude fashion?"

The Iraqi president on Sunday also accused the international community of

doing too little to stop America's continued aggression toward Iraq, the country's official news agency reported.

"We have told the world we are not producing these kind of weapons, but it seems that the world is drugged, absent or in a weak position," Saddam said during talks Sunday with visiting Belarus envoy Nikolai Ivanchenko.

Iraq's state-run newspapers expressed skepticism Sunday that America and Britain have information that could lead U.N. experts to caches of illegal arms.

"Everybody knows that if they had concrete information, they would have put it on television all around the world before giving it to the inspection teams," Babil, the newspaper run by Saddam's son Odai, said in a front-page editorial.

Iraq maintains it has no banned nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. The United States and Britain say Iraq is lying and have threatened war to force it to comply with U.N. arms control resolutions.

Babil accused America and Britain of making "criminal plans against Iraq" aimed at "dividing and destroying Iraq and seizing its oil."

In Washington, a senior Bush administration official said on condition of anonymity Sunday that the United States is in "watch and wait" mode this week.

"Iraq's actions to date suggest they have not made the strategic choice to disarm," the official said. "While we have not given up on disarming Iraq through the United Nations, we are now entering a final phase in how we compel Saddam Hussein to disarm."

Chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix told the British Broadcasting Corp.

the United States and Britain briefed inspectors on what they think the Iraqis have, but what inspectors really want is information leading to stores of weapons-related material.

Blix said inspectors need intelligence because an Iraqi weapons declaration earlier this month leaves so many unanswered questions that it is impossible to confirm the accuracy of Iraq's claim to have no weapons of mass destruction.

President Bush, pointing to what U.S. officials call fabrications and omissions in the declaration, already has declared Iraq in "material breach" of U.N. demands but has decided to hold off any military response for at least a month as the

Americans seek to build U.N. support for attacking Saddam.

U.N. experts have made almost daily inspections since resuming work in Iraq last month, working there for the first time since teams left in 1998 ahead of U.S. and British airstrikes launched to punish Baghdad for alleged failure to cooperate.

The U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission under Blix is searching for evidence of chemical or biological weapons and the means to deliver them. Mohamed ElBaradei's International Atomic Energy Agency is searching for banned nuclear weapons.

Inspectors set out Sunday morning for searches at five sites, Iraqi officials said.

A family in mourning



Mukhtar Khan/Associated Press

Unidentified relatives of the Ghulam Qadir Dar family wail over the death of four family members in Reben village about 65 kilometers (40 miles) north of Srinagar, India, Saturday. Suspected Islamic guerillas barged into the home of Dar in Indian-controlled Kashmir and shot to death four members of the family.

North Korea is removing U.N. surveillance equipment from nuclear facilities

BY CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
Associated Press Writer

SEOUL, South Korea — In a defiant declaration that triggered alarm in foreign capitals, North Korea said Sunday that it had begun removing U.N. seals and surveillance cameras from nuclear facilities that U.S. officials say could yield weapons within months.

The U.N. nuclear watchdog, which has been monitoring the facilities, said Pyongyang had unsealed a spent fuel storage chamber that holds 8,000 irradiated fuel rods.

"As the spent fuel contains a significant amount of plutonium, (North Korea's) action is of great nonproliferation concern," Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said in a press release Sunday.

The United States and its allies urged the communist country to rescind its decision. "The 8000-odd spent fuel rods are of particular concern because they could be reprocessed to recover plutonium for nuclear weapons," State Department spokesman Lou Fintor said.

Pyongyang's announcement raised fears of a nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula similar to one involving the same facilities in 1994. At that time, many officials in Seoul and Washington believed there was a heightened possibility

of war with North Korea.

Conflict was averted when North Korea agreed to freeze the facilities in a deal with the United States, but it said Dec. 12 that it planned to reactivate them to produce electricity. The removal of U.N. monitoring devices appeared to be the first step in that process.

North Korea said the Vienna-based IAEA failed to respond to its request to remove the equipment, compelling it "to immediately start the work of removing the seals and monitoring cameras from the frozen nuclear facilities for their normal operation to produce electricity."

The IAEA said in its Sunday statement that the seals and surveillance equipment had been removed from the spent fuel pond, which stores the fuel rods, at the 5-megawatt, Soviet-designed reactor in Yongbyon, 50 miles north of Pyongyang.

"Without our equipment, we cannot monitor their nuclear inventories and therefore cannot provide assurances that they are not producing material for nuclear weapons," Mark Gwozdecky, IAEA spokesman, told The Associated Press.

ElBaradei said in the statement that it was "deplorable" that Pyongyang had not responded to his requests for "an urgently needed discussion on safeguards issues."

Fintor, of the U.S. State Department, said the 8,000 spent fuel rods had "no relevance" for generating electricity. Their

unsealing "belies North Korea's announced justification to produce electricity," he said.

Security experts believe North Korea made one or two nuclear weapons using plutonium it extracted from the Yongbyon reactor in the 1990s. Now there are fears it will reprocess plutonium fuel rods that were separated from the Yongbyon reactor, and later stored under supervision by IAEA inspectors.

"They're going to be able to build four to five additional nuclear weapons within months if they begin that reprocessing operation," Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., said on "Fox News Sunday."

Biden, the outgoing chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the North Korean nuclear issue was a greater threat to U.S. interests than Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

The United States, which is preparing for a possible war against Iraq, says it seeks a diplomatic solution to the North Korean nuclear issue.

North Korea must "allow the IAEA to replace or restore the seals and cameras that the North damaged," Fintor said.

Reactivating the nuclear facilities "would fly in the face of the international consensus," he said.

In a telephone conversation Sunday, Secretary of State Colin Powell and South Korean Foreign Minister Choi Sung-hong called for close cooperation with Russia

and China on pressuring North Korea, Choi's ministry said.

"It has been our consistent position that we will not tolerate North Korea's nuclear activities," said Shim Yoon-jo, director of North American affairs at the Foreign Ministry.

"For our country, this is worrisome," the Japanese Foreign Ministry said. The French Foreign Ministry said it "deplores the new initiative of North Korea."

The announcement by the North's state-run news agency, KCNA, was part of a dispute that has been escalating since October, when U.S. officials said North Korea admitted it had a secret nuclear weapons program based on uranium enrichment.

The program violated several nuclear arms control agreements, and Washington and its allies suspended shipments of heavy fuel oil to the energy-starved country that were required under the 1994 deal. Instead of giving up its nuclear program, Pyongyang said it had no choice but to revive old nuclear facilities that were frozen under the same agreement.

The North Korean news agency referred to its earlier appeal for a nonaggression treaty with the United States, saying the North "made it clear that the issue of refreezing its nuclear facilities entirely depends on the attitude of the U.S. side."



SPORTS

Lakers get needed victory over Toronto Raptors

By The Associated Press

TORONTO — Kobe Bryant scored 31 points, including a layup with 33.2 seconds left in overtime, as the Los Angeles Lakers ended a three-game losing streak with a 109-107 victory over the Toronto Raptors on Sunday.

Shaquille O'Neal added 31 points and 15 rebounds for the Lakers, who barely escaped Toronto with a win. The Raptors were without injured All-Star Vince Carter and leading rebounder Antonio Davis.

Morris Peterson had a game-high 27 for the Raptors, who have lost three straight and seven of eight.

Peterson's 3-pointer with 9.2 seconds left in regulation appeared to give Toronto a one-point lead, but the officials ruled it a two.

Rick Fox's layup gave Los Angeles a 106-104 lead with 2:12 left in overtime, but Jerome Williams grabbed an offensive rebound, dunked and converted a 3-point play, giving Toronto a 107-106 lead with 1:52 left.

O'Neal then missed a short jumper, and Brian Shaw missed a 3-pointer.

After Peterson's pass deflected off Alvin Williams' hand, Bryant picked up the ball and made a layup, giving

Los Angeles a 108-107 lead with 33.2 seconds left.

Robert Horry then made one of two free throws to make it 109-107 with 8.5 seconds left.

O'Neal fouled Toronto's Lindsey Hunter on a layup attempt. Hunter then missed the first free throw attempt before intentionally missing the second. The ball went off a Laker, giving the Raptors the possession 1.4 seconds left.

Hunter then slipped out of bounds after receiving the inbounds pass, sealing the win for the Lakers, who went 1-3 on their four-game road trip.

Los Angeles improved to 3-13 on the road.

Derek Fisher's 18-foot jumper gave Los Angeles a four point lead with less than two minutes left in regulation, but Jerome Williams followed with a jumper.

After Bryant missed one of his two free throw attempts, Hunter made a long jumper to cut Los Angeles' lead to two with 40 seconds left.

Jerome Williams then blocked Bryant's leaning jump shot attempt with 18 seconds left. Peterson then followed with what appeared to be his go-ahead 3-pointer with 9.2 seconds left in regulation, but the officials ruled it a two, tying the game at 102.

Fisher then missed a jumper at the buzzer, sending the game into overtime.

The Raptors trailed by 11 midway through the third quarter, but pulled within two with 3:08 left in the period with an 8-2 run.

Hunter's consecutive 3-pointers early in the fourth gave Toronto 82-81 lead — its first lead since early in the first quarter.

Bryant scored 22 points and had four assists as Los Angeles led 54-45 at halftime. O'Neal had 13 points and 12 rebounds in the first half, but he missed nine of his 10 free throws.

The Lakers host Sacramento on Christmas night. Asked if the Lakers dislike the Kings, Rick Fox said: "Actually, they've been pretty good to us the last three years." The Lakers eliminated the Kings in the playoffs the last three years. Fox fought Kings guard Doug Christie twice during a preseason game two months ago. "Going into the tunnel was the worst decision I've made as a basketball player. It's something I learned from," Fox said. ... Los Angeles forward Devean George is day-to-day with tendinitis in his right ankle. George missed 10 games earlier this season with the injury.

Oakland Raiders beat rival Denver Broncos, 28-16

BY JANIE MCCAULEY

AP Sports Writer

OAKLAND — The Oakland Raiders affirmed their dominance of the AFC West by staying just as cool and confident as their record-setting quarterback.

Rich Gannon set the NFL single-season record for completions and passed for 201 yards as the Raiders surged into the playoffs, clinching their third straight division title with a 28-16 victory over the Denver Broncos on Sunday.

After scoring on its first three possessions, Oakland (10-5) weathered a strong second-half comeback led by Denver backup Steve Beuerlein, who passed for 234 yards after relieving an injured and ineffective Brian Griese.

Gannon broke Warren Moon's 11-year-old record for completions in the second quarter on a 5-yard pass to Charlie Garner. His 405th completion surpassed the mark set in 1991 by Moon, who was at the

game as a radio commentator. Gannon has 411 completions this season.

Gannon also made an artistic 3-yard TD scramble as Oakland jumped to a 21-0 lead and took much of the excitement out of one of the most important meetings in this long, heated rivalry.

Surprisingly, Denver (8-7) came out just as flat and ineffective as in its 34-10 beating by Oakland in a Monday night game last month — and not even an impressive game from Beuerlein could get the Broncos back in it.

Oakland's defense made things miserable for Griese from the beginning.

Trace Armstrong sacked him on the second play, then on the next series, Armstrong, in his 13th season, made his first career interception after Derrick Gibson deflected a pass by Griese. John Parrella had deflected the previous pass.

Safety Rod Woodson, whose 98-yard interception return in the Monday night game gave the Raiders a 10-0 lead, picked

off Griese's throw late in the first quarter to put Oakland in scoring position while ahead 14-0.

Former Broncos star Bill Romanowski sacked Griese late in the second quarter to send Griese to the sidelines with a left knee injury. Raider Nation booed Beuerlein, the former Oakland QB, and the Raiders sacked Beuerlein on his first two plays — giving Oakland three straight sacks.

Gannon was efficient despite his second straight week of low numbers, completing his first five passes and finishing 18-for-27 with one TD. He would need 475 yards in the season finale against Kansas City to break one of the league's most prestigious records: Dan Marino's 5,084 yards passing in 1984.

Beuerlein led the Broncos back with two second-half touchdown drives,

including Clinton Portis' 2-yard TD run on the first play of the fourth quarter to make it 21-16.

But Oakland made one more commanding touchdown drive, ending in Crockett's second scoring run, and Eric Barton intercepted at midfield with 5:39 left to secure the win.

Earlier Sunday, Deion Sanders announced he is discussing coming out of retirement to join the Raiders for the playoffs. RaideZack Crockett ran for two short touchdowns for the Raiders, who clinched the division title after the San Diego Chargers helped them by losing 24-22 to Kansas City.

rs senior assistant Bruce Allen would not confirm the team was negotiating with Sanders, a cornerback who retired after the 2000 season and 11 years in the NFL, but Allen did not deny it either.

Warriors' Mills suspended for fight against Blazers

BY LONDON HALL

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — Golden State forward Chris Mills was suspended for three games without pay by the NBA Sunday for fighting with Portland's Bonzi Wells after a game, going after him in the locker room and even blocking the Trail Blazers' bus.

"Chris Mills engaged in some actions at the conclusion of the game, and well after the conclusion of the game, that quite frankly we cannot accept and will not tolerate," NBA senior vice president Stu Jackson said.

Mills' suspension began with Sunday night's game at Sacramento. He'll also miss games against Toronto and the L.A. Clippers and will be eligible to return Dec. 30 against Philadelphia.

Wells was suspended two games on Saturday by the league for throwing a punch at Mills after Friday night's game, which the Blazers won 113-111 on Rasheed Wallace's last-second jumper. The altercation started a brawl involving players from both sides, and Wallace was fined \$15,000 for trying to go after a fan who had thrown a wad of gum at him.

After both teams left the floor, Mills

reportedly tried to get into the Blazers' locker room but was restrained. Later, witnesses said Mills parked his car in front of Portland's bus, then got out with several friends and challenged the Blazers.

Jackson said he took Mills' actions outside the locker room and in the bus bay into account when determining the length of the suspension.

Mills and Wells were fighting for rebounding position when Wallace's winning shot went through the net. Mills and Wells got tangled up, and after they started exchanging words and shoving each other, the Warriors' Troy Murphy and the Blazers' Ruben Patterson also got involved, and coaches and officials tried to break up the fracas.

Fans throwing plastic beer bottles and other objects escalated matters when the Blazers tried to walk off the court.

Jackson said a review of the videotape showed that Wells was the only participant who threw a punch. While Mills was not accused of a punch, "he certainly was not an innocent bystander, either," Jackson said.

Jackson said further punishment could be delivered if evidence reveals improper action by any other players.

49ers win on the road



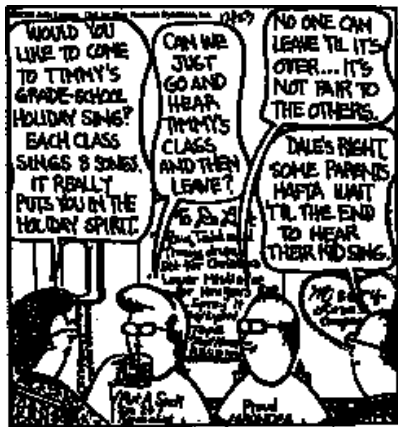
Brano Ruscak/Associated Press

Arizona Cardinals' Duane Starks (22) tries to stop San Francisco 49ers running back Garrison Hearst during the third quarter Saturday at Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, Ariz. The 49ers defeated the Cardinals 17-14.

COMICS



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CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Enormous
 - 4 In the thick of
 - 10 Competitor
 - 11 Jordan's currency
 - 13 'A Ball for ...'
 - 14 Michael Caine film
 - 15 Oahu souvenir
 - 16 Sixth sense, initially
 - 18 Middle Earth monster
 - 19 Woodstock performer
 - 22 Fr. part
 - 23 Tops for tea
 - 24 Heathen
 - 27 Iron
 - 28 Actor Bates
 - 29 Go out
 - 30 Woodstock performer
 - 35 Tar's dad
 - 36 Poetess
 - 37 "You — here"
 - 38 Sir's counterpart
 - 40 Lactian, e.g.
 - 42 Let up
 - 43 Scout leader?
 - 44 Supporters' votes
- DOWN**
- 1 Reclaim
 - 2 Snippet
 - 3 Add-on
 - 4 Bad review
 - 5 Reddish liqueur
 - 6 Make it
 - 7 Wine measure
 - 8 Operative
 - 9 Milk source
 - 12 School break
 - 17 Light source
 - 20 Midsize native
 - 21 Took on
 - 24 Broadway's "Game"
 - 25 "Open Sesame" sayer
 - 26 When the stadium fills up
 - 27 Feather-shaped
 - 28 Grass seed
 - 31 Dwellings
 - 32 Pours
 - 33 Fuming
 - 34 Inert gas
 - 39 Had lunch
 - 41 Distress letters



- Saturday's answer**
- 20 Midsize native
 - 21 Took on
 - 24 Broadway's "Game"
 - 25 "Open Sesame" sayer
 - 26 When the stadium fills up
 - 27 Feather-shaped
 - 28 Grass seed
 - 31 Dwellings
 - 32 Pours
 - 33 Fuming
 - 34 Inert gas
 - 39 Had lunch
 - 41 Distress letters

edge city

by TERRY & BARRY LEBAN



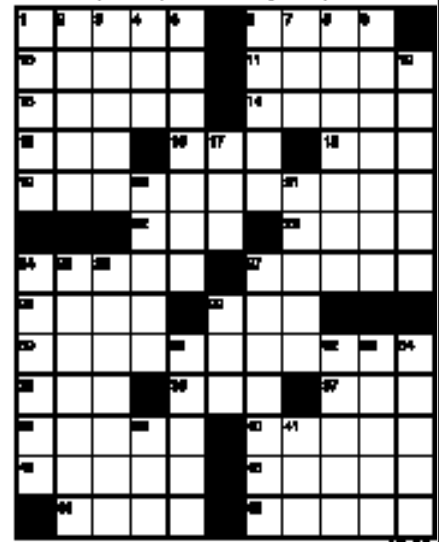
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD by Chuck Shepard

Homeless shelter volunteers rejected

Some callers to Boston's major homeless shelters became angry that their requests to help out this year on Thanksgiving and Christmas day were rejected because the shelters have too many volunteers on those days (yet too few on the other 363 days a year). A Boston Globe reporter found that volunteers even try to cajole officials to bump them up the waiting list (170 on one shelter's list, which started accumulating names in August), but express disappointment at suggestions that they help at less "popular" (and less prestigious) suburban shelters.

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2002

TODAY

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.

This Monday, December 23 look for the gift wrapping cart to help with your holiday packages ... gift wrapping is FREE, but donations are welcome for the nonprofit cart host, Santa Monica Police Activities League - Youth Directors Council. Noon to 8 p.m. 1400 Block of the Third Street Promenade (just north of Broadway) Subject to cancellation, if rain.

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

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

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

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

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TUESDAY

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

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

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

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

MOVIE °GUIDE

LOEWS CINIPLEX BROADWAY CINEMA

1441 Third St. at Broadway
Empire (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

Cities, towns are cracking down on aggressive panhandling

BY ROBERT TANNER

AP National Writer

Cities across the nation are cracking down on aggressive panhandling, even restricting panhandlers to designated "blue box" sections of sidewalk, at the same time hard economic times are driving up the numbers of homeless.

Advocates for the homeless warn of discrimination against the needy. But from Florida to California, community leaders are passing ordinances to curb what they see as a wave of intimidating panhandlers crowding the sidewalks and jostling shoppers.

"You basically couldn't walk down the street without being aggressively panhandled," said Deputy Chief Ross Robinson of Asheville, N.C., a small mountain city that has drawn growing number of outdoors-lovers, from retirees to young mountain-bikers — and people asking for spare change.

"When a reasonable person begins to wonder about their own safety, it's time to stop. It's past time to stop," Robinson said.

Asheville passed an ordinance earlier this month barring aggressive panhandling, with fines of up to \$500 and up to 20 days in jail for people with at least five prior misdemeanors.

Asheville isn't alone. Anti-panhandling ordinances — as well as rules barring sleeping on sidewalks — have been put in place in recent months in Lakeland and Orlando, Fla.; Eugene, Ore.; and Santa Cruz, Calif. Proposals are being discussed in Reno, Nev., and Cincinnati, as well.

Homeless advocates say enforcement misses the point.

"What we propose is that cities address the problem rather than criminalizing the people," said Maria Foscarnis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homeless & Poverty. "Not all people panhandling are homeless. But by and large, people who are begging on the streets are very poor."

Bans, fines or punishment for panhandlers or the

homeless are not new. But the latest actions come as states suffer their weakest economy in decades. Many cities say their financial ability to meet the need for food and shelter — up by 20 percent in some places — is falling, according to a survey in mid-December by the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

New York City has seen a record number of homeless, with an average of 37,000 a night in city shelters, up from an average 21,000 in 1998. And that doesn't count people who sleep outdoors.

"Not all people panhandling are homeless. But by and large, people who are begging on the streets are very poor."

— MARIA FOSCARINIS

National Law Center on Homeless & Poverty

City and business leaders said they're trying to come up with plans that don't simply sweep away the problem.

In Orlando, Mayor Glenda Hood just held a three-day conference with churches, service providers, the homeless and their advocates, and law enforcement to discuss solutions.

Orlando last summer passed a law barring people from sitting or laying on downtown sidewalks, with violators fined \$500 and sent to jail for 60 days. Panhandling was restricted to "blue boxes" drawn on downtown sidewalks.

City leaders said it works; advocates for the homeless disagree.

"I've seen no evidence from anyplace in the country that the kinds of ordinances that were passed here are effective in solving anything," said Robert H. Brown at the Coalition for the Homeless in Orlando, which runs a 650-person shelter.

Brown said enforcement should be combined with better services; "that makes great sense."

Foscarnis, who tracks government actions regarding the homeless, sees a civil rights issue.

"The enactment of laws targeting begging is rife with potential for discriminatory enforcement," she said. A well-dressed person asking for money won't be looked at as quickly as someone who looks homeless; a business person taking a nap on a bench won't be arrested, but a homeless person will, she said.

"It's a sign of an ongoing crisis, and maybe a deepening crisis resulting from the declining economy and rising housing costs," she said.

City and business leaders, however, said that they can't ignore the economic damage intimidating panhandlers can have.

"Our downtown, like a lot of downtowns, is now a neighborhood," said Hood, in Orlando. "People are living there, raising their family there. They didn't feel safe because of the gathering of homeless individuals."

The laws are not about punishing the poor for their poverty, city leaders said. Most aggressive panhandlers choose begging as a profession, said Cincinnati City Manager Valerie Lemmie.

"One tends to assume the panhandler is homeless and more often than not has a social service need that's driving the panhandling," Lemmie said. "If you look at the police data, it's not necessarily the case."

Most downtowns, like Cincinnati's, are safe, she said. But an aggressive panhandler can create a very different impression. Downtown Cincinnati Inc., a private business group, has hired "ambassadors" to help police keep a more wholesome atmosphere on city streets.

Community leaders there also are exploring the possibility of requiring panhandlers to register, as Dayton, Ohio, did several years ago.

"We're not going to solve homelessness," said Hood, who on Saturday was named as Florida's next secretary of state. "Unfortunately that will always be a part of a community's life. ... It's not an easy issue."



**The
First United Methodist Church
of Santa Monica**

invites you to these Christmas Eve worship services:

**Christmas Eve
Tuesday, December 24th**

6:00 p.m. Christmas Family Service
Music by the Children's and Youth choirs
The Story of the Christmas Carol
"Silent Night"

11:00 p.m. Candlelight Service
Patricia Farris, preaching:
"The Birth of Love and Hope"
Music by the Chancel Choir, Organ, and Harp

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parking facility across the street

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