

Santa Monica Daily Press

December 31, 2005-January 1, 2006

A newspaper with issues

Volume 5, Issue 42

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

3 4 20 39 40
Meganumber: 3
Jackpot: \$52 Million

FANTASY 5

1 11 24 29 30

DAILY 3

Daytime: 2 7 1
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1st: 01 Gold Rush
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

Incomplete Thinking: Michael Drennon, 26, was charged with bank robbery in Bensalem, Pa., in October after accidentally dropping his pay stub at the scene, even though he had cleverly blotted out his name and address with a black indelible marker. (Bensalem's director of public safety said the stub was easy to read: "We just (held) it under a light.") (2) Louis Jasick, 34, and a friend, involved in a scavenger hunt, knocked on the back door of the police station in Fruitport Township, Mich., in November to ask if officers would please help with the next item on their list and pose for a photograph of a cop eating a doughnut. The officers obliged but one of them recognized Jasick from a recent felony warrant and arrested him.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Horse sense is the thing a horse has which keeps it from betting on people."

W. C. FIELDS

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2005 YEAR IN REVIEW



A year of change will bring more in '06

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Mark 2005 as yet another year for Santa Monica's history books. The past year has been full of twists and turns, with good and bad news hitting Santa Monicans regularly.

A double homicide — the result of gang violence — sent shock waves through an eastside neighborhood. The death of a Santa Monica Police officer fighting in

Iraq drew mourners from throughout the country.

Two sex scandals involving adult instructors at Santa Monica High School and teenagers came to a close in 2005. And this summer, local police announced that Santa Monica could be the target of potential terrorists, thereby justifying increased security around the downtown and pier areas at the cost of at least \$2 million.

Plans to build skyscrapers in downtown Santa Monica were scrapped by a mall developer. One of the oldest businesses in Santa Monica closed up shop, while one of the largest companies in California decided to move a major portion of its operations here.

And one of the city's most powerful influences, City Manager Susan McCarthy, retired, leaving a legacy of public assets like Virginia Avenue Park and the new library. City Hall also made an unprecedented move by hiring a "homeless czar" to answer a public outcry over the growing number of residentially-challenged individuals living on the streets of Santa Monica.

Santa Monica College hired a new president, who many hope will have better luck than other college leaders in fueling a positive relationship with City Hall over the institution's growth in the city.

The past year's happenings appear to be a prelude of what's to come. With new leaders at the helm to tackle the homeless problem and top officials making strides to end violence in the community through gang summits, change is in the air for 2006.

The Santa Monica Daily Press

revisits the top news stories of 2005. Here they are in random order:

SANTA MONICA POLICE OFFICER DIES IN WAR

Local police officer Rick Crocker, 39, was a 10-year veteran of the SMPD and a major in the United States Marines Corps. On his second mission as a reservist,

Crocker was killed on May 26 in a rocket-propelled grenade attack in the province of Al-Anbar.

In June, more than 1,200 people gathered at St. Monica's Church to pay their final respects to Crocker. In addition to Crocker's family and friends, the turnout of mourn-

See YEAR IN REVIEW, page 10

LOCAL

Makin' it happen

By Daily Press staff

SM PIER — Everyone needs a push when it comes to New Year's resolutions.

And at the Santa Monica Pier on Sunday, New Year's Day, there will be dozens of people on hand to guide you toward success for 2006.

Rain or shine, the pier is hosting the first annual Resolution Festival, which is the brainchild of Lawrence Cohen, whose resolution for 2005 was to take more risks.

Cohen is self-funding the Resolution Festival. He is taking the financial risk, believing that offering a venue and support network will pay off for hundreds, if not thousands of people.

The day will start with a 9 a.m. ceremony, followed at 10 a.m. by a Soft Sand Run, which will be led by Gary Deckman, who last year lost 71 pounds on

See RESOLUTION FEST, page 15



Nicky Five Aces/Five Aces Photo



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

(Top) Santa Monica Police Chief James T. Butts Jr. says good-bye to fallen soldier and SMPD officer Rick Crocker at his June funeral.

(Bottom) Local police scan a car for bombs this summer after possible terrorists sighted at the pier put authorities on high alert.

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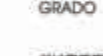
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HOROSCOPE

Heat up the night, Gem

Santa Monica Daily Press

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)
★★★★ A new person or invitation might have you adjusting your plans, as well as others'. A partner in particular wants your attention. Spend some quality time talking about the past year and the new year. Tonight: Celebrate in grand style.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ You find that everyone is finally calm and content. Your dearest friend or loved one is ready to discuss a change between you. Others seek you out to wish you a grand New Year. Let events and people flow. Tonight: Make sure you have music around you, not just at midnight.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ Plan on a cozy day with those you care about. You don't need and might not like lots of fireworks and people. You might be more into the quality of your interactions and relationships. Enjoy those around you. Tonight: Heat up the night.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ You are up for celebrations and many people. The bigger the gathering, the happier you are. You might want to throw your own spontaneous party. A child or loved one is unusually adorable. Tonight: Party the New Year in.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ You might want to play today low-key. Get together with loved ones and family at your home. Make it easy and uncomplicated. Let everyone bring a favorite junk food to share. Have fun. Tonight: Feel good at home with loved ones.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Though very rational, the lover of life emerges once more. You find that your company or companion delights in the vivacious and loving you. Help make others comfortable. Your mood is contagious. Tonight: Love the year in.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★ Take a hint from Leo's message. You could be far more tired or dragged down than you realize. Spend a little to make yourself comfortable. You won't be happy if you have to go far from home. Adapt plans. Tonight: Reflect on what you want in 2006.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ You don't need to be at a big celebration; as you might already know, you are entering a banner year. Make calls and wish those in your life a special New Year. Your thoughtfulness is appreciated. Tonight: With a couple of friends.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ You might like hiding away by yourself or with one other person. You want to be quiet and reflective right now. Besides, you are enjoying your downtime. Don't worry about feeling like a recluse. This is not a long-term situation. You will be friendly soon enough. Tonight: Make sure you have bubbles.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ You are in prime shape as you christen the New Year. Stop and visit with friends during the day. In fact, what starts as a quiet get-together could be expanded into a very happy celebration. Smile. You get what you want this year. Tonight: You are the lead player.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★ Read Sagittarius and you might decide to find a Sagittarius to team up with and quietly celebrate the New Year. You might be unusually quiet right now. Don't forget to touch base with a parent or older relative. Tonight: Vanish.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Breeze around with friends, making sure you don't forget anyone, especially that shy person. Your thoughtfulness makes a difference. Share good news. A trip might be in the offing. Make a wish a reality this next year. Tonight: Certainly a party animal.



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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Santa Monicans opened their hearts and wallets in '05

By Daily Press staff

2005 turned out to be a year of disasters and overwhelming generosity thanks to the good citizens of Santa Monica who contributed millions of dollars to disaster relief.

Santa Monicans were already contributing in January of 2005 substantial sums of money to help mitigate a disaster that happened half way around the world. The Dec. 26, 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami killed an estimated 275,000 people and destroyed billions of dollars in property in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and other countries bordering the Indian Ocean.

Contributions to the American Red Cross of Santa Monica for tsunami disaster relief alone totaled nearly \$1.9 million, according to officials. Just under \$700,000 was raised by direct donations to the chapter. Another \$1.2 million was donated through a Web site and toll free phone lines operated by the national American Red Cross from persons living in Santa Monica zip codes.

In August and September of 2005, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita slammed into the Gulf Coast, devastating parts of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. Many people found themselves with little choice but to relocate out of the disaster areas. Many of those families headed to the West Coast looking for help, housing and a chance to start over.

“The Santa Monica Red Cross alone serviced 256 families representing 423 individuals,” said Robert Chatman, director of disaster services at the American Red Cross of Santa Monica. “Seventy-nine families were housed in hotels and motels while many others found accommodations with friends and families.

“The families living in hotels and motels are for the most part receiving financial assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency and will continue to do so through Feb. 7, 2006. Some families have found more permanent housing here. An estimated couple dozen school age children from the disaster areas are enrolled in Santa Monica schools.”

The Santa Monica Red Cross disbursed nearly \$100,000 in direct financial aid and paid services to displaced persons who had applied for help in Santa Monica.

According to the Pacific Service Region of the American Red Cross, more than 2,700 displaced families and individuals received services from the Red Cross and local churches in Los Angeles County in the months after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the South.

The Santa Monica chapter instituted a series of basic Red Cross disaster relief classes to prepare individuals who might want to volunteer in the disaster area or pick up practical knowledge of how to deal with a local disaster if one should occur. About 1,300 people completed courses immediately after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Ninety-two trained individuals were sent from the Santa Monica chapter into the disaster theater.

“Volunteers were deployed for a minimum of two weeks in a number of Southern states and worked in food services, shelter management, logistics, family service, public relations and other activities,” Chatman said.

The Red Cross was not alone in experiencing the generosity of Santa Monicans.

Faith based organizations and other charitable organizations also raised money and goods for hurricane victims. School children, civic groups and even the city of Santa Monica itself got into the spirit of giving and provided financial aid, equipment and services to organizations and municipalities along the Gulf including New Orleans.

“We are overwhelmed by the generosity of people and companies in the Santa Monica area,” said John Pacheco, executive director of the American Red Cross of Santa Monica. “Although our chapter is a relatively small in size, our contributions to both the tsunami and hurricane disaster relief efforts have attracted national recognition as far as how much help we provided. And, it is all because of the generosity of the citizens of this community.”



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SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS

DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM

BEAR MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:00am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 8	LIFTS OPEN 9/12
CONDITIONS: Machine Groomed, Frozen Granular, Thin Cover				

JUNE MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 24" - 36"	LIFT HOURS 8:30am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 35	LIFTS OPEN 4/6
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed, Obstacles				

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 72" - 96"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4 pm	RUNS OPEN 150	LIFTS OPEN 22/26
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed				

MOUNTAIN HIGH

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 8"-10"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 10:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 9	LIFTS OPEN 8/16
CONDITIONS: Hard Packed, Frozen Granular, Thin Cover				

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 0"-1"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 0	LIFTS OPEN 0
CONDITIONS: N/A				

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 6:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 8	LIFTS OPEN 8/13
CONDITIONS: Machine Groomed, Frozen Granular, Thin Cover				

SNOW VALLEY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 9:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 5	LIFTS OPEN 5/11
CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed				

CONDITIONS

WATER TEMP: 59°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (5-10 FT)

Saturday the swell should back down to around head high with standouts seeing sets running 2-3 feet overhead. Sunday is looking like a head high NW day as well with pluses running 2-3 feet overhead at times, but with less power as the lagging periods in the 13-second range finally arrive from our recent swell.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

Significant NW swell Monday, but...

Tracking smaller, yet notable NW swell for Jan. 5.

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA



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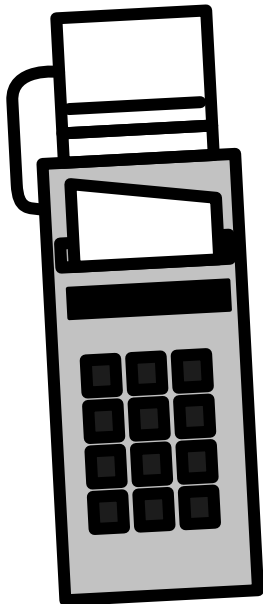
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RESPONSES ON PAGE 4.**

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The QLine

ROOM FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT WITHIN CITY HALL

This past week, Q-line asked:
"What should the City Council's resolutions be for 2006?"

Here are your responses:

☉ "Top among the city administration's priorities for 2006 should be clean up this filthy, disgusting city. The sidewalks and alleys all around town are a disgrace. In conjunction with this, get the bums and all the garbage they drag all around town and leave all over town, out of here. Have this wonderful, new homeless czar siphon the money away from the useless homeless programs and put it in a general fund to reopen and build facilities for these indigents away from the citizens and working areas. Second, please try to get the traffic flow right. Third, straighten out the parking mess. These are the three primary things as far as I am concerned and add to that the overbuilding. It's a nightmare already."

☉ "What should the City Council's resolutions be for 2006 be? Well, that's simple. Same as everybody else, lose weight, trim down and they can start by foregoing any new taxes, any new bonds, and any new fees. They could also exercise a little bit. By that I mean exercise restraint and just shut up."

☉ "Santa Monica is a city that will never be finished. I cannot remember a day that I have been in residence here that I have not had to circumvent one construction site or another while driving. Out with the old, in with the new is always the plan of the day. I suspect it will not change."

☉ "The City Council should make four resolutions. The first one is to get rid of all these drunken bums that are ruining Santa Monica. The second one is to get rid of all these drunken bums that are ruining Santa Monica. The third is to get rid of all these drunken bums that are ruining Santa Monica. And the fourth is if they refuse to do the first three they should all resign immediately. We don't need any of them."

☉ "The City Council's resolution should be to preserve rent-controlled, low-rent apartments for wealthy tenants like us. My wife and I earn over \$10,000 a month and pay just \$240 a month for our two-bedroom apartment. That's a 50 percent discount from market value. Forcing our landlords to subsidize our rent allows us to drive new cards, take vacations in Europe, and eat out at expensive restaurants. So what if the landlord has to pay market rent for everything he purchases, we like renting his apartment at a 50 percent discount."

☉ "Yes, I think it would be really nice if the City Council would obey their own strict rules. Years ago my husband tried to build a beautiful project and it was denied and I see now that with these (expletive) in the picture, they just do whatever they want to do even if it doesn't make sense and build that hideous new library when the other one would have been just fine. It's about time that we got a new City Council with the exception of certain key individuals like Bobby Shriver."

☉ "First and foremost, they should resolve to go into rehab to try and cure their addiction to squandering public money. They need a 12-step program. Step one could be a group session where each council member states, 'I am a spendaholic' and then goes onto explain why the construction of a massive \$50 million library, which was not needed, was more important than neighborhood plight such as the crumbling alleys that need resurfacing. In step two, they would need to face their compulsion to erect more and more street signs and roadway obstacles so detrimental to traffic flow. There's no room here to discuss further steps in their therapy except to suggest they try to analyze why for 25 years they have chosen to demonize and harass the

very people who produce the revenue that feeds their addictions."

☉ "The first should be the resignation of the entire City Council because of their utter failure to effectively lead with sound policies instead of political correctness and feel-good attitudes. Next, no building over three stories should be built in this town. That's going to be very hard to do with the Rand property development of 365 housing units of which 51 percent are low income, then 44 percent of those are for people outside of Santa Monica. Just like the school district, 20 percent or 3,000 students are from outside the city. No homes or education for people not from Santa Monica. Of course, you will have to give up the federal and state money. Next, less businesses means more parking and less traffic congestion for locals. Again, this means less tax money for social do-gooder programs. Next, enforce all bum laws. Give the \$200,000 for the homeless czar, plus all other taxpayer homeless funds, eliminate taxpayer funding for the parasitic nonprofits dealing with the bums and give it to the Salvation Army and downtown LA. That takes care of about 90 percent of that problem. Next, look at other beach communities: Laguna, Manhattan Beach, parts of Newport, Malibu, Pacific Palisades to give the council a better idea that simple may be better than more. Last, we should not feel guilty about living and working in Santa Monica. That we can't and should not have to try and save the world. People outside the city need to be responsible for their own lives."

☉ "One of the items I wish the City Council would work on would be to stop the use of handheld cell phones while driving. There are earpieces that people can use for safer driving. Even worse is to ban a cell phone in one hand and a cigarette in the other."

☉ "I think that Santa Monica City Council should, A: Certainly be more strict on affordable housing, they should really go for it, they shouldn't put up with any of the bologna that these developers put out about hardship exemptions and in lieu fees or any of that stuff and have the low-income housing and the affordable housing where the people are and are being kicked out of their homes because of the inflationary rents. The other thing that I would hope for, for Santa Monica is that A: They do not do any development on that Santa Monica Place monstrosity. It's already a monstrosity, why make it a bigger one? Number two, if you're going to plant trees, wouldn't it be nice to plant Jacaranda trees? They are so beautiful and turn such lovely colors in February. Number three, please save City Hall the way it is. It is an absolute jewel of art deco and I hope that they don't do anything to it. I love the sustainable gardens that they have there, such as the desert and California friendly plants. I think that ought to be even used more and I even love the rose gardens. I love those rose gardens in front of Santa Monica City Hall and please, please don't destroy it and don't 'change it for the better.' It is lovely, it is a jewel of art moderne and art deco the way it is. Please keep it. Please, please keep it. And also, if you could do something to solve the traffic problems, that would be lovely. And bless the Big Blue Bus, which I love very much. Thank you Big Blue Bus and thank you Santa Monica. You are wonderful, I just hope you keep on being wonderful in the New Year."

"We need to ask City Council to enforce the leaf blower law. Those things do create a lot of noise and pollution and are unpleasant and there are a lot of them around town that are operating."

OPINION

Merry Christmas and bah humbug



MODERN TIMES

BY LLOYD GARVER

As we move towards New Year's, I'm happy that we can put the Great Issue of The Day behind us — the proper way to phrase holiday greetings. Some people were irate that on President Bush's official Christmas card, the word "Christmas" was absent. He and Mrs. Bush wished everybody a "Happy Holiday." People don't get mad at him over the war, the economy, or the response to Katrina, but they're upset about "Happy Holiday?"

Personally, I'm pleased to receive any good wishes from anybody. I'm not offended if someone wishes me a specific or a generic happy holiday. Also, here's one thing the "great includer" does that is actually inclusive, and instead of everybody congratulating him, some people are angry. I like that he didn't single out one religion. I like that he was sensitive to the fact that some of the recipients of the card who don't celebrate Christmas might enjoy feeling more included in the greeting.

But Bill O'Reilly, Jerry Falwell, and some other non-inclusivites don't see it that way. They see it as an assault on Christmas. O'Reilly warned that "Christmas is under siege," and Falwell said that Americans who celebrate Christmas are "facing persecution." Do you think this could be a tad bit of an overreaction to a greeting card?

The other day I saw a bumper sticker on a car that read, "It's OK to say 'Merry Christmas.'" I agree. It's also OK not to say, "Merry Christmas." If this woman keeps her sticker on the car all year, will she be offended if I don't say, "Merry Christmas" to her in July?

Some on the far right organized boycotts of stores that dropped the word "Christmas" from their holiday advertising. This seems a bit ironic since usually people complain about the over-commercialization of Christmas, and now these people want businesses more involved with a religious holiday.

The second irony in all this is to somehow feel that the omission of the C-word means that President Bush is anti-Christmas, and therefore anti-Christian. Has there ever been a president who has talked more about his religious philosophy? Has there ever been a president who has courted the religious right more vigorously? President Bush, anti-Christmas? Humbug!

On the Bush card, there were two dogs and a cat on the White House lawn. Why the discrepancy? Why only one cat? Is

Bush ashamed to admit that he's a cat owner? Is this part of the general assault against cat owners? Because of the insidious pressure of dog owners, will cats be eliminated from the card altogether next year?

It's hard not to laugh at all this, but there's a serious side, too. Some extremists are blaming the alleged attack on Christmas on liberals, Jews and Jewish liberals. There's more than a hint of anti-Semitism — and probably some anti-Muslim feelings as well — in these people's tirades. And, as usual, it's baseless. Jews or liberals certainly don't control the courts that decide what's OK and what's not in terms of public displays. They don't control the big corporations that own the stores that are trying to draw customers of all faiths, either. Liberals telling Wal-Mart what to do? Double Humbug!

So, the biggest irony is the spreading of all this venom by those who claim to love Christmas. I'm far from an expert on Christmas, but I've seen all the old movies. And I can't imagine anything less Christmassy than feeling anger and hatred towards those who are different from you or disagree with you.

So, there is no "attack on Christmas." Oh, sure, political correctness sometimes goes too far, but when it does, maybe you can just laugh at it rather than getting mad. I'm still going to call an evergreen decorated with ornaments and a star on top a "Christmas tree" even if some people don't want me to.

Christmas wasn't ruined this year by any anti-Christmas forces. Nobody stopped people from celebrating it in their church, in their home, or wherever they wanted to celebrate it. Nobody stopped those neighbors of yours from putting up too many ornaments. Nobody stopped anyone from spending more than they had planned on gifts. And certainly, nobody stopped the joy on a child's face as he saw the gifts under the tree Christmas morning.

My only objection to the Bush card is this: He sent out more than 1.4 million of them, and I didn't get one. Considering how often I mention him in this column, you'd think the least he could have done was send me a card.

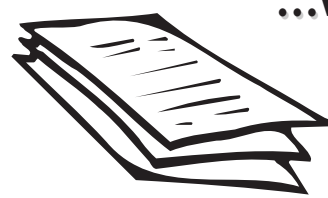
And now, I hope I'm not being too generic when I say, "Happy New Year to everybody."

(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 a weekly column for SportsLine.com. He can be reached at smdp@lloydgarvermoderntimes.com.)

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Santa Monica Daily Press

STATE



STATE BRIEFS

Shoplifter uses kids as a ploy

By The Associated Press

GLENDALE, Calif. — A father of three allegedly used his three kids as diversions so he and a partner could steal \$20,000 worth of athletic equipment from Montrose area sporting goods stores.

Gilbert Miranda, 44, and alleged accomplice Julio Morataya, 23, both of Pacoima, were arrested Tuesday and booked for investigation of burglary, possession of stolen property, possession of drugs and contributing to the delinquency of minors.

Police said hallucinogenic PCP and stolen merchandise was found in the suspects' car.

Miranda's children — ages 12, 16 and 17 — were released to a relative and investigators said Wednesday charges wouldn't be pursued against them.

About 40 aluminum baseball bats retailing for as much as \$300 each, some 40 softball gloves valued at up to \$80 each and dozens of athletic shorts, shirts and caps were seized at the Miranda and Morataya homes, police said.

The merchandise was stolen in recent weeks from Big 5, Landry's Sporting Goods and other local shops, Sgt. Ernie Garcia said. Investigators said the youngsters asked questions that took employees to other parts of the store while Miranda and Morataya looted the place.

"It's not unusual. We've seen this throughout the years where they use kids as a distraction and frequent the same stores," Garcia said. "They hit the stores a couple of times, get comfortable with the setting and keep going there until they get caught."

Machete-wielding enforcer nabbed by feds

By The Associated Press

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — Two Guatemalans described as machete-wielding "enforcers" at a downtown home used as an illegal immigrant smuggling operation drop house were arrested by federal agents.

Twenty-five immigrants from Ecuador, El Salvador and Guatemala — warehoused in two locked, cramped bedrooms until relatives paid the smugglers' fees — were held captive for weeks in the home, said Virginia Kice, spokeswoman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Captives were fed just once a day, Kice said.

Rodolfo Miguel Alvarez-Mendoza, 20, and Carlos Andres-Antonio, 19, were booked for investigation of knowingly and intentionally concealing and harboring illegal immigrants, Kice said. The men, arrested during a Wednesday morning raid, allegedly acted as guards.

Investigators tracked the smugglers to the Brockton Avenue house after a Salvadoran woman's family reported that she had been kidnapped, Kice said. The woman's family paid the smugglers \$5,000 up front, but after smugglers brought the woman to Riverside, they demanded an additional \$5,000 for her release, Kice said.

"It happens all the time," she said. The Los Angeles area is becoming a hub for such drop houses thanks to easy access to transportation and proximity to the border.

Molester sent up river

By The Associated Press

TORRANCE, Calif. — A man who sexually molested the 4-year-old foster daughter he eventually adopted was sentenced to nearly 19 years in prison.

Jurors convicted Manuel Topete, 42, on one count of continuous sexual abuse for the five years he molested the girl in their Harbor City, Perris and Lomita homes during the early- and mid-1990s.

Topete, who was sentenced Thursday, also pleaded no contest to a drug possession charge and an allegation that he was arrested on that case while out on bail on the sexual assault case. The drug charge added two years and eight months to Topete's sentence.



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Few expatriate Mexicans seek absentee ballots for presidential elections

BY PETER PRENGAMAN

Associated Press Writer

LYNWOOD, Calif. — Luis del Angel Garcia perks up as the first person in an hour approaches his information booth to ask about voting in the 2006 Mexican presidential election.

But like millions of other Mexican citizens living in the United States, the man has no voter card and can't return to Mexico to get one because he's in this country illegally. Without the card, he can't apply for an absentee ballot.

That dynamic is threatening to scuttle the first-ever attempt by Mexico to let expatriates vote.

With two weeks left before the Jan. 15 deadline to apply for absentee ballots, just over 8,000 Mexicans in the United States — about two-tenths of 1 percent of those eligible — have filed the necessary paperwork.

"People want to vote, but the Mexican government has put up obstacles that make it almost impossible," said Garcia, who runs a volunteer booth at a plaza in this heavily Hispanic Los Angeles suburb.

The approximately 11 million Mexicans in this country include more than 4 million eligible voters, according to the Mexican government. They represent a potentially huge bloc that could sway the July 2 vote — the first since Vicente Fox won the presidency in 2000, breaking the Institutional Revolutionary Party's 71-year hold on power.

Mexican law prevents Fox from seeking another term. Former Mexico City Mayor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador had been the race's front-runner, though recent polls show the race narrowing to a near-tie with candidates from Fox's conservative National Action Party and the Institutional Revolutionary Party.

The expatriate voting law passed in June was widely interpreted as recognition of the billions of dollars pumped into the national economy when expatriates send money home to relatives.

Mexican officials insist tough regulations are necessary to ensure a clean election. They want greater participation by expatriates, "but in the end it's up to them to make that decision," said Ruben Aguilar, a spokesman for Fox.

Political analysts and advocacy groups blame the government for the low number of absentee applications, saying the process is difficult at best — and not just for Mexicans in the United States illegally.

To get an absentee ballot, expatriates must send copies of their voting card, Mexican identification and proof of U.S. residency to Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute. Those without the card must travel to Mexico to apply for one then return a few weeks later to pick it up.

"Just as motorists can be fined for bad

driving, the Mexican Congress should be fined for reckless legislating," said George Grayson, a government professor and Mexico expert at The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Va.

Expatriates also complain that it's hard to connect with candidates because election officials have prohibited campaigning in the United States to help ensure compliance with Mexico's political spending limits.

The U.S. effort is being run by the election institute, which has no plans to issue voter cards here.

"The reality is we don't have the tools" to solve those problems, said Patricio Ballados, the institute's expatriate vote coordinator.

To promote the election, 3.5 million absentee applications have been shipped to Mexican consulates and organizations across the United States. Ads urging people to vote are running in Spanish-language newspapers and on Spanish-language television.

In addition, election workers have been sent to border cities to give absentee applications to Mexicans returning for the holidays.

Those measures won't help expatriates such as Mauro Martinez, 55, who entered the United States illegally 10 years ago.

"I can't leave because my residency papers are not in order," he told Garcia at the voter information booth in Lynwood.

Garcia sighed and took Martinez's phone number, promising to call if officials grant requests to set up registration booths in the United States. Meanwhile, Mexican advocacy groups are busing expatriates to Mexican border cities to apply for voter cards. "After so much pressure to get the right to vote, if only a few vote the government will say, 'Look, they are not interested,'" said Eduardo Ruiz, president of the Los Angeles-based Federation de Aguas Calientes, which organizes weekly trips to Tijuana.

Expatriates said the voting requirements are discouraging even the most determined voters. Besides the trips to Mexico, it can be difficult to find utility bills or other documents proving they once lived in Mexico.

"It's absurd," said Francisco Mendoza, a Mexico native who has lived in California for 16 years and publishes a small Spanish-language newspaper in Lynwood. Mendoza wants to vote but no longer has the necessary documents.

At the voter information booth, Garcia said the low application numbers were heartbreaking, regardless of the reasons. He immigrated 10 years ago and now sells toys while sending \$150 every two weeks to his brothers in Mexico.

"Many of us came here because there were no jobs in Mexico," Garcia said. "But how are we going to change Mexico if we don't vote?"

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NATIONAL



Vegas room rates decided based on a fickle formula

BY ROD SMITH
Associated Press Writer

LAS VEGAS — Back in the days of Bugsy Siegel and Benny Binion, it was probably simple to set room rates: \$29 a night gets you a room, \$39 a suite. Build it and they will come.

But it's not that way anymore, especially for MGM Mirage, which owns the most hotel-casinos (12) and rooms (almost 40,000) on the Las Vegas Strip.

A sharp turn by casinos toward dependence on entertainment revenues was meant to buttress business, but it vastly complicated hotel room and rate management.

MGM Mirage executives now compare setting room rates to baking three-layer cakes with lots of frosting every day. But unlike pastry chefs who use recipes, room-setters' cake mix changes constantly; they must alter the thickness of each layer and the frosting every day.

Each cake layer represents another market segment: leisure travel, often group business; convention business; and casino business. Free-and-independent travelers are the frosting.

Deutsche Bank analyst Andrew Zarnett said MGM Mirage has a sophisticated yield-management program that lets it get the highest total return for every room it offers. MGM Mirage needs the program, he suggested, because of the size of the company's hotel room inventory and the variety of customers the company serves.

"Yield management in the casino business looks at the total spent," he said. "MGM (Mirage) has worked out a system for selling on the basis of total revenue generation across a broad range of products. It's really a casino management system, a yield management program for all the properties."

Paul Berry, vice president of hotel operations at Bellagio, said the MGM Mirage yield-management system is a tool that gives decision-makers the best possible information to make rate decisions and achieve that last-best yield.

"It doesn't set rates," he said. "Human interpretation, subjective judgment, is the most important thing. Decision-makers understand the goals and outside influences."

"Each day we spend several hours analyzing demand," Berry added. "Each arrival day is its own story, especially since things are always changing."

Berry said the trick is to let each market segment run with enough inventory.

"There's not an equal or the same distribution any day of the week. Then you have to make sure the delicate balance doesn't go off-keel," he said.

Long before any check-ins appear, each of MGM's twelve Las Vegas properties work with wholesalers to package rooms with airfares that help market rooms globally and create predictable occupancy rates.

Rooms for conventioners are sold as parts of packages by properties independently, with demand varying from

Mandalay Bay to Treasure Island, depending on the meeting space each hotel offers.

Similarly, demand for rooms from casino customers varies property to property, depending on the size and class of the casino.

"What is left to manage is the FIT (free-and-independent traveler) business, the cream of the crop," he said. "The demand from the others helps us yield up (or increase the financial return) for the properties."

The mix will vary sharply, from The Venetian with its convention center, to Bellagio, even though rates may be similar, said Fletch Brunelle, MGM Mirage senior vice president for hotel sales.

The Venetian, owned by Las Vegas Sands Corp., is considered a close competitor of Bellagio.

Brunelle said part of the equation for maximum room revenue is attracting top entertainment headliners such as Paul McCartney, U2 or the Rolling Stones.

"We want maximum revenues in the hotel-casino that weekend," he said.

MGM Mirage spokesman Alan Feldman was critical of Wall Street surveys that poll hotel-casinos to determine the rates they are charging.

He said the surveys only check rates two days a week for the free-and-independent traveler market segment. Hotel-casinos, though, sell to four market segments seven days a week.

Feldman also said room nights are perishable products and cannot be sold to manage long-term yields on a year-over-year basis.

However, Zarnett, Berry and Brunelle acknowledged that over time, Wall Street surveys have accurately reflected broad trends in room rates charged for Strip properties.

Volatility in rates comes from changes in the mix of market segments.

"A convention or entertainer can fall out or a boxing match can be added," Berry said. "And sometimes demand — what you thought would happen — just didn't hold true."

"In our meetings, any given day of volatility doesn't make a trend. Volatility comes in when you don't think the glide pattern is coming in right," he said, comparing MGM Mirage's yield management systems to the seat-pricing programs airlines operate.

The pastry-chef analogy may make setting room rates seem as simple as baking a cake, but the experts agreed setting room rates is high-tech, run by computerized, sophisticated technology.

"World-altering events may change your goals, (such as the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks did when the bottom fell out of the hospitality business), but otherwise it's like sailing a supertanker through a marketplace," Brunelle said.

"Situations can change on a dime, but you'll have to turn the ship (slowly). The goal doesn't change and our goal still is to sell out."

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NATIONAL

Computer-generated wine to fancy the tippie

BY DANIEL LOVERING
Associated Press Writer

PITTSBURGH — Distinguishing fine wine from plonk is usually left to connoisseurs and winemakers, who rely on their senses, rough chemical measurements and the whims of nature to produce an exceptional tippie.

But a Carnegie Mellon University professor, working with industry scientists in Chile, is hoping that computer models will identify the traits of good wine to help vintners produce more of it.

Lorenz "Larry" Biegler, who teaches chemical engineering at the university, is working on mathematical formulas to automate the fermentation process, adjusting ingredients and conditions to ensure robust flavors and higher yields from grape harvests.

Scientists don't fully understand the delicate mix of compounds that emerge during fermentation and why they create such pleasing sensations for wine drinkers. Biegler's research focuses on yeast, which consumes sugar and produces alcohol.

"We would like to come up with a reasonably good model of how this yeast cell behaves ... then control this fermentation process so we can make better-quality wines," he said.

Much of the work is being carried out at an "aroma lab" at Pontifical Catholic University in Santiago, Chile, where industry-sponsored researchers are trying to isolate chemicals that produce desirable fragrances and flavors, Biegler said.

One goal is to help vintners avoid "stuck batches" — batches that spoil and are thrown away when fermentation stalls, leaving too much sugar.

Biegler hopes to make winemaking more efficient, consistent and, ultimately,

profitable. Similar computerized systems are routinely used at chemical plants, oil refineries and pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities, he said.

The researchers have been collaborating for more than two years and are studying only white wines, since reds are more complex and contain solids that make them difficult to analyze.

Stephen Menke, an oenologist at Pennsylvania State University's Cooperative Extension, said sorting out wine ingredients is difficult "because it's a natural product and we don't really do much processing."

Researchers are trying to refine more traditional methods of assessing a wine's quality — tasting it, sniffing its bouquet — and monitoring production, Menke said.

Scientific efforts to unlock wine's secrets have generally met with little success, said Mark Chien, a wine grape specialist also at Penn State.

"I wish it were that easy," he said. "In a textbook sense, it should be, but it never quite is. It's a fascinating scientific exercise, but nobody's been able to prove you can do something like that."

That has not stopped some from trying.

One company, Enologix, of Sonoma, Calif., takes juice samples from grapes, analyzes them and, using proprietary software, recommends how to make wines that please leading critics.

Although technology has the potential to shape the winemaking process, "there's still an art to it in terms of preference and taste and some of those things we can't describe by listing the compounds in the wine," said Mario Mazza, an oenologist at his family's North East, Pa., winery.

For Biegler, controlling fermentation is a start. "It's the dream of seeing whether we can do that," he said.

New Mexico men indicted, accused of bribing BLM employee

By The Associated Press

FARMINGTON, N.M. — A second Farmington businessman faces charges of trying to bribe an employee of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

A federal grand jury in Albuquerque this month indicted Curtis Slade, 43, on charges of offering a bribe to Ralph Mason of the BLM's Farmington field office.

Slade is a former business partner of Norman Geoff McMahon, 71, who was indicted earlier this month on four similar counts. Slade and McMahon owned NewCo Aggregate and both were involved in securing mining permits from the BLM.

McMahon is accused of giving Mason \$7,000 between Dec. 15, 2000, and Feb. 15, 2002 in connection with a BLM permit to mine humate, an organic mineral used in fertilizer and soil supplements.

Mason, who resigned on Dec. 3, 2003, was a geologist handling the permit process.

The new indictment accuses Slade of giving Mason \$4,000 for permits to mine sand and gravel.

Bill Papich, a spokesman for the BLM office in Farmington, referred questions to the U.S. attorney's office in Albuquerque, where a spokesman said the office does not comment on pending investigations.

The federal charges come nearly three years after the San Juan County district attorney charged Slade with racketeering, embezzlement and bribery of a public official. Those charges are pending.

Joe Romero Jr., Slade's attorney, said the state had access to the same information the federal government reviewed, but chose not to charge McMahon. McMahon's business attorney, Gary Risley, said he believes the charges stem from a misunderstanding by the U.S. attorney.

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Santa Monica Daily Press





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LOCAL

2005: A Look Back

YEAR IN REVIEW, from page 1

ers included representatives from 15 police agencies, the U.S. Marine Corps and other Armed Forces, the District Attorney of Los Angeles, four police chiefs from around the county — as well as several city and elected officials and the majority of the Santa Monica Police force.

Crocker was involved in the effort to re-build Iraq by helping neglected parts of the country construct new hospitals, schools and government institutions. Crocker helped maintain relationships with mayors, Sikhs, mullahs and businessmen.

In addition to working with for the SMPD's special entry team, the crime impact unit and Police Activities League, Crocker served as a medic. He also worked patrol and had been a field training officer during his police career.

He is buried in Puerto Rico National Cemetery.



REGIME CHANGE AT THE TOP

Susan McCarthy, 60, who has worked for City Hall for 23 years and served as City Manager since 1999, announced in July that she'd be retiring. She's held positions in the cultural affairs department, worked her way up to the director of human resources department, served as assistant city manager and then onto City Hall's top job.

McCarthy has overseen more than 1,000 employees within City Hall, managed the day-to-day operations of one of the most dynamic and diverse cities in the world, and handled a roughly \$350 million annual budget.

With her at the helm, city officials were fiscally responsible when Santa Monica enjoyed a strong economy in the 1990s. That revenue was invested and channeled into large capital improvement projects like the overhauling of Virginia Avenue Park, which opened in November and the Main Library, scheduled to open in January.

The Santa Monica City Council in November named her replacement, Lamont Ewell, the City Manager in San Diego, which is attempting to recover from a \$1.4 billion pension deficit, investigations by the U.S. Attorney's Office and Securities and Exchange Commission, criminal charges against six pension board members, as well as an inability to sell bonds until a long-awaited audit is completed, according to news reports.



Ewell was hired to help that city out of its financial mess. The Santa Monica City Council — which unanimously approved making Ewell City Hall's top administrator after screening more than 60 applicants — has cited his integrity in helping San Diego and other municipalities overcome obstacles as a basis for their decision in choosing him. He starts his job on Jan. 14.



A NEW HOMELESS CZAR

Edmund D. Edelman was officially hired in December to work on contract for a year to help bring cohesiveness to solving the regional homeless problem in Santa Monica. He will likely start in January, and will answer to Ewell. Edelman will earn \$200,000 for his one-year appointment.

Edelman's advocacy efforts are expected to center on the establishment of a mental health court, where by certain homeless individuals may be removed from the criminal justice system in exchange for their willingness to engage in treatment. He also will be charged with delivering more regional governance and high level leadership on the homeless issue, helping to take the burden off of Santa Monica in helping the down and out.

Edelman served as a Los Angeles county supervisor from 1974 to 1994, during which he was responsible for creating the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, charged with providing homeless services for the county.

Edelman is also known for establishing the Skid Row Mental Health Center in downtown LA and creating the Detox program at the Weingart Center and the first Drug Court in LA County.

He also has assisted U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Harry Pregerson in expanding services to homeless veterans at the West LA Veterans Administration facility.

In addition to his service as county supervisor, Edelman served on the LA City Council from 1965-74 and held many intergovernmental posts, including chairing the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board in 1994 and the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee, which he founded.



SMC PRESIDENT NAMED

It was announced in December that Dr. Chui L. Tsang will become the new president of Santa Monica College at the beginning of

2006.

Tsang, who currently serves as president for San José City College, was one of three finalists referred from an SMC search committee and chosen by the board of trustees after a public forum held in November, during which the candidates answered a slew of questions before students, school employees and community members regarding their administrative styles.

The 54-year-old Tsang, a first-generation Californian who was born and raised in China, is expected to take the reins at SMC on Feb. 27. He will earn an annual salary of \$175,000.

Tsang will succeed Dr. Piedad Robertson, who left the college in January to become president of the Denver-based Education Commission of the States.

Dr. Tsang came to the United States via Hong Kong in 1971 at the age of 19. He received his start in education as a student at Contra Costa Community College in San Pablo. After graduating with a bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley, Tsang earned his doctorate in linguistics at Stanford University, where he taught for several years.

He became president of San José City College, which has an enrollment of more than 10,000 students, back in 1997, remaining at the post for the past nine years.



DOUBLE MURDER AT MOOSE LODGE

In early 2005, local and state officials began their attempt to end violence in Santa Monica by holding a gang violence community workshop at John Adams Middle School in which hundreds of people attended.

A week later, two Santa Monica men were gunned down just a few hundred feet from where community members had gathered days before seeking a solution to the end the violence.

On March 5, Santa Monicans Jonathan Hernandez, 19, and Hector Bonilla, 25, were shot multiple times at the Moose Lodge at 1600 Ocean Park Blvd. while attending a birthday party. Between 50 and 75 witnesses were interviewed but local police had trouble investigating the murders because people were afraid to talk in fear of gang retaliation.

Then in July, police got a break in the case. The District Attorney's Office filed felony charges and issued warrants

against Jose Mojarro, 21, William Vasquez, 25, and Ector Hugo Sanchez, 20, for the murders.

The three suspects are believed to be 18th Street gang members from Los Angeles, according to the Santa Monica Police Department. They face two counts of murder, with special allegations of gang enhancements and use of firearms during a gang crime, and a third count of assault with a deadly weapon. If convicted, the three men face life without parole or the death penalty.

Mojarro and Vasquez have been arrested. Sanchez is still at large.

SAMOHİ SEX SCANDALS SIZZLE IN COURT

Two local high school instructors reached plea deals this summer in separate cases, but both stemming from allegations that they were sexually involved with teenagers.

In July, a judge approved the settlement of an underage sex case involving Carl Hammer, a former Samohi band director. He pleaded no contest to a felony charge of false imprisonment related to a sexual encounter that occurred with a 15-year-old girl, his next door neighbor, on June 6, 2004.

Hammer avoided facing at least three years in prison and the status of being a registered sex offender for the rest of his

life. He did receive five years of probation and one year of counseling.

And in October, Mike Hearn, a Samohi assistant basketball and football coach, pleaded no contest to nine felony charges related to sexual relationships he had with three teenage girls.

Hearn pleaded no contest to six counts of unlawful sex with a 17-year-old girl, two counts for allegedly having oral sex and performing a lewd act upon a 15-year-old girl, and one count for sharing pornographic materials with a third girl, also 15. Two of the victims were believed to be Samohi students. Hearn was arrested on June 2, 2004. He was sentenced to two years in jail and will carry the status of a sex offender for the rest of his life.

JULY 4, 2000 PIER STAND-OFF TRIALS COME TO A CLOSE

Justice was finally realized in March after a Los Angeles jury found two gang

Pictorial Highlights of '05



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LOCAL



2005: A Look Back



YEAR IN REVIEW, from page 10

members guilty on nearly 50 charges for a crime spree that began two months prior and ended with the July 4, 2000 Santa Monica Pier shoot-out with law enforcement.

Sentenced to death were Oswaldo Amezcua, 29, and Joseph Conrad Flores, 34, gang members who ignited a stand-off with police more than five years ago, during which five people were shot and 15 taken hostage on the Santa Monica Pier. Three Santa Monica police officers and two civilians were shot.

The five-hour stand-off began after midnight on July 4, 2000, and ended in the morning dawn with the surrender of Amezcua, a convicted felon wanted in connection with five other slayings.

The jury found Amezcua and Flores guilty of the April 11 murder of John Luis Diaz; the May 25 murder of Arturo Madrigal; and the June 19 double-murder of George Orlando Flores (no relation to the defendant) and Luis George Reyes.

Both defendants also were convicted of attempted murder, arson, second-degree robbery, shooting at an inhabited dwelling and possession of a firearm by a felon.

Amezcua also was convicted of multiple counts of attempted murder of a peace officer for the stand-off at the pier.

The shoot-out began shortly after Santa Monica Police received a phone call around 1 a.m. from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department telling them Flores was on the pier. Investigators had located Flores by placing a call to his pager and tracing the call.

Police arrived and managed to take Flores into custody after an altercation. Amezcua, however, ran into the nearby Playland Arcade. He attempted to exit the rear of the arcade, but encountered officers and opened fire, according to police.

Amezcua then took 15 people hostage, finally releasing the last of the hostages and surrendering at 6:40 a.m.

SKYSCRAPER PLANS AT SANTA MONICA PLACE MALL SCRAPPED

With grand plans unveiled in late 2004 to build three 21-story skyscrapers where Santa Monica Place sits in downtown Santa Monica, the mall's owner Macerich Inc., took its proposal off the table in 2005.

Beyond the public outcry over the height of the buildings, Macerich officials put the project on hold until an agreement is made allowing mall planners to incorporate the closure of Robinsons-May into the design scheme.

The news followed a July announcement that Federated Department Stores, Co., a national retailer which owns Macy's, will sell 68 "duplicate" stores in malls occupied by both Macy's and Robinsons-May as the result of a merger. Federated representatives said the local Robinsons-May store will likely be sold off in 2006.

Santa Monica Place, located between Second and Fourth streets and Broadway and Colorado Avenue, is anchored by dual department stores Macy's and Robinsons-May, the latter occupying 137,000 square feet of retail space.

The question of what kind of development should replace Santa Monica Place is one the city has been grappling with in recent years.

The City Council scrapped a proposed development to replace Santa Monica Place last year due to controversy about the height of the high-rise buildings. The project would have demolished the existing mall and erected three 21-story residential towers, an eight-story office building and an eight-story apartment building. Those buildings were to be built on top of a new outdoor mall, which developers described as a natural extension of the Third Street Promenade.

Macerich has culled public comment from community workshops, surveys and other outreach in order for consultants to come up with proposals to help re-configure Santa Monica Place. A new development proposal is expected as early as next year.



NEW PARK ENERGIZES EASTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD

The \$13 million expansion and renovation of Virginia Avenue Park finally came to fruition in November, after years of planning and construction.

A grand opening was held in November, with a \$50,000 community party that followed the next week. The new Virginia Avenue Park will be bounded by Pico Boulevard to the south, Cloverfield Boulevard to the east and Virginia Avenue to the north. Residences along 21st Street border the park's western edge.

It features 9.5 acres of parkland, basketball courts, playgrounds community meeting rooms, as well as an outdoor stage and a police substation.

YAHOO! COMES TO TOWN

The internet giant announced earlier this year that it will expand its presence in Santa Monica, which began in August. The addition of hundreds of employees and the company's expansion here will mean millions of dollars added to the local tax base.

Yahoo signed a 10-year lease to occupy 229,728 square feet of office space in the Colorado Center, which will be renamed Yahoo Center. The \$100 million deal with complex owner Equity Office is

See YEAR IN REVIEW, page 15

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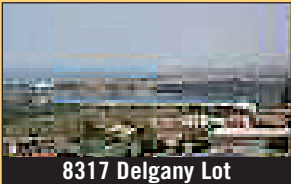
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\$775,000

Cesar Marquez 310/393-8491



2005: A Look Back

YEAR IN REVIEW, from page 13

the largest and most expensive for Santa Monica in recent years.

Yahoo already had three smaller offices in Santa Monica with a total of 200 employees. However, the company's new center is intended for the growth of its media division, which handles Yahoo's news, finances, sports and online entertainment services. As many as 700 employees are expected to be added to the payroll in the next few years.

Colorado Center is surrounded by other media companies that have been moving and expanding for more than a decade. MTV, Universal Music, Sony Music, Revolution Studios, Lucas Productions and Bruckheimer Films are some of the bigger companies within a half mile.

Yahoo will make the shift into its site over a three-year period, beginning with the move into 64,671 square feet which occurred in August. Many of the employee transfers, who are parents, moved with their families from Sunnyvale, Calif.

When determining the location for its new hub, Yahoo wanted to be located in an area that could draw the best and brightest talent. Yahoo also wanted to be close to their contact partners in the media industry. Santa Monica was chosen over Century City, Playa Vista, Westwood and West Los Angeles.

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

The end of an era in the construction world ended in February when Fisher Lumber & Hardware closed its doors after 82 years in business. It was the only lumberyard left in the city.

Opened in 1923 by John W. Fisher and Dean Swartz, Santa Monica's last remaining lumber yard was bought by City Hall in 2004 for \$18.5 million. The three-acre property will be turned into open space adjoining Memorial Park.

John W. Fisher never owned the property his hardware store was built on. He rented it from the railroads. The business was sold to Tom Fox, namesake of the development north of San Vicente Boulevard and later to Bob Sievers, who in 1980 sold it to Weyerhaeuser Co., a major lumber company, Jorgensborg said. Weyerhaeuser bought the land from the railroads in 1994 and three years ago sold it off to developer K.C. Riverstone Ltd. Then City Hall took over.

But Eric Jorgensborg, the former general manager of the lumberyard, recognized the niche needed to be filled and re-opened a smaller version of the lumberyard in November at a new location on Lincoln Boulevard.

TERROR SCARE ON THE PIER

Authorities went on heightened alert in August as a possible probe of the Santa Monica Pier was conducted in July by sus-



pected Middle Eastern operatives who may have been involved in a terrorist organization.

It was enough of a scare for local police and officials to approve \$2 million in security upgrades, which included surveillance cameras and beefed-up police patrol with bomb-sniffing dogs. Security cameras have been placed throughout the downtown area and the pier.

The preemptive measures came after a citizen on July 3 spotted three men, all of whom were of Middle Eastern decent,

suspiciously videotaping specific areas of the pier, including access roads and the SMPD's police substation. The citizen tipped police off to the suspicious activity in late July, an action prompted by the London bombings earlier that month.

The citizen handed over to the SMPD photos of the men. The next day, the SMPD shared the photos with state and federal agencies. It is believed that those same men have been seen scouting other areas of Los Angeles.

Resolution Festival planned to be an inspirational day on Jan. 1

RESOLUTION FEST, from page 1

TV's "The Biggest Loser." Deckman, who's been able to keep the weight off for a year, is running in the LA Marathon this March.

There also will be a 10K run on the beach, as well as a 10,000 Steps Walk. Due to high surf, the county lifeguards have canceled the Polar Bear swim event.

There will be a "Spinning by the Sea," event that includes 21 bikes on the sand. The charity spin will last for five hours beginning in the morning and be led by top spinning instructors, as well as actor Jack Scalia. To reserve a bike, e-mail to laurence@resolutionfest.com. There is a suggested minimum donation of \$25 per hour or \$100 for five hours. Proceeds will

go to the Johnny G Foundation. The day will end with people writing their resolutions in the sand with bamboo sticks.

The 10,000 Steps Walk will be led by Ernie Van Leeuwen, who for 10 years has been the oldest person in the Los Angeles Marathon and has recently undergone major digestive surgery.

Those events will lead up to the free "New Year/New You Expo." The expo will feature lectures, demonstrations and booths offering supportive products and services. Throughout the day's events, which go from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., the stage will feature lectures and demonstrations designed to inspire and motivate individuals to reach and sustain their New Years' resolutions, Cohen said.

Between 40 and 50 vendors — from financial consultants to health food

experts to physical fitness trainers — will be on hand to give resolution seekers advice and guidance.

The festival has a "no excuses" theme, meaning it will happen rain or shine. The day's opening ceremony recognizes athletes who represent the Challenged Athletes Foundation, which embodies the no excuses philosophy at the heart of the Resolution Festival.

Participants of the walk, run or swim will be able to designate \$10 of their entry fee to the foundation, which has satisfied more than 1,700 funding requests from challenged athletes throughout the world.

Participants also have the choice to donate to four other non-profit organizations:

■ The Johnny G Foundation, which was established by the creator of the spin-

ning phenomenon, provides support for individuals recovering from heart conditions. Johnny G, who was named one of the top 10 fitness icons by Men's Fitness Magazine, will top the list of motivational speakers during the expo.

■ Operation USA was established to support victims of hurricanes. Of every dollar donated, 98 cents will go to Operation USA to re-establish health clinics serving low-income people.

■ Team Parkinson was established to raise awareness about Parkinson's Disease and funds for research.

■ TreePeople has worked with the people of Southern California to give them tools to take environmental action into their communities through forestry, education and sustainability programs.



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NATIONAL

Tsunami centers in Alaska, Hawaii on 24-hour alert

BY JEANNETTE J. LEE

Associated Press Writer

PALMER, Alaska — When news of a big earthquake hits in the middle of the night, it takes geophysicist Bruce Turner five minutes to fumble for his beeper, throw on a coat, scrape ice off his car windshield, drive a mile to work and transmit a tsunami alert from the West Coast and Alaska Tsunami Warning Center.

These few minutes, essential to communities in a tsunami's path, will no longer be wasted on commuting when the center goes to round-the-clock staffing in April.

A portion of \$24 million appropriated by Congress in May to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will allow 24-hour staffing, seven days a week, at the nation's two tsunami warning centers, here and at Ewa Beach, Hawaii.

The federal government allocated the money in response to the earthquake and ensuing tsunami in the Indian Ocean on Dec. 26, 2004. At least 216,000 people were killed or disappeared in 11 Indian Ocean countries.

The 24-hour staffing will shave off the three to four minutes it takes scientists to rise from bed and drive to the center before issuing a tsunami alert in response to an earthquake, said Paul Whitmore, director of the warning center in Alaska.

"Rather than responding from dead sleep, we'll already have people there," Whitmore said. "We're definitely better off this way."

Earthquake alerts roust scientists from bed several times a week, and all staff are required to live no more than five minutes from work in order to respond quickly.

The Alaska center registers about 400-500 earthquake alarms per year from around the world and lets safety officials know whether those temblors could displace enough water to trigger a dangerous tsunami.

Starting in April a minimum of two people will be inside the center in Palmer at all times. It's currently open on weekdays from 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. AST. The number of positions has risen to 15 from 6.5 to fill the additional hours.

The center has been scrambling since August to train the new employees. And aside from overseeing its home state, the West Coast and British Columbia, its responsibilities have expanded to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Coast.

"It has been tumultuous here," said Turner, who has worked at the Alaska warning center and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii over the past 23 years.

In Hawaii, scientists live in a cluster of homes on the parched plain of Ewa Beach on the island of Oahu, about 500 feet from the Pacific center. It takes on-call staffers about two minutes to run or bike to the office from their homes after their beepers sound, said Stuart Weinstein, the center's assistant director.

The Hawaii center also will go to round-the-clock operation this spring. Since May, it has increased its staff from eight people to 13 and still needs to fill two more spots.

Its responsibility also has branched out from the Pacific basin to include the Caribbean. The center is also working with the Japan Meteorological Agency to monitor the Indian Ocean until a warning system is installed in the region.

NOAA will spend most of the federal money on 39 buoys with pressure recorders anchored to the sea floor that can detect tsunamis of less than a half-inch in height. Half-inch tsunami waves in mid-ocean can be compressed into towering surges of water after reaching shallower coastal areas.

The buoys relay information to tsunami warning centers via satellite. NOAA plans to raise the number of buoys in the Pacific Ocean to 32 from the current 10 and add seven in the Atlantic, which has none, by 2007.

But improved warning systems won't make a difference unless people know where to seek shelter, a tsunami expert said.

"If we're talking about saving lives, we're really talking about preparing local communities," said Harry Yeh, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Oregon State University in Corvallis.

Even before the Indian Ocean disaster, scientists from the Palmer center were helping tsunami and earthquake-prone communities in Alaska outline clear and well-publicized evacuation plans.

Longtime residents of the nation's most seismically

active state are familiar with proper earthquake and tsunami protocol. But newcomers and tens of thousands of summer tourists often aren't aware of the dangers.

"Unless you've been through it, you don't really think about it," said Jennifer Austin of Seward, who was 8 years old when a magnitude 9.2 earthquake shook Alaska on March 27, 1964.

The Good Friday earthquake was the largest ever recorded in North America and still keeps longtime Alaskans on guard. The temblor and ensuing tsunami killed 115 people in Alaska.

"The older people who lived through the 1964 earthquake are more aware," said Austin, Seward's assistant fire chief.

Alaska's curving southern shoreline traces a volatile subduction zone along the borders of two tectonic plates. Volcanic eruptions and numerous earthquakes, most of them small, shake the southern section of the state as the Pacific plate slides beneath the North American plate at a rate of several centimeters per year.

Fire officials in Seward, a coastal town about 80 miles south of Anchorage, have marked a tsunami evacuation route with blue and white signs leading from the beach park along Resurrection Bay, through the small downtown, to the hospital near the foot of massive Mount Marathon.

Seward officials say their plans can't depend too heavily on outside help in the hours and days immediately following a catastrophe.

Tsunami waves after the 1964 earthquake destroyed bridges connecting the town to the highway system and the community of 3,000 has been cut off by avalanches in recent winters.

"Our (tsunami) plan assumes we can't leave Seward and that Anchorage wouldn't be able to respond for 72-84 hours because they'd be dealing with their own problems," said Seward Fire Chief David Squires. "You must plan in every community to be on your own."

Alaska's seismic restlessness threatens those beyond its borders as well. Tsunami radiating from the mountainous south-central region and the Aleutian Islands can pose a huge danger to communities thousands of miles away.

Tsunami waves triggered by the 1964 quake killed 16 people in California. And in 1946, a tsunami spawned by a magnitude 8.1 earthquake off Unimak Island killed 159 people in Hilo, Hawaii, about 3,000 miles to the south.

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NATIONAL



Border Patrol agents use simple technique to track crossers

BY ALICIA A. CALDWELL
Associated Press Writer

FABENS, Texas — Agent Juan Galaviz had just started his morning patrol shift when a U.S. Border Patrol dispatcher called. A group of illegal immigrants had just tripped one of the thousands of underground motion sensors along the Texas-Mexico border.

Galaviz immediately steered his unmarked Chevy sport utility vehicle toward a patchwork of fields, pecan orchards and irrigation canals in Fabens — a favorite spot for illegal immigrants sneaking across the border just east of El Paso — to where other agents were on foot, looking for “signs” left by the group.

Those markers — footprints on otherwise untraveled dirt roads, water splashes along canal walls — are the tools agents use for “sign cutting,” a centuries-old technique for tracking people. For agents with millions of dollars in technology at their disposal, knowing how to track a person by following footprints in the sand, broken tree branches or even overturned rocks can be the most valuable tool.

In the El Paso sector, which covers two West Texas counties and all of New Mexico, sign cutting has helped catch more than 220,000 illegal crossers in the last two years, according to the Border Patrol.

“It’s kind of something that we always fall back on,” said Kevin McCrary, a senior Border Patrol agent who has worked in the Santa Teresa, N.M., area about 10 years and trains other agents on how to track immigrants.

The key, McCrary says, is to find fresh signs and to get ahead of the illegal crossers. Once agents have a trail, the goal is to surround the crossers and make sure they don’t get away.

As Galaviz joined the hunt near Fabens recently, his eyes darted back and forth looking for any signs of life as he drove south, all the while using a two-way radio to get direction from his colleagues.

“What kind of sign are you finding?” Galaviz would periodically ask the other agents. He was trying to get a better idea of how many sets of prints or even what kind of shoes the migrants were wearing.

He stopped occasionally, glancing at footprints only to find that they looked to be at least a day old.

Every Border Patrol agent is trained to track this way, but McCrary, an 18-year Border Patrol veteran, said the only way to get good at it is to practice.

“Sometimes the simplest forms of skills will give you the most mileage, and certainly sign cutting is one of those,” said Doug Mosier, an agency spokesman.

Along with direction, footprints can indicate a person’s size, whether they are carrying a heavy load or if they are in distress and dragging their feet through the sand, McCrary said.

Rain and wind sometimes erase footprints, but other times they help agents determine the age of a footprint that’s not completely obscured, he said.

Illegal crossers use a variety of tricks, though, to throw agents off their path, such as using tree branches to brush out their footprints or to disguise which direction they headed.

One group strapped foam cushions to their feet, said Galaviz, a nine-year veteran who patrols near Fabens, a crossing point popular with illegals because it’s close to neighborhoods where they can blend in easily or quickly make their way to Interstate 10 to escape the area.

“I guess one of them, his feet were too big, and he left a toe print,” Galaviz said. It was a toe print good enough to follow and the group was eventually arrested.

One group even carved cow hoof prints in wood and attached them to their sandals, McCrary said, but such tricks can be cumbersome, slow and almost too uniform to really get the job done.

“Any time you see regularity in nature, it probably is not going to be natural,” he said. “I don’t think nature has as much regularity as manmade things.”

Footprints aren’t the only sign. McCrary and Galaviz said they can track a group by spotting overturned rocks, revealing soil that is darker where the rock was sitting. Broken branches and trails of trash dropped along the way also can help.

When the crossers in Fabens set off the underground sensor, agents found their footprints within minutes. The fresh trail led agents along a maze of deep irrigation canals. Mud tracks on the cement banks of one of the canals and matted down brush helped give away the hiding place of 13 illegal crossers. Agents arrested them within 30 minutes of the sensor going off.

When Galaviz arrived, the last of the group was being escorted out of the canal while other agents canvassed the area to make sure they hadn’t missed anyone.

McCrary said such arrests are common, and usually all agents have to do is look for the signs.

“If there’s tracks, there’s going to be somebody,” McCrary said.

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NATIONAL

Grizzly attack survivor expects to be back at work next week

By The Associated Press

KALISPELL, Mont. — A California man who survived a grizzly bear attack while hiking with his daughter in Montana's Glacier National Park expects to be back at work next week, four months after the horrific encounter.

"I'm a little anxious, but I'm looking forward to it," Johan Otter told the Missoulian newspaper in a telephone interview from his home in Escondido, Calif. "I'm excited about getting some of my normal life back again."

Otter, 44, and his daughter Jenna, now 19, were hiking the popular Grinnell Glacier trail last August when they surprised a sow grizzly and her cubs. The bear attacked.

Jenna attempted to use her bear spray, but the attack was too quick, Otter said. In addition to severe wounds suffered in the attack itself, Otter and his daughter were injured further when they rolled off a steep embankment to get away from the bear.

Otter's injuries included five broken vertebrae, deep bite wounds to the leg, and severe damage to his scalp and one eye. Jenna suffered puncture wounds to her shoulder, a large gash on her cheek

and bite wounds to her heel.

Despite all the injuries, Otter said both he and his daughter are doing well. Jenna recently finished her first quarter at the University of California-Irvine, he said.

Otter, who is director of physical, speech and occupational therapy at Scripps Memorial Hospital in San Diego, continues his own physical therapy and is expected to undergo additional reconstructive surgery for the scalp and eye injuries.

"Everything's healing great," he told The Daily Inter Lake newspaper of Kalispell. "My neck is still stiff and, of course, there's lots of scars and, of course, there's no hair on the top of my head."

Otter said he holds no ill will toward the bear, which he said "did exactly what she should have done. She protected her cubs by neutralizing the threat." Park officials agreed and said there was no plan to kill or relocate the bear.

He said he wants to return to Glacier some day and even visit the spot where the attack occurred.

"It's more like a psychological healing in some way," he said. "I'd love to go back. I'd like to say thank you in person to the many people who helped us."

Army program offers active duty jobs for reservists returning from Iraq to hurricane-damaged hometowns

BY LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — At a cost of as much as \$20 million, more than 200 National Guard soldiers returning to Louisiana from Iraq are staying on active duty for up to a year so they can have full-time work in their hurricane-ravaged hometowns.

A program intended to give returning reservists jobs if their old ones were wiped out by hurricanes Katrina and Rita is drawing interest too from 60 National Guard soldiers from a Mississippi brigade, according to Col. Billy Thomas, deputy commander of the Army's Task Force Care.

The Louisiana Guard members were preparing to head home from Iraq when Katrina hit at the end of August. Many of the soldiers who were part of the 256th Brigade Combat Team now are helping to rebuild and restore Guard facilities in Louisiana that were damaged.

"The advantage is they have full-time employment," said Thomas, who came out of retirement to help manage the benefits and other aid for members of the military affected by Katrina.

"They came back home after fighting a war, and they had no way to make a living. So the Army has offered them a chance to stay on active duty and help the state to rebuild," Thomas said.

About 3,000 soldiers from the 256th brigade were in Iraq, and about the same number of the 155th Brigade Combat Team from Mississippi have served there and are just now heading home.

Many of the Louisiana soldiers were allowed to come home a little earlier than initially planned because of the disaster. Hundreds suffered property damage; dozens were unable to contact family members in the days just after Katrina hit.

Many soldiers returned home to find their homes and employers gone, Thomas said. Extending their active duty, he said, not only gave them salaries, but also is filling construction and engineering jobs needed to repair the bases, including a National Guard headquarters in New Orleans.

So far, he said, 211 of the Guard members have received extensions of their active duty status, which can last up to a year. The estimated cost of a yearlong extension is \$100,000 in salary and benefits, which would be more than \$200 million total. However, some may not stay that long if their previous jobs are re-established.

In addition, 59 members of the 155th Brigade have begun the application process for extended duty in their state.

The state of Louisiana has funded a similar program; it pays for reservists to extend their active duty to work in the state. So far, Thomas said, 253 reservists signed up.

Among the military facilities greatly damaged by Katrina, was Camp Shelby, a 136,000-acre base near Hattiesburg, Miss. It serves as a training facility for National Guard and active duty troops preparing to deploy overseas.

Army officials are running the task force out of Camp Shelby, setting up benefits for soldiers evacuated or affected by the hurricanes.

Service members and their families left homeless after the hurricanes are also eligible for other benefits.

So far, the task force has processed 3,147 claims from Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine families who were evacuated from their homes and had to pay for other lodging. The families could be reimbursed for up to six months of housing and other costs amounting to between \$65 and \$150 per day, depending on what city they are in, Thomas said.

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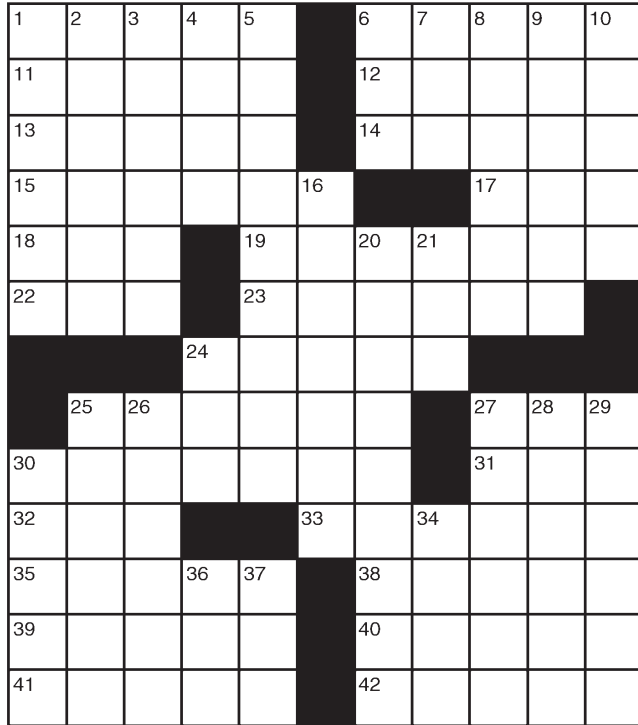
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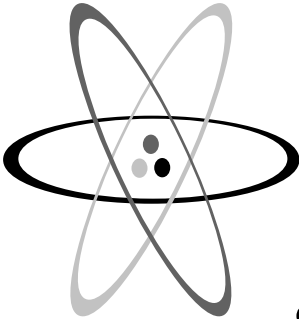
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