

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

18 20 32 34 44
Meganumber: 12
Jackpot: \$31 Million

FANTASY 5

15 22 24 26 36

DAILY 3

Daytime: 104
Evening: 5 5 3

DAILY DERBY

1st: 09 Winning Spirit
2nd: 05 California Classic
3rd: 06 Whirl Win

RACE TIME: 1:41.59

NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

In addition to his poor performance on a field sobriety test, the chief evidence that Frank Hersha, 28, was driving drunk in Manchester, Conn., in October was that police spotted him trying to order from the drive-thru window of a local restaurant that was obviously closed. And in Watertown, Mass., a playful Kudzai Kwenda, 23, accidentally locked handcuffs on his wrist at home in October, and figured they would know how to get them off at the local police station, but shortly after arrival, he was jailed because he had apparently forgotten there was an arrest warrant out against him.

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1814, the War of 1812 officially ended as the United States and Britain signed the Treaty of Ghent in Belgium.

In 1865, several veterans of the Confederate Army formed a private social club in Pulaski, Tenn., called the Ku Klux Klan.

In 1871, Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Aida" had its world premiere in Cairo, Egypt, to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal.

In 1943, President Roosevelt appointed Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower supreme commander of Allied forces as part of Operation "Overlord."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"So if a Christian is touched only once a year, the touching is still worth it, and maybe on some given Christmas, some quiet morning, the touch will take."

HARRY REASONER
AMERICAN BROADCAST JOURNALIST

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Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Freddie Baca (left) and Robert Mickles (right) used to be career criminals. With the help of the Delancey Street Foundation and proceeds from Christmas tree sales on Main Street, they have turned their lives around.

Christmas tree sales keep ex-criminals off the mean streets

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

MAIN STREET — Convicted felons Freddie Baca and Robert Mickles never dreamed they would be spending the holiday season selling Christmas trees in Santa Monica — they figured they'd end up dead or in jail again.

But with the help of a foundation dedicated to providing a structured educational and living environment for ex-felons, Baca and Mickles are reformed criminals who have turned their lives around.

"It was inevitable that we were going to end up in prison again," said Baca, 42, who was facing an eight-year prison sentence for possession of heroin

more than six years ago. Prior to that, Baca had spent four years in the California prison system for robbery and heroin possession.

"I didn't (care) about anything," Baca recalled. "All I cared about was shooting dope and robbing people ... You really become a disgusting human being."

More concerned about not going back to prison than being rehabilitated, Baca in 1999 applied to Delancey Street, which provides an alternative to incarceration. He was lucky enough to be accepted — one out of 10 criminals get into the program, Baca said.

"I had no intentions of getting help," he added, saying when he

See DELANCEY, page 7

City housing project on the drawing board

Preliminary plans would put 325 units in three buildings downtown; architects pushing for a 120-foot height limit

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Elected leaders are at odds over how many apartments and condominiums should be built on government-owned land in downtown Santa Monica, and how much of it should be

open space.

At issue is a proposal to construct 325 housing units in three complexes standing as high as 120 feet on land between City Hall and Ocean Avenue. Members of the City Council last week gave the project a preliminary approval, but said they would track closely the evolving plans.

Whatever ultimately happens, the project likely will have a significant impact on controversial plans to redevelop the Santa Monica Place mall. Mall officials have proposed building five high-rise towers with three standing 21

See CIVIC CENTER, page 6

Wide-open West lures people who look to escape the urban crush

BY GENARO C. ARMAS

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Nevada, New Mexico, Idaho, Utah and other states blessed with wide-open spaces are seeing steady population growth as increasingly cramped Americans look for ways to spread out.

Overall, the U.S. population grew by almost 3 million people over the last year to just under 294 million, the Census Bureau reported in annual population estimates released this week. The top 10 list of fastest-growing states was dominated by those in the West and South, with Nevada leading the way for the 18th consecutive year.

While favorable weather and jobs continue to be primary lures, people also are looking for places that offer space, affordability and the great outdoors. That helped place Idaho fourth on the list of fastest-growing states. Utah was seventh and New Mexico 10th.

Robert Lang, a demographer with the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech, said those states are appealing to people who want to escape the urban sprawl of big cities like Los Angeles and Denver.

"This is part of a long diffusion of population of the country because of the interstates, airports and the Internet," Lang said. "We use the whole country now."

Fern Bull, 74, moved from Colorado to Layton, Utah, about 25 miles north of Salt Lake City, to be near her two young granddaughters. In the five years since arriving, a Wal-Mart, a small shopping mall and two new fast-food restaurants have been built on once-empty parcels of land near her home, she said.

Utah's population is 2.4 million, up 1.6 percent over the past year and up 7 percent since 2000. Bull, who is involved in a social group that welcomes new residents, said local officials are trying to keep infrastructure on a

See CRUSH, page 13

Jacquie Banks

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Share more this Xmas, Aries

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

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



ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★★ Friends and loved ones feed your imagination. Allow yourself to daydream more. Enjoy the unique quality of this particular holiday. Your instincts touch a parent or someone you put on a pedestal. Don't hesitate to express your deeper feelings. Tonight: Share more; make Christmas calls early.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★ Pull away from the material side of this holiday, even if a close loved one is plugged into the gifts. Add a special touch by reaching out for those who might be alone on this holiday. Your caring will be remembered. Tonight: Make dinner your treat. Invite a friend who might be alone to join in.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★★ A misunderstanding stems from a friend or loved one's tension. Detach and express your loving understanding; your attitude will help others relax. Others appreciate your light touch. A child or new loved one expresses his or her adoration. Tonight: Ready for a surprise?

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★ You might want to keep your opinions to yourself. It might be unusual for you to be so quiet, but in the long run, it will serve you well. Friends or a partner surprises you. Someone from a distance pops up, either in the mail, on the phone or in person. Tonight: Express your gratitude.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★★ You naturally find and gather with friends and loved ones. The holiday spirit seeps through everything you do. Whether sharing holiday eggnog or enjoying gift-swapping, you relish the moment. Share your unusually deep feeling through a nurturing act. Tonight: For a loved one.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Others seek you out, at work or to share holiday greetings. Count on people depending on your leadership and direction. A loved one delights you with a caring gift or gesture. Tonight: Beaming.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★★ You naturally do the right thing. Others share their deeper feelings with you. You detach, perhaps because you are a bit uncomfortable. Get past this obstacle. Let the real you emerge. Tonight: Family calls.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★★ You are inclined to want more intimacy around all this holiday sharing and celebrating, preferring to relate individually. A loving relationship could be developing to a new peak. Follow your instincts with others. Tonight: Togetherness counts.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★★ You cannot deny the many people who seek you out this holiday. Though you might want to spend more time with family, you find that you need to divide your attention. Think. Your caring means that much. Tonight: Certainly not alone.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★ Last-minute details might have overwhelmed you. Trust that you will get as much done as possible. Ask for another's support or help. Unexpected developments keep popping up. Choose to look at these as exciting. Tonight: Relax at home.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ Your frolicsome nature cannot and will not be suppressed. Be a kid again, once more relishing the excitement of the holiday. A friend might need extra attention. He or she might have no family nearby. Be thoughtful. Tonight: Spontaneity delights you and others.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★ Family comes first on this special holiday. Your actions speak for themselves. Even though you love being around friends, you prefer to be home. Make time for a special person. You could be surprised by what he or she shares. Tonight: Love being home.

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PUBLISHER Ross Furukawa ross@smdp.com EDITOR Carolyn Sackariason sack@smdp.com STAFF WRITER John Wood wood@smdp.com ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER Robbie P. Plubeni rob@smdp.com ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Rob Schwenker schwenker@smdp.com ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Stewart O'Dell stewart@smdp.com	PRODUCTION MANAGER Alejandro Cesar Cantarero II alex@smdp.com PRODUCTION DESIGNER ★ Mary Hoang maryh@smdp.com EXECUTIVE TRAFFIC MANAGER Brenda Casas brenda@smdp.com CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE Mitch Troy mitch@smdp.com CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE ★ Mirella Reyes mirella@smdp.com	NIGHT EDITOR Lori Luechtefeld lori@smdp.com NIGHT EDITOR Michael Tittinger moneysurf@smdp.com CIRCULATION Keith Wyatt keith@smdp.com CIRCULATION Glenn Bolan glenn@smdp.com SPECIAL PROJECTS Dave Danforth dave@smdp.com MASCOT Maya Furukawa maya@smdp.com
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LOCAL



Everybody wins with embedded reporters

By Daily Press staff

The Defense Department's decision to embed journalists with U.S. troops invading Iraq in 2003 was a success for the military, the media and the public, according to a new RAND Corporation study.

"Allowing journalists to move with combat units appears to be the best solution to date at balancing the needs of three core constituencies — the press, the military, and the public," said Christopher Paul, a RAND social scientist and lead author of the report. The report also concluded that:

■ Embedding journalists with troops will be a model for the future. But the embedding program could create tensions between the press and the military in future combat operations if U.S. military forces should suffer serious setbacks or heavy casualties.

■ "Operational security in Iraq was generally intact and protected far more than it was violated" by embedded journalists. Fewer than a half-dozen reporters were pulled out of the field for security violations.

■ News media worries that reporters would become biased toward the troops in their assigned units proved unfounded, with surveys by journalism groups finding coverage by embedded reporters was "of reasonably high quality."

■ While critics may have been justified in calling embedding "soda-straw journalism" because it provided small pictures of the greater war landscape, editors were able to piece together the pictures quite well to give fuller reports.

■ Moving reporters with combat units will continue to feed the trend toward constant live and unfiltered news on cable television, with all its shortcomings and confusion, and it is unclear if such live coverage best serves the public interest.

■ News organizations did not always send their most experienced reporters to the front, resulting in reporters with minimal understanding of the military having difficulty doing their jobs.

The International Security and Defense Policy Center within the RAND National Security Research Division produced the report. The division conducts research and analysis for the Defense Department, the Joint Staff, the Unified Commands, defense and intelligence agencies, allied foreign governments and foundations.

The report is based on a review and

analysis of studies, contemporary news stories, and accounts by military officials and journalists of war reporting from World War II through the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. It is the first report to systematically evaluate the outcome of embedding journalists with troops. The study is titled: "Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context."

"The war in Iraq is unique in that it is the first recent conflict in which the military's twin obligations of informing the public and granting adequate press access were both largely satisfied," Paul said.

More than 2,200 reporters and camera crews from the United States and other nations covered the war on the ground and at sea. About 600 of those journalists participated in the embedding program. They lived, ate, moved, slept, and endured combat fire alongside the troops. Meanwhile, more than 1,400 so-called "unilaterals" chose to cover the war on their own.

Four embedded news people died during the major combat operations of the war, as well as nine journalists covering the war on their own.

The RAND report recommends that the Pentagon find ways to give credentials to the "unilateral" reporters so that troops recognize them as legitimate reporters and not as second-class journalists.

Embedding reporters with troops and allowing them wide access to fighting personnel may have marked a turning for the Pentagon away from its long-held post-Vietnam war mindset that encourages suspicion of the press, the report said.

The conduct of press-military relations during the Iraq war shows that "the Pentagon has finally overcome the knee-jerk distrust of news media coverage that has influenced so much of press-military relations since Vietnam," Paul said.

Assisting Paul in the preparation of the report was James Kim, a graduate student at Columbia University and summer intern at RAND.

RAND's National Defense Research Institute is a federally funded research and development center supported by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the unified commands and the defense agencies.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization based in Santa Monica.



SURF REPORT

On Friday, a 6.1-foot high tide will keep a lot of spots on the swampy side in the morning. New WNW swell (280-300) will be on the rise, with most spots seeing the largest surf through the afternoon and through the first part of Saturday. As the swell peaks look for average Northern spots to build into the waist-high range with occasional bigger sets. Standouts see occasional shoulder-high sets. South Bay spots will see more size with the surf building into the inconsistent chest-shoulder range for many breaks. Standout spots see sets going one to two feet overhead at times (up to seven-foot faces). Look for variable and gusty NE to E winds in the morning to shift more northerly through the afternoon.

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	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	9:17	2.3	9:18	0.6	3:28	4.6	2:38	3.1
SUNDAY	10:44	1.7	10:10	1.1	4:17	5.0	4:12	3.7
MONDAY	11:50	1.0	10:57	1.5	4:59	5.3	5:38	3.5
TUESDAY	12:42	0.4	11:40	1.9	5:37	5.6	6:48	3.5
WEDNESDAY	N/A	N/A	1:25	-0.1	6:11	5.8	7:45	3.5
THURSDAY	12:19	2.1	2:03	-0.4	6:43	6.0	8:32	3.6
FRIDAY	12:53	2.3	2:37	-0.6	7:14	6.1	9:13	3.6

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The Q Line

City officials have proposed opening a sobering center, or "drunk tank," to help curb the problem of public drunkenness in Santa Monica. Some officials champion the idea as a way to save the city money and address its homelessness problem. Others say the plan would do little to reduce vagrancy in the area.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know,

"Do you think a sobering center in Santa Monica is a good idea? Why or why not?"

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

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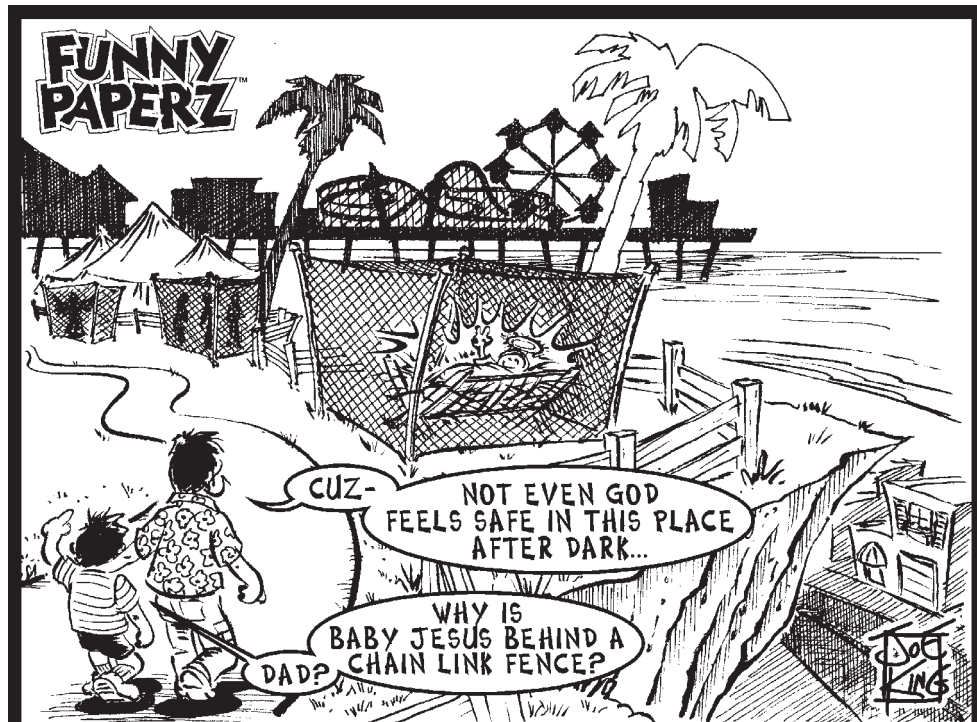
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OPINION



IT'S LIKE CAMP X-RAY FOR X-MAS!

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Iraq a debacle

Editor:

An attack in Iraq kills dozens, all thanks to Bush and the 59 million idiots who voted for him. It is becoming obvious to everyone that the Bush war is a failure. The Iraq elections next year are a joke. Make Saddam Hussein be a candidate, he would probably win. Iraq would deserve it.

Mike Kirwan
Venice

Freedom fighters or terrorists?

Editor:

I wonder if the British press reported, in December 1773, that the boarding of three ships in Boston Harbor and the dumping of their cargo into the sea was the work of "insurgents" and "terrorists."

David Stoughton
Santa Monica

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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City Hall's laws lack teeth for homeless population



OUR TOWN

BY TED WINTERER

Some feel City Hall has been too soft on our homeless population, as if we ought to recruit John Ashcroft to round up all the street people and ship them off to Guantanamo Bay. Others decry any attempts to crack down on street living and antisocial behavior as "a Rudy Giuliani-esque solution that calls for sweeping the problem under the rug without actually solving it," to quote a guest columnist from these pages.

Often forgotten when people recall the success Mayor Giuliani had in reducing New York's homelessness, using the "broken windows" school of policing which doesn't tolerate petty crimes, is the other part of the equation: New York built housing for those without homes. In my last column I suggested that Santa Monica adaptively reuse the old Rand buildings to temporarily house those without homes and provide substance abuse treatment, job training and the like. If City Hall doesn't consider this option it will have to suffer charges of NIMFYism (Not In My Front Yard) and no longer scold residents leery of affordable housing or shelters in their neighborhoods.

New York and Philadelphia have pursued successful homeless policies which include providing housing and making the streets less hospitable. Call it the carrot and the stick approach, or charity and tough love: It works because it acknowledges that while many homeless need and want public assistance, some are scoundrels mired in a subculture of vagrancy.

It's not compassionate to run off the less fortunate when they have no place to live. At the same time, it's unfair to the housed to see their parks taken over as campgrounds, streets fouled with human waste, and children intimidated by menacing behavior.

Suppose you had a loved one living in one of our parks. You'd do your best to intervene rather than enable behavior which perpetuates degrading destitution. Yet here in Santa Monica that's just what we do. If I were to indulge in holiday nog and urinate in the street in front of the police, I'd be hauled off to the pokey. But I think we all know that's not what happens to the homeless. And if a citizen wit-

nesses public intoxication or disorderly conduct by a street person and calls the Santa Monica Police Department, often the response is underwhelming.

Pressed about this tolerance for antisocial behavior, our civic leaders caterwaul about the civil rights of the homeless while the SMPD laments its limited resources and the requisite triage by which higher profile crimes take precedence.

I suggest, however, that the real issue is simply a lack of institutional will, that City Hall can write and enforce ordinances which enhance everyone's quality of life. Consider Santa Monica Municipal Code, Article 4.20.010 governing the use of median planting strips. It states that "it shall be unlawful to use the median planting strips for anything but jogging or walking. All other activities are strictly prohibited."

A few years ago, signs citing this ordinance were posted at the median on Fourth Street between San Vicente Boulevard and Adelaide Drive, at the top of the stairs leading up from the floor of Santa Monica Canyon. Why? Some affluent homeowners nearby, dismayed by presence of fitness enthusiasts who would climb those stairs and then stretch on the grassy median, used the clout of their wealth to prevail upon City Hall to enforce this law (ironically in the epicenter of the great hedge code debate of our last election).

Police officers began shooing away stair climbers, fitness classes and even mothers lounging with their babies and threatening those who disregarded the law with citations. I myself was chased off the median, for the unseemly offense of some sit-ups to tone my middle-aged gut, by not one, but two of Santa Monica's finest. The younger of this pair admitted he much preferred his work reducing gang violence in the Pico neighborhood but was assigned to the Stair Climber Task Force by his superiors. I suspect most folks in this town would rather have the police quell gang violence than suppress sit-ups.

It seems to me that if City Hall has the will and resources to prosecute dastardly crimes such as hamstringing stretching on public property, it ought to be able to more aggressively enact and effect laws restricting inappropriate behavior in our parks and streets. Or will that only happen if the homeless camp out on the ritzy turf at Fourth and San Vicente?

(Ted Winterer is a writer and lives in Ocean Park. To reach Winterer, e-mail ourtownsmdp@aol.com).

FED UP WITH PICO VIOLENCE? YOUR OPINION MATTERS

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OPINION

GUEST COMMENTARY BY LEONARD PEIKOFF

Christmas should be more egoistic and commercial

Christmas in America is an exuberant display of human ingenuity, capitalist productivity, and the enjoyment of life. Yet all of these are castigated as "materialistic." The real meaning of the holiday, we are told, is assorted nativity tales and altruist injunctions (e.g., love thy neighbor) that no one takes seriously.

In fact, Christmas as we celebrate it today is a 19th century American invention. The freedom and prosperity of post-Civil War America created the happiest nation in history. The result was the desire to celebrate, to revel in the goods and pleasures of life on earth. Christmas, which was not a federal holiday until 1870, became the leading American outlet for this feeling.

Historically, people have always celebrated the winter solstice as the time when the days begin to lengthen, indicating the earth's return to life. Ancient Romans feasted and reveled during the festival of Saturnalia. Early Christians condemned these Roman celebrations — they were waiting for the end of the world and had only scorn for earthly pleasures. By the fourth century, the pagans were worshipping the god of the sun on Dec. 25, and the Christians came to a decision: If you can't stop 'em, join 'em. They claimed — contrary to known fact — that the date was Jesus' birthday, and usurped the solstice holiday for their church.

Even after the Christians stole Christmas, they were ambivalent about it. The holiday was inherently a pro-life festival of earthly renewal, but the Christians preached renunciation, sacrifice, and concern for the next world, not this one. As Cotton Mather, an 18th century clergyman, put it: "Can you in your consciences think that our Holy Savior is honored by mirth? ... Shall it be said that at the birth of our Savior ... we take time ... to do actions that have much more of hell than of heaven in them?"

Then came the major developments of 19th century capitalism: Industrialization, urbanization, the triumph of science — all of it leading to easy transportation, efficient mail delivery, the widespread publishing of books and magazines, new inventions making life comfortable and exciting, and the rise of entrepreneurs who understood that the way to make a profit was to produce something good and sell it to a mass market.

For the first time, the giving of gifts became a major feature of Christmas. Early Christians denounced gift-giving as a Roman practice, and Puritans called it diabolical. But Americans were not to be deterred. Thanks to capitalism, there

was enough wealth to make gifts possible, a great productive apparatus to advertise them and make them available cheaply, and a country so content that men wanted to reach out to their friends and express their enjoyment of life. The whole country took with glee to giving gifts on an unprecedented scale.

Santa Claus is a thoroughly American invention. There was a St. Nicholas long ago and a feeble holiday connected with him — on Dec. 5. In 1822, an American named Clement Clarke Moore wrote a poem about a visit from St. Nick. It was Moore, and a few other New Yorkers, who invented St. Nick's physical appearance and personality, came up with the idea that Santa travels on Christmas Eve in a sleigh pulled by reindeer, comes down the chimney, stuffs toys in the kids' stockings, then goes back to the North Pole.

Of course, the Puritans denounced Santa as the Anti-Christ, because he pushed Jesus to the background. Furthermore, Santa implicitly rejected the whole Christian ethics. He did not denounce the rich and demand that they give everything to the poor. On the contrary, he gave gifts to rich and poor children alike. Nor is Santa a champion of Christian mercy or unconditional love. On the contrary, he is for justice — Santa gives only to good children, not to bad ones.

All the best customs of Christmas, from carols to trees to spectacular decorations, have their root in pagan ideas and practices. These customs were greatly amplified by American culture, as the product of reason, science, business, worldliness, and egoism, i.e., the pursuit of happiness.

America's tragedy is that its intellectual leaders have typically tried to replace happiness with guilt by insisting that the spiritual meaning of Christmas is religion and self-sacrifice for Tiny Tim, or his equivalent. But the spiritual must start with recognizing reality. Life requires reason, selfishness and capitalism. That is what Christmas should celebrate — and really, underneath all the pretense, that is what it does celebrate. It is time to take the Christ out of Christmas, and turn the holiday into a guiltlessly egoistic, pro-reason, this-worldly, commercial celebration.

(Leonard Peikoff is the founder of the Ayn Rand Institute. The institute promotes the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of "Atlas Shrugged" and "The Fountainhead." Send comments to reaction@aynrand.org).

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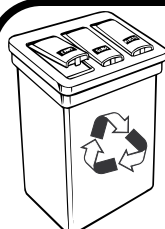
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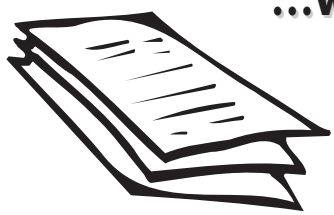
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LOCAL

New downtown housing may stretch up to 120 feet

CIVIC CENTER, from page 1

stories tall, the same height as the tallest building in Santa Monica.

Meanwhile, three teams of architects and developers were chosen to draft detailed proposals for the 11.3 acres of land currently occupied by the former headquarters of the Rand Corp., as well as a construction area and a parking lot. Once completed, the city's housing development will be a key component of a planned \$120 million Civic Center revamp that also encompasses City Hall and the courthouse.

Pleasing the entire City Council will be a tall task. Two council members indicated they would rather not build condominiums and instead move ahead only with the 160 affordable rental units, using the rest of the land for park space. All new developments must include affordable housing under state law and City Hall is no exception.

Other council members pointed out that housing officials originally had hoped for as many as 600 units on the site.

Ron Barefield, a housing administrator at City Hall, encouraged the council to consider the higher height limit and the inclusion of condominiums because it would generate extra revenue for other housing projects. Tens of millions of housing dollars could be at stake, housing officials said. What's more, approving just the 160 affordable apartments and no ownership units would turn the area into a veritable housing project, with a lower quality of life, said Bob Moncrief, the city's housing and redevelopment manager.

The current plans call for two buildings on the east side of Ocean Avenue and one west off of Main Street and just north of the new Rand Corp. building, according to Jim Adams, director of urban design and a principal at the Roma Design Group, the design firm that did the initial planning. The project would have a mix of units for senior citizens, artists, families and other groups. Allowing one of the buildings to reach 120 feet high will be critical, Adams said.

Several council members disagreed.

"I don't share the vision of building a new neighborhood in Santa Monica," City Councilman Bob Holbrook said. "I think we're really a dense city."

City Councilman Herb Katz, an architect, said it was "the most dense, unimaginative" proposal he'd seen in years.

"There is a quality of life that's missing here," he said. "There isn't much open space there, and I'm looking at that with a professional eye. That isn't pleasant."

"We've got 10 pounds of plaster in a five pound bag right now."

HERB KATZ
City Councilman

"We've got 10 pounds of plaster in a five pound bag right now."

Holbrook was joined by City Councilman Bobby Shriver in proposing that only 160 housing units be built on the site. That proposal failed.

On the other side of the debate were City Councilmen Ken Genser and Kevin McKeown, who reiterated the demand for affordable housing and said developers should retain flexibility at this point.

To help guide the architects, Genser suggested a set of guiding principles. Those principles, which later were backed by the entire council, included mixing owned and rented units in the development; minimizing heights where possible; maximizing open space; designing on a human, pedestrian scale; including live-work space and family housing; and establishing a relationship between residences and park space.

No matter what City Hall decides to build on its land downtown, local residents will have something to say about it. A handful of people spoke up on the issue at last week's meeting, most with strong criticisms.

"I see a little triangle in the middle of a bunch of buildings and they call it open space, and I think that's a joke," Ocean Park resident Jacob Samuel said. "I just think it's imperative that we put the brakes on building and development and really try to bring a park-like atmosphere — especially by the beach areas."



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LOCAL



Ex-felons find their way with Delancey Street

DELANCEY, from page 1

got to the residence on Vermont Avenue in Los Angeles, he found an unique environment, completely run by ex-convicts. "But unbeknownst to me, these people weren't messing around. My first impression was, 'Where are all the drug addicts?' They just didn't carry themselves that way."

Baca and Mickles are just two of 2,500 residents of Delancey Street, a foundation based in San Francisco that has spread across the country since its inception in 1971. Selling Christmas trees in nine locations throughout Los Angeles is just one of the programs of Delancey Street. The income generated by Christmas tree lots, a commercial Christmas tree decorating business, a professional moving company, catering and restaurants — all operated by Delancey Street residents — allows the foundation to provide ex-felons training in a variety of business schools.

A vision of Mimi Silbert, a former professor of UC Berkeley who was studying the condition of prisons and realized there was a serious failure in rehabilitation throughout the system, Delancey Street began with four residents, a \$1,000 loan, and a dream to develop a new model to turn around the lives of substance abusers, former felons, and others who have hit rock bottom.

The foundation operates with no professionals, no government funding, and at no charge to the clients. It has addressed generations of poverty, illiteracy, lack of job skills, hard-core substance abusers, homelessness, repeat felons, gang members, teen pregnancies, perpetrators and victims of every kind of abuse. The average client has been in prison for seven years and has been addicted to drugs for 15 years, Baca said. He added that Delancey Street is recognized by the court system as the toughest alternative to prison.

In addition to selling 17,000 Christmas trees each year, the ex-convicts now operate one of the largest independent moving companies in California, a three-star restaurant on San Francisco's waterfront, a catering business in Hollywood and a commercial tree decorating business that recently decorated LA's City Hall and the mayor's office.

Delancey Street first came on scene in Santa Monica after city officials granted the foundation a five-year lease on an apartment building in the Mid-City neighborhood. Christmas trees have been sold at the corner of Main and Pacific streets for six years.

"Santa Monica has been extremely supportive and helped us along the way," Baca said.

After an average of four years — with a minimum stay of two years — residents gain an academic education, three marketable skills, accountability and responsibility, dignity and integrity. More than 14,000 people have graduated into society as successful taxpaying citizens, leading productive lives. They can choose to study professions such as culinary arts, real estate, business administration and construction, to name a few, according to Baca.

Using the principle of "each one, teach one," the residents take responsibility for each other's welfare and hold each other accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in everything they do.

"It's imperative for us because we have never had a job or a career that we learn the concept of self-reliance," Baca said. "You come to Delancey Street and I don't care who you are, you are going to stand on your own two feet."

When clients first come to Delancey Street, they start at the bottom and are mentored by veterans of the program. They begin to work their way up the ladder in terms of jobs, then they get their education in whatever vocation they choose. Many of them go on to college, Baca said. He recently graduated from San Francisco State with a bachelor's degree in urban studies.

Mickles, a 52-year-old who oversees the Santa Monica Christmas tree lot, said he spent 15 years of his life in prison and never knew what responsibility was.

"I've never done anything long term in my life," he said, adding he's been at Delancey Street for more than five years and doesn't plan on leaving anytime soon. "I haven't stopped growing. My stay is infinite."

Mickles said he feels fortunate to have been accepted into the program. Facing another prison sentence for theft, he wrote to his sister and then to Delancey Street's founder, hoping he could get out of the system.

"For some reason, they had compassion and accepted me," he said. "I got there and it took me 14 months to come out of the fog."

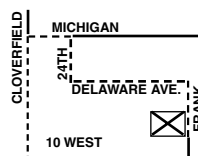
"It's such a great feeling helping people," Mickles said. "I just feel so good waking up in the morning."

Baca has given Delancey Street a 10-year commitment.

"It changes who you are. It's very much like an extended family," he said. "It's done with a lot of love and compassion."

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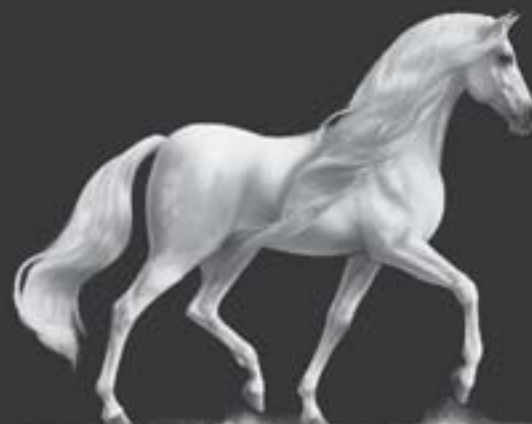
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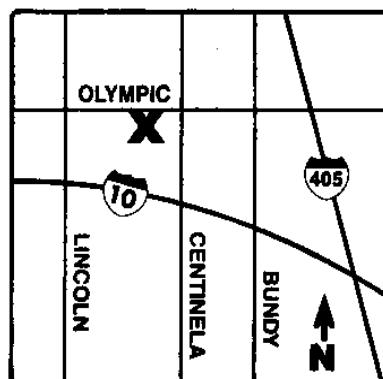
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STATE



STATE BRIEFS

STATE BRIEFS, from page 8

jumped into my bath," said the woman, who said she is in her early 40s and employed in the airline industry.

The company delivered Little Nicky two weeks ago and was expected to publicly announced the news Thursday.

Robert Mondavi sells out

By The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A California wine country landmark changed hands Wednesday as shareholders of the Robert Mondavi Corp. approved a nearly \$1.36 billion buyout by New York-based drinks giant Constellation Brands.

The deal was approved at a meeting in San Francisco with more than 80 percent of votes cast by Class A shareholders and 94 percent of votes cast by Class B shareholders in favor of selling.

Mondavi has faced tough competition from imports and inexpensive domestic brands such as California's Charles Shaw, commonly known as Two Buck Chuck because the brand typically sells for \$1.99 a bottle. Mondavi had planned to try to revitalize the company by selling the luxury side of the business and refocusing on \$15-and-under brands such as Woodbridge.

Those plans were upset when Constellation made an offer for the whole company, which was founded in 1966 by wine pioneer Robert Mondavi.

Mondavi's board was cool to the initial offer of \$970 million, but executives changed their minds after Constellation sweetened the deal.

Human rights and Korean protest Chinese Consulate

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Korean-American and human rights groups rallied outside the Chinese Consulate this week to protest the recent repatriation of North Koreans who had escaped to China and to demand cancellation of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

The rally by about 50 people from 16 groups was part of a larger action. Protests were also set outside China's consulates in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C., and Seoul, South Korea.

Organizers said the Chinese government arrested 65 defectors at a safe house in Beijing in October and sent them back to North Korea despite strong criticism from international human rights groups.

Organizers handed out a long list of defectors they said had been deported by China since 1997. Also listed were the names of Korean activists in China who the organizers said had been imprisoned.

The protest organizers said the list was compiled by human rights activists working in China and was reviewed for accuracy by several international organizations.

The demonstrators slipped the list through a window at the consulate reception desk. The receptionist said no one at the consulate was able to comment.

Protesters chanted slogans in Korean and English, criticizing China's human rights record and demanding that the 2008 Olympics be taken away from China.



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Entertainment

What’s playing ...

THE AVIATOR
The second-best biopic Scorsese has helmed, behind the exalted “Raging Bull.” DiCaprio’s portrayal of Hughes stands out as the finest work of his career.
Starring: Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett

LEMONY SNICKET’S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
Inspired adaptation of the wildly popular kids’ book series that ‘tis a hell of a lot more naughty than nice.
Starring: Jim Carrey, Meryl Streep

SPANGLISH
James Brooks is one of the best in the business at harvesting fresh perspectives on the human condition.
Starring: Adam Sandler, Tea Leoni

MILLION DOLLAR BABY
At its core, this is a heart-wrenching story about overcoming impossible odds and realizing dreams.
Starring: Hilary Swank, Clint Eastwood, Morgan Freeman

FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
This one’s all about the action and the actors have grasped that and have fun with it.
Starring: Dennis Quaid, Giovanni Ribisi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hollywood legends DeNiro, Hoffman ‘Focker’ it up

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

As far as living Hollywood legends go, it doesn’t get any bigger than Dustin Hoffman or Robert DeNiro. They’ve been perennial Oscar contenders for over three decades, and boast extensive filmographies teeming with the stuff cinephile dreams are made of. Hoffman’s credits include “The Graduate,” “Midnight Cowboy, and “Rain Man.” DeNiro’s done “The Godfather: Part II,” “Taxi Driver” and “Raging Bull.” Though perhaps best known for their dramatic roles, both actors are top-notch comedic performers as well. They generate plenty of laughter in the much-anticipated new comedy “Meet the Fockers,” and took time out recently to discuss it.

What’s so hilarious about parenting?
DUSTIN HOFFMAN: Because you can’t win. No matter how hard you try — we all try to do better than our parents did, and you can’t win. Part of that is that the DNA of the kid makes them want to leave the nest. So sometimes the better the parent you are, the more they invent reasons to (make you out to be) a crappy parent. So there’s comedy in the tension.
ROBERT DeNIRO: Yeah, you can’t win. I think that’s a good way to put it.

Was the “Fockers” set a fun one?
DH: They’re never fun, because you’re always thinking that it’s not going to work. It’s a gamble making a movie. Something like 400 movies (are made) in America every year, and how many of them are any good? So you know you’re going in as a long shot. I think one of the commonalties we had on set was that we all ran scared. We’re all humbled by the knowledge that we could fail.

What was it like working with Barbara Streisand?
DH: Terrible (laughs).

RD: He plays her husband, so he should know. Nah, it was fine. Barbara’s very good. We had a good time.

Robert, this is your second go-round with (director) Jay Roach. What was the experience like this time?
RD: He was very considerate and sensitive to everybody’s, uh — whatever you want to call it — way of working. He suffered for all our sins. He tried to be very diplomatic, and he did a very good job.

DH: He was indefatigable. I think there was a point, three-quarters through making the movie, that he just collapsed. I think he went to the hospital. His body just gave out. I’ve never seen anyone work that hard.

So we’ve covered Barbara and Jay, tell us about working with each other.

DH: This is our fourth time working together, and we’ve never liked working together. We’re masochistic.
RD: The fourth time, is it?
DH: Isn’t it the fourth?
RD: “Wag the Dog.”
DH: “Sleepers.” OK, third time ... there won’t be a fourth time (laughs).

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Schumacher’s rendition of ‘Phantom’ falls flat

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Fans — and they number in the tens of millions — of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s long-running stage phenomenon are likely to revel in filmmaker Joel Schumacher’s highly faithful rendering. I’m not one of them.

This latest cinematic rehash based on the play that is based on the early 20th century novel by Gaston Leroux is one of the more expensive exercises in démodé grandiloquence to come along in years. Schumacher and his team clearly put a great deal of energy into crafting the look of the film which is, like the bloated narrative, awfully ornamented yet woefully unmodulated — everything’s resplendent, from the crown of the Paris Opera House all the way down to the underground lair of the title character. With nothing unsightly in sight to counteract the beauty, the movie is noticeably out of balance. The effect is dizzying. As for the players, 35-year-old Scottish stud Gerard Butler (“Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life”) is entirely too young and pretty to be playing the Phantom, a fact Oscar-winning make-up artist Jenny Shircore inexplicably fails to cover up. Maybe she thought they were making “The Pissed-off GQ Model of the Opera,” but whatever the rationale, it doesn’t work. What does is young Emmy Rossum (Sean Penn’s daughter in “Mystic River”) as the golden-throated Christine Daae, object of the reclusive masked menace’s desire. So good is Rossum, who is well-trained in classical vocal technique, at belting out Lloyd Webber’s tunes, she almost makes it possible to overlook the manifest hokiness of the lyrics. Almost. Minnie Driver returns from wherever it was she was hiding and turns in a knee-slapping performance as a temperamental diva who speaks a most peculiar Italian dialect. The women are clearly the film’s strength, but not even their muscular performances are enough to lift it very high ... of course, millions of Andrew Lloyd Webber fans might beg to differ.

(Rated PG-13 for brief violent images. Running time: 143 minutes)

'Woodsman' disturbing but entertaining film

BY DAN DUNN
Special to the Daily Press

Fresh out of NYU film school, director Nicole Kassell makes her Big League debut with a disturbing portrait of a paroled pedophile's attempts to re-enter society. "The Woodsman" is certainly not a pleasant film, but there is joy to be found in Kevin Bacon's excellent portrayal of Walter, a tight-lipped predator being preyed upon by external forces — namely, his co-workers — and the demons inside his own head. Walter longs to be "normal," yet grapples with unnatural urges for prepubescent girls. His struggle is intensified by circumstance — the parole board has inexplicably seen fit to set Walter up in a dingy apartment across the street from an elementary school, and his daily bus commute puts him in dangerous proximity to an enticing little girl. Plus, recurring visits from his supportive but wary brother-in-law (an excellent Benjamin Bratt) serve as a reminder of his estranged sister. Without saying much at all, Bacon is able to effectively convey the chaos and pain behind Walter's eyes. There's an abiding discomfort in watching him, as we're never sure whether he's headed for redemption or something far worse. But Bacon is one of the best in the business at unearthing the humanity in even the most deplorable of characters, and the star's inherent likeability disarms our impulse to be repulsed by this sex offender. Kyra Sedgwick is a powerful piece of this controversial puzzle, playing a tough-as-nails forklift operator who welcomes Walter into her bed — and lets him remain there even after he confesses his sins.

Review

(Rated R for sexuality, disturbing behavior and language. Running time: 87 minutes)



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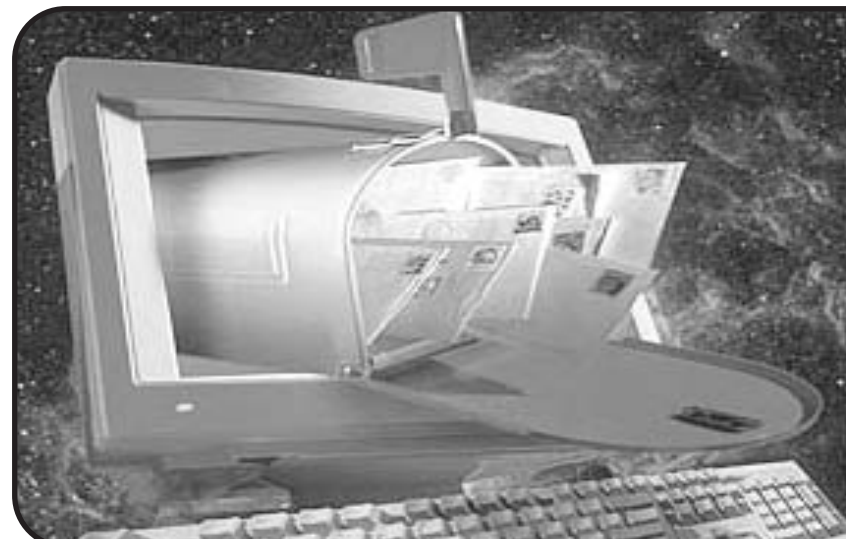


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NATIONAL

Rent-a-tree appeals to the environmentally conscious

BY RUKMINI CALLIMACHI

Associated Press Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. — For years, Pat de Garmo's Christmas tree was her aging yucca plant.

She doesn't like the idea of killing trees, and the size of her yard prevents her from getting a potted one. So year after year she strung lights and ornaments on the indoor yucca plant, hanging toy drums and colored orbs from its stiff branches.

For environmentally conscious consumers like de Garmo — and their numbers abound in this liberal Northwest city — a venture that rents out living Christmas trees is filling a void.

The Original Living Christmas Tree Company founded by John Fogel, 39, has rented out 419 Christmas trees this holiday season, starting at \$55 for a 7-foot Douglas fir.

The trees are taken out of the ground, roots and all, put into pots, and delivered to families in the Portland area.

Soon after New Year's, Fogel and his crew pick up the trees and deliver them to parks, school districts and other groups who pay around \$10 to have the trees planted on their property.

"It seems like to cut a tree and put it in your house and have it dry out and then just toss it away is such a shame. This way, I know it will be replanted — no guilt," said the 61-year-old de Garmo, a retired nurse, who hasn't decorated her indoor plants since she discovered the rent-a-tree business three years ago.

Officials at the National Christmas Tree Association say they know of no other rent-a-tree business venture in the United States.

While Fogel says he could grow beyond his current orders, he maintains a strict policy of accepting no more orders than he can find buyers willing to plant the trees come January.

"Just the idea of cutting all of these trees — these living things for decorations — kind of appalls me," said

44-year-old Glen Jacobs, a high school theater teacher in Portland, who along with his family has turned renting a tree into a yearly tradition.

While tree-rental businesses appear to be a rarity, buying live Christmas trees that have been placed in pots is less so.

Steve Mannhard is a board member of the National Christmas Tree Association. About a decade ago customers began showing up with shovels at his sprawling Christmas tree farm on Alabama's Gulf Coast.

"People started trying to dig the trees out of the ground. I asked them: 'Why are you doing that?' They said, 'Because I want it to live,'" said Mannhard, 57, who began offering potted trees in addition to cut ones at Fish River Trees, near Summerdale, Ala., in 1992.

Last year, out of a total of nearly 5,000 trees he sold, about 1,000 were potted, said Mannhard — a fact he says underscores the popularity of the living tree concept.

"Trees and human beings have a close relationship — and some people are more sensitive to that," he said.

Fogel started the Original Living Christmas Tree Co. in 1992. He says the seed was planted by his father decades ago in upstate New York, when he read to him a fable about a lonely tree in the forest that longed to be decorated by a loving family.

On a recent December afternoon, Fogel watched his two helpers lean a Douglas fir against a green house in a leafy Portland neighborhood. The owners were not home, so he left an envelope tucked among the tree's branches, outlining a few simple instructions on how to care for the tree — and the date when he planned to return.

"My market happens to be people that feel guilty about cutting trees," Fogel said. "But this also happens to be a convenient alternative."

And that is what makes his venture unique, said Bruce Judson, an expert on small businesses at the Yale School of Management, who points out that the \$791 million Christmas tree industry has been reeling from the growing popularity of synthetic trees.

In 1990, 35.4 million households put up real trees and 36.3 million displayed artificial ones, according to a consumer survey by the National Christmas Tree Association. A decade later, the split was 32 million live and 50.6 million artificial.

Those numbers show that Americans are increasingly choosing convenience over tradition, said Judson — and a venture like Fogel's neatly straddles both worlds.

"This gives you the convenience of a plastic tree with the aesthetics and environmental values of a live tree," he said.

While Fogel's trees have become a yearly tradition in hundreds of Portland homes, the endeavor has not yet made him rich. Someday, he hopes his business will support him year-round. But come January, he'll be out looking for a part-time job.

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NATIONAL



Southern states continue to draw more people in

CRUSH, from page 1

pace with the influx. “We’re just trying to get highways and transportation,” she said. “As more people keep moving in, we need more.”

Idaho’s population rose 2 percent over the last year to nearly 1.4 million. There is growth around the capital of Boise and in Kootenai County in northern Idaho. That is where the shoreline of Lake Coeur d’Alene has been increasingly fenced by million-dollar homes, and subdivisions are climbing higher up the county’s hillsides, said Rand Wichman, the county’s planning and zoning director.

“We’re struggling to keep the infrastructure up with the growth, and schools and roads and all those kinds of things are perpetually behind the curve,” he said. “The question is how long we can keep this a great place to live before the pressure overwhelms us.”

Nevada, spurred in large part by the sprawling growth around Las Vegas, grew by 4.1 percent to 2.3 million people.

Retired utility worker Lloyd Wicliff, 58, moved from the Los Angeles area to North Las Vegas last year. “Your money goes a little further here,” he said. “A nice house in Southern California can be a nicer home in southern Nevada.”

Arizona had the second-largest growth, up 3 percent to 5.7 million, while Florida was third with a 2.3 percent increase to 17.4 million. Georgia, Texas, Delaware and North Carolina also were in the top 10.

Massachusetts was the only state that had a population decline — albeit down a slight 3,800 people, or 0.1 percent, to 6.41 million. Demographers speculated it could have been caused by an exodus of people leaving to escape rising costs in the Boston area.

The bureau estimated North Dakota gained population for the first time since at least 2000. The July 2004 population of 634,366 was 966 higher than the previous year.

There also has been small but steady growth in Montana and Wyoming, probably due in part to folks’ seeking to leave urban settings for a small-town lifestyle, said William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

“Put yourself in someone’s shoes living in Los Angeles,” said Marty Bakken, a 30-year veteran of the fast-growing real estate market around Bozeman, Mont.

“If they can make a living and provide for their family here, they’re probably going to do it.”

Also, Frey said, with low housing prices and warm climates, don’t expect the popularity of Arizona or Nevada to wane soon.

State population estimates from the Census Bureau for July 1, 2004; July 1, 2003; and April 1, 2000:

State	2004	2003	2000
Ala.	4,530,182	4,503,726	4,447,351
Alaska	655,435	648,280	626,931
Ariz.	5,743,834	5,579,222	5,130,632
Ark.	2,752,629	2,727,774	2,673,398
Calif.	35,893,799	35,462,712	33,871,653
Colo.	4,601,403	4,547,633	4,302,015
Conn.	3,503,604	3,486,960	3,405,602
Del.	830,364	818,166	783,600
D.C.	553,523	557,620	572,059
Fla.	17,397,161	16,999,181	15,982,824
Ga.	8,829,383	8,676,460	8,186,816
Hawaii	1,262,840	1,248,755	1,211,537
Idaho	1,393,262	1,367,034	1,293,956
Ill.	12,713,634	12,649,087	12,419,647
Ind.	6,237,569	6,199,571	6,080,517
Iowa	2,954,451	2,941,976	2,926,382
Kan.	2,735,502	2,724,786	2,688,824
Ky.	4,145,922	4,118,189	4,042,285
La.	4,515,770	4,493,665	4,468,958
Maine	1,317,253	1,309,205	1,274,923
Md.	5,558,058	5,512,310	5,296,506
Mass.	6,416,505	6,420,357	6,349,105
Mich.	10,112,620	10,082,364	9,938,480
Minn.	5,100,958	5,064,172	4,919,492
Miss.	2,902,966	2,882,594	2,844,656
Mo.	5,754,618	5,719,204	5,596,683
Mont.	926,865	918,157	902,195
Neb.	1,747,214	1,737,475	1,711,265
Nev.	2,334,771	2,242,207	1,998,257
N.H.	1,299,500	1,288,705	1,235,786
N.J.	8,698,879	8,642,412	8,414,347
N.M.	1,903,289	1,878,562	1,819,046
N.Y.	19,227,088	19,212,425	18,976,821
N.C.	8,541,221	8,421,190	8,046,491
N.D.	634,366	633,400	642,204
Ohio	11,459,011	11,437,680	11,353,145

Okla.	3,523,553	3,506,469	3,450,654
Ore.	3,594,586	3,564,330	3,421,436
Pa.	12,406,292	12,370,761	12,281,054
Puerto Rico	3,877,881	3,808,603	
R.I.	1,080,632	1,076,084	1,048,319
S.C.	4,198,068	4,148,744	4,011,816
S.D.	770,883	764,905	754,840
Tenn.	5,900,962	5,845,208	5,689,262
Texas	22,490,022	22,103,374	20,851,790
Utah	2,389,039	2,352,119	2,233,198
Vt.	621,394	619,343	608,827
Va.	7,459,827	7,365,284	7,079,030
Wash.	6,203,788	6,131,298	5,894,140
W.Va.	1,815,354	1,811,440	1,808,350
Wis.	5,509,026	5,474,290	5,363,715
Wyo.	506,529	502,111	493,782
Nation	293,655,404	290,788,976	281,424,602

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NATIONAL

Wave of newcomers brings changes to Fernley

BY SUSANNAH ROSENBLATT

Associated Press Writer

FERNLEY, Nev. — Things in Fernley aren't like they used to be. Just ask Linda Sanders.

"We used to be able to go to the grocery store and talk to everybody," said the 63-year-old secretary, a longtime resident. "Now I don't know anybody."

That's because the population of this former ranching community has nearly doubled in the past four years. Fernley officials estimate their city has about 16,000 residents — up almost 20 percent in the past year alone.

The explosion is emblematic of Nevada's booming economy and red-hot real estate market, experts say, and is part of a nationwide migration to the exurbs. Soaring property values near city centers have led many middle- and

working-class families to settle beyond suburbs, where housing is more affordable and space more plentiful.

"This is the kind of new growth in America, this ... sort of sprawling movement to suburban regions," said William Frey, a demographer with the Brookings Institution.

With Reno growing more expensive and densely populated, Fernley, 30 miles to the east, and other communities in wide-open northern Nevada are enticing businesses and individuals — nearly half from California — to relocate.

Reno and the rest of Washoe County don't have much room left for large-scale development, said Ron Weisinger, executive director of the Northern Nevada Development Authority. "It's a natural progression of going east and south," he said.

Lyon County, where Fernley is located, is the nation's

35th-fastest-growing county in the fastest-growing state, according to census figures. And Fernley, a newly incorporated city, is experiencing its share of growing pains.

Drive far enough east, past the cluster of gas stations and shops along Main Street, and you'll find the future of Fernley. It's in the Donner Trail Estates subdivision, with its canary-yellow and scarlet flags whipping in the chilly mountain wind. Row after row of one-story stucco houses have sprouted up from pastureland, the seams still visible in the yards' newly laid sod and the distinct thump of hammering echoing through the air.

On Fort Bridger Road, five houses in a row have "Sold" signs planted on their lawns. An estimated 1,200 houses are being built each year in Fernley, with 5,600 more planned, according to City Manager Gary Bacock.

Fina Larsen and her husband ditched their rented four-bedroom, 1,300-square-foot, \$1,600-a-month Napa, Calif., town house in June for a larger four-bedroom home with a yard and a \$1,400 mortgage payment in Fernley.

"I could not buy a mortgage in California," said Larsen, 37, an employee at the Dark Horse coffee shop and the mother of two. "I don't need to do a lot and survive out here," Larsen said. "In Napa, I was making \$11 an hour and wasn't making it. I make \$6 to \$7 an hour here, and I'm just doing fine. ... This is going to be a little California the next thing you know."

That's what worries some residents. Fernley's handful of roads, where farmers used to drive their tractors hauling hay, have grown congested with people commuting to and from Reno or Carson City, where about half of Fernley's residents work.

The local schools, lone grocery store and volunteer fire department are feeling the strain. There are concerns about water availability. And because Fernley became a city only in 2001, the newly established government is having to make it up as it goes.

"We've had to really step up our efforts to stay ahead," Mayor David Stix Jr. said.

Retiree Jim Schiller, 57, is skeptical. "They have to limit the growth," he said, hanging out at Mary & Moe's Wigwam, a restaurant and casino that's a Fernley institution.

"Fernley is basically a warehouse for people, where it used to be a rural community," said Albert Raney, 60, a welder and mechanic who lives in nearby Hazen.

According to demographer Frey, rapidly growing areas can produce mixed results. "In a way, it can breed a sense of newness and freshness and neighborliness ... but also a sense of instability that comes with it — crime, political turf battles."

With new homes starting at \$200,000 or less, Fernley has attracted a number of California retirees who have sold their pricey residences to move to northern Nevada, sometimes investing in multiple properties with the pocketed cash.

That's a story Realtor Jeff Dakin says he hears almost daily.

"This is kind of the American psyche. It used to be 'Go West, young man.' Now, for Californians, it's 'Go east,'" Frey said. "In order to have this house and this land and some kind of local autonomy, (people are) willing to trade off other kinds of amenities, maybe commute a little further. ... and not have the sort of cushy urban lifestyle you might have in Los Angeles."

As the newcomers roll in, home values are crawling upward — though not at the breakneck pace of Las Vegas. There, although growth is slowing, housing prices appreciated 53.7 percent during the third quarter this year — the highest gain in the nation.

Toni Patterson's \$100,000 house in Fernley has roughly doubled in value since 2000. "The economy's picking up," said Patterson, 54. Her daughter has successfully invested in local real estate, "buying and selling like mad."

Nevada's lack of corporate and personal income taxes and low workers' compensation rates have helped lure businesses.

"With the un-business-friendly atmosphere in California, you've got so many companies that are looking to get out in order to survive, let alone grow," Weisinger said.

He ticked off several California businesses that have fled, such as Production Pattern & Foundry Co., an aluminum casting outfit that is leaving San Leandro for Mound House, also in Lyon County.

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INTERNATIONAL



Peace agreement getting close in Sudan's south

BY GEORGE GEDDA

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Suffering continues in war-ravaged western Sudan. But to the south, after 21 years of conflict, things are looking up.

The Islamic government in Khartoum may be ready to initial a peace agreement with southern Sudanese rebels on or before a Dec. 31 deadline. There might even be a formal signing ceremony in Washington if all goes well during the next month.

That can come, however, only after the government and the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Movement work out some pending questions.

Bush administration officials consider the two conflicts linked, exacerbated by government policies, and they say unless the situation in western Sudan changes for the better, the proposal for a Washington ceremony will be off the table.

Progress in Darfur is no less important than it is in the North-South conflict, says Michael Ranneberger, the No. 2 official in the State Department's African affairs bureau.

"The two situations are inextricably related and must be resolved in tandem. There are two tracks, but they must lead to the same place: peace and change in Sudan," Ranneberger said in the speech last week.

In Darfur, the Sudanese government and Arab militias that it supports are battling two black African Muslim rebel groups. The toll on civilians has been horrific; new U.S. estimates indicate that 2 million people — overwhelmingly black Africans — have been uprooted from their homes during the 22-month conflict.

There is hardly an issue on which Secretary of State Colin Powell has spent more time since last spring than Darfur. The results have been meager, but a hopeful sign is a Sudanese government commitment this past weekend to observe an often-violated cease-fire that was signed last April.

Partly under pressure from domestic American constituencies, Powell also has pushed hard for settlement to the North-South conflict in Sudan.

The war has generated interest from U.S. evangelical Christians offended by the suffering inflicted on the Christian population of southern Sudan by

Khartoum's Arab-dominated armies. Also, American civil rights groups are outraged by slave conditions under which some in the south and west suffer.

Many Americans are familiar with the war-induced plight of the southern Sudanese thanks to the testimony of special category of Sudanese, numbering 3,700, who were allowed to resettle in the United States.

Known as the "Lost Boys of Sudan," they were left homeless and orphaned by the war and walked, barefoot, more than 1,200 miles in the deserts and jungles of Sudan and Ethiopia in search of refuge before finding it in Kenya.

They were the lucky ones, compared with many of their compatriots. An estimated 2 million Sudanese have died in the North-South conflict, mostly from famine caused by the fighting and displacement. That far exceeds the combined numbers of American war dead during the past century.

Some of the Sudanese who died were companions of the "Lost Boys." Death often resulted from drowning, attacks by wild animals or militia groups, hunger, dehydration or fatigue.

And the estimated 4 million internally displaced southern Sudanese dwarf those of all other conflicts in recent decades.

With peace now in prospect, many uprooted Sudanese are planning to return home. In preparation, the World Food Program of the United Nations is expanding operations in the region.

U.N. officials also are attempting to put together an international force of between 9,000 and 13,000 to help ensure that the peace pact holds. The southern Sudanese also can expect hundreds of million of dollars in international assistance next year, based on donor country pledges.

Under the agreement now being worked out, power in southern Sudan will largely be in the hands of local authorities. Agreements also have been reached on the sharing of oil revenues and other natural resources.

Some vital issues remain. There is no agreement on who will pay for feeding and housing the southern Sudanese army once the war officially ends.

But rarely have the prospects for peace been brighter for a region that has known only one decade without war since independence in 1956.



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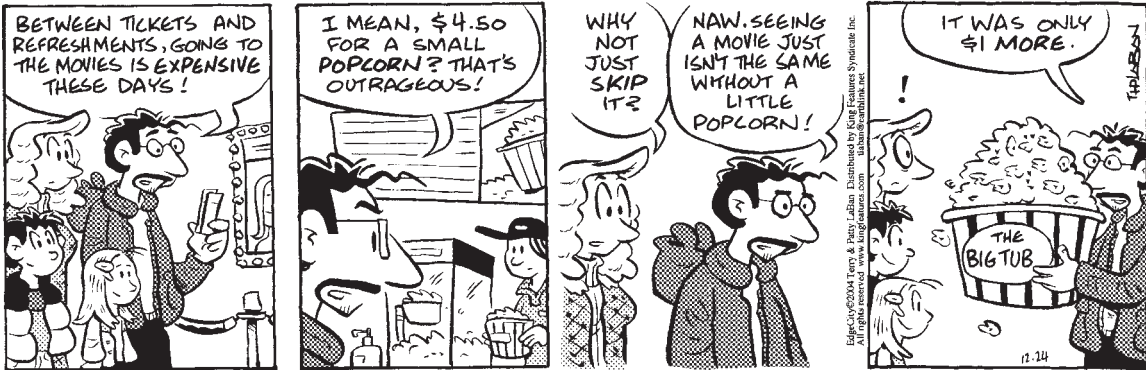


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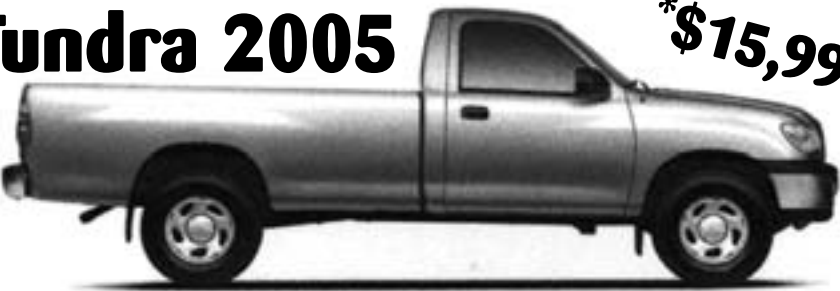
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