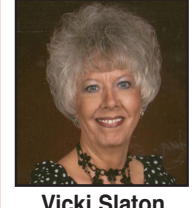




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 Page 1B

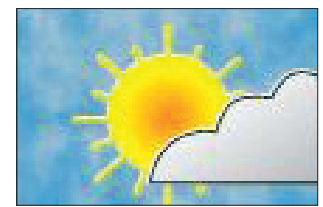


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# H BIG SPRING HERALD

**WEDNESDAY**

**DECEMBER 30, 2009**



VOLUME 105, NUMBER 20

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## Most local agencies closing on New Year's Day

By **THOMAS JENKINS**  
 Staff Writer

As area residents prepare to ring in the new year this weekend, many area businesses and agencies are preparing to take time off from their routines.

The city of Big Spring will close all offices, including the municipal landfill and compost facility, Friday in observance of New Year's Day. There will be no sanitation pick-up Friday, as well. Business is expected to resume as normal Monday morning.

Howard County employees will also be afforded time to enjoy the new year, with offices also expected to be closed Friday. According to County

Judge Mark Barr, some county offices may be closing as early as 3 p.m. Thursday.

"It's up to the elected officials, so your best bet is to contact them individually and find out if they will close early Thursday if you have business to take care of that day," said Barr.

County operations are expected to resume Monday morning.

The Big Spring Post Office will also be following the city and county, closing its offices Thursday afternoon and all day Friday for the holiday. Thursday hours will be from 8 a.m. until noon, with the office set to reopen Saturday from 9 a.m. until noon.

No mail delivery is expected

Friday.

As many people prepare to enjoy a day off for Friday, area emergency personnel will be bracing themselves for the inevitable holiday onslaught.

Local agencies, including the Big Spring Police Department, Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services and Howard County Sheriff's Office, all report the special day will be busier for them, as they pay special attention to motorists and partygoers.

The police department's main office will be closed Friday, and will reopen at 8 a.m. Monday.

Those looking for party supplies at the last minute will be relieved to know the local Wal-Mart Supercenter,

which is open 24-hours, will be open throughout the holiday. HEB will also be taking the holiday in stride, adhering to its normal 6 a.m. until midnight schedule on both New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

Keeping with their 24-hour, 365-day image, local 7-11 convenience stores will also be open throughout the New Year holiday.

The Spring City Senior Citizens Center will close its doors Friday in observance of the New Year, resuming activities Monday morning. The facility will be holding a New Years dance, however, from 9 p.m. until midnight Thursday night.

The Herald office will be closed Friday, reopening at 8 a.m. Monday.

## Hot seat

### Obama wants answers after botched attack

**LOLITA C. BALDOR**  
 and  
**PHILIP ELLIOTT**

Associated Press Writers

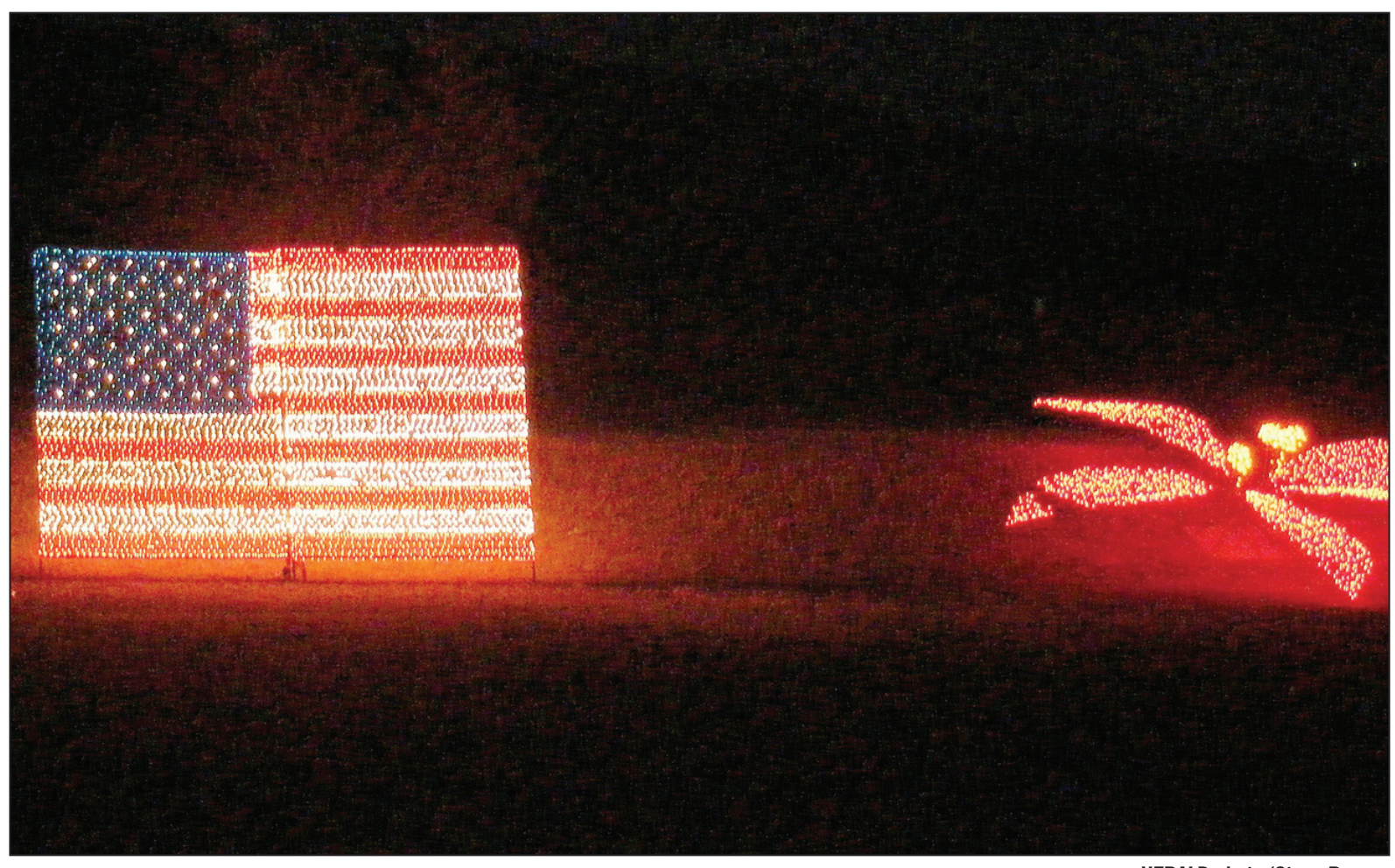
HONOLULU — President Barack Obama is demanding answers on why information was never pieced together by the U.S. intelligence community to trigger red flags about an alleged terrorist and possibly prevent his botched Christmas Day attempt to blow up a Detroit-bound airliner.

Administration officials are poring over reams of data, looking for failings that allowed Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a 23-year-old Nigerian with suspected ties to al-Qaida, to board the Northwest Airlines flight from Nigeria by way of Amsterdam.

Obama's criticism came as

See **OBAMA**, Page 3A

## JUST TWO MORE DAYS LEFT



HERALD photo/Steve Reagan

A U.S. flag and poinsettia are just two of the many lighted attractions awaiting visitors to the Festival of Lights. There are only a couple of nights left to view the show. The 13th annual attraction runs through Thursday at Comanche Trail Park. Admission is free.

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## Hutchison lays out transportation plan

**JAY ROOT**  
 Associated Press Writer

AUSTIN — U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison vowed Tuesday to "clean up" the Texas Department of Transportation, reduce traffic congestion and start building a high-speed rail network connecting Dallas, Houston and San Antonio if she is elected Texas governor.



Hutchison laid out her transportation plan Tuesday at campaign swings in Tyler, Waco and Dallas, with more stops scheduled Wednesday.

The senator proposed a series of reforms, including new restrictions on toll road

construction and more checks on spending, while linking roads with railroads, airports and waterways. She also wants to make the Texas Transportation Commission a nine-member panel.

The senior U.S. senator from Texas gave little detail on how to pay for it all, saying she'll focus first on eliminating wasteful spending and inefficiencies in management. After that, if her proposed special transportation committee recommends new taxes or fees, she would put the issue before voters in regional referendums.

"Texans are tired of the traffic and congestion in our cities. They are frustrated with the arrogance and inefficiencies of the leadership at the Texas Department of

Transportation that have failed to produce results," Hutchison said. "One of my top priorities as governor will be to clean up TxDOT and solve the transportation problems that have plagued Texas for the last decade."

Hutchison, who hopes to oust Gov. Rick Perry in the March Republican primary, has been a vocal critic of TxDOT, calling it the "most arrogant" agency in state government. In her remarks Tuesday, she called for more transparency and enhanced financial controls, taking note of TxDOT's embarrassing admission last year that it had made a \$1 billion budgeting error by counting income twice.

Hutchison said she'd eventually like to see a high-speed

rail network in the "Texas Triangle," linking the Dallas-Fort Worth area with Houston and San Antonio. The cities make up the most populous areas of the state.

The Perry campaign, which has portrayed Hutchison as a free-spending Washington insider, said she failed to spell out where the money would come from to pay for her proposals.

"After 16 years in Washington, it's no surprise the only thing Sen. Hutchison proposed today was a plan that will require billions of tax dollars and grow government bureaucracy," Perry spokesman Mark Miner said. "Creating a new committee and expanding the TxDOT commission will not build one new road in Texas."

**A Look Back at 2009  
 "Year in Review"  
 In Thursday's Edition of the  
 Big Spring Herald**



















# News in brief

## Leader of presidential delegation: Afghan civilians killed by foreign troops

KABUL (AP) — The head of a presidential delegation investigating the deaths of 10 people in eastern Afghanistan concluded that civilians — including schoolchildren — were killed in an attack involving foreign troops, disputing NATO reports that the dead were insurgents.

Asadullah Wafa, a senior adviser to President Hamid Karzai, told The Associated Press by telephone that eight schoolchildren between the ages of 12 and 14 were among the dead discovered in a village house in the Narang district of Kunar province.

A NATO official has said initial reports from troops involved in the fighting on Sunday indicated that those killed were insurgents — all young males.

Civilian deaths are one of the most sensitive issues for foreign troops in Afghanistan, especially now when some additional 37,000 U.S. and NATO troops are being deployed to the war-ravaged country. Although far more civilians are killed by the Taliban, those blamed on international forces spark widespread resentment and undermine the fight against the militants.

Several hundred Afghans protested the deaths Wednesday in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad and in the capital of Kabul. In Jalalabad, they burned President Barack Obama's effigy and an American flag, chanting "death" to Obama and Karzai.

In Kabul, the protesters chanted, "Unity, unity, death to the enemy of Islam!" and a protester with a bullhorn called on Obama to "take your soldiers out of Afghanistan."

Wafa said that he was convinced that all those killed in the Kunar incident were innocent civilians.

## Officials: Bombs kill 21 in Iraq's western Anbar province

BAGHDAD (AP) — Staggered explosions killed 21 people Wednesday and injured the governor of Anbar, Iraqi officials said, in the latest violence to roil a turbulent province that is still struggling to stamp out the remnants of the al-Qaida insurgency.

The western province of Anbar is strategically important because it was once the heartland of support for al-Qaida linked militants before American officials paid Iraqi fighters to join a pro-government force.

Police official Lt. Col. Imad al-Fahdawi said two bombs exploded in Anbar's capital of Ramadi, 70 miles (115 kilometers) west of Baghdad. He says a suicide bomber in a car caused the first blast on the main road near the provincial administration buildings.

Gov. Qassim al-Fahdawi, the deputy police chief and other officials came to inspect the damage, the police official said, when a suicide bomber on foot detonated a vest full of explosives nearby.

The deputy police chief was killed and the governor and other officials wounded, al-Fahdawi said. Police have put a curfew in place, he added.

## Intelligence report: Iran is seeking to smuggle 1,350 tons of uranium

VIENNA (AP) — Iran is close to clinching a deal to clandestinely import 1,350 tons of purified uranium ore from Kazakhstan, according to an intelligence report obtained by The Associated Press. The assessment is heightening international concern about Tehran's nuclear activities, diplomats said.

Such a deal would be significant because, according to an independent research group, Tehran appears to be running out of the material, which it needs to feed its uranium enrichment program.

Kazakh Foreign Ministry spokesman Yerzhan Ashikbayev denied Wednesday his government was involved, saying that the ex-Soviet nation has

fully observed its international obligations. "All Kazakhstan's activities in the uranium sphere have been under the IAEA control," he told the AP.

A spokesman for Kazatomprom, the Kazakh state uranium company, also denied involvement.

Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York described the report as "a fabrication and completely baseless," in a statement faxed to the AP in Tehran.

## Yemen investigates Nigerian suspect's contacts with al-Qaida

SAN'A, Yemen (AP) — Officials in Yemen are investigating whether the Nigerian suspected in the attempted Christmas Day attack on a U.S. airliner spent time with al-Qaida militants in the country in the months leading up to the botched bombing.

Administrators, teachers and fellow students at the San'a Institute for the Arabic Language, where Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab had enrolled to study Arabic, told The Associated Press on Tuesday that he attended school for only the month of Ramadan, which began in late August. That has raised questions about what he did during the rest of his stay, which continued into December.

Abdulmutallab, 23, told U.S. officials after his arrest he received training and instructions from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen, a law enforcement official has said.

According to Yemeni officials, Abdulmutallab spent another extended period in Yemen, from 2004-2005.

People at the school who knew Abdulmutallab said he was not openly extremist, though he expressed anger over Israel's actions against Palestinians in Gaza.

## Obama issues order to limit number of classified records held from public

WASHINGTON (AP) — More than 400 million pages of Cold War-era documents could be declassified as the federal government responds to President Barack Obama's order to rethink the way it protects the nation's secrets.

Among the changes announced Tuesday by Obama is a requirement that every record be released eventually and that federal agencies review how and why they mark documents classified or deny the release of historical records. A National Declassification Center at the National Archives will be established to assist them and help clear a backlog of the Cold War records by Dec. 31, 2013.

Obama also reversed a decision by President George W. Bush that had allowed the intelligence community to block the release of a specific document, even if an interagency panel decided the information wouldn't harm national security.

Advocates for a more open government are cautiously cheering the move.

"Everything will depend on implementation," said Steven Aftergood, director of the Project on Government Secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists. But the order "has tremendous potential to reduce the level of secrecy throughout the government."

## Colorado mother, baby revived after nearly dying during Christmas Eve birth

DENVER (AP) — Mike Hermanstorfer was clutching his pregnant wife's hand in a Colorado hospital on Christmas Eve when she stopped breathing, her life apparently slipping away. Then he cradled his newborn son's limp body seconds after a medical team delivered the baby by Cesarean section.

Minutes later he saw his son show signs of life in his arms under the feverish attention of doctors, and soon he learned his wife had inexplicably started breathing again.

"My legs went out from underneath me," Hermanstorfer said Tuesday.

"I had everything in the world taken from me, and in an hour and a half I had everything given to me."

Hermanstorfer's wife, Tracy, went into cardiac arrest and stopped breathing during labor on Thursday, said Dr. Stephanie Martin, a maternal fetal medicine specialist at Memorial Hospital in Colorado Springs, where the Hermanstorfers had gone for the birth of their son.

"She had no signs of life. No heartbeat, no blood pressure, she wasn't breathing," said Martin, who had rushed to Hermanstorfer's room to help. "The baby was, it was basically limp, with a very slow heart rate."

## Man with world's 'Best Job' survives deadly jellyfish sting

ADELAIDE, Australia (AP) — Trouble struck paradise this week when a British man who has the "Best Job in the World" as the caretaker of a tropical Australian island was stung by a potentially lethal jellyfish.

Ben Southall — who won a contest to blog for six months about life on Australia's Hamilton Island to promote tourism — wrote Tuesday that he was lucky to have survived his brush with the extremely venomous Irukandji jellyfish.

Earlier this week, Southall was getting off a Jet Ski in the ocean when he felt "a small bee-like sting" on his arm. When he later noticed a tingling in his hands and feet, island staff took Southall immediately to the doctor.

Progressive symptoms of fever, headache, lower back pain, chest tightness and high blood pressure led the doctor to diagnose that Southall had been stung by an Irukandji jellyfish. He was given pain medication and slept off the venom's effects overnight.

"I thought I'd done particularly well at avoiding any contact with any of the dangerous critters that consider this part of the world their home," Southall wrote.

## In Sunday's Big Spring Herald



## Sweet relief

Before 2006, the Rheinlander Bakery was known for its tasty German-style baked goods. Now, the family-owned bakery is the source of the King Cakes for Katrina fundraiser in support of providing relief for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Plus, an action figure army and Boston brown bread.

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## News in brief

### University's beloved oak tree being cut down

GALVESTON (AP) — A shady oak tree that served for decades as both a good luck charm for University of Texas Medical Branch students and an open-air study hall is being cut down this week after never recovering from Hurricane Ike.

For months after the September 2008 hurricane, signs of life were searched for in the oak that had been dedicated in memory of the medical branch's first president, Truman G. Blocker.

Mike Shriner, vice president of business operations and facilities at the school, says the experts called in agreed the tree would not recover.

The Galveston County Daily News reports that the medical branch is asking faculty, staff and students to suggest ways to immortalize the "Blocker Oak."

### Texas jewelry store robbers make off with \$6M

LEWISVILLE (AP) — Authorities are searching for two men who got away with \$6 million worth of jewelry and coins in a suburban Dallas jewelry store robbery.

Lewisville Police Capt. Jay Powell said Harold's Jewelers was just about to open Monday morning when a man came to the door indicating he needed a battery for his watch.

When a store employee opened the door, the man brandished a weapon and, accompanied by another suspect, forced the employee to empty the contents of the safe into two black duffel bags, Powell said.

The store employee was not injured.

The employee says the men took the store's video recorder.

### Rep. Frank Corte of San Antonio to retire

AUSTIN (AP) — State Rep. Frank Corte, R-San Antonio, is retiring from the Texas House of Representatives.

Corte, first elected in 1992, announced Tuesday he would not run for re-election in 2010. Dean of the Bexar County House delegation, Corte was known for his unabashed conservatism and opposition to abortion.

Corte had deployed to Iraq as a colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve during his service in the Legislature.

Corte will serve out his term, which ends in January 2011.

### South Texas ban on dogs at beach lifted

CORPUS CHRISTI (AP) — Officials have lifted their ban on dogs at the Padre Island National Seashore.

But, officials warned in a news release Tuesday, people bring their dogs to the park at their own risk because the animals could get sick or die from eating fish killed by toxic red tide algae.

A dozen coyotes died and six pet dogs either died or got sick after eating dead fish in early December, officials said.

A red tide bloom nearly disappeared but was detected mid-December by field testers with the Texas Department of Health Services, which monitor oyster beds for red tide contamination. Concentrations of the algae, which can cause respiratory symptoms in humans, were spotted throughout the Coastal Bend.

### 2-year-old recovering from Christmas shooting

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A 2-year-old Bandera County girl continues to recover after she was shot in the back of the head on Christmas Day as her father was cleaning his gun.

Kalia Wallace is out of University Hospital's intensive care unit and has been moved to the pediatric ward.

Her father was cleaning his gun when a bullet went through a kitchen cabinet and hit Kalia, who was on the other side. Her father, a former law enforcement officer, has not been charged. The Bandera County Sheriff's Office says the shooting appeared to be accidental.

Officials had called it a Christmas miracle that the girl survived. Her father told investigators he thought the gun was unloaded when he was cleaning it.

### Feds nab pot, other goods on Texas-Mexico border

EL PASO (AP) — Federal agents on the U.S.-Mexico border in and around El Paso were busy during Christmas week, confiscating everything from marijuana to tamales.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers seized 1,682 pounds of marijuana and several prohibited food products.

The largest seizure was on Christmas Eve at the Bridge of the Americas, where more than 600 pounds of pot were found hidden in wooden furni-

ture.

Agents working in El Paso, West Texas and New Mexico seized food products including apples, oranges, sugarcane, guavas, sausage and pork tamales.

### Houston judge resigns after oppression conviction

HOUSTON (AP) — A Harris County criminal court-at-law judge has resigned following his conviction of official oppression for trying to woo a woman facing a drunken-driving charge in his court.

Judge Donald Jackson's resignation, delivered Tuesday in a one-sentence letter to county commissioners, is effective Thursday.

A 28-year-old woman accused Jackson of offering her a better court-appointed attorney if she'd agree to a romantic relationship.

A jury convicted Jackson of the misdemeanor earlier this month.

The judge was sentenced to 30 days in jail and two years probation.



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AP Photo/Michael Norris, Amarillo Globe-News

Jennifer Strecklane reels in her fishing line at Medical Center Park in Amarillo as Justin Spicer watches Tuesday.




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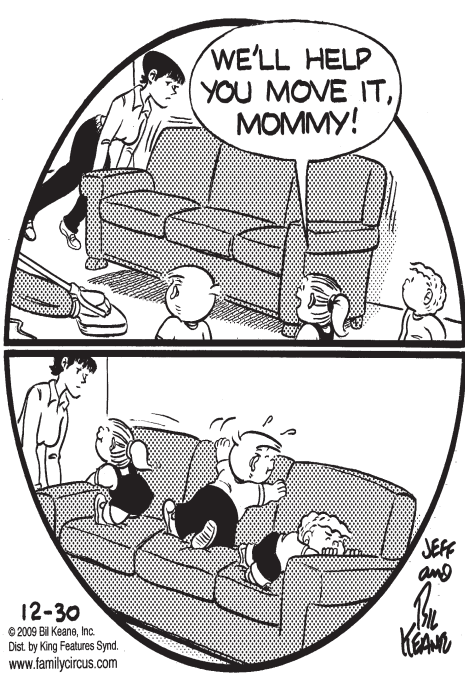
**ON THE BIG 1400 KBYG**

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	Dallas	Midland	Spanish	Odessa	Odessa	Telemundo	Midland	Atlanta	Odessa	Odessa	Discovery	Classics	Spike TV	Atlanta	Black Ent.	Disney	Sports	Sports
5:30	News ABC	News ABC	Locura ABC	Lopez ABC	News CBS	Noticias CBS	News NBC	Seinfeld Office	Cortes Harris	BBC Business	Everest: Beyond	Movie: Rambo: First Blood Part II	Ways Die	Law & Order	Movie: Beauty Shop	Phineas Suite Life	SportsCenter	Bowling (Idaho)
6:30	Ent. Ton.	Jeopardy!	Gancho	Two Men	Ent. Ton.	12 Cora-zones	News Millionaire	Name Swallow	Mark	PBS News-Hour	Everest: Beyond	Ways Die	Bones	Wizards Montana	College Basketball			
7:30	Charlie-Yr Middle	Charlie-Yr Middle	Nombre-Amor	Glee	Christine Gary	Más Sabe el Diablo	Office Payne	Office Payne	House	A Girl's Life	Everest: Beyond	Movie: Aliens, Michael Biehn	Ways Die	Bones	Movie: Juwanna Mann, Kevin Pollak	Princess Protection Program	College Basketball: Baylor at Arkansas.	Colk Foot. Paci. Holik -- Ar Nebi
8:30	Family Cougar	Family Cougar	Sortilegio	Glee	Criminal Minds	Pobres	Office Payne	Office Payne	Light of the Southwest	P.O.V.	Everest: Beyond	Die	Forensic Die	Forensic Die	The Mo'Nique	Phineas Montana	Wizards So Raven	SportsCtr. NFL Live
9:30	(.01) East-wick	(.01) East-wick	Don Francisco	Simpsons Friends	CSI: NY	Victorinos	The Jay Leno Show	Brows	Brows		Everest: Beyond	Die	MAN	MAN	MAN	Wendy Williams	Life De Cory	Fastbreak
10:30	News Nightline	News Nightline	Impacto Noticiero	Raymond TMZ	News Late Show	Noticias Decisiones	News Tonight Show	Lopez	Dr. Young	Charlie Rose	Everest: Beyond	Movie: Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome	UFC 108 Countdown	CSI: NY	NUMB3RS	Movie: Juwanna Mann, Kevin Pollak	Replace Kim	College Football
11:30	Insider Jimmy Kimmel Live	Insider Jimmy Kimmel Live	La Casa de la Risa	Law & Order: SVU	Late Late Show	Decisiones	Late Night	Sex & Upd	Sex & Upd	T. Smiley (Off Air)	Everest: Beyond	Movie: Alien, John Hurt	Star Trek: Voyager	Cold Case		Emperor Dragon		
12:30	News Wall St	News Wall St	Mujer...	King-Hill	Insider	Pagado	Poker After Dark	Lopez	Lopez	Sanchez	Everest: Beyond	Overhaul						
1:30	Paid	Paid	Cero	RENO 911	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid

DENNIS THE MENACE



THE FAMILY CIRCUS



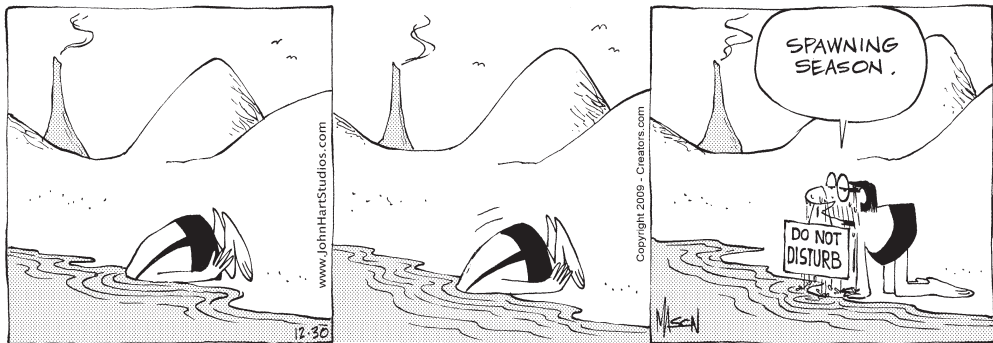
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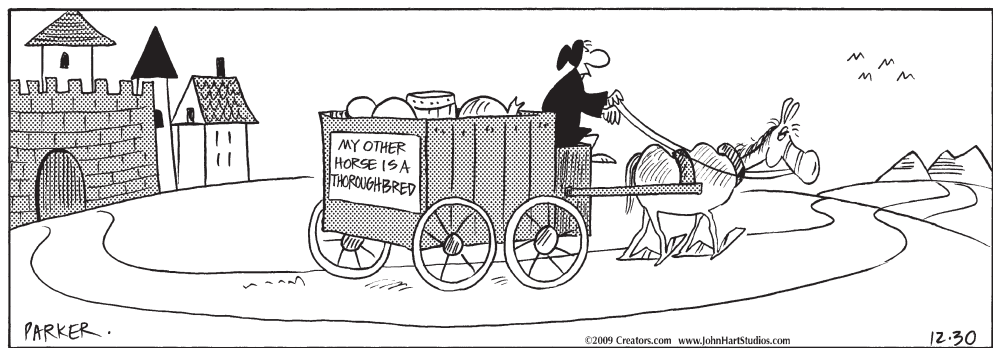
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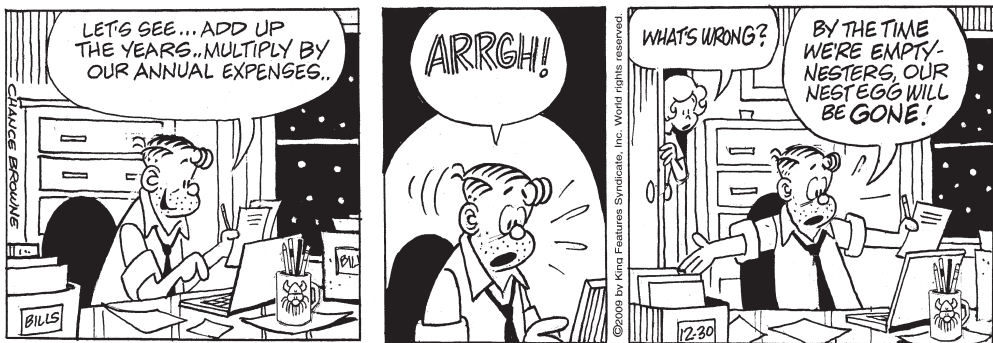
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AGNES



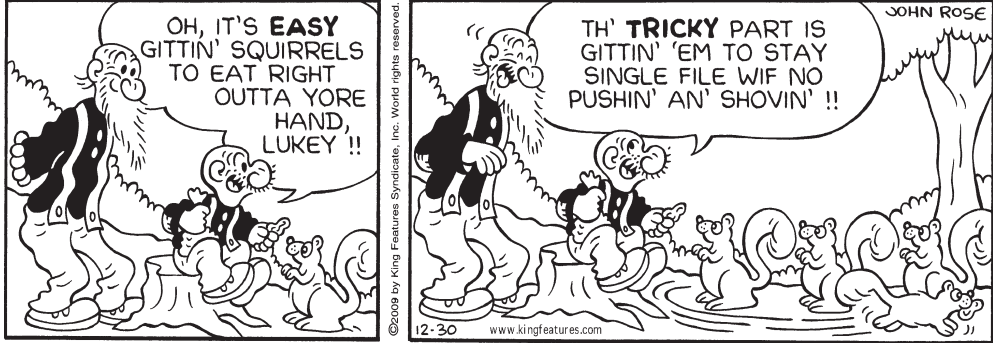
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This Date In History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 30, the 364th day of 2009. There is 1 day left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 30, 1853, the United States and Mexico signed a treaty under which the U.S. agreed to buy some 45,000 square miles of land from Mexico for \$10 million in a deal known as the Gadsden Purchase.

On this date:

In 1813, the British burned Buffalo, N.Y., during the War of 1812.

In 1903, about 600 people died when fire broke out at the recently opened Iroquois Theater in Chicago.

In 1907, the Mills Commission issued its final report, concluding that Abner Doubleday had invented baseball, a view few sports historians, if any, agree with.

In 1922, Vladimir I. Lenin proclaimed the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics.

In 1936, the United Auto Workers union staged its first "sit-down" strike, at the Fisher Body Plant No. 1 in Flint, Mich.

In 1948, the Cole Porter musical "Kiss Me, Kate" opened on Broadway.

In 1972, the United States halted its heavy bombing of North Vietnam.

In 1979, Broadway composer Richard Rodgers died in New York at age 77.

In 1989, a Northwest Airlines DC-10, which had been the target of a telephoned threat, flew safely from Paris to Detroit with 22 passengers amid extra-tight security.

In 1994, a gunman walked into a pair of suburban Boston abortion clinics and opened fire, killing two employees. (John C. Salvi III was later convicted of murder; he died in prison, an apparent suicide.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Joseph Bologna is 75. Actor Russ Tamblyn is 75. Baseball Hall of Famer Sandy Koufax is 74. Actor Jack Riley is 74. Folk singer Noel Paul Stookey is 72. TV director James Burrows is 69. Actor Fred Ward is 67. Singer-musician Michael

Nesmith is 67. Singer Davy Jones is 64. Actress Conchetta Tomei is 64. Singer Patti Smith is 63. Rock singer-musician Jeff Lynne is 62. TV host Meredith Vieira is 56. Actress Sheryl Lee Ralph is 54. Actress Patricia Kalember is 53. Country singer Suzy Bogguss is 53. "Today" show anchor Matt Lauer is 52. Actress-comedian Tracey Ullman is 50. Rock musician Rob Hotchkiss is 49. Radio-TV commentator Sean Hannity is 48. Track star Ben Johnson is 48. Actor George Newbern is 46. Singer Jay Kay (Jamiroquai) is 40. Rock musician Byron McMackin (Pennywise) is 40. Actress Meredith Monroe is 40.

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Answer to previous puzzle

EGRET	LIED	PREP
GLARE	EDGE	LAVA
GETAMOVEON	UNIV	SEE
DEER	SING	ACROSS
CHEST	PEAT	APES
CIAO	EAR	HERE
TRIM	PARS	LEAVE
PREDICT	NEARER	TOTE
PUSHES	SIPS	HMO
ANTI	TAKE	ACTION
ITAN	OVEN	AISLE
LONG	PEWS	PESTS

Newsday Crossword

NO HARM DONE by Norma Steinberg  
Edited by Stanley Newman  
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

1 Have top billing

5 Ear cleaners

10 California county

14 Smidgen

15 Airline employee

16 Starting-date phrase

17 Golf-club handle

18 Join forces

19 Two cups

20 Leaving

23 Mork's home planet

24 Online chuckle

25 Island near Naples

28 Candy in a dispenser

31 Train terminal

35 A single

36 Under a parasol, say

39 Predatory dolphin

40 Being frugal

43 And the rest: Abbr.

44 Flour or sugar

45 Jazz fan

46 Merchant's concern

48 Hit show's sign

49 Peace goddess

51 Members of mgmt.

53 Become more mellow

54 Getting a party going

62 Fifth-rate

63 Perfect

64 Libya neighbor

65 Pickling herb

66 My Fair Lady heroine

67 Actress Davis

68 Friend in battle

69 Monica of tennis

70 \_\_\_ for business

DOWN

1 Wistful sound

2 Spelling of 90210

3 Quarreling

4 Bird of prey

5 Mettle

6 Part of a mansion

7 Got down

8 This and that

9 Pittsburgh product

10 Waterloo loser

11 Where to find China

12 Frog hangout

13 Nautical direction

21 From Cork

22 Curtain hardware

25 Accepts adversity

26 Singer Baker

27 Of punishment

28 Part of a suit

29 Mystery writing award

30 One of the Marxes

32 The bottom line

33 Where the buoys are

34 Have a sample of

37 That guy's

38 Biden's home state: Abbr.

41 With wit

42 Equine sound

47 Hot tub

50 Repeat again

52 Heavens

53 Legendary lifter

54 Seethe

55 Get going

56 Doing nothing

57 Astronaut

Armstrong

58 Look steadily

59 Flapjack franchise

60 Matador gear

61 Paradise

62 Electronic organizer

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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68					69					70		

CREATORS SYNDICATE © 2009 STANLEY NEWMAN STANXWORDS@AOL.COM 12/30/09

# Family global treks a real-world education

DALLAS — When Carla Fisher and her husband announced plans to travel the globe with their adolescent daughters for a year, some friends called them crazy.

Seven years later, with wonderful memories and a book documenting their world trek, the Fishers now seem like global trailblazers.

Despite a recession that may have limited the number of U.S. students traveling abroad in exchange programs, some parents are going out of their way to make sure their children have extended international experiences.

"It's really encouraging to hear that there are a lot of other people who want to educate their kids in that manner," said Fisher, an environmental biologist in suburban Houston.

Some parents are trying to raise enlightened "world citizens," young Americans who aren't caught up in the race to acquire more stuff. Others want to give their children the skills they'll need to compete globally.

"You always want your kids to be ahead of the crowd," said Christopher Holtby, who works in Dallas and commutes to Mexico where his family moved temporarily in August so their three sons could become bilingual.

Tuition for their private school in Mexico is \$200 a month, per child — a fraction of what it would cost them in the states.

"This is a global world," Holtby said. "My wife and I understand that if we can give our kids some exposure they'll have more options."

No one knows exactly how many American families are choosing the global education path — about 2,000 U.S. secondary school students studied abroad in exchange programs last year, according to the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel.

But global education consultants say a growing number of parents are traveling for a year or more with their children, in part because technology makes it easy for them to work from anywhere.

"There is a tremendous amount of interest in spending time abroad at all stages of life and increasingly, as a family with children," said Maya Frost, author of "The New Global Student: Skip the SAT, Save Thousands on Tuition and Get a Truly International Education." She knows American families in every corner of the globe who have made

**"This is a global world. My wife and I understand that if we can give our kids some exposure they'll have more options."**

Christopher Holtby

that choice.

She and her husband left their Portland, Ore., suburb for adventures in Mexico and Argentina with their four teenage daughters in 2005.

"The old model of the expatriate family — corporate transfers and diplomats — is still an option, but the new global families are more likely to be moving abroad independently and creating their own work for themselves," said Frost.

Some families who opt for nomadic education are former Peace Corps volunteers, children of immigrants, have adopted a child from overseas or simply suffer from wanderlust.

Computers enable them to continue working while they're traveling, and homeschooling makes it easier to pluck children out of traditional schools for some real-world learning.

"There's so much more to education than school," said Tessa Hill, who recently returned to her Houston-area home, after driving her family across North America, Central America and Europe in a motor home for 13 months. "World travel is an education in people, cultures, in language, in travel skills, street smarts and in how lucky we are to live in the United States."

When Hill and her husband began considering extended global travel, their middle child, Charles, 13, was skeptical.

"My first reaction was 'well, are we really going to do this?'" Charles said. "But it did sound like great fun."

Charles said missing his buddies was the hardest part. He stayed in touch via e-mail and made some new friends along the way, play-

ing soccer with kids in France and learning about rugby from youths in Ireland.

The tasty and varied cuisine of other lands was another unexpected joy the seventh-grader extols.

"I'd definitely recommend this to other kids," Charles said. "It was such a great opportunity to see different countries and learn geography a different way."

To make re-entry smoother, most school officials prefer that families work out an educational plan before they leave town. Sometimes tests are given to determine grade-level placement or subject mastery upon return.

"It sounds cliché, but it really opens up your mind and your eyes to the world," said Robbin Goodman, 17, a senior at St. Stephen's Episcopal School in Austin who spent his junior year skateboarding across Beijing, China, when he wasn't studying Chinese history and other core subjects.

Had he not already taken a school-sponsored spring break trip with his mom to China in 2007, Robbin said he probably would not have been able to convince his parents to let him go alone for a year.

"I knew I would learn Chinese and all that, but my goal was to have a great time," Robbin said.

"That's what I was shooting for was to make every moment awesome and it was."

While studying, living or traveling abroad for a year isn't for everyone, it is no longer limited to the rich. Fisher said she and her husband began saving for their trek when their two daughters were really young.

While away, tenants covered their mortgage and the Fishers stayed in hostels and inexpensive apartments, shopped in local markets and prepared their own food.

Fisher said their 13-month international sojourn cost about \$100,000 in 2001-02 with transportation.

"The biggest obstacle for those seriously considering going abroad is dealing with those who are against the idea," said Frost.

Parents say the benefits to their children outweigh inconvenienc-

es.

"They gain the ability to take risks and to have confidence in themselves," said Liz Perelstein, founder of New York-based School Choice International, a global education con-

sulting firm. "When we came home (from being expatriates in London), my daughter, who had been painfully shy before we left, said 'Mom, now I know there's nothing I can't do.'"

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# Hard-liners back Iran government in rallies

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Tens of thousands of hard-line government supporters turned out for state-sponsored rallies Wednesday, some of them calling for the execution of opposition leaders as Iran's police chief threatened to show "no mercy" in crushing any new protests by the pro-reform movement.

Pro-government rallies were staged in Shiraz, Arak, Qom, Tehran among other cities. Demonstrators at a rally in Tehran chanted "Death to Mousavi," a reference to opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi. Some shouted "Rioter hypocrites must be executed" and held up a banner that read: "We sacrifice our blood for supreme leader."

The government gave all civil servants and employees a day off to attend the rallies

and organized buses to transport groups of schoolchildren and supporters from outlying rural areas to the protests.

Hardline cleric Ahmad Alamolhoda called opponents of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei supporters of Satan.

"Enemies of the leader, according to the Quran, belong to the party of Satan," Alamolhoda told demonstrators in Tehran in comments broadcast on state TV. "Our war in the world is war against the opponents of the rule of the supreme leader."

Separately, police chief Gen. Ismail Ahmadi Moghaddam warned protesters to stay off the streets or face harsh consequences. At least eight people were killed in street violence Sunday, the coun-

try's worst unrest since the aftermath of the disputed presidential election on June 12.

"In dealing with previous protests, police showed leniency. But given that these opponents are seeking to topple (the ruling system), there will be no mercy," Moghaddam said, according to the official news agency IRNA. "We will take severe action. The era of tolerance is over. Anyone attending such rallies will be crushed."

One of those killed Sunday was the nephew of opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi. Iran's deputy police chief said Ali Mousavi was assassinated by unidentified assailants and not killed by security forces.

Ali Mousavi was buried Wednesday in a hastily organized ceremony. Authorities had

taken his body from the hospital earlier in the week in what was seen as an attempt to prevent the funeral from turning into another pro-opposition protest.

The opposition says Ali Mousavi was shot and killed by security forces.

But Iran's deputy

police chief, Ahmad Reza Radan, was quoted by IRNA as saying that the way he was killed suggests he was assassinated while walking. *The New York Times* has quoted a family friend as saying he was run over by a vehicle outside his home in an assassination.

The police chief said more than 500 protesters who took part in Sunday's demonstrations have been arrested but the number may be higher since hardline Basij militiamen and intelligence agents may have apprehended more people on their own, sources said.



AP photo/Vahid Salemi  
Pro-government Iranian demonstrators gather in a rally at Revolution Square in Tehran, Iran Wednesday. Iran's police chief threatened to show "no mercy" to pro-reform demonstrators.

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