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THURSDAY
 FEBRUARY 21, 2008



BIG SPRING HERALD

VOLUME 103, NUMBER 72

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50 CENTS DAILY/\$1.25 SUNDAY

City council will have contested race for District 3

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
 Staff Writer

The city of Big Spring will have at least one contested race during the May election, as local resident John "Huck" Huckabee has filed to run against incumbent District 3 City Councilwoman Jo Ann Staulcup.

According to city officials, Huckabee — a local mechanic and truck driver — filed his candidacy Wednesday.

"I was just tired of the vote always going one way," said Huckabee. "It seems like every time



Huckabee



Staulcup

there's a vote, it's the same old thing. I feel like I can help the community if I'm elected."

Huckabee, a resident of Big Spring between 30 and 40 years, said he has several changes in mind for the council if elected.

"Oh, I've got quite a few

See **CITY**, Page 3A



Police officials investigate a reported hit-and-run accident in the 1000 block of Runnels shortly after 5 p.m. Wednesday. According to law enforcement officials, a pickup driven by an allegedly intoxicated Big Spring man struck a home.

HERALD photo/Steve Reagan

Man jailed for DWI after striking house

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
 Staff Writer

A Big Spring man was arrested Wednesday afternoon when police officials say he ran into a home in the 1000 block of Runnels with a pickup truck, then left the scene in another vehicle.

Ted Martinez, 20, of 1014 Stadium, was arrested on a charge of driving while intoxicated shortly after the pickup he was traveling in struck a home located at 1014 Runnels.

According to Sgt. Tony Everett,

public information officer with the Big Spring Police Department, Martinez was apprehended minutes after the crash in another vehicle.

"After hitting the home, he left the vehicle and caught a ride with someone that was driving by," said Everett. "Officers stopped that vehicle and the arrest was made."

Everett said Martinez could also face a charge of hit and run, but officers decided to charge him with the more serious offense.

See **DWI**, Page 3A

Help feed Alon

Volunteer groups sought to prepare meals

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
 Staff Writer

As the terror associated with Monday's explosion at the Alon USA Big Spring Refinery subsides, the need to support the Howard County landmark couldn't be stronger, according to local officials.

Debbie ValVerde, executive director for the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce, said she and her staff — along with a number of local businesses, churches and organizations — are doing what they can to make sure employees at the refinery have a good lunch each day.

"We have businesses that have agreed to feed



ValVerde

See **ALON**, Page 3A

Trustee elections getting few takers

By **STEVE REAGAN**
 Staff Writer

School board candidates haven't exactly been running through walls in a rush to file for election.

Candidate filing has been slow among the area schools with trustee elections this May. Many districts report no filings, while others report only sporadic interest.

Persons interested in running for area school

board elections have a month to announce their candidacies.

Howard College and area school districts, with the exception of Glasscock County and Grady, will hold trustee elections May 10.

Prospective candidates have until March 10 to file for the respective elections.

See **ISD**, Page 3A

Big Spring soldier killed in action in Iraq

By **STEVE REAGAN**
 Staff Writer

The war in Iraq has claimed the life of another Big Spring native.

Conrad Alvarez, a U.S. Army soldier stationed in the Baghdad area, was recently killed in action while on duty

in that war-torn country.

Alvarez's mother, Melinda Garcia, was notified of her son's death Wednesday morning.

The Rev. Joel Miller, speaking for the family, said no details surrounding Alvarez's death have been made available to the family as of this morn-

ing.

"They just informed her (Wednesday) morning and there will be U.S. Army personnel visiting with her later today who will be able to provide more information, but we really don't know anything right now," Miller said. "Obviously, she is in shock right now."

Alvarez is the third Howard County native killed while serving on active duty in the Iraq theater.

Marine Pfc. Chad Metcalf Bales, of Coahoma, was killed shortly after President George Bush ordered the invasion of that country in April 2003. Big Spring's Robert J. Volker, a

specialist in the Army, was killed when his vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device in December 2006.

Former Big Spring Police Department officer Steven Evrard, working in Iraq as a civilian security specialist, was killed by a roadside bomb in December 2007.

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Find us online at:
www.bigspringherald.com

To reach us:
 Please call 263-7331. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you miss your paper, please call (432) 263-7335 before 7 p.m. weekdays and noon Sunday.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Black History and its impact on all races will be the theme for "The History of Black History," set for 6 p.m. tonight in the Big Spring High School Auditorium.

Admission is free. Everyone is invited. About 30 high school students and community members will be taking part in the show, which will feature individuals performing as famous singers at the legendary Apollo Theater. Others will give poetry readings, political speeches and perform step dances and pantomime.

MONDAY'S PAPER ON CD

Monday's edition of the Herald has sold out. No more copies are available. However, due to demand, the Herald is making available a CD which contains both Monday's regular edition and the Extra published early Monday evening for \$2. These can be purchased at the Herald office, 710 Scurry.

Photos of the Alon USA Big Spring Refinery explosion can be found on the Herald Web site at www.bigspringherald.com

AHA 'SOCK HOP' SET

The American Heart Association will hold a "sock hop" gala beginning at 8 p.m. at the Big Spring Country Club. Activities include winning and dining, dancing and bidding on auction items.

Admission is \$20 per person or \$35 per couple.

For more information and to make reservations, call Amanda Cole Calvio at 267-1353.

Proceeds will go toward research and public awareness information.

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Sports

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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
Thursday, February 21, 2008**

IN BRIEF

Crossroads high school varsity sports calendar TODAY

Big Spring softball, Forsan softball and Coahoma softball at West Texas Classic in Midland through Saturday.

Coahoma baseball at Sonora Tournament through Saturday.

BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

Garden City boys vs. Dell City at Seminole, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY

Big Spring baseball at Sweetwater, 6 p.m.

BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

Forsan boys vs. Plains at Andrews, 6 p.m.

Grady girls vs. McLean at the Texan Dome in Levelland, 2:30 p.m.

Grady boys vs. Turkey Valley at the Rip Griffin Center in Lubbock, 7:30 p.m.

Garden City girls vs. Guthrie at Fort Worth, 4 p.m.

Wear red get in free at Howard's final home game

The Howard College Hawks final game of the regular season takes place Tuesday at Dorothy Garrett Coliseum with the women tipping off against South Plains College at 5:30 p.m. and the men starting at 7:30 p.m.

Anyone wearing red to the game will be admitted free of charge.

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 signup 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

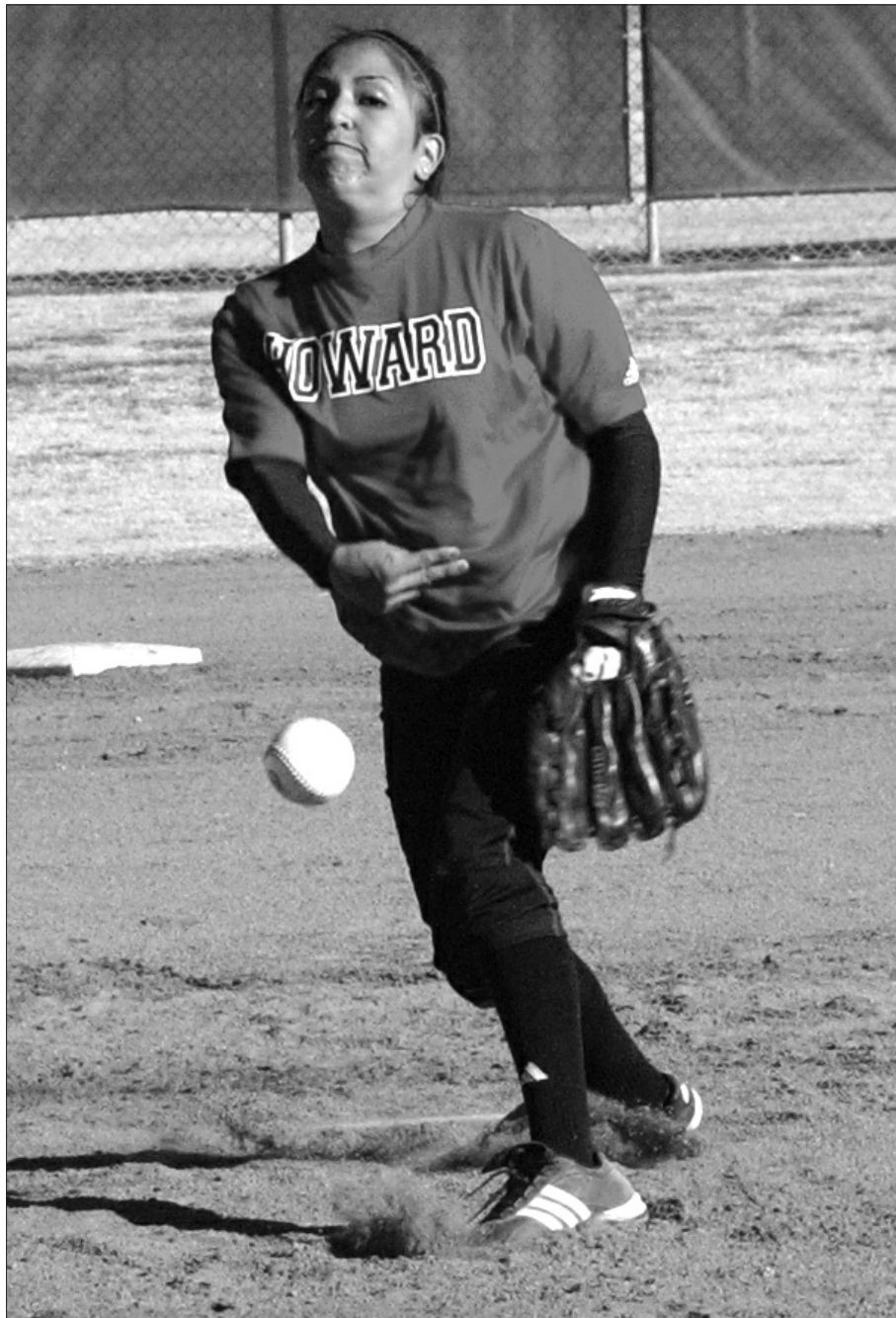
The Big Spring Country Club has scheduled a 4-person scramble for Saturday and Sunday.

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.

Hawks sweep doubleheader with Ranger



HERALD photo/Jonathan Hull
Howard College Hawks pitcher Diana Espinal hurls a pitch in the Hawks' Game 2 win of a doubleheader sweep over Ranger College Wednesday.

By JONATHAN HULL

Herald Sports Editor

Howard College's softball team accomplished a feat Wednesday it hadn't succeeded in doing so far this season. The Hawks put together two solid games back to back, sweeping a doubleheader from Ranger College, 5-4 and 6-2.

"We finally put things together for two games in a row," Howard Head Coach Kelly Raines said. "It's been a bit of a worry up until now."

Ranger struck first in Game 1 with second baseman Theresa Garcia leading off the top of the second inning with a double and working her way around to home courtesy of two well placed fielder's choice balls. Haley Holden picked up the RBI.

As was the theme for the first game of the afternoon, though, Howard had a stronger response. The Hawks knocked in two runs in the bottom of the second, courtesy of a crushing home run by Ashley Calles. Kristy Leal also scored on the blast, making the score 2-1 in Howard's favor.

The Hawks lost that lead in the top of the fourth with Ranger picking up two more runs on fielder's choice plays. However, Calles had another long-ball shot left in her system. This time it was a solo shot that knotted the game up at 3 after four innings.

Ranger grabbed its third lead of the game in the top of the fifth thanks to a solo home run by third baseman Juanita Coleman. Unfortunately for the visiting team, Howard's response proved to be stronger again.

Amanda Benavides led off the

fifth drawing a walk and moved to second base after a sacrifice bunt by Katie Powell. Benavides scored a batter later when pitcher Kendra Corbin smacked a double to left field, tying the game at 4.

Corbin moved to third on a wild pitch and then scored on a suicide squeeze after Misti Lindamood laid down a bunt.

Corbin then retook the mound and retired six of the next seven Ranger batters, earning Howard's sixth win of the season. She pitched a complete game, surrendering four runs, all earned, on seven hits while striking out three.

Pitching was key to Howard picking up its second victory of the day in Game 2. Diana Espinal overcame a tough showing in her last outing, which she didn't make it out of the first inning, to throw a gem, picking up a 6-2 win against Ranger.

Howard's bats jumped on scoring opportunities in the bottom of the third inning, picking up three runs. After Ranger's starting pitcher left the game with an injured ankle, the Hawks strung together four consecutive hits, allowing Corbin, Lindamood and Jessica Moreno to cross the plate.

Moreno knocked in Corbin and Lindamood with a double to right center field and scored a batter later, courtesy of a double to center by Calles.

Ranger snuck within a run of the Hawks in the top of the fourth after Holden singled down the right field line, bringing in

See **HAWKS**, Page 2B

Kidd outshined by Paul in Mavs' debut

By BRETT MARTEL

AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Perhaps Chris Paul and the New Orleans Hornets don't need any blockbuster trades to keep pace with their Western Conference rivals.

Paul had 31 points, 11 assists and a career-high nine steals, spoiling Jason Kidd's debut with Dallas and lifting the New Orleans Hornets to a 104-93 victory over the Mavericks on Wednesday night.

"We were excited that we would be their first game (with Kidd)," Paul said. "We knew it was going to take some time for them to get used to playing with those guys and we took full advantage of it."

Kidd, acquired Tuesday from New Jersey, looked out of sorts at times, committing six turnovers.

"He made some great passes and some of the time guys weren't looking for the ball," Dallas coach Avery Johnson said. "This is kind of like a

mini-training camp. We just don't have a lot of time. But at the same time, we need every practice and every game for everybody to get on the same page and everybody to get used to playing with Kidd."

Kidd has had one full practice and one game-day shootaround with his new team. He finished with eight points and five assists.

"I caused a couple of breakdowns," Kidd conceded. "We can build on this. ... I have some bad habits. I just have to make some adjustments and look at the game. I just need to keep getting the feel of everybody and go to practice tomorrow."

Meanwhile, Paul's dazzling performance on both ends of the floor had the enraptured crowd on its feet, raining down chants of "M-V-P!" for their own All-Star point guard while a banner offering similar sentiments flapped from the upper deck.

See **MAVS**, Page 2B



AP photo/Alex Brandon
New Orleans Hornets forward Peja Stojakovic, left, battles for the rebound with Dallas Mavericks guard Jason Kidd in the first half of the Hornets' in New Orleans, Wednesday.

NFL close to agreement for Walsh's testimony

By MICHAEL MAROT

AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell hopes the NFL is close to an agreement that will allow former New England Patriots employee Matt Walsh to tell the league about the tapes he is said to have made of the St. Louis Rams' walkthrough before the 2002 Super Bowl.

"The lawyers are still talking and we're anxious to speak to him. We're anxious to get an agreement to get him to come forth." Goodell told the Associated Press on Wednesday before the start of the NFL combine.

"We hope to be able to talk to him shortly."

Walsh, now a golf pro in Maui, did video work for the Patriots

when they won the first of their three Super Bowls after the 2001 season. Three weeks ago, the Boston Herald reported that Walsh claimed he had taped the practice before the Patriots' 20-17 upset of the Rams, who were two-touchdown favorites.

NFL lawyers have been meeting with Michael Levy, Walsh's Washington-based lawyer, who is seeking further protection for his client if he tells what he knows.

Levy said last week that the NFL's offer of protection "is highly conditional and still leaves Mr. Walsh vulnerable. I have asked the NFL to provide Mr. Walsh with the necessary legal protections so that he can come forward with the truth without fear of retaliation and litigation."

Goodell has said that Walsh was not interviewed as part of

the NFL's investigation into "Spygate," which involved the NFL confiscating tapes from a Patriots employee who recorded the New York Jets' defensive signals from the sideline during the opening game of the 2007 season.

As a result of that investigation, New England coach Bill Belichick was fined \$500,000 and the team was fined \$250,000 and forfeited its 2008 first-round draft choice.

Six confiscated tapes and other documents pertaining to the Patriots' taping were subsequently destroyed by the league. Goodell has defended the destruction of the tapes.

Last week, Willie Gary, who played seven games for the Rams that season, filed suit in New Orleans accusing the Patriots of fraud, unfair trade practices and engaging in a "pattern of racketeering."

Three fans joined in the suit.

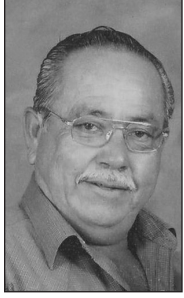
On Tuesday, Hugh Campbell, the Cincinnati lawyer who filed Gary's suit, said he wanted to add at least two new classes to the action: all employees and players of all NFL teams who were illegally videotaped by the Pats, plus all fans who bought tickets to any game that the Pats illegally taped. He also said he wanted to join with Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., who also is looking into the allegations.

Specter told The Associated Press on Wednesday that if Walsh is under subpoena in a suit, it might solve the problem of protection.

"I think now that the lawsuits have been started, that I got the ball rolling, and the plaintiffs' lawyers are picking it up," Specter said.

Obituaries

Francisco 'Frank' Alcantar



Francisco "Frank" Alcantar, 69, died Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2008, at Scenic Mountain Medical Center. Funeral services will be at 10 a.m. Friday at Myers & Smith Chapel with the Rev. Sam Segundo officiating. Burial will be at Mt. Olive Memorial Park. Prayer services will be at 7 p.m. Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel.

He was born April 11, 1938, in Howard County to Elizabeth and Andres Alcantar. He worked for the city of Big Spring for 17 years, and then Fiberglass Systems for seven years. He married Tomasa "Gracie" Samaniego, Aug. 5, 1984, in Big Spring. He was a lifetime resident of Howard County and was a member of the Family Faith Victory Center.

He is survived by his wife, Gracie of Big Spring; three daughters, Sophia Lopez and her husband Johnnie of Midland, Isabel Herrera and her husband Sisto and Cheryl Alcantar, all of Big Spring, four sons: Frank Alcantar Jr. and his wife Rosa, Michael Alcantar and his wife Cassie Cantu, Henry Gusman and his wife Michelle and Bert Gusman, all of Big Spring; 16 grandchildren; 15 great grandchildren; one sister, Guadalupe Ramirez of Big Spring; one brother, Andy Alcantar and his wife Carmen of Midland; and several nephews and nieces.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two brothers, Willie and Eligio Alcantar; and two sisters, Juanita Aguire and Maggie Ramirez.

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

Elaine Merrick Waddill



Elaine Merrick Waddill, 81, of Big Spring, died Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2008, at the Home Hospice House in Odessa. Graveside funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23, 2008, at the Peace Chapel at Trinity Memorial Park with Pastor Marcella Bassett, pastor of God's Rainbow Promises Fellowship Church, officiating.

The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday at the funeral home.

She was born Feb. 16, 1927, in New London, Conn. She married Frank C. Merrick in 1944 in New London, Conn., and he preceded her in death in 1971. She then married Robert Waddill in May 1979 and he preceded her in death in 1993.

She had been a resident of Big Spring since 1973. She was a Baptist.

Survivors include four daughters, Sylvia Booth and partner Nancy Reed, Lorene Merrick, G. Marie Merrick and Marsha Gross and husband Ronald, all of Big Spring; one son, William R. Merrick III of Big Spring; two step-sons, Bill Waddill of Big Spring and Bobby Waddill of Odessa; one step-daughter, Cathy Hammond and husband, Ron of Odessa; one brother, William H. "Bill" Tooker Jr. of Louisiana; two sisters, Patricia Krich and husband David and Lorraine Tooker, all of Pennsylvania; 32 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren; and four great-great-grandchildren.

She was also preceded in death by her parents and one son, Alan Merrick.

The family suggests memorials to the American Cancer Society Memorial Program, in care of Carolyn Brooks, P.O. Box 2121, Big Spring 79721-2121.

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

Hazel Aaron

Hazel Aaron, 89, of Big Spring died Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2008, in an Odessa nursing home. Graveside funeral services will be held at 1 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22, 2008, at the Mount Olive Memorial Park with Bro. Cal Westerhof officiating.

She was born Jan. 11, 1919, in Waxahachie and married Claudie C. Aaron Sr. March 20, 1938, in Marietta, Okla. He preceded her in death May 11, 1990.

Mrs. Aaron came to Big Spring in 1946 and owned Aaron's Beauty Shop for 21 years. She was a Baptist and a member of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Survivors include one son, Claudie C. Aaron Jr. and wife Johnnie of Midland; one daughter-in-law, Linda Aaron of Midland; one granddaughter; one grandson; and four great-grandchildren.

She was also preceded in death by one son, Ron G. Aaron, and one granddaughter.

The family suggests memorials be made to Hospice of Midland, 911 West Texas, Midland 79701, or a favorite charity.

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

Catherine Williams

Catherine Williams, 86, of Lake Jackson, formerly of Big Spring died Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2008, in Lake Jackson. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Police blotter

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

- **CRYSTAL PEEBLES**, 34, of 1508 Wood, was arrested Wednesday on a local warrant and a charge of driving while license invalid - enhanced.
- **CYNTHIA SALAZAR**, 24, of 2310 Runnels, was arrested Wednesday on a local citation and a local capias warrant.
- **CRYSTAL COBLE**, 20, of 1510 Nolan, was arrested Wednesday on four local capias warrants and a charge of possession of marijuana - two ounces or less.
- **ROBERT PHERIGO**, 60, of 505 Frist, was arrested Wednesday on a Taylor County warrant.
- **JOHNNY RODRIGUEZ JR.**, 18, of 1601 Avion, was arrested Wednesday on a charge of minor in consumption of an alcoholic beverage - third or more offense.
- **JUAN M. RODRIGUEZ**, 19, of Apt. 7 Valverde, was arrested Wednesday on a charge of minor in consumption of an alcoholic beverage.
- **TED J. MARTINEZ**, 20, of 1014 Stadium, was arrested Wednesday on three local capias warrants and a charge of driving while intoxicated.
- **GUADALUPE S. CRUZ**, 17, of 402 Burton, was arrested Wednesday on a charge of public intoxication.
- **THEFT OF SERVICE** was reported in the 1000 block of Main Street.
- **POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA - TWO OUNCES OR LESS IN A DRUG FREE ZONE** was reported in the 900 block of Seventh Street.
- **CRIMINAL MISCHIEF** was reported in the 2500 block of Langley.
- **BURGLARY OF A HABITATION** was reported in the 2500 block of Barksdale.
- **ASSAULT BY THREAT** was reported in the 200 block of Circle.

Sheriff's report

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

- Note — Officials with the Howard County Jail reported having 43 inmates at the time of this report.
- **JAMIE LEE ATKINSON**, 39, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a judgment/sentence for theft, unlawfully carrying a weapon, terroristic threat of a family/household; motions to revoke probation for harassment (three counts), terroristic threat, criminal trespass of a habitation; and capias fines for criminal trespass of a habitation.
- **TONY DELAGARZA**, 42, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of driving while intoxicated - open container, third or more conviction.
- **SHANE LEE NEWSOM**, 43, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of public intoxication.

Fire/EMS

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

- **TRAFFIC ACCIDENT** was reported near the intersection of 16th Street and Douglas. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 3900 block of Hamilton. Service refused.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1800 block of N. Highway 87. 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 1800 block of Interstate Highway 20. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 700 block of Interstate Highway 20. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAFFIC ACCIDENT** was reported near the intersection of Eighth Street and Johnson. Service refused.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1800 block of N. Highway 87. One person was transported to SMMC.

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Bulletin Board

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

- TODAY**
- Citizen's Police Academy Alumni Association meets at 5:30 p.m. in the RSVP office at 501 Runnels.
 - League of United Latin American Citizens LULAC Chapter 4791 meets at 5:30 p.m. at the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce. For more information, contact John Ybarra at 264-1628. The public is invited.
 - American Legion Post 506 meets at 6 p.m. Call 263-2084 for more information.
 - Rackley-Swords 379, Vietnam Veterans of America meets at 7 p.m. in the Sparenburg Building, 309 S. Main St.
 - Big Spring Masonic Lodge No. 1340 meets at 7:30 p.m. at 2101 Lancaster.

- FRIDAY**
- Signal Mountain Quilting Guild meets from 9 a.m. until about 3 p.m. at 1019 Nolan St. Call 267-1037 or 267-7281 for more information.
 - AMBUCS meet at noon in La Posada Restaurant.
 - Greater Big Spring Rotary Club meets at noon at the Howard College Cactus Room.
 - Dance at the Senior Center, 1901 Simler, from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

- MONDAY**
- 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 263-1758 213-3598.
 - 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.

Weather

Tonight...Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 30s. West winds 15 to 20 mph shifting to the north around 10 mph after midnight.

Friday...Mostly cloudy. Highs in the upper 60s. Light and variable winds becoming west 10 to 15 mph in the afternoon.

Friday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the upper 30s. Southwest winds around 10 mph.

Saturday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 70s. SouthwestWinds 15 to 20 mph.

Saturday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the upper 30s.

Sunday...Mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 70s.

Sunday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 40s.

Monday...Mostly sunny. Highs around 80.

Monday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the upper 30s.

Tuesday...Partly cloudy. Much cooler. Highs in the upper 50s.

Tuesday night...Partly cloudy. Lows around 30.

Wednesday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 60s.

Lottery

Results of the Lotto Texas drawing Wednesday night: Winning numbers drawn: 16-32-36-41-43-49
Number matching six of six: none.

Results of the Cash 5 drawing Wednesday night: Winning numbers drawn: 4-11-29-33-35
Number matching five of five: none.

The winning Daily 4 numbers drawn Wednesday night by the Texas Lottery, in order: 9-4-6-6. Sum It Up: 25.

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Wednesday night by the Texas Lottery, in order: 2-1-5. Sum It Up: 8.

BIG SPRING HERALD
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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

 By Eddy Pitchford

I thought a large truck slammed into the side of the church building Monday morning. AS you know, the jolt came from the explosion at the refinery. The smoke, sirens, telephone calls and news reports confirmed the enormity of the situation.

When catastrophic events occur, we immediately cry out to God in prayer. We feel a great concern for people, who may have been hurt or killed. We think of the worried family members, who await word about loved ones. We desire safety for those involved in rescue operations.

When crises occur, many things are brought into perspective. We realize that God and people are all that matter. We suddenly have little desire to talk about peripheral and mundane things. Indeed, we are jolted into the great commandments, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

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MAVS

Continued from Page 1B

"It's fun to watch. I was getting pumped up," said Hornets center Tyson Chandler, who at one point early in the fourth quarter was jumping along the sideline, arms raised triumphantly, while waiting to check into the game. "Tonight was unbelievable. The guy was all over the place. He took a personal challenge to go out and just, I mean, he was incredible. I haven't seen anything like that in a while."

While Paul dribbled surgically through Dallas' defense, Peja Stojakovic and Bobby Jackson shot with precision from the perimeter, combining for eight of the Hornets' 10 3-pointers as New Orleans won its fifth straight.

Stojakovic made three 3-pointers and finished with 18 points, while Jackson hit five and wound up with 17 points. David West also scored 18 for New Orleans, despite playing with foul trouble in the second half.

"It was a game we had to come in and be dominant and show everybody what we could do," Jackson said. "We've got so many great shooters and guys who can make plays, when one person gets going it opens up the floor for everybody else."

Dirk Nowitzki led Dallas with 31 points. Reserve Jason Terry scored 14 points and Erick Dampier added 11.

Paul, whose nine steals also tied a franchise high, scored 19 points in the third quarter, when he hit all seven of his shots, including a pair of 3-pointers, to help New Orleans surge to an 11-point lead.

New Orleans began to pull away when Stojakovic hit a jumper and Paul followed with an open 3 after Kidd got tangled up with two other players and fell. Soon after, Paul fed Hilton Armstrong inside for a three-point play, then Paul capped a 10-2 run with a pull-up jumper with just over a second left in the third quarter to give New Orleans a 75-64

lead heading into the final period.

New Orleans widened its lead to 17 in the fourth quarter, when Jackson made two of his 3-pointers and Dallas began to look tired and miss shots.

Neither team led by more than six during an intense but sometimes sloppy first half during which both teams turned the ball over 11 times.

Nowitzki and West each scored 14 points during the first two periods, but both also were called for three fouls.

Kidd made an immediate contribution on Dallas' first possession, feeding Josh Howard for a basket inside. However, he sometimes looked out of synch with his new teammates, who sometimes pulled him aside after unfruitful possessions and pointed out instructions.

Some of Kidd's problems had more to do with Paul, who set a franchise record for steals in a half with seven.

Dallas outshot and out-rebounded New Orleans during the first half, but Stojakovic and Jackson each hit three 3-pointers and Stojakovic turned one of those into a four-point play when he was fouled. Paul then hit a pull-up jumper in the final minute of the second quarter, giving New Orleans a 47-44 halftime lead.

Notes: Shooting guard Morris Peterson returned to the Hornets' starting lineup after missing the Hornets' last three games before the All-Star break. He played only 13 minutes and had two points. ... Attendance was 15,941, about 1,300 short of a sell-out. ... The Mavericks have dropped four in a row on the road and are 12-16 away from home.

Lakers 130, Suns 124

PHOENIX — Kobe Bryant scored 41 points to help the Los Angeles Lakers spoil Shaquille O'Neal's Phoenix debut with a 130-124 victory over the Suns on Wednesday night.

Pau Gasol added 29, including a breakaway dunk that put Los Angeles up 123-117 with

1:15 to play. Lamar Odom added 22 for the Lakers, who won their sixth in a row to move into a tie with Phoenix atop the Pacific Division.

O'Neal scored nine of his 15 points in the final quarter and grabbed nine rebounds in 29 minutes against his old team in his first game in nearly a month. He came to the Suns a week ago in an unexpected trade that sent Shawn Marion and Marcus Banks to Miami. O'Neal played for the Lakers from 1996-2004 and helped lead them to three NBA titles.

Amare Stoudemire had 37 points and 15 rebounds for Phoenix, while Steve Nash added 26 points and eight assists and Leandro Barbosa and Grant Hill each had 17 points.

Cavaliers 106, Pacers 97

INDIANAPOLIS — LeBron James had his second consecutive triple-double, with 31 points, 14 rebounds and 12 assists for the Cleveland Cavaliers.

It was James' sixth triple-double of the season and the 16th of his career, and it helped the Cavaliers end a two-game losing streak. Larry Hughes added 19 points and Zydrunas Ilgauskas had 14 points and 17 rebounds, but Cleveland lost guard Daniel Gibson to a sprained left ankle in the third quarter.

Danny Granger scored 30 points, Troy Murphy 20 and Jeff Foster had nine points and 15 rebounds for the Pacers, who lost their third straight.

Cleveland has won six straight against Pacers, including all three meetings this season. James had a triple-double in their last meeting in Indianapolis — 30 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists — in Cleveland's 111-106 win.

76ers 124, Knicks 84

PHILADELPHIA — The Philadelphia 76ers rarely have had a win so easy, scoring 100 points through three quarters and crushing the New York Knicks.

New York had turnovers on almost

every possession in some stretches, took ugly shots and trailed by 46 points in the third quarter. By the fourth quarter, a few Knicks fans — or more likely 76ers fans poking fun at New York's dismal situation — started the familiar "Fire Isiah!" chant. Coach Isiah Thomas couldn't escape the derisive jeer or another loss down I-95.

Willie Green scored 21 points, Thaddeus Young had a career-high 20 and Andre Iguodala added 19 for the Sixers, who won their sixth straight at home.

Philadelphia's win came hours after the Sixers gave coach Maurice Cheeks a one-year contract extension. While one former NBA point guard-turned-coach celebrated, belittled and beleaguered Thomas could only sit on the Knicks bench and simply stare ahead at this horror.

Jamal Crawford scored 14 points and Eddy Curry had 12 for the Knicks.

Raptors 127, Magic 110

TORONTO — Chris Bosh had 40 points — going 14-for-16 from the field and 11-for-11 from the foul line — and Jose Calderon had 19 points and 13 assists for the Toronto Raptors.

Bosh made 11 of his first 12 shots and even made a rare 3-pointer in the third quarter, struggling to contain a smile as he retreated back down court. Bosh is 3-for-6 from 3-point range this season.

Carlos Delfino came off the bench to score 23 for Toronto, including five 3-pointers. Jamario Moon had 17 points and 11 rebounds, and Anthony Parker scored 10.

Dwight Howard led Orlando with 37 points and 15 rebounds, going 13-for-16 from the field and 11-for-15 from the free-throw line. Rashard Lewis and Hedo Turkoglu each finished with 16, Jameer Nelson had 13 and Maurice Evans 12.

Bucks 103, Pistons 98

MILWAUKEE — Michael Redd scored 27 points and Andrew Bogut continued his tear with 14 points and 14 rebounds as the Milwaukee Bucks snapped a four-game losing streak.

Milwaukee, which avoided extending a season-high losing skid, also snapped a streak of four straight setbacks to Detroit, including a pair of embarrassing losses this season by an average of 35.5 points.

The Pistons, leading the Central Division at 39-15 and still 19 games ahead of cellar-dwelling Milwaukee, finally came on in the final four minutes after trailing by as many as 21 in the second half.

Rasheed Wallace, who finished with 21 points on 5-of-10 shooting from 3-point range, hit four 3s in the final 2:20 to nearly bring the Pistons back, but Milwaukee saved itself by hitting 10 of 12 free throws in the span.

Nets 110, Bulls 102, OT

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Marcus Williams, in his first game as Jason Kidd's temporary replacement at point guard, combined with Richard Jefferson for New Jersey's first 10 points of overtime.

Vince Carter led the Nets with a season-high 33 points, though

appeared to be grabbing at his hamstring as the game ended. But Williams and Jefferson dominated the overtime on both ends of the floor, helping the Nets to their 13th straight home victory over the Bulls.

Williams scored a season-best 25 points and had a big steal in overtime. Jefferson finished with 24 points and added a big blocked shot in the extra session. Both players had six points in overtime.

Joe Smith scored 17 points for the Bulls and Ben Gordon added 14 in an otherwise poor performance.

Warriors 119, Celtics 117

OAKLAND, Calif. — Baron Davis hit a 20-foot jumper with 0.3 seconds to play, and Golden State sent the NBA leaders to their second straight loss since Kevin Garnett's return.

Monta Ellis scored 12 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter, and Davis capped his 29-point performance with his latest incredible late-game heroics. Al Harrington added 22 points and 12 rebounds for the Warriors.

Paul Pierce scored seven of his 23 points in the final 1:38 to rally Boston, including two free throws with 6.5 seconds left. The Warriors turned over the game to Davis, who dribbled casually to the right side of the key before draining a fallaway jump shot.

Ray Allen hit six 3-pointers while scoring 32 points for the Celtics, and Garnett had 17 points and 15 rebounds while playing 31 minutes in his return from a strained abdominal muscle.

HAWKS

Continued from Page 1B

Garcia and Meghan Vaughan. However, Ranger would get only two more runners on base after that inning.

Meanwhile, Howard added to its lead with Krista Chesworth crossing the plate after a wild pitch in the bottom of the fourth to make the score 4-2. The Hawks picked up their last two runs in the fifth inning. Corbin led off the inning with a triple down the third-base line and scored after Lindamood executed another bunt, allowing Corbin to score on a suicide squeeze.

Moreno scored Howard's final run after crossing the plate on a fielder's choice ball hit by Leal.

Espinal finished with a complete game, surrendering two earned runs on seven hits, striking out five in the process.

Wednesday was the beginning of a busy week for the Hawks as they'll play two more double-headers Friday and Saturday against conference foes Frank Phillips and Clarendon. According to Raines, starting the stretch with two wins will make the weekend's contests a little less stressful.

"It's great to go into the next four conference

games with two wins," Raines said. "It would be a challenge if we hadn't have won those games." Contact Sports Editor

Jonathan Hull by calling 263-7331, ext. 237, or by e-mailing him at sports@bigspringherald.com.

In Sunday's Big Spring Herald



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American Profile

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HOWARD COUNTY BIBLE CLASS BOARD

Take Note



The board of directors for the Howard County Bible Class are (left to right) Carl Johansen, treasurer; Bob Underwood, vice president; Sandra Logback, secretary; Murray Murphy, president; Pat Simmons, historian; and Hays Stripling Jr., financial secretary.

• Every church is invited to attend the associational evangelism rally set for 6:30 p.m. Sunday in the Big Spring Municipal Auditorium. Evangelist-entertainer David Crain will be the featured speaker. A nursery will be provided at East Fourth Street Baptist Church. Plan on attending and bringing a friend.

• The Howard County Youth Horseman Club is sponsoring an equine shot clinic from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 1, at the HCYHC arena on the Garden City Highway. Brock Veterinarian Clinic of Lamesa is providing the services. You do not have to be a member to participate. Call (432) 599-2934 if you have questions.

• 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 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.

ALON

Continued from Page 1A

lunch to the Alon employees — there are 150 of them (employees) — through this Friday, as well as through Wednesday of next week," said ValVerde. "If there's a business that's interested, or if there are two businesses that want to join together, they can be a part of this. All they have to do is give us a call. We have information we can fax you on what needs to be done and how it needs to be

done. We'll be glad to help anyone interested in being involved in this effort."

An explosion ripped through the Big Spring Refinery at approximately 8:15 a.m. Monday, sending a shock wave through the surrounding communities.

Five injuries were reported as a result of the explosion, according to Blake Lewis, spokesperson for Alon USA. They include one Alon employee, a trio of contractors and a motorist who was struck by debris while traveling on Interstate Highway 20.

ValVerde said conditions for the employees working to clean up and repair the facility are less than ideal.

"The Union building is just jam-packed with computers, people working and people on the phones," said ValVerde. "It's certainly not a cafeteria. A lot of the guys have to grab a sandwich and go outside and sit in the back of their pickup and eat, and from there they have to go back to work.

"They're not getting an hour for lunch. They aren't getting 30 minutes for lunch. They have to pick up a hamburger —

we offered hamburgers today, along with Dell's Cafe — eat and get right back to work."

ValVerde said efforts are ongoing to provide meals over the weekends, as well.

"Suzie Teeters, who is with Howard College, is currently contacting the churches," said ValVerde. "We're hoping they can feed the employees on the weekends. These employees are going to be working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If we can provide just one meal, it's worth it.

"This is just good will. Alon has been the pillar of our com-

munity, and that pillar has shifted, kind of fallen over. Now it's time for the community to get out there and rally and support the employees — the people who live here in Howard County and Big Spring — who spend their money here. We need to support them, even if it's just one meal."

For more information on the effort, contact the Chamber office at 263-7641.

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

CITY

Continued from Page 1A

things in mind. I'm not sure if this is the time to really talk about them, though," said Huckabee. "I came to Big Spring in the latter part of 1960, and I feel like things could be

run a lot better than they are being run now. For starters, we need more input from the community. That's for certain."

Huckabee, who owns Huck's Automotive, will have to get by incumbent council member Staulcup before he can begin implementing changes.

Staulcup, who filed to run for re-election Feb. 12, said she wel-

comes the competition.

"I wish him well. If he's interested in serving the people of the district, he's to be congratulated," said Staulcup.

When asked if she hesitated to run for re-election after almost six years in office, Staulcup said there was little doubt.

"Not really," she said with a smile. "I thoroughly enjoy serv-

ing the people of Big Spring. Every so often you succeed with something, and that's very gratifying. It makes all the work worth it. So, there was never much doubt in my mind that I'd run again."

Also up for election this May will be the District 1 seat on the council, which is currently held by Stephanie Horton, who

has indicated she plans to run for re-election but has yet to file with city offices. No challengers have filed to run for the office at this time.

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

ISD

Continued from Page 1A

Big Spring Independent School District will elect two trustees this year. The District 1 seat currently held by Irene Galan, and the District 6 seat held by Board President Alan Partee are up for election, BSISD Business Manager Debbie Green said.

Galan and Partee have both filed for re-election. Both seats will be for three-year terms.

Candidates can file for the election from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday at the district business office on 11th Place.

All three incumbents have filed for re-election to the Howard County Junior College District Board of Trustees, officials said.

At-large seats currently held by Dr. Charles

Warren, John Freeman and Marie Ethridge are up for election this year. Warren, Freeman and Ethridge have filed for additional six-year terms, said Steve Smith, assistant to the college president.

Candidates for the HC board may file for the election between 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. in the college president's office in the administration building.

In Coahoma, three at-large seats are up for election, said Administration Secretary Judy Dobbs.

Three-year seats currently held by Dale Coates and Mike Blissard will be contested. In addition, an election will be held to fill the unexpired term of the seat vacated by John Wayne Metcalf, who recently resigned.

No candidates have filed in Coahoma as of Wednesday, Dobbs said, adding they may do so from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Monday through Friday in the administration building.

Forsan ISD will elect three trustees in May. At-large seats currently held by Beckie Wash, Marty Whetsel and Dale Humphreys will be decided, although no candidates had filed as of Wednesday.

Administration Secretary Judy Park said candidates may file at the administration building between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Stanton ISD voters will elect three trustees this spring — three-year terms in Districts 3 (currently held by Valerie Smith) and 4 (in which Todd Smith is the incumbent) and a one-year term in District 7, currently held by Reggie Franklin.

No candidates have filed as of Wednesday. Persons interested in the election

may file between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at the business office, Business Manager Brad Holland said.

Two trustees will be elected by Sands CISD voters in May. At-large seats currently held by Martin Nichols and Robin Barraza will be decided, although no candidates have filed as of Wednesday, officials said. Filing hours are from 8

a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday in the school's business office, Superintendent Wayne Blount said.

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

ald.com.

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

24th & Johnson 267-8288

Francisco "Frank" Alcantar, 69, died Tuesday. Funeral Services will be at 10:00 AM Friday at Myers & Smith Chapel with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park. Prayer Services will be at 7:00 PM Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Catherine Williams, 86, died Wednesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

CINEMARK
The Best Seat in Town

6650 **CINEMA 4**

1801 East FM 700 (432) 263-2232

ADULT MATINEE BEFORE 6PM \$4.00 / ADULT \$8.00 / CHILD / \$4.00

- ◆ FOOL'S GOLD (PG-13) 4:30 PM 7:00 PM
- ◆ JUMPER (PG-13) 5:00 PM 7:30 PM
- ◆ JUNO (PG-13) 4:50 PM 7:20 PM
- ◆ THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES (PG) 4:40 PM 7:10 PM

VALID 2/18/08 THRU 2/21/08
ADVANCE TICKET SALES • NO PASSES-NO SUPERSAVERS
Showtimes available at cinemark.com

Dragon China Buffet
1300 Gregg 268-8888


\$1.00 Off Per Adult
.50 Off Per Child

Up to 10 People
(NOT FOR CARRYOUT)

EXP. 2/29/08

Come to **FREE ADMISSION**
Children's Dental Fair

Presented by:
Howard College Dental Hygiene Dept.



Saturday-February 23
10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Kids bring your old toothbrush and receive a new one

Lots of Fun - games, popcorn, treats, stickers, door prizes and more!

HOWARD COLLEGE
1001 Birdwell Lane
Dental Hygiene Clinic - Horace Garrett Building

DWI

Continued from Page 1A

"Even though it was a house that he hit, it's still hit and run," said Everett. "It's the same as if he hit another car and then got out and ran. However, the driving while intoxicated charge

is more serious, and that's what he's being charged with."

Everett said the extent of the damage to the home is not known at this time.

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

PLANT EXPLOSION Personal Injury and Wrongful Death Claims

Patricia M. Davis
Attorney At Law


3334 Richmond Ave.,
Suite 206
Houston, TX 77098
(713) 621-2552 - Phone
(713) 520-0363 - Fax

Rainbow Connection

Stevi, Good Luck At Rainbow Connection!




**Good Luck
and
Lots of Love
Kinsey and Danzation**



Mom, Dad, Katie and Cade

Miss Stevi,
Your commitment to this group is unbelievable. The many number of hours you spend with us is greatly appreciated!
Good Luck Danzation!
We are very proud to be a part of such a wonderful team!
Chloe B. and Family

**Show'em Your Star Potential
Kinsey**




**With Love,
Mary, Chrissie, Jim & J.B.**


Lots of Love Kinsey
from
Nacogdoches
We're Proud Of You
Little Gran and Grandpa



**Love,
Mom & Dad
Alexandria, Nonna
& Paw Paw**




**Good Luck to
Kinsey
My Little Dancer**




Love Mimi

**Best Of
Luck To
The
Sweetest
& Most
Special Girl
In The
World.**



**Love,
Granny**

Mrs. Stevi,



What a wonderful job you've done AGAIN. We can't tell you enough what a great teacher, choreographer, friend & role model you are for our child. We appreciate all your hard work & long hours.

♥ Shane, Karen & Stevi

**San Antonio
Here We Come!**

Stevi, it's time to let all that hard work pay off.




We ♥ You & Could Not Be Any More Proud.

**Best Of Luck
Mom & Dad**

**Mady
"Rocks Our
World"**

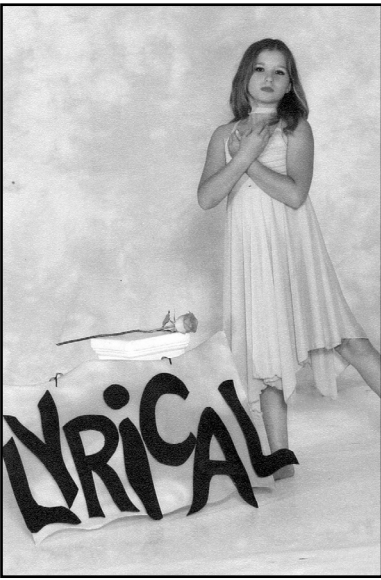
Good Luck at
Rainbow
Connection in
San Antonio



**Love,
Mom, Dad, Alexandria
Nonna & PawPaw**

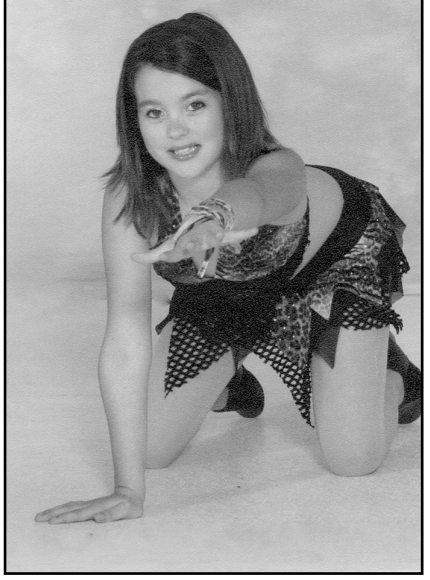
**Kiss Kiss
to
Mady**

Good Luck at
Rainbow
Connection in
San Antonio



**Love,
From Your Family**

**Good Luck
At
Competition
We Are
So Proud
Of You
Bailee**

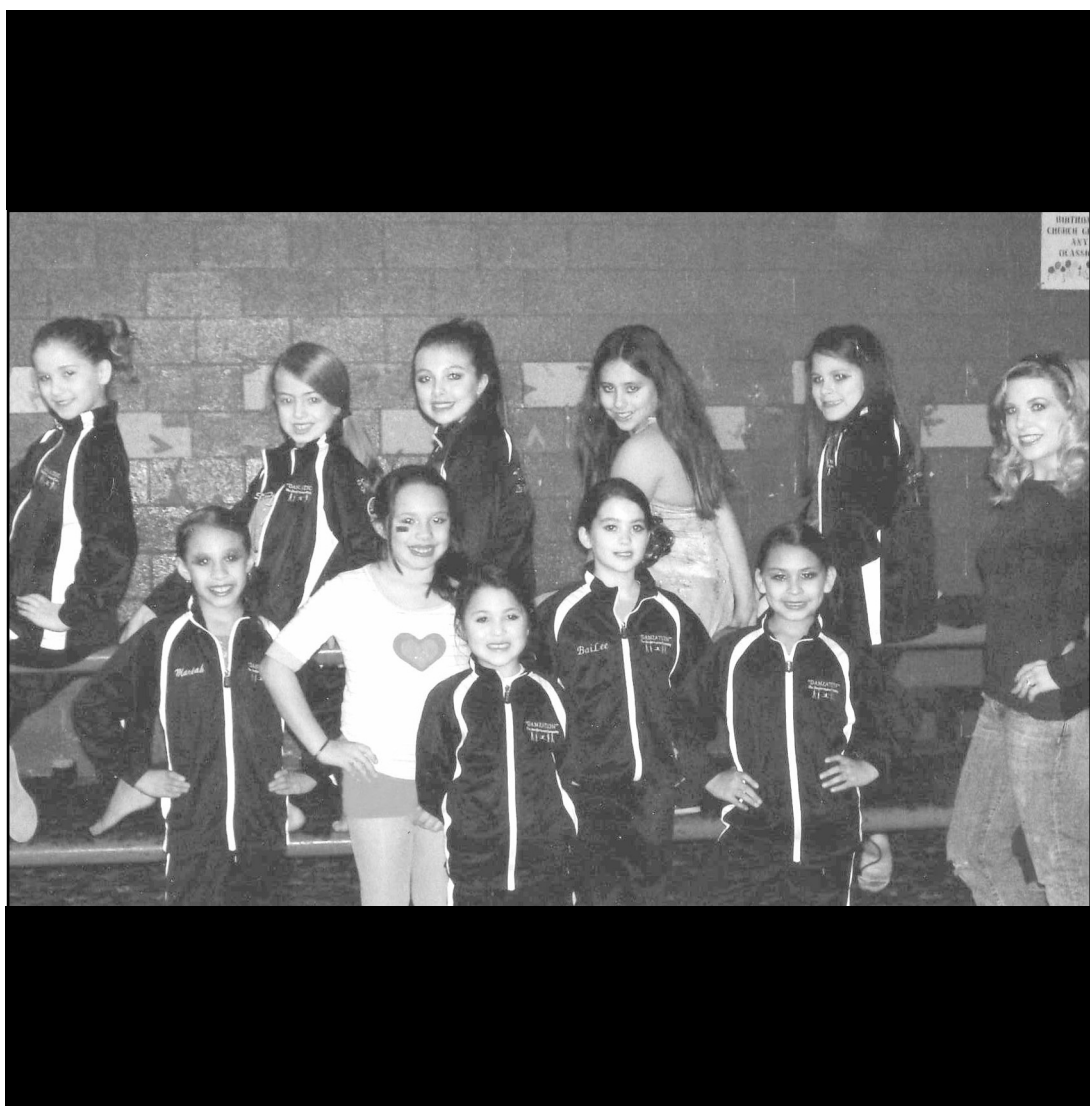


**Love -
Dad, Mom, Landon, Bentley,
Mimi, Papa and Family**

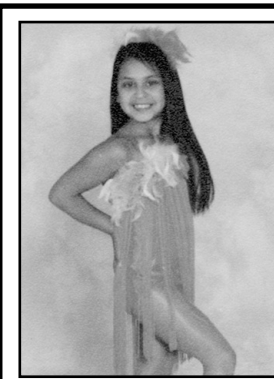
San Antonio, Texas

Saturday, Feb. 23, 2008

Sunday, Feb. 24, 2008



Chloe Bustamante
Alyssa Deanda
Mady Gartman
Bailee Grant
Megan Magallanes
Destiny Mata
Mariah Sarmiento
Lauren Smith
Bergan Trevino
Stevi Ward
Kinsey Wash



**Good Luck
Destiny Mata**

From Your
Ampa Tyky

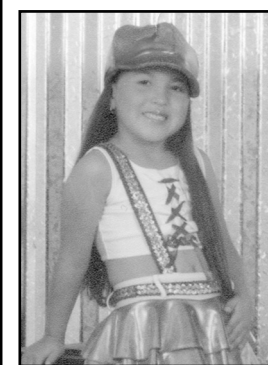
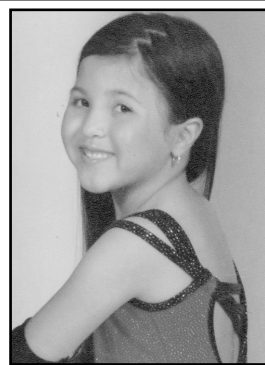
8913

*I'm so proud
of your accomplishments
in Dallas.*

**Good Luck In
San Antonio.**

Love, "Granny"

8879



Congratulations on getting a
gold in Dallas on your solo.

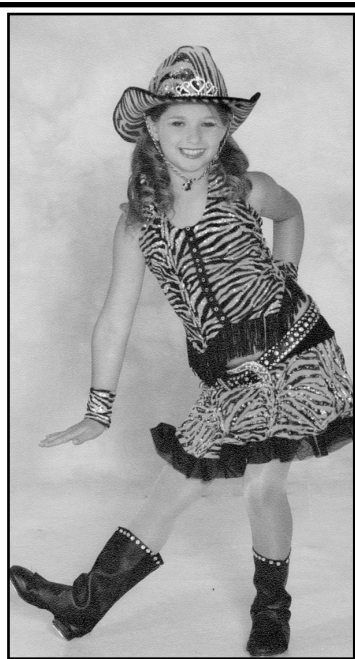
**Let's Do It Again In
San Antonio**

We Love You,
Mommy And Daddy

8880

**Mady
"Rocks Our
World"**

Good Luck at
Rainbow
Connection in
San Antonio



Love,
Mom, Dad, Alexandria
Nonna & PawPaw

8880

Seek your way to the top
and knock-em dead in
San Antonio!!



We Love You.
Aunt Anna, Pa & Great Granny

8887

Dear Danzation Girls,

*I am very proud of each
of you and know you will do
awesome. Let's go pump it up
and rock the show!*

**Dancingly,
Miss Stevi**

8917

To our wonderful
daughter....Miss Stevi,

From Big Spring to
the Big City, Steal the
show like you
always do.

We are so proud
of you!

Love Always,
Mom & Dad



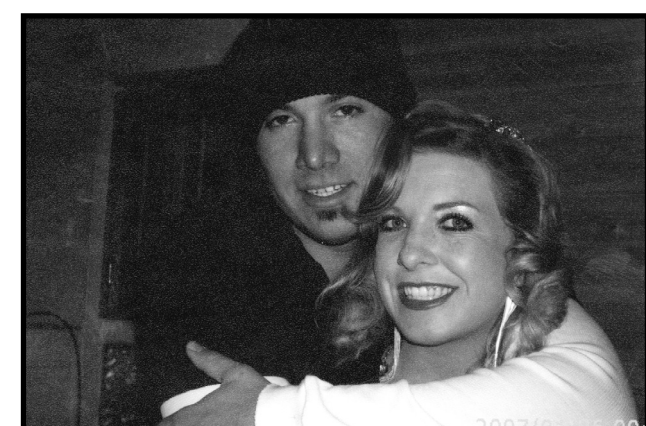
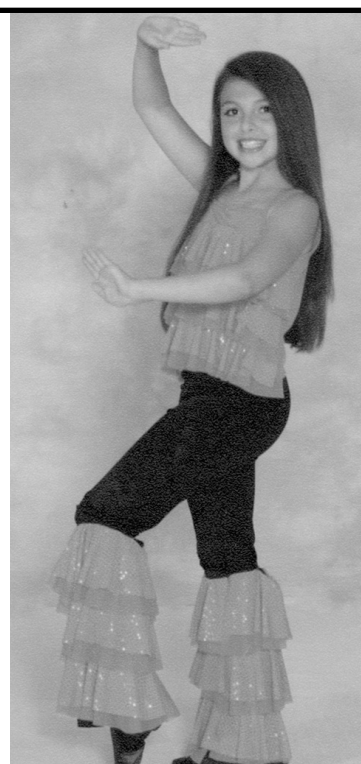
Alyssa,

**We Are So
Proud Of You,**

**We Love You
Very Much!**

Love,
Larry & Mom

8887



Best of Luck to you and
Your girls at Competition

Love,
Your Husband

8915

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

Volunteer chaplains helping all

It's looking for a few good men and women, but it's not the United States Marine Corps. No, it's the local Emergency Services Chaplains Corps program who are looking for persons interested in serving as volunteer chaplains.

The program's coordinators, led by Senior Chaplain Joel Miller, will begin chaplain classes the first of March. The two-week school is scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday the first two weeks of March. The classes are set for 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

While the ESCC's chaplains' tasks are carried out primarily by volunteer pastors, lay people are also eligible to go through training and help serve both the victims of tragic circumstances and emergency services personnel.

Chaplains serve as counselors for members of several different agencies — the Big Spring Police Department, Howard County Sheriff's Department, Big Spring Fire Department, Howard County Volunteer Fire Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Victim Services and Scenic Mountain Medical Center Emergency Room.

"When a policeman has to see a small child who's had his head crushed by a car, he needs to be able to relieve himself of that," Miller said in providing a scenario where chaplains play a pivotal role for emergency responders.

But ESCC chaplains do a great deal more. "We're prepared to do whatever we can to help the families in times of crisis, whether they're emergency personnel or victims," Miller explained. "We make telephone calls for them, help them make funeral arrangements. We've also presided over funerals for the families who don't have pastors of their own. Most of all, we try to show them the love of God and that whatever has happened to them isn't the end of the world. That's one of our main goals.

"Also, law enforcement can't always stay there, but we can. We can stay there until other members of the family arrive. One of my chaplains stayed up until 12:30 a.m. at the hospital with a woman who had just lost her husband in a traffic accident. The next morning, he got up and went back to the hospital to stay with her until her family arrived from Nebraska."

Simply put, ESCC chaplains provide counseling and comfort to anyone needing it — clearly a selfless task — and we here at the *Herald* can think of little that could be needed more in any community.

So, we encourage anyone interested in learning more about the program to do so by contacting Miller at 432-213-1221.

LETTER POLICIES

- The Herald welcomes letters to the editor.
- Limit your letters to no more than 300 words.
- Sign your letter.
- Provide a daytime telephone number, as well as a street address for verification purposes.
- We reserve the right to edit for style and clarity.
- 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

May we simply follow through on what You know to be important, Lord.

Amen

Why I wrote 'On My Honor'

For close to a century, Scouting has planted the values of our founding fathers in the next generation of Boy Scouts, and the next generation of many U.S. leaders. Men like Astronaut James Lovell, Ross Perot, Michael Dukakis, Gerald Ford, James Stewart, William Bennett and U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates were all Eagle Scouts long before they were prominent, successful public figures.



RICK PERRY

And yet the organization that produced so many of our nation's leaders — the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) — has been under cultural and legal attack for close to thirty years by a small but dedicated minority of secularists because the BSA has refused to bend to the winds of political correctness.

And sadly, groups like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have refined their tactics and begun to prevail in courts of law even as their actions are largely seen as appalling in the court of public opinion.

I wrote the book — *On My Honor: Why American Values of the Boy Scouts are Worth Fighting For* — for two main reasons: To espouse the virtues of a movement that has positively shaped the lives of millions of young men, and to expose the virus of secularism that endangers institutions that teach traditional values.

As the culture has increasingly told young people that "moral values are relative," "if it feels good do it," and "look out for number one", it has elevated self as a false idol of worship, and defined our existence as a self-centric pursuit at the expense of serving a higher calling of living for causes greater than self.

Scouting is a rare institution in today's society because it teaches

young men that there are causes greater than self, that there is value in hard work and sacrifice, that it is more important to do what is right instead of what is easy, and that there are obligations and responsibilities we share in a free society, such as: being good stewards of the outdoors and one another's trust.

In fact, there are 12 positive attributes Scouting seeks to instill in young men, known as the Scout law: "A Scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean and Reverent."

Ignoring the enormous positive influence scouting has on our youth, the secularists on the left have aimed to shut the Boy Scouts down on three basic fronts: that BSA requires scouts and scout leaders to believe in God; that it limits adult scout leadership on the basis of sexuality, and; that it limits the participation in troops to boys.

These secularists pursue radical agendas in the name of political correctness, standing up for atheists and militant homosexual groups who would attempt to shut Scouting down if they won't change their membership standards.

While the courts have sided with the BSA on all three issues, it has come at great cost in legal fees. Furthermore, the secularists have refined their attacks and have begun to find success.

Today many suits by the ACLU and their allies focus on public facilities used by Scout troops. Cities that used to offer free park space to Scout troops either charge them for its use or kick them off totally.

The Department of Defense has been sued for making its facilities available.

And in Philadelphia, the city bureaucracy said the Scouts would have to start paying fair market value for their headquarters because the property is city-owned

— this despite the fact that the Scouts built the facility 80 years ago and gave it to the city for free!

The attack on Scouting is part of a larger cultural phenomenon. Secularists seek to drive people of faith from the public square and to sanitize the Pledge of Allegiance, our currency, our government buildings and even the scouting oath from any mention of God. They also seek to open Scout troops to Scout leaders who are openly homosexual.

While I agree with the right of individuals to choose their own sexual orientation and share a "live and let live" view about homosexuality with millions of my fellow Americans, I also don't believe parents enroll their sons in Scouts to get a lesson on human sexuality. They shouldn't be subject to a debate about homosexuality in troop meetings any more than they should the sexual exploits or proclivities of heterosexual scout leaders. Scouting isn't about sex, period.

In waging a culture war, the secularists take a good cause — defending individual liberty — and ruin it by defending license. There is a difference between liberty and license: One is the application of freedom with respect for the responsibilities and boundaries of freedom, the other is the indulgence of self with no regard for the greater good of society.

Scouting teaches young men the responsibilities of freedom. It teaches them the traits of leadership. It instills courage and character. And it guides its subjects along the path to proper citizenship. I hope and pray, in telling the story of the Boy Scouts, I might bring greater awareness to the virtues of the Scouting movement and the battle it must win in order to preserve its primacy in the lives of millions of young men.

Rick Perry is the governor of the State of Texas. For more information on his book, go to www.OnMyHonorTheBook.com.

Conservatives, liberals and others

Something is missing in all the intramural debates among different stripes of Republicans this primary season. Bigger-government

Republicans don't seem fully to appreciate the extent to which the differences between conservative Republicans and liberals are about more than policy.

Conservatives and liberals differ not merely over the level of taxation, protection of the unborn, immigration, the war and other issues — though the importance of these disputes cannot easily be overstated.

Admittedly, conservatives view these policy differences as matters of great urgency.

The power to tax is the power to destroy. Abortion kills human beings. Illegal, unregulated immigration jeopardizes our national security, undermines the rule of law, could bankrupt our government and, because of the negligence concerning proper assimilation, would likely radically change the culture.

Successful prosecution of the war on terror, in Iraq and elsewhere, is essential to our national security.

But at an even more fundamental level, conservatives, being sentimental saps, believe — apparently unlike Michelle Obama — that the United States is not only the greatest nation in the world but also that it owes its greatness largely to its Constitution.

Even if liberals were to concede this point, they would probably have different reasons for believing it is so.

They tout their fondness for the Bill of Rights and little else in the document, but even here, close inspection reveals their affinity is selective.

They're definitely all about the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures — to such an extreme that they would extend it to non-citizen enemy combatants.

They also surely fashion themselves as Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Amendment enthusiasts,

with their due process, witness confrontation, jury trial, double jeopardy, self-incrimination and cruel-and-unusual punishment provisions.

But their support gets murkier when it comes to the First, Second, Ninth and 10th Amendments.

They revere the Establishment Clause but are less enamored of the Free Exercise Clause.

They consider themselves free-speech watchdogs but love campus speech codes, the Fairness Doctrine, campaign-finance reform laws and classroom indoctrination.

And I've never heard a liberal wax proudly about federalism or the erosion of states' rights that has accompanied its dilution.

Conservatives, by contrast, not only champion the Bill of Rights — the complete package — but also believe Americans owe our unique liberties to the scheme of governmental power established in the body of the Constitution.

We believe, as did the framers, that the structural limitations on government, like the separation of powers and federalism, are what make possible individual liberties. The pitting against each other of competing levels and branches of government run by imperfect men was designed to deter government from its natural tendency toward absolutism.

That's why conservatives get so exercised about appellate judges who refuse to honor the Constitution as written and insist on rewriting its provisions from the bench.

When they do so, "legislating" certain abhorrent policies from the bench isn't their only sin. They are also tampering with the delicate balance of governmental power that guarantees our freedom.

For example, conservatives couldn't be more passionate about the appointment of judges who would reverse *Roe vs. Wade* because that would hopefully reduce abortions.

But they are also passionate about judges honoring the Constitution's original intent — not because they are mired-in-the-mud fuddy-duddies but because only by honoring that intent will

we be able to restrain the government and maximize our liberties.

Conservatives also see quite clearly the interrelationship between economic and political liberty. Whether or not they've studied Friedrich Hayek's "The Road to Serfdom," they understand that expansive government and socialism — no matter how well meaning, in some cases — are ultimately incompatible with individual liberties.

Big government Republicans, however, evidently don't have the same distrust of governmental power, believing it is an unstoppable force that can't be beaten and so must be joined and harnessed to "conservative" ends.

No matter how smart these intellectuals are, they just don't get it.

If they did, they wouldn't be happily surrendering to anti-constitutional liberals and willingly playing the game on their turf.

Conservatives realize that politics (and the preservation of our liberties) ain't beanbag.

They don't invest their future in the platitudes of "hope," "bipartisanship," or "kumbaya."

In the end, these are just recklessly naive expressions of confidence in the power of government to deliver us from all hardship.

Instead, conservatives believe that government is a necessary evil to establish order and promote the common defense and the like but otherwise must be restrained in order to unleash the power and freedom of the individual.

Conservatives should not be underestimated as mere players in a cynical chessboard game of party politics.

They believe in the power of ideas and will continue to promote their ideas irrespective of the eventual identity of the respective presidential nominees and regardless of how much they are pressured to be silent about first principles.

David Limbaugh is a writer, author and attorney. His book "Bankrupt: The Intellectual and Moral Bankruptcy of Today's Democratic Party" was recently released in paperback.

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THURSDAY

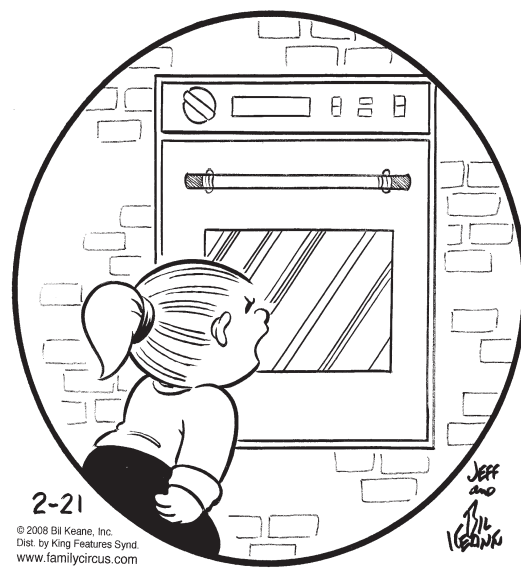
Table with 20 columns (WFAA, KMYD, UNI, KPEJ, KOSA, KTLT, KWES, WTBS, KMLM, KPBT, DISC, AMC, SPIKE, TNT, BET, DISN, ESPN2, ESPN, SCIFI) and 7 rows (6:30, 7:30, 8:30, 9:30, 10:30, 11:30, 12:30) listing various TV programs and their channels.

DENNIS THE MENACE



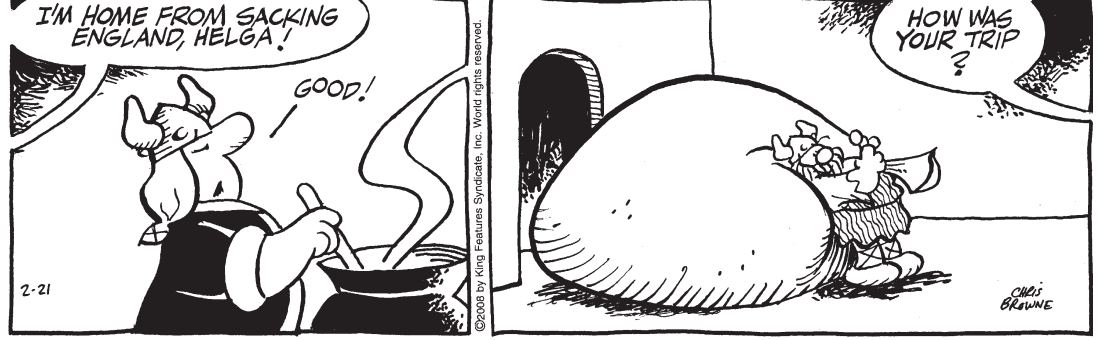
"DON'T WORRY, DAD. I MADE THEM PROMISE NOT TO LAUGH."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

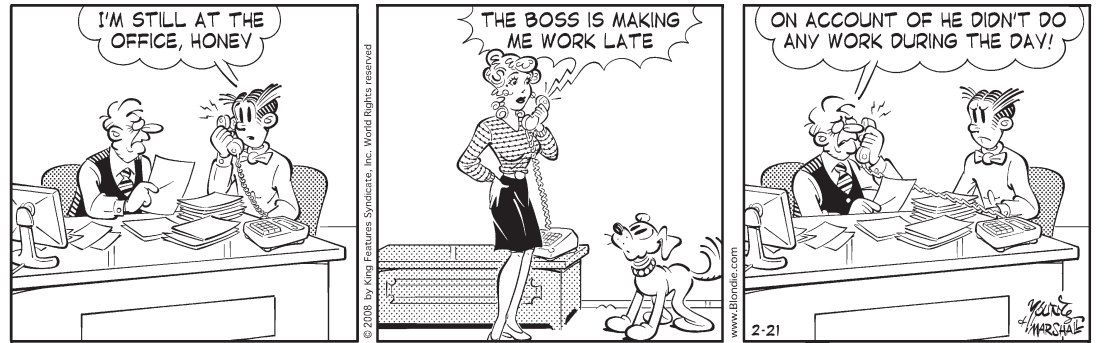


"I can't tell if they're getting brown. We need an HD oven door."

HAGAR



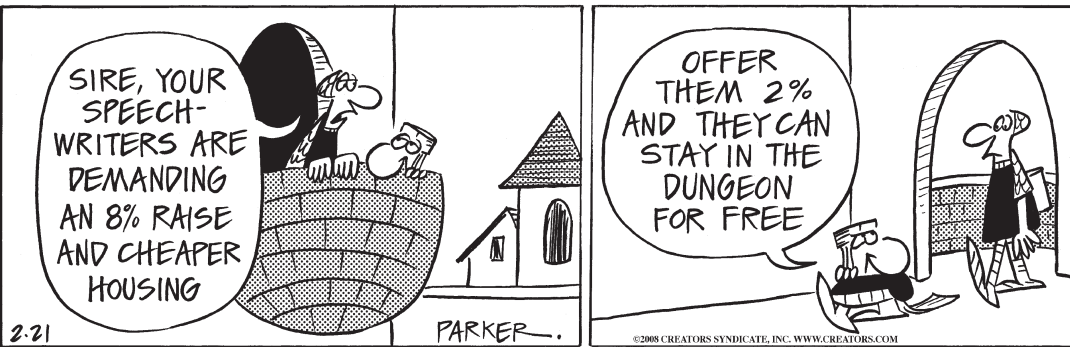
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BC



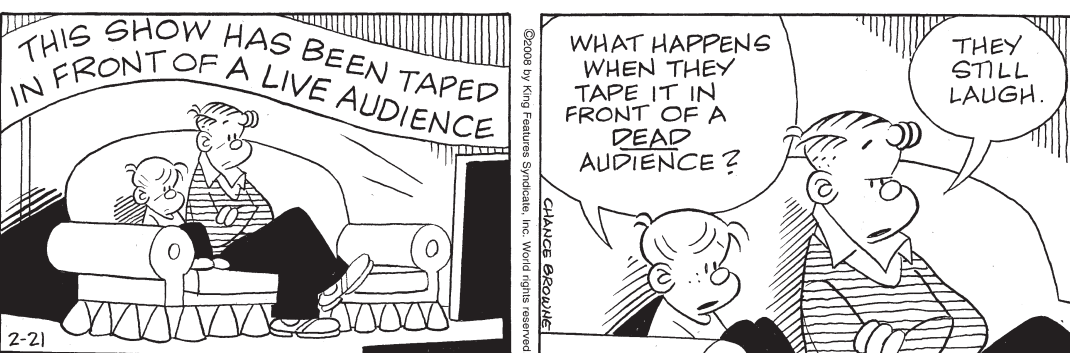
WIZARD OF ID



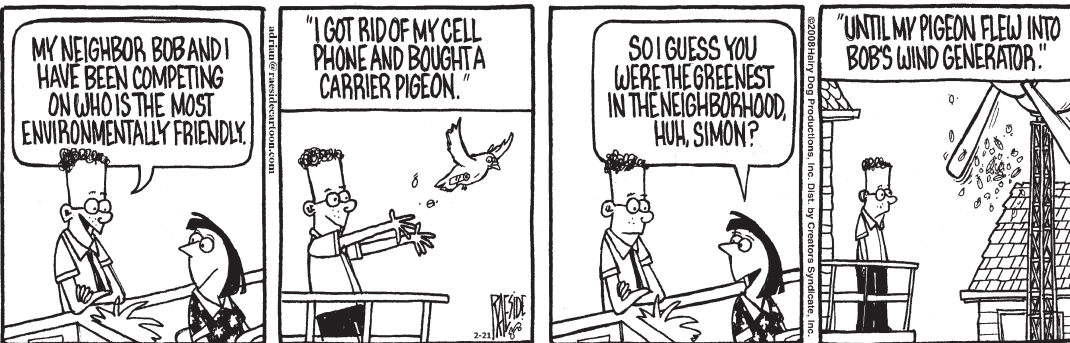
AGNES



HI AND LOIS



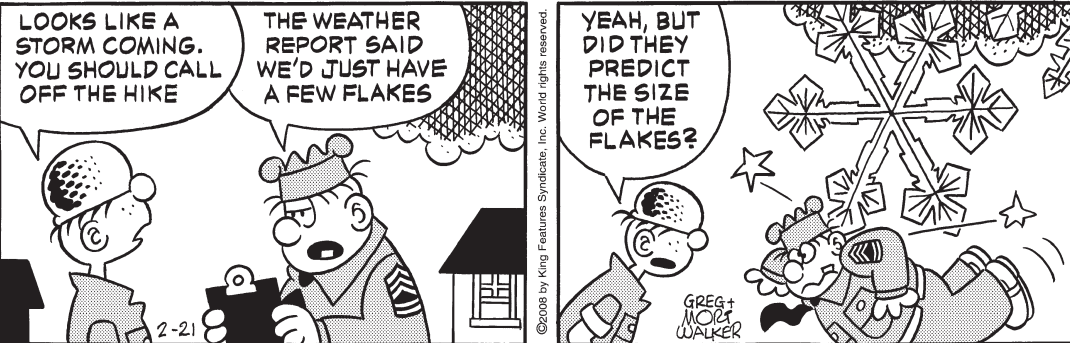
THE OTHER COAST



SNUFFY SMITH



BEETLE BAILEY



This Date In History

Today is Thursday, Feb. 21, the 52nd day of 2008. There are 314 days left in the year. Today's Highlight in History: On Feb. 21, 1965, black Muslim leader and civil rights activist Malcolm X, 39, was shot to death inside the Audubon Ballroom in New York by assassins identified as members of the Nation of Islam. On this date: In 1885, the Washington Monument was dedicated. In 1907, Anglo-American poet W.H. Auden was born in York, England. In 1916, the World War I Battle of Verdun began in France as German forces attacked; the French were able to prevail after 10 months of fighting. In 1947, Edwin H. Land publicly demonstrated his Polaroid Land camera, which could produce a

black-and-white photograph in 60 seconds. In 1972, President Nixon began his historic visit to China as he and his wife, Pat, arrived in Shanghai. In 1973, Israeli fighter planes shot down Libyan Arab Airlines Flight 114 over the Sinai Desert, killing more than 100 people. In 1975, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman were sentenced to 2-1/2 to 8 years in prison for their roles in the Watergate cover-up. In 1995, Chicago adventurer Steve Fossett became the first person to fly solo across the Pacific Ocean in a balloon, landing in Leader, Saskatchewan, Canada. In 2000, consumer advocate Ralph Nader announced his entry into the presidential race, bidding for the nomination of the Green Party. Today's Birthdays: Fashion designer Hubert de Givenchy is 81. Movie director Bob Rafelson is 75. Actress Rue McClanahan is

73. Actor Gary Lockwood is 71. Actor Peter McEnery is 68. Film/music company executive David Geffen is 65. Actor Alan Rickman is 62. Actress Tyne Daly is 62. Actor Anthony Daniels is 62. Tricia Nixon Cox is 62. Sen. Olympia J. Snowe, R-Maine, is 61. Rock musician Jerry Harrison (The Heads) is 59. Actress Christine Ebersole is 55. Actor William Petersen is 55. Actor Kelsey Grammer is 53. Country singer Mary Chapin Carpenter is 50. Actor Jack Coleman is 50. Actor Christopher Atkins is 47. Rock singer Ranking Roger is 47. Actor William Baldwin is 45.

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Answer to previous puzzle

A crossword puzzle grid with the following words filled in: DJED, CUPS, ABDUL, RUDE, ANON, CLOSE, ANNE, VISA, TALE, BEAM, WITH, PRIDE, RAY, HOE, MASTER, LOIN, SHE, ASPIC, NOON, MAIN, STICK, TO, THE, POINT, TREK, RUTS, RANGE, SOD, RENO, POTTER, SUV, JAN, SPLINTER, GROUP, ADORE, EAST, ORCA, NADIR, WISE, BALL, SNAGS, SLED, SLAM.

Newsday Crossword

GREENERY by Daniel R. Stark Edited by Stanley Newman www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS: 1 Nightclub routine, 4 On the ball, 9 Library tome, 14 Amigo of Fidel, 15 Madame Curie, 16 Patio appliance, 17 Relish-tray tidbit, 19 Snug, 20 Cupcake topper, 21 Take to the air, 23 Pops, 24 Flooring pieces, 26 Flooring piece, 29 Sells off, 31 Martinique, par exemple, 32 Figured, 36 Flagpole topper, 38 Makes it, 39 Aquarium performer, 41 Very upset, 42 Breakfast nooks, 43 Blubber, 44 Some tires, 47 Thus, 49 Many-petaled blossom, 50 Mystery writer Paretsky, 54 Bonnie or Clyde, 56 Meat-locker units, 57 Turnpike stop, 59 Window-sill succulent, 62 Maneuvered slowly, 63 Love, in Lombardy, 64 Cent starter, 65 Oater extras, 66 Went off course, 67 Phone's ABC, DOWN: 1 Bitterly pungent, 2 Girl from Baja, 3 Half-hearted, 4 Visibility hindrance, 5 Shakespearean prince, 6 Jackie's second, 7 Was equal to, 8 Irks, 9 Turkish title, 10 Runs slowly, 11 Fame, so to speak, 12 Stein filler, 13 Roguish, 18 Coast Guard off., 22 Suffix meaning "practitioner", 24 Rake tooth, 25 Noted lithographer, 27 Kate's sitcom friend, 28 Cold temperatures, 29 Eastern capital, 30 1990s tennis star, 32 Employee's goal, 33 Blunder, 34 Lawn invader, 35 Model, to begin with, 37 Well-chosen, 39 Primatologist Fossey, 40 Merely, 42 3-D exhibit, 45 PD dispatch, 46 Platter spinner, 48 Flows slowly, 50 Part of RSVP, 51 Cope with change, 52 Pick up a lease, 53 The Jetsons' dog, 55 Ordered, 56 Exceeded the limit, 57 Get-up-and-go, 58 Southeast Asian language, 60 Jones' partner, 61 Poetic preposition.

A crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1 through 67 indicating the starting positions for the words listed in the adjacent list.

Sun Cat

Jaguar XK Convertible quick, nimble, loaded with luxury



The 2008 Jaguar XK Convertible.

The new Jaguar XK has succeeded in achieving the perfect combination of luxury and performance.

Powered by a 300-horsepower 4.2 V-8 engine and mated to a state-of-the-art six-speed automatic transmission, it is quick.

Featuring Jaguar's enhanced Computer Active Technology Suspension (CATS) system that provides optimum balance between ride and handling, it is nimble.

Without question, it is absolutely loaded with luxury amenities and intuitive high-tech comforts.

It is powerful, yet graceful.

Stylish, yet not over the top.

In fact, the only negative I've found during my one-week test drive in the 2008 XK Convertible was that it was too cold to put the top down.

ON THE ROAD



BY NEAL WHITE

Available in coupe or convertible body styles, the four-passenger XK is a remarkable vehicle.

For the 2008 model year, Jaguar has added a

supercharged 420-horsepower XKR version to the lineup.

But let's get back to the new XK Convertible.

If you are a Jaguar fan, it was designed just for you. If you're not, you will be after one test drive.

When it comes to performance, the XK not only lives up to Jaguar's heritage, it exceeds it.

The normally aspirated 4.2-liter V-8 has a 0-60

mph time of 5.9 seconds (6 seconds for the convertible) while the supercharged XKR delivers a 0-60 mph time of 4.9 seconds.

And the sound of the engine is incredible. When you push the button to start the car, it has this low guttural growl that makes me imagine a big cat purring. It's not obtrusive at all. In fact, even when you're giving the car a workout you can still carry on a conversation.

Likewise, handling is exceptional.

Featuring a lightweight yet rigid body, the suspension system is so sophisticated that it measures both pitch and yaw rates as well as steering wheel angle and brake demand to continuously vary damper settings and provide a smooth, level ride — even during aggressive handling.

The rear-wheel drive XK is further enhanced

by traction control and dynamic stability control systems, as well as ABS with electronic brake force distribution.

And yes, the XK is absolutely loaded. In the limited space remaining, I have to talk about the easy to use touch control screen.

This is so user-friendly I don't know why more vehicles aren't using a similar system.

From changing the temperature to the audio system, all you do is touch the appropriate icon on the color monitor located in the center of the dash. There are also redundant controls built into the steering wheel. It's very high-tech, but doesn't require a PhD to operate.

I absolutely recommend the new XK for anyone considering a premium vehicle. It is a must test drive.

Neal White has been covering the automotive industry for more than 15

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

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FUEL: Premium unleaded

SUSPENSION: Sport-tuned with enhanced Computer Active Technology Suspension, fully independent wishbones, coil springs with telescopic dampers, anti-dive geometry providing longitudinal stability and anti-roll bar (XK).

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BRAKES: ABS with yaw control, passive brake booster.

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WIDTH: 81.5 inches

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FUEL TANK: 18.8 gallons

TIRES: 18-, 19- or 20-inch

years and is affiliated with the Texas Auto Writers Association and the Midwest Automotive

Media Association. Comments may be sent to Neal at neal.white@waxa-hachiedailylight.com.

Hand-painted mustangs part of rodeo feel in Houston

By SARAH VIREN

Houston Chronicle HOUSTON (AP) — The cows came first.

Then the boots had their turn.

This year, mustangs will reign.

By the end of this month, a herd of 28 hand-painted horses will go on display across Houston, all part of the pre-rodeo hype organized by the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

The public art part public relations, part charity event is an outgrowth of the 1999 Cow Parade in Chicago, which quickly became a national phenomenon. Two years later, Houston sponsored its first cow parade with local corporations and charities paying artists to decorate fiberglass

bovines. Other cities have organized displays of painted guitars, corn and salmon.

Last year, Houston's rodeo followed suit with larger-than-life cowboy boots scattered around town.

This year, organizers decided on the equally Wild West-themed mustangs.

"The hope is to have them out in the community and just build a little good will, let them know that we embrace our Western heritage in the city," said Charlene Floyd, head of the committee behind the mustang exhibit. A few of the horses will make a showing downtown for a pre-rodeo event Feb. 26, but the rest will be on display during the rodeo at

Reliant Stadium next month.

"This one was on Jay Leno," Houston artist Kermit Eisenhut said, pointing out a picture of one of his boots that Leno, as part of a joke, showed a picture of on his late-night talk show last year.

Eisenhut was working on the exhibit's last mustang, a mare called Towering Bronco, that's sponsored by Hines, an international real estate firm based in Houston. Once completed, the horse will be covered in images of downtown skyscrapers and buildings the corporation helped develop.

Towering Bronco is Eisenhut's 12th mustang. Last year, he made 15 boots and in 2001 completed 14 cows. Usually the

fiberglass forms take about three days to create, he said from his makeshift studio in the corner of a downtown auto body shop.

Eisenhut started painting there after neighbors complained that he was hauling life-size cows in and out of his apartment. From his new location, the 54-year-old artist can pay the shop mechanics to put a shiny, clear car finish on each new piece.

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News in brief

U.S. Navy missile scores pinpoint hit on disabled spy satellite

HONOLULU (AP) — A U.S. Navy cruiser blasted a disabled spy satellite with a pinpoint missile strike that achieved the main mission of exploding a tank of toxic fuel 130 miles above the Pacific Ocean, defense officials said.

Destroying the satellite's onboard tank of about 1,000 pounds of hydrazine fuel was the primary goal, and a senior defense official close to the mission said Thursday that it appears the tank was destroyed, and the strike with a specially designed missile was a complete success.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates ordered the shootdown, which came late Wednesday as he began an eight-day, around-the-world trip on which he likely will face questions about the mission.

The elaborate intercept may trigger worries from some international leaders, who could see it as a thinly disguised attempt to test an anti-satellite weapon — one that could take out other nation's orbiting communications and spy spacecraft.

Within hours of the reported success, China said it was on the alert for possible harmful fallout from the shootdown and urged Washington to promptly release data on the action.

NATO troops say they killed Taliban commanders

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghan and NATO-led troops killed two regional Taliban commanders in southern Afghanistan, and an explosion in the same province claimed the life of a British soldier, officials said Thursday.

"As a result of this successful attack (on the commanders), the Taliban's networks have suffered another severe setback," said Brig. Gen. Carlos Branco, a spokesman for NATO's International Security Assistance Force.

The joint NATO-Afghan forces killed commander Mullah Abdul Matin and his associate, Mullah Karim Agha, in the southern province of Helmand on Monday, the alliance said in a statement.

U.S. will work with new Pakistani government

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush called Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf following his party's loss in parliamentary elections, but the White House says it's up to the Pakistani people to decide the embattled leader's political future.

Bush called the Pakistani president on Tuesday during a flight from Rwanda to Ghana. White House press secretary Dana Perino disclosed the call Thursday but would not reveal what the two leaders discussed.

She says Bush has supported Musharraf all along because he "helped Pakistan on its path to democracy" and has been a good partner in the war against terrorists. She says it is "up to the Pakistani people to decide whether Musharraf retains his position."

President Bush pledges U.S. support to Liberia

MONROVIA, Liberia (AP) — President Bush said Thursday that the United

States is committed to helping restore lives of "hope and peace" to Liberia, a poor African nation that ties its founding and its renewed freedom to America.

Bush landed in Monrovia, the capital city named for President James Monroe. This nation — founded by freed American slaves and ruined by a 14-year civil war that ended in 2003 — is proudly trying to revive itself under a democratic government.

"The U.S. message is we want to help you recover from a terrible period," Bush said.

Liberia is in depressingly poor shape. Many rotted houses look like they're held together by sheer will. Billboards warn against mob violence, rape, corruption and AIDS.

The U.S. government is pumping in money for education, security, construction and disease prevention. Direct U.S. aid has totaled more than \$750 million since the war ended. The president is to announce that the U.S. aid will provide 1 million textbooks to children by the start of the next school year and desks and seating for 10,000 students, White House press secretary Dana Perino said.

Investigators in shooting seeking answers in Baghdad

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal authorities investigating Blackwater Worldwide contractors are returning to Baghdad this week to revisit the scene of a deadly September shooting that left 17 Iraqi civilians dead.

The two-week trip, by eight prosecutors and FBI agents, marks the latest phase in an inquiry that was limited from the start by the government's promise of immunity for Blackwater bodyguards who provided sworn statements about the shootings.

The gunplay in a crowded Baghdad intersection has strained diplomatic relations and raised questions over whether some contractors can operate without legal consequences.

The Justice Department team left Tuesday night for Iraq, where they planned to interview witnesses and gather evidence from the Sept. 16 shooting. The trip was confirmed by several people close to the case who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the investigation.

Clinton needs landslide-size wins to erase Obama's delegate edge

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton must win 57 percent of the remaining primary and caucus delegates to erase Barack Obama's lead, a daunting task requiring landslide-sized victories by a struggling presidential candidate.

Obama's victories in Wisconsin and Hawaii on Tuesday — his ninth and 10th in a row — left him with 1,178 pledged delegates won in primaries and caucuses in The Associated Press' count. Clinton has 1,024.

Another 1,025 remain to be awarded, most of them in contests in 14 states, Guam and Puerto Rico. It takes 2,025 to win the nomination.

Further complicating Clinton's challenge, Obama appears particularly well-positioned to win at least one of the remaining states with ease. Mississippi, with a primary on March 11, fits a pat-

tern of Southern states with large black populations that he has won handily, including South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana.

The rival campaigns maintain their own delegate counts. And while both agree Obama is the leader, they differ on the significance.

Study: Strokes among middle-aged women triple;

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Strokes have tripled in recent years among middle-aged women in the U.S., an alarming trend doctors blame on the obesity epidemic. Nearly 2 percent of women ages 35 to 54 reported suffering a stroke in the most recent federal health survey, from 1999 to 2004. Only about half a percent did in the previous survey, from 1988 to 1994.

The percentage is small because most strokes occur in older people. But the sudden spike in middle age and the reasons behind it are ominous, doctors said in research presented Wednesday at a medical conference.

It happened even though more women in the recent survey were on medicines to control their cholesterol and blood pressure — steps that lower the risk of stroke.

Women's waistlines are nearly two inches bigger than they were a decade earlier, and that bulge corresponds with the increase in strokes, researchers said.

In addition, women's average body mass index, a commonly used measure of obesity, rose from 27 in the earlier survey to 29. They also had higher blood sugar levels.

Pauly Shore countersues neighbor over property damage

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Pauly Shore is suing neighbor Wes Craven for creating a nightmare on his property in a dispute between the two that began last year.

Shore claimed that a landslide on his Hollywood Hills property in December 2006 was caused by Craven's failure to properly maintain vegetation and landscaping on a hillside on his property, according to a lawsuit filed Monday in Superior Court.

The comedian also alleged that Craven, the director of "A Nightmare on Elm Street" and the "Scream" series, did not eradicate rodents burrowing in the hill and made improvements on his property that "changed the geology, topography and drainage," according to the lawsuit.

A call to Craven's attorney Wednesday was not returned.

Oil prices hover above \$100 a barrel after hitting record overnight

SINGAPORE (AP) — Oil prices held near \$100 a barrel Thursday after hitting a record overnight as investors poured more cash into crude and other commodities as a hedge against inflation.

Oil futures on Wednesday pushed briefly past \$101 a barrel after the U.S. Federal Reserve lowered its forecast for U.S. economic growth this year, convincing energy investors that the central bank will slash interest rates further.

"Investors are going into commodities for a safe haven, because they think commodities may perform better than equities and also may be hedges against inflation," said Victor Shum, an energy analyst with Purvin & Gertz in Singapore.

Lower interest rates can help the economy but tend to weaken the dollar, encouraging investors to shift funds into hard assets like gold or oil as a safeguard against inflation. After oil rallied above \$100 a barrel, precious metals such as gold and silver also hit records.

The possible rate cut is also viewed as hopeful of bolstering a flagging U.S. economy, which would assuage fears of weakening crude demand.

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Group: Economic slowdown to continue

NEW YORK (AP) — A gauge of future economic activity dropped for the fourth consecutive month in January, a business group said Thursday, suggesting the U.S. economy could weaken further in the near future.

The Conference Board said its index of leading economic indicators fell 0.1 percent last month, after a revised 0.1 percent drop in December and a 0.4 decline in November.

The index is designed to forecast the direction of the nation's economy over the next three to six months. Persistent, pronounced declines over several months could signal a recession is in store.

With the decline, the

leading index has fallen 2.0 percent over the last six months, the biggest drop since early 2001. Weakness among the components that make up the index has also been more widespread in recent months.

"What we're seeing is that it's very, very close to capitulation," said Brian Bethune, an economist with Global Insight.

The Conference Board report comes a day after the Federal Reserve released its updated forecast for slower economic growth, higher unemployment and higher inflation. The dismal outlook for the year was despite the central bank's aggressive interest rate cuts in

January.

Also Thursday, the Labor Department said the number of newly laid off workers filing claims for unemployment benefits fell last week, but the larger-than-expected drop was seen as only a temporary improvement.

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CLIP FOR BONUS

Obama wins Democrats Abroad global primary

WASHINGTON (AP) — Barack Obama won the Democrats Abroad global primary in results announced Thursday, giving him 11 straight victories in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

The Illinois senator won the primary in which Democrats living in other countries voted by Internet, mail and in person, according to results released by the Democrats Abroad, an organization sanctioned by the national party.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton has not won a nominating contest since Super Tuesday, more than two weeks ago.

More than 20,000 U.S. citizens living abroad voted in the primary, which ran from Feb. 5 to Feb. 12.

Obama won about 65 percent of the vote, according to the results released Thursday.

Voters living in 164 countries cast votes online, while expatriates voted in person in more than 30 countries, at hotels in Australia and Costa Rica, at a pub in Ireland and at a Starbucks in Thailand. The results took about a week to tabulate as local committees around the globe gathered ballots.

"This really gives Americans an opportunity to participate," said Christine Schon Marques, the international chair of Democrats Abroad.

There is no comparable primary among Republicans, though the GOP has several contests this weekend in U.S. territories, including party caucuses in Puerto Rico Sunday.

The Democrats Abroad controls seven pledged delegates at the party's national convention this summer.

However, the group's system of dividing the delegates is unique, and could create an anomaly in which Obama and Clinton end up with fractions of delegates.

The party will send 14 pledged delegates to the convention, each with a half vote.

The primary was used to determine nine people, or the equivalent of 4.5 delegates. Obama won 2.5 and Clinton won two, according to Schon Marques.

The Democrats Abroad will hold a global convention in Vancouver, Canada, in April to select the other five people who will attend the convention. They will represent the remaining 2.5 votes.

The system creates the

possibility that Obama and Clinton could each end up with an extra half vote at the convention, Schon Marques said.

Democratic parties in U.S. territories use similar systems, in which

they send twice the number of delegates, giving them each a half vote. But their systems are designed to ensure that that candidates do not end up with fractions of delegates.

su | do | ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

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

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

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Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

Heads I Win, Tails You Lose

South dealer. Both sides vulnerable.

NORTH
 ♠ A Q 9 6 2
 ♥ A Q
 ♦ 8 5
 ♣ J 7 4 3

WEST
 ♠ —
 ♥ J 10 9 8 5 3 2
 ♦ Q J 4
 ♣ A 10 8

EAST
 ♠ 7 5 4
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ 10 7 6 3 2
 ♣ K 9 2

SOUTH
 ♠ K J 10 8 3
 ♥ 7 4
 ♦ A K 9
 ♣ Q 6 5

The bidding:
 South 1♠ West 2♥ North 3♠ East Pass

Opening lead — jack of hearts. When either or both defenders have been in the bidding, declarer usually finds it much easier to gauge how their cards are divided. However, all such evidence is presumptive, not conclusive, and should be ignored when there are more reliable guidelines to follow.

For example, take this deal where South went astray. West led a heart, and declarer, mindful of West's overcall, finessed the queen. East took the king and returned a diamond, and

South later lost three club tricks for down one.

It is true that on the bidding West was far more likely than East to have the king of hearts. To that extent, declarer was unlucky to lose the finesse. However, since South could have assured the contract 100 percent by playing the ace of hearts from dummy at trick one, it was wrong of him to have risked the finesse.

After taking the ace of hearts, declarer draws trumps, cashes the A-K of diamonds and ruffs a diamond in dummy to bring about this position:

North
 ♠ 9
 ♥ Q
 ♦ J 7 4 3

West
 ♥ 10 9 8
 ♣ A 10 8

East
 ♥ K
 ♦ 10 7
 ♣ K 9 2

South leads the heart queen, and it doesn't matter where the king is actually located. Whoever wins must return a club or yield a ruff-and-discard. Either way, declarer loses only a heart and two clubs.

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McCain says report suggesting inappropriate relationship 'not true'

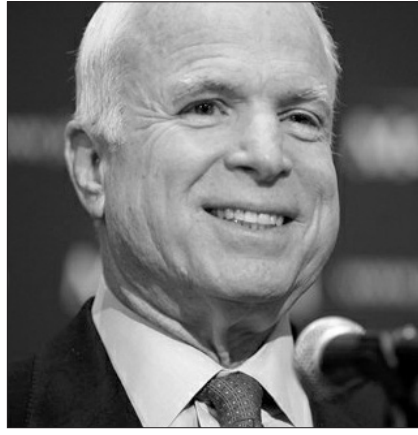
By LIBBY QUAID

Associated Press Writer

TOLEDO, Ohio — John McCain emphatically denied a romantic relationship with a female telecommunications lobbyist Thursday and said a report by *The New York Times* suggesting favoritism for her clients is "not true."

"I'm very disappointed in the article. It's not true," the likely Republican presidential nominee said as his wife, Cindy, stood beside him during a news conference called to address the matter.

"I've served this nation honorably for more than half a century," said McCain, a four-term Arizona senator and former Navy pilot. "At no time have I



AP Photo/Kiichiro Sato
Republican presidential hopeful, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., speaks at a news conference Wednesday in Columbus, Ohio.

ever done anything that would betray the public trust."

"I intend to move on," he added.

McCain described the woman in question, lobbyist Vicki Iseman, as a friend.

The newspaper quoted anonymous aides as saying they had urged McCain and Iseman to stay away from each other prior to his failed presidential campaign in 2000. In its own follow-up story, *The Washington Post* quoted long-time aide John Weaver, who split with McCain last year, as saying he met with lobbyist Iseman and urged her to steer clear of McCain.

Weaver told the *Times* he arranged the meeting before the 2000 campaign after "a discussion among the campaign leadership" about Iseman.

McCain said he was unaware of any such conversation, and denied that his aides ever tried to talk to him about his interactions with Iseman.

"I never discussed it with John Weaver. As far as I know, there was no necessity for it," McCain said. "I don't know anything about it," he added. "John Weaver is a friend of mine. He remains a friend of mine. But I certainly didn't know anything of that nature."

His wife also said she was disappointed with the newspaper.

"More importantly, my children and I not only trust my husband, but know that he would never do anything to not only disappoint our family, but disappoint the people of America. He's a man of great

character," Cindy McCain said. The couple smiled throughout the questioning at a Toledo hotel.

The published reports said McCain and Iseman each denied having a romantic relationship. Neither story asserted that there was a romantic relationship and offered no evidence that there was, reporting only that aides worried about the appearance of McCain having close ties to a lobbyist with business before the Senate Commerce Committee on which McCain served.

The stories also allege that McCain wrote letters and pushed legislation involving television station ownership that would have benefited Iseman's clients.



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