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BIG SPRING

HERALD

MONDAY
DECEMBER 17, 2007



VOLUME 103, NUMBER 14

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Rebates

Sales tax revenue up for local cities during December

By **BILL McCLELLAN**
News Editor

Sales tax revenues for the city of Big Spring were up for December compared to a year ago, according to the State Comptroller's Office.

Big Spring received \$408,334.44 this month, pushing the year's total above \$5 million. Compared to December 2006's receipts of \$376,254.38, that's an increase of 8.52 percent. The funds pushed total receipts to \$5,401,871.55 — an increase over 2006 of 8.18 percent.

Coahoma, which has experienced triple-digit increases most of the year, witnessed strong receipts again for December. The community received \$10,456.30 this month compared to \$6,829.72 a year ago. That's an increase of 53.09 percent. For the year, Coahoma has collected \$130,097.98, a substantial 54.39 percent increase compared to last year.

Forsan wound up the year right about where it started. The community received \$7,184.90 this month, down 7.68 percent compared to the \$7,782.75 officials took in a year ago. For 2007, Forsan banked \$86,084.45, up a scant 0.68 percent compared to 2006.

Abilene pulled in \$2,560,192.89 this month. Compared to the \$2,401,353.84 check received in December 2006, the Key City posted a hike of 6.61 percent. Abilene brought in \$33,516,809.85 for the year, up 5.19 percent.

Brownfield, which had been down in year-to-date totals until this month, experienced a whopping 130.64 percent increase in

December, comparing \$170,793.79 received this month to \$74,052.06 received in December 2006. For the year, Brownfield received \$1,087,482.16, up 7.34 percent compared to 2006 totals.

Colorado City witnessed a modest 3.73 percent increase this month. The Mitchell County seat took in \$41,138.25 this month compared to \$39,655.27 in December 2006. Through 2007, Colorado City received \$538,796.53, an increase over last year of 6.42 percent.

Fort Stockton continued to reap major dividends in sales tax receipts. That city took in \$189,356.57 this month, another whopping 41.55 percent increase when compared to the \$133,768.67 received in December 2006. For the year, the home of Paisano Pete took in \$2,192,321.13, up 26.56 percent.

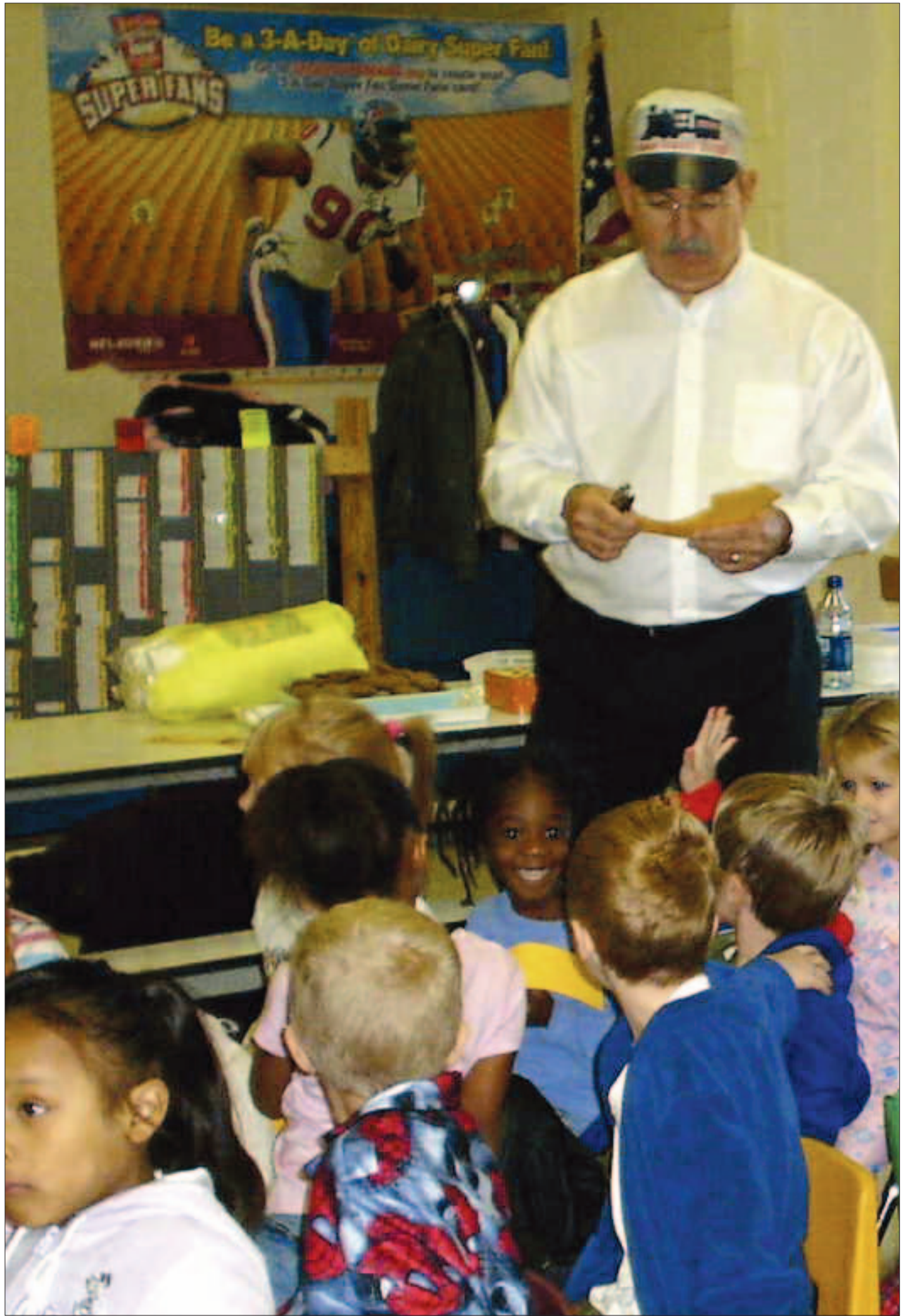
Dawson County's largest community, Lamesa, pulled in \$88,316.47 this month, up 18.76 percent compared to the \$74,362.01 it received in December 2006. For 2007, the community received \$1,141,215.10, up 12.42 percent.

Lubbock, home of Texas Tech University, received \$3,463,486.77, an increase of 4.07 percent when compared to the \$3,327,896.02 taken in during December 2006. For the year, Lubbock pulled in \$46,533,577.34, up 4.7 percent.

Midlanders had an increase of 4.15 percent in sales tax revenues, comparing the \$2,601,410.64 received this month to the \$2,497,599.83 taken in for December 2006. For

See **REBATES**, Page 3A

POLAR EXPRESS EXPERIENCE



Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen reads "The Polar Express" to kindergarten students at Washington Elementary School on Thursday. The children all gathered in a train like shape and listened while McEwen read the story. Santa Claus also brought each child a bell with a red ribbon.

Courtesy photo

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Grand jury returns indictments

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

A Howard County grand jury handed down 11 indictments Friday, including several for drug and alcohol-related violations.

True-bill indictments were delivered for the following individuals:

- Felicia Aldridge, 21, of 309 W. Fifth Street, bail jumping and failure to appear (third-degree felony).
- Kevin James Belcher, 22, of 1913 W. County Road 32, possession of a controlled substance (state jail felony).
- Michael Neal Birmelin, 27, of 1012

W. Third Street, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle (state jail felony) and driving while intoxicated with a child passenger (state jail felony).

- John Loya Campos, 57, of San Angelo, driving while intoxicated (third-degree felony).
- Thomas Henry Cox, 40, of 4009 Wasson Road, injury to an elderly individual (second-degree felony).
- James Driver, 48, of 1404 Virginia, possession of a controlled substance (second-degree felony).

See **INDICTED**, Page 3A

8 Shopping Days Til Christmas



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Sports

BIG SPRING HERALD

Do you have an interesting sports item or story idea? Call Jonathan Hull at 263-7331, Ext. 237. Email results to: sports@bigspringherald.com

Page 1B
Monday, December 17, 2007

IN BRIEF

Crossroads region varsity sports weekly calendar

Here's a look at the upcoming Crossroads varsity sports schedule:

TODAY

Big Spring boys and girls basketball vs. Snyder, 6 p.m.

TUESDAY

Forsan boys and girls basketball at Rankin, 6:30 p.m.

Coahoma boys and girls basketball at Merkel, 6:30 p.m.

FRIDAY

Forsan boys and girls basketball vs. Trent, 5 p.m.

Coahoma boys and girls basketball vs. Hawley, 6:30 p.m.

Lady Steers softball team holding fund raiser at Pizza Inn

The Big Spring Lady Steers Lady Steers Booster Club will be holding a fundraiser for the softball team Thursday at the Pizza Inn.

The Pizza Inn Doughnation Drive begins at 5 p.m. and ends at 9 p.m. Pizza Inn will donate 10 percent of the night's profit to the softball team.

Individuals needed to referee area basketball games

Individuals are needed to referee area subvarsity basketball games for the 2007-08 season.

Anyone interested should call Adam Rodriguez at 517-0300.

Texas Schoolboy playoff results and pairings

CLASS 5A DIVISION I Semifinals
Eules Trinity 30, Plano 27, 2OT
Converse Judson 28, Galena Park North Shore 7

Final

Eules Trinity (14-1) vs. Converse Judson (11-4), 2 p.m. Saturday, Alamodome

DIVISION II Semifinals

Pflugerville 20, Abilene 14
Katy 66, SA Madison 21

Final

Pflugerville (12-3) vs. Katy (15-0), 7 p.m. Saturday, Alamodome

CLASS 4A DIVISION I Final

Rosenberg Lamar 20, Copperas Cove 14

DIVISION II Semifinals

Highland Park 42, Everman 13
Lake Travis 49, Dayton 13

Final

Highland Park (15-0) vs. Lake Travis (14-1), 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Waco's Floyd Casey Stadium

CLASS 3A DIVISION I Final

Liberty Hill 38, Gilmer 13

See BRIEFS, Page 4B

Michigan steals WVU's head man Rodriguez

By LARRY LAGE

AP Sports Writer

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Michigan hired Rich Rodriguez away from his alma mater after failing to bring back one of its own.

A man with ties to both the Wolverines and West Virginia might've helped.

College football's winningest program ended its coaching search Sunday, nearly a month after it started, by announcing Rodriguez would succeed retiring Lloyd Carr.

Rodriguez was scheduled to be

introduced as the Wolverines' coach at a news conference Monday morning.

"I am thrilled to have Rich Rodriguez as Michigan's new coach," athletic director Bill Martin wrote in an e-mail to The Associated Press. "Rich brings an exciting brand of football to Michigan Stadium. We welcome the entire Rodriguez family to Ann Arbor."

Former West Virginia coach Don Nehlen, who coached Rodriguez when he played for the Mountaineers and was on Bo Schembechler's staff at Michigan, endorsed the move.

"I felt it was a great opportunity for Rich," Nehlen told the AP in a telephone interview from Morgantown, W.Va. "There are not many Michigans around."

Michigan's reputation, though, seemed to take a hit during constant coverage of its first coaching search since hiring Schembechler nearly four decades ago. The school had permission to talk to LSU coach Les Miles, who played for Schembechler and also was an assistant under him, but couldn't bring him back to Ann Arbor. It also talked with Greg Schiano, who decided to stay at Rutgers.

The 44-year-old Rodriguez seems to be much more than a consolation prize.

He built West Virginia into a Big East power, winning the conference championship this year for the fourth time in five seasons and going 60-26 overall.

The 11th-ranked Mountaineers (10-2) will play in their second Bowl Championship Series game in three seasons, but Nehlen doesn't expect Rodriguez to coach them in the Fiesta Bowl against Oklahoma.

See COACH, Page 4B

Eagles shock Cowboys as Romo struggles

By JAIME ARON

AP Sports Writer

IRVING — With the game on the line, Tony Romo got ready for another heart-stopping rally.

He dropped back to pass, cocked his arm — and the ball squirted out, an indication his hand injury was more than a minor inconvenience. But Romo bounced back to make a fourth-down conversion, keeping hope alive.

Then he dropped back again, saw Terrell Owens cutting to the sideline and threw it right where T.O. was supposed to be. But he wasn't. He fell, so the ball went straight to one of the Philadelphia Eagles, the third time they'd caught a pass meant for Owens.

From aches and pains to painful mistakes, the Dallas Cowboys had little go their way Sunday. So there was no crazy comeback this time, just a 10-6 loss that ended their seven-game winning streak and raises questions about another December slide.

Dallas (12-2) had 240 yards, its fewest of the season, and didn't score a touchdown for the first time since November 2004. Add in last week's last-second victory in Detroit and the Cowboys have played two lousy games in a row.

"We'll get back and right the ship," Romo said. "I know I've got to come back to do better."

He's also got to come back healthy.

Romo hurt the thumb area on his passing hand on the same third-quarter play in which center Andre Gurode was hurt. X-rays shows no break, but it's at least bruised. Romo had it



AP photo/Mike Stone

Dallas Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo (9) loses the ball after being hit by Philadelphia Eagles defensive end Trent Cole (58) in the fourth quarter Sunday in Irving. Romo threw three interceptions in the Cowboys' 10-6 loss.

See COWBOYS, Page 4B

NFL roundup: Dolphins win first, Pats go 14-0

The Associated Press

Maybe all the Miami Dolphins needed was the right kind of inspiration.

The Dolphins got their first victory of the season after 13 losses on a day when their undefeated team of 35 years ago was honored. Perhaps it was the presence of seven Hall of Famers from that team as honorary captains that finally made the difference in a 22-16 overtime victory Sunday against reeling Baltimore.

"I talked to Coach Shula, and I told him we would win," Miami defensive end Jason Taylor said. "I'm glad we did. I can't lie to Coach Shula."

And he didn't, thanks to Baltimore's Matt Stover missing a 44-yard field goal in the extra period, then Miami's Greg Camarillo turning a short completion into a 64-yard touchdown.

"I've been looking forward to this day for quite some time," said coach Cam Cameron after getting his first NFL win as a head coach.

For one afternoon, the Dolphins got to feel what has become a habit for New England. The Patriots beat the New

York Jets 20-10 in icy, windy conditions and became the second NFL team to go 14-0. The other was the 1972 Miami club that went on to take the Super Bowl.

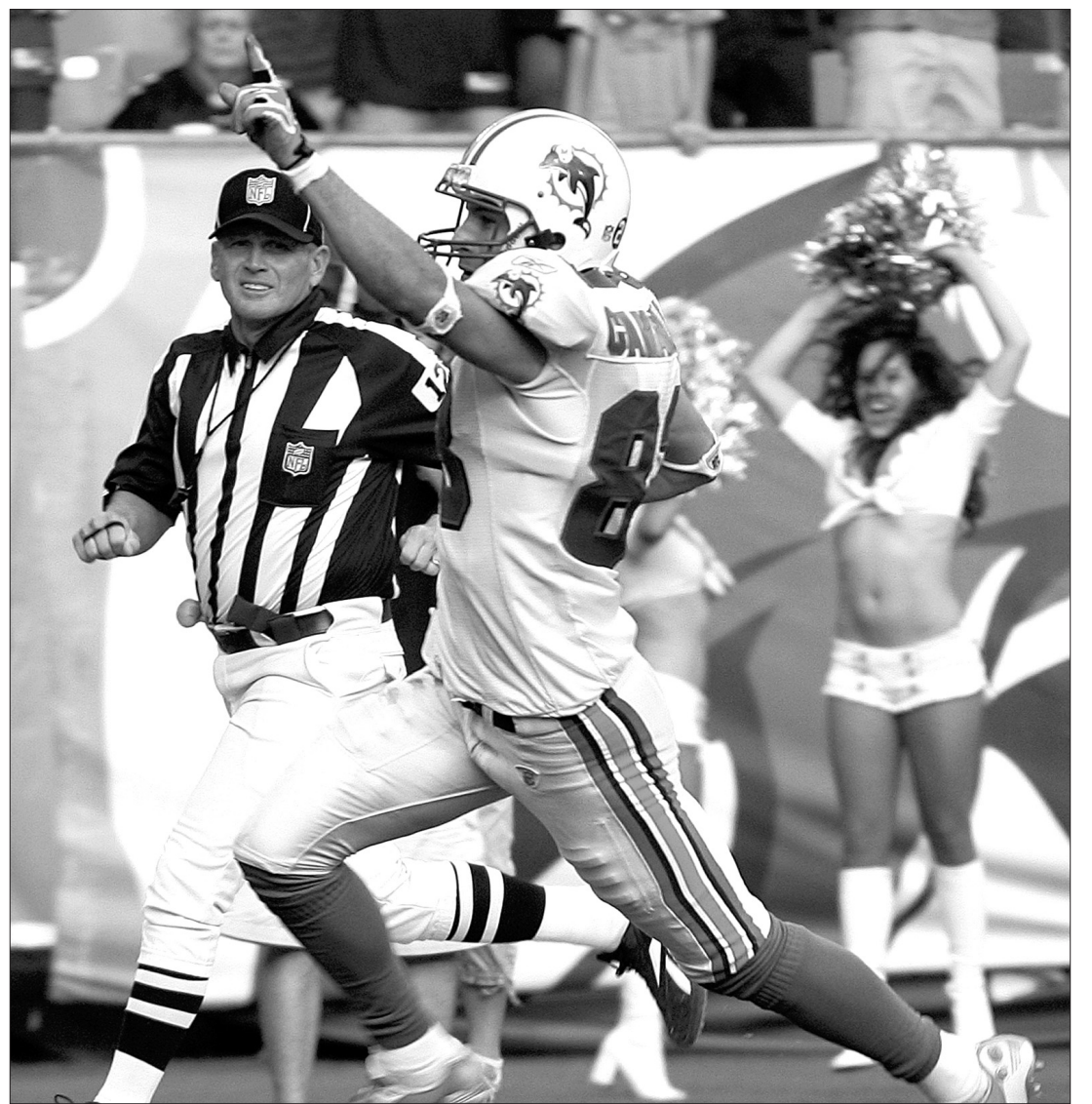
"As long as that zero stays in that (loss) column, I'm cool with it," star receiver Randy Moss said.

Also Sunday, Tampa Bay clinched the NFC North by routing Atlanta 37-7, and San Diego took the AFC West with a 51-14 romp past Detroit. Indianapolis clinched a first-round playoff bye with its 21-14 victory at Oakland. Green Bay did the same after its 33-14 victory at St. Louis.

Dolphins 22, Ravens 16, OT

Miami snapped a 16-game losing streak and sent Baltimore (4-10) to a franchise-record eighth consecutive defeat.

Camarillo broke over the middle on third down and had two steps on the secondary when he caught a pass from Cleo Lemon near midfield. Camarillo sprinted to the end zone for his first NFL



AP photo/J. Pat Carter

Miami Dolphins wide receiver Greg Camarillo scores the winning touchdown during overtime of their 22-16 win against the Baltimore Ravens Sunday in Miami. The victory was the first of the season for the Dolphins.

See NFL, Page 4B

Obituaries

Virginia Hilario Bustamante



Virginia Hilario Bustamante, 51, of Big Spring died Sunday, Dec. 16, 2007, at Covenant Medical Center in Lubbock. Funeral mass will be at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2007, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church with the Rev. James Plagens officiating. Vigil services will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2007, at Myers & Smith Chapel. Burial will be at Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

She was born March 11, 1956, in Big Spring to Ofelia and Ascension Hilario Sr. She was a lifetime resident of Big Spring and was a homemaker. She was a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

She is survived by her husband, Elias Bustamante Jr. of Big Spring; two sons, Eric H. Bustamante and his wife, Maria San Roma, of Rogers, Ark., and Elias Bustamante III of Big Spring; two daughters, Erica Delbosquez and her husband, Chris, and Priscilla B. Tapia and her husband, Lance, all of Big Spring; five grandchildren; her mother, Ofelia Galan of Big Spring; 12 sisters, Ester Calderon, Estella Hilario, Marylou Villareal, Norma Juarez, Sarah Rivera, Isabel Martinez, Cecilia Hyden, Diana Rodriguez and JoAnne Hilario, all of Big Spring, Yolanda Moran of San Antonio, Rosemary Guiterrez of Lovington, N.M., and Sally Correa of Amarillo; two brothers, Ascencion Hilario Jr. and Sammy Hilario, both of Big Spring; and a number of nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her father, Ascencion Hilario Sr., and one sister, Mary H. Martinez.

Arrangements are by Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Pay your respects online at www.myersandsmith.com

Ona Bickley



Funeral services for Ona Bickley will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2007, at the First United Methodist Church of Stanton with the Rev. Daniel Armstrong, pastor, officiating. Interment will be at Evergreen Cemetery in Stanton.

The family will receive friends Monday from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Gilbreath Funeral Home.

Ona Bickley was born Sept. 9, 1916, in Trent to J.R. and Arilla Nichols.

The family moved to West Texas where she went to school and graduated from Courtney.

She married Harrison Bickley on Dec. 31, 1938, in the First Methodist Church of Stanton.

She devoted her life to Christ and used her musical talent playing the organ and piano in her church from the time she was a teenager.

She is survived by two daughters, Shirley Stone and Marilyn Glaspie, both of Stanton; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; one brother, Oran Nichols of Midland; and numerous nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents; two brothers, Clarence Nichols and Elma "Pop" Nichols; two sisters, Opal Jones and Velma Clements; and her husband of 67 years.

The family suggests memorials be made to First United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 1193, Stanton 79782 or to Home Hospice, 901 W. Missouri Ave., Midland 79701.

Arrangements are under the direction of Gilbreath Funeral Home. Online condolences may be made at www.npwelch.com.

Robert 'Bob' Baird

Robert "Bob" Baird, 64, of Big Spring died on Saturday, Dec. 15, 2007, in a Lubbock hospital. Graveside funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2007, at Mt. Olive Memorial Park with the Rev. Keith Weaver, pastor of East Fourth Street Baptist Church, officiating.

He was born on Feb. 27, 1943, in Redding, Calif., and married Marie Hastain on Dec. 7, 1967, in Sacramento, Calif.

Survivors include his wife, Marie Baird of Big Spring; one daughter and son-in-law, Robyn and Keith Torbik of Big Spring; three step-daughters, Jeri Richey of Georgetown, Calif., Mary Franklin of Rio Linda, Calif., and Lisa Fackrell of Des Moines, Wash.; two step-sons, Sam Fackrell of Puyallup, Wash., and John Fackrell of Georgetown, Calif.; one sister, Shirley Burkett of Sacramento, Calif.; one brother, James LaBue of Sacramento, Calif.; 16 grandchildren; and several great-grandchildren.

Arrangements under the direction of Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Big Spring. Online condolences can be made at www.npwelch.com.

Weather

Today — Mostly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.

Tonight — Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 30s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.

Tuesday — Sunny. Highs in the mid 60s. Southwest winds 10 to 15 mph.

Tuesday night — Partly cloudy. Lows 33 to 38. South winds around 10 mph.

Wednesday — Mostly sunny. Highs in the upper 60s. Southwest winds 15 to 20 mph.

Wednesday night — Mostly clear. Lows 31 to 36.

Thursday — Mostly sunny. Highs in the upper 60s.

Thursday night — Partly cloudy. Lows in the upper 30s.

Carl A. Coleman

Carl A. Coleman, 94, of Big Spring died Monday, Dec. 17, 2007, in a local nursing home. His services are pending with Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Big Spring.

Gilberto S. Recio

Gilberto S. Recio, 62, of Big Spring died Sunday, Dec. 16, 2007, at his residence. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Margaret Elwell

Margaret Elwell, 92, of Big Spring died Saturday, Dec. 15, 2007, at her residence. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Edith Davie

Edith Davie, 85, of Big Spring died Friday, Dec. 14, 2007, at Scenic Mountain Medical Center. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Sheriff's report

The Howard County Sheriff's Office reported the following activity:

Note — Officials with the Howard County Jail reported having 65 inmates at the time of this report.

• **MICHAEL DALE MOSELEY**, 42, was arrested Friday by DPS on charges of driving while license invalid - enhanced, driving while intoxicated - third or more offense and possession of marijuana - two ounces or less.

• **FRANKIE DEAN NORVELL**, 38, was arrested Friday by the HCSO on a charge of theft.

• **CYNTHIA WHITE**, 43, was arrested Friday by the HCSO on a judgment/sentence for possession of a controlled substance.

• **BERNARDO MENDEZ RODRIGUEZ**, 36, was arrested Friday by the HCSO on a charge of possession of a controlled substance.

• **ERNEST WILLIAM CLARK**, 67, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on a charge of criminal trespass.

• **TERRY EDWARDS SHIRLEY**, 44, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on a charge of criminal trespass.

• **DIANA DARDEN SANDERS**, 47, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of public intoxication.

• **CHARLES WESLEY CAMPBELL**, 49, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of driving while intoxicated and unlawfully carrying a weapon.

• **ADAM CANDIDO AGUILAR**, 31, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of driving while intoxicated - second offense.

• **TOMMY DEL BOLTON**, 25, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of public intoxication.

• **BRAD AARON KINARD**, 23, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of driving while intoxicated.

• **KAYE LYNN WOOLRIDGE**, 20, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on a charge of theft by check.

• **RYAN COLE WALKER**, 19, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of driving under the influence by a minor and minor in possession of alcohol.

• **GARRETT BRYAN WALKER**, 19, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of consumption of alcohol by a minor and minor in possession of alcohol.

• **DAVID CRUZ**, 41, was arrested Sunday by DPS on a charge of driving while intoxicated - third or more offense, open container.

• **PERRY LEE JEFFERY**, 20, was arrested Sunday by DPS on charges of consumption of alcohol by a minor and minor in possession of alcohol.

• **CHRISTINA MARTINEZ**, 24, was transferred to the county jail Sunday by the BSPD on a charge of resisting arrest, search or transportation.

Lottery

Results of the Lotto Texas drawing Saturday night:
Winning numbers drawn: 19-20-24-29-37-44
Number matching six of six: None
Estimated jackpot for Wednesday night drawing: \$6 million.

Results of the Cash 5 drawing Saturday night:
Winning numbers drawn: 8-10-19-33-37
Number matching five of five: None
Next Cash 5 drawing: Tonight.

The winning Daily 4 numbers drawn Saturday night, in order:
2-9-8-0. Sum It Up: 19.

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Saturday night, in order:
9-3-8. Sum It Up: 20.

The winning Daily 4 numbers drawn Saturday afternoon, in order:
2-4-4-0. Sum It Up: 10.

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Saturday afternoon, in order:
9-9-1. Sum It Up: 19.

Police blotter

The Big Spring Police Department reported the following activity between 9 a.m. Saturday and 7 a.m. today:

• **PRESTON BOLTON**, 24, of 2621 Fairchild, was arrested Saturday on a charge of driving while license invalid.

• **HECTOR LOPEZ JR.**, 27, of 1408 S. Donnalay, was arrested Sunday on a warrant.

• **CHRISTINA MARTINEZ**, 24, of 134 Jonesboro, was arrested Sunday on charges of assault Class C/family violence and resisting arrest.

• **JACK PAREDEZ**, 21, of 105 E. 17th Street, was arrested Sunday on two local citations.

• **SANDRA HAYMAN**, 41, of 2501 Chanute, was arrested Sunday on a Brady County warrant.

• **JAY FRANK OLIVAS**, 17, of 7003 Old Colorado City Highway, was arrested Sunday on a charge of theft.

• **UNATTENDED DEATH** was reported in the 1600 block of Martin Luther King Blvd.

• **THEFT** was reported:

- in the 1600 block of Stanford.

- in the 1200 block of 11th Place.

- in the 1100 block of Lamesa.

- in the 1400 block of Highway 87.

- in the 200 block of Marcy.

- in the 700 block of Interstate Highway 20.

- in the 800 block of 13th Street.

- in the 400 block of Fourth Street.

• **CRIMINAL MISCHIEF** was reported:

- in the 300 block of State.

- in the 1600 block of 11th Place.

- in the 700 block of Second Street.

• **BURGLARY OF A VEHICLE** was reported:

- in the 700 block of 11th Place.

- in the 800 block of 16th Street.

• **BURGLARY OF A HABITATION** was reported in the 1000 block of Second Street.

• **ASSAULT CLASS C/FAMILY VIOLENCE** was reported in the 600 block of 17th Street.

• **UNAUTHORIZED USE OF A MOTOR VEHICLE** was reported:

- in the 600 block of Caylor.

- in the 4000 block of Connally.

• **AGGRAVATED ASSAULT** was reported in the 3300 block of FM 700.

Fire/EMS

The Big Spring Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services reported the following activity:

NOTE — A trio of structure fires reported over the weekend are currently being investigated by the Big Spring Fire Marshal's office. More information was not available at press time.

• **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1800 block of N. Highway 87. One person was transported to the VAMC.

• **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2600 block of Loop Road. One person was transported to the VAMC.

• **MEDICAL** was reported in the 200 block of Jefferson. One person was transported to SMMC.

• **TRAUMA** was reported in the 1400 block of main. Service refused.

• **TRAUMA** was reported in the 500 block of N. Birdwell Lane. One person was transported to SMMC.

• **MEDICAL** was reported in the 300 block of S. Main Street. Service refused.

• **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2000 block of S. Gregg Street. Service refused.

• **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1800 block of N. Highway 87. One person was transported to SMMC.

• **TRAUMA** was reported in the 500 block of W. 17th Street. One person was transported to SMMC.

• **MEDICAL** was reported in the 400 block of E. 16th Street. One person was transported to SMMC.

• **MEDICAL** was reported in the 3200 block of Parkway. One person was transported to SMMC.

• **MEDICAL** was reported in the 900 block of Father Delaney. One person was transported to SMMC.

• **STRUCTURE FIRE** was reported in the 1100 block of Wood Street.

• **RUBBISH FIRE** was reported in the area of 16th Street.

• **TRAUMA** was reported in the 500 block of Westover Road. One person was transported to SMMC.

• **TRAUMA** was reported in the 2500 block of Alsbrook. Service refused.

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'Be A Star' program benefits APS clients

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

While many area charities concentrate on collecting Christmas gifts for the area's needy children each year, Adult Protective Services is looking after Howard County's elderly and disabled with its annual "Be a Star" program.

The program, which collects Christmas gifts for the area's elderly and disabled and is being sponsored by First Bank of West Texas, will continue collecting gifts until Friday,

according to Darla Barton, Community Initiatives Specialist for APS.

"All you have to do is go to any First Bank of West Texas location and pick out a star," said Barton. "The stars will have the client's first name and requested gift. Each gift that is purchased for the elderly or disabled clients needs to be returned to the bank."

"The elderly and disabled people APS serves are our neighbors and part of our communities. Each are special and

unique. This is everyone's chance to contribute to a project that makes everyone feel like a star."

Part of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Adult Protective Services officials said the program can make all the difference in the lives of one of the state's most forgotten, yet continually growing, demographics.

"A lot of people don't realize it, but the elderly and disabled population is the fastest grow-

ing in the state," said Barton. "According to the last census, people 65 and older make up 12.4 percent of the population. People between the ages of 21 and 64 with disabilities make up 15.1 percent of the population, and both of these demographics are the fastest growing in the nation."

"Those same numbers are always higher for West Texas. In Howard County, 14.1 percent of the population is 65 or older, and 23.6 percent are between 21 and 64 years old with disabili-

ties. So Big Spring and the surrounding areas have a very real stake in a program like this."

First Bank of West Texas has locations at 607 S. Scurry, 1810 E. FM 700 and 500 W. Broadway in Coahoma. Lobby hours are 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.

For more information on the program, contact Barton at 432-684-3201.

Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232 or by e-mail at citydesk@bigspringherald.com.

THE WORLD BRIEFLY

Travel hazardous as snow, sleet, freezing rain hit Northeast; jetliner skids off RI runway

BOSTON (AP) — A wind-blown brew of snow, sleet and freezing rain cut visibility and iced over highways from the Great Lakes to New England on Sunday, stranding air and road travelers and causing a jetliner to skid off a runway.

At least three traffic deaths have been blamed on the storm.

The National Weather Service posted winter storm warnings from Michigan and Indiana all the way to Maine. Around a foot of snow had fallen on parts of the Chicago area, with 10 inches in Vermont. Meteorologists said that 18 inches was possible in northern New England; more snow was still expected in parts of Michigan.

"Our biggest advice right now is, stay home," said Maine State Police Sgt. Andrew Donovan. Visibility in the blowing snow was less than 200 yards, and in stronger gusts "if there's a car in front of you, you can't even see it," he said.

In Rhode Island, a U.S. Airways Express Flight from Philadelphia carrying 31 passengers and three crew members slid off the runway as it tried to land at T.F. Green Airport, which got nearly 8 inches of snow, the Providence Journal reported on its Web site. No injuries were reported, but the airport had to close its runways for about 2 1/2 hours, spokespeople told the newspaper.

International donors pledge \$650 million in aid toward creating Palestinian state

PARIS (AP) — Donors began committing funds from around the world Monday for the moribund Palestinian economy amid a renewed international push for a Palestinian state, with the European Union promising \$650 million in 2008.

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad is asking

for \$5.6 billion over three years. U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged the international community to fulfill the Palestinian needs and more.

"What we must do now is work together before the end of 2008 for the creation of an independent, democratic, viable Palestinian state," French President Nicolas Sarkozy, the meeting's host, said in a speech to representatives from nearly 90 donor countries and international organizations.

Meanwhile, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said Monday that he has ruled out dialogue with rival Islamic militant Hamas, and that without international support Gaza is "heading into disaster."

Gaza has been virtually cut off from the world since Hamas seized control of the territory by force in June. Israel and Egypt sharply restricted border access in response, and the blockade has further deepened poverty there.

Suicide bomber kills 9 army recruits returning from a soccer game in northwestern Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — A suicide bomber blew himself up among a group of Pakistani army recruits returning from a soccer game in northwestern Pakistan on Monday, killing nine of them, the army said.

The attacker struck near an army communications center in Kohat, about 30 miles from the city of Peshawar. Army spokesman Maj. Gen. Waheed Arshad said nine troops were killed and four were wounded.

The young recruits were walking back to their quarters along a public road when a lone bomber walked up to them and set off the blast.

Russia makes first nuclear fuel shipment to Iran's Bushehr plant, Foreign Ministry says

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia has made its first shipment of nuclear fuel to Iran's Bushehr plant, which is at the center of the international tensions over Tehran's nuclear program, the Foreign Ministry said Monday.

Iran contends the nuclear power plant operation in Bushehr is strictly for civilian purposes, but many critics suspect Tehran intends to use the plant as part of an alleged effort to develop nuclear weapons.

Construction at Bushehr had been frequently delayed. Officials said the delays were due to payment disputes, but many observers suggested Russia also was unhappy with Iran's resistance to international pressure to make its nuclear program more open and to assure the international community that it was not developing nuclear arms.

"All fuel that will be delivered will be under the control and guarantees of the International Atomic Energy Agency for the whole time it stays on Iranian territory," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "Moreover, the Iranian side gave additional written guarantees that the fuel will be used only for the Bushehr nuclear power plant."

Turkey bombs Kurdish rebel targets in Iraq; military chief says US intelligence used

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey said dozens of its warplanes bombed Kurdish rebel targets as deep as 60 miles inside northern Iraq for three hours Sunday, the largest aerial attack in years against the outlawed separatist group. Turkey's military chief said the U.S. gave intelligence and tacit approval for the raid.

An Iraqi official said the planes attacked several villages, killing one woman. The rebels said two civilians and five rebels were killed.

The U.S. Embassy in Iraq refused to comment Monday on the Turkish general's assertion that American officials had given Turkey permission to enter Iraq's air space.

In the nighttime offensive, the fighter jets hit rebel positions close to the border with Turkey and in the Qandil mountains, which straddle the Iraq-Iran border, the Turkish military said in a statement posted on its Web site. It said the operation was directed against the rebels and not against the local population.

As many as 50 fighter jets were involved in the airstrikes.

REBATES

Continued from Page 1A

the year, the Tall City pulled in \$33,907,957.55, up 13.14 percent.

Monahans witnessed a .26 percent decrease in sales tax revenue for the year's final month. The Ward County seat received \$119,348.12 this month compared to \$119,660.37 a year ago. For 2007, Monahans took in \$1,416,969.44, up 7.68 percent.

Odessa received \$1,781,315.82 this month, a 14.48 percent increase

compared to the \$1,555,888.10 taken in a year earlier. For 2007, Odessa received \$22,169,077.79, up 12.54 percent.

Pecos, home of the Texas Rodeo Hall of Fame, has been recording high scores out of the chute all year. This time, the Reeves County seat posted a 78.51 percent increase in revenue, comparing receipts of \$146,595.45 to \$82,120.81 a year ago. For the expanse of 2007, Pecos collected \$1,545,444.87, up 54.59 percent.

Recording a 4.28 percent

increase comparing last December to the present was San Angelo. The city received \$1,425,523.54 this month and \$1,366,906.37 in December 2006. For the year, the home of Angelo State University and a Howard College campus received \$18,642,880.28, up 5.67 percent.

Snyder, of white buffalo fame, witnessed a strong 40.85 percent increase when comparing this December's revenue of \$215,777.99 to last December's revenue of \$153,193.44. For the year, the Scurry County seat accumulated \$2,372,101.03,

an increase of 17.44 percent.

Receipts were up an astounding 74.14 percent in Stanton. The home of a few old soreheads took in \$25,121.88 this month compared to \$14,426.09 233,205.90 in December 2006. For the year, Stanton received \$287,170.26, and despite a few very strong months, revenues were down for the Martin County seat by 7.07 percent.

Finally, Sweetwater, home of the National WASP World War II

Museum, received \$189,065.20, up 3.57 percent compared to the \$182,543.36 the city took in during December 2006. For the year, Sweetwater received \$2,605,562.02, up 4.58 percent.

Bill McClellan can be reached at 263-7331, ext. 235 or by e-mail at newsdesk@bigspringherald.com.

INDICTED

Continued from Page 1A

• Daniel Frederick Hembree, 40, of 700 Diver Road, driving while intoxicated (first-degree felony - enhanced).

• Jabenia Shanell Summers, 31, currently in the Howard County Jail, three counts of theft-less than \$1,500 with two or more previous convic-

tions (all three charges are third-degree felonies - enhanced).

• Nick Rodriguez Valencia, 24, of 1104 Nolan, possession of a controlled substance (second-degree felony).

• Joe Anthony Villesca, 31, currently in the Howard County Jail, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon (second-degree felony).

• Michael P. Wertman,

27, of 1603 Lincoln, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon (second-degree felony).

Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232 or by e-mail at citydesk@bigspringherald.com.

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Virginia Hilario Bustamante, 51, died Sunday. Funeral Mass will be at 11:00 AM Wednesday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Vigil Services will be at 7:00 PM Tuesday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Burial will be at Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

Edith Davie, 85, died Friday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Margaret Elwell, 92, died Saturday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Gilberto S. Recio, 62, died Sunday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

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EDITORIAL

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

-FIRST AMENDMENT

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the Editorial Board of the Big Spring Herald unless otherwise indicated.

Ron Midkiff
Publisher

John A. Moseley
Managing Editor

Bill McClellan
News Editor

OUR VIEWS

Let's remember what Christmas really celebrates

What a wonderful time of year the Christmas season is ... the parties, parades, carols, the gathering of families and giving and getting of all those gifts. There's absolutely no surprise that most people will tell you this is their favorite time of the year.

But enjoying what is for most of us our favorite time of the year, we need to remember the "reason for the season."

We write this every year in this space for good reason.

Every year on Dec. 25 we Christians celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, we know there are a great many "educated" people who want to remind us that the winter solstice has been a celebrated pagan holiday since time immemorial.

Some Christians are even ready each year to remind us that Dec. 25 wasn't the date of Christ's birth. And that's true. The date of Dec. 25, roughly corresponding to the date of the winter solstice, was chosen as the "traditional" birthday of Jesus by early Christians for no other reason than to appease pagan tribesmen.

The Christmas tree, the Yule log, the wreath and countless other Christmas traditions come directly from pagan celebrations and ceremony.

But that makes little difference today.

Christmas is not a few days off from school or work. It is not the giving and receiving of material gifts. The true meaning of Christmas is not even found in the opportunity for families to come together and fellowship.

It isn't found in Dickens' a "Christmas Carol," the songs about "Frosty the Snowman" or "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" or even in "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" penned by good old Dr. Seuss.

All of those things have become Christmas traditions and we should cherish them.

What we must not forget, once again, is that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ.

We Christians know why that is important. The real reason for the season is to remember what His immaculate birth represents for all of us.

Yes, we believe that Jesus is the reason for the season. More importantly, we think, He is the reason for every season.

How To Contact Us

The Herald is always interested in our readers' opinions. In order that we might better serve your needs, we offer several ways in which you may contact us:

- In person at 710 Scurry St.
- By telephone at 263-7331
- By fax at 264-7205
- By e-mail Managing Editor John A. Moseley at editor@bigspringherald.com or News Editor Bill McClellan at newsdesk@bigspringherald.com.
- By mail at P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721

LETTER POLICIES

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 - We reserve the right to limit publication to one letter per 30-day period per author.
 - Letters that are unsigned or do not include a telephone number or address will not be considered.
 - Letters should be submitted to Editor, Big Spring Herald, P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721. They can also be e-mailed to editor@bigspringherald.com

A SMALL PRAYER

by K. Rae Anderson

Rather than make a mistake, Lord, may we come to You with our concerns.

Amen

Heavy money, scant defense

Watching the resignation of Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.), the Senate's No. 2 Republican, only a year after he was re-elected and a little more than a month before tougher lobbying restrictions took effect, it was easy to connect the dots between his decision to leave and the hefty lobbying salary he was bound to collect.



JACK SHANAHAN

But in the wake of another famous November resignation two years ago, Lott's departure becomes much more poignant.

In November 2005, Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham also surrendered his seat over a bribery scandal involving earmarks — those notorious last-minute additions to the federal budget — that he won for defense contractors.

And with the 2008 Defense Authorization Bill, totaling almost \$500 billion (not including funds for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan), emerging from conference committee after the Thanksgiving break, one has to wonder that if Duke Cunningham weren't already serving a prison sentence, might the corrupt lawmaker have followed Lott's lead from Congress to K Street as a defense lobbyist?

This scenario isn't so far-fetched. The revolving door between Washington lobbyists and Washington lawmakers is spinning at breakneck speed, giving public servants a more lucrative career path after they leave office.

And as an investigation in "Business Week" magazine last September demonstrated, the biggest beneficiary of lobbying and earmarking is the defense industry.

Again, according to "Business Week," the "vast majority" of the top 50 recipients of earmarks in the 2005 budget were military contractors, with Boeing turning up as the biggest winner with \$456 million in budget add-ons.

In 2004, Darlene Druyan, the former number-two weapons procurer for the Air Force, was sentenced to prison for negotiating a job for herself with Boeing while she was still overseeing weapons contracts at the Pentagon — but not before a full investigation revealed that she had used her official position to direct billions of dollars to her future employers.

The Cunninghams and the Druyans are extreme examples of outright lawbreaking in a world where the lines often are blurred between weapons buyers and weapons makers.

A separate story printed on January 4, 2007, in "The Hill," a Washington, D.C.-based newspaper, that the defense industry, anticipating possible earmark reform from the new Democratic Congress, was preparing an aggressive lobbying agenda as the Pentagon's 2008 budget request was first submitted.

The president of the Aerospace Industries Association was quoted saying that a major part of that agenda was multi-year contracts for big defense systems.

Is it any wonder, then, why the Senate approved an amendment for a multi-year contract for the F-

22 Raptor fighter, even though members of the Senate Armed Services Committee had decided to fund the plane one year at a time due to its skyrocketing costs?

The senator who pushed the multi-year contract was Saxby Chambliss from Georgia, where the F-22 is produced.

Taking a step back, it doesn't take much curiosity to ask how much of that \$500 billion baseline defense budget is devoted to feathering the nests of defense contractors and select congressional districts.

For example, how does the Pentagon justify \$3.5 billion for the DDG-1000 stealth destroyer or \$2.4 billion for the Virginia-class submarine?

The added value to national defense of these weapons in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world is highly questionable, but their tremendous cost overruns are hardly in doubt.

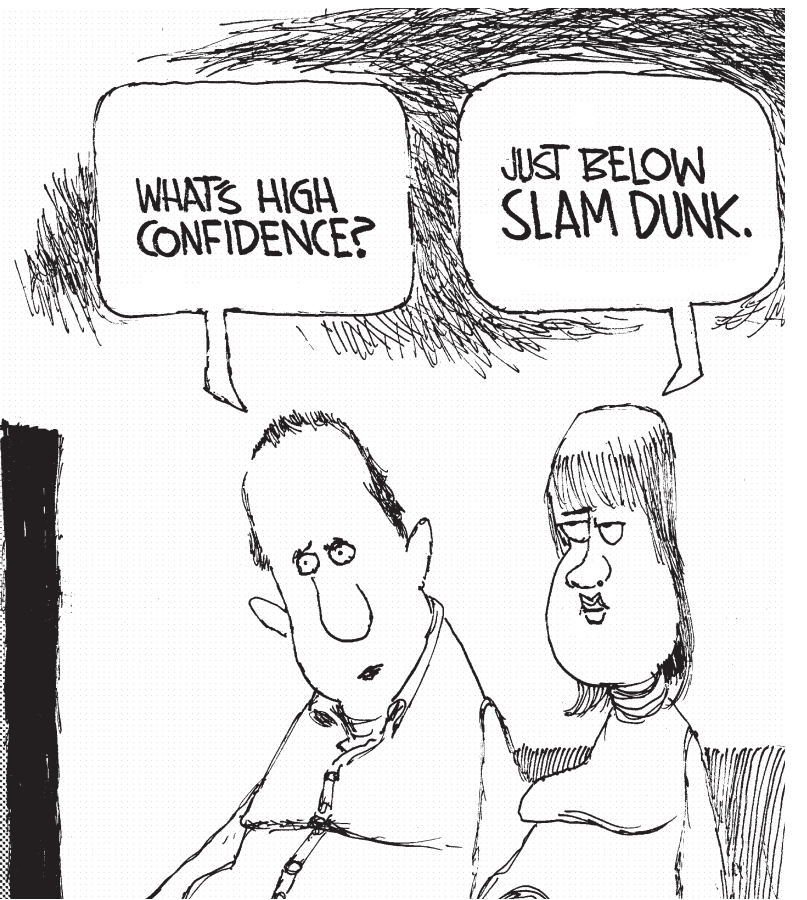
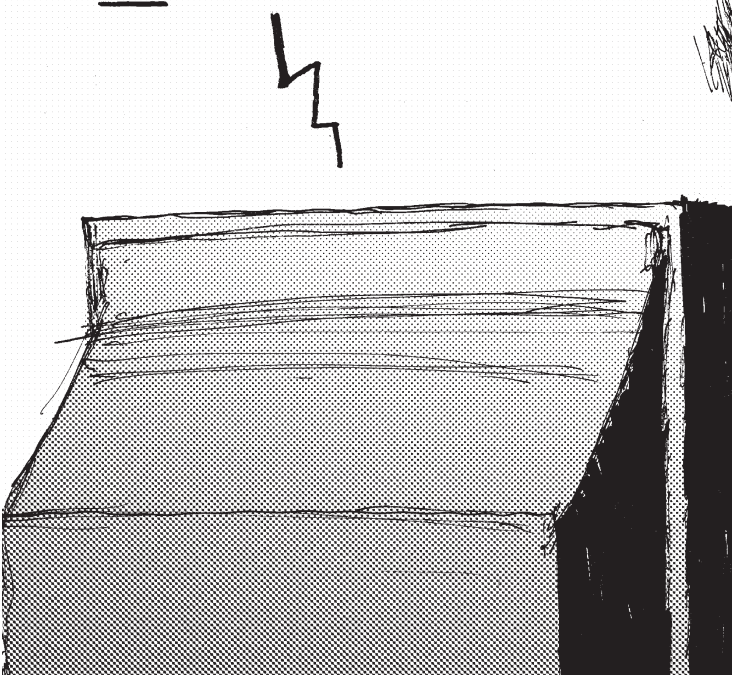
Today's business practices of the Pentagon and the defense lobby should serve as a warning that the political process in Congress may be incapable of dealing with issues in the national interest.

But unless the common-sense lobby becomes as profitable as the weapons-making lobby, we may have to find a way around Congress before we can see some fiscal sanity.

Jack Shanahan is head of the Military Advisory Committee of Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities and former commander of the U.S. Second Fleet.

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WE HAVE A HIGH CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT THAT IRAN IS NOT A NUCLEAR THREAT.



Let's discuss tanks vs. talks

Because of President Bush, the world hates America. If voters elect a Democrat, the 2008 hopefuls argue, Washington will engage in more diplomacy and the world will love us.



DEBRA SAUNDERS

They glom onto every news story to bolster that argument — including the new National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that refuted a 2005 NIE that reported "high confidence" that Iran was working on nukes, by assessing with "high confidence" that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program."

For years, Democrats have complained that Bush should have been more skeptical of intelligence that supported his ideology. Now they're doing the same thing, as they embrace the new NIE report as gospel.

In an interview at Stanford Law School Friday, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad was less accepting of the new NIE. As a diplomat, Khalilzad did not engage in partisan attacks. But he did comment on the NIE's history of underestimating — Iraqi efforts before the first Gulf War — and overestimating — Iraq's WMD before this war.

Khalilzad added, "This estimate is about a part of the nuclear problem of Iran. The biggest part of the nuclear problem is having the fissile material to make the

bomb." No one should relax when oil-rich Iran continues uranium enrichment.

At a National Public Radio debate last week, Democratic candidates argued that Iran's actions highlight the need for more diplomacy. Diplomacy boosters cite the NIE statement that the Iran nuclear program "was halted primarily in response to international pressure."

Hmmm. Which would present greater "international pressure" — a war in Iraq or a U.N. resolution? According to the Washington Post, "senior intelligence officials said it is possible that Libya's decision to halt its nuclear program and the war in Iraq were also factors, but said there was no direct evidence of either." Right. There's no direct evidence, other than the fact that Libya also happened to do the same thing right after the start of the war. No wonder conservatives are suspicious.

An Afghan who first came here as a high-school exchange student near Modesto, Calif., Khalilzad is living proof that many in the world love America. He "fell in love" with Americans, how "welcoming" they are and the way they interact with others. He can't imagine another large country that would have granted him such opportunity.

Rather than hate us, Khalilzad, also former ambassador to Afghanistan, noted that the Afghans "couldn't have enough of us. The only fear that they have is that we will abandon them." As former ambassador to Iraq,

Khalilzad saw Shiites and Kurds thankful for U.S. troops in Iraq, while recent efforts to reach out to Sunnis have improved how all Iraqis look at U.S. troops.

What would happen to America's image abroad if U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq? Khalilzad answered: "That would be a disaster in my mind." And: "Weakness is very provocative."

Many fear violence between Sunni and Shiites, Turks and Kurds, and extremist Iraqis and moderate Iraqis who cooperated with U.S. troops.

Sen. Chris Dodd was in San Francisco Sunday. When I asked him what would happen to America's image abroad if we withdrew from Iraq in, say, 18 months, Dodd observed that nothing is certain, but: "I think we enhance the image."

The troops surge has not brought about political reconciliation. The world, Dodd surmised, would respect a nation that recognizes it is "traveling down the wrong road."

That is the fundamental difference between the pro-war and anti-war camps on Iran and Iraq.

One side argues that Americans must show themselves big enough to admit a mistake.

The other side believes that losing doesn't win many friends or mollify many enemies.

E-mail Debra J. Saunders at dsanders@schronicle.com.

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COWBOYS

Continued from Page 1B

wrapped and iced during his postgame news conference and insisted, "I'll be fine."

Philadelphia (6-8) ended a three-game losing streak, kept alive hopes of snagging a wildcard playoff berth and avenged a nationally televised blowout loss to Dallas six weeks ago. The Eagles also ended the Cowboys' seven-game winning streak and prevented them from tying the franchise record for wins in a season.

As bad as it sounds for Dallas, the Cowboys knew before kickoff they'd secured a first-round bye — and that they couldn't lock up home-field advantage throughout the playoffs. So the stakes were pretty low. And they played like it.

"In the NFL, you can have days it doesn't work for you, and this is one of those days," team owner Jerry Jones said. "I've seen us play too well on offense, but what should con-

cern everybody, is if this happens in the playoffs, you get to go home."

Gurode and defense end Chris Canty went out with left knee injuries. Gurode is having an MRI Monday, but is expected to be OK. Canty should be fine. Backup safety Pat Watkins sprained his left ankle and tight end Anthony Fasano sustained a mild concussion.

Then there's Terrell Owens, whose ego has to be smarting after waiting until the fourth quarter for his first catch against his former team. He had only two after having only three last week. Worse yet, three passes Romo threw to him were caught by Philadelphia, including what turned out to be Dallas' final offensive snap. T.O. slipped on the play, ending the locals' hopes of seeing the kind of last-minute rally Romo pulled off in Detroit last week and Buffalo in October.

"We came out flat. We just couldn't get anything going offensively," Owens said.

"Maybe this is good for us — a gut-check."

Romo finished 13-of-36 for 214 yards, with a career-low rating of 22.2. It came in front of his parents and his newest A-list girlfriend — Jessica Simpson, who tugged the front of her pink No. 9 jersey, then mouthed the word "Romo!" when cameras spotted her. For what it's worth, Romo's previous worst rating came last December against Philadelphia when then-girlfriend Carrie Underwood was here.

"If we go on and win the Super Bowl, the loss is a good thing," Romo said. "If we lose first round of the playoffs, the loss is not a good thing."

Philadelphia's Donovan McNabb was 23-of-41 for 208 yards and a touchdown, which he celebrated with the kind of spread-armed, arched-back gesture Owens used when he played for the Eagles. He also ran nine times for a season-high 53 yards, with a season-best 28-yarder. He was hardly dominant, getting sacked four

times and failing to convert on several third-and-shorts. Then again, he also overcame the first-quarter loss of tight end Matt Schobel (concussion) and right guard Shawn Andrews (knee).

McNabb denied borrowing a page from T.O.'s celebration manual.

"I've been through a lot this season, so I was just giving thanks to the man upstairs," McNabb said.

Philadelphia's defense was out to save face after giving up 38 points and 434 yards last time against Dallas. The Eagles proved their point right away, preventing the Cowboys from getting a first down in the first quarter. Romo started 0-for-6 after having only five incompletions last time.

"This is special," Philadelphia defensive coordinator Jim Johnson said.

Eagles running back Brian Westbrook broke free for what would've been a 25-yard touchdown with a little more than two minutes left, but he decided

to stop at the 1. It seemed bizarre, but was brilliant strategy. With Dallas out of timeouts, all McNabb had to do was take a knee three straight times to seal the deal.

"It was brilliant," Philadelphia coach Andy Reid said. "He used that Villanova education and transferred it to the football field."

Westbrook gained 81 yards on 18 rushes and 63 yards on nine receptions.

Witten, coming off a team-record 15 receptions, caught eight passes for 113 yards, including a 53-yarder that made him the first Dallas tight end to go over 1,000 yards receiving in a season.

Reggie Brown had Philadelphia's touchdown and the venture into the kettle after an incompleting.

"I was running too fast to slow down," he said. "I about bowled over a cheerleader. There was a big red bowl there. I was happy there wasn't any presents in there. I didn't want to squish anyone's presents."

NFL

Continued from Page 1B

touchdown, and his jubilant teammates ran after him to create a mob scene in the corner of Dolphin Stadium.

"Man, I haven't run in the open field in a long time," Camarillo said. "To see it open up, to see the end zone, to see everybody cheering, it was a great feeling."

With their first victory since Dec. 10, 2006, the Dolphins avoided matching the worst start in NFL history, 0-14 by the 1976 expansion Buccaneers and the 1980 Saints.

Patriots 20, Jets 10

Host New England clinched home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs even though Tom Brady failed to throw a touchdown pass for the first time this season. Laurence Maroney ran for 104 yards, just the fourth time this season a New England rusher surpassed 100.

On New York's second offensive play, Richard Seymour slammed Kellen Clemens to the ground in the Jets' end zone, forcing a bad throw and an interception that Eugene Wilson returned 5 yards for a touchdown. Clemens didn't return. Coach Bill Belichick

and Jets coach Eric Mangini, his former friend and protege who turned him in for using a sideline videocamera in violation of NFL rules after the season opener, had a pleasant exchange at game's end.

Belichick smiled all the way from the sideline until he reached Mangini and appeared to say, "Great game, awesome," as they shook hands. Then Belichick walked away, pumping his fist twice over his head.

The NFL fined Belichick \$500,000 and the team \$250,000 and took away their first-round draft choice next year for the illegal taping.

Buccaneers 37, Falcons 3

At Tampa, Fla., Micheal Spurlock ran back a kickoff 90 yards for a touchdown, the first in the franchise's 32 seasons, and Tampa Bay won the NFC South for the second time in three seasons. The Bucs (9-5) improved to 5-0 in the division after going 0-6 against NFC South rivals a year ago.

It's the fifth straight season the team winning the NFC South finished last the previous season.

Ronde Barber returned an interception 29 yards for a TD and Earnest Graham scored a touchdown rushing in a team-record sixth consecutive game.

The loss was the fifth in a row for Atlanta (3-11). It capped a tumultuous week that began with suspended star quarterback Michael Vick being sentenced to 23 months in prison for his role in a dogfighting ring, a lopsided loss to New Orleans and the abrupt resignation of first-year coach Bobby Petrino.

Chargers 51, Lions 14

At San Diego, the Chargers (9-5) repeated as AFC West champions by beating the punchless Lions for their fourth straight win and eighth in 10 games.

LaDainian Tomlinson had 116 yards and two

scores on 15 carries in one half. Backup Darren Sproles ran for 122 yards and two TDs after that. It was the first time in Chargers history two backs rushed for more than 100 yards in the same game.

Detroit's Jon Kitna tied his career high with five interceptions. Three came in the span of six plays in the first half, leading to 17 points, as the Lions (6-8) lost their sixth in a row.

Cornerback Antonio Cromartie broke a 46-year-old Chargers record with his 10th interception of the season, tops in the NFL. Cromartie's 10 picks have come in the past nine games, and he's been a starter for the past six.

COACH

Continued from Page 1B

"He'll be in Ann Arbor to stay," Nehlen told The AP. "It would be too hard for him to coach West Virginia in the bowl game."

"He's got a lot of work right away at Michigan, where he has to assemble a staff and catch up on recruiting."

Rodriguez told the Mountaineers before their practice Sunday afternoon that he was leaving to coach the Wolverines.

West Virginia cornerback Vaughn Rivers said Rodriguez was emotional to the point of tears, but did not elaborate on his decision.

"It's a rough day," Rivers said. "Now we just have to pull together as a team and get ready for a bowl game."

"Coach Rod was a man about it."

Carr announced Nov. 19 he was retiring after 13 seasons as Michigan's head coach following the

season, which ends on New Year's Day in the Capital One Bowl against Florida.

Rodriguez's West Virginia contract, which ran through the 2013 season, had a \$4 million buyout clause if he left before next September. After several days last year, Rodriguez turned down Alabama's reported six-year, \$12 million offer after the Mountaineers gave him a one-year contract extension.

When Michigan lured basketball coach John Beilein away from West Virginia last April, Beilein's contract had a \$2.5 million buyout clause. Under an agreement with West Virginia, he agreed to pay \$1.5 million to the WVU Foundation.

Michigan spokesman Bruce Madej said he did not know how the school and Rodriguez would handle his buyout.

Freshman Ryan Mallett gained experience this year with the Wolverines, filling in for banged-up Chad Henne, and his father said people should-

n't assume his son is transferring because he might not fit into Rodriguez's offense that features a mobile quarterback.

"I talked to Ryan today and he's going to keep an open mind and is looking forward to hearing what coach Rodriguez's plans are," Jim Mallett told the AP. "So, we'll just have to wait and see."

Mallett's decision might be easier if Terrelle Pryor decides to commit to Rodriguez and the Wolverines.

The star QB from Jeannette, Pa., said he informed Rodriguez that

Michigan became one of the five schools he was considering when the coach told him he was going to lead the Wolverines.

"We talked at 10 a.m. this morning and I told him Michigan just got on my list," Pryor told the AP on Sunday night.

Pryor is also considering Ohio State, Oregon, Penn State and Florida.

After watching Pryor play on tape, Nehlen said he reminds him of Tennessee Titans quarterback Vince Young.

"If that kid comes, he's probably more important than Rich," Nehlen joked.

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9	6			3				
	7	3		1	9	8		
		8	5		3	4		
8	2	6	9	7				
	4				2			
		5	7	2	1		4	
3	1			6	2			
	5	7	4		6	9		
			3			5	1	

BRIEFS

Continued from Page 1B

DIVISION II Semifinals
Celina 33, Snyder 7
China Spring 37, Cuero 14

Final
Celina (15-0) vs. China Spring (14-1), TBD

CLASS 2A DIVISION I Final
Farmersville 27, Tatum 24, OT

DIVISION II Semifinals
Canadian 17, Cisco 6
Elysian Fields 46, Altair Rice 3

Final
Canadian (15-1) vs. Elysian Fields (14-1), 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Brownwood's Wood Stadium

CLASS 1A DIVISION I Final
Alto 22, Seymour 3

DIVISION II Semifinals
Munday 47, Sundown 0
Bremond 31, Maud 20

Final
Munday (14-0) vs. Bremond (12-2), 2 p.m. Saturday, Stephenville's Tarleton Memorial Stadium

SIX MAN DIVISION I Final
Richland Springs 98, Rule 54

DIVISION II Final
Matador Motley County 44, Woodson 38

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NORTH
♠ K J 8 6 5 2
♥ K 7
♦ K Q 7 6 4
♣ —

WEST
♠ A 9 4 3
♥ 9 8 6 4
♦ 5
♣ 7 6 4 3

EAST
♥ Q 10 3
♦ J 8 2
♣ K Q J 9 8 5 2

SOUTH
♠ Q 10 7
♥ A J 5 2
♦ A 10 9 3
♣ A 10

The bidding:
South West North East
1♦ Pass 1♣ 1NT
Pass 2♣ 3♣ Pass
3♣ Pass 4♦ Pass
4♥ Pass 6♦

Opening lead — ace of spades.
This deal occurred during the match between Italy and the United States in 1951. The Italians scored heavily on the hand but lost the match by a wide margin on one of the few occasions through the years that an American team triumphed over Italy.
The bidding at the first table went as shown. Eugenio Chiaradia's

notrump overcall, as played by him and his partner Augusto Ricci, indicated a long suit in either hearts or clubs.
John Crawford and B. Jay Becker were respectively North-South for the U.S. and wound up in six diamonds. Ricci, having listened carefully to the bidding, then led the ace and another spade, ruffed by East for down one. As the East-West cards were divided, the U.S. pair could have made six spades.
At the second table, where an Italian pair held the North-South cards, six diamonds was also reached — but the outcome was not the same. Here, the bidding went:
South West North East
1♥ Pass 2♦ Pass
3♣ Pass 3♣ Pass
4♦ Pass 4♦ Pass
4NT Pass 6♦

The Italians at that time always bid their shorter suit first with a very promising hand, which accounts for North's initial response of two diamonds.
The effect of this was that North wound up as declarer at six diamonds instead of South. With East on lead, six diamonds could not be defeated, and Italy gained 1,470 points on the deal.

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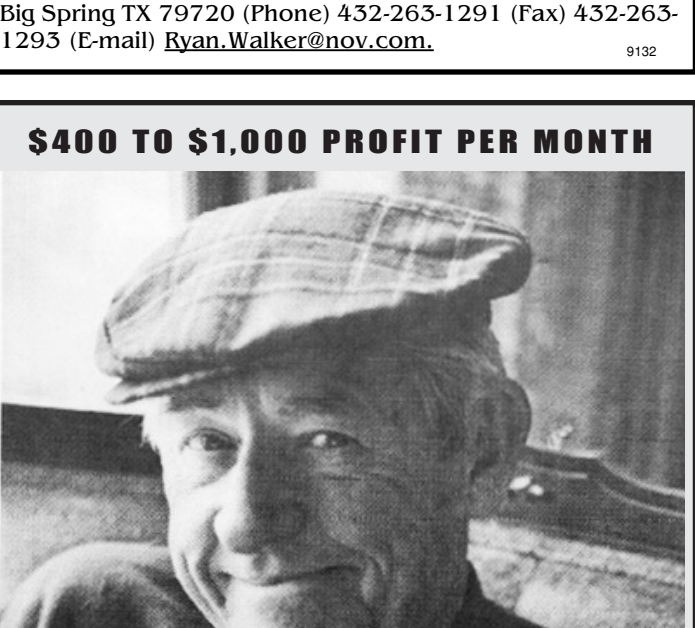
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Try some simply elegant spiced oranges

Oranges and orange juice are as commonplace today as peanut butter and hamburgers. But for well into the 20th Century, many Americans considered them a luxury. Originally brought from India and China to Europe and then to California and Florida, citrus fruits represented wealth and opulence. At this time of year, as we exchange gifts, consider the historic significance of offering your friends and loved ones oranges.

The way our food simply shows up at our grocery stores today, we've lost any sense of connection to the foods that we eat. So perhaps a brief agriculture lesson is in order. Orange trees present both ripe fruit and blossoms for the next crop at the same time. Fruit from one season is sometimes left on orange trees until the next harvest; called regreened oranges, these are the sweetest ones of all.

Every part of an orange offers its own pleasures. The bright orange skin, also known as the zest, is full of aromatic oils that smell so good they are frequently used in perfumes. The white, spongy part, or pith, which we avoid eating, includes flavonoids that offer antioxidant protection. Inside, an orange's juicy flesh is deliciously sweet and rich in vitamins and minerals. In particular, oranges provide an excellent source of vitamin C as well as fiber. While eating the whole

fruit offers the most health benefits, when you do want juice, squeezing it yourself is your best bet.

Returning oranges to the holiday treat they once were, I marinate sliced oranges with spices then whirl some of the marinade with apricot fruit spread, creating a jewel of a sauce. For an elegant finishing touch, I top the oranges with candied zest. Serve this elegant dish alone or alongside frozen yogurt or angel food cake.

Spiced Oranges

- 5 medium navel oranges
- 3/4 cup sugar, divided
- 3 cups cold water
- 4-inch cinnamon stick
- 2 whole cloves
- 1/2 star anise (or 1/4 tsp. anise extract)
- 1/2 cup apricot fruit spread

Using a vegetable peeler, remove 4 strips of zest, each 1-inch by 3-inches, from one of the oranges and set aside.

Cut each of the remaining four oranges horizontally into 4 or 5 round slices (skin not removed). Place the sliced fruit in a wide bowl or container, cover, and set aside.

For the syrup, place 1/2 cup of the sugar in a medium saucepan. Add the cold water, cinnamon, cloves, star anise, and reserved strips orange zest, and set the pot over medium-high heat. Boil the liquid until it is reduced to 2 cups. Set it aside to cool for 20 minutes. Remove and reserve the orange



zest, and discard the spices. Pour the syrup over the sliced oranges. Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Meanwhile, place the remaining 1/4 cup sugar in a heavy saucepan. Pour in 1/2 cup water and add the orange zest. Place the pot over medium-high heat. When the liquid boils, reduce the heat and simmer gently for 10 minutes, or until the zest looks translucent and shiny. Using a fork, remove it and place on a wire rack to dry, 8 to

24 hours. With a sharp knife, cut the candied zest crosswise into thin strips.

Just before serving, strain off 1/2 cup of the liquid from the oranges and place in a mini-food processor or blender. Add the apricot fruit spread and whirl just until blended; if using a blender, use low speed so mixture does not froth. Divide the sauce among 4 wide, shallow dessert bowls. Add the oranges, arranging them on top of the sauce. Sprinkle on the

candied zest, and serve.

Makes 4 servings.
Per serving: 260 calories, 0 g total fat (0 g saturated fat), 70 g carbohydrate, 2 g protein, 3 g dietary fiber, 15 mg sodium.

Something Different is written by Dana Jacobi, author of "12 Best Foods Cookbook" and contributor to AICR's "New American Plate Cookbook: Recipes for a Healthy Weight and a Healthy Life."

Does 'zero trans fat' mean it's healthy?

When you see a food labeled "zero trans fat," can you automatically assume it's a better choice? Not so fast. As food manufacturers rush to remove trans fat-laden products from grocery shelves, many companies are substituting equally unhealthy ingredients to retain the same flavor and texture of the original products.



KAREN COLLINS
MS, RD, CDN

Americans consume the majority of their trans fat from partially hydrogenated vegetable oils in the form of commercial baked goods and snack foods, French fries and other deep-fried foods, and stick margarines and shortening. Without question, trans fat from hydrogenated vegetable oil is unhealthy. The hydrogenation process, which hardens the liquid oil to a spreadable consistency, prevents the fat from becoming rancid too quickly and extends its shelf life. However, it also changes the chemical structure of the fat to one that raises "bad" LDL cholesterol and reduces "good" HDL cholesterol. Some research suggests it may increase blood markers of inflam-

mation as well, potentially raising your risk of developing cancer.

Public health concerns about the negative effects of trans fat have become so robust that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) now requires that the trans fat content of foods be listed on the Nutrition Facts panel. In response, many companies have reformulated their products resulting in an army of "trans fat free" offerings that now fill the aisles at grocery stores across the country.

But are these foods truly free of all trans fat? In fact, no. According to FDA labeling regulations, as long as one standard serving of a food contains less than 0.5 grams (g) of trans fat, a food manufacturer can market the amount as zero. However, that means that although a serving of three cookies with 0.4 g of trans fat can legally declare itself free of trans fat, if you eat nine cookies, you would get 1.2 g of trans fat where you were expecting none. While this might not sound like much, consid-

er these figures in relation to recommendations that we limit trans fat to less than one percent of total calories (2 g daily for a 2000 calorie diet).

In general, food manufacturers employ three basic techniques to retain the taste, texture and shelf-life of reformulated trans fat free foods. One option is to use tropical oils, like palm and coconut, as a substitute. But although these oils do not include trans fat, they do contain lots of saturated fat, which has a similar effect raising LDL cholesterol levels.

Manufacturers also utilize interesterified oils as a trans fat replacement. These customized blends combine a highly saturated fat and a liquid oil to create a product that looks and acts very much like trans fat.

Unfortunately, some of the trans fat free margarines, pastries, cookies and other products made from interesterified oils actually contain substantially higher levels of saturated fat than the original trans fat version. In the end, rather than mak-

ing a healthier product, many food manufacturers are asking consumers to choose the lesser of two evils.

Finally, plant breeding (or genetic engineering) can produce vegetable oils that are naturally more stable and thus require less hydrogenation. While the genetically modified oils born from this process can be more healthful than the original, this is not always the case. For example, breeding plants to reduce the polyunsaturated fat in canola oil removes some healthful omega-3 fat that is one of the nutritional bonuses of using the oil to begin with.

For now, don't automatically assume that anything labeled "no trans fat" must be healthy. Check the label for both trans fat and saturated fat content. Remember, too, that being "trans fat free" does not change the

sugar and calorie load of many processed foods.

AICR's Nutrition Hotline is a free service that allows you to ask a registered dietitian ques-

tions about diet, nutrition and cancer. Access it online at www.aicr.org/hotline or by phone (1-800-843-8114) 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET Monday-Friday.

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TEXAS NEWS BRIEFS

State reviews comments on pros and cons of digital billboards

AUSTIN (AP) — The billboard industry is squarely behind a proposal to allow digital billboards on Texas highways, while many members of the general public oppose the idea, according to comments submitted to the Texas Department of Transportation.

The state received more than 750 comments during a three-month period ending earlier this month. The Texas Transportation Commission has set a February meeting to consider the proposal, which would give cities authority over whether to allow the electronic, changeable billboards in their jurisdictions.

Of the 482 members of the public who sent letters to the transportation department, 386 of them were against digital billboards. All but one of the 241 comments from billboard-industry interests voiced support for the signs.

Presidential hopeful Paul raises \$6 million in 24-hour effort

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Republican presidential hopeful Ron Paul's supporters raised more than \$6 million Sunday to boost the 10-term Texas congressman's campaign for the White House.

Called a "Money Bomb," the goal was to raise as much money as possible on the Internet in one day. The campaign's previous fundraiser brought in \$4.2 million.

At midnight EST, donations were over \$6 million, according to the campaign Web site. Those donations are processed credit card receipts, said Paul campaign spokesman Jesse Benton. Benton said the median donation is about \$50 in the fundraiser, which was the idea of Paul supporters who are not officially connected to the campaign.

Trevor Lyman, a Paul supporter who is traveling the country following the Ron Paul blimp, said the date of the fundraiser coincides with the 234th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party.

East Texas soldier killed in Iraq during second tour was only child

TYLER (AP) — A 24-year-old soldier from the East Texas town of Troup has died in combat during his second tour in Iraq, his family and the military said.

Sgt. Samuel E. Kelsey died Thursday in Tunnis, Iraq, from wounds he suffered in an explosion, the U.S. Department of Defense said in a release.

Denina Kelsey said her son had run to help a fellow soldier whose legs were injured in an explosion. The second improvised explosive device went off while Kelsey was trying to help the soldier.

"He felt strongly about wanting his men, every one of them, to come home," Denina Kelsey said. "He was saving somebody else's life, and my child lost his life."

Denina Kelsey said she was devastated by the loss of her only child.

Newspaper says nonprofits are seldom investigated

FORT WORTH (AP) — While the Texas Attorney General's Office has a reputation for aggressive oversight of nonprofits, a newspaper reports that nonprofits here are unlikely to get investigated unless someone else brings a problem to the office's attention.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported that so far this year, only four out of 60,000 Texas nonprofits have been investigated by the Charitable Trusts Section of the attorney general's office.

The office says that over a 33-month stretch that ended in October it began 23 investigations, many because of com-

plaints and news reports.

When the office does open a case, it takes months to complete and involve thousands of documents. Most of the work is done by six attorneys and two investigators in the Charitable Trusts Section.

For more than a decade, the staffing has been about the same. In that time, there's been a 59 percent increase in the number of Texas charities that file financial information with the Internal Revenue Service, according to the Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations.

Police kill Mercedes man who fatally stabbed his wife

MERCEDES (AP) — A police officer shot and killed a man who wouldn't drop the knife that he had used to fatally stab his wife, police said.

The man was shot at the family's home early Sunday after police responded to a call from the couple's teenage daughter. Officers found the man standing over his wife's body.

"Officers ordered the man more than once to drop the weapon," Mercedes police Chief Olga Maldonado said. "When he turned toward the officers (with the knife), he was shot one time."

Maldonado declined to name the victims, pending notification of their relatives. The man and woman both died at area hospitals.

Maldonado also declined to identify the officer who fired the fatal shot or confirm whether he was placed on administrative leave.

Roy Herrera Jr., whose father rented the home to the couple, said he was concerned about the teenage girl.

"I just feel really bad for her," Herrera said. "It's about to be Christmas and now both of her parents are dead."

Officials: Night cop was no fake, but still suspended from his job

LEAGUE CITY (AP) — A bailiff has resigned and state and county authorities are probing his work history after he admitted pulling over and questioning at least three women driving alone at night.

Kevin Bruce Byrne, 57, of Dickinson, held a peace officer's license, but he wasn't employed with any law enforcement agency within 95 miles of League City when he made the traffic stops there.

Byrne was a bailiff for the 12th District Court in Walker County, said Capt. James Schwab of the county's marshal service. The seat of Walker County is Huntsville, about 95 miles north of League City.

Byrne was suspended on Tuesday and the marshal service launched an internal investigation, Schwab said. On Friday, Byrne resigned.

"He wasn't doing anything illegal, but he was doing something we didn't like," Schwab said.

Attempts by The Associated Press to reach Byrne for comment on Sunday were unsuccessful.

League City police Sgt. Dan Krieger said Byrne had been on medical leave since October.

The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education, the board that awards peace officers' licenses, is doing an audit on Byrne's work history, Krieger said.

Police interviewed Byrne, who admitted to pulling at least three women over in League City, Krieger said.

Krieger said there was nothing "sexual or provocative" about the incidents.

"He was taking the power vested in him a little too far," Krieger said. "It raised my eyebrows."

One woman told police Monday that a man driving a black Dodge truck pulled her over and acted as if he were a police officer. She said he was not in a uniform, but was wearing a T-shirt with

the word "police" printed on it and camouflage pants. He also had a police badge, she said.

Galveston County District Attorney Kurt Sistrunk said no charges were filed because the report was based on a peace officer making traffic stops. But he said he requested copies of League City police reports.

"We are still going to look at it again once both agencies have ended their investigations," Sistrunk said. "His actions demand a thorough review."

University of Texas professor buys archaeological dig site

AUSTIN (AP) — After trying to raise the money to buy an archaeological dig site north of Austin, a University of Texas professor cashed out his personal savings to purchase the land and then donated it to the Archaeological Conservancy.

The 33-acre Gault site in Southwestern Bell County was one of the major areas of activity for the Clovis people in North America and contains relics that are as many as 13,500 years old, said Michael Collins, associate researcher at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at UT's J.J. Pickle Research Campus.

The Clovis — nomadic mammoth hunters who traveled from Siberia to Alaska across the Bering Strait — are thought to be the first people to enter the Americas.

Collins, who declined to specify how much he paid, said the conservancy will manage the site and preserve it for future research as new technologies allow for new archaeological theories and breakthroughs.

"It's a good idea to have important sites preserved to take advantage of those new techniques," he said. "This is the best place to place this property for its long-term conservation."

The conservancy, a New Mexico-based nonprofit group, has 380 archaeological preserves in the United States, including 15 in Texas.

Jim Walker, vice president and Southwest regional director for the conservancy, said the site provides useful insight on Paleo-Indian, or original Native American, culture.

Walker said a conservancy committee will regulate what work researchers will be able to do at the Gault site.

Since the early 20th century, UT archaeology professors have been visiting the site off and on. But with local residents digging for artifacts to collect or sell, UT researchers thought the land had been stripped of any archaeological value.

Researchers though returned in the

early 1990s after a local resident uncovered some relics that caught their attention.

Collins said the excavations that followed turned up artifacts that challenge major theories about the Clovis people. For instance, he said that some finds suggest that the Clovis people were more domestic, building shelters and making tools for chores.

It's currently believed that after migrating through Alaska, the Clovis people followed mammoth herds through Canada, the United States and into South America over about 500 years.

"They were not nearly as nomadic as they would had to have been if they were hunting a single species," he said.

In 2002, Collins said, the team uncovered artifacts that predate the Clovis.

"This one site could tell us more about the Clovis than we had learned and not learned from other sites up until then, and it also had evidence of people being there before the Clovis," he said. "Those two things combined make it of extraordinary scientific interest and importance."

The UT System leased the Gault site for university use from 1999 to 2002. After the lease was up, Collins led an effort to raise money to purchase the land but was unable to meet the owner's asking price.

A&M creates school to train students in nuclear power

COLLEGE STATION (AP) — Texas A&M is launching an institute that will train students for careers related to nuclear power.

The Nuclear Power Institute will help train staff needed to operate new reactors and generating plants. It will also revamp curriculum for junior high, high school and college students who are interested in pursuing careers in the field, according to officials with Texas A&M Engineering.

The institute was established in a joint effort by the Dwight Look College of Engineering and the Texas Engineering Experiment Station (TEES). The Look College is one of the largest engineering colleges in the nation, with nearly 9,000 students and 12 departments.

"The Texas A&M University System is uniquely configured with the ideal combination of education, research and service agencies and universities to lead this effort," Vice Chancellor and Dean of Engineering Kem Bennett said in a statement released last week. "The institute will make a significant impact upon the work force and economy of the state and nation."

Man uses cow patties to make unusual pens

By SARA CALDERON

San Antonio Express-News
POTEET — One cow's excrement is one man's fine writing instrument.

At least it is for John Lopez, 42, who began making his South Texas Cow Patty Pens six years ago with local, natural materials.

He perfected the process through trial and error. The end result: flecks of brown suspended in a clear plastic, looking almost like wood from a distance.

"I take my pen kits and feed 'em to the cows and then go out in the pasture and pick 'em up," Lopez joked, stroking his mustache from behind the desk at JS Shop, his lawn-mower repair business in

downtown Poteet.

Cow patties may be Lopez's current specialty, but when he began the craft in 2000 he used wood, bone, deer antler and other materials to encase mail-ordered ballpoints.

"I was bored, poor," he said. "I had bought some tools" and decided to give

See PENS, Page 9A

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3. Limit one entry per child. Entries will not be returned.
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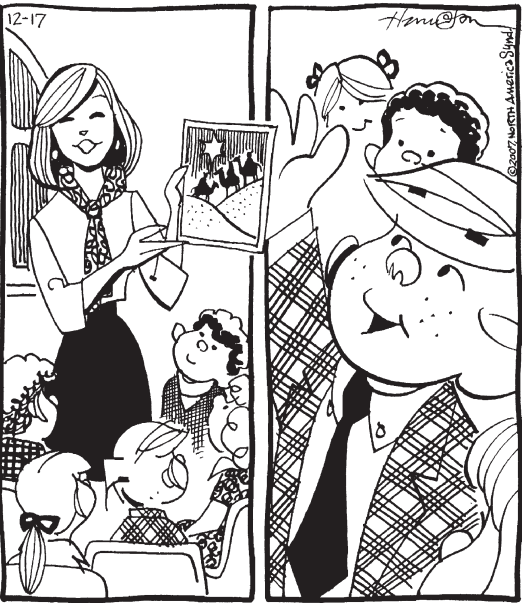
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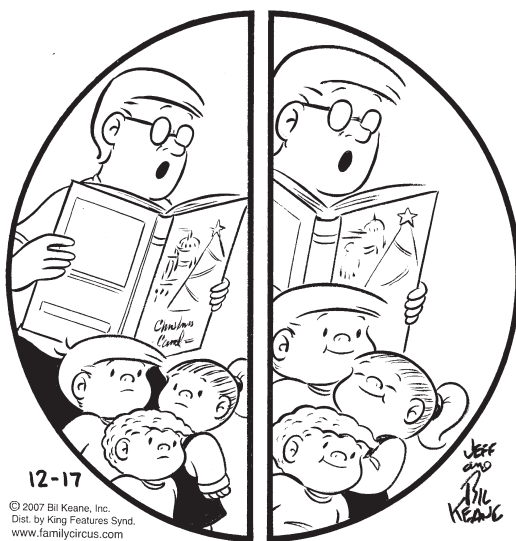
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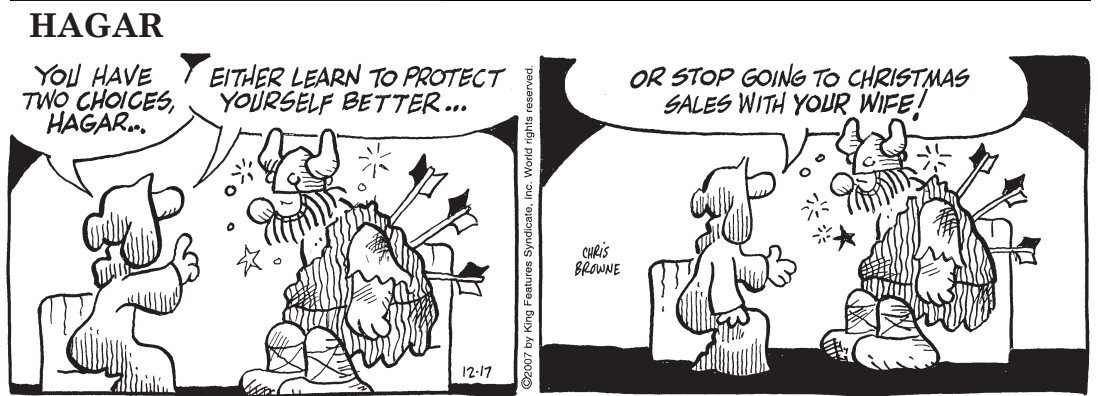
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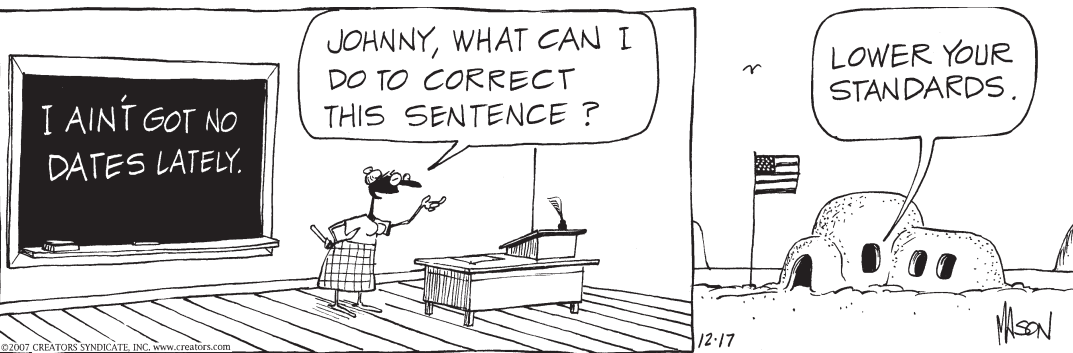
This Date In History: In 1925, Col. William "Billy" Mitchell was convicted at his court-martial of insubordination for accusing senior military officials of incompetence and criminal negligence; he was suspended from active duty.

Today is Monday, Dec. 17, the 351st day of 2007. There are 14 days left in the year. Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 17, 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright of Dayton, Ohio, conducted the first successful manned powered-airplane flights, near Kitty Hawk, N.C., using their experimental craft, the Wright Flyer.

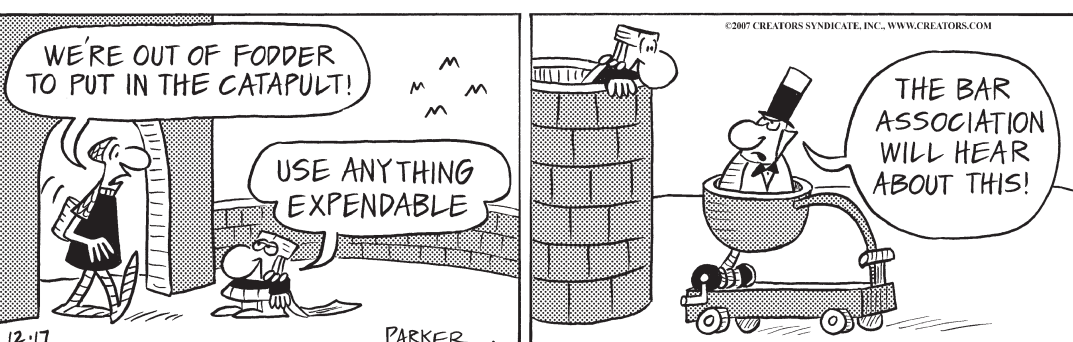
Newsday Crossword

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Clues include: 1 Golfer's shout, 5 Slender, 9 Postage purchase, 14 Tel __, Israel, 15 Change the decor of, 16 Spooky, 17 Painter Salvador, 18 Very much, 19 Place for a cummerbund, 20 Winter vehicle, 21 Prepare to reach a verdict, 23 Adam and Eve's home, 25 College Web site suffix, 26 Like most store-bought soups, 29 Paramedic's technique: Abbr., 31 "Hey you!", 35 Author Jong, 36 No longer shackled, 38 Your and my, 39 Courtroom questioner, 42 Insect in a colony, 43 Alphabetizes, 44 Is in first place, 45 Sunbeams, 47 Compass point opposite SSW, 48 Confidential, 49 French "yes", 51 On the __ (separately), 52 Trial's written record, 57 Ocean liner, for one, 8 Phrase of denial, 9 Stitched, 10 Rip to shreds, 11 Operatic solo, 12 Fine rain, 13 Tennis pro Sampras, 22 Parisian cap, 24 College officials, 26 Aromatic wood, 27 Sports venue, 28 "Swell!", 29 Box for oranges, 30 Poodles and parakeets, 32 Sub tracking device, 33 Shoe material, 34 On-the-sly meeting, 36 Office plant, 37 Parceled (out) boom (jet sound), 41 Took a break from court, 46 Shakespearean poetic form, 48 Starts to get out of bed, 50 Computer owners, 51 Harpoon, 52 As compared to, 53 Part to play, 54 __ and crafts, 55 After-bath wrap, 56 Creative thought, 58 Symbol of saintliness, 59 In that case, 60 Jury member

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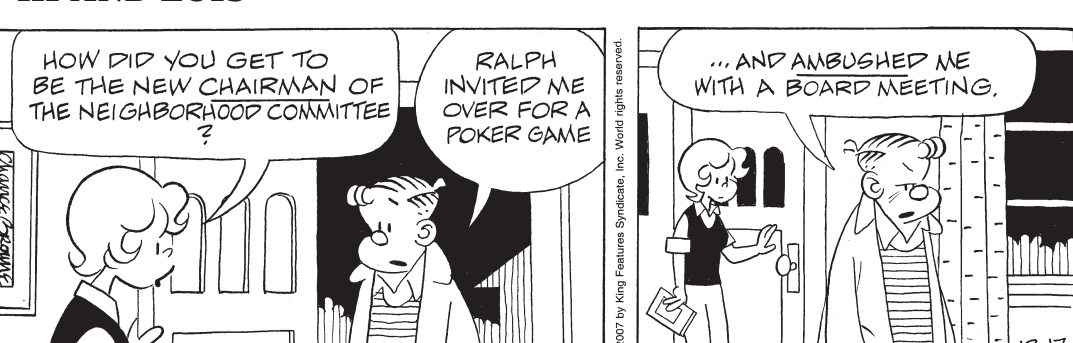
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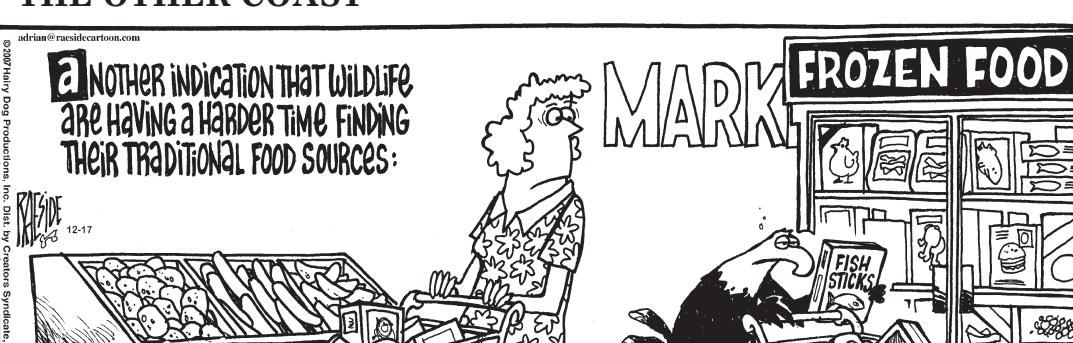
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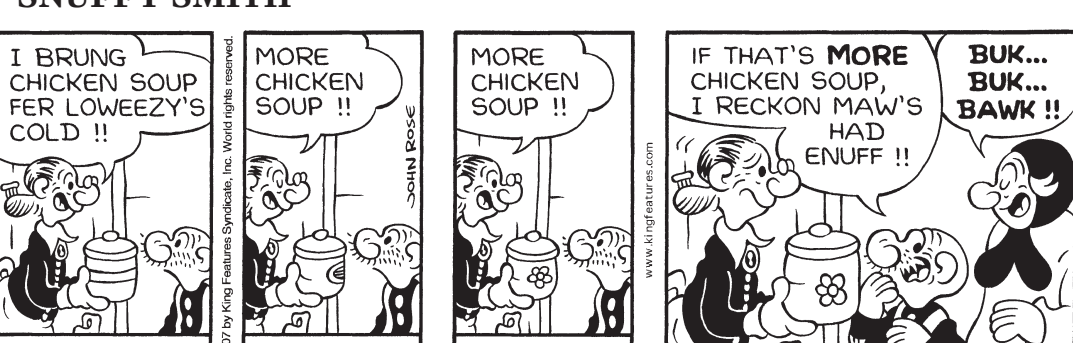
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JURY DUTY by Sally R. Stein Edited by Stanley Newman www.stanxwords.com

Some worried over new asbestos-abatement plan

By ANGELA K. BROWN

Associated Press Writer

FORT WORTH — Sometime this week, bulldozers are expected to tear down a section of the Oak Hollow apartments, ridding this city of a neighborhood eyesore.

But some living near the run-down complex, as well as environmentalists and hazardous materials experts, say they fear it could be replaced with something much worse — tiny, cancer-causing asbestos fibers in the air.

At issue is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's largely untested method to demolish the apartment's office building and remove the asbestos-laden rubble. The EPA hopes this less expensive process will soon be approved for use nationwide, helping other cities plagued with dilapidated structures.

Similar to a method the EPA deemed unsafe just three years ago, it will be the first time tried in a densely populated residential area and will test what the agency claims is a new, improved — and now safe — process.

But some wonder if they are being used as guinea pigs.

Shawn Smith, who lives in a complex across the street from Oak Hollow, is worried about the possible health effects on his children, ages 8 and 9. He doubts the method would have been tried in a higher-income neighborhood.

"I'm concerned about it, but they're going to do what they're going to do," Smith said. "It makes me frustrated because they won't use the money to get the apartments fixed and improve this area."

The dispute is reminiscent of one in 2004, when Fort Worth planned to tear down a dilapidated motel using a new, cheaper method: spraying it with water before and during demolition instead of removing asbestos. Residents and health officials feared harmful fibers could go airborne, and the Cowtown Inn was eventually razed the traditional way, after crews sealed it in plastic and hauled out the asbestos by hand.

Since then, the EPA claims to have improved the so-called "wet" method. Before and during demolition, workers douse the building with a foam similar to what firefighters use.

"The (foam) adheres to the structure," said Brian Boerner, the city's director of environmental management, adding that with constant spraying, "it never has the opportunity to dry out."

Other measures include removing 3-6 inches of dirt beneath the building after the debris is taken to a special landfill, and filtering the runoff before it is recirculated into the local water system. In some cases, depending on what is inside the structure, crews remove

"I'm concerned about it, but they're going to do what they're going to do. It makes me frustrated because they won't use the money to get the apartments fixed and improve this area."

Shawn Smith
Complex resident

asbestos-laden materials before applying the foam.

In two previous tests at empty military buildings at Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, results were promising and indicated that the new method was as safe as the traditional way, said Adele Cardenas Malott, a program manager in the EPA's Dallas regional office.

"If we thought safety was an issue for us, we wouldn't do it," Malott said.

A panel of industry experts who recently reviewed the EPA's 2006

study comparing both asbestos-removal methods had concerns, however. While test results were good, the experts said the agency appeared biased toward the new procedure by misstating costs and levels of airborne asbestos.

The panel questioned the EPA's conclusion that airborne asbestos levels were insignificant, saying the agency did not assess health risks at the test sites. The experts said that could indicate "a research bias or hidden agenda."

The panel suggested inserting a sentence in the EPA's report saying the agency does not endorse the new method.

Panelist Tom Laubenthal, technical chief of The Environmental Institute in Marietta, Ga., said he felt the test results were inconclusive. He also is concerned that if the method is approved, construction crews would not use the same stringent monitoring and guidelines used by the EPA.

"It could open the barn door for all kinds of non-compliance issues," Laubenthal said.

EPA and city officials dispute claims they targeted a low-income neighborhood for the test. In fact, the area around Oak Hollow includes single-family homes and a country club in addition to many apartment complexes, Boerner said.

The Fort Worth apart-

ment was chosen as the EPA's third and final test of the method because the Oak Hollow building is small and met other criteria, Malott said.

After the EPA met with neighborhood groups and held a public meeting, some were so supportive that they asked why the alternative method could not be used on the entire complex, Malott said. The city will raze the other buildings using the traditional method, she said.

Scott L. Frost, a Dallas attorney working with the Washington, D.C.-based law firm Public Justice, said EPA and city officials did not properly notify residents because they feared opposition similar to that which erupted in 2004. Even though the area is largely Hispanic, he said notices distributed prior to last month's public meeting were available only in English.

PENS

Continued from Page 6A

handmade pens a try. But after hawking them at craft shows and county fairs, he realized his wares looked like everyone else's.

So he started looking for a way to distinguish his work. Exotic materials were hard to find in Poteet, but he came across the solution in his own backyard.

"There's not much money in this area, so I need to make things with the finances (I have) and I need the materials the same way," he said.

His original brand name for the pens included a vulgar barnyard term, but it offended customers and other vendors at craft shows, so he retreated to the safer "South Texas Cow Patty Pen."

Listening to Lopez describe how he arrived at his production method is like listening to a scientist describe a breakthrough discovery. The cow patties can't be too dry but they can't be too fresh, either. Also important is the type of feed the cattle in question are eating.

Eligible patties must be made from pure coastal grass, never grain. Lopez said adamantly, gesturing with both hands otherwise the patty "won't be natural."

Once selected and harvested, the winners are ground into a powder, placed in a tray and mixed with a plastic resin. After four days, he can cut the hardened plastic into small blocks for further custom milling. He said it's the

hardest substance he has ever cut because of sand ingested by the cows along with the grass.

The blocks are spun on a wood lathe at 3,900 revolutions per minute, worked into a cylinder, assembled with parts bought from a catalog and polished. The process yields 10 to 15 pens and takes six to eight hours, Lopez said.

The finished product goes for \$45.

"It's not an easy-made pen," Lopez said.

A jack-of-all-trades, Lopez has made everything from patio furniture to metal coat racks and even earrings, but only pens, darts, knife handles and letter openers from cow patties.

Lopez's pens have become fairly well known around Atascosa County, one collector of his work said.

"Probably nowhere but South Texas you'll come across that," said a laughing David Soward, who owns a few of Lopez's antler and wood ballpoints and whose sister-in-law gave him a cow patty pen as a gag gift.

Local demand for the pens has spread via humorous word of mouth, said Soward, the Atascosa County Sheriff's Department's chief deputy.

"It's just a novelty item," he said. "I get a kick out of it."

Lopez has spent his life in South Texas, loves his home and wants his work to reflect his natural surroundings.

"That's where I live, and I'm not a Yankee," he said with pride, adding: "I've been up north once. I've been to Oklahoma, and I didn't care for it."

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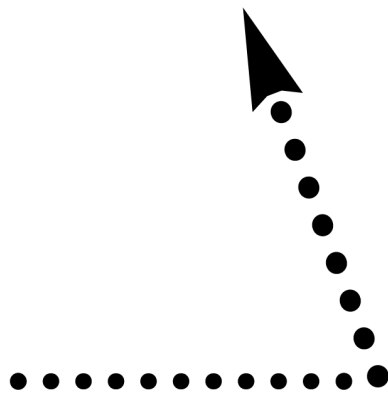
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Retailers look to final holiday shopping days to meet goals after unimpressive weekend

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — Following a lukewarm shopping weekend, the nation's stores are now focusing their attention on the final week leading to Christmas, as consumers seem to be postponing more of their buying to the last minute compared to a year ago.

Just as malls and stores ushered the official start of the holiday season with expanded hours and generous discounts, they plan to do the same in the final stretch. Macy's Inc. plans to pull all-nighters at several of its stores, including its Manhattan flagship, starting Friday. Toys "R" Us plans to keep its doors open until midnight every day until Dec. 24.

Based on early reports from analysts and malls on Sunday, sales results were generally unimpressive this past weekend, as shoppers were held back by a snow storm that spread a mix of sleet, freezing rain and snow from the Great Lakes states to New England. Consumers, fretting about economic worries, were also delaying their shopping even more this year, knowing there's a full weekend before Christmas, when the bargains will be even better.

Meanwhile, for online retailers, which likely finished their busiest days last week, their fate appears to be already sealed: holiday sales didn't live up to industry's hopes as lower-income shoppers pulled back on spending amid a housing slump. ComScore Inc. reported on Sunday that online sales from Nov. 1 through Dec. 14 rose 18 percent — less than the 26 percent growth rate seen in the same period a year ago and the 20 percent projection for the season.

"This holiday season at this point has been disappointing, whether they're brick and mortar, catalog or online," said C. Britt Beemer, chairman of America's Research Group, based in Charleston, S.C. "Shopper are more frugal and cost-conscious because they have less money to spend." As for Saturday and Sunday, he said, "This weekend was busy, but it wasn't huge."

Bill Martin, co-founder of ShopperTrak RCT Corp., was more

upbeat, noting that the fate of the holiday season depends on the final stretch, predicting business in the final days will be "huge." According to ShopperTrak, five of the remaining days left until Christmas account for the biggest sales days of the season.

Shoppers at malls over the weekend seemed to be taking their time.

"I think there's better deals now," said Mike Weigel of Shoreview, Minn. He just started holiday shopping and was on the hunt for a plasma TV while at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., Friday afternoon.

"I always like to wait until the panic rush," said Michelle Williams of Kingwood, Texas, who was at the Woodlands Mall near Houston. She had just started Friday night. "I want to get it all done this week," he added.

After a strong Thanksgiving weekend, the official start of the holiday shopping season, business has slowed even more than normal, resulting in mixed November results for retailers and uneven business so far in December. There's been a shopping frenzy surrounding such hard-to-find items as Nintendo Co.'s Wii and UGG Australian sheepskin boots, and anything from Walt Disney Co.'s Hanna Montana and "High School Musical" franchises have been hugely popular. But, generally, there seems to be a lack of enthusiasm for holiday buying.

"I am trying to get almost everybody done in one shot, type of thing, because I am pretty busy with school and work and stuff. So I'm basically tired," said Melissa Browne-Smith, who was at Stonestown Mall in San Francisco on Saturday night.

Plenty of retailers are getting anxious, offering last-minute enticements to spur sales. Toy seller FAO Schwarz added a free standard shipping and 25 percent discount offer on all goods ordered at fao.com through Tuesday. Others resorted to even more desperate means. On Saturday, a sales clerk outside a midtown Manhattan location of Lane Bryant, a large-size clothing chain, was seen blasting "40 percent discounts" using a bull horn.

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