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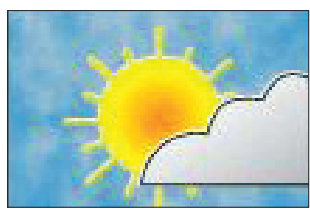
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H BIG SPRING HERALD

MONDAY

DECEMBER 29, 2008



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Robberies mark weekend

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

A trio of aggravated robberies during the holiday weekend have investigators with the Big Spring Police Department searching for suspects, as two local motels and a lo-

cal woman were targeted by people with similar descriptions.

According to BSPD Lt. Terry Chamness, the first report came Christmas Day from the Quality Inn in the 300 block of Tulane.

"A male suspect approached

the motel clerk wanting a room for the night," said Chamness. "At that time he produced what appeared to be the barrel of a gun and demanded money. The clerk complied and the suspect made away on foot."

The suspect was described

as a Hispanic male with a full beard, wearing a black beanie hat, a black jacket and blue jeans.

No injuries were reported as a result of the crime, and the assailant made away with an undetermined amount of cash, according to police of-

ficials.

The second robbery, according to Chamness, occurred in the parking lot of the 7-Eleven convenience store located on the corner of Owens and Third Street the following

See **ROBBERIES**, Page 3



AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

Lelia LaRue shows her father, George Francis, a copy of the morning newspaper with President-elect Barack Obama on the front page, at a Sacramento, Calif. nursing home. Francis, the nation's oldest man who lived through both world wars, man's first walk on the moon and got to vote for the first black president, has died. He was 112.

Oldest man in the states dies in Sacramento at 112

By **JASON DEAREN**
Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO—George Francis, the nation's oldest man, who lived through both world wars, man's first walk on the moon and the election of the first black president, has died. He was 112.

Francis died Saturday of congestive heart failure at a nursing home in Sacramento, his son, Anthony Fran-

cis, said Sunday.

"He lived four years in the 19th century, 100 years in the 20th century, and 8 years in the 21st century. We call him the man of three centuries," said the younger Francis, 81.

UCLA gerontologist Dr. Stephen Coles, who maintains a list of the world's oldest people, said Francis lived 112 years and 204 days.

With Francis' death, Walter Breuning of Montana, who is 112 years, 98 days old, becomes the country's oldest living man. At 114, Gertrude Baines of Los Angeles is the nation's oldest living person. The world's oldest person is Maria de Jesus of Portugal, who is 115 years, 109 days old, and the oldest

See **OLDEST**, Page 3

Suspects sought in pair of local drive-by shootings

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

Investigators with the Big Spring Police Department are searching for a suspect believed to be responsible for a pair of shootings Saturday evening that sent a local man to the emergency room.

According to BSPD Lt. Terry Chamness, the first report of deadly conduct—discharge of a firearm was received at approximately 8:05 p.m. Saturday from the 100 block of Canyon.

"We received a report of shots fired," said Chamness. "It was a drive-by shooting and the suspect used a shotgun. No injuries were reported as a result of the shooting. Officers were able to get a description of the vehicle, however."

And while the search for the vehicle used in the shooting got under way, Chamness said the gunman turned up less than 30 minutes later, involved in a second shooting.

"The second shooting was reported in the 1100 block of Lancaster at approximately 8:29 p.m.," said Chamness. "This was also a drive-by shooting. A vehicle drove by the residence and opened fire on a vehicle where three people were sitting listening to music."

"One of the occupants of the vehicle, a 22-year-old male, was struck in the head. We're not sure at this time

"Neither of the residences that were attacked appear on the PD's list of known gang-related residences, so these shootings aren't believed to be gang related at this time."



Chamness

if he was struck by the shot from the shotgun or if it was glass from the window, but it didn't penetrate. He was transported to the emergency room at Scenic Mountain Medical Center, where he was conscious and talking to officers."

Chamness said descriptions of the vehicle used in the second shooting were similar to the first.

"It's believed the same vehicle was used in both shootings," said Chamness. "Neither of the residences that were attacked appear on the PD's list of known gang-related residences, so these shootings aren't believed to be gang related at this time."

Chamness declined to com-

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Nearly 200,000 without power in Michigan

By **DAVID RUNK**
Associated Press Writer

DETROIT — Crews were working to restore electricity to nearly 200,000 Michigan homes and businesses early Monday, a day after strong winds knocked down tree limbs and power lines, while residents in parts of the Northwest braced for another winter storm.

Meanwhile, flood warnings were posted throughout the Midwest as temperatures rose after a week of

heavy snowfall. Forecasters said flooding was possible in areas of Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and northwest Ohio.

Winter storm warnings were issued throughout the Northwest, which has been hammered by storms in recent weeks. The National Weather Service said northeastern Washington and the Idaho panhandle could expect 3 to 7 inches of new snow in the valleys, and 6 to 10 inches in the mountains through Monday evening.

In Michigan, winds gusting more than 60 mph knocked out power Sunday as temperatures dropped back into the 20s and 30s. Parts of the state also got about 4 inches of snow.

"We've had an intensifying storm system track northeast through the state," said Mark Sekelsky, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Grand Rapids. "As that storm intensified, it brought the

See **POWER**, Page 3

LOCAL NEWS AND LOCAL VIEWS

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Police blotter

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

- DENNIS AUSBIE, 48, of Lubbock, was arrested Saturday on two local warrants.
- PEDRO BRISENO, 25, of Denton, was arrested Sunday on a charge of criminal mischief.
- STEVEN ANTHONY RODRIGUEZ, 36, was arrested Sunday on a charge of criminal mischief.
- THEFT was reported:
 - in the 1200 block of 11th Place.
 - in the 300 block of Owens.
 - in the 2500 block of Wasson Road.
 - in the 400 block of Birdwell Lane.
- DEADLY CONDUCT - DISCHARGE OF A FIRE-ARM was reported:
 - in the 1100 block of Lancaster.
 - in the 100 block of Canyon.
- BURGLARY OF A VEHICLE was reported:
 - in the 1100 block of 11th Street.
 - in the 400 block of 18th Street.
 - in the 3200 block of Auburn.
- CRIMINAL MISCHIEF was reported in the 500 block of Owens.
- ASSAULT CLASS C/FAMILY VIOLENCE was reported:
 - in the 2600 block of Albrook.
 - in the 1500 block of Fifth Street.
 - in the 800 block of Douglas.
- ASSAULT BY CONTACT was reported:
 - in the 1900 block of N. Highway 87.

Fire/EMS

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

- MEDICAL was reported in the 3800 block of Piper Road. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 500 block of S. Second Street in Coahoma. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the area of Cauble Road. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1800 block of Old Colorado City Highway. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 800 block of W. FM 700. One person was transported to SMMC.
- TRAUMA was reported in the 2500 block of Guntner. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1500 block of Stadium. One person was transported to SMMC.
- TRAUMA was reported in the 1000 block of Sycamore. One person was transported to SMMC.
- TRAUMA was reported in the 1000 block of Main Street. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 2600 block of Dow. Service refused.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 500 block of W. 17th Street. Service refused.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1700 block of Purdue. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 2700 block of Hernandez. Service refused.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 200 block of Croze. One person was transported to SMMC.
- TRAUMA was reported in the 400 block of Fourth Street. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1600 block of Canary. One person was transported to SMMC.
- TRAUMA was reported in the 1300 block of Park. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 900 block of E. 15th Street. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 200 block of Marcy. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1400 block of State. Service refused.
- TRAUMA was reported in the 800 block of Settles. Service refused.
- TRAFFIC ACCIDENT/MEDICAL was reported near the 201 mile marker of Interstate Highway 20. One person was transported to SMMC.
- TRAUMA was reported in the 1100 block of Lancaster. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 2900 block of Highway 80. One person was transported to SMMC.
- TRAFFIC ACCIDENT was reported near the intersection of 23rd Street and Edgemere. Service refused.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 500 block of Birdwell Lane. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1500 block of Lancaster. Service refused.

SHOOTING

Continued from Page 1A

ment on whether the shooter or shooters were targeting a specific person in the attacks.

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ROBBERIES

Continued from Page 1

day. "The call came in at about 8 p.m.," said Chamness. "It's what we call a snatch and grab, where an assailant will simply push the victim and take their purse or wallet. In this case, the victim was a 26-year-old female. The suspect pushed her down and made off with her purse, which contained her driver's license, bank cards and other items." Chamness said the woman escaped the encounter with only minor injuries, but because the purse snatcher physically attacked her in the course of committing the crime, it's being treated as an aggravated robbery. "He used bodily force to take her purse. That's what makes it an aggravated robbery," said Chamness.

OLDEST

Continued from Page 1

man is Tomoji Tanabe of Japan, who is 113 years, 101 days, Coles said. Francis, who at his prime barely weighed more than 100 pounds, was born June 6, 1896, in New Orleans. As an African-American in the South, he felt the sting of the Jim Crow-era segregation laws in his early life. His son said Francis

tried to enlist in the U.S. Army during World War I but was turned down because of his stature. "We always attributed his longevity to his mental and physical toughness," Anthony Francis said. George Francis quit school after the sixth grade, became an amateur boxer as a young man and later worked as a chauffeur, an auto mechanic and a barber. He and his wife, Josephine Johnson Francis, had a son and three daughters. Josephine

Francis died of cancer in 1964. Even in his waning days, Francis never lost his passion for politics, his family said. He voted for Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s and for Barack Obama in 2008. In an interview with The Associated Press after Obama's victory, Francis, who used a wheelchair, said he felt like jumping up and down. "He is going to give black men a break in the world, and give them a better opportunity

to live and make more money," he said. "For people who say voting doesn't matter, I think that's crazy." Anthony Francis said his father was devoted to his family and that he attributed his longevity to them. "He said 'My children and my friends, I live off of them,'" he said. Besides his four children, Francis is survived by 18 grandchildren, 33 great-grandchildren and 16 great-great grandchildren.



AP Photo/Jan Lovell

A fallen tree obstructs a lane of traffic in Detroit Sunday. Tens of thousands of customers were without power in Michigan after high winds hit the state, knocking down tree limbs and power lines.

POWER

Continued from Page 1

winds." Detroit-based DTE Energy Co. said about 135,000 customers were without power early Monday, mostly in Wayne and Oakland counties, down from about 230,000 Sunday. DTE said some could be blacked out into Wednesday. CMS Energy Corp. subsidiary Consumers Energy said about 183,000 of its customers lost power Sunday because of the winds and 62,000

remained blacked out early Monday. Consumers said all of its customers should have power by Wednesday. Strong winds also gusted across upstate New York on Sunday, reaching 75 mph and toppling some power poles and trees from Buffalo to central New York. More than 9,000 customers in five western and northern counties were without power early Monday, down from more than 60,000 the night before. Melting snow and ice caused problems in the Midwest. In southeastern Wisconsin, the

National Weather Service predicted the Fox River would crest about a foot over flood stage Tuesday in the town of Wheatland. Amtrak canceled one train Sunday night and one Monday morning between Chicago and Grand Rapids, Mich., because of the weather, Amtrak spokeswoman Tracy Connell said.

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

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Antonia Davila Marquez, 98, died Thursday. Funeral Mass was at 11:00 AM Monday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church with burial Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

Janie M. Lownes, 58, died Saturday. The family will receive friends from 6:00 until 7:00 PM Monday and Vigil Services will be at 7:00 PM Monday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Memorial Mass will be at 11:00 AM Tuesday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

Janie Tovar, 73, died Sunday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

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CLOSED NEW YEAR'S DAY

Compass Bank
CLOSED AT 4 P.M. NEW YEAR'S EVE
CLOSED NEW YEAR'S DAY

In observation of the New Year, The Big Spring Herald will observe the following deadline schedule:

RETAIL / CLASSIFIED ADS

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31ST
Deadline Monday, Dec. 29nd, 3:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, JAN. 1ST
Deadline, Tuesday, Dec. 30TH, 10:00 a.m.

FRIDAY, JAN. 2ND
Deadline Tuesday, Dec. 30TH, 3:00 p.m.

SUNDAY, JAN. 4TH
Deadline Wednesday, Dec. 31ST, 3:00 p.m.

Merry Christmas!

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

OTHER VIEWS

A lesson in Mumbai

Metal detectors, armed guards and sniffer dogs aren't usually the signs of a celebration. But the celebrations Sunday night marking the partial reopenings of two hotels hit last month in the terrorist siege of Mumbai are, of necessity, accompanied by a heightened vigilance. That's the new reality in India.

Indians - Mumbaikers in particular - have long prided themselves on bouncing back from terrorist attacks that have become far too common. But last month's assaults on Mumbai, which left 171 people dead, finally moved a famously resilient and unflappable people to anger.

Yes, Indians are angry at Pakistan, which served as a launch point for the Mumbai onslaught. The rest of the world is watching nervously, waiting to see if Pakistan will turn over to India people who are suspected of masterminding the attack.

But there's another aspect of this that has international implications. Citizens of India are also angry at their own government for failing to keep them safe.

The three-day assault on Mumbai, carried out apparently by just 10 men, exposed India's rickety security.

Mumbai police were outgunned by the small band of terrorists. The police didn't have bulletproof vests or radio communications. Many were armed with nothing more than lathis — bamboo sticks.

Fire crews arrived hours after they were needed at the burning Taj Mahal Hotel. India's best forces, the "Black Cats" commandos, are based outside Delhi and didn't get to Mumbai until nearly 10 hours after the attacks started.

The Research and Analysis Wing, India's equivalent of the CIA, had warned of a potential terrorist attack on Mumbai, specifically on its hotels. State and local police insist they received no information upon which they could act.

Beyond the disastrous response, India has generally been lackadaisical about security. The nation has about 122 police officers for every 100,000 citizens; the United Nations recommends 222 police.

McClatchy Newspapers reported that there are fewer than 2,300 weapons - revolvers, rifles and the like - available to the 180,000-strong police force of Maharashtra state, which includes Mumbai.

The priorities of leaders have come under sharp scrutiny. Julio Ribeiro, a former police chief in Mumbai, told McClatchy, "All this can change only when politicians stop recruiting yes-men to the top echelons of the police, and stop diverting elite commandos toward their own personal security."

All this is astonishing, given that India has suffered numerous terrorist attacks in recent years.

Last year alone, 1,093 people were killed in terrorist violence in India. Only Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan suffered more terrorism-related deaths.

India had plenty of warning and time to prepare.

Perhaps it couldn't have avoided an attack, but it surely could have been better prepared to try, better prepared to respond more quickly and effectively.

India, its citizens stunned and angry and blaming their failed leaders, will have to play catch-up if it hopes to protect the country. The citizens of India are angry. And the rest of us have a reminder: Be vigilant.

Chicago Tribune.

Amigos or imperialists?

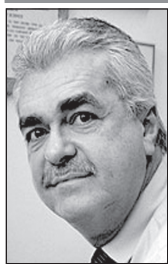
They choose to overlook Cuba's 50 years without free elections, free speech or freedom of the press. They refuse to see the dissidents rotting in jail or drowning while trying to escape from the Communist island. They shamelessly align themselves with the world's oldest dictatorship, yet Latin American leaders make it seem as if the only country that has stood firmly against such atrocities -- the United States -- is really the villain.

"We ask the government of the United States of America to fulfill the requirements of the 17 successive resolutions approved by the United Nations General Assembly and put an end to the economic, trade and financial blockade it maintains against Cuba," the leaders declared in a joint statement issued at the end of a two-day summit in Brazil last week.

Not surprisingly, no mention was made of the numerous U.N. resolutions condemning human rights violations on the Communist island or the countless refusals by the Fidel/Raul Castro regime to allow U.N. inspectors to look in their dungeons for political prisoners.

As the Castro dictatorship turns 50 years old Jan. 1, 2009, the world wants to turn a blind eye on a half-century of atrocities in Cuba. Some leftist Latin American leaders now want to make it seem as if the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba -- instead of the Castro brothers -- is the reason the Cuban people are living in a state of misery. Because Cuba trades with the rest of the world (even U.S. products constantly are arriving there, through third-party countries), the Cuban government uses the U.S. embargo as a phony excuse for all its failures. Only the leftist "useful fools" are duped into believing that the U.S. embargo is more evil than Fidel.

"In the defense of free exchanges and the transparent practice of international trade, the application of unilateral



MIGUEL PEREZ

coercive measures that affect the well-being of the people and obstruct the processes of integration are unacceptable," noted the statement from 33 presidents and top officials from Latin American and Caribbean countries. If world leaders felt that way about all economic embargoes, South Africa still would be ruled under apartheid.

In reality, what has made the U.S. embargo against Cuba ineffective is the fact that it has been unilateral. Had it been bilateral -- had the rest of the world, especially Latin America, joined the United States in squeezing the Castro brothers out of power -- Cuba would have been a free country some decades ago.

The problem is that through the years, with some rare exceptions, most Latin American leaders have been a bunch of cowards. They fear Cuba and its leftist guerrilla allies much more than they fear the United States. And because the Latin American left -- led by Venezuela's Hugo Chavez -- has been much more aggressive and intimidating in recent years, nowadays more cowards than ever are finding it easier to condemn the United States instead of Cuba.

One such leftist leader, Bolivian President Evo Morales, went as far as to propose expelling U.S. ambassadors from Latin American countries. Most of these countries never have expelled Cuban ambassadors -- not even to condemn Castro's firing squads or Cuba's support of terrorists and guerrillas throughout the Americas -- but now Morales wants to give an ultimatum to the Obama administration. "If the new United States government doesn't lift the economic blockade, we should expel its ambassadors," Morales said.

However, giving Barack Obama an ultimatum is not a very bright idea. If they want the embargo lifted, the last thing the Latin American left should do is pick a fight with the U.S. president-elect. After all, although Obama has pledged not to lift the embargo until Cuba makes some steps toward democracy, he also has vowed to lift some travel restrictions to

Cuba. Obama has said he would meet with the Castro brothers "without preconditions," and he has surrounded himself with Cabinet members who oppose the embargo. If Obama doesn't ease U.S. sanctions on Cuba, no one will!

Yet we have to wonder whether there is a motive behind Morales' illogically antagonistic attitude toward the "new United States government." With a leftist president in the White House, how will the Latin American left opt to deal with the United States? Will we still be "Yankee imperialists," or will we become "amigos"?

If we go by Morales' attitude, it is safe to assume we still will be imperialists. And what about Raul Castro's response to a question about Cuban dissidents? While in Brazil, Castro sarcastically suggested that the dissidents, whose only crime was to try to express themselves freely, could be exchanged with five Cuban spies serving time in U.S. prisons. That statement once again demonstrated that perhaps the Castro regime still will be unwilling to engage in democratic reforms and still prefers to have us as "enemigos."

Do the Latin American socialists really want the U.S. embargo against Cuba lifted, or are they seeking to create impediments to prevent it from happening, as they have in the past? On more than one occasion when the U.S. government has begun a process of easing its sanctions against Cuba, it is the Castro brothers who have made some outrageous moves to prevent it from happening. Many Cuba observers believe the Castro brothers may want to continue using the embargo as a reliable pretext on which to blame their amazing mismanagement of the Cuban economy.

After all, once the embargo is lifted, what excuse will the Castro brothers have for all their cruelty and all their failures?

To find out more about Miguel Perez and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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The other marriage penalty

Energy czar-designate Carol Browner's husband does it. So does Health and Human Services Secretary-designate Tom Daschle's wife. Congressman John Dingell's wife has been doing it for years.

Should they all be forced to stop and go home and bake some of those chocolate-chip cookies, the very mention of which got Secretary of State-designate Hillary Clinton in so much trouble so many years ago?

Former Sen. Daschle's wife is a lobbyist. So are former Congressman Tom Downey -- aka Mr. Browner -- and Debbie Dingell.

The Obama administration has announced new and much-needed limits on lobbying for those who take jobs in the administration. It's the latest attempt to make the ever-revolving door spin a little more slowly. But it raises, in a bad week, the issue of how, if at all, spouses should be allowed to go through that door.

It's a bad week because one of the reasons being offered as to why securities regulators took so long to figure out that Bernie Madoff was running a Ponzi scheme might have something to do with the fact that his niece, Shana Madoff, who was general counsel to the firm founded by her uncle, is now married to one of the former Securities and

Exchange Commission (SEC) lawyers charged with keeping an eye on Madoff.

Shana and Eric Swanson met in 2003, started dating in April 2006 and married last year. He left the SEC in 2006, after participating in the examination of Madoff's operations in 1999 and 2004. There is certainly more than enough blame to go around in this one, and Swanson's reps are saying that his role in investigating Bernie came before his relationship with Shana.

If nothing else, it proves that rules are needed, both for mates and dates, to ensure both the reality and the appearance of integrity, not to mention to avoid financial gloom and doom.

Back in 1992, as some might recall, Hillary Clinton came under fire for her role in representing banks and other financial institutions (what was the name of that savings and loan?) that were subject to state regulation at a time when her husband was governor of the state and appointed the regulators. Her less than artful effort to defend her decision to work full time as a lawyer (at a time when the salary for the governor of Arkansas topped out at \$30,000) posed the alternative of staying home and baking chocolate-chip cookies -- a slip of tongue that has left her baking countless chocolate-chip cookies ever since.

The point was that law firms, at least most of them, do represent banks and other financial institutions, and that avoiding the appearance of conflicts when you're a corporate lawyer married to the governor is a difficult

if not impossible task.

The good news is that Michelle Obama, herself a trained but lapsed lawyer, apparently has no plans to join Covington and Burling once she moves to town.

But the other Cabinet spouses, not to mention the large number of congressional spouses who work as lobbyists, are likely to come under increasing scrutiny thanks to the new Obama rules and the questions about the relationship between Mr. Swanson and Ms. Madoff.

Marrying someone who opts for public service is always going to require certain sacrifices, like never seeing your spouse, filling out endless forms and the fact that for most people in top jobs, pay checks that sound like a lot are actually substantially less than what they could earn in the private sector. But it shouldn't also necessitate the sacrifice of your career.

The obvious answer is that spouses of public officials should not be allowed to lobby their spouse's departments. They should not be allowed to lobby Congress on the issues over which their spouses have jurisdiction. By the same token, public officials should not be reviewing or regulating businesses or concerns in which their spouses have jobs, financial interests, etc.

To find out more about Susan Estrich and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate website at www.creators.com.

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DAVID LIMBAUGH

Texans spoil Bears' postseason plans

By CHRIS DUNCAN

AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — The Chicago Bears got the help they needed to make the playoffs. They just couldn't take advantage of it.

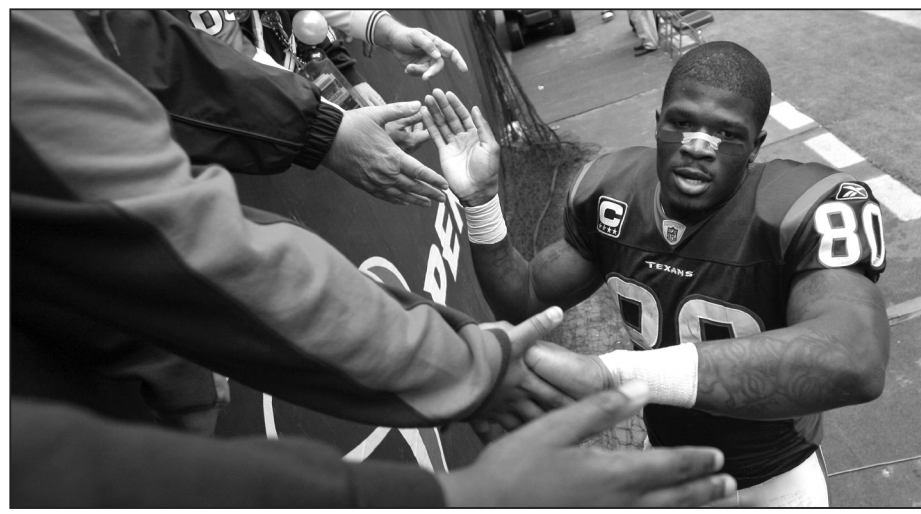
Matt Schaub threw for 328 yards and two touchdown passes to Andre Johnson, and the Texans knocked the Bears out of playoff contention with a 31-24 victory on

Sunday.

Minnesota beat the New York Giants to clinch the NFC North, but the Bears (9-7) could've made it into the wild-card game after losses by Tampa Bay and Dallas.

All Chicago had to do was beat the Texans, who were eliminated from the playoffs weeks ago. The Bears led 10-0,

See **TEXANS**, Page 6



AP Photo/David J. Phillip

Houston Texans wide receiver Andre Johnson (80) celebrates with fans after beating the Chicago Bears in an NFL game Sunday in Houston. The Texans beat the Bears 31-24.

Letdown

Eagles drill Cowboys, 44-6, for NFC's final playoff berth

By ROB MAADDI

AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA — Donovan McNabb flexed his muscles, danced on the sideline and revved up the crowd.

The Philadelphia Eagles are going to the playoffs, so the five-time Pro Bowl quarterback had plenty to celebrate on a day when many came to the stadium wondering if they were seeing his last game in this city.

McNabb threw two touchdown passes and ran for another, Brian Dawkins forced two fumbles that were returned for scores and the Eagles overcame daunting odds to capture an NFC wild-card spot with a dominating 44-6 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Sunday.

So much for all that preseason Super Bowl hype in Dallas — America's Team can start its vacation plans early. It could be a turbulent offseason for the Cowboys (9-7) after another dismal finish.

The Eagles (9-6-1) will play at NFC North champion Minnesota (10-6) next Sunday.

"I've been kind of revived, I guess," McNabb said. "They've (critics) thrown me out, they ran over me, spit on me, but you know what, I just continue to prevail."

Written off after a 10-3 loss at Washington last week, Philadelphia avoided elimination when Oakland upset Tampa Bay and Houston beat Chicago in the early games. The Raiders were 13-point underdogs when the Buccaneers, who lost their fourth straight.

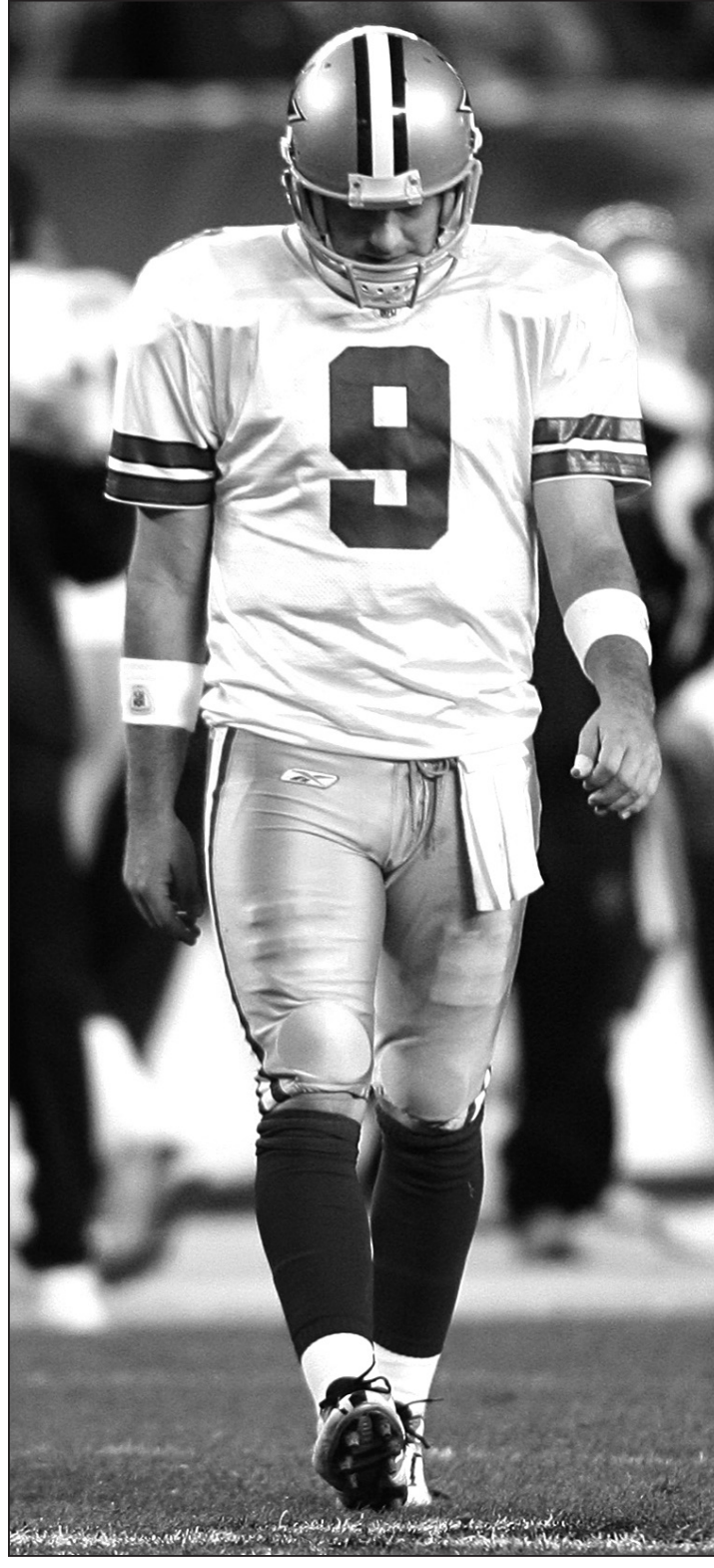
"I want to thank the Raiders and Texans," coach Andy Reid said. "They did a heck of a job."

Of all the teams that remained in contention for a playoff berth entering the final weekend, the Eagles had the lowest odds. Meanwhile, Dallas knew all week it just had to win to get in.

How 'bout them Cowboys!

Tony Romo came up way short in another crucial game, dropping his record to 5-8 in December. T.O. was a non-factor, despite six catches for 103 yards. "With our destiny in our own hands, we kind of just stunk it up," Owens said.

According to multiple media reports, Romo sustained a rib injury late in the game and collapsed



AP photo/Tom Mihalek

Dallas Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo walks to the huddle late in the fourth quarter of an NFL game against the Philadelphia Eagles Sunday in Philadelphia. The Eagles won, 44-6, clinching a playoff spot, while also eliminating the nemesis Cowboys from postseason contention.



AP photo/Danny Moloshok

Dallas Mavericks forward Josh Howard shoots over Los Angeles Clippers forward Al Thornton during the first half of an NBA game in Los Angeles Sunday. Dallas won 98-76.

Mavs coast to win without Nowitzki

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Dallas Mavericks didn't miss Dirk Nowitzki nearly as much as the Los Angeles Clippers missed Zach Randolph.

Josh Howard had 29 points, nine rebounds and a career-best seven assists, leading Dallas to a 98-76 victory Sunday while Nowitzki served a one-game suspension.

"Overall, the team came together," Howard said. "Once we found out about Dirk not playing, we had to come in tighter and just be a better unit without him."

The suspension was announced by the NBA about 3 hours before the game. Nowitzki, the Mavericks' leading scorer and rebounder, received a flagrant-2 foul and an automatic ejection in the fourth quarter of Friday night's 97-88 loss at Utah. He took a backward swing at Matt

Harpring with a closed fist and hit him in the face, after he and the Jazz forward got tangled up under the basket.

"It was not surprising, just because of the way the rule is written," Dallas coach Rick Carlisle said. "We had contingency plans, based on whether or not there was a suspension, so it wasn't like it ruined our preparation. We had a feeling this could happen. But, for the record, I don't believe it was an intentional thing."

Nowitzki, the league's MVP two seasons ago, averaged 31 points in the other two meetings with the Clippers this season. The missed game will cost him \$164,344 in salary. Nowitzki missed only two games in each of the previous three seasons, including a one-game ban for his hard foul against Utah's Andrei Kirilenko.

Dolphins, Vikings, Bolts win divisions

The Associated Press

Far from the imperfect abyss into which the Detroit Lions have fallen, the NFL's latest playoff qualifiers are celebrating.

Shockingly, those party-goers include the Miami Dolphins.

Hours after the Lions became the first team to go 0-16 in a season, the Dolphins, who were 1-15 a year ago, completed a memorable turnaround and won the AFC East at 11-5. That alone should give hope to all of the league's tailenders.

"I don't think words can describe it," running back Ronnie Brown said Sunday after a 24-17 win over the New York Jets. "Earlier in the season, we could only imagine being in this situation."

"It's a great accomplishment. With it comes more motivation to keep winning games. Obviously, now we're in a situation where each one counts and if you lose, you go home."

That begins next Sunday when the Dolphins host the Baltimore Ravens, who earned a wild-card berth with a 27-7 victory over Jacksonville.

"We have an opportunity to prove we're the best team in the NFL," said Baltimore's John Harbaugh, like Miami's Tony Sparano a rookie head coach. "That's what we're going to try to do."

Of course, there are 12 teams looking to prove just that. The playoff qualifiers in the NFC on the final day of the schedule were Minnesota and Philadelphia, joining previous entrants Carolina, Arizona, Atlanta and the defending Super Bowl champion New York Giants.

In the AFC, San Diego also got in with a 52-21 romp past Denver to take the West. Already in were Tennessee, Pittsburgh and Indianapolis.

The other games next weekend are Atlanta at Arizona and Indianapolis at San Diego on Saturday, and Philadelphia at Minnesota on Sunday.

On Jan. 10, Tennessee and Carolina will be the hosts. The next day, it will be New York and Pittsburgh.

In other finishes, it was Green Bay 31, Detroit 21; Minnesota 20, New York Giants 19; Carolina 33, New Orleans 31; New England 13, Buffalo 0; Oakland 31, Tampa Bay 24; Atlanta 31, St. Louis 27; Pittsburgh 31, Cleveland 0; Arizona 34, Seattle 21; San Francisco 27, Arizona 24; Indianapolis 23, Tennessee 0; and Cincinnati 16, Kansas City 6.

Dolphins 24, Jets 17

Chad Pennington, cut in the offseason by the Jets to make room for Brett Favre, threw two touchdown passes at the Meadowlands. Miami joined the 1999 Indianapolis Colts as the only teams in NFL history to make 10-game improvements. Miami, which has won five straight and nine of 10, made the playoffs for the first time in seven seasons. It's also the Dolphins' first AFC East title since 2000.

The Jets (9-7) lost four of their last five.

Ravens 27, Jaguars 7

At Baltimore, Le'Ron McClain ran for two touchdowns in the first half and Baltimore

See **NFL**, Page 6

NFL wild card schedule

Saturday

Falcons at Cardinals, 3:30 p.m.
Colts at Chargers, 7 p.m.

Sunday

Ravens at Dolphins, noon
Eagles at Vikings, 3:30 p.m.

First-round byes

AFC: Titans, Steelers
NFC: Giants, Panthers

NFL

Continued from Page 5

(11-5) never let up against the stumbling Jaguars (5-11), who committed four turnovers and were held scoreless over the final 45 minutes. The seven points were a season low for Jacksonville.

A year ago, Baltimore went 5-11 and

finished last in the AFC North. This season, with a first-year coach, a dynamic defense and rookie quarterback Joe Flacco, the Ravens finished with nine wins in their last 11 games.

Packers 31, Lions 21

At Green Bay, the Lions earned a distinction no team wants: worst in NFL history.

Facing one last chance to avoid

their dubious destiny, the Lions lost for the 23rd time in 24 games.

The 1976 expansion Tampa Bay Buccaneers (0-14) were the last NFL team to complete a full season without a victory.

The Packers wound up 6-10.

Vikings 20, Giants 19

Ryan Longwell's 50-yard field goal as the game ended lifted the host Vikings to the NFC North title for

their first postseason appearance in four years.

New York (12-4), the NFC East winner with home-field advantage throughout the playoffs, was on cruise control for much of the second half with backups on the field. The Vikings (10-6), who pulled within two points on a 54-yard touchdown pass by Tarvaris Jackson to a wide-open Bernard Berrian after third-string cornerback Terrell Thomas fell down, took advantage.

COWBOYS

Continued from Page 5

in the shower after. He had to be helped to his feet by teammates. Romo had X-rays and was able to meet with reporters, though he blew off questions about his health.

Right from the start, the Eagles played with more urgency. While fans cheered Tampa's loss to Oakland, players ran onto the field for pregame introductions seconds after that game ended.

McNabb scored on a sneak from inside the 1 to put Philadelphia ahead 10-3 in the second quarter. He kept the drive going with a 59-yard catch-and-run to Correll Buckhalter on third-and-6.

Then the Eagles scored 17 points in the final 2:03 of the second quarter. McNabb tossed a 4-yard TD pass to Buckhalter to make it 17-3 just before the 2-minute warning. He twice kept the drive going in third-and-long situations, connecting with Kevin Curtis for 15 yards and DeSean Jackson for 34 yards to the Cowboys 3.

TEXANS

Continued from Page 5

but then gave up 21 straight points over the next quarter and a half and never recovered.

"We didn't seize the moment," cornerback Charles Tillman said. "We didn't finish, plain and simple. Opportunities presented themselves and we just didn't get it done."

The game followed a familiar pattern for Chicago this season. They played well at the start, struggled in the middle of the game and needed a strong finish to try and salvage a victory.

"Every game, it's the same stuff happening," defensive end Alex Brown said. "It's the same stuff happening week in and week out and we see it and can't correct it."

The Bears stayed in the playoff hunt by winning their previous two games in overtime, but Houston rookie Steve Slaton sealed this one with a 2-yard touchdown run with 3:24 left to put Houston up 31-17.

After Kyle Orton capped a last-ditch drive with a short TD run with 1:31 remaining, sure-handed Houston receiver Kevin Walter recovered the onside kick and the Texans ran out the clock.

"We've played pretty good at the start and finish of games," Orton said. "We just have to find ways to make it last throughout the entire

game. It seems like we go through a second- or third-quarter lapse where we don't do a whole lot. We've got to find a way to get that corrected."

The Texans (8-8) won five of their last six games and were, like the Bears, lamenting what could have been after their season finale. They've still never finished with a winning record or made the playoffs in seven seasons, but they rallied from an 0-4 start to reach .500 for the second straight year.

"I think we're a better team than we were last year," coach Gary Kubiak said. "There's no doubt in my mind that we're headed in the right direction, but there's two or three more games that you want, I want, every guy in the locker room wants, and we'll find them."

Having Johnson back next year will certainly be a good place to start.

He caught 10 passes for 148 yards on Sunday, his eighth 100-yard game this season. He pulled down at least 10 receptions for the seventh time this season, an NFL record, and finished with 1,575 yards, the most by a receiver since 2003.

"You know, if we would have lost the game we would have had a losing record," Johnson said. "So, that was a big deal to everybody and we didn't want to lose this game today. We started off slow but we found a way to get it done."

Sheldon Brown intercepted Romo's underthrown pass to Roy Williams on Dallas' ensuing possession and returned it 23 yards to the Dallas 42. Then two big penalties — a personal foul on Adam "Pacman" Jones and pass interference against Terence Newman in the end zone — set up McNabb's 1-yard TD pass to Brent Celek.

A fired-up McNabb sprinted toward the Eagles sideline and suddenly stopped. He turned around toward the Cowboys bench and flexed, the way T.O. often does.

Jones was stripped by Quintin Demps on the kickoff and Omar Gaither recovered at the Cowboys 31 with 3 seconds left in the half. David Akers made a 50-yard field goal to give the Eagles a 27-3 lead going into halftime.

Dallas pulled out all the tricks on the first possession of the third quarter, including a 42-yard pass from tight end Jason Witten to Owens to the Eagles 14. But Dawkins sacked Romo on the next play, and Chris Clemons picked up the fumble and raced 73 yards for a score that gave Philly a 34-3 lead.

Joselio Hanson returned Marion Barber's fumble 96 yards for a TD on the next series.

"It's frustrating," Romo said. "We obviously had

Slaton rushed 20 times for 92 yards and beat out Chicago's Matt Forte for the rookie rushing title. Slaton ran for 1,282 yards this season; Forte finished with 1,238 yards.

"I put a lot of pressure on myself for next year," Slaton said.

Brandon Lloyd made a leaping catch in the front corner of the end zone on Chicago's first series. The Bears scored six touchdowns on their opening possessions this season.

Slaton caught a short pass on the Texans' next series, but Tillman knocked the ball loose. Brown recovered and Robbie Gould kicked a 37-yard field goal to stretch the Bears' lead to 10-0.

The Bears got the ball near midfield after a Houston punt early in the second quarter. On third down, Mario Williams tackled Orton for his 12th sack of the season.

Schaub moved Houston across midfield, then froze the Bears' defense with a play-action fake and found Johnson wide open for a 43-yard touchdown with 5:50 left in the first half.

"They got an easy one on that one," Tillman said. "Breakdown on the coverage."

Danieal Manning fumbled the ensuing kickoff and kicker Kris Brown recovered at the Bears 38. On third-and-goal, Johnson outfought Tillman on a timing throw from Schaub in the end zone for another touchdown.

hopes to play a lot better than we did."

The Eagles seemed headed for their third last-place finish in four years after they tied lowly Cincinnati and were routed by Baltimore in consecutive weeks last month. McNabb was benched for the first time in his career in that loss to the Ravens and his future in Philadelphia was the hot topic.

But McNabb came back strong and led the Eagles to three straight wins only to fall short against the Redskins — Reggie Brown was tackled at the 1 on the final play.

Still, the Eagles found a way to make the playoffs after getting all the help they needed around the league.

"Everybody turned their backs on us," Dawkins said. "But we believed in one another."

sudoku

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.

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	6		8	4		7
	2		5			6
1	5		8			3 9
			4	9		
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	8		7			1
	1	3	8			9
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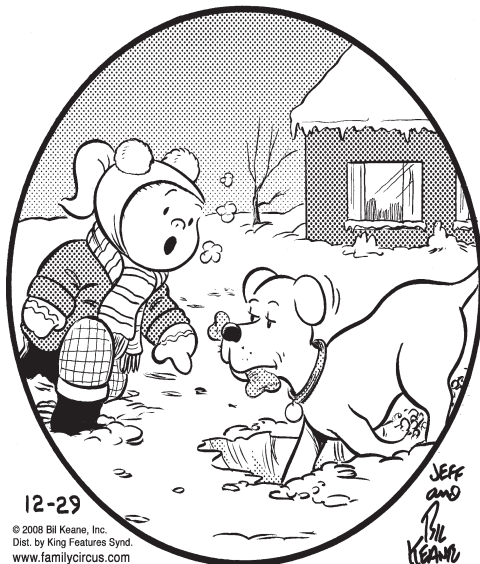
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5 :PM	News ABC	News ABC	Locura Noticiero	Lopez	News CBS	Noticias Noticiero	News NBC	Raymond Friends	CCM Granger	BBC Business	Deadliest Catch	Movie: Fargo, William H. Macy	Married... Married...	Law & Order	106 & Park: BET's Top 10 Live	Suite Life
6 :PM	News ABC	Jeopardy! Fortune	Tontas Cielo	Two Men	News CBS	12 Corazonas	News NBC	Seinfeld Van Impe	Seinfeld Hagee	News-Lehrer	Deadliest Catch	CSI: Crime Scn	Law & Order	Movie: Hair Show, Gina Torres	Montana	Movie: Return to Never Land
7 :PM	Movie: Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl	Movie: Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl	Cuidado-Angel	House	Big Bang How I Met	Doña Barbara	Holiday Home Video	Fam. Guy	Israel Shoebat	Antiques Roadshow	Deadliest Catch	Movie: Out for Justice, Jerry Orbach	CSI: Crime Scn	Law & Order	Movie: Hair Show, Gina Torres	Movie: Return to Never Land
8 :PM	News ABC	The Curse of the Black Pearl	Fuego en la Sangre	Bones	Two Men Gary	El Rostro de Analia	Deal or No Deal	Fam. Guy	Fam. Guy	Great Performances at the Met	Deadliest Catch	Movie: Boyz N the Hood	Law & Order	Cole	Phineas	Wizards Life De
9 :PM	News ABC	News ABC	Impacto	Raymond	News CBS	Noticias	News NBC	Seinfeld	Israel		Deadliest Catch	Movie: The Hunt for Red October, Scott Glenn	MAN	The Closer	Hatchett	Suite Life
10 :PM	Nightline	Nightline	Noticiero	King-Hill	Late Show	Decisiones de	Tonight Show	Sex & Sala	Uri Harel	Smiley	Deadliest Catch	MAN	Without a Trace	Movie: Hair Show, Gina Torres	So Raven Cory	Replace
11 :PM	Insider Jimmy Kimmel Live	Insider Jimmy Kimmel Live	La Hora de la Risa	Law Order: CI	Late Late Show	Decisiones de	Late Night	Movie: Mission: Impossible 2, Thandie Newton	Israel	Mark (Off Air)	Deadliest Catch	Star Trek: Voyager	Without a Trace	Movie: Hair Show, Gina Torres	Replace	Kim Emperor
12 :AM	News ABC	News ABC	Clasicos Humor	TMZ	Friends	Entertain	Poker After Dark	Light of the Southwest			Deadliest Catch	Deep Space 9	Cold Case	The Deal		

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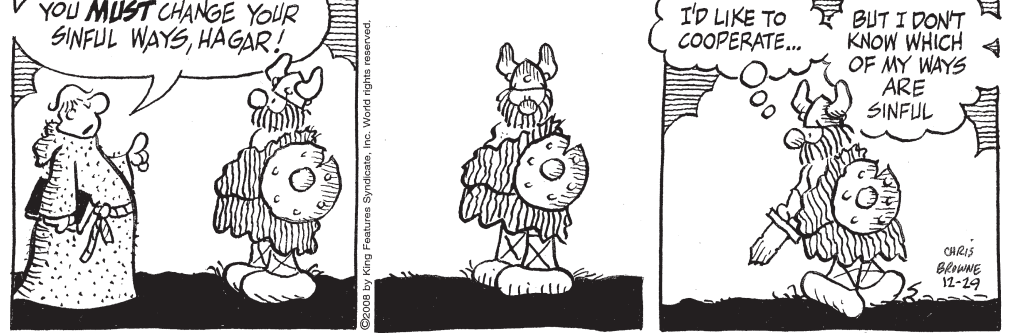
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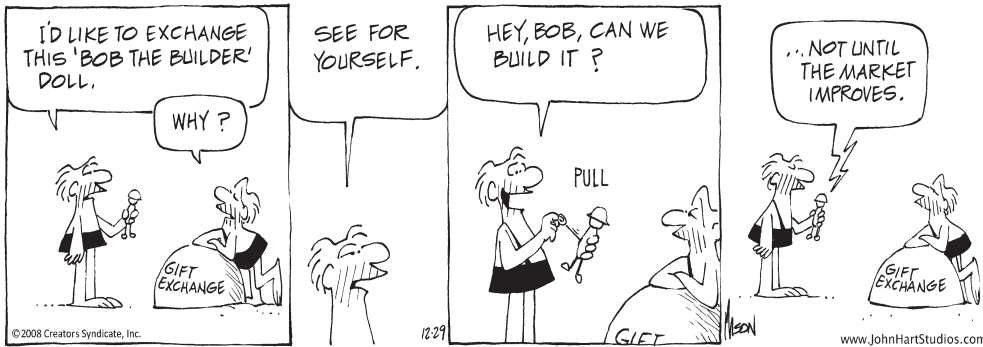
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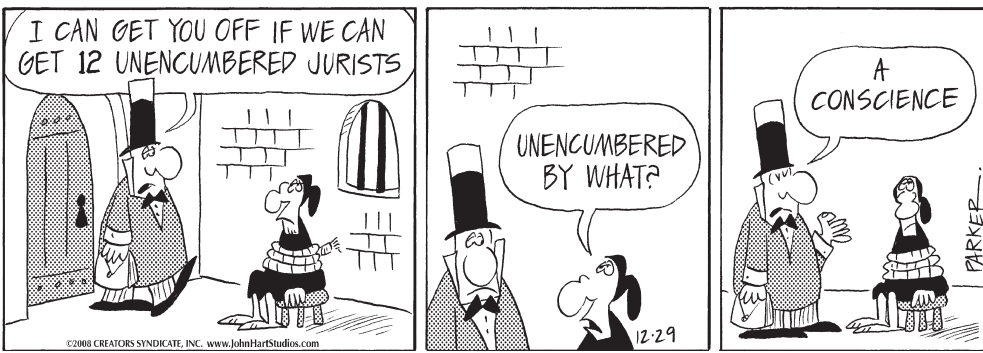
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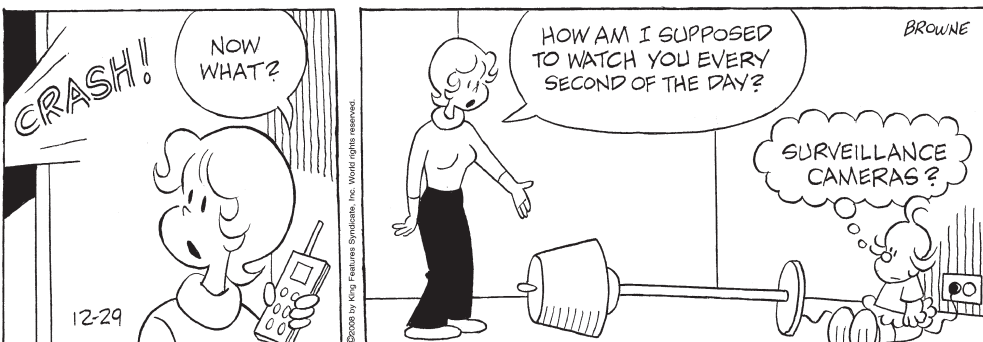
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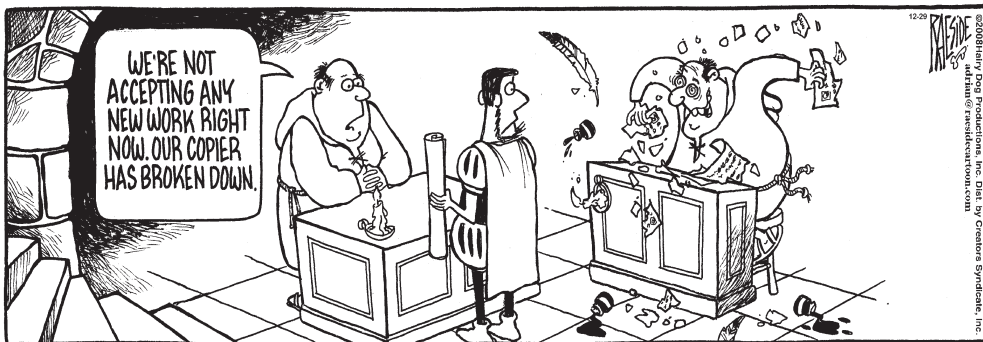
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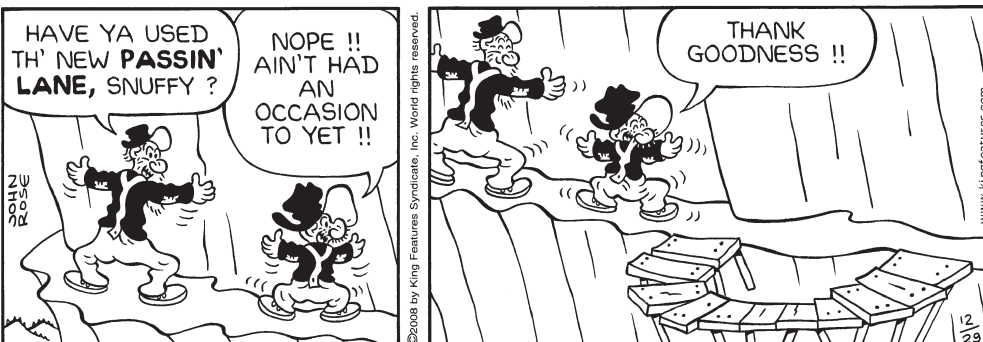
HI AND LOIS



THE OTHER COAST



SNUFFY SMITH



BETLE BAILEY



This Date In History

Today is Monday, Dec. 29, the 364th day of 2008. There are two days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: Two hundred years ago, on Dec. 29, 1808, the 17th president of the United States, Andrew Johnson, was born in Raleigh, N.C.

On this date: In 1170, Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by knights loyal to King Henry II.

In 1845, Texas was admitted as the 28th state.

In 1851, the first American Young Men's Christian Association was organized, in Boston.

In 1890, the Wounded Knee massacre took place in South Dakota as an estimated 300 Sioux Indians were killed by U.S. troops sent to disarm them.

In 1916, Grigory Rasputin, the so-called "Mad Monk"

who'd wielded great influence with Czar Nicholas II, was murdered by a group of Russian noblemen in St. Petersburg.

In 1934, Japan formally denounced the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922.

In 1940, during World War II, Germany dropped incendiary bombs on London, setting off what came to be known as "The Second Great Fire of London."

In 1957, singers Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme were married in Las Vegas.

In 1975, a bomb exploded in the main terminal of New York's LaGuardia Airport, killing 11 people.

In 1978, during the Gator Bowl, Ohio State University coach Woody Hayes punched Clemson player Charlie Bauman, who'd intercepted an Ohio pass. (Hayes was fired by Ohio State the next day.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Clarence Swensen ("The Wizard of Oz") is 91. Actress Inga Swenson is 76. ABC newscaster Tom Jarriel is 74. Actress Mary Tyler Moore is 71. Actor Jon Voight is 70. Country singer Ed Bruce is 69. Rock musician Ray Thomas is 67. Singer Marianne Faithfull is 62. Jockey Laffit Pincay Jr. is 62.

Actor Ted Danson is 61. Actor Jon Polito is 58. Rock singer-musician Jim Reid (The Jesus and Mary Chain) is 47. Movie director Andy Wachowski is 41. Actress Jennifer Ehle is 39. Rock singer-musician Glen Phillips is 38. Actor Kevin Weisman is 38. Actor Jude Law is 36. Actor Mekhi Phifer is 34. Actor Shawn Hatosy is 33. Actor Diego Luna is 29. Country singer Jessica Andrews is 25.

Thought for Today: "Ours is the age of substitutes: Instead of language we have jargon; instead of principles, slogans; and instead of genuine ideas, bright suggestions." — Eric Bentley, British-born American author and educator.

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Answer to previous puzzle

SCRAPPY	FEASTER
PRAIRIE	UPBORNE
OUTDOES	CABRIDE
KITES	MPH REPEL
ASIS	RAISE ROME
NEE	SHAPING LIC
ERRATUM	AFFLICT
SUB	OLE
BATHMAT	CRAWDAD
OUR	PRODUCT ERE
IDOL	BLASE HARP
TILES	SST CACAO
ATLEAST	AMAZONS
NEEDSTO	REVENGE
ODYSSEY	DRESSED

Newsday Crossword

RANGE REVIEW by Gail Grabowski
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ACROSS | 54 Kid's interlocking block | 6 Hunger for | 30 Butter portions |
| 1 Spill the beans | 56 "I understand!" | 7 Actors' parts | 32 Fractions of a yard |
| 5 "Get lost!" | 57 Computer input surface | 8 Prayer ending | 33 Give permission to |
| 10 "Ten-four" sayer | 58 Where Honolulu is | 9 Wrestling | 36 Pay out |
| 14 Service-station grease job | 59 High-society group | 10 Woodworking tool | 37 Dishwasherful |
| 15 Kitchen scent | 60 First person in the Bible | 11 Place for low-priority items | 41 Easter, for one |
| 16 Be in possession of | 61 Short golf stroke | 12 Day before a holiday | 43 Wasn't renewed in time |
| 17 Conceited | 62 Solitary sort | 13 Stop-sign color | 44 Hunting dog |
| 18 Parking-lot attendant | 63 Shrill bark | 21 Beret, for example | 45 Lion or leopard |
| 19 Topped, as a cake | DOWN | 22 Felt poorly | 47 Glossy fabric |
| 20 Heavy kettle | 1 Ave. relative | 24 Pulled apart | 48 Humdrum |
| 22 Pose a question | 2 58 Across party | 25 Clothing | 50 Game on horseback |
| 23 Rabbit relatives | 3 Just (slightly) | 26 Walked unsteadily | 51 Constructed |
| 24 Man's jewelry clasp | 4 Seats in the park | 27 African expedition | 52 List-ending abbr. |
| 27 Airline's prime concern | 5 Delicious | 28 Stage whispers | 53 Highway exit |
| 30 Contaminate, as water | | 29 Break of day | 54 Remove, as branches |
| 31 With no warranty | | | 55 de Cologne |
| 32 Distress signal | | | 56 Hair stiffener |
| 34 Numbered highway: Abbr. | | | |
| 35 Christmas tree | | | |
| 36 Came down in freezing pellets | | | |
| 38 Zilch | | | |
| 39 TV commercials | | | |
| 40 Rhyme writers | | | |
| 41 Roll-call response | | | |
| 42 Pull back from the front lines | | | |
| 44 Made a touchdown | | | |
| 46 Cyprus or Malta | | | |
| 47 Terrific bargain | | | |
| 49 Illinois neighbor: Abbr. | | | |
| 50 Two-days-a-week worker | | | |

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