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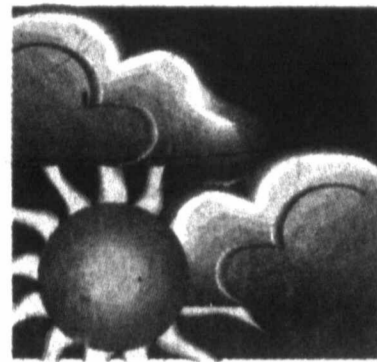
PAMPA NEWS

VOL: 90 NO: 100

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, 1997

PAMPA, TEXAS

50¢ DAILY/SUNDAY \$1



Low tonight 65.
High tomorrow expected to be from 85-90 degrees.

Counseling Services and Parenting Classes will be offered to the residents of Pampa and vicinity.

A counselor from Buckner Children and Family Services in Amarillo will be at the First Baptist Church in Pampa on Wednesdays from 1-5 p.m. offering counseling services to individuals or families who are interested.

Contact the church office at 669-1155 to schedule an appointment.

Fees will be determined on a sliding scale and there is no charge for the initial session.

A parenting class will be offered starting Aug. 27. If interested in this seven-week class, call Dale Moreland at 669-1155.

AUSTIN (AP) — Proposition 1 on the Aug. 9 Constitutional election ballot regarding homestead property tax exemptions will read as follows:

"The constitutional amendment providing school property tax relief by increasing the residence homestead exemption by \$10,000 and providing for the transfer of the tax limitation to another qualified homestead for persons over 65 and a reduction in taxes on homesteads subject to the limitation."

HOUSTON (AP) — A 35-year-old man who has been imprisoned 12 years for rape has been cleared by DNA tests on hair and blood samples he submitted after he was arrested in 1985.

Kevin Byrd voluntarily had given the samples to investigators, saying he was innocent.

District Attorney John B. Holmes Jr., Sheriff Tommy Thomas and District Judge Doug Shaver on Monday signed a letter to Gov. George W. Bush asking that he pardon Byrd, who has been held at the Garza Unit in Beville.

"Based on the conclusion of the recent DNA testing, which excludes Kevin Byrd from being the semen donor in the 1985 aggravated sexual assault (case), I recommend that Gov. George Bush grant Mr. Byrd executive clemency in the form of a pardon from his conviction," the letter says.

Cellmark, a Maryland firm, concluded that Byrd could be excluded as the rapist, and a Houston police lab analysis of Cellmark's results did not reveal any flaws or errors in the conclusion.

- Bessie Loraine Kennedy, 80, homemaker.
- Emmitt W. Sehorn, 90, retired barber.

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Preparing first-timers for that big school day

A child's first day at school can be an A+ if parents do a little homework.

"A parent's attitude about school plays an important part in how the child reacts," said Dr. Lou Ann Todd Mock, a psychologist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "If your child has been in day care, make clear that this change is a real accomplishment and that now the child is grown-up enough to go to 'real' school," she said. Mock's other suggestions:

- Visit the school during the summer.
- Begin the appropriate bedtime and wake-up schedule a week or two in advance.
- Figure out the best morning routine.
- Let the child select the first-day clothes and lay them out in advance.

No tax, fee hikes in city budget plan

By LAURA HALEY
Staff Writer

It will take approximately \$13.3 million to keep the City of Pampa operating during the 1997-98 fiscal year, City Manager Bob Eskridge told commissioners Tuesday night.

That's slightly more than this year's operating budget of \$12.9 million. This "small increase" over this year's operating budget is attributed to a reduction in personnel and the retirement program offered to city employees last year.

Even with the slight growth in operating expenses, the city will offer the same services to residents without fee or tax increases, said Eskridge. Next year's budget also includes several projects

planned by commissioners, such as increased funding for demolition and a drainage study for the Prairie Village area.

The estimated expenditure for the 1997-98 fiscal year is \$14.6 million. This figure includes the operating expense (\$13.3 million) plus capital projects (\$314,946) and certificate of obligations (\$976,000).

With revenue for the 1997-98 budget only totaling \$13.2 million, the additional funds will be drawn from approximately \$1.13 million in restricted reserves for specific projects and the unrestricted cash balance.

At this time, the city is estimating the total amount in the unrestricted cash balances at \$1.6 million. Only \$199,000 will be needed to cover the remaining

expenses during the 1997-98 proposed budget. A certain percentage of remaining funds in the unrestricted cash balances will be used for 5 percent emergency funds and 2 percent contingency funds in each account.

In the general fund, Eskridge estimated a cash balance of \$636,000, revenue of \$7.4 million and other revenue of \$418,000. Expenses in this fund is estimated at \$7.8 million. To be set aside in the 5 percent emergency fund is \$369,166 and \$147,666 will be placed in a 2 percent contingency fund. An estimated \$9,287 will be left as unrestricted cash in this fund after the 1997-98 budget year.

In the water/wastewater fund, the cash balance is \$483,000, revenue of \$1.1 million.

See CITY PLAN, Page 2



The USS Indianapolis was commissioned in 1932. After seeing heavy action in the Pacific during World War II, the cruiser was sunk by a Japanese submarine just weeks before the end of the war in what was to become one of the worst disasters in the history of the United States Navy.

In retrospect... Sacrifice not forgotten

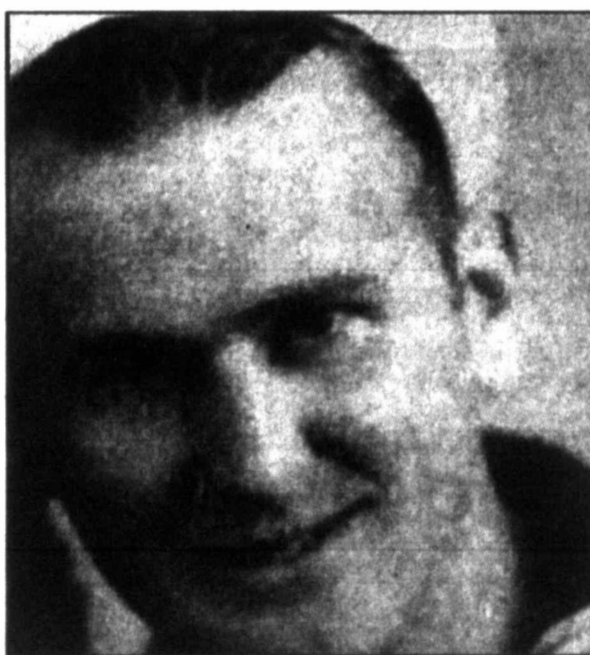
By DAVE BOWSER
Staff writer

LIPSCOMB — It's a long way from the gently rolling prairies of Lipscomb County to the depths of the Pacific Ocean. Hugh Neu made that trip. He never came back.

Hugh Neu was a Petty Officer Second Class aboard the USS Indianapolis in one of the most bizarre events of World War II.

Commissioned in 1932, the heavy cruiser Indianapolis had faced the Japanese in the South Pacific and off the Aleutians in the North Pacific soon after Pearl Harbor. She had participated in landings in the Gilbert Islands, Tarawa, Makin, the Marianas and Saipan. She was at the center of the Battle of the Philippine Sea. As flagship of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, her eight-inch guns shelled Peleliu.

In the pre-invasion bombardment of Okinawa, a Japanese fighter crashed into her aft main deck killing nine crewmen. Following repairs, the Indianapolis was ordered to proceed at high speed to the island of Tinian, carrying nuclear material for the atomic bombs that were to be dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After making the 5,000 mile transit in 10 days, she was ordered to join the USS Idaho in the Leyte Gulf.



Hugh Neu grew up around Higgins in Lipscomb County. He was assigned to the USS Indianapolis after he enlisted in the Navy in 1943.

Steaming alone on the 1,500 mile trip, she was spotted by a Japanese submarine.

It was just a few minutes after midnight on July 30, 1945, when a Japanese torpedo struck the Indianapolis. The first torpedo blew away the cruiser's bow. A second torpedo hit amidships on the starboard side igniting the powder magazine and a fuel oil bunker. The ship was without electricity and unable to radio for help.

According to survivors, officers began ordering all hand to abandon ship. Men began jumping into the ink-black sea. Within 12 minutes, the Indianapolis rolled to starboard and went down bow first.

Of the 1,197 officers and men aboard the Indianapolis, an estimated 880 men, many of them badly burned, were scattered across the

See RETROSPECT, Page 2

100 bike riders headed our way Wild West 150 Tour

The bike tour is coming.

On Saturday and Sunday, the Panhandle Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society will host its 10th Annual Wild West 150 Bike Tour that will include a stop-over in Pampa.

Cyclists raise funds by collecting pledges for each mile pedaled. Saturday they will leave Amarillo at 7 a.m. travelling through Panhandle and White Deer, arriving in Pampa before noon, where they will lunch in Hobart Park.

They'll then peddle to Miami, with some riders finishing the day there, and others, wishing to obtain the century mark of 100 miles, will finish in Canadian at approximately 3 p.m.

After spending the night there, the group will begin riding Sunday morning at 7 heading north to Higgins and coming back into Canadian for the finish of the tour and lunch.

Proceeds from the MS Bike Tour will benefit national research efforts and also provide education, counseling, referral, advocacy and equipment assistance services on a local level through the panhandle chapter located in Amarillo.

Storms cause some flooding

A moist and unstable air mass resulted in heavy rains across much of the Texas Panhandle early today. The National Weather Service issued a flash flood watch for today in the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles from Pampa west and north of Interstate 40.

Thunderstorm drifted north across the western two-thirds of the Texas Panhandle today. At dawn today, the strongest concentration of thunderstorms was across the northern Texas Panhandle and across the Oklahoma Panhandle.

The National Weather Service said the heaviest rain was north of the Canadian River and west

of a line from Pampa to Turpin, Okla.

Thunderstorms in eastern Dallam and Hartley Counties and western Sherman County produced over three inches of rain this morning. Water was reported on U.S. 385 between Hartley and Dalhart and on U.S. 54 between Dalhart and Stratford.

Heavy rain late Tuesday afternoon closed Interstate 40 in Amarillo due to flooding. The National Weather Service in Amarillo reported 3.47 inches of rain in about an hour and a half period Tuesday afternoon.

Amarillo recorded another
See STORM, Page 2

Museum features photos, architecture

PANHANDLE — The Carson County Square House Museum in Panhandle is featuring two new displays through Labor Day. "Architecture in New Mexico: Evolution and Influence Through the Centuries" is in the Moody Wildlife Hall and "Panhandle Wide" can be viewed in the Hazlewood Building auditorium.

Developed and loaned by the Branigan Cultural Center in Las Cruces, NM, "Architecture in New Mexico" is a traveling exhibit consisting of miniature buildings and structures representing 2,000 years of New Mexico domestic and commercial architecture.

"Nine dioramas in three display cases focus on the development of architectural styles which have become the trademark of New Mexico, demonstrating how these styles evolved and were influenced by migration, immigration, assimilation and reinterpretation," said David Harkness, the exhibit's creator.

"Architecture in New Mexico" is designed to appeal to a broad
See MUSEUM, Page 2

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'Air Force One' debuts as nation's top flick

By JOHN HORN
AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — *Air Force One* soared to No. 1 in its debut at the nation's box offices, while *George of the Jungle* kept a snake-like hold on second place.

Air Force One, starring Harrison Ford as the feisty and resourceful president forced to confront hijackers on his own jet, took in \$37.1 million in its first weekend.

George of the Jungle, the Disney remake starring Brendan Fraser as the inept jungle hero popularized by the old TV cartoon, earned \$13.2 million as it stayed in the No. 2 spot in its second week.

The only other film to open in wide release — the teen comedy *Good Burger* — finished fifth with \$7.1 million. In limited release, *Star Maps* got little attention, while *Batman and Robin* dropped to 15th.

The top 20 movies at North American theaters Friday through Sunday, followed by studio, gross, number of theater locations, receipts per location, total gross and number of weeks in release, as compiled Monday by Entertainment Data Inc. and Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc.:

1. *Air Force One*, Columbia, \$37.1 million, 2,919 locations, \$12,721 average, \$37.1 million, one week.
2. *George of the Jungle*, Disney, \$13.2 million, 2,554 locations, \$5,167 average, \$48.1 million, two weeks.
3. *Men in Black*, Columbia, \$12.4 million, 3,180 locations, \$3,884 average, \$194 million, four weeks.
4. *Contact*, Warner Bros., \$9.7 million, 2,314 locations, \$4,194 average, \$65 million, three weeks.

BOX OFFICE	
Top weekend movies	
Weekend of July 25-27, 1997	
All dollar figures in millions	
Gross in date, weeks in release, number of screens	Weekend gross
1 <i>Air Force One</i> \$37.1, one week, 2,919 screens	\$37.1
2 <i>George of the Jungle</i> \$13.2, two weeks, 2,554 screens	\$13.2
3 <i>Men in Black</i> \$12.4, four weeks, 3,180 screens	\$12.4
4 <i>Contact</i> \$9.7, three weeks, 2,314 screens	\$9.7
5 <i>Good Burger</i> \$7.1, one week, 1,887 screens	\$7.1
6 <i>Nothing to Lose</i> \$6.9, two weeks, 1,888 screens	\$6.9
7 <i>Face/Off</i> \$6.1, five weeks, 2,509 screens	\$6.1
8 <i>My Best Friend's Wedding</i> \$4.5, six weeks, 2,146 screens	\$4.5
9 <i>Hercules</i> \$3.2, seven weeks, 1,957 screens	\$3.2
10 <i>Operation Condor</i> \$1.7, two weeks, 1,532 screens	\$1.7

Source: Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc. AP

5. *Good Burger*, Paramount, \$7.1 million, 1,887 locations, \$3,741 average, \$7.1 million, one week.
6. *Nothing to Lose*, Disney, \$6.9 million, 1,888 locations, \$3,664 average, \$24.5 million, two weeks.
7. *Face/Off*, Paramount, \$5.6 million, 2,509 locations, \$2,233 average, \$96.1 million, five weeks.
8. *My Best Friend's Wedding*, TriStar, \$4.5 million, 2,146 locations, \$2,103 average, \$103.1 million, six weeks.
9. *Hercules*, Disney, \$3.2 million, 1,957 locations, \$1,610 average, \$83.4 million, seven weeks.
10. *Operation Condor*, Miramax, \$1.7 million, 1,532 locations,

\$1,106 average, \$8.3 million, two weeks.

11. *Out to Sea*, 20th Century Fox, \$1.6 million, 1,438 locations, \$1,146 average, \$23.5 million, four weeks.

12. *Con Air*, Disney, \$972,000, 964 locations, \$1,008 average, \$94.9 million, eight weeks.

13. *Speed 2: Cruise Control*, Fox, \$714,000, 662 locations, \$1,079 average, \$45.8 million, seven weeks.

14. *Ulee's Gold*, Orion, \$710,000, 350 locations, \$2,027 average, \$5.4 million, seven weeks.

15. *Batman and Robin*, Warner Bros., \$703,000, 1,090 locations, \$645 average, \$104.6 million, six weeks.

16. *Liar Liar*, Universal, \$518,000, 493 locations, \$1,050 average, \$178.3 million, 19 weeks.

17. *Shall We Dance*, Miramax, \$467,000, 62 locations, \$7,537 average, \$1.2 million, three weeks.

18. *The Fifth Element*, Columbia, \$421,000, 673 locations, \$625 average, \$61.8 million, 12 weeks.

19. *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, Universal, \$409,000, 556 locations, \$735 average, \$223.4 million, 10 weeks.

20. *A Simple Wish*, Universal, \$400,000, 817 locations, \$490 average, \$7 million, three weeks.

Top sergeant's accuser called disgruntled

WASHINGTON (AP) — The first woman to make sexual-misconduct allegations against the Army's top enlisted man received support from congresswomen Tuesday as a former Army colleague described her as disgruntled and questioned the accuracy of her story.

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy Spencer told an Army hearing that Sgt. Maj. Brenda Hoster told him in May 1996 that she had been sexually harassed by Sgt. Maj. of the Army Gene McKinney. Hoster went public with her allegations last February and said that during an official trip to Hawaii in April 1996, McKinney came to her hotel room, grabbed her, kissed her and asked her to have sex with him. She refused.

Spencer said that when she told him about the incident she never mentioned any physical contact. He said the dialogue she repeated to him was the same as she described in her later versions.

"Her story was a little different than it is now," he told the Fort McNair hearing.

A second witness, Delores Holts, a retired sergeant who worked for McKinney for five years, said she was on the Hawaii trip and that Hoster told her the next morning that McKinney had made improper advances to her. She said Hoster never mentioned that McKinney had touched or kissed her.

Now in its sixth week, the hearing is being held

to determine if there is sufficient evidence to court-martial McKinney on sexual misconduct charges. He has denied the allegations.

Since Hoster filed a formal complaint against McKinney, four other women have also alleged that he made improper advances to them.

About a mile away from the hearing, Hoster met on Capitol Hill with several congresswomen to discuss legislation on sexual harassment in the military. Afterward, she told reporters she resents implications by McKinney's lawyers that she had a relationship with a female Army colleague.

"I was in shock," Hoster said, referring to her cross-examination last week. "When it was happening, I couldn't believe it was happening. ... It put innuendo out there that I cannot respond to."

The lawmakers, including Reps. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., Elizabeth Furse, D-Ore., and Sheila Jackson-Lee, D-Texas, said they would press for legislation requiring the Pentagon to keep detailed statistics on sexual harassment complaints. They also said they would seek a complete review of the military justice system and the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which Maloney said "is not uniform and it is not just."

Maloney said the military investigatory system appears to be stacked against accusers, leading many military women to refrain from coming forward with complaints.

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James Holley

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Undercover Girlfriend Tires Of Not Being Seen Or Heard

DEAR ABBY: I am a woman in my early 40s, and I have been involved with "Rick" for so many years I have lost count. He has been separated from his wife since before I met him, but he has not divorced her. Rick is at my place all the time except when he sees his son. Neither his son nor any of his family knows about me. His mother died recently, and it hurt not to accompany him to her funeral. But, of course, I couldn't attend because his family would find out he has a girlfriend.

Sometimes Rick has different days off work than I do. I don't know what he does on those days, but I've heard that he sees other women. I know for a fact that he keeps in touch with his former girlfriend.

Rick thinks I am content with the status quo, but I feel my life is one big lie. I'm tired of being nothing more than a convenience; however, I've been with him so long, I don't know how to move on.

Abby, please tell me how to get on with my life — sans Rick — without hurting his feelings. Sign me ...

TIRED OF THE STATUS QUO

DEAR TIRED: Why should you be concerned about hurting Rick's feelings? He has no qualms about hurting yours by denying your existence to his family and friends. Face the fact that Rick has no intention of making a commitment. If he did, he would be divorced and dating you openly.

Since you are no longer con-

Abigail Van Buren

SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

need is behavior modification. Try this: Put a rubber band loosely on your wrist. When the urge to suck your thumb strikes, snap the rubber band hard enough to remind you to resist the habit. Soon you will associate the "sting" with the urge to suck your thumb, and because of the discomfort, you will reject the urge.

DEAR ABBY: Among the letters you printed about transsexuals using the ladies room was one from a woman who noticed the shoes on the person in the stall next to hers were pointed the "wrong" way, and she was outraged.

That letter made me laugh because a couple of years ago my bladder, for all intents and purposes, ceased functioning and I had a urostomy operation. In plain English, that means I now have a tube inside attached to a bag outside, and when I go to the ladies room to empty it, my shoes also point the "wrong way" and I occasionally wonder if anyone ever notices.

People shouldn't jump to conclusions — especially about things that are none of their business. Please do not use my name if you print this.

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

DEAR GIRL NEXT DOOR: Most people are not privy to this kind of information, so thank you for speaking out. You were 100 percent on target when you stated that people shouldn't jump to conclusions.

PHIL IN OREGON
DEAR PHIL: There is no charge for my advice. What you

have more direct control today over the situations that affect you. You will enjoy calling the shots instead of doing the bidding for others.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) By putting the needs of another above your own today, you'll gain in ways you might least expect. The word will get around regarding your kindness.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) You will find that a gentle approach will be most effective when dealing with others today. You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) Someone you trust may treat you very kindly today and do something generous for you that he or she would not do for others.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Your most impressive gains today could come through team play and partnership arrangements. Others involved will try to match your contribution.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) Just when you'll need assistance today, an ally might help you to successfully manage a task that had made you feel over-

welmed.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) An unplanned social involvement with a few close friends today may turn your day around into something pleasurable rather than mundane.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) This is a good day to make some of those little artistic changes around the house you've been contemplating. You will like the results.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Someone you like is making plans for a pleasant activity and you'll be figured in on them. You could learn of this either late today or tomorrow.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Through a loved one, something you've been wanting might come into your possession today. It might not be large, but it will be meaningful.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Charm, humor and wit are the tools you'll use to your advantage today. Make things pleasant for those with whom you'll share your day.

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Horoscope



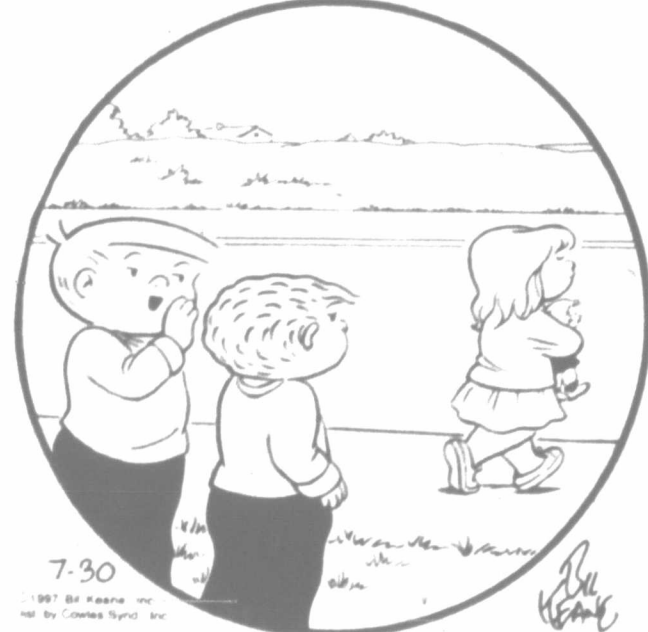
Your Birthday

Thursday, July 31, 1997

Education you have acquired either through personal experiences or schooling will be used constructively in the year ahead in your chosen field of endeavor. Advancement is indicated.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Something materially beneficial might develop for you today through the good auspices of a friend. It could put you in a positive frame of mind for the entire day. Know where to look for romance and you'll find it. The Astro-Graph Matchmaker instantly reveals which signs are romantically perfect for you. Mail \$2.75 to Matchmaker, c/o this newspaper, P.O. Box 1758, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) You n-



"When I grow old enough to start liking girls, I think I'll start with Matilda."



"How many bottles of my bubble bath have you used up?"

The Family Circus



Marmaduke



Grizzwells



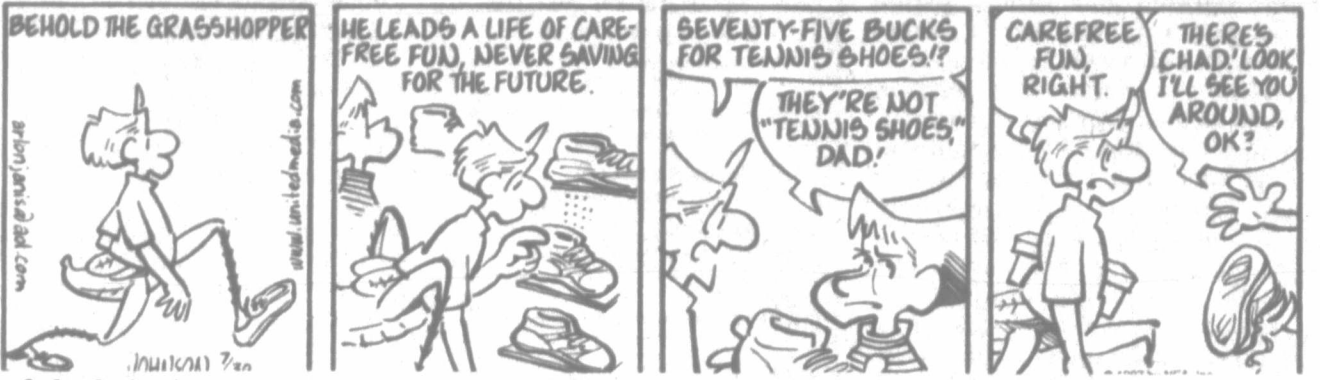
Alley Oop



Peanuts



For Better or For Worse



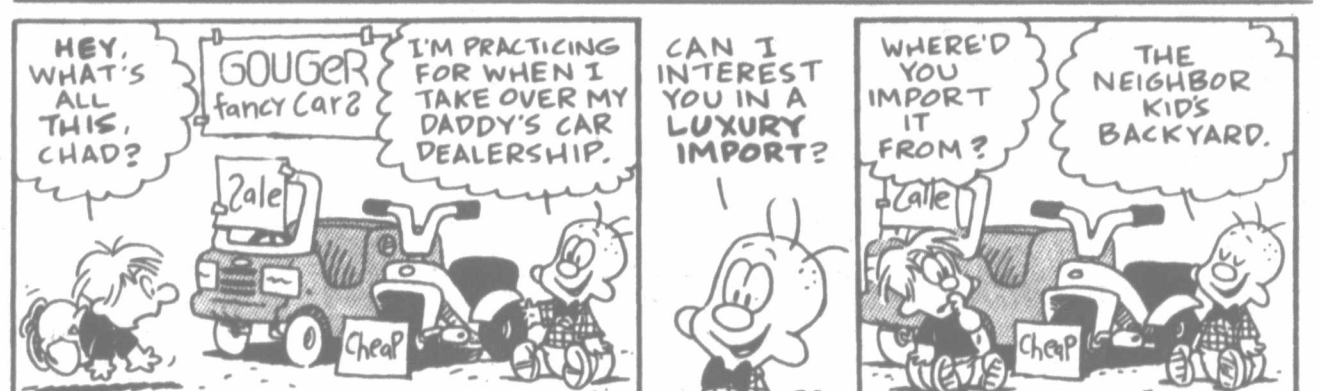
Arlo & Janis



Garfield



Walnut Cove



Marvin



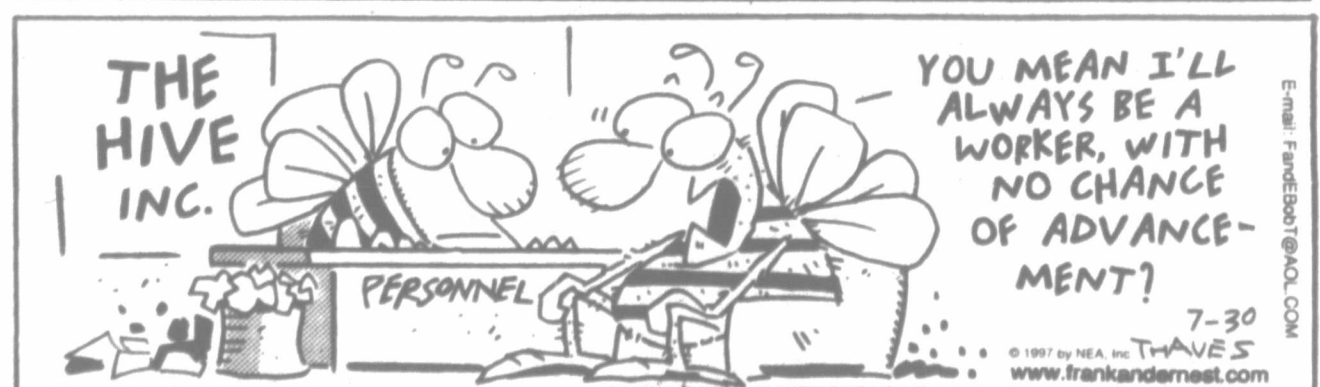
B.C.



Eek & Meek



The Born Loser



Frank And Ernest



Mallard Filmore



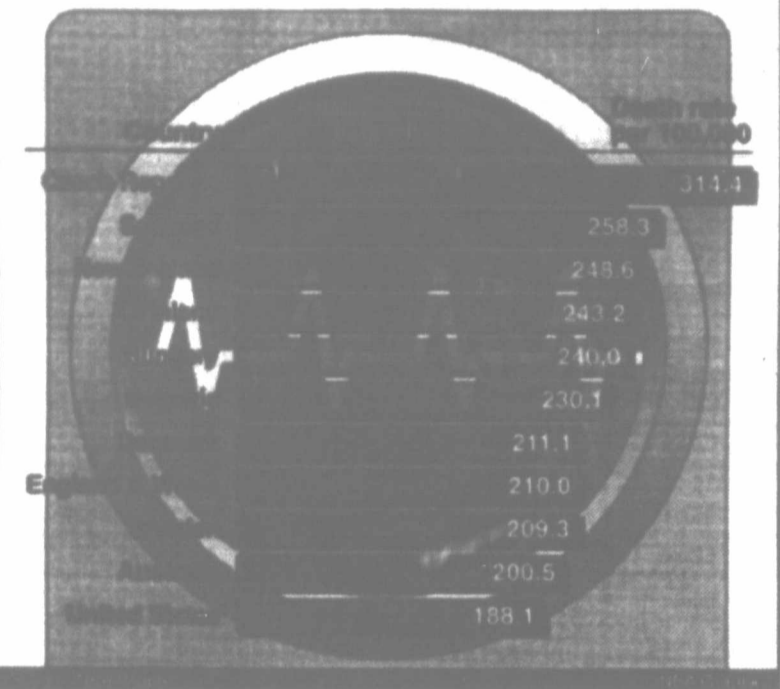
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MEDICAL

Fighting heart disease in U.S.

Heart disease countries

The 10 countries with the most deaths from heart disease



The Czech Republic leads the world in the unenviable category of most deaths from heart disease — well over 300 heart-disease related deaths per 100,000 people. The United States' rate is dramatically lower.

Mastectomy

Breast removal could mean increased life span in women with bad genes

By KATHARINE WEBSTER
Associated Press Writer

Women with certain genes that strongly increase their risk of breast cancer could live an average of three to five years longer by having their breasts removed at age 30 while they are still healthy, a study found.

Women with the bad genes run a lifetime risk of breast cancer that has been estimated at anywhere from 56 percent to 85 percent.

Some women carrying the bad genes have chosen to undergo a mastectomy just in case. Until now, little data existed to show how much longer they might live by doing so.

The study also looked at preventive ovary removal, since some women with the defective genes run a 40 percent risk of ovarian cancer. These women could live an average of two years longer if they had surgery by age 40.

The researchers estimated that even without preventive surgery, women with the defective genes could expect to live an average of 65 years or more, as long as they got frequent checkups and mammograms.

"We're not advocating these surgeries," said Dr. Deborah Schrag of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, the study's lead author. "A woman facing these decisions will want to consider her self-image, her ability to have children, her ability to nurse her children, as well as relief of her anxiety about getting cancer."

Mutations in the genes known as BRCA1 and BRCA2 cause about five percent to ten percent of all breast cancer and five percent of all ovarian cancer. They often are to blame in families with high rates of both.

Until recently, surgery to remove healthy breasts was rare. But the development of blood tests for mutations in the BRCA genes has increased demand for the operation.

The study is a statistical analysis of data on breast cancer risk and life expectancy, not one that directly compares women who were randomly given preventive mastectomies with those who were not.

The Dana-Farber researchers made conservative estimates, so the benefits of surgery could be even greater than the study suggests, said the Mayo Clinic's Lynn Hartmann, who has studied preventive mastectomies.

The study is one of four in the May 15 *New England Journal of Medicine* that examine BRCA mutations and their implica-

tions for breast cancer screening, risks and treatment.

Dr. Bernadine Healy, dean of the College of Medicine at Ohio State University, said in an accompanying editorial that the studies show that not all mutations act the same and that other factors may play a role in triggering breast cancer in women with bad genes.

Another of the studies, by National Institutes of Health researchers, looked at more than 5,318 Washington-area Jews of Eastern European heritage. It found that more than 2 percent had defects in their BRCA genes and that women with the bad genes had a 56 percent lifetime risk of breast cancer.

While that is high compared with the 13 percent risk for women without a defective gene, it is much lower than the widely quoted 85 percent chance estimated in earlier studies. The 85 percent risk was found in families who had numerous cases of breast and ovarian cancer.

The study also found a 16 percent risk of ovarian cancer among women and an equal chance of prostate cancer among men with the defective genes, both much higher than in the general population.

The University of Washington scientist who discovered the BRCA1 gene, Mary-Claire King, said the study is badly flawed because the risk estimates were based entirely on participants' memories of whether anyone in the family had had cancer. She said the risk is probably higher.

A third study of patients at clinics that specialize in breast cancer screening found that only seven percent of women with breast cancer and a family history of breast cancer had a BRCA1 defect.

The University of Pennsylvania study concluded that routine testing for women with family histories of breast cancer is unwarranted, but screening for smaller groups could make sense.

The fourth study, by Massachusetts General Hospital researchers, found the risk of developing breast cancer by age 32 is high among women with BRCA1 mutations but not among those with BRCA2 mutations.

That suggests that women with a defective BRCA2 gene may not gain as much from preventive mastectomies as women with BRCA1 mutations.

All the estimates are based on averages of risks and life expectancy. So a woman with a defective gene from one of the highest-risk families "might be looking at 30 years of extra life," Healy said.

Researchers show how salt makes food more palatable to taste buds

By MATT CRENSON
AP Science Editor

Every good chef knows that salt makes things taste better — but until now, science hasn't shaken out the reason why.

A new study shows that salt suppresses bitter tastes, bringing sweet and sour flavors to the fore.

That may not sound like a big revelation. But it could help food designers concoct more effective salt substitutes for people with high blood pressure.

It was a simple experiment by Paul Breslin of the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia that cracked the salt nut. Breslin offered people tastes of sugar, the salt relative sodium acetate and urea, a bitter substance, in every possible combination.

He used sodium acetate instead of sodium chloride because it enhances flavor like table salt without delivering its powerful salty taste, which can confuse subjects.

With each flavor combination, the researchers asked their subjects to rate how much sweetness, saltiness or bitterness they tasted.

It turned out that all of the flavors inhibited each other, but the sodium acetate salt inhibited the bitter urea more than it did the sugar. So when all three were

served together, the result was sweet compared with the urea-sugar combination.

"Everything suppresses everything else, but the sodium is special for the bitter," Breslin said. "If you add salt, you're going to knock out the bitter taste."

In the real culinary world, the finding suggests that in baking, for example, salt masks the compounds that give unsalted bread the flavor of cardboard.

So in designing a salt substitute, food engineers would want to invent something not just salty tasting, but also with the ability to mask bitter flavors.

"Salt does amazing things to food that are probably related to this phenomenon," said Breslin, who describes his work in the June 5 issue of the British scientific journal *Nature*.

Still, Breslin's work can't really explain exactly how salt does what it does. Because the taste receptor that detects bitterness is unknown, there's no way to determine how salt interferes with it.

"These things probably go on all the time in our food," said Harry Lawless, a psychologist and food scientist at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. "I suspect that culinary artists probably have some kind of gut level appreciation for them."

Anti-snoring treatment using radio waves approved by FDA

NEW YORK (AP) — A California company has received Food and Drug Administration approval for an anti-snoring treatment that uses radio waves to heat and destroy tissue blocking the airway.

The procedure aims to cure snoring and a more serious ailment, sleep apnea, a recurrent halting of breath that can wake sufferers repeatedly and, in rare instances, suffocate them.

Somnus Medical Technologies of Sunnyvale, Calif., was expected to announce the approval of its technology on Tuesday.

Forty million Americans suffer from habitual snoring, the National Commission on Sleep Disorders Research reported in 1994. Seven million to 18 million Americans are thought to have sleep apnea.

Unlike laser surgery, the Somnoplasty technology works at relatively low temperatures and leaves outer tissue intact.

A radio frequency generator connected to a needle penetrates the tongue, throat or soft palate and destroys a small portion of inner tissue by generating a heat of 158 to 176 degrees. The outpatient procedure takes about a half-hour.

Christine Higgins' snoring often drove her husband to sleep in a guest room before she had the first of two Somnoplasty procedures.

"Now he can sleep with me. Usually he leaves," the 48-year-old from Baltimore said.

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