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BIG SPRING HERALD

MONDAY
FEBRUARY 18, 2008



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Blast rocks Alon



HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins
 Four people were reported injured as the result of an explosion and fire about 8:20 a.m. today at the Big Spring Alon Refinery. Emergency personnel closed Interstate 20 and evacuated those in the immediate vicinity of the refinery. See additional photos, Page 5.

Four injuries reported in morning explosion

By **STEVE REAGAN**
 Staff Writer

A massive explosion rocked the Big Spring Alon Refinery this morning, injuring at least four people and causing extensive damage to the facility. The morning calm of Big Spring was abruptly shattered at about 8:20 a.m. today when an explosion occurred in the light gas unit of the refinery, officials confirmed. Unofficial reports state that a propylene leak in the unit sparked the explosion,

SPECIAL EDITION
 The Big Spring Herald will issue a special edition on the Alon USA Big Spring Refinery explosion early this evening.

sion, which was heard as far as 50 miles away and shattered windows miles from the refinery. Eyewitnesses reported seeing a knee-high gas cloud from the leak, which resulted in an emergency evacuation order just minutes before the blast. "I heard it like just about everyone else," Howard County Judge Mark Barr said. "It sounded like a bus hit the outside of my house. I ran outside and saw what was happening and immediately called the county emergency coordinator, but he was already quite busy at the time."
 "It was extremely scary. You shook you were so scared," said Laura McEwen, the wife of Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen who lives about two miles from the refinery. "Our walls shook. It jolted your bed. It was like an earthquake."
 Within minutes, fire erupted in several sections of the refinery, sending an enormous column of black smoke miles into the sky.

Miraculously, no life-threatening injuries were reported as of 11 a.m. One refinery worker was airlifted to a Lubbock hospital with undisclosed injuries because of burns, while three others were transported to Scenic Mountain Medical. One of the injured was a motorist whose vehicle was hit by debris while traveling next to the refinery on Interstate 20. All other refinery employees and contractors were accounted for, officials said. Emergency units from across Howard County and the Permian Basin responded to the scene. Firefighters from Big Spring, Howard County Volunteers and other communities were assisting Alon's firefighters battle the blaze, which was still raging at noon today. Smoke from the fire appeared to be dissipating around noon and officials were quick to reassure jittery residents. "I want to assure the public that they are in no eminent danger," Mayor McEwen said. "Judge Barr and I are asking people to just stay home and let the emergency personnel handle the situation."
 "What you can see from your home is

"It was extremely scary. You shook you were so scared. Our walls shook. It jolted your bed. It was like an earthquake."
 —Laura McEwen

"I heard it like just about everyone else. It sounded like a bus hit the outside of my house. I ran outside and saw what was happening and immediately called the county emergency coordinator..."
 —Judge Mark Barr

"Alon officials are very confident they are getting things under control. As good as you can feel about something like this, they feel good about things."
 —Mayor Russ McEwen

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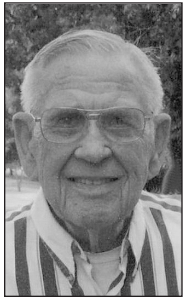
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NEW LISTING

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Obituaries

Silas T. 'Si' Cheatham Jr.



Silas T. "Si" Cheatham Jr., 88, of Big Spring died Friday, Feb. 15, 2008, at Scenic Mountain Medical Center. Graveside services will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2008, at Trinity Memorial Park with the Rev. Mike Couch officiating. The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. until 6 p.m. Monday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Si was born March 9, 1919, in Childress County to Virginia and Silas Cheatham Sr. He began work in Civil Service before World War II, working in Panama. Si served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. After the war, he resumed his work at Panama. Si was later at Amarillo Air Force Base and transferred to Webb Air Force Base where he was an aircraft repair shop foreman until the base closed in 1978. He had lived in Big Spring for more than 50 years and was a member of the First Baptist Church and the Masonic Lodge. Si married Frances Ann Ivey June 27, 1944, in Beaumont.

He is survived by his wife, Ann, of Big Spring; two grandchildren, Tawnya Cheatham of Seoul, Korea, and John Ryan Miller of El Paso; one sister, Virginia Spain of Lubbock; a number of nieces and nephews; and very special friends, Daniel and Alvina Arguello and their family of Big Spring.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his son, Silas Terry Cheatham III, and his daughter, Cindy Lee Miller.

The family suggests memorials to Gideons International, Big Spring Camp No. U42060, P.O. Box 133, Big Spring 79791-0133.

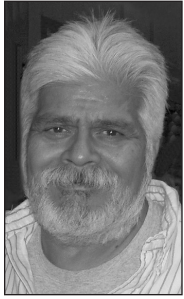
The family wishes to express its appreciation to the staff of Lamun-Lusk-Sanchez State Veterans Home and Scenic Mountain Medical Center for their care and kindness, and a special thanks to Dr. Kuprianowicz.

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

Paid obituary

Juan Jose 'Big Joe' Rodriguez

Juan Jose "Big Joe" Rodriguez, 56, of Big Spring died Saturday, Feb. 16, 2008, at his residence. Funeral mass will be at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2008, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park. Vigil services will be at 7 p.m. Monday at Myers & Smith Chapel.



He was born Dec. 17, 1951, in Willacy County to Bernarda and Jose Rodriguez. He was born and grew up on the King Ranch. He married Gloria Martinez April 1, 1974, in Howard County. He was a backhoe operator, having worked at Caldwell Electric and then at Earthco. He had been a resident of Big Spring for more than 40 years and was a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

He is survived by his wife, Gloria Rodriguez of Big Spring; two daughters, Joanne Payen and her husband, Javier, and Bridgette Rodriguez, all of Big Spring; one son, Johnny Joe Rodriguez of Big Spring; five grandchildren, Allison Payen, Javier Payen Jr., Aiden Payen, Kayleigh Rodriguez and Jonathan Rodriguez; five brothers, Ray Valencia Sr., Oscar Valencia, Steven Valencia and Ernest "Neto" Valencia, all of Big Spring, and Sabino Valencia Jr. of Lubbock; and seven sisters, Nellie Flores of Phoenix, Ariz., Lupe Yanez of Lamesa, Antonia Lara of San Antonio, Irene Garfias of Houston, Mary Elma Saldivar of Midland, Mary Elva Talamantez of Odessa and Alice Badillo of Arlington.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by three brothers, Arturo, Adam and Alex; and one grandson, Michael "Mikey" Rodriguez.

Pallbearers will be Chris Ross, Adam Valencia Jr., Eric Padilla, Luis Nava, Andrew Martinez, Nick Valencia and Joseph Badillo.

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

Paid obituary

Petra Escanuelas

Petra Escanuelas, 73, of Odessa, formerly of Big Spring, died Saturday, Feb. 16, 2008, in Odessa. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Sam J. Froman

Sam J. Froman, 72, of Big Spring died Monday, Feb. 18, 2008, in a local nursing home. His services are pending with Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Big Spring.

Police blotter

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

- JAVIER RAMIREZ, 26, of Arkansas, was arrested Saturday on a charge of failure to identify - giving false information.
- JESUS OROZCO ORTIZ, 21, of Mexico, was arrested Saturday and held for immigration.
- GENE HERNANDEZ, 28, of 1502 Bluebird, was arrested Saturday on charges of evading arrest, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, traffic accident involving damage to a vehicle, four local warrants and one local capias warrant.
- CRISTOVAL MORENO, 48, of 1700 S. Lancaster, was arrested Sunday on a charge of burglary of a building.
- GERALD MIRELES, 39, of 1903 Morrison, was arrested Sunday on a local warrant and four local capias warrants.
- MARSHA BURCIAGA, 35, of 412 Edwards, was arrested Sunday on a charge of public intoxication.
- UNAUTHORIZED USE OF A MOTOR VEHICLE was reported in the 1000 block of Main Street.
- THEFT was reported:
 - in the 400 block of Fourth Street.
 - in the 1200 block of 11th Place.
- FAILURE TO IDENTIFY AS A FUGITIVE FROM JUSTICE - GIVING FALSE INFORMATION was reported in the 300 block of Birdwell Lane.
- EVADING ARREST/DETENTION was reported in the 400 block of Fourth Street.
- DEADLY CONDUCT - DISCHARGE OF A FIREARM was reported in the 4200 block of Theo.
- CRIMINAL MISCHIEF was reported:
 - in the 700 block of Colgate.
 - in the 700 block of Birdwell Lane.

Weather

Tonight — Mostly clear. Lows in the mid 30s. Southeast winds around 10 mph.

Tuesday — Sunny. Highs in the upper 60s. South winds 10 to 20 mph.

Tuesday night — Mostly clear. Not as cool. Lows in the upper 40s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.

Wednesday — Sunny. Highs in the upper 60s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.

Bulletin Board

If you have items for the Bulletin board, contact the Herald news room at 263-7331 or email editor@bigspringherald.com

TODAY

• Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) No. 21 meets at 5 p.m. in the Dora Roberts Rehabilitation Center, 306 W. Third, for weigh-in. The meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. Call 1-800-392-8677 or 263-0391 or 263-1758.

• Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) No. TX 1756 meets in the First Christian Church of Big Spring, 911 Goliad. A different program is offered every week. Enter through the south side door off 10th Street. Call 213-1342 for more information. Weigh-in starts at 5 p.m.; meetings begin at 5:30 p.m.

• Evening Lions Club meets at 6:45 p.m. at Dragon China Buffett.

• DAV and Auxiliary Chapter 47 meets at 6:30 p.m. at 610 Abrams St.

• Christian Singles Fellowship meets from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church Youth Hall. All singles in the community are invited for an evening of fellowship, food and table games.

• Prospector's Club work night begins at 7 p.m. at 606 E. Third.

TUESDAY

• Big Spring Rotary Club meets at noon in the Howard College Cactus Room, 1001 Birdwell Lane.

• Big Spring Band Boosters meets at 5:30 p.m. in the high school band hall. All band parents are invited to attend.

Lottery

Results of the Lotto Texas drawing Saturday night: Winning numbers drawn: 9-14-26-27-28-53 Number matching six of six: None. Estimated jackpot for Wednesday night drawing: \$26 million.

•••

Results of the Cash 5 drawing Saturday night: Winning numbers drawn: 9-10-12-28-32 Number matching five of five: 2. Prize per winner: \$13,848. Winning tickets sold in: Edinburg and Mineral Wells Next Cash 5 drawing: Tonight.

•••

The winning Daily 4 numbers drawn Saturday night, in order: 6-4-7-0. Sum It Up: 17.

•••


The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Saturday night, in order: 3-9-6. Sum It Up: 18.

•••

The winning Daily 4 numbers drawn Saturday afternoon, in order: 9-5-1-0. Sum It Up: 15.

•••

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Saturday afternoon, in order: 2-9-8. Sum It Up: 19.

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TUESDAY ON CBS7 NEWS
 Your Eye on Big Spring

It's a must-see
 CBS7 Eye Team Report

TAKE NOTE

• Big Spring Symphony Chorus rehearsals begin Tuesday for "The Best of Broadway" concert featuring Renay Peters Jobert and David Corman. Songs will be from "Fiddler on the Roof," "Oklahoma," "Wizard of Oz," "West Side Story," "My Fair Lady" and many others. Rehearsals will run from 7 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. in the choral rehearsal room at the First United Methodist Church in Big Spring. Enter from the alley way. Everyone is welcome.

• Area voters are invited to meet the local Republican candidates Tuesday from 4:30 p.m. until 6 p.m. at Places & Pleasures Travel Agency, located at 222 S. Main Street in downtown Big Spring. For more information, contact Melanie at 267-7387.

• The History of Black History, a program to celebrate Black History Month, will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21, in the Big Spring High School Auditorium. Some 30 students and community members will be performing through song, dance, pantomime and more. Admission is free.

• A fund has been established to help pay expenses for Sean Bailey, 25, who was injured in an oilfield accident Jan. 28. He and his wife are Tressa are currently in Lubbock, where Sean is hospitalized. Donations can be made at Citizens Federal Credit Union to account 930442 to help with expenses. Please keep them in your prayers.

• Cross stitchers are needed to complete one or more blocks of this year's Howard County Fair quilt. All supplies are provided. Blocks may be picked up from Posey Cotton Office, 601 Scurry, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to noon. For information, call 263-1267 or 263-4980. This year's quilt theme is "Wildflowers of Texas." All proceeds from the sale of tickets for the quilt are used to defray the expenses of the Fair. The quilt will be awarded the last night of the fair.

• Pediatric flu vaccinations for children ages 6 months to 35 months are now available at the Texas Department of State Health Services clinic in College Park Shopping Center. Cost is \$10, although no one will be turned away for inability to pay. For more information, call 263-9775.

• St. Mary's and friends of St. Mary's are holding a lap blanket drive to place approximately 400 lap blankets in the hands of every nursing home patient in Big Spring. Blankets can be taken to the church office, 1001 Goliad, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Friday or call Connie Fowler at 267-2713.

A beginning crochet class is being held at 6 p.m. Wednesday in the church's Parish Hall.

• All creatures Sanctuary and Rescue has an account set up with Big Spring Salvage at 3608 N. Hwy. 87 for all types of metals and aluminum cans. Please tell them that your donations are for All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue. All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue is also still

taking weight circles off of all Purina brand dog foods. Send your Purina Weight Circles, to A.C.S. & R. at P.O. 871, Coahoma 79511. All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue is still accepting old and used cell phones and ink jet cartridges, for drop off locations in Big Spring and Coahoma. Call Melanie at 267-7387.

• Christ Community Fellowship is collecting infant car seats and carriers. These are given to new mothers who cannot afford them. To donate your old or new car seats and carriers, call Karen Allen at 263-3517 or leave a message at Christ Community Fellowship, 263-love. All donations are appreciated.

• Road to Recovery, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, seeks volunteers to drive cancer patients to treatment in Midland. This requires just a few hours commitment each month. To volunteer, or to request a ride for treatment, call Nancy Koger at 267-7809.

• New Life Ministries Church of God In Christ is holding a soup kitchen every second and fourth Tuesday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 204 N.W. 10th. The meal is free. Call 264-0771 for more information.

• The Pet Patrol helps locate lost pets and owners of found pets. To volunteer or for more information, call Melanie Gambrell at 267-PETS (7387).

• Legal Aid of Northwest Texas is accepting appointments from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. the first and third Wednesday of each month. Individuals seeking legal advice for matters concerning family law, divorce, custody and child support issues, social security cases, employment and housing may contact the office to schedule an appointment. Criminal cases are not accepted. Anyone recently served with legal documents should call the office immediately at 800-926-5630 or 432-686-0647.

• Big Spring and surrounding counties are in critical need of foster families. Foster parents are the caretakers for the children in the community who have been abused or neglected. For more information on becoming foster parents or adoptive families, call the Children's Protective Services office at 263-9669.

Sales tax revenue up slightly

By **BILL MCCLELLAN**
News Editor

February's sales tax revenues for the city of Big Spring were up — if only marginally — compared to a year ago, according to the State Comptroller's office.

Big Spring received \$553,457.91, this month, a scant 1.63 percent increase when compared to the \$544,549.05 taken in for February 2007. For the year, Big Spring has received \$935,318.71, up 2.22 percent compared to a year ago.

Coahoma, which witnessed a 22.2 percent jump last night, experienced a turnaround in February. Coahoma took in \$8,662.46 this month compared to \$11,770.16 a year ago. That's a decline of 26.4 percent. For the year, Coahoma has collected \$16,662.82, down 9.03 percent.

Forsan continued to have a decline in revenues. Last month, the city incurred a decline of 18.02 percent; this month,

revenues fell short by 18.42 percent. Forsan received \$6,462.19 in February, compared to \$7,922.03 a year ago. For the 2008, Forsan has received \$11,877.70, down 18.24 percent.

Abilene witnessed an 8.21 percent increase when comparing the \$3,894,609.32 the Key City received this month to the \$3,598,943.15 taken in last February. For the year, Abilene has received \$6,384,788.34, up 4.91 percent.

Andrews, hampered with a 15.13 percent downturn in January, got better results this month. Revenues were up 9.76 percent, comparing February 2008 revenues of \$321,172.08 to February 2007 revenues of \$292,592.29. For the year, Andrews has received \$549,178.34, down 2.15 percent.

Colorado City took in \$62,327.39 this month, a 2.66 percent increase when compared to the \$60,710.06 received in

February 2007. This year, Colorado City has received \$102,103.30, up 2.76 percent.

Fort Stockton enjoyed a 58.75 percent increase in revenues, comparing this February's receipts of \$311,418.27 to the \$196,158.57 collected last February. For the year, Fort Stockton has received \$496,022.57, up 43.2 percent.

Lamesa received \$139,652.82 this month compared to \$126,514.34 a year ago. That's an increase of 10.38 percent. For 2008, Lamesa has taken in \$232,860.62, up 14.26 percent.

Lubbock took in \$5,385,413.81 this February compared to \$5,086,971.52 in February 2007, an increase of 5.86 percent. Over the first two months of the new year, Lubbock has received \$8,856,499.21, an increase of 2.67 percent.

Midland collected \$3,710,804.95 for February 2008. That's 1.84 percent more than the

\$3,643,614.99 collected in February 2007. For the year, the Tall City has collected \$6,345,089.91, up 3.83 percent.

Monahans brought in \$145,799.45 this month, an 0.27 percent decrease when compared to the \$146,202.24 received in February 2007. For the year, Monahans has taken in \$258,180.07, up 3.55 percent.

Odessa enjoyed a 10.36 percent upswing in revenues, comparing the \$2,593,630.85 received this month to the \$2,349,977.30 collected last February.

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

24th & Johnson 267-8288

Shirley Slate, 61, died Thursday. Funeral Services will be at 2 p.m. Tuesday at Myers & Smith Chapel with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Tuesday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Silas T. "Si" Cheatham, Jr., 88, died Friday. Graveside services will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at Trinity Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. until 6 p.m. Monday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Juan Jose "Big Joe" Rodriguez, 56, died Saturday. Funeral Mass will be at 10 a.m. Tuesday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park. Vigil Services will be at 7 p.m. Monday at Myers & Smith Chapel.

Petra "Patsy" Escanuelas, 73, died Saturday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

EXPLOSION

Continued from Page 1A

what you can see at the refinery — a lot of black smoke," Barr added.

Big Spring Police and Howard County Sheriff's Office personnel, along with auxiliary volunteers, had cordoned off roads leading into and from the refinery. Officials said Interstate 20 traffic had been rerouted from Highway 350 to Salem Road.

"All emergency response plans are in effect now," McEwen said. "We are working with a team from Alon by the minute, literally."

McEwen said personnel appeared to be getting a handle on the emergency.

"Alon officials are very confident they are getting things under control," he said. "As good as you can feel about something like this, they feel good about things."

Fearing for the safety of students, Big Spring Independent School District officials ordered dismissal of classes from Washington and Moss elementaries, the two campuses closest to the refinery, at about 8:50 a.m. Soon after, they dismissed classes at all other campuses, Assistant Superintendent Carie Dunnam said.

Several sporting events scheduled for today involving BSISD teams have been postponed, Dunnam added.

Citing safety concerns, Howard College officials also decided to suspend

classes this morning. After consultations, Coahoma ISD officials decided to continue classes today, Administration Secretary Judy Dobbs said.

Several traffic accidents blamed on "rubber-necking" motorists also were reported this morning, although no major injuries were reported.

U.S. Congressman Randy Neugebauer and State Rep. Joe Hefflin arrived in Big Spring this morning to assess the situation, officials said.

Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331, ext. 234 or by e-mail at reporter@bigspringherald.com.

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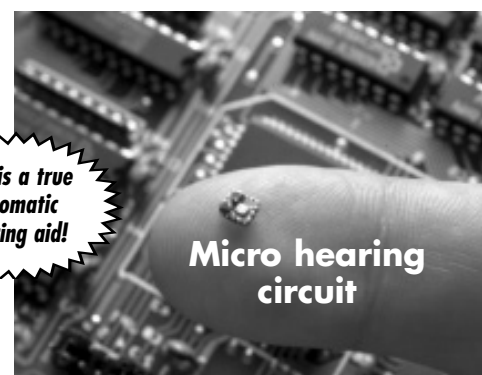
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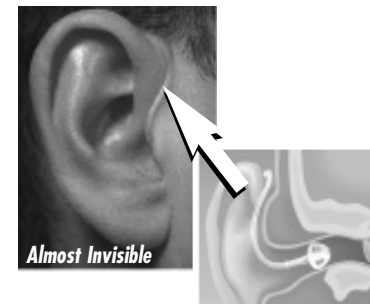


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EDITORIAL

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-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

OTHER VIEWS

Recognizing the importance of food stamps

HEB's tagline, "Here Everything's Better," applies to much more than just groceries. The San Antonio-based supermarket was recently awarded the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Golden Grocer Award, for outstanding achievement in meeting the needs of its low-income customers.

I nominated HEB for the award, and HEB was selected, for its long-standing commitment to addressing hunger, providing nutrition education to customers, and helping people apply for food stamps in partnership with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.



CARLOS URESTI

Like HEB, food stamps are a vital part of Texas communities. In fact, statewide, one in four Texas children participates in the Food Stamps Program. According to the Agriculture Department, roughly half of all Americans will rely on food stamps at some point in their lives when they fall on hard times. For 30 years the Food Stamp Program has been so successful in preventing hunger and improving nutrition that the National Journal recently acclaimed it as "a government reform that worked."

Unfortunately, due to cuts in 1996, the purchasing power of food stamps has eroded. Food stamp recipients now get just \$1 per meal per day, which increases the risk of families running out of food before the end of the month or forces them to buy cheaper, less healthy food.

Cuts to the Food Stamp Program are even more crippling when you consider that the Agriculture Department estimates that 16 percent of Texas families — more than 3 million Texans — are either hungry or at risk for hunger. Texas has the second-highest rate of families at risk for hunger in the nation.

This is not just an individual problem, it is a state problem. Hunger costs the state more than \$9 billion a year in charity, treatment of diet-related illnesses and lower economic productivity.

Fortunately, Congress has been debating and will soon finalize a proposal to potentially strengthen the Food Stamp Program.

There is virtual consensus on the need to improve the Food Stamp Program. The proposals include many key nutrition provisions that will help the millions of needy Texans at risk for hunger. The proposals improve the value of food stamp benefits, improve outdated asset limits, help families with high child care costs, improve benefits to the elderly and disabled and provide new funding for food banks.

What is now being debated is whether to make these changes to the Food Stamps Program temporary (five years) or permanent. It is important that these nutrition improvements be permanent and that we have enough money to fund them.

The final proposal should also adopt low-cost program improvements, including crucial provisions that would simplify overly harsh and complicated time limits on unemployed childless workers, and require states to justify the cost-benefit of fingerprinting food stamp applicants.

HEB recognizes the importance of food stamps. Let's hope that Congress does too.

State Sen. Carlos I. Uresti is a Democrat representing constituents in State Senate District 19.
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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:

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A SMALL PRAYER

by K. Rae Anderson

Even when we don't want to say "no" to the world please help us, Lord, it could be the best action we could ever take.
Amen

Wish the Dems luck with Iraq

After thinking it over, I've come to the conclusion that there's no way we can get out of Iraq. It would be nice and all but the more I look at the plans put forward by the Democratic presidential candidates the less I see. They're hardly more realistic than the rosy scenarios sold to us by the Republicans who got us into this mess.



DONALD KAUL

Take, for example, Hillary Clinton's plan. She's for withdrawing rapidly but keeping a residual force in place to fight terrorists, protect the Kurds, fend off Iran and give the Iraq military a hand.

That's quite a lot, admittedly, but as "New York Times" correspondent Michael Gordon pointed out the other day, it doesn't go very far toward protecting the Iraqi people from insurgent violence, a key element in counter-insurgency strategy. To protect the people, Hillary says, would involve us in a civil war. Her words: "This is an Iraqi problem, we cannot save the Iraqis from themselves."

Perhaps not, but are we really prepared to stand safe in our Iraq bases while the civilian population outside is slaughtered en masse in a war that is essentially of our creation? It's bad enough we avert our eyes from far-away Darfur; have we really the stomach to ignore a genocide occurring in plain sight?

That doesn't sound like any America I'm familiar with.

Then there's Barack Obama's blueprint, which calls for a withdrawal of troops within 16 months of his taking office, leaving behind only counter-terrorism units to prevent terrorists from setting up shop to attack us. He has said, however, he'd be willing to send troops back in as part of an international force to stop a genocide.

That sounds good too, but as Gordon, a master of the inconvenient truth tells us, it will be a lot more difficult and dangerous fighting our way back into a civil war from the outside than what we're doing now. According to one expert: "When you go over the roads you are going to come across IEDs because you did not spend the last few months patrolling the streets to know where they are planted. You are going to run into ambushes because you don't have any local informants working with you, because they will be the first ones targeted in the opening weeks of genocide."

Not good.

So we move on to John Edwards' plan, which was a variation of the other two — with a 10-month time-frame — and shared the same drawbacks. Edwards, however, argued that only a withdrawal of our combat troops will encourage competing Iraqi leaders to reconcile their differences and forge a unity government. Yes, unless — as seems far more likely — they start choosing up sides in order to prevail in a sectarian bloodbath.

Nor will the damage be limited

to the Iraqi people. I recently heard Ali Adeeb, a native of Iraq who spent three years as Baghdad news editor for "The New York Times." He thinks abandoning Iraq now would be an unmitigated disaster, a much worse blow to our international standing than Vietnam was.

Without the United States serving as a buffer between the Shia and Sunni factions, civil war is sure to break out, offering an opportunity for al Qaida to become dominant there.

The south of Iraq would fall under the direct influence of Iran and Saudi Arabia and might very well fragment. The stability of the entire Middle East would be put at risk.

Did I mention oil? I know it's not fashionable to think that control of natural resources is a valid reason for war (truth, justice and democracy are so much more appealing) but the fact is our economy runs on oil. Chaos in the Middle East would not be good for our economy or anyone else's, except perhaps Venezuela and Russia.

So you see, we simply cannot afford to get out of Iraq.

On the other hand, we can't afford to stay there either.

Thanks, Mr. Bush.

Donald Kaul is a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington correspondent who, by his own account, is right more than he's wrong. E-mail him at dkaul1@verizon.net.

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Time's up — Bring the Guard home

Guess what, Mr. President? Your authority to keep state National Guard troops in Iraq has expired. So says a new bill introduced this week to the Vermont Legislature by Rep. Michael Fisher and Sen. Peter Shumlin. It is supported by 30 of their colleagues.



KAREN DOLAN

"It is clear that the mission that Congress authorized no longer exists," said Fisher. "Unless Congress grants a new authorization, the Vermont Guard should revert back to state control." The Vermont bill states:

The Authorization for the Use of Military Force of October 16th, 2002, having expired, the General Assembly declares that all members of the Vermont National Guard should be promptly and expeditiously withdrawn from Iraq, subject only to the conditions of time and manner specifically required to assure their safety and well-being during removal operations ... The General Assembly calls on the Governor of Vermont to take prompt steps as the Commander-in-Chief of the Vermont National Guard to effectuate these purposes.



BEN MANSKI

The Guard is the mainstay of America's national defense, and as with other American institutions, the Guard's duties are split between the states and the federal government. Unless called into national service, each unit and each individual member of the Guard remains in the service of their respective states.

Five years ago, George W. Bush called the Guard into national service pursuant to the 2002 Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) against Iraq. Passed by Congress in its rush to war, it established a two-fold limited mission: First, the removal of Saddam Hussein from power; second, enforcement of preceding United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding the elimination of alleged Iraqi WMDs and ballistic missiles. The Vermont bill recognizes that those mission objectives are complete and that the national service of the Vermont Guard is over; the bill recalls the Guard to state control.

And Vermont is not alone. Minnesota, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island lawmakers plan to sponsor similar legislation. And legislators in several other states, including Maryland, Maine and Wisconsin, have openly declared that they are considering following suit.

This latest chapter in Democracy vs. Empire illustrates one of the most significant and perhaps most underreported aspects of the tragedy of the occupation of Iraq: The wisdom of the American people. For a public that has all but given up hope for congressional action to end the war, this new state-based legal approach takes advantage of a surge of another kind.

In the run up to the ill-fated March 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, nearly 200 municipalities passed symbolic resolutions stating the reasons that the United States should not invade: The war would be too costly; the wrong priority for federal funds (better spent in our crumbling communities); and would be fought after rushed U.N. weapons inspectors found insufficient evidence of WMDs, would be fought unilaterally, not multilaterally; and above all, the potential for devastating and unnecessary

loss of life on all sides was great. Unfortunately, the wisdom from Main Street U.S.A. proved vastly better than the "intelligence" propagated by 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. In these last five years of occupation, we have seen estimates of the war's cost rise to between \$500 billion and \$3.5 trillion, depending on the source. Four thousand U.S. soldiers and over half a million innocent Iraqi civilians — men, women and children — have lost their lives; hundreds of thousands of others have been seriously wounded. Iraq no longer exists as an independent or intact nation.

In the face of this war toll, world and domestic public opinion have turned sharply against both the foolish presidency and the cowardly Congress. Over 300 cities, towns, counties and states have expressed opposition to continuing the war. Fully half of the U.S. population either voted in popular referenda for withdrawal from Iraq, or are represented by elected officials who did. Now, with the Vermont legislation, the public's wisdom may become a reality. Legislators who passed anti-war resolutions can now cast votes recalling the Guard from Iraq. Vermont has led the way. And many other states have been quick to follow.

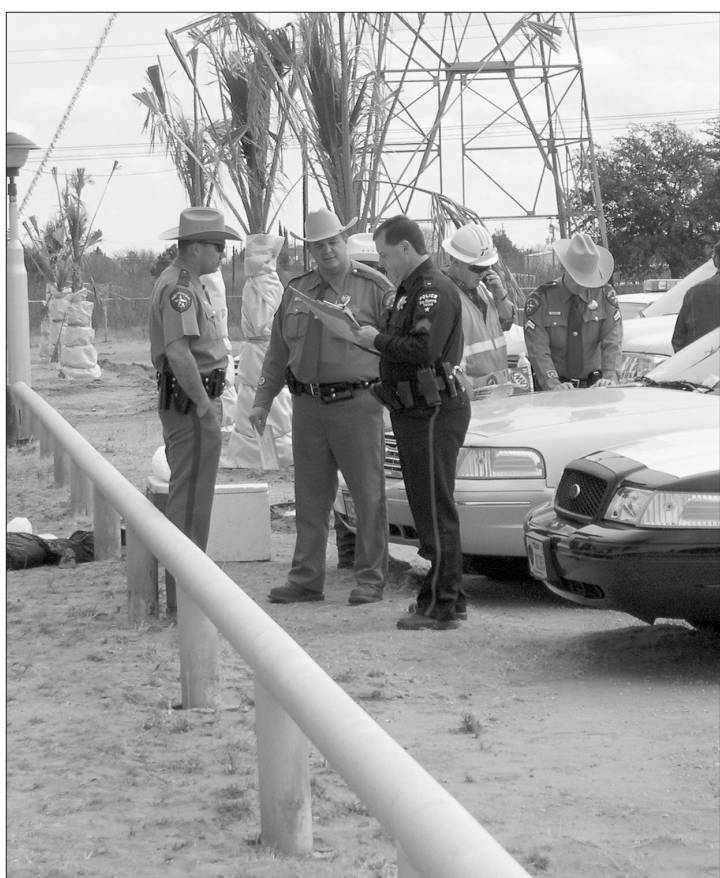
Mr. President, your time is up. Your authority is over. The people have said their piece. Now they are beginning to bring home the women and men of the National Guard.

Karen Dolan is a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., and a contributor to Foreign Policy In Focus. Ben Manski is a Wisconsin attorney and the executive director of the Liberty Tree Foundation for the Democratic Revolution.

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CLIP AD FOR BONUS

CLIP AD FOR BONUS

Early voting for March primaries begins Tuesday

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

Local election officials are getting their democratic motors revved, as early voting in this year's political party primaries is set to get under way Tuesday at the Howard County Courthouse.

With early voting polls for both the Republican and Democratic parties located on the third floor of the courthouse, Howard County Elections Administrator Sandra Bloom said she and her staff are preparing for annual balloting.

"We strive to meet the needs of the voters whenever it's possible and want to encourage every registered voter to cast their ballots," said Bloom. "If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask. The poll workers and staff is here to help the voters of Howard County in any way they can."

Bloom said early voting in the Republican and Democratic primaries is set to begin Tuesday and continue through Feb. 29.

"The early voting polls will be located in the elections office, which is on the third floor of the courthouse," said Bloom. "They will be open from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. We'll have extended-hour voting Feb. 26 and 28, when the polls will be open until 7 p.m. We've had a lot of success with these hours in the past because a lot of people have to work until after 5 p.m., and don't have the opportunity to cast their ballots early."

"It's very important to remember you can vote in either the Republican primary or the Democratic primary, but you can not vote in both," she added. "The primaries act as a nominating process to decide who will be on the ballot in the November election. However, you don't have to vote in the



primaries to be eligible to vote in the November election."

Bloom said anyone with questions regarding the election can contact her office at 264-2273 for more information.

One of the most anticipated contests in Howard County will be the race for sheriff.

Sheriff Dale Walker filed to run for re-election on the Republican ticket, bringing his eight-year run with the Democratic party to a close. Walker will face Gary Morgan

and Stan Parker in the March contest, with former HCSO deputy Pat Carter the lone candidate on the Democratic ticket.

In the race for the Precinct 3 seat on the commissioner's court, nearly a half-dozen hopefuls have thrown their hats into the ring. Dick Dubose, who ran for the seat four years ago, is the lone Democratic candidate, automatically earning him a place on the November ballot. However, Steve Gray, Winston Paschal Odom, Jimmie Wayne Long and Fred Green will have to duke it out in March in hopes of winning the Republican nomination.

Incumbent William Crooker announced in late 2007 he would not seek re-election.

Edwin O. Ware will be able to quietly cruise through the primaries as the lone Republican candidate seeking the Precinct 1 seat on the commissioner's court, while incumbent Emma

Brown and challenger Yolanda Mendoza will try to win the Democratic nomination. Brown defeated Mendoza in her last bid for re-election approximately four years ago.

Howard County Constable Bill Holden will run for re-election on the Democratic ticket, and while he failed to draw a party opponent, Kneel B. Stallings has filed to challenge on the Republican card, forcing the contest to a November resolution.

Also in Howard County contests, County Attorney Mike Thomas will run for re-election with the Democratic Party, drawing his only opponent in local attorney Joshua Hamby, who will run on the Republican ticket, setting up a November showdown.

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

Martin, Glasscock voters ready to head to polls

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

Get ready to vote.

That's the message going out from the county clerk's offices in Martin and Glasscock counties, as both prepare to open early voting polls for the political party primaries Tuesday.

Linda Gonzales, deputy clerk for Martin County, said she and her team of election officials are ready for early voting, which will run from Tuesday until Feb. 29.

"We've been busy, but I feel like we're ready," said Gonzales. "We just got the last of the handbooks in and everything is going smoothly. The polls will be right here in the county clerk's office, located in the Martin County Courthouse, open 8 a.m. until noon, and 1 p.m. until 5 p.m."

Voters in Martin County will have plenty of races to decide during the primaries, as several seats currently up for grabs have drawn both Republican and Democrat candidates.

The race for Martin County Sheriff has drawn a trio of candidates, with John Woodward II and Teddy H. Smith both running on the Republican ticket, and lone Democrat Jerry Heflin failing to draw a challenger for the primaries.

Heflin is expected to face the winner of the Woodward/Smith race in November.

Incumbent Randy Cozart opted not to run for re-election.

The race for the Precinct 1 seat on the Martin County Commissioner's Court may very well be decided in March, as Jesus "Sonny" Garza will take on Bruce Jeffcoat in the Democratic Primary. The winner of the race is

expected to go unopposed in November.

The Precinct 3 seat on the commissioner's court managed to draw a trio of candidates. Morgan Cox and Jim Smith will square-off for the Democratic nomination for the position, while Republican candidate Bobby Holland should automatically advance to the November election.

County Attorney James L. McGilvray and Tax Assessor-Collector Kathy Hull, both incumbents, failed to draw opponents for the impending elections, and will be re-elected by default.

According to Glasscock County Deputy Clerk Suzie Hillger, all candidates filing to run in the primaries signed up to run on the Republican ticket, making a local November contest highly unlikely.

"It looks like all of our local races will be decided when the polls close March 4," said Hillger. "Polls will be open here at the Glasscock County Courthouse from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. from Tuesday until Feb. 29."

Glasscock County commissioner for Precinct 1, Jimmy Strube, made it through the filing period without drawing a challenger, and is expected reach the November ballot uncontested.

Fellow incumbent commissioner Marck Schaefer, who currently represents Precinct 3, decided not to run for re-election this year. Schaefer's decision has drawn Dalem Schwartz and Gary W. Jones, both Republican candidates, into the race, with the winner of the primary expected to go unchallenged in November.

Like Strube, County Tax Collector and Assessor Nancy Hillger also made

it out of the filing period without drawing an opponent.

Voters in Glasscock County will, however, be asked to elect a new sheriff, as Royce "Booger" Pruitt announced he

would not be running for re-election after nearly 50 years of service.

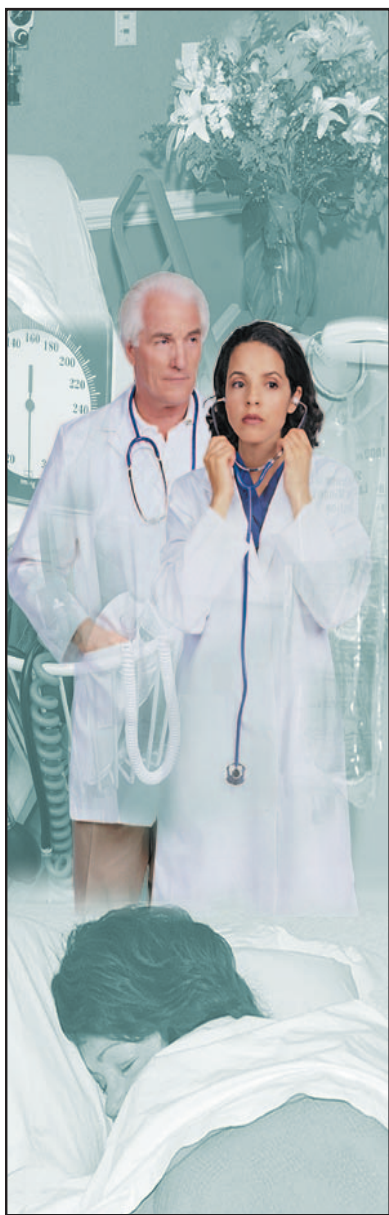
Keith Burnett and Kenneth W. Zunker have both filed with the Republican party to run for sheriff, with the win-

ner expected to go unopposed in the November election.

The office of constable, currently held by Mark L. Frysak, will also go unchallenged in both the primaries and November

election, as Frysak failed to draw an opponent.

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



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Sports

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Page 7
Monday, February 18, 2008

IN BRIEF

Crossroads high school varsity sports calendar

Due to the explosion at Alon USA refinery, Big Spring's and Coahoma's baseball games scheduled for today have been postponed.

TUESDAY

Big Spring softball vs. Midland Lee, 5:30 p.m.

Forsan softball vs. Grape Creek, 4 p.m.

Coahoma softball vs. Midland High, 7 p.m.

BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

Coahoma girls and boys basketball vs. Wall at Abilene Cooper, 6:30 p.m.

Forsan boys basketball vs. Iraan at Angelo State's Junell Center in San Angelo, 5:30 p.m.

Grady girls basketball vs. Whitharral at Borden County, 5 p.m.

Garden City girls basketball vs. Sterling City at Dorothy Garrett Coliseum, 6 p.m.

Sands boys basketball vs. Ropes at Post, 8 p.m.

THURSDAY

Big Spring softball, Forsan softball and Coahoma softball at West Texas Classic in Midland in tournament play through Feb. 23.

Coahoma baseball at Sonora Tournament through Feb. 23.

FRIDAY

Big Spring baseball at Sweetwater, 6 p.m.

Forsan baseball at Tahoka, 7 p.m.

Big Spring Girls Softball registration held every Saturday

The Big Spring Girls Softball Association begins registration for the 2008 youth softball season Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Big Spring Mall across from Merle Norman.

Girls ages 4 to 14 as of Jan. 1 are eligible to play.

A Subsequent sign-up dates will be held March 1.

Fee is \$45 with a \$5 discount for a second child.

Anyone with questions can call Rodney Jones at 213-3750.

Big Spring Country Club schedules 4-person scramble

The Big Spring Country Club has scheduled a 4-person scramble for Saturday and Sunday.

Entry fee is \$75 per player, plus golf cart fees, and includes a barbecue lunch on the course both days. Private carts are welcome.

Practice rounds are available Friday. The Field will be flighted by first-round score and the number of flights will be determined by the number of entries.

Call the Pro Shop at 267-5354 for more information or to enter a team.

King of All Stars: LeBron leads East to win

By TOM WITHERS

AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Toss some leftover Mardi Gras beads toward the East. LeBron James and his crew earned them.

Outduking, outpassing and outperforming their more trumpeted counterparts from the Western Conference, the Eastern Conference All-Stars avenged a year-old beating with a 134-128 win on Sunday night.

Ray Allen scored 28 points, making three straight 3-pointers in the final 3:15, and James added 27, including a did-he-real-

ly-do-that? dunk in the last minute to propel the East and earn MVP honors.

Last year, the West humiliated the East in a 153-132 rout in Las Vegas when Kobe Bryant and Co. rewrote the event's record books. However, this time led by Allen's 14 fourth-quarter points and James, the East salvaged some pride and can return to the season's second half with bragging rights.

"They beat up on us pretty bad last year," James said. "We didn't want to allow that to happen. We wanted to win."

James, who added nine assists

and eight rebounds, was MVP for the second time in three years. He also won the honor in 2006, when the East beat the West in Houston.

Amare Stoudemire, Brandon Roy and Carmelo Anthony scored 18 points apiece to lead the West, which trailed by 13 entering the fourth quarter before rallying behind New Orleans' own Chris Paul. The sensational guard's seventh assist of the final period set up Roy's layup to give the West a 122-119 lead.

But Boston's Allen, the final player added to either roster,

knocked down his second 3-pointer in 48 seconds to tie it before Paul answered with a 3, sending the hometown crowd into a frenzy.

Allen finally missed and James poked away the ball, and then came up with the night's most stirring moment.

Slashing through the lane, Cleveland's megastar rose and dunked over several West defenders, much like he did in Game 5 of last year's Eastern Conference finals in Detroit when he scored the Cavaliers'

See **NBA**, Page 8

Team Penske finishes 1-2 at Daytona

By JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — One down, one to go for The Captain.

Roger Penske picked up his elusive Daytona 500 victory, a \$1 million bonus and a new challenge — pairing the race he just conquered with the one that means the most to him.

Ryan Newman gave Penske his first Daytona 500 victory in 24 years of trying, a frustrating span for a car owner accustomed to dominating big events: He's won the Indianapolis 500 a record 14 times.

Now he wants one more. Matching victories in two of motorsports' most sought after bounties.

"Comparing it to the Indy 500, as Ryan knows, we've been open-wheel guys and coming down here has been tough," Penske said following Sunday's victory. "This has got to go to the top of the charts here, this win. What I'm going to try to do this year is have them back-to-back, have one in May, too."

"That's my real challenge right now."

Penske earned his win in a thriller, with Newman ending an 81-race winless streak by teaming up with Kurt Busch for a last-lap pass that handed Tony Stewart yet another Daytona defeat. The Penske cars ganged up on the two-time champion, who made a strategic error that prevented him from holding off the charge.

"Kurt was the push from heaven that made it all happen," Newman said. "Without a doubt, he could have easily gone three-wide and split us through the



AP photo/Ryan Remiorz/The Canadian Press
Ryan Newman drives his Alltel Dodge across the finish line to win the Daytona 500 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series auto race in Daytona, Fla., Sunday.

center and made one heck of a mess there. But he chose to be a teammate, and that was the most honorable thing that he could do."

It gave Penske the win in the 50th running of the Daytona 500, and when the car owner finally made it to storied Victory Lane, he was met by Rick Hendrick, NASCAR's most powerful owner.

"I talked to Rick earlier today, and I said, 'You've been in the winner's circle so many times, if we win will you give me your hat?' He was the first one down here. So I thank him," Penske

said while wearing that very cap. "We've been working here for many years. Certainly Kurt and the teamwork was just unbelievable. It's a big day in our life and for our whole team."

The Penske cars were quiet for 199 of the 200 laps, letting Joe Gibbs Racing stars Stewart and Kyle Busch race each other in a battle of Toyotas. With one lap to go, it appeared Stewart finally would get his first Daytona 500 win in his 10th try.

Running out front in the high line, he held off the two Penske cars as they circled the famed

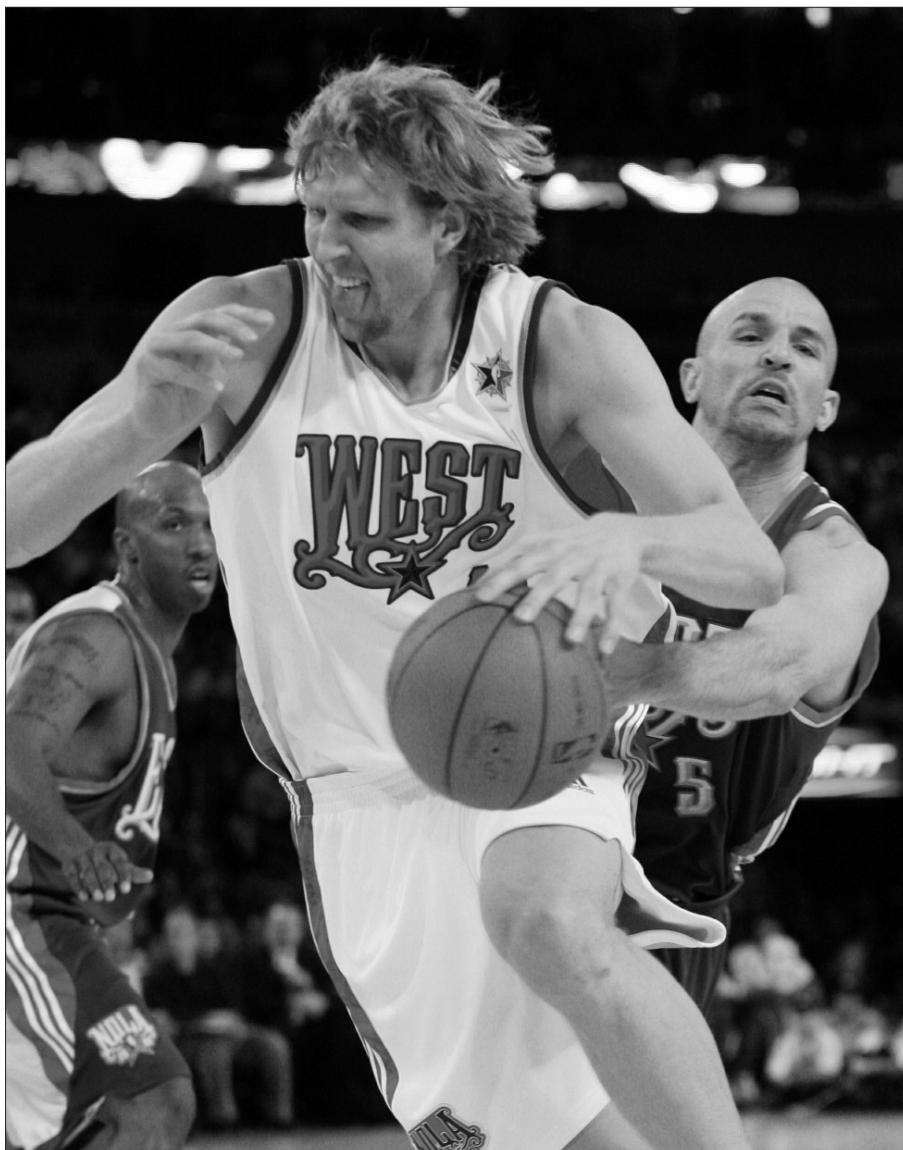
speedway. But as the Penske teammates closed in on him, Stewart didn't feel safe running alone without any allies.

At the last second, he dropped low on the track to line up in front of Kyle Busch. The JGR teams had talked all week about the importance of teamwork, and Stewart thought he'd need Busch to make it to the checkered flag.

But the decision backfired in the blink of an eye.

Stewart couldn't hook up with Kyle Busch fast enough, and the

See **NASCAR**, Page 8



AP photo/Alex Brandon
Dallas Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki drives to the basket as New Jersey Nets guard Jason Kidd (5) defends in the second half of the NBA All-Star game Sunday in New Orleans. Kidd and Nowitzki will be teammates after the All-Star break as the Mavs and Nets finally worked out a trade, sending Kidd and forward Malik Allen to Dallas and Devin Harris, three other players and two first-round draft picks to New Jersey.

Kidd finally headed back to Mavericks

The Associated Press

DALLAS — Jason Kidd is headed to the Dallas Mavericks after all, although in a trade that's slightly different than originally arranged.

The new deal — as reported by various media outlets Sunday night, all citing anonymous sources — has Kidd and forward Malik Allen going to Dallas for point guard Devin Harris, center DeSagana Diop and swingman Maurice Ager, plus a few new pieces: retired forward Keith Van Horn and Trenton Hassell.

New Jersey also will get two first-round draft picks and \$3 million.

Van Horn and Hassell replace Jerry Stackhouse and Devean George.

Stackhouse's presence in the deal was muddled by plans to get him back to Dallas — within the rules, although in a way the league frowned upon — and George used his veto power to block his involvement.

The reconfigured proposal is expected to be offered for league approval Monday. If all goes as planned, Kidd could make his return to the team that drafted him when the Mavericks play in New Orleans on Wednesday night.

"There's a lot of talk that the deal is done," Kidd said after Sunday's All-Star game in New Orleans, where word of the trade broke. "I've heard that before. Until I get a call from Rod (Thorn) or Mark (Cuban), then it will be official."

A spokesman for the New Jersey Nets declined comment at the game.

If all goes as planned, Kidd will be back in the Western Conference by the time the All-Star break ends.

Kidd spent the first 2-plus seasons of his career in Dallas. The Mavs drafted him third overall in 1994 and he was the NBA's co-rookie of the year in '94-95. He was traded to Phoenix in December 1996, then went from the Suns to New Jersey prior to the 2001-02 season. He helped the Nets reach the NBA finals his first two seasons, but they haven't made a long playoff run since.

The Mavericks have been among the NBA's top teams the last few years, but have fallen short of a title. They're trading Harris' promising future in hopes that Kidd, who turns 35 next month, has enough tenacity and leadership to push them over the top.

NASCAR

Continued from Page 7

two Penske cars steam-rolled past him on the top. Newman pulled away for his first win since New Hampshire in September 2005, while Stewart had to settle for third. "I don't think there's too many people that would take the white flag and like finishing third," a dejected Stewart sighed. "We tried to win the Daytona 500. That's all I can say. I just made the

wrong decision on the backstretch. "My intention was to get in front of Kyle and pull Kyle along with us. It's hard to explain. It's probably one of the most disappointing moments in my racing career." The disappointment was also evident on Greg Zipadelli, who starts his 10th season with Stewart in NASCAR's longest active driver-crew chief pairing. "We've worked all winter, we've worked the last 10 years, I've worked my whole life," Zipadelli said. "It's just the way that it

is. There's a lot of good people that haven't won this race. I'm not going to get hung up on it. I'm going to work as hard as I can, and when it's done, if we have our turn, we will. "It won't be because we didn't work at it." The failure was a setback for Toyota, which seemed destined to win its first points race in NASCAR's top series behind the strength of JGR. "There's no doubt the Gibbs guys feel dejected tonight," Kurt Busch said. The Gibbs organization

joined Toyota this season, giving the manufacturer instant credibility after an embarrassing 2007 debut. Based on a strong month of testing and Denny Hamlin's win in one of Thursday's qualifying races, the JGR cars set the stage for an intense battle with powerful Hendrick Motorsports for the biggest prize in NASCAR. But the Hendrick cars never challenged. Jeff Gordon dropped out with mechanical problems, Casey Mears and Jimmie Johnson both wrecked and, without any

Hendrick help, Dale Earnhardt Jr. didn't have the muscle to hold off the Gibbs entries. It allowed Stewart and Kyle Busch to dominate the race, only to fade at the end. Busch, who led a race-high 86 laps, finished fourth, while Hamlin was 17th. "Just frustrating to come home fourth, but that's part of the Daytona 500," said Kyle Busch, who joined Gibbs this season after Hendrick let him go to sign Earnhardt. "On the last lap, Stewart had a chance to go high to block (Newman) and

(Busch), but they just had such a big run, I think he knew it was going to be a waste of time." The disappointment was a stark contrast to the euphoria in the Penske camp, which finished 1-2 in NASCAR's Super Bowl. "I was very emotional crossing the line finishing second, because I know we did something very special for The Captain tonight," said Busch, the runner-up, who was near tears when he visited Victory Lane.

NBA

Continued from Page 7

final 25 points "We had two people on him," Paul said. "but that still wasn't enough." Paul was called for an offensive foul on the West's next trip. Dwyane Wade hit a layup and Allen scored to make it 131-125. Roy's 3-pointer with 8.7 seconds brought the West within three, but Allen made three free throws to close it out. The weekend in New Orleans was about much more than spectacular dunks, a game featuring marginal defense or collecting strings of beads while strolling down boozy Bourbon Street. The NBA came to the Big Easy hoping to help this special city continue its comeback from Hurricane Katrina, the effects of which are still being felt 27 years since she blasted through. On Friday, the world's biggest basketball names as well as hundreds of volunteers fanned out to all sides of the city to help refurbish playgrounds, paint houses and lend a hand with whatever they could on a day devoted to community service. Many of the players were moved by the experience and came away with a greater sense of what the area has gone through and the monumental work that lies ahead in the Gulf Coast Region. "Well, I hope not just me, but every All-Star from the East and West was able to put smiles on kids and on families faces," James said. "I think we all know what happened, the devastation

down here and to bring the NBA All-Star game here I think it really uplifted the families down here. We had a great time." Bryant, who won MVP honors last year, played less than 3 minutes so he could rest his injured pinkie. The 10-time All-Star dislocated his finger earlier this month and doctors have advised him to have surgery. Bryant, though, energized by the club's addition of center Pau Gasol in a trade, wants to delay any operation until late summer. As soon as he took on the West's bench, a trainer wrapped a large ice pack around his entire hand, rendering arguably the league's top player to spectator status. The West could have used him. "There's one player we really, really missed, and that was Kobe," West coach Byron Scott of New Orleans said. "Obviously, Kobe would have loved to play." New Jersey's Jason Kidd spent the weekend wondering whether he would be going back to the Nets or changing into a Dallas jersey. A complex trade, snagged when Mavericks guard Devean George blocked the deal, may have new life. The clubs still hope to get a deal done before Thursday's deadline. Players were grooving even before they hit the floor. Introduced under a balcony resembling one in the city's historic French Quarter, several of the All-Stars danced as a local brass band filled New Orleans Arena with the sounds that exemplify the area's laid-back, fun-lov-

ing ethos: Laissez Les Bon Temps Roulez — Let The Good Times Roll. The East came out flying, getting seven dunks and a layup in the first 5 minutes to take an early 11-point lead before the West awakened. Paul and Hornets teammate David West sparked the West, which cut it to two before James, Kidd and Dwight Howard, whose Superman routine won him Saturday's dunk contest, put on passing display like they were playing pickup Mball in the schoolyard. On one possession, Kidd threw a lob pass to James, who then bounced it off the glass for a charging Howard, who slammed it in. Both teams were scoring so quickly in the second quarter that the p.a. announcer was having a hard time keeping up. "Rasheed Wallace," he said before catching a breath to say, "Carmelo Anthony." The game was missing one of its biggest stars as Shaquille O'Neal was not

selected, snapping his record-tying 14-year run. Without O'Neal, there were no comedic moments like when Shaq pulled out a giant sneaker phone or made like a point guard and dribbled his way up the court. Notes: Phoenix will host next year's All-Star game. The event was last held there in 1995, when the West won 139-112 and Sacramento's Mitch Richmond was named MVP. ... Celtics C Kevin Garnett, the leading vote getter who missed the game because of an abdominal strain, worked out for coach Doc Rivers on Sunday. He's expected to practice with the club in Denver on Monday and could return to action on Tuesday. "I'm back to my old self again," he said. ... The East attempted 36 3-pointers, breaking the record of 30 set by the West in 2002. ... Paul's 14 assists are the most since Kidd had 14 in 2000. ... James is the 11th multiple MVP winner.

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Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9 with no repeats. That means no number is repeated in any row, column or box. Solution, tips and computer program at www.sudoku.com

9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers pre-filled: Row 1: 4, 5; Row 2: 1, 7, 9; Row 3: 2, 7, 1, 8; Row 4: 5, 3; Row 5: 3, 4, 5, 7; Row 6: 9, 4; Row 7: 5, 1, 6, 2; Row 8: 7, 6, 9; Row 9: 6, 1

Contract Bridge Famous Hand By Steve Becker

Contract Bridge Famous Hand. By Steve Becker. North dealer. North-South vulnerable. NORTH: ♠Q832, ♥432, ♦J76, ♣AK2. WEST: ♠KJ5, ♥J, ♦A1054, ♣J10975. EAST: ♠K109876, ♥K9832, ♦64. SOUTH: ♠A109764, ♥AQ5, ♦Q, ♣Q83. The bidding: North Pass, East 3♥, South Pass, West 4♠. Opening lead — jack of hearts. Foresight is one of the key traits of the top-flight player. Consider this gem from the 1967 Far Eastern championship played in Manila in the match between Taiwan and Australia. When a Taiwanese pair held the North-South cards, they got to four spades doubled on the bidding shown. West led the jack of hearts, won by South, Patrick Huang, with the queen. Declarer then played the ace of spades, on which East showed out. Huang realized that if he played a trump toward the queen at this point, he could be defeated by West's taking the king and leading a low diamond to East for a killing heart return. The Australians would thus score a spade, a diamond, a heart ruff and, later on, another heart. Huang saw there was no way he could avert the impending heart ruff, but he did find a way to circumvent the other heart loser. Accordingly, he cashed the A-K-Q of clubs before leading a spade toward the queen. West went up with the king but found himself in dire straits regardless of how he continued. If he played the ace and another diamond, he would not get a heart ruff, and declarer's only losers would be a spade, a heart and a diamond. And if he led a low diamond to East's king instead, he would be able to ruff South's ace of hearts when East returned the king, but that would mark the end of the road for the defense. Whether West presented South with a ruff-and-discard by returning a club, or led a diamond and converted dummy's jack into a trick, Huang was certain to make the contract.

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Tomorrow's Horoscope

If today's solar procession into Pisces were captured in a work of art, it could be Michelangelo's colossally reverent homage, the Sistine chapel; if it were nature, it might be the awe inspired by sunlight streaming through parting clouds; if it were a sound, it might be a monastic chant of monks or choir of angels. Wherever we find it, we know it's faith.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Oh, the tangled web one weaves trying to please everyone! Since you can't, just be honest.

Respond to the needs of others with an open heart, but give your own needs the top priority.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). It's been said that luck is when hard work meets opportunity. But what about when it's not? Good things fall into your lap for no good reason at all. It's as improbable as a fairy tale and just as magical.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You're driven to heroic action. Not rescuing people from burning buildings, perse, but you will be rescuing people from something — likely their own limiting beliefs about who they are.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's something worth chasing now, which is fantastic for you since you're invigorated by the act of pursuit. Take notice of that person who glows in your company. New relationships require you to make the first move.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Sometimes you feel that if you go outside your circle of friends for support, you're somehow betraying your closest friends. Real friends wish you support and happiness even if they are not the ones providing it.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). People whose decisions directly affect your life are engaged in struggle with each other. Remain impartial. Get comfortable with this balancing act, as it will go on for a few days.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). There is always an exception to the rule, and today, you're it. You're special, your talent is special, and the world gives you special treatment. Soak it up. This doesn't happen every day.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). If your Spidey-sense is tingling when you meet someone on the job, there's probably a good reason for it. Careful, that cute new cubicle dweller may be angling for your position, or even your boss's! Be polite and on alert.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You know a lot, but there are still benefits to learning more. Seminars, books and classes are all portholes to other worlds. Your fascination with a

subject will grow the more you learn about it.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Life provides entertaining revelations. You're a different person than you were -- wiser for sure. Tonight, you've incredible control of your mind! It IS possible to think only good thoughts about people.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). A quick fix is, by definition, temporary. Since you're making an effort to solve problems, you may as well do the job once and for all. Keep looking until you find a permanent solution.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Everybody wants something. You listen through the small talk to discover what that something is. Tonight is ideal for maximizing your financial options. Talk it over with Capricorn.

ASTROLOGICAL QUESTIONS: "I'm a Leo, he's a Cancer. I was hit with the "He's the ONE!" lightning bolt back in '73, and the feeling is still going strong. His past is multiple partners, mine is not. As he is in a relationship now, I'm concentrating on further developing my metaphysical and healing talents in order to be of service to him and others. Can he feel for me as I do for him?"

A wise person once said, "Life is rarely complicated, it's just difficult." Your situation is not complicated, but it's not easy to make the decision to hold out for healthy love. If you give your heart to someone who is clearly not available to an exclusive relationship with you, you're inviting a prolonged agony of heartache. The decision to take care of you is difficult, so you're concentrating on your healing work, which sounds like an elaborate rationalization, a way of passing the time when he's not available. This altruism can't keep you warm at night -- but it will turn your love life into a waiting room. As a Leo, you need to be the center of someone's universe. If he can't give that to you, look elsewhere.

CELEBRITY PROFILES: Can you pick an Aquarian out of a crowd? Molly Ringwald is a quick study in Aquarian spotting. With her long and lanky silhouette, ghostly pale skin, and strong bone structure she epitomizes this Sun sign's fabulous features. Many Aquarians also have funky flair, dressing with distinctive style. The best place to spot an Aquarian? Among friends, because that's where you'll find her.

Holiday Mathis is the author of "Rock Your Stars." If you would like to write to her, please go to www.creators.com and click on "Write the Author" on the Holiday Mathis page, or you may send her a postcard in the mail. To find out more about Holiday Mathis and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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ANSWERS

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

DONT LET SOMEONE MAKE YOUR DECISIONS FOR YOU.
VOTE!

MONDAY

	WFAA (2) Dallas	KMID (3) Midland	UNI (4) Spanish	KPEJ (5) Odessa	KOSA (7) Odessa	KTLE (8) Telemundo	KWES (9) Midland	WTBS (11) Atlanta	KMLM (12) Odessa	KPBT (13) Odessa	DISC (20) Discovery	AMC (21) Classics	SPIKE (22) Spike TV	TNT (23) Atlanta	BET (26) Black Ent.	DISN (27) Disney	ESPN2 (28) Sports	ESPN (29) Sports	SCIFI (64) Science Fic.
6:30	News (CC) Entertainment	Jeopardy! Wheel-Fortune	Yo Amo a Juan	The Simpsons Two-Half Men	News Entertainment	12 Corazones	News Be a Millionaire	Raymond Raymond	Jack Van Impe John Hagee	News-Lehrer	MythBusters (CC)		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn. (CC) (DVS)	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Live (CC) Hell Date	Wizards-Place Wizards-Place	Women's College	College Basketball: Syracuse at Louisville	Star Trek: Enterprise
7:30	Dance War: Bruno vs.	Dance War: Bruno vs.	Al Diablo con Los Guapos	Prison Break (CC)	How I Met Welcome-Capt	La Traicion	Deal or No Deal (CC)	Friends (CC) Friends (CC)	Update Israel Jim Jamieson	Antiques Roadshow	MythBusters (CC)	Movie: The Godfather (CC)	CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn. (CC) (DVS)	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Girlfriends Girlfriends	:15 Movie: Minutemen	Basketball	Syracuse at Louisville	Star Trek: Enterprise
8:30	Carrie Ann (CC)	Carrie Ann (CC)	Pasion	Sarah Connor Chronicles	Two-Half Men Old Christine	Victoria	My Dad-Better Than Your Dad	Family Guy Family Guy	Light of the Southwest	American Experience	MythBusters (CC)		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn. (CC) (DVS)	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Girlfriends Girlfriends		2004 World Series of Poker	College Basketball: Texas A&M at Texas	Star Trek: Enterprise
9:30	October Road (CC)	October Road (CC)	Cristina	TMZ (CC) Raymond	CSI: Miami	Pecados Ajenos	Medium (CC)	Family Guy Family Guy		(CC) (DVS) PBS Previews	MythBusters (CC)		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn. (CC) (DVS)	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Comicview (CC)	That's-Raven Life Derek		Texas A&M at Texas	Jericho (CC)
10:30	News (CC) Nightline	News Nightline	Primer Impacto Noticiero Univ	Two-Half Men Raymond	News Late Show-	Noticias Titulares y Mas	News Tonight Show	Sex and-City Sex and-City	Update Israel Y. Salamanca	Charlie Rose (CC)	MythBusters (CC)		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn. (CC)	The Closer (CC)	Hell Date Hell Date	Zack & Cody Han, Montana	College Basketball:	SportsCenter (CC)	Tactics Tactics
11:30	The Insider Jimmy Kimmel Live (CC)	Jimmy Kimmel Live (CC)	La Hora de la Risa	Law & Order: Criminal Intent	Letterman Late Late	Decisiones	Late Night-	Movie: Trapped (CC)	Uri Harel Scrivner	Tavis Smiley Tavis Smiley	MythBusters (CC)	Movie: Death Wish 4: The Crackdown	CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn. (CC)	Without a Trace (CC)	Jamie Foxx Jamie Foxx	Replacements Kim Possible	Gonzaga at San Diego	NFL Live Gamernight	Noein (CC) Noein (CC)
12:30	Live (CC) News (CC)	Extra (CC) Lighthouse	Salome (SS)	Peno 9111 George Lopez	Show The Insider	Programa	Conan O'Brien News	Update Israel Rico Cortes	Sign Off	MythBusters (CC)		Star Trek: Voyager	Without a Trace (CC)	Comicview (CC)	Emperor New American Drgn	ESPN Inside the Polls	SportsCenter (CC)	Twilight Zone Twilight Zone	

DENNIS THE MENACE



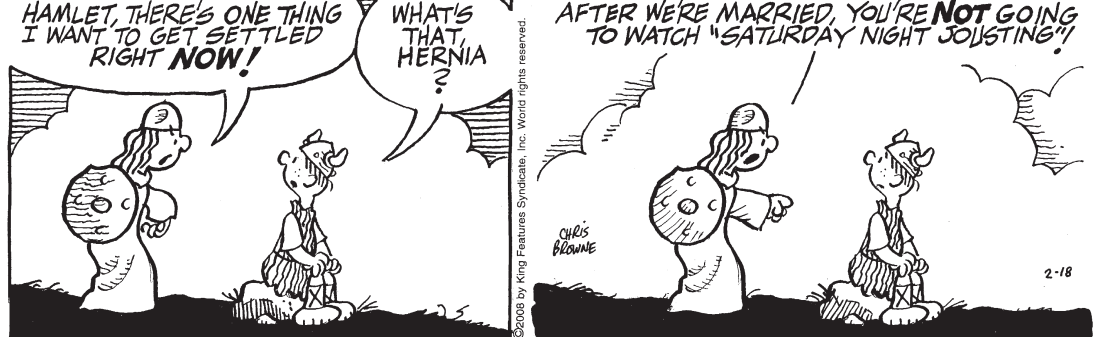
"WHEN IT COMES TO COOKIES, MY STOMACH IS A LOT BIGGER THAN MY EYES."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS



"How come the alphabet ends with Z, but numbers keep going on forever?"

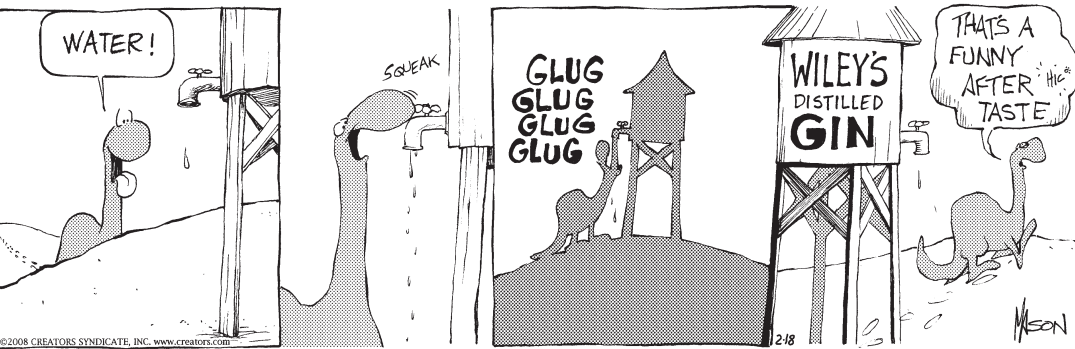
HAGAR



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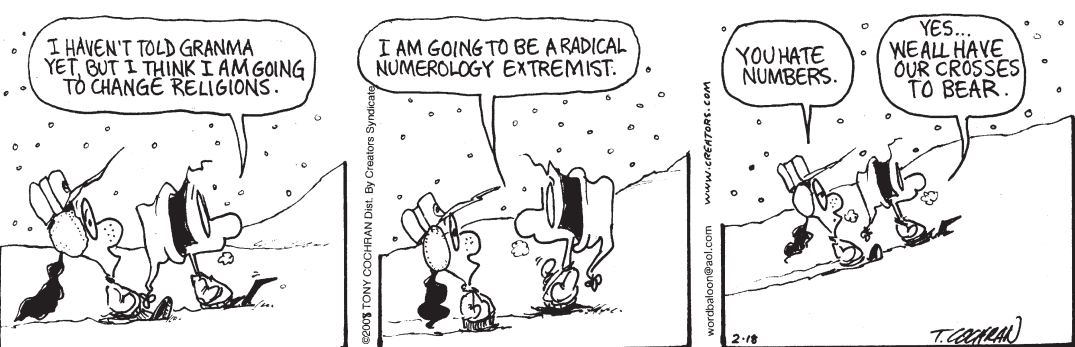
BC



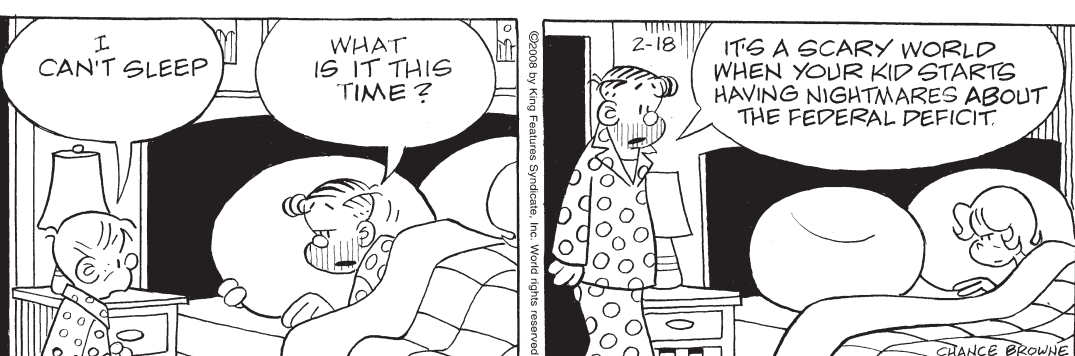
WIZARD OF ID



AGNES



HI AND LOIS



THE OTHER COAST



SNUFFY SMITH



BEETLE BAILEY



This Date In History

Today is Monday, Feb. 18, the 49th day of 2008. There are 317 days left in the year. This is Presidents Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 18, 1885, Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" was published in the U.S. for the first time.

On this date: In 1546, Martin Luther, leader of the Protestant Reformation in Germany, died in Eisleben.

In 1564, artist Michelangelo died in Rome.

In 1861, Jefferson Davis was sworn in as the provisional president of the Confederate States of America in Montgomery, Ala.

In 1930, photographic evidence of Pluto (now designated a "dwarf planet") was discovered by Clyde W. Tombaugh at Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Ariz.

In 1960, the eighth Winter Olympic Games were formally opened in Squaw Valley, Calif., by Vice President Nixon.

In 1967, American theoretical physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer died in Princeton, N.J., at age 62.

In 1970, the "Chicago Seven" defendants were found innocent of conspiring to incite riots at the 1968 Democratic national convention; five were convicted of violating the Anti-Riot Act of 1968. (Those convictions were later reversed).

In 1977, the space shuttle Enterprise, sitting atop a Boeing 747, went on its maiden "flight" above the Mojave Desert.

In 1988, Anthony M. Kennedy was sworn in as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2001, auto racing star Dale Earnhardt Sr. died from injuries suffered in a crash at the Daytona 500; he was 49.

Today's Birthdays: Former Cosmopolitan editor Helen Gurley Brown is 86. Actor George Kennedy is 83. Sen. John Warner, R-Va., is 81.

Author Toni Morrison is 77. Movie director Milos Forman is 76. Singer Yoko Ono is 75. Singer/songwriter Bobby Hart is 69. Singer Irma Thomas is 67. Singer Herman Santiago (Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers) is 67. Singer Dennis DeYoung is 61. Actress Sinead Cusack is 60. Producer-director-writer John Hughes is 58. Actress Cybill Shepherd is 58. Singer Juice Newton is 56. Singer Randy Crawford is 56. Rock musician Robbie Bachman is 55. Rock musician Larry Rust (Iron Butterfly) is 55. Actor John Travolta is 54. Game show host Vanna White is 51.

Answer to previous puzzle

ROASTERS	COVEST
INSPIRIT	AVANTI
CASANOVA	NELSON
ALERTS	TWIRLING
RENDS	READE
DATA	BIOS
OST	FANFARD
SHOWING	THEROPES
FRESHEST	ASP
CARPE	FEAT
ANE	ALoud
LOVELORN	SORREL
VIOLAS	IRRITATE
ENTIRE	OUTSIDER
STEAms	NEATNESS

Newsday Crossword

PRESIDENT'S DAY by Sally R. Stein
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN | |
| 1 No more than basics | 1 Baseball arbiters | 9 Luau garland |
| 5 Kindergarten | 2 Banana protector | 10 Idleness |
| 9 Circus roarers | 3 Answering-machine beep | 11 Kind of vaccine |
| 14 Cat's comment | 4 Once possessed | 12 ___ Scotia, Canada |
| 15 Very ___ (a lot) | 5 Vanderbilt of etiquette | 13 Whole bunch |
| 16 Sign up | 6 Cow's young offspring | 18 Slalom down a slope |
| 17 Addr. of the White House | 7 206, in Roman numerals | 19 Prefix meaning "new" |
| 20 Trim and graceful | 8 Mine passageways | 24 Got to one's feet |
| 21 Vitality | | 26 Deplete |
| 22 Eagle's talon | | 27 Carelessly quick |
| 23 Platter | | 28 "Are not!" response |
| 25 Speak well of | | 29 Personal journal |
| 27 Once possessed | | 31 Singer Midler |
| 30 Keep ___ on (watch closely) | | 33 Rotates |
| 32 Mama's boy | | 34 Pleasure boat |
| 36 French friend | | 35 Busybody |
| 37 One of 18 in golf | | 37 Robbery, slangily |
| 38 Folks | | |
| 39 Subject of an annual presidential speech | | |
| 42 Oppressively hot | | |
| 43 Waterproof cover | | |
| 44 "I should say ___!" | | |
| 45 Toys on a string | | |
| 46 Tournay round | | |
| 47 Hot spring | | |
| 48 Salt Lake City's state | | |
| 50 Vending-machine opening | | |
| 53 Notify in advance | | |
| 56 College club | | |
| 58 Opera solos | | |
| 62 Governmental area headed by the President | | |
| 65 ___ one's trade | | |

