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The PAMPA NEWS

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Weekend Issue
 Saturday and Sunday, December 24-25, 2011

75¢ Daily • Weekend \$1.50

Pampa folks share Christmas traditions

MOLLIE BRYANT
 mbryant@thepampanews.com

Christmas is a time for people to come together, and remember the reason for the season, and every family has their own holiday traditions.

Suzanne Wood, who will be traveling to Austin for Christmas this year, typically bakes treats like pound cake.

"We like sweets," she said.

"We read the Christmas story, sing Christmas carols and talk about what Christmas really means."

This year, Carey Knutson said that his family will be breaking from the norm by serving mostly finger food.

"It's not about food," he said. "It's about spending time with family, not worrying about cooking."

Faustina Curry is planning a

quiet Christmas, but her family goes out of its way to celebrate the Epiphany on January 6.

"We celebrate the Russian Christmas, which is when the wise men visited baby Jesus," she said. "We have a bunch of friends over, and make a special meal."

For many families, certain movies have become a big part of the holiday season. Peggie Coleman watched "The Christmas Carol" with George & Scott each year.

"It's my all time favorite Christmas movie," she said.

Joe Weaver and his family also big lovers of the story. He made it a holiday tradition with his kids were growing up.

"We used the read 'The Christmas Carol' every year between Thanksgiving and Christmas," he said. "We collect copies of the story in audio or video, but my books."

MERRY CHRISTMAS



staff photo by Randy Pribble

Wilson Elementary music teacher Francene Owens (center, standing) conducts students during the school's Christmas program earlier this week.

Enbridge to move into PEC in early 2012

MOLLIE BRYANT
 mbryant@thepampanews.com

After entering into an agreement to lease a 116-acre facility at the Pampa Energy Center (PEC) owned by the Pampa Economic Development Corporation (PEDC), Enbridge Energy Partners plans to move into the space around the quarter of 2012.

In addition to a \$4 million pipeline purchase from the PEDC, an affiliate of Enbridge has leased the liquids terminal facility at the PEC for \$1.3 million dollars over a 40-year commitment. The space includes a warehouse building, safety and security building, storage tanks, loading racks and more, which Terri Larson of Enbridge said will be the main focus for the gas transportation company.

"With the growing production of gas and liquids there in the Granite Wash, we really need a variety of options for transportation out of the area, and we think rail needs to be one of those options," she said. "The PEC gives us that immediate, cost effective access to the network, so that's the key part for us now."

The Granite Wash, an oil and natural gas reservoir in the Panhandle. **ENBRIDGE** cont. on page 6

Big year of altruism for VFW

ARNIE AURELLANO
 editor@thepampanews.com

Just judging by the membership numbers, it's easy to call 2011 a good year for Pampa's Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1657.

"(This year), we've gone from 153 members to 188, I think it is right now," said VFW Post President Danny Martin. "We're on the way up for sure. We got a lot of new members this year. It was good."

It was an eventful year for the post as well. The boys threw a pair of successful banquets, accepted a Soldier's Cross statue from their women's auxiliary in November and welcomed national VFW Commander-in-chief Richard L. Eubank and State Commander Wayne Depute in February.

The real breadth, though, of the VFW's accomplishments this year lies beyond just membership statistics and visits from dignitaries. In fact, ask Martin



Martin

about why his numbers went up, and he'd readily tell you the true success story of the VFW's 2011.

"I think the membership's growing because of the good things we do for our community," Martin said. "That's what made it a real good year for us, I think. We were able to help a lot of people."

While Martin humbly declined to go into a lot of detail ("We don't like to advertise," he said with a brief laugh), but he did mention that the post was able to provide scholarships to a number of Pampa kids and aid to several needy people and families over the course of the year. The post also held a benefit auction and concert in August to help chip in for renovations to its sister post. **VFW** cont. on page 6

12 kids of Christmas

Grace Campbell, 8

Parents: Shauna and Shane Campbell

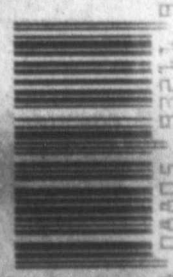


What I want most for Christmas is: "A pink teddy bear." For my parents: "I want my dad to get a shirt and my mom to get a pink pencil." The best gift I've ever gotten: "A Barbie doll."




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PAMPA FORECAST

Today	Sunday	Monday
		
High 42 Low 22	High 47 Low 25	High 51 Low 23

Today: Mostly sunny, with a high near 42. Northwest wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Tonight: Mostly clear, with a low around 22. North northwest wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Christmas Day: Sunny, with a high near 47. North northwest wind around 10 mph.

Sunday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 25. North northwest wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Monday: Sunny, with a high near 51. Breezy, with a southwest wind between 10 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Monday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 23.

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Court: Districts may be discriminatory

AUSTIN (AP) — There are "genuine issues" of whether Texas Republicans in the Legislature intentionally discriminated against Hispanics in redrawing the state's political maps, three federal court judges said in an opinion.

The Washington-based court sought to explain why it refused to approve redistricting maps drawn earlier this year by the Legislature. Texas is one of 16 states covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act and must get pre-approval from either the Dept. of Justice or the federal district court in Washington before changing any voting laws. The rule applies to states with a history of racial discrimination.

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott asked the Washington court earlier this year to approve the new maps, but the Justice Department and Texas minority groups argued that the redistricting plans were discriminatory and asked the court to put them on hold. The court refused to approve the maps and set a trial date for Jan. 17 to hear more detailed arguments.

In a 44-page opinion filed late Thursday, the court explained why.

"We conclude that there are genuine issues of material fact regarding whether the plans were enacted with discriminatory intent," the court wrote. "The abil-

ity (of minorities to elect a candidate of their choice) can rarely be measured by a simple statistical yardstick, as is the essence of Texas's approach (to drawing fair districts)."

The groups opposing the maps argue that they are drawn to give whites a majority of seats in the Texas House, Senate and in the Texas congressional delegation, even though, according to the 2010 census, whites only make up 45.3 percent of the population. As an example, the congressional district map drawn by Republican lawmakers made voting-age whites the majority in 25 out of Texas' 36 districts.

In arguments before the court, state lawyers denied any intentional racial bias. They explained that because Republicans control the Legislature, it was only natural that they drew maps that would benefit Republican candidates. The reason Hispanics are not the majority in more districts is because most Hispanics vote Democratic, not because of their ethnicity, the Texas attorney general's office said.

The redistricting maps are also under attack in a second federal court case in San Antonio. Minority groups asked that district court to throw out the Legislature's maps completely, claiming they are drawn to make sure minorities do not win elections. That court

decided to wait until there was a resolution in the Washington case and drew up temporary maps for use in the 2012 election pending a resolution.

The court created those maps by working off the old districts and accounting for racial factors. Democrats welcomed that map, which gave them greater chances of winning more districts.

Abbott, however, said the San Antonio court overstepped its authority by overruling the Legislature's maps before the Washington court had made a decision. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear that appeal on Jan. 9.

In court papers filed Thursday, Abbott asked the Supreme Court to order the use of the Legislature's maps until the two pending court cases are decided. If the Supreme Court agrees, the decision would permanently change how the Voting Rights Act is enforced by allowing the use of contested maps before a court can decide if they are discriminatory or not.

Meanwhile, the uncertainty has left many politicians in limbo, not knowing what their districts will look like, and therefore, whether or not they have a chance of winning. If the courts can reach an agreement on a map for the 2012 election by late January, the Texas primary is scheduled to take place on April 3.

Texas inmate loses appeal in fire death

HOUSTON (AP) — A federal appeals court has refused an appeal from a Bryan man sent to death row for killing his ex-girlfriend by throwing gasoline on the woman and setting her on fire.

Attorneys for Carl Henry Blue, 46, argued to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that he's mentally impaired, making him legally ineligible for execution, and that instructions given to Brazos County jurors at a punishment trial in 2001 were unconstitutional.

A three-judge panel of the New Orleans-based court rejected the arguments Thursday.

Blue was convicted in 1995 and sentenced to death for killing Carmen Richards-Sanders, 38, who was set on fire at her apartment in College Station in 1994. A man with her, Larence Williams, also was set ablaze but survived and testified against Blue.

Blue was given a second punishment hearing in 2001 after a psychologist was found to have testified improperly at his first trial that because Blue was a black man, he was more likely to be a future danger. Blue was among about a half-dozen condemned Texas inmates to receive new punishment trials because

of similar trial testimony from the psychologist, but his latest appeal was based on his second punishment trial.

Blue does not have an execution date and could appeal his case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

John Wright, an attorney for Blue, did not immediately return a call Friday from The Associated Press.

Evidence showed Blue bought a paper cup of gasoline from a station next to the apartment complex and waited outside for Richards-Sanders to leave for work. When she opened the door, he threw gasoline on her and used a lighter to ignite her. When he saw Williams, he also tossed gasoline on him.

Blue turned himself in to police. Prison records show he told authorities he'd been drinking and smoking crack behind a convenience store, decided as a joke to offer the gasoline to her as a drink and became enraged when he saw Williams with her.

Defense lawyers acknowledged at Blue's trial that he was responsible for the fire death but said the circumstances did not make it a death penalty case.

Obituaries

Joy "Bird" Yvonne Bybee, 48

A memorial service will be held for JoyBird Yvonne Bybee on Wednesday, December 28, 2011, at 2 p.m. at the Highland Baptist Church in Pampa. Rev. Mike Watson of Hobart Baptist Church will be officiating. Burial will be in Fairview Cemetery.

Joy died August 11, 2011, in Lufkin. She was born October 31, 1962, in Pampa.

Joy was preceded in death by her parents, B.M. (Bob) and Shirley Bybee and two brothers, Tommy Leroy Bybee and Tony Bob Bybee. Survivors include her brother, Michael Bybee; sister, Diana Brummett; and children, Matt Rogers, Daniel Rogers, John Rogers, Jena Clark, LaTisha Huckins, Sarah Quilimaco, Jimmy Brown, Adam Brown, Joe Sperry, and Michael Benage; and numerous grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, uncles, and an aunt.

Memorials may be made to People Baptist Church, PO

Box 1959, Fort Worth, TX 76101.

Michael Glen Lyle, 56

On December 22, 2011, Michael Lyle went home to be with the Lord.

Mike was born December 12, 1955, in Bryan. He grew up in Pampa and graduated from Pampa High School in 1975. Mike was a loving son and brother. He will be greatly missed by all those who loved him.

Mike is survived by his parents, Dr. Robert and Lou Ree Lyle; his sister, Debbie Stewart and husband John; his brother, Major Clay Lyle and wife Stephanie; three nieces; four nephews; one great-nephew and two great-nieces.

A graveside service was held in Tulia on December 24, 2011. Donations may be made to the BSA Hospice in Amarillo or First Baptist Church Building Fund.

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MORNINGRUSH

Oyster industry eyes tracking

HOUMA, La. (AP) - The oyster industry in the Gulf of Mexico is developing an electronic system needed to track oysters for new food safety regulations.

The *Courier* reports that Gulf states are developing the system, required under measures passed by Congress last year to make it easier to track food-borne illness by tracing food from harvest to table.

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, a board representing the five Gulf states on fisheries issues, wants to replace the paper tracking process in use today with electronic technology.

Industry leaders say doing that could make the data more efficient, easier to access and could reduce the cost of complying with new food-safety regulations.

150,000 seed balls for Bastrop

AUSTIN (AP) - About 300 groups of children have worked to make sure parts of Central Texas blackened by wildfires get new plants.

Officials with Capital Area Master Naturalists in Austin say about 150,000 seed balls will be available to Bastrop residents, whose land was damaged by the fires. The marble-size balls of clay and compost also contain native plant seeds.

Members of the Native Plant Society raised \$1,800 to buy compost, clay and a special seed mix.

The *Austin American-Statesman* reported Thursday that the seed balls were put together by children at schools, churches and youth groups. The seeds are from more than 50 varieties of Central Texas plants.

Organizer Ryan Fleming says she wanted to give something back to people whose land was burned in wildfires since Labor Day weekend.

Texas man claims Okla. jackpot

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) - A Hemphill, Texas, construction company owner who purchased a lottery ticket in Oklahoma has claimed a \$1.2 million Hot Lotto jackpot.

Oklahoma Lottery officials said Thursday Kyle Conn bought the ticket at a convenience store in Idabel. Conn was traveling through the state on business and purchased the ticket for the Nov. 23 drawing.

Conn said he plans to celebrate his winnings with a big New Year's Eve party and will invest his prize money.

SPCA finds 4 horses dead

DALLAS (AP) - Animal welfare officers in Dallas have made a grim discovery, finding four horses dead and seven emaciated on a property in southwest Dallas.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of Texas says the situation was reported Wednesday near the intersection of Loop 12 and Lancaster Road.

SPCA of Texas spokeswoman Maura Davies tells KTVT-TV of Fort Worth and Dallas says no water was found on the property for the horses, and the animals couldn't reach what little food was there. Instead, the horses ate the bark and twigs off trees, which Davies says have little nutritive value.

The SPCA is now caring for the surviving horses, and a custody hearing is scheduled for next week.

Police station evacuated

SAN ANTONIO (AP) - Part of San Antonio police headquarters had to be evacuated for several hours after a nearby construction crew hit a natural gas line.

CPS Energy spokeswoman Christine Patmon says police were allowed back into the building around 4:30 a.m. Friday.

Patmon says the utility, shortly before 1:30 a.m. Friday, received a report from police about a strong smell of natural gas and that officers were evacuating part of the building.

Patmon told The Associated Press that a contractor working in front of police headquarters struck a 4-inch gas line. Patmon says there was no fire.

She had no reports of anyone hurt. San Antonio police did not immediately provide further details to The Associated Press.

Elderly couple missing

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) - Authorities in eastern Oklahoma say they're looking for a Checotah couple last seen on Thursday.

The *Oklahoman* reports Friday that the McIntosh County sheriff's office issued a silver alert for 80-year-old Mildred Kirkham and 90-year-old Evert Kirkham early Friday morning.

The newspaper says the couple was last seen about 10 a.m. Thursday. Both may be wearing camouflage jackets.

Authorities say they may be heading to Meeker or the Oklahoma City area.

Dallas pair convicted of fraud

DALLAS (AP) - A federal jury in Dallas has convicted two men in a \$20 million telecommunications scam in which homeless people were paid for use of their identities.

Prosecutors say Nathan Todd Shafer of Irving and Matthew Norman Simpson of Red Oak were convicted Thursday of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and mail fraud. Simpson was also convicted of e-mail-related fraud, obstruction-destruction of evidence and false registration of a domain name.

Prosecutors say the names of some homeless people were listed as officers, directors and managers of bogus companies, to defraud telecommunications firms of goods and services.

A dozen other people have pleaded guilty since 2009, when Simpson's home and business were raided.

Sentencing has been set for March 23. The conspiracy and obstruction-destruction of evidence counts carry maximum 20-year prison terms.

63 school districts file 4th suit against TX

WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) - A coalition of school districts that educate more than 1.5 million Texas children filed a fourth lawsuit against the state Thursday over school funding, alleging that the current system doesn't provide schools enough money and distributes it unfairly.

The suit was brought by 63 public school districts and has the financial backing of two more, which collectively represent about a third of the state's public school enrollment, according to Thompson & Horton, the Houston-based law firm handling the suit.

It will be "the most broad and diverse group of school districts ever to jointly challenge the school finance system," the firm said in a statement. "The plaintiff group

includes the largest and some of the smallest school districts in the state, and many in between."

Filed in Travis County, which includes Austin, the suit is the fourth of its kind since the Texas Legislature cut \$5.4 billion from education funding when devising the state's two-year budget this summer. In all, more than 500 Texas school districts representing about 3.3 million children are now suing the state.

Thompson & Horton says Texas is expected to grow by 170,000 students in the next two years and much of that growth will be among economically disadvantaged students who "now make up almost 60 percent of total student enrollment." Its suit says that for the first time since World War II, Texas lawmakers failed to provide enough funding to cover the costs of student growth, while also elimi-

nating or severely cutting funding for programs designed to help at-risk students.

Paying for public schools has been a battle in Texas for much of the last century. Most recently, lawmakers implemented a new tax structure, reducing reliance on property taxes and creating a new business tax.

The Legislature adopted the overhaul during a 2006 special session, under court threat of closing public schools. At the time, the Texas Supreme Court warned that the plan would only be a temporary fix.

The suit filed Thursday says, "unfortunately, the Texas Legislature has failed repeatedly to heed the Supreme Court's warnings. Instead of true structural change, the state has fallen back on temporary fixes that ultimately fail to support the increasing expectations Texas has set

for a student population that is rapidly growing and disadvantaged."

The suit also alleges that the current funding system has effectively violated a Texas constitutional ban on property tax because of the Legislature's previously approved a cap on how much districts can raise local property taxes without voter approval. Continued lack of state funding has since forced many districts to continually tax at the highest rate possible.

"Over time, increased state requirements coupled with reduced state financial support have stripped school districts of any meaningful discretion over local tax rates. Districts have no other choice than to tax at high rates in order to meet state requirements," the suit says. "Consequently... the system now operates as a state property tax."

Estranged dad of exonerated TX inmate seeks pay

WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

AUSTIN (AP) - The long-estranged father of the first Texas prison inmate to be posthumously exonerated by DNA testing has suddenly come forward, claiming he's entitled to half of the nearly \$1.1 million the state awarded to the man's family for his wrongful imprisonment.

Ernest J. Kennard appeared in a Fort Worth court this month and obtained a judge's order entitling him to half of the estate of Tim Cole, who was wrongfully convicted for a 1985 rape but died in prison before he was declared innocent. Relatives are outraged that Kennard would turn up now, after having no

contact with the family for decades, said Cole's half brother Cory Session.

"He is the dearest of dead-beat dads," said Session, policy director for the Innocence Project of Texas, which helps clear wrongfully convicted prison inmates. "When he showed up in court, we were all like, 'Who is this man?' He's like a stranger."

Session said the court order, which directed the estate be shared with Cole's mother, has been suspended pending a review of Cole's will. He said his mother plans to sue Kennard for back child support if he receives any compensation.

Kennard's attorney, Aaron Ray, did not return

a series of phone calls from The Associated Press this week. Kennard lives in Houston but two phone numbers listed for him have been disconnected, and a man who answered a third said he had never heard of him.

A U.S. Army veteran, Cole was studying at Texas Tech University when he was convicted of the 1985 rape of a fellow student. He always maintained his innocence, even though admitting to the crime could have earned him parole.

Cole was 39 when he died behind bars in 1999 from asthma complications. Nine years later, a DNA test cleared him of the crime and implicated convicted rapist Jerry

Wayne Johnson, who confessed in several letters to court officials that date back to 1995.

Last year, Gov. Rick Perry granted Texas' first posthumous pardon to Cole.

PAY cont. on page 5

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To our friends and customers:

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May your holiday be filled with joy and the coming year be overflowing with all good things in life.

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Viewpoints

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Dec. 24, the 358th day of 2011. There are seven days left in the year. This is Christmas Eve.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 24, 1814, the War of 1812 officially ended as the United States and Britain signed the Treaty of Ghent.

On this date:

In 1524, Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama - who had discovered a sea route around Africa to India - died in Cochin, India.

In 1809, legendary American frontiersman Christopher "Kit" Carson was born in Madison County, Ky.

In 1851, fire devastated the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., destroying about 35,000 volumes.

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

In 1871, Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Aida" had its world premiere in Cairo, Egypt.

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

In 1951, Gian Carlo Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors," the first opera written specifically for television, was first broadcast by NBC-TV.

In 1961, the Houston Oilers won the second American Football League Championship Game, defeating the San Diego Chargers, 10-3.

In 1968, the Apollo 8 astronauts, orbiting the moon, read passages from the Old Testament Book of Genesis during a Christmas Eve telecast.

In 1980, Americans remembered the U.S. hostages in Iran by burning candles or shining lights for 417 seconds - one second for each day of captivity. Karl Doenitz, the last leader of the Third Reich following the suicides of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, died in West Germany at age 89.

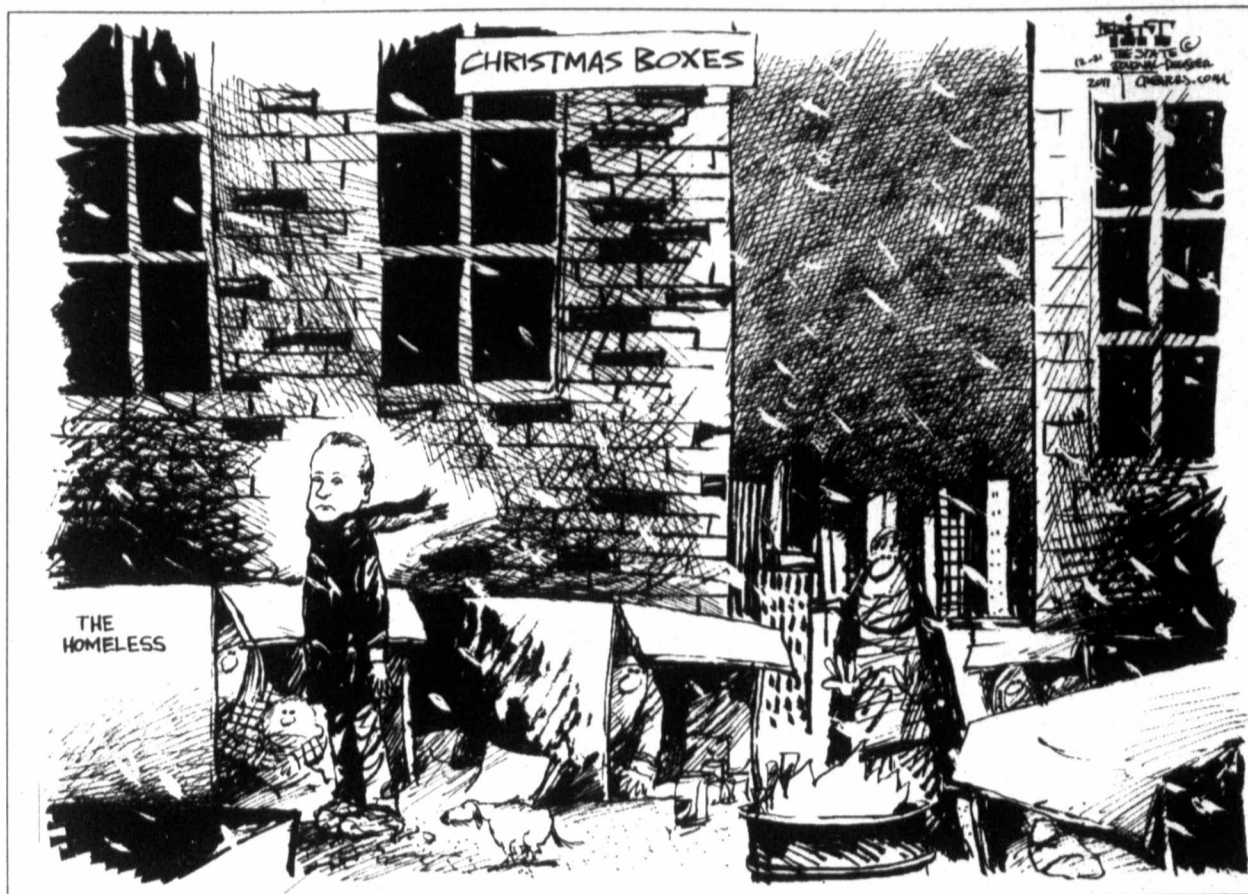
Ten years ago: Officials said President George W. Bush had created a formal line of succession at several key federal agencies in the event a Cabinet secretary were to be killed or incapacitated.

Five years ago: Ethiopia sent fighter jets into Somalia and bombed several towns in a dramatic attack on Somalia's powerful Islamic movement; Ethiopia's prime minister said his country had been "forced to enter a war."

One year ago: Pope Benedict XVI ushered in Christmas Eve with an evening Mass amid heightened security concerns following package bombings at two Rome embassies and Christmas Eve security breaches at the Vatican the previous two years.

Today's Birthdays: Songwriter-bandleader Dave Bartholomew is 91. Author Mary Higgins Clark is 84. Rock singer-musician Lemmy (Motorhead) is 66. Actor Grand L. Bush is 56. Actor Clarence Gilyard is 56. Actress Stephanie Hodge is 55. Rock musician Ian Burden (The Human League) is 54. Actor Anil Kapoor is 52. Actor Wade Williams is 50. Designer Kate Spade is 49. Rock singer Mary Ramsey (10,000 Maniacs) is 48. Actor Mark Valley is 47. Actor Diedrich Bader is 45. Actor Amaury Nolasco is 41. Singer Ricky Martin is 40. Author Stephenie Meyer ("Twilight") is 38. "American Idol" host Ryan Seacrest is 37.

Thought for Today: "Christmas comes, but once a year is enough." - American proverb



Have yourself a melancholy little Christmas

Sometimes it hurts to say Merry Christmas.

Those of us who are old enough to have experienced the pain of loss know that for some people Christmas is anything but merry.

Yet we say it, hopeful that the sadness in their eyes will be brightened by the promise of a lowly child born in a manger; that the good wishes of friends may help offset the feeling of loss that the season brings.

As we spend time with family and friends this Christmas, we will be reminded of those who are no longer with us physically, but are smiling and laughing with us in our minds' eye — parents, grandparents, cousins, friends. We will feel them.

We are thankful that our family can be together, however briefly, and that we all are healthy.

We will also ponder the fact that we are blessed. There are millions of people who are without a job and find themselves in a position they previously would not have thought

possible. There is want everywhere we turn, and children who are hungry.

Do you know that you live in a community where schools and teachers go out of their way to get some students a bit more food, because they are not sure the kids are getting any meals on the weekend?

Later in his short life, Jesus said, "There will be poor always."

He did not mean that we should not try to do anything about it.

So we will also be mindful of the wonderful churches and organizations like the Salvation Army that exemplify the spirit of Christ here every day.

We will worship this Christmas in one of those churches and be truly thankful for the opportunity to do so.

Our prayers will go out for the homeless, for men and women in



RANDY PRIBBLE

uniform and we will wonder what Christmas is like for them.

And yes, we will open presents, those brightly colored expressions of love for one another, knowing full well that should presents not be possible sometime in the future, the love will always be.

We will also pray for peace this Christmas - peace for this war-weary

world, and for peace within each of us.

We will ponder the meaning of it all: Innocence thrown into an evil world to save it; the beauty in the image of a helpless baby who will prove to be stronger than kings.

And we will resolve to try harder to deserve that child's gift.

Randy Pribble is the publisher of The Pampa News. Contact him at rpribble@thepampanews.com.

Letter to the Editor

Fuel prices in Pampa

To the Editor:

I was wondering when I read an article in The Pampa News who could have written this article and had they ever been to Pampa? The article said the average price per gallon of gas in Texas was \$3.05 and the average for the nation was

\$3.21 well

Obviously they haven't filled up in Pampa. They listed the highest in Texas in Texarkana at \$3.07 and we had a price of \$3.24 here in Pampa!

I don't guess I understand how far they have to ship our gasoline, because I thought it came from Borger, but I could be mistaken. Has anybody but me noticed?

Well the money saved on gasoline buys one more present for a loved one so I guess I'll go to Amarillo to fill up and we usually eat while were there and I'm sure the businesses in Pampa could use the extra money to fuel our economy. But remember to shop Pampa first.

Marland Miller
Pampa

The PAMPA NEWS

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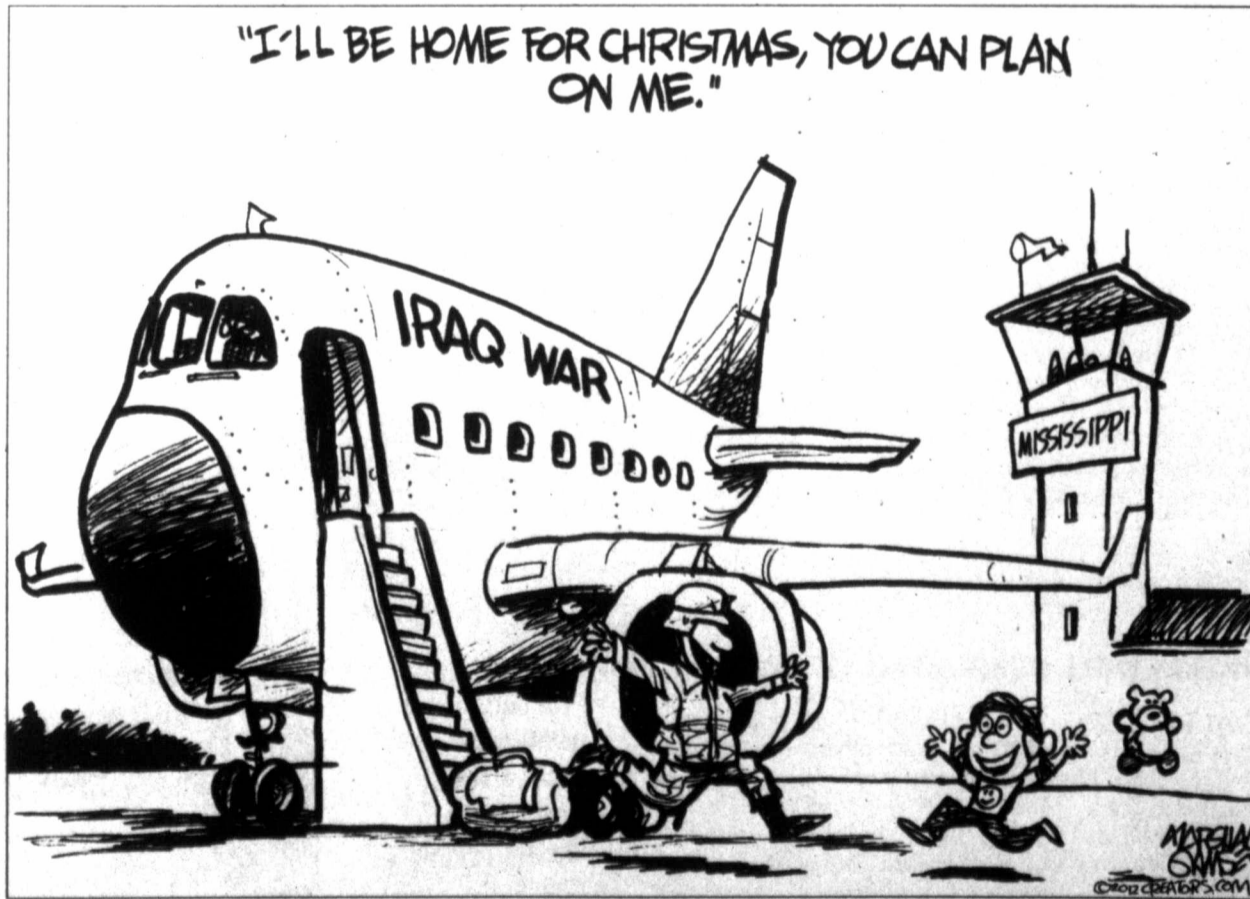
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We welcome your letters

To ensure publication, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Letters should be brief and to the point. All correspondence will be edited for length and clarity.
- All letters must be signed. Submit your name, address and telephone number with the letter for verification. Only your name and city will be published.
- Defamatory comments will not be published.
- E-mail submissions are welcome.
- The views and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of The Pampa News or its staff.

Christmas Day in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 25, the 359th day of 2011. There are six days left in the year. This is Christmas Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 25, 1991, Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev went on television to announce his resignation as the eighth and final leader of a communist superpower that had already gone out of existence.

On this date:

In A.D. 336, the first recorded celebration of Christmas on Dec. 25 took place in Rome.

In 1066, William the Conqueror was crowned king of England.

In 1776, Gen. George Washington and his troops crossed the Delaware River for a surprise attack against Hessian forces at Trenton, N.J.

In 1818, "Silent Night," written by Franz Gruber and Father Joseph Mohr, was performed for the first time, at the Church of St. Nikolaus in Oberndorf, Austria.

In 1931, New York's Metropolitan Opera broadcast an entire live opera over radio for the first time: "Hansel and Gretel" by Engelbert Humperdinck.

In 1936, American newspaperman Arthur Brisbane, 72, died in New York.

In 1941, during World War II, Japan announced the surrender of the British-Canadian garrison at Hong Kong.

In 1961, Pope John XXIII formally announced the upcoming convocation of the Second Vatican Council, which opened in Oct. 1962.

In 1989, ousted Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu (chow-SHES'-koo) and his wife, Elena, were executed following a popular uprising.

In 2009, passengers aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253 foiled an attempt to blow up the plane as it was landing in Detroit by seizing a man who tried to set off explosives in his underwear.

Ten years ago: From Mazar-e-Sharif to Kandahar in Afghanistan and the USS Theodore Roosevelt in the Arabian Sea, American forces celebrated Christmas with carols, touch football and turkey dinners. In his traditional "Urbi et Orbi" message, Pope John Paul II turned his thoughts at Christmas to children - Palestinian, Israeli, American, Afghan and African - declaring that humanity's hope depended on helping them.

Five years ago: James Brown, the "Godfather of Soul," died in Atlanta at age 73. Pope Benedict XVI used his Christmas Day address to call for a peaceful resolution of conflicts worldwide and appealed for greater caring of the poor, the exploited and all who suffer.

One year ago: The top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, Gen. David Petraeus, crisscrossed the country, making a Christmas visit to coalition troops at some of the main battle fronts in a show of appreciation and support in the tenth year of the war against the Taliban. A female suicide bomber attacked an aid center in Pakistan, killing at least 45 people. The West Bank town of Bethlehem bustled with its biggest crowd of Christian pilgrims in years. Former Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez died in Miami. Olympics documentary filmmaker Bud Greenspan, 84, died in New York.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Tony Martin is 98. Actor Dick Miller is 83. Author Anne Roiphe is 76. Actress Hanna Schygulla is 68. Rhythm-and-blues singer John Edwards (The Spinners) is 67. Actor Gary Sandy is 66. Singer Jimmy Buffett is 65. Pro and College Football Hall-of-Famer Larry Csonka is 65. Country singer Barbara Mandrell is 63. Actress Sissy Spacek is 62. Former White House adviser Karl Rove is 61. Actress CCH Pounder is 59. Singer Annie Lennox is 57. Reggae singer-musician Robin Campbell (UB40) is 57. Country singer Steve Wariner is 57. Singer Shane MacGowan (The Pogues, The Popes) is 54. Baseball Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson is 53. The former Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, Christina Romer, is 53. Actress Klea Scott is 43. Rock musician Noel Hogan (The Cranberries) is 40. Singer Dido is 40. Rock singer Mac Powell (Third Day) is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Ryan Shaw is 31. Country singer Alecia Elliott is 29. Pop singers Lisa and Jess Origliasso (The Veronicas) are 27.

Thought for Today: "One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas Day. Don't clean it up too quickly." - Andy Rooney, CBS News commentator (1919-2011).

Pay

The case led to the 2009 Timothy Cole Act, under which Texas increased the compensation it pays to those wrongfully convicted from \$50,000 to \$80,000 for each year they spent in prison. So far, 43 inmates have been exonerated in Texas TCOA more than any other state - according to the New York-based Innocence Project. The organization specializes in using DNA evidence to overturn wrongful convictions, and the Innocence Project of Texas is its local arm.

Cole's family received \$1.06 million in compensation in May, according to the Texas Comptroller's Office.

Cole's mother, Ruby Session, is in charge of his estate. She told the AP she did not want to speak about the matter, and her Fort Worth-based attorney, Robert Gieb, also declined comment.

Kennard claimed during the Dec. 13 court hearing that he was one of Cole's heirs. Court documents show that an associate judge ruled that the heirs were Cole's mother as well as Kennard, and that the estate should be divided equally between the parents.

Cory Session said the

ruling was suspended pending review of a will that Cole created while in the Army. The will is not expected to be publicly released until at least next month.

Court documents don't show any record of the judge's order being suspended, but they do indicate a letter being issued for a further hearing in the matter. It's unclear when that hearing might be held. When contacted by phone, an administrator for the Tarrant County court read through the documents but couldn't provide further guidance on what the next step might be.

Cory Session said Kennard was subpoenaed to appear at the hearing, and the judge asked him just two questions: Did Tim Cole have any children and was he ever married? Kennard answered "no" to both.

Session said his mother doesn't dispute that Kennard is Cole's father, but from the day Cole was born, Kennard said he wanted nothing to do with the baby. That prompted her to leave Kennard's name off Cole's birth certificate, Session said.

"His birth certificate

says Timothy Brian Cole, Mother: Ruby Cole. Where it says 'Father' it's blank," he said.

Session said the family was further angered that during the court proceedings, Kennard didn't ask where Cole was buried - even though his gravesite was two miles from the Fort Worth courtroom.


"He finally came to Fort Worth after all of those years ignoring us, and he didn't even want to go see him," Session said.

Session said Cole was raised by his mother and stepfather. He said that if the judge's order stands, his mother plans to sue Kennard for back child support.

"We need to make him accountable," Session said. "He's not going to swoop in, sign on the dotted line, and get well over half a million dollars. Actually, he might do it, but we'll make sure he doesn't get away with it."

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VFW

in Childress, which needed repairs on interior damage and a leaky roof.

Even this past Tuesday, the VFW took 17 local needy families on a Christmas shopping trip at Walmart.

"We just had our meeting and the members nominated families that we thought could use some help this Christmas," Martin said. "It was great. (The families) were real appreciative and we had a good time. ... The best part of it was it wasn't just junk toys that the kids bought, you know? They bought stuff they needed, clothes, that kind of thing.

"And the kids all bought something for their parents for Christmas," Martin added. "It was good to see. It was fun."

Martin said that it's simply the VFW way to give back.

"That's the VFW motto," Martin said. "We honor our dead by helping the living. We take it seriously. I think it's the comradeship. I would say that it's the comradeship that we all share that makes

us truly believe that. (Helping) is just what we like to do."

In turn, Martin said that the VFW heartily appreciates the support that the Gray County community has given the post in 2011.

"I think the community backs us 100 percent," he said. "We get a lot of support from the people in the area, and we appreciate that. ... To see a Veterans Day program like Travis puts on, you see the M.K. Brown (Auditorium) full of kids, that kind of tells you something being a veteran. That makes you feel good. We love that."

It's displays like that, Martin said, that motivates the VFW to keep up its steady stream of service to Pampa in 2012.

"Every year, we want to grow and we want to be able to do things," Martin said. "We don't have anything special that we're planning on. We just want to keep our community in our sights and do what we can do to help."

Enbridge

cont. from page 1

and southwest Oklahoma, has spurred recent industry growth, particularly with access to new technologies like horizontal drilling and fracking. Increased production has trickled down to create growth for transportation companies like Enbridge.

"We're seeing a lot more liquid rich gas and growing production in that area, so that is and will continue to be a big focus for us," said Larson.

As of now, she isn't certain how many jobs the expansion will bring to the area.

"We've been in the Panhandle and the Pampa area for a while, and we certainly are committed to continuing to grow our business there, and contribute to the workforce when we can, whenever it's appropriate to do so," she said.

cont. from page 1

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Christmas Morning Service
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Community

WEDDING BELLS



Jenee Norris and Clinton Devoll

Norris, Devoll wed Sept. 10

Jeneé Brionne Norris and Clinton Reid Devoll were married on September 10, 2011 in Amarillo, Texas. The ceremony was officiated by Rev. Paul Carruth and Carol Peet.

Parents of the bride are Jenny Bronner-Norris and Dennis Norris.

Grandparents are Sandra and David Bronner of Pampa, and Jackie and Jim Norris of Lorenzo, Texas. Parents of the groom are Twila and Vernon Devoll. Grandparents are Herb Trimble and Louise and Vernon Ray Devoll all of Pampa.

Maid of honor was Erin Norris, sister of the bride.

Bridal attendants were Ali Norris, sister of the bride; and Derek Norris, brother of the bride; Darby Jackson, Danielle Miller and Kourtney Evens.

The flower girl was Katie Evens. Guest book registry was Cheyenne Rush, cousin of the bride.

Best man was Coy Devoll, brother of the groom. Groom's attendants were Stefani Devoll, sister-in-law of the groom; Brian Sullivan, Josh Jackson, Wade Miller and Chris Evens.

The ring bearers were Dillon Evens and Kaleb Evens. Ushers were Mitchell Kilgo and Collin

Kilgo, cousins of the bride; James Ray Devoll, cousin of the groom; and Adam Kent.

A dinner and dance followed the ceremony at Moonwater Weddings. Following the wedding, the happy couple spent their honeymoon at the Atlantis Resort in Nassau.

The bride attended Wayland Baptist University on a soccer scholarship and graduated with a degree in Sociology. The groom graduated from West Texas A&M with a degree in Business Administration. The couple will reside in Pampa.

Weekly Menus

Pampa Senior Citizens Center

MONDAY, Dec. 26
Chicken fried steak or chicken & ham tetrazini, mashed potatoes, green beans, beets, beans, slaw, tossed salad, jello, spice cake, blueberry creme pie, fruit cup, hot roll, cornbread

TUESDAY, Dec. 27
Swiss steak or Kraut 'n sausages, sour creme potatoes, california blend, beans, slaw, tossed salad, jello, pistachio/chocolate bundt cake, lemon pie, fruit cup, hot roll, cornbread

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 28
Roast beef brisket/brown gravy or cook's choice, mashed potatoes, baby carrots, peas, beans, slaw, tossed salad, jello, pineapple upside down cake, blackberry cobbler, fruit cup, hot roll, cornbread

THURSDAY, Dec. 28
Chicken strips or liver 'n onions, curly fries, mac & tomatoes, corn, beans, slaw, tossed salad, jello, funfetti cake, pumpkin pie, fruit cup, hot roll, cornbread

FRIDAY, Dec. 29
Cod fish filet/hushpuppies or swedish meatballs/noodles, potato wedges, squash casserole, beans, slaw, tossed salad, jello, brownies, tapioca cup, fruit cup, garlic breadstick, hot roll, cornbread

Pampa Meals on Wheels

MONDAY, Dec. 26
Closed - Holiday Merry Christmas

TUESDAY, Dec. 27
BBQ Sandwiches, potato salad, baked beans, pineapple

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 28
Meatloaf, scalloped potatoes, peas, pears

THURSDAY, Dec. 29
Stew, cornbread, applesauce

FRIDAY, Dec. 30
Tater tot casserole, cabbage, blackeyed peas, mixed fruit

THE PAMPA NEWS

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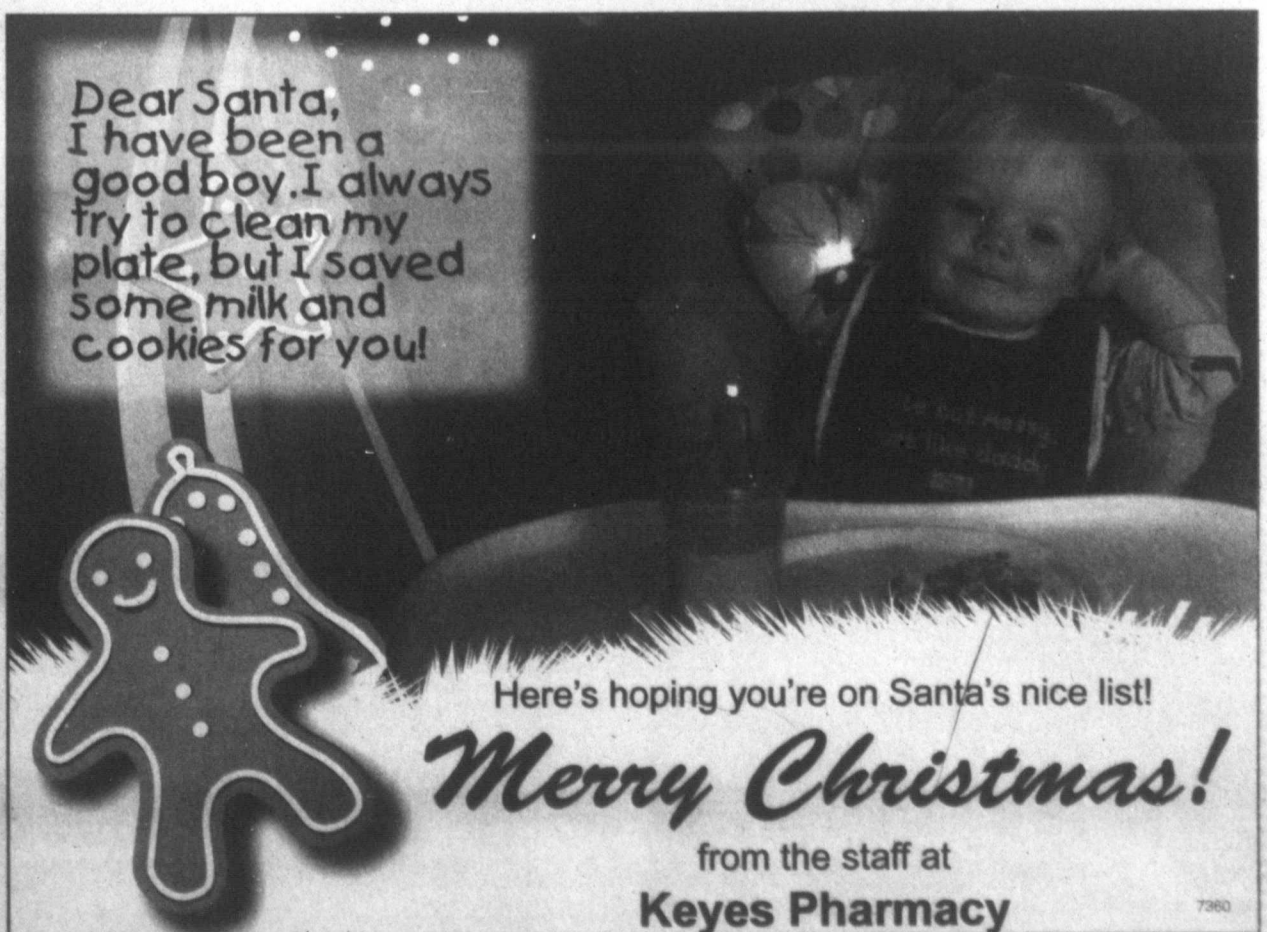
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Here's hoping you're on Santa's nice list!

Merry Christmas!

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Community

ENDURING LOVE



Judy and John Warner
50 years ago

Warners celebrate 50th wedding anniversary Dec. 30

The children of John and Judy Warner announce their parent's 50th wedding anniversary.

John William Warner and Judith Diane Mumma were married December 30, 1961 at St. Stephen's Methodist Church, Houston, Tx.

The couple have resided in Pampa for the last 50 years. They are members of the United Methodist Church and have been involved in many civic and com-

munity projects.

Children of the couple are Mike Warner, Amarillo, Tx; Sandy Carr and husband Ron, Miami, Tx, Melanie Warner, Fresno, Ca. and Patti Warner, Dallas, Tx.

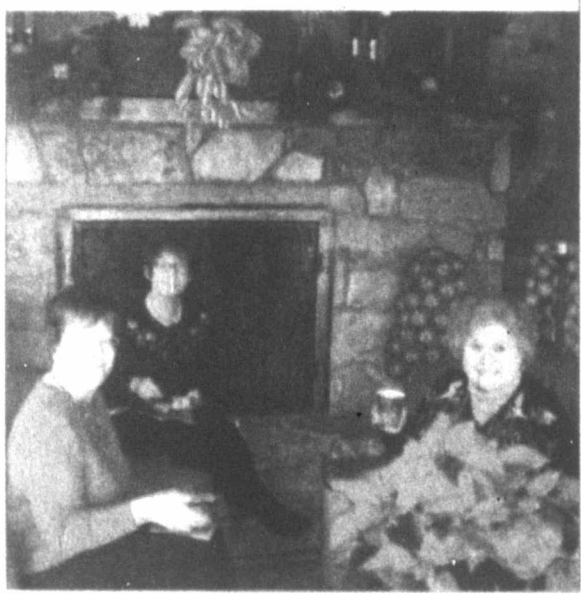
Grandchildren are Sage, Phebe and Simone Warner of Amarillo; Jonathan, Aaron and Shelbie Carr of Miami and Kyla, Cole, Hudson and the late Carson Kennedy of Fresno.

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President's reception



Altrusans Judy Warner (from left), Carol Fields and Rochelle Lacy enjoy visiting at the Altrusa Christmas Reception held recently at the home of Kathryn Green. The annual event is held to honor the club's president. Rochelle Lacy is presently serving as 2011-2012 president.

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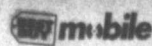
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Caprock Tourney a holiday tradition for PHS basketball



photo courtesy of Joe Murray

Latigo Collins shoots a layup in last season's Caprock Tournament. Collins helped the Harvesters to a second place finish in last season's tournament.

ANDREW GLOVER
aglover@thepampanews.com

During the last four seasons, the Pampa Harvesters and Lady Harvesters have included a trip to Lubbock in their holiday plans. This year will be no different, as both teams will try to build on last year's results when they return to the Caprock Tournament Wednesday in Lubbock.

The tournament is the largest in the state of Texas and will host 85 teams this week from all over the state. Schools as large as 5A and as small as 1A participate in the event.

For the second consecutive season,

Pampa will be playing in a small school bracket. Last year, the Harvesters finished as runners-up and the Lady Harvesters won the consolation bracket. The Harvesters got to play the championship game on Lubbock Christian University's floor. Senior Latigo Collins said it was a fun atmosphere.

"I had played there before then in AAU," Collins said. "But there was quite a bit of people there. Just wish we wouldn't have gotten killed."

The Harvesters were defeated 93-67 by Wall, which was ranked second in 2A at the time.

Head coach Dustin Miller said he likes
TOURNAMENT cont. on page 5B

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in the highest
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good will toward men.
Luke 2:14*

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for the good will you've shown
us this past year.*

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Sports

Merry Christmas from the Broncos' Tim Tebow

Last week, ended Denver Broncos' quarterback Tim Tebow's comeback run. Six straight come from behind victories is still an accomplishment.

Now, I've heard people saying that "Tebow Time" is overrated and he isn't the real reason that the Broncos won. I agree and disagree in part with those people. Tebow definitely deserves some credit, because if he didn't start playing in the fourth, then there wouldn't be a "Tebow time."

Still, other people do deserve credit for those wins. With Christmas tomorrow, here's some people whom I think are on Tebow's Christmas card list.

Looking at just the Broncos, Tebow definitely has been grateful to his defense and kicker Matt Prater. During the six wins, the Broncos allowed an average of 17 points per game.

The defense has been able to keep opponents at bay which has kept Denver in the game so Tebow Time can occur.

During the winning streak, Prater has kicked three-straight game-winning field goals and two game-tying field goals. Prater has definitely come up clutch and has helped



ANDREW GLOVER

the Broncos get where they are.

These victories weren't just because of Tebow's team either. Some of the opponents helped Tebow lead a comeback.

I think the first card Tebow would send would be to the fans in Miami that cheered him to a comeback victory.

Dear Fans,

Thanks for cheering me on and helping my team come from behind. I understand that the Dolphins are your hometown team. Your enthusiastic support

shows I still have a place in your heart as well. I feel so blessed because of that. Any ways thanks for a memorable game. Merry Christmas.

God Bless, Tim Tebow

Then, there was the game against Minnesota. It was a key game for Denver because a victory and an Oakland loss would mean it would be in first place. The Vikings secondary, especially Cedric Griffin, left Denver's Demaryius Thomas wide open several times leading to two touchdowns. Tebow was definitely grateful for that.

Dear Cedric Griffin,

Thanks for allowing me to hit my target. You don't know how much I needed that. Your man Jared Allen was on me all game, I needed an escape. Thank for letting me find my outlet. Merry Christmas.

God Bless, Tim Tebow

Finally, against the Bears, it looked like Tebow Time wasn't going to run as scheduled but there was Marion Barber. Two times the Bears could have left the Mile High city with a win and deny Tebow a chance. Thanks to Barber running out of bounds and fumbling that didn't happen.

Dear Marion Barber, *Thanks for saving my team and giving me chance after chance to lead them back. I know the playoffs mean a lot to you and your team. But I'm humble and grateful that you gave me another chance. You are a great man. Merry Christmas.*

God Bless, Tim Tebow

This week, Tebow will be looking to start another run. Maybe someone on the Bills will give him a playoff berth for Christmas.

Andrew Glover is The Pampa News sports reporter. He can be reached online at aglover@thepampa.com

Romo on roll for playoff hopeful Dallas

IRVING (AP) — Tony Romo is on quite a roll, even though he has never had a winning December for the Dallas Cowboys.

Right after their last game, owner Jerry Jones declared that it would be a career disappointment for him if the NFC East-leading Cowboys missed the playoffs this season when their quarterback is playing so well.

"I just think anytime you're in this position, where you have a chance to make the playoffs, it's important to get it done," Romo said. "It's hard to get here. It's also fun to be in this position and have a chance. I think that's exciting for our football team, that's why guys are playing with a lot of passion and are energized to be here every day. That's a great feeling."

The Cowboys (8-6) play their regular-season home finale against Philadelphia (6-8) on Saturday. If the New York Giants lose earlier in the day against the

Jets, Dallas would have a chance to clinch the NFC East title.

Though Dallas has won only one of its three December games, the victory coming last week at Tampa Bay, Romo has completed 70 percent of his passes for 869 yards with eight touchdowns and no interceptions in that stretch. He has 22 TDs with only four picks his last 10 games.

"I tell you what, he's playing very, very good football right now," Eagles coach Andy Reid said. "It's a tribute to him and that whole offense there, but he's putting that ball into small windows, doing a nice job with it."

After the Cowboys swept through their four November games, improving Romo's career record as a starter in that month to 19-2, they lost their first two games in December when they missed field goals at the end of regulation in both.

Romo has a 10-14 record

overall in December, and has never won more than two games in the last month of the calendar year. But his eight TDs this month are already more than he's ever had in December.

"It's about us going out and winning football games, so I don't think about any individual stats or any of that stuff," Romo said. "Anytime you step on the field, you've got to have confidence in your abilities as a team and, obviously, individually. Our team continues to grow and get better."

Romo, in his sixth season as the Cowboys starter, got his first playoff victory two years ago when the Cowboys beat the Eagles in the regular-season finale and then again the following week in the NFC wild-card game.

In 2006, after Romo became the starter seven games into the season, the Cowboys lost 21-20 in the playoffs at Seattle when Romo flubbed the hold on a short field-goal attempt

and was tackled short of the end zone trying to scramble for a score. A year later in the postseason, the Cowboys were home as the No. 1 seed after a bye week and lost 27-21 to the Giants after Romo's fourth-down pass with 9 seconds left was intercepted in the end zone.

Romo was asked if he was worried they may be running out of chances and if there was a feeling of having to do it now.

"I just think you have to put your head down and win football games and keep getting better as a team throughout the season. We'll deal with the end of the stuff later," Romo said. "It's hard to be in this position, to be in first place this late in the year."

"You need to go out and obviously finish it, and then start the whole new season once the playoffs begin," he said. "So our objective is just keep getting better, put our heads down and go win a football game this week."

Quirks galore in shortened NBA season

Carmelo Anthony's return to Denver is delayed for another year. LeBron James and Dwyane Wade won't be visiting Sacramento anytime soon. Fans in Chicago will only be seeing Kobe Bryant on television this season.

The NBA sought competitive balance. What it got was schedule imbalance.

One of the many consequences of the lockout, besides hundreds of lost games and hundreds of millions of lost dollars, was the tradition that every team plays in every NBA city at least once per season. That's not the case this year.

While teams will visit every other team in their own conference, they will only make trips to play nine clubs from the other side of the league instead of the usual 15.

It's one of many quirks of a 66-game schedule that, in a variety of ways, is not like any other in NBA history.

"In some cases, the team business-type might complain that they didn't get (to host) the Heat or the Lakers," NBA Commissioner David Stern said. "While in the background, the coach is doing cartwheels. So it's kind of an interesting dynamic."

There's no shortage of those.

Reigning scoring king Kevin Durant dropped 66 points in New York earlier this year — alas, at Rucker Park, the fabled outdoor court and not Madison Square Garden. He and

Oklahoma City won't be going to play the Knicks this season.

The NBA champion Dallas Mavericks won't be going to Charlotte, nor will Durant's Thunder, Bryant's Lakers or the Spurs, and that will keep ticket dollars from finding Bobcats owner Michael Jordan's pockets.

Teams won't be playing the same number of divisional games, so get ready for complaining should tiebreakers come into play when determining playoff seeding. And many small market teams will be miss out on some guaranteed

sellouts against some elite clubs that might hurt in the standings but help with the bottom line.

"That's what happens when you have a lockout," Durant said.

When Magic coach Stan Van Gundy heard the league was putting together a 66-game slate instead of the usual 82-game run, he figured the breakdown was simple: Play every team in your division four times, then face every other team home and away.

That seemed easy enough.

Instead, it's complicated. "I'm not being critical

of it," Van Gundy said. "They've got a short period of time to play 66 games and there were a lot of factors they had to consider and I'm sure that they did it the best way that they could."

True, but there is some zanihness.

Atlanta takes a trip that has the Hawks going north, then south, then north, then west, then east, then west and then home again, all in the span of nine days. Cleveland has a nine-game February homestand. San Antonio goes nearly four

QUIRKS cont. on page 2D

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And the angel said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy... Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10,11

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Great Grandparents... Joan Smigielski
Merle & AnnaMae Spence
Jane Adams

Clark James Campbell
Born... August 9, 2011



Parents... Ben & Mayra Campbell
Grandparents... Don & Sue Campbell
Ramon & Grace Hernandez
Great Grandparents... LaJuana Mayer
Anne Campbell

Caleb Wyatt & Colt Weston Fondren
Born... November 22, 2011



Parents... Jeremy & Misty Fondren
Sister... Alexis Fondren
Grandparents... Joe & Brenda Hall
Greg & Debbie Darby

Carson Grey Gonzalez
Born... June 25, 2011



Parents... Vince & Teryn Gonzalez
Grandparents... Dennis & Tonja Stowers
Vicente & Sofia Gonzalez
Great Grandparents... Betty & Vernon Stowers
Jim & Jo Atherton

Madison Lauren Petroski
Born... October 5, 2011



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Grandparents... Mike & Sherry Cox
Amy & The late Robert Petroski

Annie Grace Lawrence
Born... July 18, 2011



Parents... Kelley & Rhett Lawrence
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Amy Alexander
Kara & James Lawrence
Great Grandparents... Dot & Dick Stowers
Bob Lawrence

Roland Goode
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QDY LRQFSLJ LXFBYQJ ABSL
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— JXEU NETTFR WQZRUH
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I THINK OF A HERO
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DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT COMES
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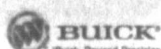
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Santa Claus still flying high in new AP poll

CONNIE CASS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) - Why do kids believe a chubby guy in a flying sleigh can deliver joy across America? Because their parents do. A whopping 84 percent of grown-ups were once children who trusted in Santa's magic, and lots cling to it still.

Things are changing fast these days, with toddlers wishing for iPads, grade schoolers emailing their Christmas lists and moms wrestling over bargain toys at midnight sales. Despite all the pressures on the rituals of the season, an AP-GfK poll confirms that families are sticking by old St. Nick.

"It's important for kids to have something to believe in," says great-grandmother Wanda Smith of Norman, Okla.

And so they do. Year after year, Santa Claus survives the scoffers and the Scrooges and the 6-year-old playground skeptics. He endures belittling commercials that portray him shopping at Target or taking directions from an iPhone. He shrugs off scolds who say his bagful of toys overshadows the reason for the season.

Two-thirds of parents with kids under 18 say Santa's an important part of their celebrations this year. Moms, especially, have a soft spot for the man in red - 71 percent of them say he's important, and that's a big jump from 58 percent just five years ago.

His overall popularity is up slightly from an AP-AOL poll in 2006, before the recession hit. In these bleaker times of homes lost to foreclosure and parents sweating out their next paychecks, the poll shows Santa riding high with families both wealthy and poor.

Maybe that's because the big guy's always known how to stretch a dollar to make a kid smile.

Smith, whose childhood gifts were mostly handmade by her mother - things like cookies and knit scarves - remembers that every year Santa Claus managed to put one present under the tree for her to share with her two brothers (four more siblings came later).

"One year it was a bicycle, one year we had a sled. One year we got a puppy - his name was Jack and he was a border collie," recalls Smith, now 70.

"We didn't have a lot," she said, "but we didn't know it. Our mother and daddy made it a wonderful time for us."

In multicultural America, Father Christmas isn't just for Christians any more. Three-fourths of non-Christian adults say they believed in Santa when they were children. And half feel he's important to their holiday celebrations now.

Developmental psychologist Cyndy Scheibe, who's been interviewing kids about Santa since 1986, said lots of Jewish children told her that Santa Claus was real, even though he didn't stop at their houses on Christmas Eve.

And many non-Christian parents embrace Santa because they see Christmas serving as a secular as well as religious holiday in the U.S., she said.

"Santa Claus is more than someone who just comes and gives you a present, it's this whole spirit of giving and magic that you get to be a part of and celebrate," said Scheibe, an associate professor at Ithaca College in New York.

That's what keeps Santa going over the decades and

across cultures, she said. "That, and there's almost nothing as much fun as getting to see your kid's face so completely excited."

Scheibe knows firsthand. She used to climb a ladder to

polled said Santa detracts from the religious significance of Christmas more than he enhances it.

When she was growing up, Naomi Stenberg's fundamentalist Baptist parents didn't want her mixed up with Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny or Halloween trick-or-treating.

"I didn't understand why everybody else got to believe in Santa, and me and my brother didn't," says Stenberg, 32, now a stay-at-home mom in Baxter, Minn. "I felt left out."

Her own three children have gotten the full Kris Kringle experience, but sometimes she feels ill-equipped to handle the tough queries from her youngest, 6-year-old Rylan.

"She's been asking questions like how does Santa fit through the chimney," she said. "I don't know how to answer things like that."

Matt Hoyt vividly remembers seeing Santa's black boots peeking out from behind his bedroom curtains when he was a boy. He froze. "I was just trying to pretend to be asleep," Hoyt said, "so I'd get my presents."

Only much later did he realize those were probably the black shoes of his dad,

hanging his new "Star Wars" drapes. Now Hoyt, a 35-year-old computer engineer from Houston, is awaiting the birth of his first child in April, and wondering how long that child will believe.

In the poll, the median age when adults said they outgrew Santa was 8. Hoyt suspects his child's generation will

turn away even earlier. After all, "They've got Google at their fingertips."

But Santa needn't worry. They'll come back someday ... when they're parents.

The Associated Press-GfK Poll was conducted Dec. 8-12 by GfK Roper Public Affairs and Corporate Communications. It involved

landline and cellphone interviews with 1,000 adults nationwide and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

AP Deputy Director of Polling Jennifer Agiesta and News Survey Specialist Dennis Junius contributed to this report.



the roof every Christmas, her daughter watching, to leave a key tied to a big red bow, because they didn't have a fireplace.

It's not all snowflakes and mistletoe in Santaland, however. Even among Christians, there's tension about how big a role, if any, a jolly old elf deserves in the celebration of Christ's birth.

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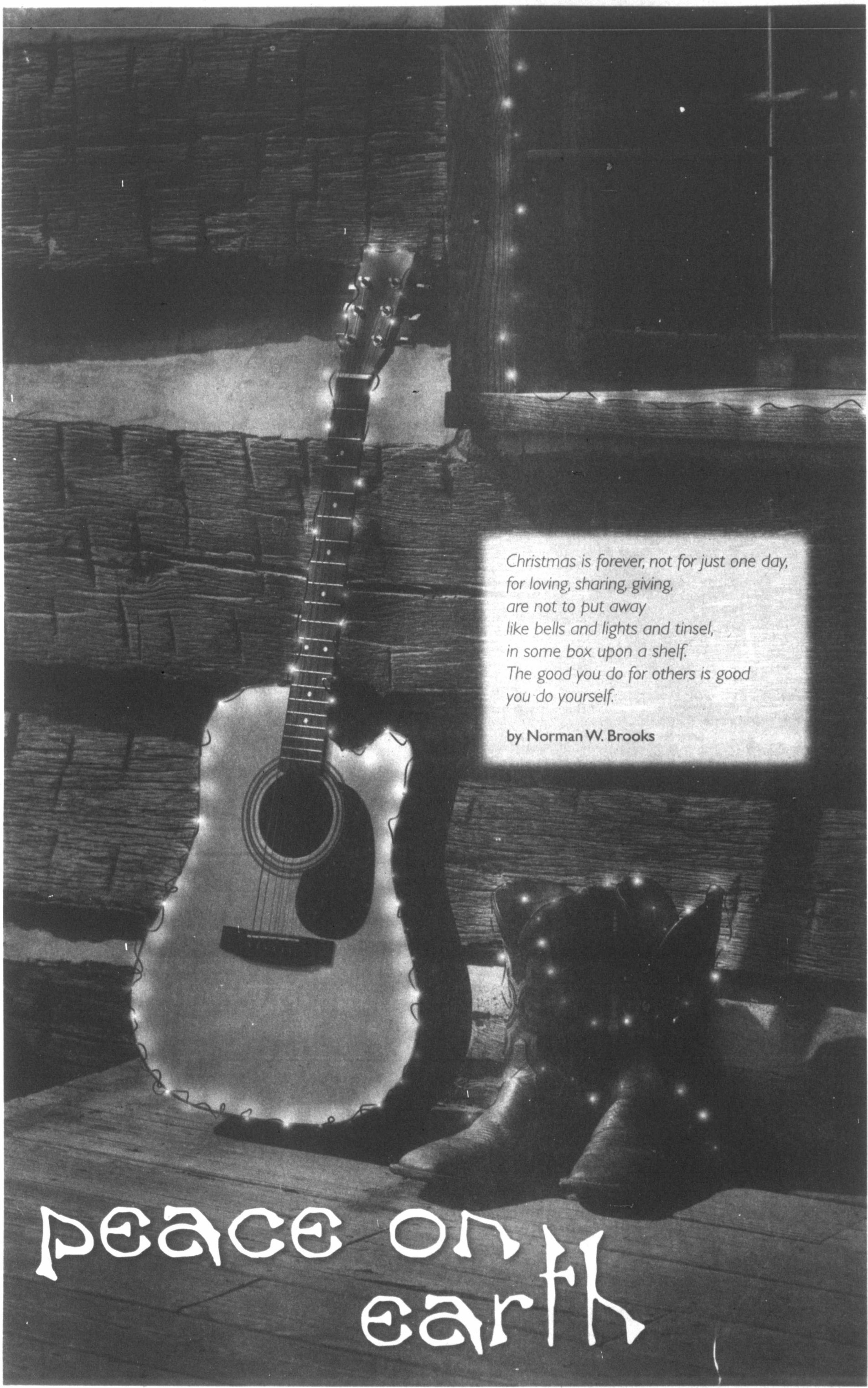
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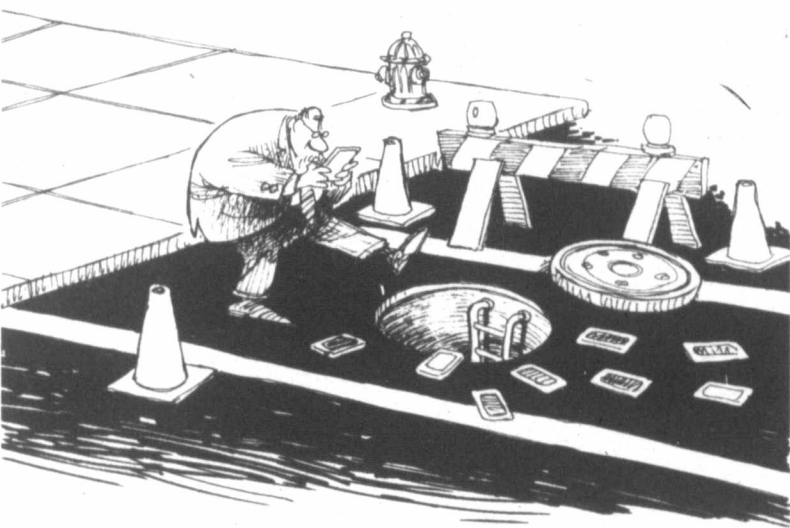


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"They won't know till they're grown, but their BEST gifts are the memories they're making."

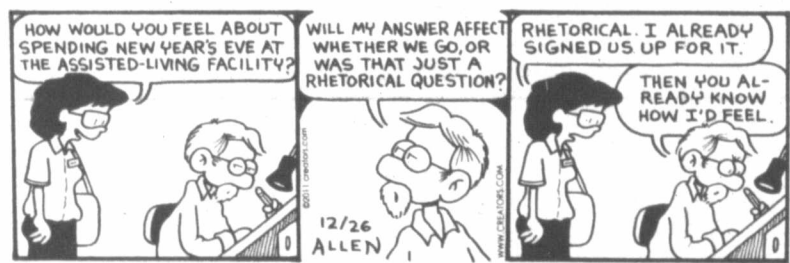
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Nest Heads



daily horoscope

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Monday, Dec. 26, 2011:

Expect to flip from being very creative to practical this year. Both sides are part of you and can work as a team. Once these elements come together, you will witness dynamic changes in various areas of your life. Your centering allows for many more possibilities, though you might demand changes from yourself and from others. If you are attached, your sweetie might not have the flexibility that you do this year. Be kind, and let him or her adjust to the morphing you. If you are single, a relationship could evolve. You will need time to see if the bond will be valid once this period ends. **CAPRICORN** often can demand a lot.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★ Meetings activate an unusual resourcefulness and creativity in you. Someone who often plays devil's advocate appears to have shut down. A provocative action could open a door and/or cause a change. Express your caring in a way that counts. Tonight: Where the action is.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★ You will need your positive attitude in order to leap over a difficulty or problem. Understand the liabilities when dealing with a higher-up or a respected relative. An unanticipated reaction could cause a problem. You come from a place of caring. Tonight: To the wee hours.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★★ When eyeing a situation, you have the unique ability to demand a change in the status quo. Although you might want to indulge in a reaction, do your best to center yourself before acting. Bold thinking saves the day. Tonight: Relax. You need some downtime.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★★ Deal with a partner or associate directly when handling a touchy matter. This party might be capable of the unexpected, causing you to overcompensate. It might be hard to tell, but this person really does care and might not realize the dimensions of his or her actions. Tonight: Talk away.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Others clearly are drawn to you, yet they could challenge you. Be responsive and understand their moodiness, which could be a natural response to the holidays. Stay even, and a better attitude will come forward. Tonight: Indulge a loved one.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Others might have the day off, but you feel the need to accomplish a little more. Some of you will be working, while others will be tackling a home project. Many people would like to visit or chat with you. Be honest about your time. Tonight: Mellow out.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ You have a different, flamboyant style. Somehow your decisions could be provocative. Others act in ways that might be difficult to understand. Approach plans and a project creatively. Tonight: Give a child or loved one extra time.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ Pressure builds. Inadvertently, you make judgments that increase the tension. Realize your limits and stop worrying about what others expect. You are human and can do only so much. An element of the unexpected could disrupt your plans. Tonight: Close to home.

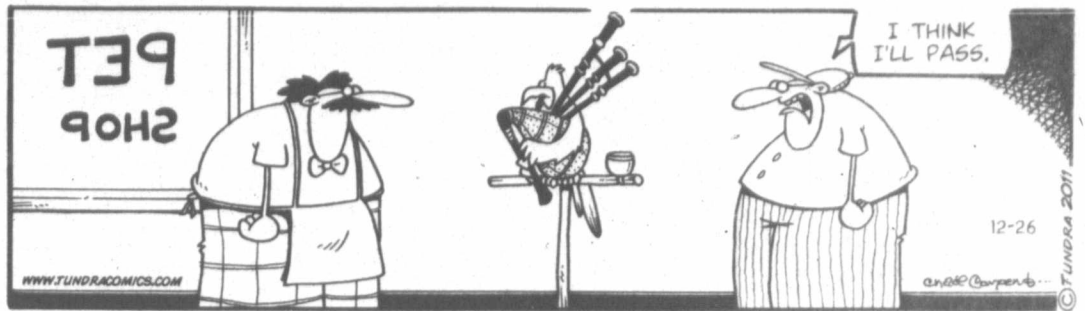
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★★ Others come forward and express their preferences. A friend or associate could be a bit much to handle. You are wondering why you should deal with this behavior. Maintain an element of levity. A child could do what is least expected. Tonight: Look at what saunters through the door!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★ You might be bent on tallying up the damages of the past few days, or returning an item or two. Relax and don't put any more stress on yourself than in the past. Listen to your inner voice regarding an unstable domestic issue. You will know what to do. Tonight: Treat yourself to something you want that you didn't get.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ You are full of excitement. Someone at a distance might hold back or do something very different. Let go of feeling awkward; know that you don't have all the solutions. Let your personality melt barriers. Show your caring in a way that speaks to that person or persons. Tonight: As you want.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★ You might feel down. Don't overthink the situation. You could be tired or reacting to a grumbling loved one. Make a call, and you'll feel better quickly. Don't get stuck dealing with another person. Tonight: Be careful with a financial risk.

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Gray wolves see rebound, but future uncertain

JOHN FLESHER
Associated Press

ATLANTA, Mich. (AP) - After devoting four decades and tens of millions of dollars to saving the gray wolf, the federal government wants to get out of the wolf-protection business, leaving it to individual states - and the wolves themselves - to determine the future of the legendary predator.

The Obama administration has declared more than 4,000 wolves in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin have recovered from widespread extermination and will be removed from the endangered species list.

"Gray wolves are thriving in the Great Lakes region," said Dan Ashe, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Coupled with an earlier move that lifted protections in five western states, the decision puts the gray wolf at a historical crossroads - one that could test both its reputation for resilience and the tolerance of ranchers and hunters who bemoan its attacks on livestock and big game.

Wolves have returned only to isolated pockets

of the territory they once occupied, and increasing numbers are dying at the hands of hunters, wildlife agents and ranchers. Now, the legal shield making it a crime to gun them down is being lifted in the only two sections of the lower



Gray Wolves

48 states where significant numbers exist.

State officials said they will keep wolf numbers healthy, but all three western Great Lakes states will allow wolves to be shot if they are caught assaulting farm animals or pets.

"We now have the ability to kill a wolf that needs killing," said Russ Mason, Michigan's wildlife division chief.

Hunting and trapping also could be allowed. No seasons have been set.

Some environmentalists supported the decision. Others whose lawsuits blocked previous efforts to drop Great Lakes wolves from the endangered list

WOLF cont. on page 2D

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Wolf

said they were disappointed but had not decided whether to return to court.

"We believe the wolf has not recovered," said Howard Goldman, Minnesota state director for the Humane Society of the United States.

Since being declared endangered in 1974, the American wolf population has grown fivefold - to about 6,200 animals wandering parts of 10 states outside Alaska.

"They are in the best position they've been in for the past 100 years," said David Mech, a senior scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey in St. Paul, Minn., and a leading wolf expert. The animals' long-term survival will "depend on how much wild land remains available, because wolves are not compatible with areas that are agricultural and have a lot of humans."

There's just too much conflict."

The government has also put off a decision on protections in 29 Eastern states that presently have no wolves. The Interior Department said it still was reconsidering its prior claim that wolves in those states historically were a separate species, which effectively would cancel out protections now in place.

Gray wolves in Wyoming are next in line to come off the endangered list, which is expected sometime next year. Similar actions are planned for most remaining western states and the Great Plains.

Since 1991, the federal government has spent \$92.6 million on gray wolf recovery programs and state agencies have chipped in \$13.9 million, according to documents reviewed by The

Associated Press.

"We are ready to declare success in those areas where wolves are now secure, turn over management responsibility to the states and begin to focus our limited resources on other species that are in trouble," said Gary Frazer, assistant director for the Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species program.

The government plans to continue trying to bolster a struggling Mexican gray wolf population in the desert Southwest and is weighing whether to expand protections for small numbers of the animals that have slipped into the Pacific Northwest from Canada.

But there are no plans to promote their return elsewhere. Federal officials say it's not the government's job to return wolves to their previous range as long as the population is stable.

In Montana and Idaho, where wolves can be legally hunted and trapped, officials want to drive down wolf numbers this winter to curb attacks on farm animals and elk.

Some scientists and advocates say the hunts show what will happen when federal safeguards are lifted elsewhere. The government, they say, is abandoning the recovery effort too soon, before packs can take hold in new areas. Vast, wild territories in the southern Rockies

and Northeast are ripe for wolves but unoccupied.

"The habitat is there. The prey is there. Why not give them the chance?" said Chris Amato, New York's assistant commissioner for natural resources.

But federal officials are grappling with tight budgets and political pressure to expand hunting and prevent wolves from invading new turf. They insist the animals known for their eerie howl, graceful lope and ruthless efficiency in slaughtering prey will get by on their own with help from state agencies.

North America was once home to as many as 2 million gray wolves. By the 1930s, fur traders, bounty hunters and government agents had poisoned, trapped and shot almost all wolves outside Canada and Alaska.

The surviving 1,200 were clustered in northern Minnesota in the 1970s. With endangered species protection, their numbers rocketed to nearly 3,000 in the state and they gradually spread elsewhere.

Today, Wisconsin has about 782 wolves and Michigan 687 - far above what biologists said were needed for sustainable populations.

The success story is hardly surprising in woodlands teeming with deer, said John Vucetich, a biologist at Michigan Tech University. But even in such an ideal setting, the

wolves could return only when killing them became illegal.

"What do wolves need to survive?" Vucetich said. "They need forest cover, and they need prey. And they need not to be shot."

Shooting already is happening - legally or not - as adventurous wolves range into new regions such as Michigan's Lower Peninsula and the plains of eastern Montana.

Those sightings are unsettling to farmers because resurgent packs have killed thousands of livestock. Some owners may quietly take matters into their own hands - "shoot, shovel and shut up," said Jim Baker, who raises 60 beef cattle near the village of Atlanta, Mich.

Wolves "could wipe me out in a couple of nights if they wanted," Baker said.

Since the late 1980s, more than 5,000 wolves have been killed legally, according to an AP review of state and federal records. Hundreds more have been killed illegally over the past two decades in the Northern Rockies alone.

Ranchers in some areas are allowed under federal law to shoot wolves to defend their livestock. In the northern Rockies, government wildlife agents have routinely shot wolves from aircraft in response to such attacks. Often that involves trapping a single

cont. from page 1D

wolf, fitting it with a radio collar and tracking it back to its den so the entire pack can be killed.

Biologists are confident that neither legal hunts nor poaching will push wolves back to the brink of extinction.

Idaho has been the most aggressive in reducing wolf numbers, offering a 10-month hunting season that sets no limits. State officials say they intend to reduce the population from 750 to as few as 150; the minimum the federal government says is needed in each Northern Rockies state to keep the animal off the endangered list.

Studies indicate plentiful habitat remains in other regions, including upstate New York, northern New England and the southern Rockies of Colorado and Utah. But experts say the Fish and Wildlife Service's plan would mean that any wolves wandering into those states could be shot on sight unless protected by state laws.

"Wolves, next to people, are one of the most adaptable animals in the world," said Ed Bangs, a former Fish and Wildlife Service biologist who led the effort to return wolves to the northern Rockies. "The key with wolves is, it's all about human tolerance."

Quirks

cont. from page 2B

weeks without a home game. The Kings close the first half of their schedule with 20 of 28 away from Sacramento, daunting for a team desperate to keep fans engaged while trying to get a new arena. Denver plays nine in a row at home in one stretch, then immediately hits the road for seven straight.

But there's no Anthony homecoming in Denver.

"Did it bother me? Not really," said Anthony, now with the Knicks. "I mean, I would love to go back and play there. The reaction I would get, who knows? I might get some boos, I might get some claps, but it'd have been fun."

Minnesota coach Rick Adelman was thrilled to see his club opens with six of seven at home. And then he looked who those early opponents are - the first four clubs to visit the Timberwolves are Oklahoma City, Miami, Dallas and San Antonio.

"It's a challenge for us," Adelman said. "If we come out and we're ready to go, and we can knock some of these people off, it's just going to be better for us."

The Wolves don't host Atlanta, Milwaukee, New Jersey, Orlando, Toronto and Washington, teams that perhaps don't inspire the casual fan to run down on game night to check them out, but could be winnable games. They also don't travel to Boston, Chicago, Miami or New York. From a competitive standpoint, not having to play those teams on the road is great for the Wolves. But from a player experience standpoint, the Wolves don't sound thrilled.

"I think we don't go to

Miami and Chicago. ... That's a little sad," eagerly anticipated guard Ricky Rubio said.

With this kind of schedule, youth might be served. Washington is expected to open the year with 10 players on the team age 25 or younger. So on those back-to-back-to-back nights, the Wizards might have a touch more spring in their collective step than some other clubs.

"It reminds me of an AAU season - playing five games in one day," Wizards guard John Wall said. "It can be tough at times, but I think it can help us."

In past years, playing four games in five nights would be considered the worst of the schedule grind.

It's worse this year.

Not only will every team have at least one stretch of playing three games in three nights, but there will also be times when teams play eight games in 11 days. If a key player rolls an ankle, certainly a common issue in the NBA, at a particularly busy time in the schedule, a team could find itself without a key player for maybe 20 percent of the season. And with all those games in such a short span, this much is guaranteed: There will be nights when some teams will know the odds are stacked very, very highly against them, when they're the weary-legged club against a team that's had a couple of days off to freshen up.

"There will be nights when you'll be like, 'OK, well, let's just go try and see what happens,'" Wade said. "It's not going to be easy. For anyone."

Firefighters duck flying ammo as Texas house burns

MAGNOLIA (AP) - A house fire in Southeast Texas ignited thousands of ammunition rounds, keeping firefighters away and allowing the old house to burn to the ground.

Magnolia County Assistant Fire Marshal Scott Burlin says the noon

fire Thursday destroyed the rural house about 40 miles northwest of Houston near Magnolia. Burlin estimated the oldest part of the house was about 100 years old.

Bill Adams told The

Courier of Conroe the house had been in his family since 1927 and contained hundreds of antiques reduced to ashes with the rest of the house. Among the antiques were about 40 guns, for which

Burlin estimated there was about 100,000 rounds of ammunition in the house.

Adams also said one of his three dogs died in the fire.

No other injuries were reported.



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Woman arrested, charged in college student's death

AUSTIN (AP) - A woman accused of fatally stabbing a Huston-Tillotson University student has been charged with murder the day after the 21-year-old female victim died.

Officials say biology major and women's track team member Fatima Barrie died Wednesday at an Austin hospital of wounds suffered Dec. 4 outside a downtown Austin club.

Authorities say 19-year-old Kaitlyn Lucretia Ritcherson was initially charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon after the stabbing. Ritcherson's attorney, Charlie Baird, tells the Austin American-Statesman (<http://bit.ly/t0XKcl>) that the charge was upgraded to murder on Thursday.

Ritcherson remains in the Travis County Jail with bond set at \$125,000.

Austin police detective Anthony Nelson said the two women didn't know each other, and investigators are still trying to determine what prompted the attack.

Guard at medical unit in Texas accused of abuse

FORT WORTH (AP) - A guard at a federal medical prison in North Texas has been accused of sexual abuse of an inmate.

A grand jury this week indicted Kraig D. Lavan of Granbury on one count of engaging in a sexual act with an inmate at the Federal Medical Center Carswell.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported Thursday that the woman was in "official detention." The indictment says the abuse allegedly happened around Nov. 2.

A Carswell spokesman says Lavan worked at the unit from April 2010 until last month, when he resigned.

The center, at Naval Air Station Fort Worth, provides specialized services to female inmates with medical and psychiatric illnesses.

No attorney was listed for Lavan in federal records. Online phone records had no number for Lavan.

Doctors: Boy shot outside TX school lost kidney

McALLEN (AP) - A 14-year-old Texas boy shot while trying out for his school basketball team lost a kidney but should recover to live a normal life, his doctors said.

Edson Amaro sustained massive injuries earlier this month when he and Nicholas Tijerina were shot outside Harwell Middle School near Edinburg in South Texas. The boys were in a parking lot that had been converted into a temporary basketball court.

Doctors at Rio Grande Regional Hospital discussed Edson's condition during a news conference Wednesday.

Edson was shot in the back and the bullet went through a large vein, his stomach, his liver and his right kidney, said Dr. Carlos Garcia-Cantu,

director of trauma services at the hospital. The kidney was removed in a five-hour surgery, but Edson is recovering and could make it home for the holidays, he said.

"I know my son Edson has a long recovery road ahead of him, but in the meantime I am happy he is recovering nicely and will look forward to the possibility of spending the holidays at home," Edson's father, Pedro Amaro, said in a statement released to the media Wednesday.

Meanwhile, 13-year-old Nicholas has been unable to move his legs. His doctor said last week that he has been stable and talking, but that it's too soon to know the lasting effects of the shooting. The bullet entered the lower portion of Nicholas' chest under his right arm, damaging

the lower portion of his lung. It went through the right half of his liver and through one of the bones of his spine before lodging in the soft tissue of his back.

About 50 students were trying out for the middle school basketball team when the shots rang out the afternoon of Dec. 12. Classes were out, but many children remained on the rural campus for extracurricular activities.

No charges have been filed in the shooting, but rifles have been seized from three men found on adjacent ranchland after the incident.

Investigators questioned the men, releasing two who had been practicing target shooting nearly a mile from the school.

The third man was an illegal immigrant with an

assault rifle who was trespassing on the property, authorities said. He was kept in custody on charges of misdemeanor trespass and poaching.

Authorities are trying to determine which, if any, of the rifles fired the shots. Investigators were waiting for the results of ballistic testing on a bullet removed from the 14-year-old.

Earlier this week, a lawyer for the school district said authorities had previously responded to reports of gunfire around the middle school. She said they only confirmed that shots had been heard from afar. The school district contacted an adjacent landowner who said he would no longer allow hunting on the land.

Slain ICE agent's mom cheers suspect's extradition

BROWNSVILLE (AP) - A man accused in the fatal shooting of a U.S. immigration agent in February was extradited to the U.S. from Mexico this week, drawing praise from the slain agent's mother who feared that her son had been forgotten.

Julian Zapata Espinoza pleaded not guilty to charges including murder and attempted murder during an arraignment hearing Wednesday, and he was ordered jailed without bail, according to a spokesman for U.S. District Court in Washington.

The charges stem from a mid-day attack Feb. 15 along a Mexican highway that killed U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent Jaime Zapata and wounded his colleague Victor Avila.

"It had been 10 months already, and we hadn't heard anything or nothing had been done," the agent's mother, Mary Zapata, told The Brownsville Herald. "You know you wonder, 'did they forget about my son?'"

Zapata and Avila were driving to Mexico City after a meeting with other U.S. personnel. The shooting in the northern state of San Luis Potosi was a rare attack on American officials in the country fighting violent drug cartels.

Espinoza is known by the nickname "El Piolin," or Tweety Bird, apparently because of his short stature. He was captured along with five other suspected members of the Zeta cartel during an army raid a week after the shooting.

Mary Zapata said a federal magistrate called her Wednesday morning to tell her of the suspect's arrival on U.S. soil.

"He is one of several (suspects), and it makes me happy that maybe they are doing things behind the scenes that we are not able to see," she told The Herald. "My main concern is my son is gone. He cannot be replaced. I cannot push a button and bring him back."

The Mexican attorney general's office said in a statement that Espinoza had been kept in a prison in the Gulf of Mexico state of Veracruz for the past seven months, and was turned over to FBI agents Tuesday at the city of Veracruz airport.

The Mexican army has said Espinoza admitted

killing Zapata in what he claimed was a case of mistaken identity, with the Zetas mistaking the ICE agents' Chevrolet Suburban for one used by a rival gang.

According to the indictment, Espinoza and others shot the agents "with malice aforethought, willfully, deliberately, maliciously and with premeditation" during an attempt to rob them. The four-page indictment provided few other details.

Zapata, a 32-year-old native of the Texas border town of Brownsville, was on assignment from the ICE office in Laredo, Texas.

Avila, who was based in El Paso, was shot in the leg. He has since recovered.

Heavy snow closes roads, delays airplanes in West

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Heavy snow from a winter storm blanketed parts of the West on Friday, stranding motorists throughout New Mexico, and delaying holiday travelers who were trying to fly in and out of Albuquerque and Denver.

The snow and high winds struck the region Thursday and forced dozens of drivers off Interstate 40 after severe conditions made driving near impossible in western New Mexico.

"If you don't have (four-wheel drive) and you just have two-wheel ... you're either going to spin or stay stuck," stranded motorist Tarquin Wilding told KOAT-TV while in Grants, N.M., on his way to Santa Fe.

By Friday morning, the National Weather Service reported that Grants and parts of western New Mexico had been slammed with more than a foot of snow. A winter storm warning remained in effect for the state

SNOW cont. on page 5D


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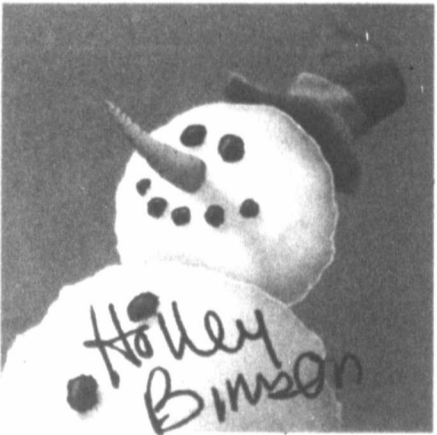
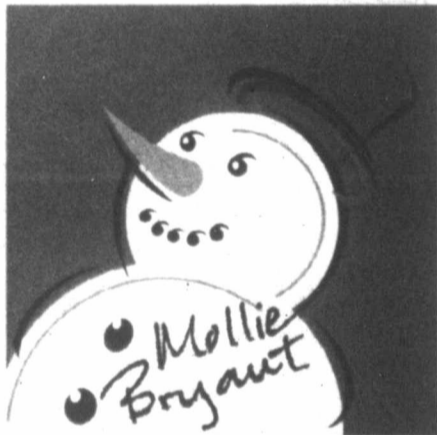
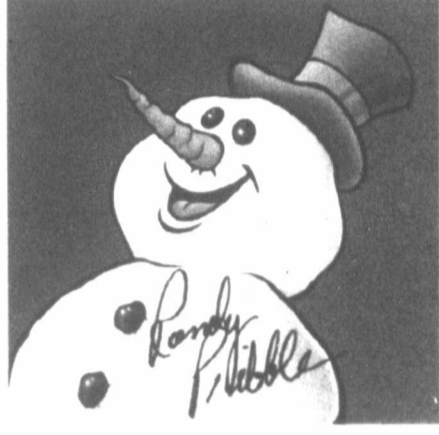


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'Tis the season to... steal? *Snow*

cont. from page 1

More than spirits are being lifted this holiday season.

During the four weeks leading up to Christmas, an estimated \$1.8 billion in merchandise will be shoplifted this year, according to The Global Retail Theft Barometer, a survey of retailers worldwide. That's up about 6 percent from \$1.7 billion during the same period last year.

"They shoplift for Christmas gifts, they steal for themselves, for their family," says Joshua Bamfield, executive director of the Centre for Retail Research and author of the survey.

Sticky fingers are common during the holidays. The crowded stores and harried clerks make it easier to slip a tablet computer into a purse or stuff a sweater under a coat undetected. But higher joblessness and falling wages have contributed to an even bigger rise this year. People steal everything from necessities (think food) to luxuries they can no longer afford (think electronics or Gucci purse).

"It's really a question of need versus greed," says Joseph LaRocca, senior adviser of asset protection for the National Retail Federation trade group. "People will rationalize what they are stealing: 'Oh, I'm feeling the economy. I lost my job.' But it's hard to make the argument you need a \$900 handbag."

Some experts say the economy's influence is largely a cop-out. They say shoplifters are stealing for myriad reasons this holiday season that have nothing to do with economic turmoil. Among them, some do it for a

rush or thrill. For others, it's about filling a void. Still others are trying to relieve anxiety, boredom or depression — all emotions that are particularly common during the holidays.

"Shoplifting is generally a crime of opportunity and opportunities abound at the holiday," says Barbara Staib, a spokeswoman for the National Association for Shoplifting Prevention, a nonprofit that provides shoplifting prevention education programs. "The stressors that come with the holiday will certainly help them rationalize their need for bad behavior."

Shoplifting is surprisingly common. An estimated one in 11 Americans shoplift, according to the National Association of Shoplifting Prevention. It

bases its information on academic research and information from those who are ordered or choose to enter its counseling programs for shoplifters.

About 75 percent of shoplifters are adults — equally men and women — while kids make up about 25 percent of them. More than 70 percent of shoplifters say they did not plan ahead to steal and they acted spontaneously.

It adds up to billions of dollars in losses for retailers.

Theft of all kinds — including shop lifting, organized retail crime, employee theft and vendor fraud — cost retailers more than \$119 billion worldwide in the 12 months ending in June.

STEAL cont. on page 8D

through Friday afternoon, but meteorologists said the snow wasn't expected to clear up until the weekend.

Some parts of the state saw 16 inches as state and local police responded to dozens of minor accidents. No major injuries were reported.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation closed parts of I-40 around Albuquerque and in eastern New Mexico because of poor driving conditions due to ice and heavy winds. Large portions of I-25 from Truth or Consequences to Las Cruces, and I-10 in western New Mexico also were closed, and authorities were urging motorists to seek shelter in hotels.

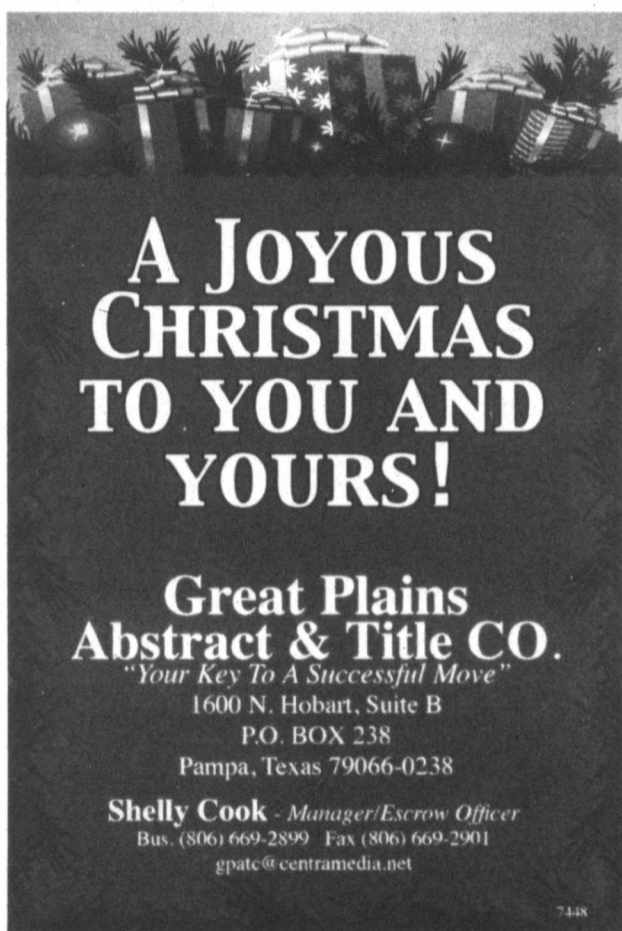
El Paso, Texas, residents awoke to snow covered roads and yards Friday, and some sections of I-10 in the western part of the state were reduced to one lane as officers responded to a rash of accidents. Other West

Texas cities and the central portion of the state were expected to get their own snowfall by this weekend.

Brian Shoemaker, of Albuquerque, was stuck in a line of motorists who had been stopped by police at a roadblock along U.S. 550 in Rio Rancho, N.M. He was heading to Colorado to spend Christmas with his family, and unhappy to learn it would be early afternoon before he could get on the road again.

"Some places in Albuquerque it was horrible, and some places it was great. It's just real spotty," he said. "You'll move from good to bad within two-, three-mile sections."

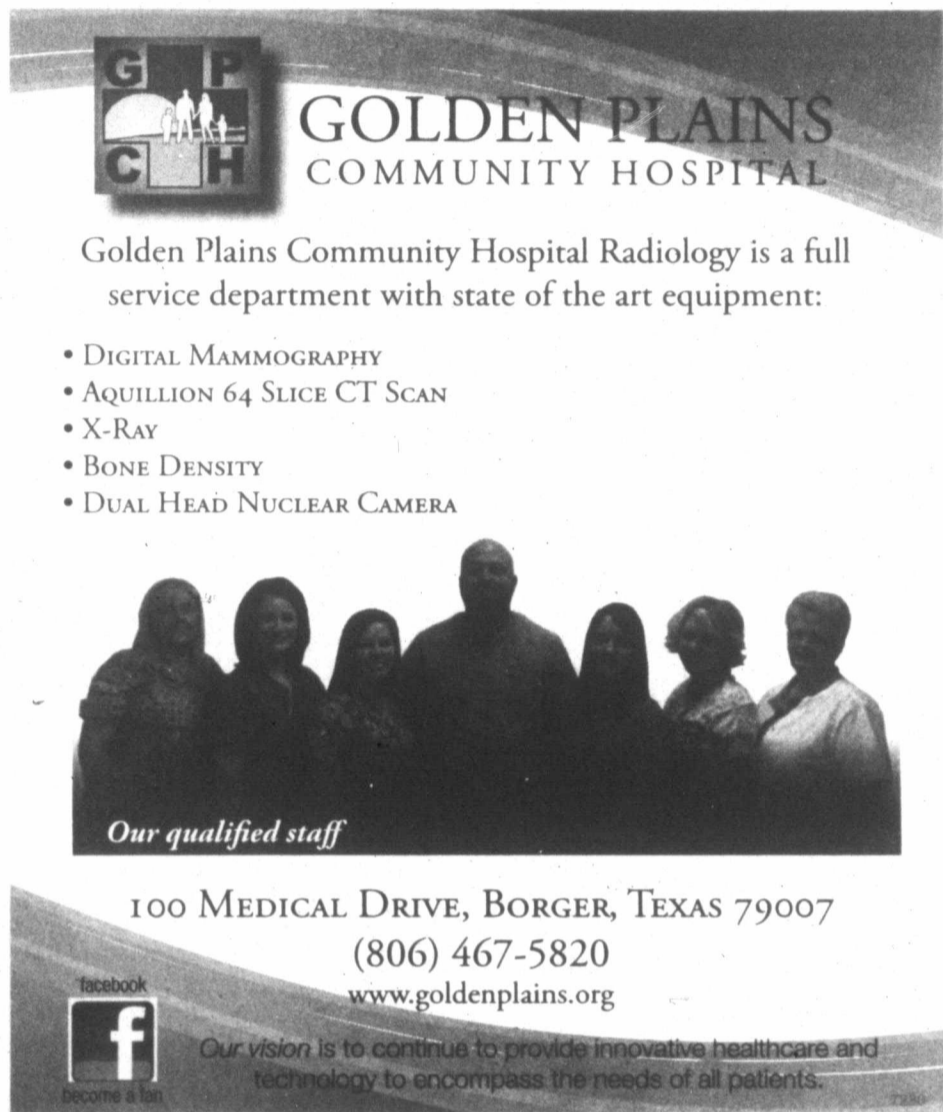
In Colorado, operations at the Denver International Airport were getting back to normal after a storm that brought about 10 inches of snow. However, airport officials say passengers flying out Friday morning would still have deicing delays of about 25 minutes after leaving their gates.



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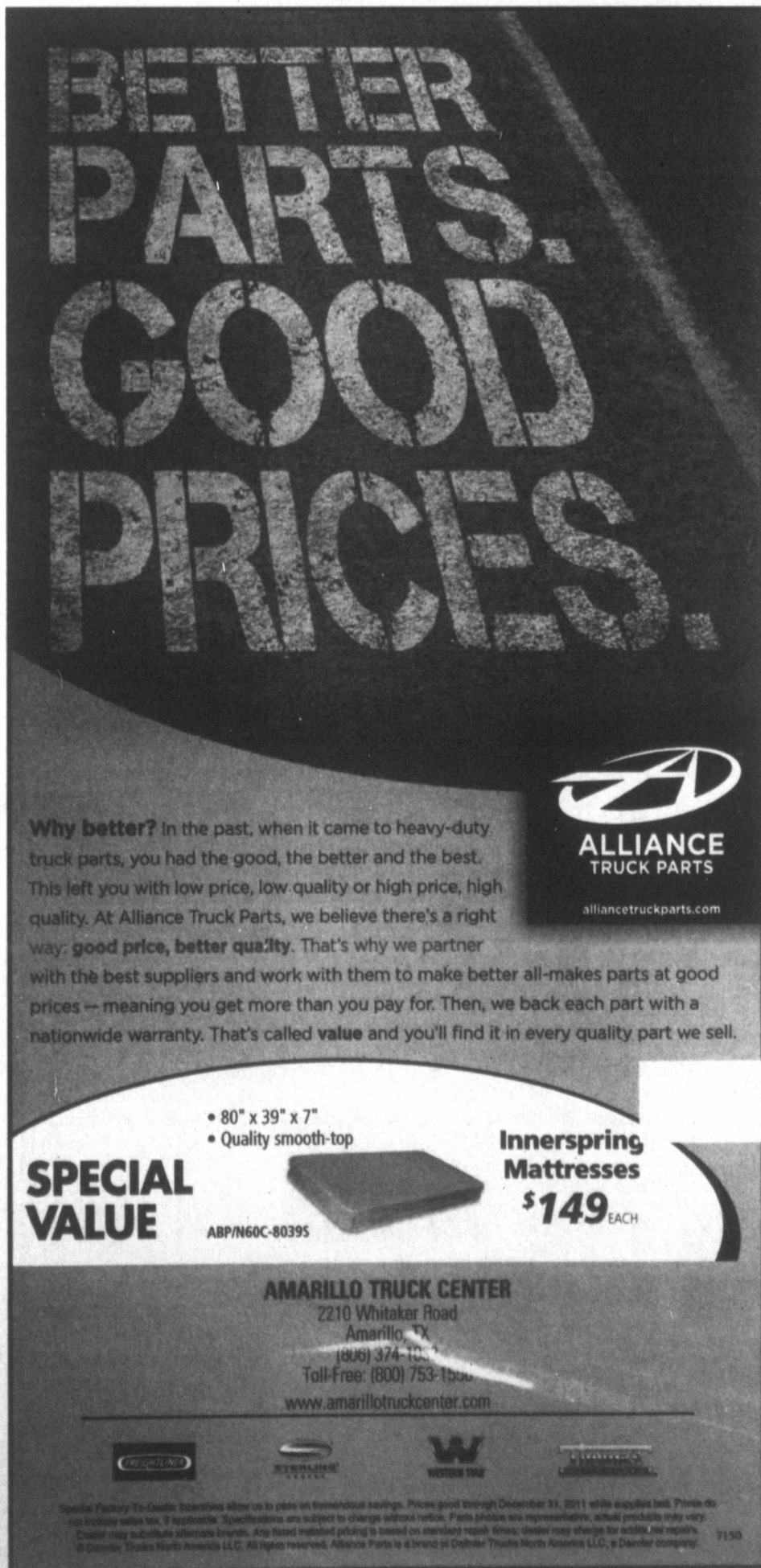
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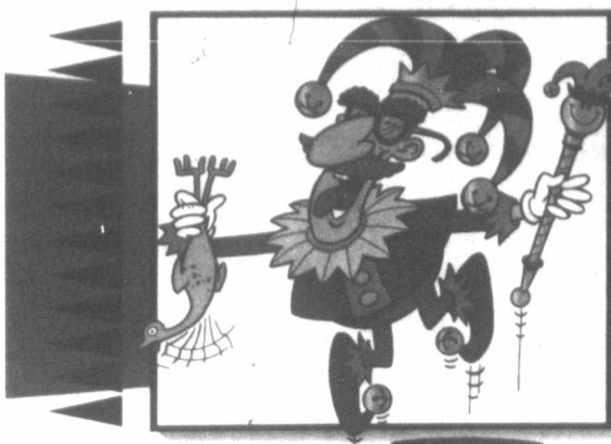


'TIS THE SEASON to say, Thanks!

—And wish you all the trimmings of a very merry and festive season. In lieu of Christmas cards, we have made a donation to Meals on Wheels.

A&T Yard Service

1305 S. Hobart • 669-9000



kicks to kids

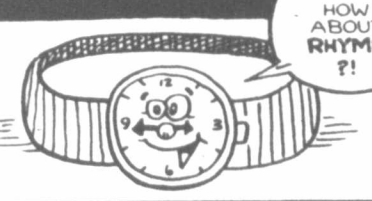
GAMES AND PUZZLES

DRAW IT!

DRAW HANDS ON THIS CLOCK...
MAKE MY HANDS SHOW YOUR BEDTIME!



GIVE ME 5 RHYMES FOR TIME...
HOW ABOUT RHYME?!



UNSCRAMBLE THIS TO SEE WHAT THE DIGITAL CLOCK SAID TO THE GRANDFATHER CLOCK...

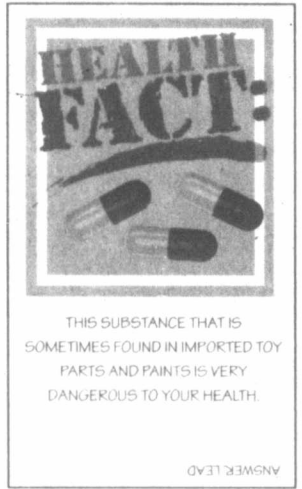
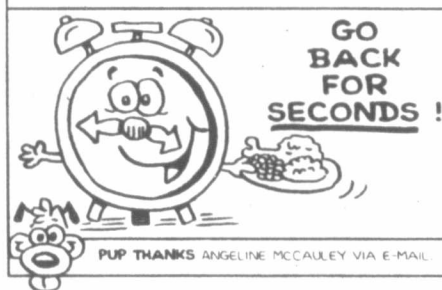


LOTS OF CLOCKS ARE ALL LINED UP IN THIS PUZZLE WITH YOUR PUP! ONLY ONE CLOCK'S NOT THE SAME IN THIS TIMELY PUZZLE GAME!



WRITE US... WE'LL WRITE YOU BACK!
IF YOU HAVE ANY FUN GAMES OR JOKE'S SEND THEM TO: PUP
95 LAUREL STREET
HARRISONBURG, VA 22801
OR EMAIL: PUP100N@AOL.COM

WHAT DOES A CLOCK DO WHEN IT'S STILL HUNGRY?



THIS SUBSTANCE THAT IS SOMETIMES FOUND IN IMPORTED TOY PARTS AND PAINTS IS VERY DANGEROUS TO YOUR HEALTH.

What's the Difference?

There are four things different between Picture A and Picture B. Can you find them all?



Answers: 1. Boys pants design 2. Missing truck cab 3. Two gear shifters on truck 4. Missing safety cone

THIS DAY IN... HISTORY
DEC 25

- 1066: WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR IS CROWNED THE KING OF ENGLAND.
- 1776: GEORGE WASHINGTON CROSSES THE DELAWARE RIVER AND SURPRISES THE HESSIANS.
- 1977: POPULAR BRITISH ACTOR AND DIRECTOR CHARLIE CHAPLIN DIES AT THE AGE OF 88.

New Word
hazard
danger or risk

How they say that in...
ENGLISH: Dangerous
SPANISH: Peligroso
ITALIAN: Pericoloso
FRENCH: Dangereux
GERMAN: Gefährlich

Did you know?
IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER'S AGE RECOMMENDATION FOR TOYS. OTHERWISE, SMALL PARTS OR COMPONENTS COULD BE DANGEROUS TO YOUNGER CHILDREN.

GET THE PICTURE?
Can you guess what the bigger picture is?
NOEL BERGHOFF



SHAGG E. HOLIDAY (1840 to 1852)
OWNED BY JOHN ALLCOTT HORSLEY, DESIGNER OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CARD. THIS IS NOT WHAT THE CARD LOOKED LIKE... BUT IT SHOULD HAVE.

Dear Shagg,
Do bumblebees burrow in the ground for the winter?
David A. Snelter
Valley Springs, SD

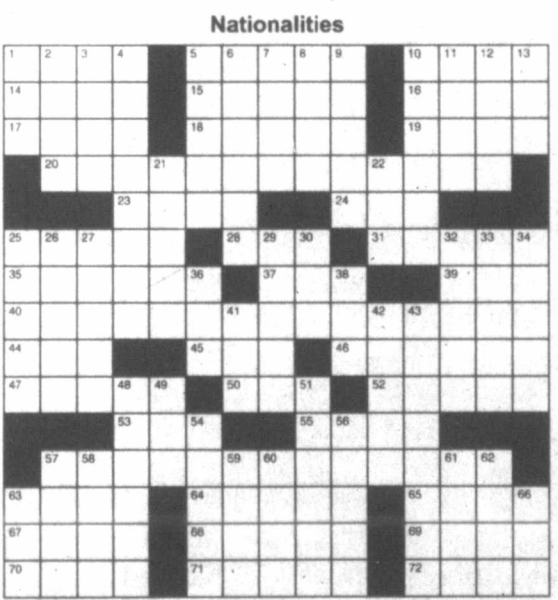


adult addlers

Word Search — Winter Day

T F U X H M F X S Q T S F R B
S E C Y O D I U L K N N R Y I
G Z M S Q Y R I G O F E I T R
Z L E P Y E E A W T P T G E J
S W O H E T P F Z U F T I J N
S W G V T R L Q R Z Q I D S A
W Y M I E A A X L Y I M R J U
O B O F K S C T I J Z L Y D C
N H X E O X E C U F J Z L B Y P
S U E T I B T S O R F P L A Y
B U N D L E U B N O E L R C Q
M U R D F R A C S B I K I G V
E N G G B S G L Z H A Q X Q E
A C G E V I S J C O L S R Z J
I P D N S N K U W F C Q U O E

- Blizzard
- Bundle
- Chilly
- Drift
- Fireplace
- Frigid
- Frostbite
- Gloves
- Icy
- Mittens
- Parka
- Scarf
- Snow
- Snowflake
- Temperature

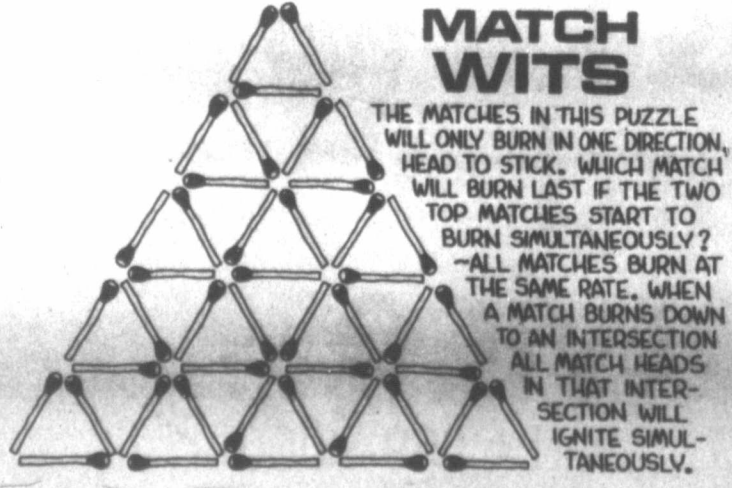
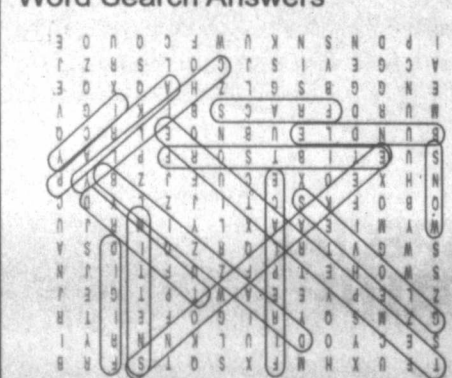


- NATIONALITIES**
- ACROSS**
- Carpe
 - Counts calories
 - Rain forest feature
 - Highlander
 - Fakir's faith
 - Biblical preposition
 - Boxer Matthew Muhammad
 - Mild cigar
 - Pond cover
 - Graham Green novel, with The
 - Flourish
 - 24 inches
 - Give up
 - Pinch
 - Most's opposite
 - Steep-roofed structure
 - Pants part
 - Fr. holy woman
 - Rocky Balboa's nickname
 - Film location
 - Brazilian resort, briefly
 - Small dog
 - Comard
 - All Things
- DOWN**
- Moines, IA
 - Mesopotamia, today
 - Isaac's son
 - Middle Age
 - Start to phone
 - Elton John's Girl
 - Jack, of TV's Easy Street
 - Weight deduction
 - Campfire treat
 - Pectoralis, e.g.
 - Old Peruvian
 - Bowl over
 - Male turkey
 - Fragrant resin
 - Bedbound
 - Pants measurement
 - Following
 - Fit to be tied
 - Last name in journalism
 - Lay it on the line
 - All kidding
 - Boa
 - Belief
 - Listener
 - Space
 - Diarrist of note
 - Also-ran
 - Candy on a stick
 - Philadelphia eleven
 - La Dee, 1958 song
 - Type of sleeve
 - Video game name
 - Evangelist Sunday
 - Rank's partner
 - Misfortunes
 - Roulet, L.
 - Taboo
 - Wise guy
 - Take on
 - Tailor's edge
 - Blue Hen St.

Crossword Puzzle Answers

MESS IRONY PAID
ELLE RENAL OGRE
HILL ATOLL
FIGHTING RISH
AVALABEL
TREAD NPH SLEET
SET RIOR POODLE
TETALLIANTALLION
AFRAME LEG STE
WAIVE DAB LEAST
ELVANELL
QUITE AMERICAN
SAAD CLARV SCUM
ERASE ISLAM UNTO
MIST DIETS DIEM

Word Search Answers



MATCH WITS
THE MATCHES IN THIS PUZZLE WILL ONLY BURN IN ONE DIRECTION, HEAD TO STICK. WHICH MATCH WILL BURN LAST IF THE TWO TOP MATCHES START TO BURN SIMULTANEOUSLY? —ALL MATCHES BURN AT THE SAME RATE, WHEN A MATCH BURNS DOWN TO AN INTERSECTION ALL MATCH HEADS IN THAT INTERSECTION WILL IGNITE SIMULTANEOUSLY.



comics PAGE

THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



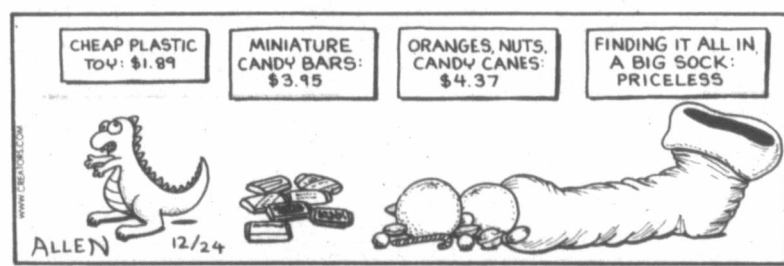
12-24
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"Joseph should've just gone online and booked a room before they left."

Non Sequitur



Nest Heads



daily horoscope

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Saturday, Dec. 24, 2011:

This year your birthday falls on a New Moon, creating a new beginning in an area of your life. This lunar position bestows charisma and creativity. Others admire your dynamic energy and willingness to transform as needed. If you are single, you have a slew of admirers and would-be suitors. Decide what type of relationship you want, then choose. The world really is your oyster! If you are attached, make sure to keep the balance between you as a couple. You could be a little too me-oriented. CAPRICORN reads through your defenses.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★ You might not be as open as others would like. Your organizational abilities come out. When you assume the role of leader, no one worries. Everything will work out perfectly. You could be jolted by news or another person's insight. Tonight: Opt for a new beginning.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Keep reaching out for distant friends you want to wish holiday cheer. News that heads in your direction indicates a faulty assumption. Really, it isn't all that serious yet. Tonight: Put on some music and break out the eggnog.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ Deal with one other person directly, and then another person, and then one more. Those contacts — especially with people you say "hi" and "bye" to, but no more — mean a lot. You might need to pitch in and help someone at the last minute. Make it your pleasure. Tonight: A little more tame than usual.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ Others request your talents and companionship. Though a sudden change could toss plans to the wayside, you accomplish a lot quite quickly. Ask fewer questions, and focus on helping others instrument their ideas. Good feelings mark these exchanges. Tonight: The only answer is "yes."

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ You emanate joy nearly everywhere, yet suddenly you become very practical. Some will be relieved to see that side of you emerge, but others will wonder where the playful Leo has gone. You will be perpetually making adjustments right now. Tonight: Giving 100 percent of yourself.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ You wake up acting like a 5-year-old getting ready to greet Christmas. Every so often, the child in you emerges. What perfect timing! Even those who might be perpetual Scrooges find themselves grinning at your optimism. Tonight: Loving every moment.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ Approach a situation with more understanding than many others. You understand what is needed at this point; be determined to give just that. You might be overwhelmed by everything that is going on and landing in your lap. This, too, will pass. Tonight: What would anyone do without you?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ You might be very happy at the thought of the upcoming holiday. Or you could be overwhelmed and/or tired of the celebration. Still, seeing people you care about who are not readily available creates a warm feeling. Don't forget about that neighbor, too! Tonight: You know what to do.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Last-minute errands or a forgotten gift could have you running, whether you like it or not. Though many of you have your day well planned, you still can break out to call someone or invite a loved one over who might be alone. Tonight: Don't go overboard.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ You glide through the day, perhaps the result of excellent planning, but also because you don't have too many expectations. You recognize a new beginning in a key relationship in your life. Don't hesitate to jump on it. Tonight: Flex with a change.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★ A general feeling of malaise or concern permeates your mood. If you haven't connected with a key person, don't stand on ceremony — make it so. Don't force yourself; be sensitive to those around you. Tonight: How about some eggnog?

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Zero in on the moment. At the last minute, you could opt to invite friends over, or join friends at some point in the day. Someone you have counted on keeps changing his or her mind. You cannot stop the process, so you might as well go with it. Tonight: Seize the moment.

Tundra



Shoe



Mother Goose and Grim



Zits



Garfield



Beetle Bailey



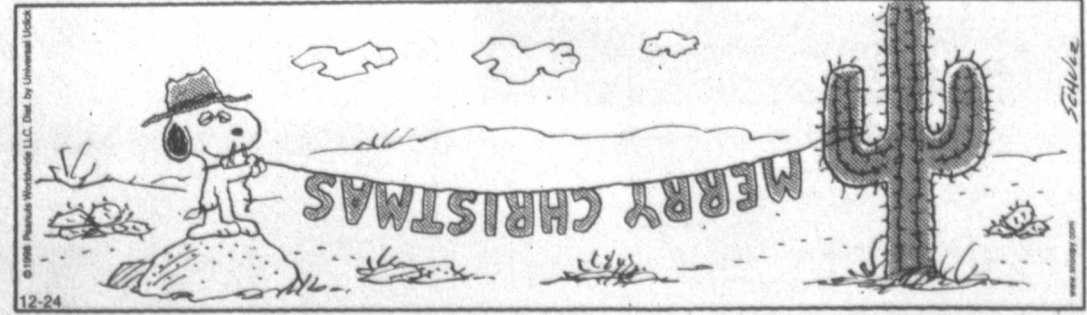
Marvin



Hagar The Horrible



Peanuts



Blondie



Steal

up nearly 7 percent from the same period in 2010. That's the biggest increase recorded by the Global Retail Theft Barometer since it began the survey in 2007.

In the four weeks leading up to Christmas, retailers in the U.S. are expected to lose \$5 billion in theft and other crimes. About 36 percent of those losses come from shoplifting. Employee theft represents about 44 percent. Vendor theft and administrative error make up the remainder.

Several major chains declined to discuss their efforts to thwart the growing theft in stores by shoppers and employees. But the National Retail Federation says big merchants are spending about \$11.5 billion a year to fend off losses.

They're trying to improve their technology, such as surveillance methods and tagging of merchandise with security devices. They also are working with competitors and law enforcement agencies more than ever by sharing more information, such as what criminals are taking and how they are targeting individual merchants.

Retailers' efforts are important, prevention experts say, because theft not only costs them, but society as a whole. Theft

drives up retailers' costs and those are often passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices on everything from blueberries to blouses.

"I think one of the things we have to remember is shoplifting is a crime," says Staib, with the prevention group. "Shoplifting is not just an economic issue, it's a social issue."

Shop owner Travis Maynard, who has been on both sides of the shoplifting fence, agrees.

As a teenager running with a bad crowd, he used to steal regularly - Visine to cover up his drug use, condiments to finish off his sandwich and even a flowering tree as a gift for his mother. That is, until he got caught stealing a Misfits CD as a teen and decided to turn his life around.

Maynard, 31, now watches for shoplifters at Lime Tigar Studio, a shop in Murfreesboro, Tenn., where he sells antiques, vintage clothing and other items. He says he knows the tricks and is on high alert when someone is lingering too long in a certain spot.

"For someone to come in and pretend to be a patron of my business and steal, to me it's the most disgusting thing someone could do," Maynard says. "It's one of the highest levels of dishonesty."

More Americans taking long holiday trips

NEW YORK (AP) - More Americans are expected to take long trips this holiday season - and in many parts of the country it looks to be smooth sailing.

About 92 million people will travel 50 miles or more from Friday through Jan. 2, an increase of 1.4 percent more than last year, according to AAA.

The federation of motor clubs said 90 percent will travel by car. Drivers will find gasoline prices higher than last year, but well below this year's peaks. Air travel will be down about 10 percent.

When there are problems with air travel today - be it weather, mechanical issues or computer glitches - they are much worse

than just a few years ago.

Airlines have trimmed the number of flights and are packing planes fuller than ever before. That means if something goes wrong, there are fewer options to rebook stranded passengers. There are just no spare seats.

When large snowstorms hit the busy Northeast last Christmas, it took airlines as long as a week to get some people home. A similar passenger nightmare occurred after Hurricane Irene struck in August.

Bad weather also can mean more cancellations than in the past. A Department of Transportation rule that went into effect in April 2010 limits planes to three hours on the tarmac.

Airlines that violate it face penalties of up to \$27,500 per person - that's more than \$3.7 million for just one Boeing 737.

That has made them skittish about operating in bad weather, leading to 20 percent more cancellations in the typical month.

But as of Thursday evening, there was nothing to indicate any widespread weather disruptions at the beginning of the Christmas travel period.

Heavy snow did force the cancellation of more than 100 flights Thursday at Denver International Airport, one of the nation's busiest, but that tapered off by Thursday evening.

Severe thunderstorms are forecast today in the southeast part of the coun-

try, while snow falls in the mountains of New England.

Mountainous areas of New York state and New England were expected to get several inches of snow by Friday morning, and rain and thunderstorms were forecast down the coast to the Carolinas.

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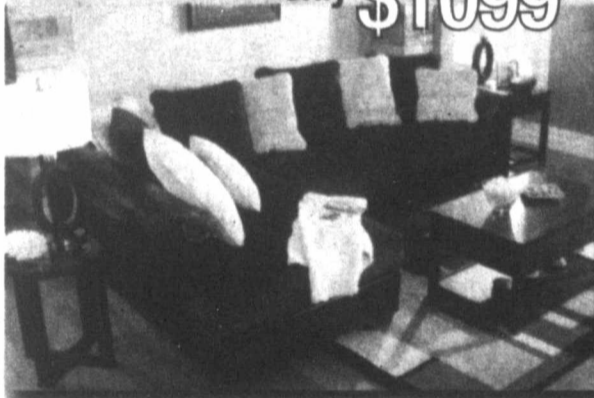


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Joyous Christmas & Happy New Year!
 Your patronage is greatly appreciated and I look forward to seeing you in the new year!
 God Bless!
 Regina Woods
 SHEAR ELEGANCE

Season's Greetings
 From all of us to you
 We hope your holiday is filled with tidings of joy, good fortune, and good health.
 Merry Christmas!
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