WEEKEND EDITION

FREE

Santa Monica Daily Press

December 25-26, 2004 | A newspaper with issues | Volume 4, Issue 37



NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

"Freegans" are non-homeless Dumpster divers with a political or at least philosophical commitment not to waste perfectly usable discarded goods, including food, according to reports in Newsday (September) and the Houston Press (November). Most are driven by a belief that too many Americans have a fetishized view of newness, pointing out that restaurants discard much unspoiled food simply because they need to sell even fresher food. (Freegans don't eat table scraps.) Still, many restaurants elaborately protect their garbage from "Dumpstering" foragers, with locks and razor wire or by coating it with bleach. (Not usually counted as freegans are less-philosophical people who obsessively explore trash piles to carry away anything potentially useful.)

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1926, Hirohito became emperor of Japan, succeeding his father, Emperor Yoshihito. (Hirohito was formally enthroned almost two years later.)
In 1931, New York's Metropolitan Opera broadcast an entire opera over radio for the first time: "Hansel and Gretel" by Engelbert Humperdinck.
In 1941, during World War II, Japan announced the surrender of the British-Canadian garrison at Hong Kong.
In 1946, comedian W.C. Fields died in Pasadena, Calif., at age 66.
In 1977, comedian Sir Charles Chaplin died in Switzerland at age 88.
In 1991, Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev went on television to announce his resignation as the eighth and final leader of a communist superpower that had already gone out of existence.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"A Merry Christmas to all
my friends except two."

ATTRIBUTED TO W.C. FIELDS
AMERICAN COMEDIAN (1880-1946)

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Alejandro Cesar Cantarero II/Daily Press

The line of children waiting to making their last-minute Christmas wishes to Santa Claus at the Santa Monica Place mall grew longer as the big day approached. Santa was expected to visit every house in the world today.

Santa Claus born from a monk named Nicholas

By Daily Press staff

The origins of Santa Claus can be traced back to a monk who lived hundreds of years ago.

This monk named Nicholas is believed to have been born in a small town in an area that is now inside Turkey around 280 AD. Nicholas is said to have inherited a large sum of money, which he gave away. There are many legends or stories about the kindness of Nicholas. The most famous involved his providing a dowry for three sisters to prevent them from being sold into slavery or prostitution. The exact date of Nicholas' death is uncertain, but the current belief is that it is Dec. 6 in 345 or 352 AD, when he became known as Saint Nicholas.

After the Protestant reformation, Saint Nicholas was one of the few saints to remain in good standing with the people. Saint Nicholas started to become popular in America at the end of the 18th century, when Dutch immigrants celebrated the anniversary of his death. The name Santa Claus evolved from the Dutch version of Saint Nicholas, sint Nikolaas, and eventually

See **ORIGINS**, page 6

Santa Monica tech firm has stake in $1B network deal

DreamHammer to help build network for U.S. Treasury Department

By Daily Press staff

DOWNTOWN — A Santa Monica firm has been chosen to help build a computer network for the U.S. Treasury Department that is expected to serve tens of thousands users around the world.

The estimated $1 billion project will be overseen by AT&T Government Solutions, which has brought in a handful of established outside firms. One of those firms is DreamHammer Inc., an Internet technology company located at 501 Colorado Ave. in downtown Santa Monica.

A spokesman said AT&T's team of techies will build a secure, high-speed network designed to handle the Treasury's voice, video and data traffic. It will serve more than 1,000 domestic locations.

Treasury personnel will be able to communicate with any location or data center over the network, which will be designed to accommodate future requirements, such as voice over technology and real-time video services. Using a Web-based interface, Treasury users will have access to online ordering, billing, help desk support and

See **NETWORK**, page 5

Advocates make for a special Christmas for domestic violence victims

BY MARY PEREA
Associated Press Writer

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Agnes Maldonado encounters sad cases of domestic violence daily, but there's one heartbreaking story she always remembers around Christmas.

Maldonado, the executive director of the New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence, remembers when a man threw the family's Christmas tree out the window of their home in a fit of rage on Christmas Eve.

The mother and young son called Maldonado for help. The 4- or 5-year-old child told her that his father took the Christmas tree away because the boy was bad.

"He kept saying over and over again, 'I was bad — Santa is not coming,"' Maldonado said.

The coalition helps the victims attend church services of their choice with an escort.

The coalition's staff made sure that Santa Claus delivered a gift or two for the boy and his mother and that they were able to celebrate what was left of Christmas. Counselors also made sure to talk to the boy and explain that he was not to blame for the violence.

Workers at 23 domestic violence shelters around the state

See **VIOLENCE**, page 5

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Love loved ones, Gemini

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)
★★★★ Sometimes expectations can be a problem. You might expect everyone to be on his or her best behavior, but it's not so. Avoid a conflict; simply be detached and loving. The issue is with the other person, not you. Enjoy those who have a similar frame of mind as you. Tonight: Catch up on others' news.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Pull away from a difficult loved one who might be overly demanding or having a Scrooge attack. What's going on has more to do with this person's past than the present moment. Share your caring with those around you. Tonight: Relax.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ Those around you might be having a hard time. Sometimes the holidays aren't everything we wish they'd be. Understand some of the moodiness, yet at the same time, add cheer to the moment. Be a role model. Tonight: Love the ones you are with.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ This particular holiday might be overwhelming you or creating a mild depression. Consider going out and finding people who have nothing or no one to be with. Gain a realistic perspective. Actions help you change your mood. Tonight: Get into a cleanup project.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Your lively side brings many together. Wherever you are, others feel like they are having a party. A child or loved one could be testy, as he or she might expect more attention. You will need to deal with this person sooner or later. Tonight: Slow down.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★ You are the centerpiece wherever you are. Others need you to direct events or pull together the moment. A family member might be put off that you aren't more into the family. Tonight: Follow through on what is ultimately important.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ Hopefully you have taken a few days off. You might have a difficult time anchoring in on what is happening in your immediate surroundings. Try to focus and concentrate. Those around you need your attention. Tonight: Allow your mind to roam.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ A key loved one or friend zeros in on you. Know that you have little choice but to go along. Relax and do not feel embarrassed if someone gives you a gift and you don't have one for him or her. Remember the spirit of the holiday. Tonight: Pull yourself together.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★ You might be acting out or more provocative than usual. You might have negative past memories of this holiday. Possibly you could be disappointed by someone in some way. Don't express your anger or hurt yet. Tonight: Let others enjoy themselves.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★ Don't allow what is brewing in your mind to impact your day or those you deal with. Process it in the next few days, at a better time. Get into helping others make more of their day. Pitch in where help might be necessary, Tonight: Relax; put your feet up.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ Relish the uniqueness of the day and those who surround you. Give in to the child in you and help others become more playful. A friend could be difficult. Give him or her space. Don't worry if an expectation might not occur. Just be. Tonight: Add that extra sparkle.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Stay close to home and family. Others adore being around you. When you venture out or visit an older relative or boss, you might be greeted with flak. Why bother? Be where you are cared about. Help with a special meal or project. Tonight: Say "thank you" to a loved one.

Santa Monica Daily Press

Published Monday through Saturday
Phone: (310) 458-PRESS (7737) • Fax: (310) 576-9913
1427 Third Street Promenade, Ste. #202 • Santa Monica, CA 90401 • www.smdp.com

PUBLISHER
Ross Furukawa .....ross@smdp.com

EDITOR
Carolyn Sackariason .....sack@smdp.com

STAFF WRITER
John Wood .....wood@smdp.com

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER
Robbie P. Piubeni .....rob@smdp.com

ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Rob Schwenker .....schwenker@smdp.com

ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Stewart O'Dell .....stewarto@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

LOCAL

Kids' literacy lagging throughout country

By Daily Press staff

Reading achievement among the nation's students in grades 4-12 lags significantly behind federal goals, raising questions about whether schools can meet federal requirements that all students be "proficient" readers by 2014, according to the RAND Corporation, based in Santa Monica.

An assessment of student literacy achievement compiled by researchers from RAND Education found that in several states fewer than half the students tested meet state reading proficiency standards set for NCLB.

The RAND report is the first to compile details about reading and writing assessments and student achievement on those assessments from all 50 states and Washington, D.C. in one comprehensive document.

"This report pulls together a lot of publicly available information and sets it in the context of adolescent literacy," said Jennifer McCombs, a RAND policy analyst who is the lead author of the report. "We hope it will be a valuable resource to policymakers and researchers who are interested in this issue."

The nation's elementary and secondary school landscape shifted two years ago with passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The law requires that all students be proficient in reading and math based on state-adopted standards by 2014.

The law also requires states to test all children annually in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school by 2005-06. Additional testing in science is required in later years. States are also required to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a federal test given to some students each year that is considered to have a high standard for reading proficiency.

Researchers reported state achievement test results in 2003 from as many states as available and from the District of Columbia, focusing on results among students in grades 4-12. In addition, the RAND study includes student achievement information from the NAEP.

Among the findings reported by the researchers are:

■ Proficiency rates on state assessments varied widely. Pass rates for elementary students — generally fourth graders — ranged from a low of 28 percent in the District of Columbia to a high of 90 percent in Massachusetts.

■ Pass rates for middle school students ranged from 21 percent in South Carolina to 94 percent in Massachusetts. Twelve jurisdictions had pass rates below 50 percent for middle school students — Arkansas, California, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Maine, Missouri, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming.

■ Pass rates on high school reading tests not required for graduation ranged from 13 percent in the District of Columbia to 87 percent in Colorado.

■ On the NAEP, 8th grade proficiency rates ranged from 10 percent in the District of Columbia to 43 percent in Massachusetts. The rate was similar for 4th grade students.

■ Both the NAEP and state assessments show very large achievement gaps by race/ethnicity and poverty.

■ Not surprisingly, students who have limited English proficiency and special education needs perform at the lowest levels.

"A large number of American adolescents are struggling readers and results from achievement tests suggest much needs to be done to bring them all up to the proficient level by 2014," McCombs said. "We need to make a national commitment to teach children to 'read to learn' in order for them to be successful later in their lives."

The RAND report was compiled for the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which has launched an initiative called "Advancing Literacy" that is designed to improve adolescent literacy through research, practice, and policy. Carnegie's newly-established Advisory Council on Advancing Literacy will be examining literacy policy and research and making recommendations to improve the literacy achievement of the nation's adolescents.

"In order to bridge these gaps a national K-12 literacy policy is necessary," said Andrés Henríquez, Carnegie Corporation program officer for the Advancing Literacy initiative. "We should build on the momentum of interest and investments we've made in early reading. This will be particularly important in the next several years as No Child Left Behind is extended into the high schools — given these data it is hard to imagine dropout rates improving any time soon."

RAND researchers found there often is

See **LITERACY**, page 7

SURF REPORT

If this Christmas is as merry as ones previous — last year excluded — surfers not too stuffed from a Christmas Eve feast or too consumed by other obligations will have something to be stoked about. So far, so good.

Our WNW swell peaks today before slowly fading through Sunday. Modest SW swell (195-210) holds through the weekend, adding a little southern hemi pulse to the mix. Further out, charts are showing some strong but potentially messy storm activity forming in the Gulf of Alaska over the weekend. If it lives up to forecasts then we could see a sloppy dose of NNW wind/ground swell arriving Monday or Tuesday, along with some bad weather.

Write us at wood@smdp.com and tell us what the surf is doing today at your local break.

Today the water is:

59°

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	1:26	2.4	3:10	-0.7	7:44	6.1	9:49	3.6
SUNDAY	1:57	2.5	3:43	-0/7	7:44	6.1	9:49	3.6
MONDAY	2:29	2.6	4:16	-0.6	8:46	6.0	11:00	3.5
TUESDAY	3:01	2.6	4:50	-0.5	9:18	5.9	11:38	3.5
WEDNESDAY	3:36	2.7	5:24	-0.3	9:51	5.6	N/A	N/A
THURSDAY	4:17	2.8	5:58	0.0	12:18	3.6	(10:25	5.3)
FRIDAY	5:08	2.9	6:34	0.3	1:00	3.6	(11:03	4.9)

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WE HAVE THE QUESTIONS.
YOU HAVE THE ANSWERS.
CHECK OUT THIS WEEK'S Q-LINE RESPONSES ON PAGE 4.



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OPINION

The Q Line

DRUNK TANK HAS RESIDENTS SEEING DOUBLE

This past week, Q-line asked:

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

Here are your responses:

✆ "A drunk tank is ideal to help curb the problem of public drunkenness in Santa Monica. By definition, a drunk tank could include drug addicts who are high and people, because of their drunken state, accosting tourists, etc. They used to have a paddy wagon in the old days and what they would have are benches on the inside of the wagon. Each bench would accommodate six people. They would take them to the drunk tank, sober them up and then release them. This is an ongoing process. One further suggestion would be that as they sober up, you have a place like the Veteran's Administration building to go to take care of their personal needs so that they can be rehabilitated ..."

✆ "A sobering center is only a Band Aid and a small one at that. The out-of-control, expanding homeless and vagrant problem in this city never ends until the welcome mat of continuing hand-outs, public feedings and an overall permissive attitude stops. Everything else is lip service and obviously after years of practice, does not work. The conditions have only gotten worse."

✆ "I think it would be an excellent idea for the city of Sanmalicious to have a sobering center because after all, alcoholism is a terrible problem. My late father was an alcoholic and I think it's wonderful to have a sobering center."

✆ "I do not think a sobering center is a good idea. I believe that these people who would be sent to a sobering center would have done so themselves if they had any will to do so. I think being drunk in public should be a criminal offense and they should serve their time in custody sobering up rather than be deposited in a voluntary center where otherwise they would not have volunteered."

✆ "Deal with all the drunks instead of making a so-called sobering center. Build a nice big jail, put them to work all day and lock them up so they won't be able to have access to alcohol. Once their sentences are up, they'll think twice about getting drunk in public again."

✆ "We do not need a sobering center or drunk tank. City officials should just use their offices or where ever they claim their offices are. They are all drunk with power already, creating rules we do not need."

✆ "I think the best way to sober up the vagrants on the street is by holding their SSI checks and making them work for their SSI checks and if they don't work, they don't get their money. That would sober them up faster than anything."

✆ "I do think it's a good idea but I wouldn't have the facility in Santa Monica. I would have the bay station where people would go in Santa Monica, being that Santa Monica is world famous for homeless as a place to go. There would be a shuttle that would shuttle the homeless to a brand new, state-of-the-art, multi-million dollar facility in Idaho where the rent is a lot cheaper. I think everybody would win. I think the residents and the politicians of Santa Monica could still pat themselves on the back and they would still feel really good ..."

✆ "I think the sobering center is a good idea to put all of the City Council people in there if they plan to go ahead with the Macerich shopping center and that monster project. They should go to the sobering center."

✆ "The drunk tank is a stupid idea. This is not Mayberry and the inebriates are not kin to Otis, Mayberry's affable town drunk. This foolish thinking will enable freeloading street drunks to abuse Santa Monica's generosity ever so much more. The claim to financial savings is hokum and hooey. The taxpayers will pay in dollars and in quality of life."

✆ "I think it's a very good idea to have a sobering center and first, they should put all of the members of the City Council in there until they come to their senses. They should sober up."

Holiday letters written by the rich and famous



MODERN TIMES

BY LLOYD GARVER

'Tis the season for my second annual selection of excerpts of "Christmas Letters From Famous People That You Might Not Have Received."

FROM JANET JACKSON:

Well, it's been a challenging year, to say the least. But I never got too sad or depressed. I remained the optimist that I always am. You see, I'm the kind of person who looks at life as the bra being half-full ...

FROM BARRY BONDS:

WHY DO PEOPLE KEEP THINKING THAT I'M ON STEROIDS?

FROM JOHN KERRY AND TERESA HEINZ KERRY:

JOHN: Teresa and I are writing this letter together because we are a team.

TERESA: We're not a team. I'm my own individual.

JOHN: And that's why I love her. Anyway, it was a difficult year, but one I'm very proud of. I wouldn't have done anything differently.

TERESA: You mean you're happy you lost?

JOHN: Maybe if you stopped interrupting, I'd be able to make my point.

TERESA: Go ahead. Make your little point. Politics is silly anyway. I have many more important things in my life.

JOHN: What I'm trying to say is that we fought the good fight, we didn't get down in the mud, and I never had to resort to actually having a platform or taking any positions.

TERESA: I think you would have won if you had let me talk more.

JOHN: And that's why I love her.

FROM BEN AFFLECK:

Humbug!

FROM PRESIDENT BUSH:

This is a time for reflection and gratitude. Looking at my reflection in the White House bathroom mirror, I am grateful. I'm grateful that the country has had such a good year. I'm happy that the war in Iraq is such a success, despite people being killed every day. I'm happy that our economy is such a success, despite its now being controlled by China and Japan. And of course, I'm happy that I had such a huge victory in November, beating the opposition by almost 2 percent. It was also a year of surprises. To tell you the truth, I didn't even know that Jeb was also governor of Ohio.

FROM COLIN POWELL:

Yeah! I'm out of there. Merry Christmas to all!

FROM ALETA ST. JAMES (the 56-year-old woman who had twins)

I've been so busy, I barely have time to write this holiday letter. As the whole world knows, I received a double blessing this year. Not surprisingly, my two bundles of joy have changed my life. Now that things have settled down a bit, I only have one question. What was I thinking?!

FROM DONALD TRUMP:

This is my favorite time of year because I can buy anything I want. Of course, I can do that all year long, but this season reminds me of just how rich I am. And who cares if you don't like my hair? Of course, I have a hit TV show, but in case you haven't noticed, I'm also doing some TV commercials. I'm not doing them because I need the money but because I want to share my personality with as many people as possible. Before this year, I never thought my life could get any better but it sure has. There's nothing I can't do. In fact, there are just a few words I'd like to say that sum up my feelings about the Christmas spirit: "Santa Claus, you're fired!"

(Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier." He also has read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSnews.com's opinion page and can be reached at smdp@lloydgarvermoderntimes.com).

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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...PLEASE SEND LETTERS TO:

Santa Monica Daily Press: Att. Editor 1427 Third Street Promenade Suite 202 Santa Monica, CA 90401

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Top firms tapped for Treasury Department project

NETWORK, from page 1

network performance information, according to spokesman Jim McGann.

Also working on the project under AT&T will be Illinois-based Accenture LLP; BAE Systems of McLean, Va.; GTSI of Chantilly, Va.; Lucent Technologies of Murray Hill, N.J.; and SRA of Fairfax, Va. The technical name for the planned network is an Internet Protocol Virtual Private Network (IP VPN).

"We have assembled the best companies in the industry to assist us in implementing a secure IP network that will accommodate the future convergence of voice and data while transitioning smoothly from current technology," said Lou Addeo, president of AT&T Government Solutions, in a prepared statement. "We're proud to serve the Treasury Department and look forward to using our network integration skills to deliver a solution that could become a model for agencies that are thinking about how to prepare for the networking of the future."

The AT&T contract calls for three base years and seven one-year options. Its value could reach $1 billion, according to McGann, who added the network, once completed, will be the largest for any civilian agency.

Domestic violence reaches its height during holiday season

VIOLENCE, from page 1

decorate Christmas trees, prepare Christmas dinners and provide gifts both for children and adults.

The coalition, which comprises domestic violence shelters, some counselors and others who work to combat domestic violence, also helps the victims attend church services of their choice with an escort.

Frank Ruiz, Dona Ana County's acting sheriff, says his department handles more domestic violence during the holidays, and this year they're dreading the worst.

"We're expecting a rise between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve because they both fall on a Friday," Ruiz said.

Friday is a typical party day and most domestic violence involves alcohol, he said.

State police also tend to deal with more domestic violence calls around the holidays, Lt. Jimmy Glascock said.

There were 25,644 cases of domestic violence presented to New Mexico law enforcement in all of 2003, according to a report released by Gov. Bill Richardson's Domestic Violence Advisory Board. Figures for the holidays were not available.

Maldonado said in spite of the fact that financial problems, more stress and additional family time often trigger domestic violence during the holidays, occupancy at shelters is typically down because people are trying to keep their families together.

"They're hoping because it's religion and everything with Christmas and Thanksgiving that he's thankful and going to change," Maldonado said.

Occupancy is typically around 75 percent at shelters around the state. They are currently at 90 percent and that number increases after Christmas.

"January, February and March are huge," she said.

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Coca Cola responsible for creating Santa Claus

ORIGINS, from page 1

became shortened to Sinter Klaas. In the early 1800's New York Historical Society member John Pintard distributed wood-carvings with the images of Santa Claus, followed by Washington Irving's book "The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon." At this time, the images used to represent Santa Claus varied widely.

The current image we have is partly due to Episcopalian minister Clement Clarke Moore. In 1822 he wrote a poem for his children entitled "An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas." This poem fleshed out many of the traits still present today — a full figured jolly bearded man who entered houses through the chimney. He even gave names to Santa's eight reindeer (Rudolf comes much later) that pulled his magical red sleigh through the air on Christmas Eve. Political cartoonist Thomas Nast filled in the remaining details of Santa's appearance in his comic strip in Harpers' Weekly. He gave Santa his bright red suit and hat, and full white beard. He also set Santa's workshop at the North Pole, where he lived with Mrs. Claus and his toy making elves.

In the 1930s, the Coca-Cola Company was looking for ways to boost its sales in the winter months. Illustrator Haddon Sundblom created a series of advertising illustrations with Santa Claus giving, receiving and drinking Coca Cola. The marketing campaign was a success, and brought this version of Santa into pop-culture of the time. While Coca-Cola is often credited with inventing Santa or this particular version of Santa, this is nothing more than an urban legend.

In the 1840s stores began to advertise for Christmas and holiday merchandise. One industrious department store in Philadelphia went as far as to make a life size statue of Santa that was visited by thousands of children. Shortly after this, department stores began to have their own live Santa for children to visit.

Why we do what we do on Christmas

By Daily Press staff

Every year, Christians celebrate Christmas but most of us have no earthly idea why we do the things we do — except that it's tradition. Here are the origins of some of our most popular traditions:

■ Holly: Early Christians of Northern Europe decorated their homes and churches with this easily grown evergreen and was called "Holy Tree" and later "Holly," because the pointed green leaves reminded them of the crown of thorns and the red berries of the drops of blood at Jesus' crucifixion.

■ Kris Kringle: German for "Christ's Child" or "Christkindlein." A name for an early German gift-bringing infant Jesus or angelic being, who was thought of as Christ's helper and gave gifts to poor and needy children. As cultures merged, visits from the similar St. Nicholas, Pere Noel, Pelznickel and Christkindlein all became overshadowed or mutated into Santa Claus.

■ Lights: The lighting of candles and decorating with candles has always been popular, but also one of biggest sources of danger during the Christmas holidays. In 1895 a New England telephone employee, Ralph Morris, while looking at the newly installed strings of lights made for the telephone switchboard, decided to take some home to decorate his tree with. It also may be attributed to Thomas Edison's partner, Edward Johnson, for inventing of the first string of lights around the same time. In 1923, President Calvin Coolridge started the annual tradition of the National Christmas Tree lighting ceremony on the White House lawn.

■ "Merry Christmas:" When the phrase was coined, merry meant blessed and peaceful, "or blessed and peaceful Christmas." The phrase "God bless ye merry gentlemen" when written, meant "blessed peaceful" gentlemen.

■ Mistletoe: Ancient Celtic priests calls "Druids" around the new year would collect mistletoe from their holy oak tree and offer some as a sacrifice to the gods. Some would be hung up during a ceremony which people would stand under it and kiss, showing an end to their old grievances with each other. This later practice never actually died out.

■ Nativity Scene (creche): St. Francis of Assisi is responsible for popularizing the nativity scene, but most probably existed earlier. In 1223 or 1224, St. Francis wanted to add hope and joy of God's love to his message by constructing a life-size manger scene with live animals, with the gospel sung around the scene. This became very popular.

■ North Pole: In 1882 Thomas Nast drew a cartoon showing Santa sitting on a box addressed "Christmas Box 1882, St. Nicholas, North Pole." Nast just figured it was a good place for Santa to live.

■ Ornaments: Early Christmas trees had real fruit, flowers and candles as decorations. It looked good but was very heavy on the branches. German glass blowers began producing glass balls to replace the heavy decorations. These became known as bulbs.

■ Poinsettia: Early Mexican Christians called it the "Flower of Holy Night" and legend has it that a small boy was upset on Christmas Eve because he had nothing to offer the Christ Child on his birthday. While the boy was praying at his village church altar, a flower sprang up with its brilliant red and green.

■ History of gift giving: An early Dec. 17 Roman festival of Saturnalia and a Jan. 1 Roman New Year holiday, gifts were given as good luck emblems and houses were decorated with greenery. The early Christians frowned on this pagan ritual and wouldn't have any part of it. For many years, many of the converts wouldn't part with the practice of giving gifts and related it to St. Nicholas' gift giving. Gift giving became widely accepted by the middle ages.

One of the most popular gift requests of the 19th and early 20th century was fruit, nuts and candy. Many of the early letters to Santa printed in newspapers would include this. Many churches to this day make up sacks of fruit, nuts and candy to pass out to everyone on the Sunday before Christmas.

Beginning in early 1900's teddy bears became the most requested gift by boys and girls and still is the most popular stuffed toy of all time.

LOCAL ❑ STATE

Literacy dramatically varies state by state

LITERACY, from page 3

a significant difference between what a state deems to be proficient for purposes of NCLB and how its students score on the federal assessment. In most cases, student proficiency rates were higher on state tests than on the national exam.

In Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina and Texas, the percentage of 8th grade students scoring at the proficient level was 50 points or more lower on federal assessments than on state assessments. In one state — South Carolina — the proficiency rate on the NAEP was slightly lower than it was on the state assessment.

"The state NAEP results highlight that there is a big difference among states in what they consider 'proficient' for purposes of NCLB," McCombs said. "Even if each state were to meet its 100 percent proficiency goal for reading, students across states would likely have quite disparate abilities, knowledge, and skills."

While literacy instruction is a focus of instruction in the primary grades, it has become an "orphaned" responsibility for students as they approach and reach adolescence, according to the report.

"The job market places a premium on workers who have high-level literacy skills," McCombs said. "We are doing a disservice to our young people if we prepare them for anything less."

Other authors of the report are: Sheila Kirby, Heather Barney and Hilary Darilek, all of RAND; and Scarlett Magee, a former RAND researcher.

RAND Education conducts research and analysis on a variety of topics, including school reform, educational assessment and accountability, and trends among teachers and teacher training.

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California students struggling to pay for tuition fees at college

BY MICHELLE LOCKE
Associated Press Writer

BERKELEY, Calif. — In 1960, California leaders pledged a tuition-free ride for state high school graduates with the smarts and gumption to pursue a degree at a public college or university.

Four decades later, it seems a distant promise.

This year, Nick Bolton, a freshman at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is working 30 hours a week selling washing machines to help foot a college bill of more than $6,000, a figure that has increased for four consecutive years and may well go up for a fifth year.

"It's a burden," said Bolton, 18. ``They just keep increasing the price and cutting the funding."

Recent fee increases at the 10-campus UC, the 23-campus California State University system and the state's 109 community colleges spring from a multi-billion-dollar state deficit. But they also are part of a longer trend that has seen the state swing away from its 45-year-old vision _ the Master Plan for Higher Education, which promised accessible and affordable college and has been lauded as a national model.

"We have built wonderful institutions and we're trying to hang on by our fingernails here to maintain that commitment to the master plan," said state Assemblywoman Carol Lui, D-La Canada-Flintridge and chairwoman of the Assembly's Committee on Higher Education. "But we are struggling without resources."

See COLLEGE COSTS, page 8

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STATE

Average year at college costs well over $20,000

COLLEGE COSTS, from page 7

In 1960, when the master plan was new, it cost $84 in "incidental fees" to attend UC. Today, the state still doesn't technically charge students tuition, but fees have mounted to the point where they are no longer incidental.

``We crossed that bridge a long time ago about whether it was going to be free or not," said Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in San Jose.

In a recent study, the center found that college is less affordable for most Americans than it was a decade ago.

Despite the hikes, California college administrators point out that the state's schools still compare favorably with the rest of the nation.

At UC, fees have increased about 60 percent over the past decade. They rose from about $5,200 (including miscellaneous campus fees) in 2002-03, to the present total of about $6,700 for a student with a full-time class load. UC officials said that is about $1,100 less than projected averages for comparable prominent public institutions in other states.

Still, there is concern that California isn't measuring up to its own standards.

Three decades ago, state funds comprised 41 percent of the general operating budget of UC, the system that includes the world-famous campuses of Berkeley and UCLA and serves about 200,000 students. This year, the total was 19 percent, said Jerry Kissel, UC's assistant vice chancellor of budget.

For Bolton, the numbers translated this way: He initially expected to have to come up with $19,000 to cover total costs of his freshman year. But as fees started to rise, he found he was going to need about $21,000.

Bolton, who has four siblings and whose single-parent father makes only about $40,000 a year, made up the difference by applying for eight or nine scholarships, winning two worth about $12,000.

The rest of the money he earns. He has seen others overwhelmed by debt and doesn't want to graduate with a massive loan hanging over his head.

Meanwhile, he's cramming as many courses in as he can, no easy task since his goal is a double major in business economics and communications.

``Because the price is so high, I can't take classes slower. I have to finish in four years," he said. ``That's a lot of pressure."

It costs less to go to CSU than UC, but fees at the larger system have followed the same upward trajectory, also rising about 60 percent over the past 10 years. As at UC, Cal State fees are increasing for 2005-06, to about $3,100, including mis-

See **COLLEGE COSTS**, page 9



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STATE

Community college costs up

COLLEGE COSTS, from page 8

cellaneous campus fees.

Meanwhile, community college fees have risen from $11 a unit two years ago to $26.

Bolton's sister, Lindsey, is on the receiving end of both the community college and CSU fee hikes. Currently a student at Santa Rosa Junior College, she is expecting to attend CSU next year.

Like her brother, Lindsey has some scholarships and a job, two in her case. But school sometimes seems like a nonstop financial drain, from the $90 she recently paid for a textbook to the cost of the parking pass that doesn't guarantee parking.

``It comes straight out of your pocket," she says. ``It's really frustrating. The only way to really get a good job is to have a good education. They make that so hard, it's no wonder so many people give up or just drop out."

The latest fee hikes are part of a six-year pact worked out between the CSU and UC systems and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who ousted former Gray Davis in 2003 on a promise to bring order to state finances.

Critics say school officials should have fought for more funding.

Administrators say cuts had to be made in light of the state's multibillion-dollar deficit. They note that financial aid has increased to help the poorest students and say the pact was a good deal because it provided predictability and the promise of increased state funding in future years.

``I think given the state's fiscal crisis, that's a pretty powerful statement, that's a pretty powerful commitment from this governor," said H.D. Palmer, deputy director for Schwarzenegger's Department of Finance.

Under the pact, UC and CSU undergraduate fees could rise by as much as 10 percent for 2006-07. Officials will get a clearer idea of whether that's likely to happen when the governor releases his proposed budget next month.

The state is projected to have a budget shortfall of $8.1 billion next year.

Fading support for higher education began long before the Schwarzenegger administration.

One reason for the dwindling funds is Proposition 13, the 1978 voter-approved property tax revolt, said UC's Kissel. Another reason is that just as college-age baby boomers fueled the burst of higher education spending in the 1960s, the now aging boomers are eating up health dollars.

The bottom line is that there is less state taxpayer support for higher education nationally and in California, Kissel said. Meanwhile, a second wave of teenagers, the boomers' children, is rising. UC alone expects 60,000 more students between 1999 and 2010.

That makes the current budget crisis much more acute than previous cycles of good-time spending followed by belt-tightening, said Callan, of the San Jose policy center.

"We've never had this kind of perfect storm situation, where you've got more

See COLLEGE COSTS, page 10

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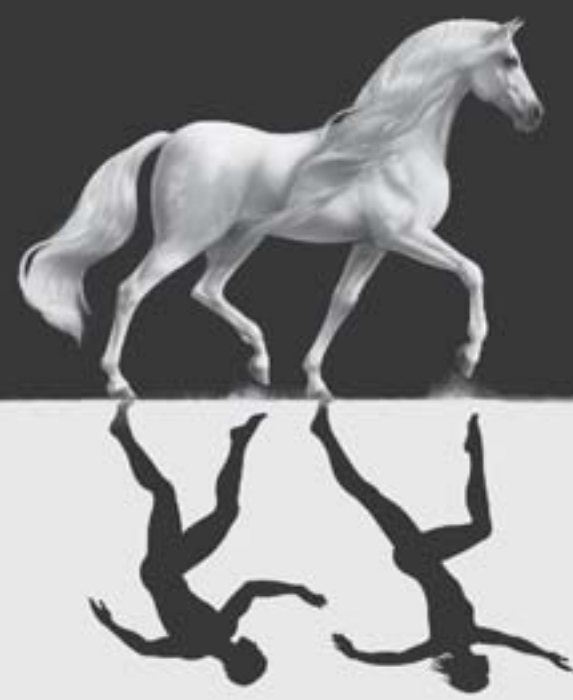
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STATE

Officials worried about higher college costs

COLLEGE COSTS, from page 9

kids graduating (high school) as the budget gets tighter," he said.

Forty years ago, the investment in higher education paid off, producing an educated work force that fueled the economic engines of Silicon Valley, Hollywood and the biotechnology industry.

An educated work force is even more important in today's knowledge-based economies, where work can easily be farmed out to other states and countries.

"Do we really think that we can compete against people who will take less money if our people have less education and less training?" Callan said. "This is a very high stakes game."

For students, the stakes are personal.

"It's horrible," said Teresita Alvarez, a UC Berkeley student who feels conflicted about recruiting students from her low-income high school in Los Angeles, knowing the kind of costs they'll face.

Alvarez, a senior, expects to graduate with $10,000 debt, despite winning several scholarships.

"If we keep looking at the short-term goals that we might achieve through these increases, we lose sight of the long-term goal, which is to have a population of Californians who are educated," she said.

A look at public higher education in California

By The Associated Press

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA:
Number of campuses: 10
Estimated enrollment: 208,000
Average annual fees: $6,769.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY:
Number of campuses: 23
Estimated enrollment: 409,000
Average annual fees: $3,102.

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
Number of campuses: 109
Estimated enrollment: 2.5 million
Cost per unit: $26.

Figures are for the 2005-2006 school year and are average total costs that include miscellaneous campus fees, which add about $600 a year to the university student fee.



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INTERNATIONAL

Migrants' faith plays large role in trips to U.S.

BY ANABELLE GARAY
Associated Press Writer

ALTAR, Mexico — Along a northbound dirt road, a young couple clad in jeans and T-shirts jumps out of an idling van and walks toward the path's edge, making for a white concrete box with an ornate wrought iron cross perched on top.

Dozens of candles — some lit, some melted, some broken, some dirtied — are crammed inside the three-foot-high makeshift altar, along with statues of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Jude, patron saint of lost causes.

As the couple kneels before the display with bowed heads, a little boy runs out of the van and kisses the ground.

The humble altar some 60 miles south of the Mexico-Arizona border serves as one of the last few places where migrants worship before being shuttled to spots where they will attempt to slip illegally into the United States on foot.

On their trek for economic survival, migrants traveling through the treacherous Arizona desert also find themselves embarking on a religious journey. Many rely on faith to sustain them through the trip's perils, stopping to pray at icons or lighting votive candles to remember those who died along the way.

Before jumping aboard moving cargo trains during the trip north, many of the Central American migrants 29-year-old Carlos Enrique Cano Vanega was traveling with would pray by the side of the tracks.

"We began to entrust ourselves to God and asked that he would keep us safe," said Cano, a Honduran man who had traveled to this Mexican community recently in preparation for an attempted trip to the United States.

Typically, people seek spiritual comfort during troubled times. And culturally, Latin Americans identify themselves as religious, even if they don't attend services regularly, said Jacqueline Hagan, co-director for the Center for Immigration Research at the University of Houston.

But in the case of poor immigrants, reliance on faith is even heavier because they have virtually no other resources, Hagan said.

"The only recourse they have is to turn to religion and that's all they really have on the road as well," she said.

Religious symbols and shrines can be spotted along the paths taken by such migrants, from their hometowns to the border and beyond.

Before embarking on a trek into the United States, indigenous residents of the Guatemalan highlands seek counsel about whether to make the trip and when to go from evangelical pastors or the Black Christ, a dark-skinned depiction of Jesus common in parts of Latin America, Hagan said.

"Religion is their spiritual passport in the absence of authorization," she said. "They get sanctioned by God to do this."

While on the road, some turn to biblical passages that mirror their travels, such as those citing how the Israelites wandered through the desert under God's guidance.

For Cano and others on the train, reading the New Testament to each other brought comfort.

"You feel something, because you feel safer than being out there" without anything to sustain you, he said at a migrant shelter in Altar, a city that serves as a popular staging area for migrants planning to cross the border at Arizona.

Closer to the international line in Tijuana, Mexico, migrants pray at a shrine dedicated to Juan Soldado, a folk hero said to perform miracles for migrants but not sanctioned by the Catholic Church. According to legend, Juan Soldado was a Mexican soldier who was wrongly accused of rape and murder.

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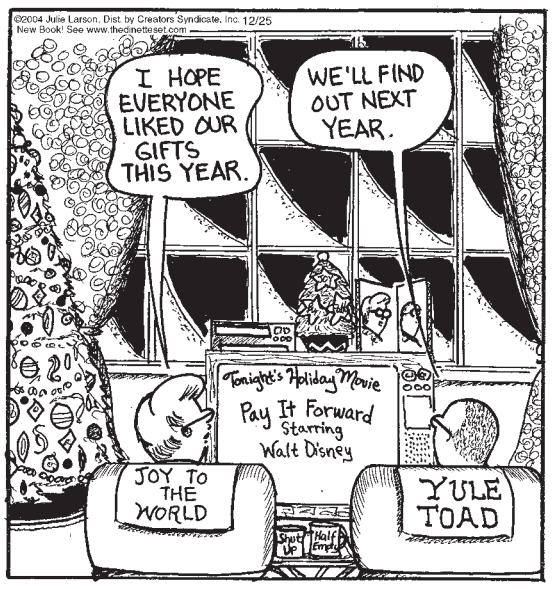
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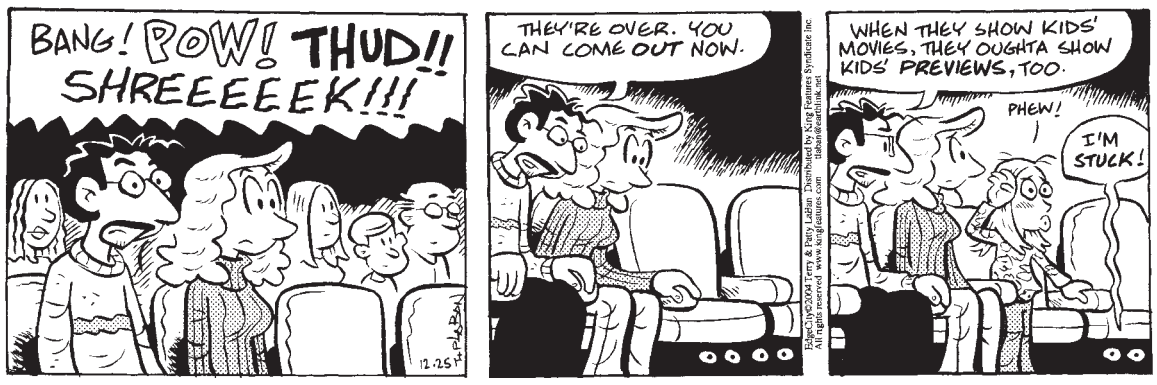
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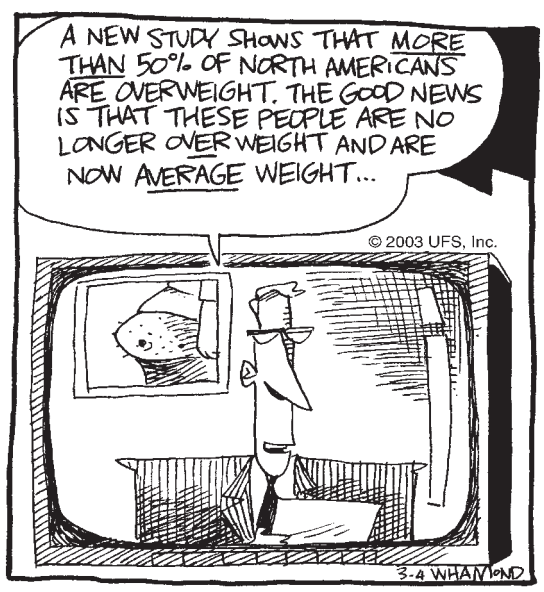
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19 Very bright
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26 Turns right
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33 Ohio city
34 Kind of basin
35 Pay phone part
36 Easter event
37 Hostess Maxwell
38 Left
39 Not as much
40 Frisco team

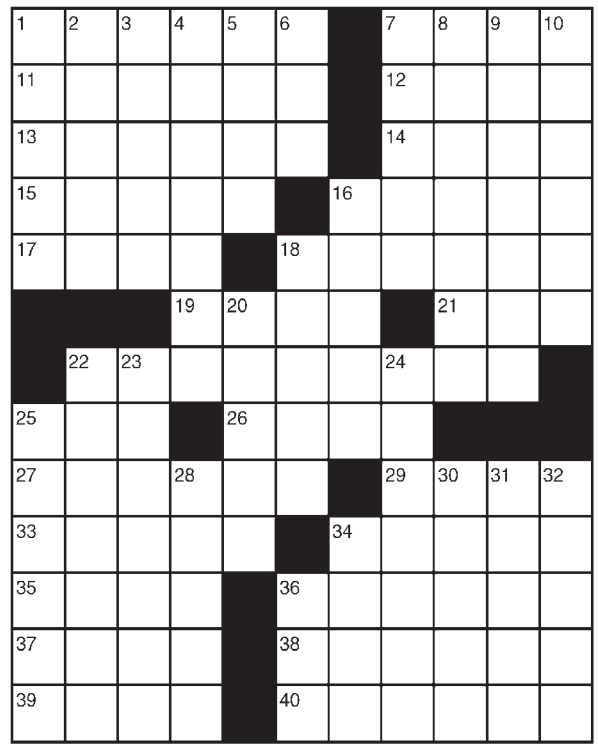
DOWN

1 Blue character
2 Stand in the studio
3 Detached
4 Massa-chusetts peninsula
5 Has debts
6 Take the title
7 Talks drunkenly
8 Bluenose
9 Apple pie order
10 Monarchs
16 Shilling change
18 "The Highway man" poet
20 Perime-ters
22 Dumas heroine
23 Puzzled
24 Ache battler
25 Ginger-bread eater
28 Greek letters
30 "It's —!" ("You're on!")
31 Tall boot
32 Snow gliders
34 City car
36 Signing need

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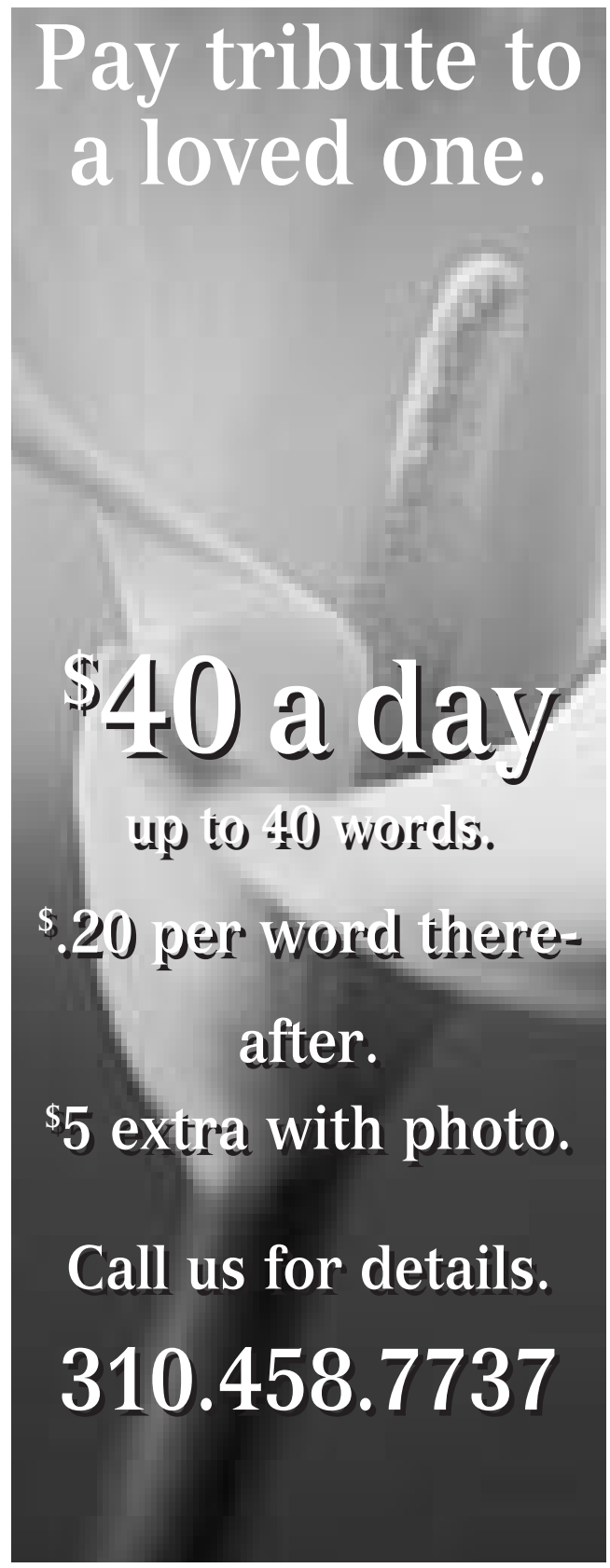
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Beckhams hold lavish party for sons' christening

By The Associated Press

SAWBRIDGEWORTH, England — Pop star Elton John and other celebrities attended a lavish party held by soccer star David Beckham and his wife, Victoria, for the christening of their two sons.

The ceremony for Brooklyn, 5, and Romeo, 2, was held Thursday on the grounds of the Beckhams' Hertfordshire mansion north of London, which has been dubbed "Beckingham Palace."

The christenings were conducted by the Rev. William Paul Colton, a bishop in the Anglican Church of Ireland, who had married the couple five years ago.

John arrived with his partner, David Furnish, in a silver Rolls-Royce. The ceremony was closed to the media, but reports said John would become the godfather of the two boys.

Other guests included actress Elizabeth Hurley and former Spice Girls Geri Halliwell, Emma Bunton, Melanie Brown and Melanie Chisholm.

Victoria Beckham, also a former Spice Girl, is expecting the couple's third child in March. She recently announced that she would give up her music career to focus on being a fashion designer.

Aerial photographs showed a private chapel that had been built for the occasion. To get to the chapel, guests walked past fake ruins modeled on the crumbling Irish castle where the couple wed in 1999.

The Beckhams are Britain's pre-eminent celebrity couple _ he the England soccer captain with a flamboyant fashion sense; she the former Posh Spice with an unrivaled flair for self-promotion.

Their marriage came under the spotlight earlier this year when David Beckham's former personal assistant Rebecca Loos claimed that she and the Real Madrid star had had a 10-day affair.

He dismissed the claim as "ludicrous."

LOS ANGELES — Ben Stiller can't believe Barbra Streisand agreed to play his mother in the new comedy "Meet the Fockers."

"Nobody thought it would actually happen and it did, which was incredible," Stiller told AP Radio in an interview. "She was so cool and funny, and it was great to see her have a chance to sort of go back to that comedy that she's done."

Streisand won an Oscar for her role in 1968's "Funny Girl."

Stiller says the 62-year-old actress was his dream choice, but he never thought she'd agree to do the movie, a sequel to 2000's "Meet the Parents."

In the new film, Stiller, who plays Greg Focker, and his fiancee (Teri Polo) are preparing to wed, so it's time for her parents — the reserved Byrnes (Robert De Niro and Blythe Danner) — to meet the irrepressibly liberal Fockers (Streisand and Dustin Hoffman).

Stiller said he wasn't as nervous around De Niro as he was while shooting the original movie.

"The first time around I was just so sort of intimidated and sort of like you know, in awe," he said. "And this time around I was intimidated and in awe ... but at least I'd done it once before and so it was slightly more loose."

LOS ANGELES — Bill Murray's choice of swimwear in his new movie leaves little to the imagination. But the star of "The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou" says he wasn't embarrassed to be seen in a tiny bathing suit.

"Being in a Speedo with other men in Speedos is, you know, is like you're on a swimming team," he told reporters recently, according to AP Radio. "It's the other men that are not in Speedos that are the problem because they're kind of going like, `Can you get a load of the guy in the Speedo?"'

Wes Anderson's gleeful takeoff on undersea adventure movies stars Murray as the Jacques-Yves Cousteau-like explorer of the film's title.

The 54-year-old actor said he didn't see his character as being physically vain.

"I like to say I made the acting choice to have a little bit of a belly. I could've gotten really in shape, but I didn't think that Steve Zissou would be a guy who'd be like completely buff," he said. "I actually had to get a little bit out of shape."

Several Anderson regulars are back for the film, including Owen Wilson and Anjelica Huston.

NEW YORK — It will be Jessica Lange as the domineering mother, Amanda Wingfield, in a Broadway revival of Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie," opening March 15 at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

Lange has been working her way through some of the great roles in modern American theater, having played Blanche Du Bois in Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire" in both New York and London and Mary Tyrone in an acclaimed London revival of Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night."

Also signed for "Menagerie" is Dallas Roberts, who will portray her rebellious son, Tom, a role modeled after Williams himself. Roberts is now co-starring off-Broadway with Sam Shepard in "A Number," Caryl Churchill's play about cloning.

Sarah Paulson has been mentioned for the role of the daughter, Laura, although her casting could not be confirmed by Philip Rinaldi, a spokesman for the show. No casting has been announced for the role of the Gentleman Caller.

Preview performances of "The Glass Menagerie," which will be directed by David Leveaux, will begin in late February, Rinaldi said Wednesday.

