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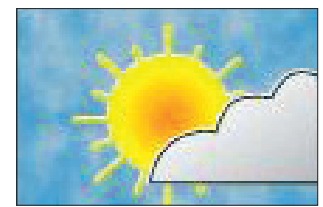
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BIG SPRING HERALD

WEDNESDAY
 DECEMBER 22, 2010



VOLUME 105, NUMBER 321A

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HERALD photo/Steve Reagan

Big Spring police and emergency medical service personnel responded to the scene of an automobile-motorcycle accident at the intersection of West Fourth and San Antonio streets Tuesday evening. The motorcycle rider and his passenger were transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center with undisclosed injuries.

Mum is the word

*SO tight-lipped
 on investigation
 of found skull*

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
 Staff Writer

Law enforcement officials are remaining tight-lipped regarding an investigation into what may be a human skull discovered Monday morning at a location in northern Howard County.

A press release issued by the Howard County Sheriff's Office Monday morning advised law enforcement officials were called to the scene around 11 a.m. at an undisclosed location in northern Howard County after what appears to be a piece of a human skull was found.

Sheriff Stan Parker said the item has been sent to specialists to determine if the skull is indeed human, and, if so, details such as how old it is and whether it came from a male or female subject.

"The investigation is open and ongoing. There really isn't much more I'm at liberty to discuss at this time," Parker said.

When asked if the skull is believed to be tied to any other ongoing investigations — such as a missing person or possible homicide — Parker declined to comment, once again citing the open investigation.

See **SKULL**, Page 3A

Don't toss that old TV, donate it, BSSH says

Special to the Herald



Couch

We don't know what Santa plans to put under your tree this Christmas, but if you happen to be surprised with a new flat-screen, plasma television set, Big Spring State Hospital would be more than happy to take the old one off your hands.

Big Spring State Hospital needs used tube television sets for patient areas, Big Spring State Hospital Assistant Superintendent Lorie Couch said.

"The donated television sets will be used in patient living areas and be used to add to the therapeutic setting we provide for our patients," Couch said. "Each of our

patient living units has a shared living area where patients relax and visit, and either watch television, read or play games.

"We are always in need of television sets, and we thought Christmas would be the perfect time to ask the public for their used television sets.

"Our only requirement is that they be at least a 13-inch screen and that they be in working condition," Couch said.

"Remote controls are not necessary, but we will take them with the television set."

Televisions can be taken to the Community Relations office on the Big Spring State Hospital campus, 1901 N. Highway 87, or the hospital can arrange to pick up televisions from a local address, she said.

Donations are tax-deductible, and the Community Relations office can provide receipts for the donations. If you have any questions, call the Community Relations office at 432 268-7535.

Big Spring State Hospital is a 200-bed psychiatric hospital in Howard County for people in West Texas. The hospital employs more than 650 people, including physicians, nurses, therapists and direct care workers.

TxDOT encourages motorists to travel safe

Special to the Herald

Santa and his entourage — reindeer and elves — encourage Texans to have fun through the holidays. But, you better look out because he won't be the only one watching.

The Texas Department of Transportation will partner with law enforcement across

the state to communicate important travel messages to keep citizens safe through the holidays. And, law enforcement will be working overtime to find and arrest folks who drive impaired.

Officials say follow some simple travel tips to make sure

See **SAFE**, Page 3A

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Mavericks beat new-look Magic

The Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — All the uncertainty around Orlando couldn't have worked out better for the Dallas Mavericks.

Not that they've had a problem with anybody lately.

Caron Butler scored 20 points, Dirk Nowitzki had 17 and the streaking Mavericks became the latest team to topple the reconstructed Magic in a 105-99 victory Tuesday night.

"We still know who they had," Nowitzki said of a Magic team that just overhauled its roster. "Dwight (Howard) is their focus. They have a bunch of shooters, Jameer (Nelson) and all those guys."

In other words, still not good enough to beat the NBA's elite.

Nowitzki also passed Celtics great Larry Bird for 25th on the NBA's career scoring list, finishing the night at

21,798 points. Tyson Chandler added 16 points to help the Mavericks pull away in the fourth quarter for their 16th win in 17 games.

A night after snapping Miami's 12-game winning streak, they shot 49 percent from the floor, including 46 percent from 3-point range.

"We feel like we're one of the best teams in the league, if not the best right now," Butler said. "We're playing great basketball, so we want to capitalize on every opportunity."

And Orlando provided a perfect one.

The Magic again looked like a team that hasn't had time to hold a practice since newcomers Gilbert Arenas, Jason Richardson and Hedo Turkoglu were acquired on Saturday. They've lost the first two games since the pair of blockbuster trades and dropped eight of their last nine.

The latest came on another monster night for Howard, who had 26 points and 23 rebounds but got no help from his new teammates. Howard has had at least 20 rebounds in three straight games.

"It can't get any worse," Howard said of his team's slide.

The Magic can only hope not.

Their next two games come against the league's top two teams: San Antonio and Boston.

The struggles were a big reason they orchestrated two trades that brought Arenas from Washington and Turkoglu, Richardson and Earl Clark from Phoenix.

They gave up Rashard Lewis, Vince Carter, Mickael Pietrus and Marcin Gortat, plus a 2011 first-round draft pick, in the deals.

The three biggest newcomers have so far been unspectacular. After a loss

at Atlanta in their first outing together, their home debuts were equally troubling: Arenas had two points (1 for 6), Turkoglu nine points (2 for 11) and Richardson 10 points (4 for 13).

"None of those guys are shooting the ball very well right now," Magic coach Stan Van Gundy said. "I don't know if it's being in a new situation or putting too much pressure on themselves. All three of them are struggling to shoot the ball."

The problem now is sorting out how this revamped roster is supposed to work.

It wasn't until the Mavericks went ahead by 12 points in the fourth quarter that the Magic — at least those other than Howard — showed any consistent fight.

Richardson's 3-pointer with 56 seconds remaining trimmed the deficit to three.

Cowboys put Romo on season-ending IR

The Associated Press

IRVING (AP) — With time running out on this season, the Dallas Cowboys told injured quarterback Tony Romo he might as well rest up for next season.

Romo went on injured reserve Tuesday, eliminating any chance of him playing Saturday night at Arizona or in the season finale at Philadelphia. He's been out since breaking his left collarbone Oct. 25.

"When you just start doing the math on it and say, 'Where is he with this injury? Where is he physically functioning? Where is he being able to take a hit? And then, how much practice time you need to have any player be ready to play in a game?'" interim coach Jason Garrett said. "We just felt when we worked all those things together, it just made sense to make this move."

It seemed silly for the Cowboys to take any chances since they can't make the playoffs and are guaranteed a losing record, though they kept the option open by carrying him on the active roster the last eight weeks. Garrett said



Dallas Cowboys' quarterback Tony Romo flirted with the possibility of returning from injury this season, but was put on injured reserve Tuesday, ending any chance of him playing in the final two games of the season.

having this weekend recovery.

On Sunday, team owner Jerry Jones said

Romo was "still having sensitivity there" and not ready to play.

Garrett indicated Romo was announced before the club even hit the field.

Steinbrenner, Wooden among year's losses in sports

The Associated Press

He was The Boss, and George Steinbrenner came to revel in all it would suggest.

He filled a room with loud talk and big money, making promises of players to come, games to be won and the titles that must follow. He was the principal owner of the New York Yankees, but commander was really more like it.

John Wooden was the Wizard of Westwood, a nickname he never much cared for, although the poet in him might have enjoyed the alliteration.

Teacher — not something with a whiff of alchemy and mysterious doings — would have been closer to the mark. For that's how generations of basketball players at UCLA came to regard him. He won plenty of championships, but what mattered most was the lifetime of lessons imparted.

Wooden and Steinbrenner — two towering figures in sports — died in 2010, each having transformed his game in a distinct but enduring way.

Wooden, the only member of the Basketball Hall of Fame as a player and coach, had roots that practically went back to peach baskets and the genesis of the game itself. He died at 99, just a couple months short of a century.

"In my opinion, if he's not as impor-

"He taught me in a very simple way. He used sports as a means to teach us how to apply ourselves to any situation."

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar,
Former UCLA basketball player on John Wooden

tant as Dr. Naismith, he's right next to him," Connecticut coach Jim Calhoun said. He was, Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said, "a giant in all of sport."

Gripping a rolled-up program like a baton, Wooden was the consummate maestro. The Bruins won 10 NCAA titles and seven in a row from 1967 to 1973. There was an 88-game winning streak that has enjoyed renewed attention thanks to the Connecticut women and their dynasty a generation down the road.

But, as Wooden would be the first to note, he never scored a basket during that run. It was all the players, and what players they were: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Bill Walton, Gail Goodrich, Jamaal Wilkes. For all the victories, however, it was the daily practice that drove Wooden. That's when basketball was taught. When the game itself arrived, he would have been happy to sit in the stands and see what became of his instruction.

"He taught in a very simple way," Abdul-Jabbar said. "He used sports as a means to teach us how to apply ourselves to any situation."

Steinbrenner's reign had the subtlety of a bullhorn. His teams also produced titles — seven World Series crowns and 11 pennants — but if UCLA thrived under the quiet, scholarly tutelage of Wooden, Steinbrenner's Yankees cranked up the volume and brought a showmanship and self-promotion that has come to define much of professional sports.

"George was The Boss, make no mistake," said Yogi Berra, who for years cut himself off from the Yankees because of Steinbrenner. "He built the Yankees into champions, and that's something nobody can ever deny."

Steinbrenner died of a heart attack at 80. He was a shadow of himself in his final years as his health weakened, the bluster and mighty pronouncements fading as his sons took control of the team. By the end, the man who was twice suspended from baseball on the way to building a sports empire was something of a beloved figure.

He was a long way from the owner who saw himself as a gung-ho football coach and inspired fear and trembling among employees, spending wildly on free agents, clashing with the likes

of Berra, Billy Martin and Dave Winfield, and firing and rehiring managers in what became comic opera.

"I will always remember George Steinbrenner as a passionate man, a tough boss, a true visionary," said Joe Torre, who managed the Yankees for 12 years.

But no matter how much noise the Yankees created, none of it matched the din from the "Shot Heard 'Round the World." Bobby Thomson, whose home run decided the 1951 pennant for the New York Giants, died this year at 86.

The blow came off Ralph Branca of the Brooklyn Dodgers in Game 3 of a National League playoff and soared into baseball lore as the game's greatest home run. For many fans of a certain age it was a marker in their lives.

"I never thought it was going to be that big. Hell, no," Branca recalled. "When we went into the next season, I thought it'd be forgotten."

If Steinbrenner and Thomson were about sound, Bob Feller was about speed. The Iowa farm boy made it to the majors with the Cleveland Indians at just 17 and eventually to the Hall of Fame. He died at 92, his last days spent in a hospice, and was one of baseball's greatest pitchers.

Police blotter

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

- SAMUEL RAY SEGUNDO III, 19, of 503 Washington Blvd., was arrested Tuesday on a charge of consumption of alcohol by a minor.
- JIMMY RAY WATSON, 19, of 2601 Chanute, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of consumption of alcohol by a minor.
- CHRISTOPHER KENT BROOKS, 20, of 2309 Allendale, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of consumption of alcohol by a minor.
- HUTTON TAYLOR EVANS, 19, of 3103 Mountain Shadow, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of consumption of alcohol by a minor.
- MICHAEL JOSEPH MARTINEZ, 27, of 4211 Parkway, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of public intoxication.
- CADE AARON HOLLANDSWORTH, 19, of 2700 Ann, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of consumption of alcohol by a minor.
- CHRISTOPHER DAVID MARTINEZ, 21, of 1507 Aylesford, was arrested Tuesday on charges of purchasing/furnishing alcohol to a minor and criminal trespass.
- CORY LEE PUGA, 19, of 1313 Lindbergh, was arrested Tuesday on a warrant for assault causing bodily injury.
- LACEY B. VAUGHN, 51, of 902 S. Runnels, was

arrested Tuesday on a charge of public intoxication.

- CHRISTOPHER ALTON RANEY, 38, of Lubbock, was arrested Tuesday on a warrant for theft.
- VINCENT PAUL GONZALEZ, 22, of San Antonio, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of disorderly conduct - language.
- JUSTIN CLAY COLE, 32, of 1425 E. Sixth St., was arrested Wednesday on warrants for expired license plate (two counts), expired motor vehicle inspection certificate, failure to maintain financial responsibility, driving while license invalid and a warrant from another agency.
- KYLE SHALOR SEBER, 21, of 1807 Driver Rd., was arrested Wednesday on a charge of driving while intoxicated.
- LINDA RENA TORRES, 28, of 1429 E. Sixth St. Apt. 12, was arrested Wednesday on a charge of public intoxication.
- THEFT was reported:
In the 2500 block of Fairchild.
In the 400 block of E. Fourth Street.
- CRIMINAL MISCHIEF was reported in the 4100 block of S. Highway 87.
- BURGLARY OF A HABITATION was reported:
In the 1800 block of Laurie.
In the 700 block of Lorilla.
- ASSAULT was reported in the 2300 block of

Morrison.

Sheriff

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

Note — Officials with the Howard County Jail reported having 67 inmates at the time of this report.

- CHRISTOPHER DAVID MARTINEZ, 21, was transferred to the county jail Tuesday by the

See **SHERIFF**, Page 5A

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Chip Kelly wins AP coach of year

BY ADAM COLEMAN

EUGENE, Ore. — Oregon athletic officials were so convinced that Chip Kelly was destined to be head coach of the Ducks they offered him the job before it came open.

Smart move.

In just his second season leading Oregon, Kelly is taking the second-ranked Ducks to the national championship game on Jan. 10 against No. 1 Auburn — and for that he was voted AP Coach of the Year on Tuesday.

Kelly received 24 votes from the 60-member AP football poll panel to beat out his BCS title game counterpart, Gene Chizik of Auburn, who received 17 votes.

Stanford's Jim Harbaugh was third with five votes, TCU's Gary Patterson, last year's winner, and Mark Dantonio of Michigan State each received three votes. Getting one vote apiece were Nevada's Chris Ault, Oklahoma State's Mike Gundy and Miami, Ohio's Mike Haywood, who led the school to a Mid-American Conference championship before taking the top job at Pittsburgh last week.

One voter abstained and four did not return ballots.

Kelly has made a rapid rise from I-AA coordinator in New England to leading the Pac-10's new powerhouse program to within a victory of its first national championship.

Mike Bellotti, Oregon's longtime head coach through the 2008 season, hired Kelly away from New Hampshire to run the Ducks offense in 2007. He installed an up-tempo, spread-option attack that has been growing more potent ever since.

It didn't take long for it to become clear that Bellotti had hired his heir apparent. When Bellotti was tapped to take over as the school's athletic director, Oregon announced in December 2008 — as the Ducks prepared for the Holiday Bowl — that Bellotti would become full-time AD at some point and Kelly was the head-coach in waiting.

That spring, Bellotti made it official and Kelly took over the Ducks.

In his first season as head coach, Kelly led the Ducks to a 10-3 record and the Pac-10 championship, tailoring his explosive offense to the dual talents of quarterback Jeremiah Masoli and weathering the storm of negative publicity brought about when star running back LeGarrette Blount punched a Boise State player after an opening game loss.

Oregon regrouped and went on to the Rose Bowl for the first time since New Year's 1995.

Kelly was met by more turbulence this past spring when both Masoli and running back LaMichael James got into trouble.

After Masoli pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge tied to the theft of a campus fraternity house, Kelly suspended him for the season. The coach lat-

er won praise for dismissing Masoli — considered to be a preseason Heisman Trophy hopeful — when he was caught with marijuana in his car.

With Masoli gone, Kelly developed sophomore Darron Thomas into not just a replacement, but an upgrade.

James was suspended for the opener after pleading guilty to misdemeanor harassment for an altercation with his ex-girlfriend — but Kelly maintained that James was both honest and contrite about what had transpired.

Just as he had after Blount and the punch, Kelly had his team focused on moving forward in fall camp. The ability to reign in his team and shut out distractions has become one of his trademarks.

This season's Ducks have fully bought into Kelly's "Win The Day" philosophy. The motto is the last thing the players see above them as they emerge from the tunnel onto the field at Autzen Stadium. The acronym "WTD" graces the four corners of the stadium. And it will be written on the team's helmets in the national championship game.

Oregon reached No. 1 in the nation for the first time in school history and Kelly has become college football's genius du jour. While plenty of teams are pushing the pace at which they play offensively, nobody does it as well and as quickly as the Ducks.

"Our vision is we want to play fast. We want to play hard. We want to finish," he said.

LOSSES

Continued from Page 1B

Feller was blindingly fast. He struck out 15 in his major league debut and threw three no-hitters (the only one on opening day) and 12 one-hitters.

He also won 266 games in 18 seasons.

su | do | ku
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ANSWERS

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

Boise State regroups for MAACO Bowl

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Austin Pettis and his teammates say all the right things, if only because they have no other choice. No need to disrespect Utah or the early bowl game in this gambling city, even if they would rather be smelling roses somewhere else.

What might have been for Boise State ended with two

missed field goals against Nevada that cost the Broncos an expected bid to the Rose Bowl. Now they must overcome crushed expectations and perform like a BCS team against the No. 20 Utes to try and set the stage for another magical run next season.

"It's not like we didn't try or didn't try and go out there to win the game," Pettis said of

the 34-31 overtime loss to Nevada. "Everyone played their best and sometimes it doesn't work out the way we wanted to. It's not like we're in a bad situation.

"We still have a nice bowl game."

Nice, perhaps. But playing in the desert before Christmas isn't the same as playing in the Rose Bowl on New Year's Day

no matter how Boise's players and coaches try to spin it.

Still, there's next year to think about. And a big win over Utah (10-2), which has won nine straight bowl games, could go a long way toward retaining the national respect Boise State have built up and set the Broncos up for a higher ranking entering the 2011 season.

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Redskins' QB McNabb felt 'disrespected' by benching

The Associated Press

ASHBURN, Va. — Donovan McNabb felt disrespected by the

way he was benched by Washington Redskins coach Mike Shanahan. "Everything was handled awkwardly," McNabb said Tuesday on his weekly radio show on ESPN980, "somewhat to a disrespect to me and to the team."

Making his first public comments since his demotion last week, McNabb said he strongly disagreed with the deci-

sion, but he has a bigger problem with the way he says the organization leaked the news to the media before informing him.

"Because of the timing and because of all the leaks and everything that was put out there, and no putting out the fire, so to speak," McNabb said, "I'm hearing everything through the media."

In **Sunday's**
Big Spring Herald

American Profile
SPECIAL ISSUE
Acts of Kindness
Heartwarming stories about inspiring gestures of caring.

Gestures of Caring

Culled from suggestions by readers, this annual collection of heartwarming stories spotlights people whose selfless and generous acts show that the spirit of kindness is very much alive and well in America.

American Profile

Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

A Spot Card Shows the Way

South dealer.
Both sides vulnerable.

NORTH
♦ Q J
♥ J 9 4
♦ A Q 10 7 3
♣ 8 7 5

WEST
♦ K 8 3 2
♥ A 6
♦ J
♣ K Q J 10 9 2

EAST
♥ A 9 6 5
♦ 7 5 2
♦ 9 4 2
♣ 6 4 3

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

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

Opening lead — jack of diamonds.

The opportunity to use certain specialized defensive signals does not come up very often. But when the proper occasion arises, these methods can be used to devastating effect.

Consider this deal from a team contest where both North-South pairs reached four hearts and both Wests led the jack of diamonds.

At the first table, South played low from dummy, East followed with the deuce, and declarer won with the

king. A low heart was then led toward dummy. West, seeking a diamond ruff, put up the ace and had to decide how to try to reach his partner's hand.

With all the cards in view, it is easy to see that a spade shift would have succeeded. But from West's seat, a spade lead looked extremely risky, while a club return appeared harmless. So West opted for the safer lead of the club nine. East would win with the ace if he had it, while the nine would force out the ace if South had that card.

Unfortunately, South produced the ace, drew trumps and conceded two spade tricks — making four.

At the second table, East gave his partner far more help. Fully attuned to the fact that his partner was interested in a diamond ruff, East played the nine of diamonds on the first trick. Under the circumstances, this could hardly be construed as a come-on signal in diamonds, so it had to be interpreted as suit-preference, directing West to lead the higher-ranking of the two remaining side suits (spades and clubs) if he gained the lead.

Accordingly, when West took his ace of hearts at trick two, he shifted to a spade. East won with the ace and returned a diamond for West to ruff, and the king of spades put the finishing touch on a well-defended hand.

Tomorrow: A self-imposed challenge.
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su | do | ku
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Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9 with no repeats. That means no number is repeated in any row, column or box. Solution, tips and computer program at www.sudoku.com

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

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Today's Weather

Local 5-Day Forecast

Thu 12/23	Fri 12/24	Sat 12/25	Sun 12/26	Mon 12/27
56/42 Cloudy skies early. A few showers developing later in the day. High 56F.	57/29 Morning clouds followed by afternoon sun.	55/25 Sunshine. Highs in the mid 50s and lows in the mid 20s.	59/30 Sunny. Highs in the upper 50s and lows in the low 30s.	64/33 More sun than clouds. Highs in the mid 60s and lows in the low 30s.
Sunrise: 7:44 AM Sunset: 5:46 PM	Sunrise: 7:44 AM Sunset: 5:47 PM	Sunrise: 7:45 AM Sunset: 5:48 PM	Sunrise: 7:45 AM Sunset: 5:48 PM	Sunrise: 7:46 AM Sunset: 5:49 PM

Texas At A Glance

Area Cities

City	Hi	Lo	Cond.	City	Hi	Lo	Cond.
Abilene	58	46	rain	Kingsville	81	60	pt sunny
Amarillo	53	33	cloudy	Livingston	60	45	cloudy
Austin	69	55	cloudy	Longview	53	43	cloudy
Beaumont	60	47	cloudy	Lubbock	57	35	cloudy
Brownsville	78	62	pt sunny	Lufkin	56	44	cloudy
Brownwood	61	50	rain	Midland	60	42	cloudy
Corpus Christi	78	61	cloudy	Raymondville	82	60	pt sunny
Corsicana	56	47	cloudy	Rosenberg	69	53	cloudy
Dallas	54	47	cloudy	San Antonio	75	58	cloudy
Del Rio	70	53	cloudy	San Marcos	70	55	cloudy
El Paso	65	39	windy	Sulphur Springs	52	44	cloudy
Fort Stockton	67	43	pt sunny	Sweetwater	57	45	rain
Gainesville	50	40	rain	Tyler	53	43	cloudy
Greenville	51	42	cloudy	Weatherford	53	43	rain
Houston	67	52	cloudy	Wichita Falls	54	40	rain

National Cities

City	Hi	Lo	Cond.	City	Hi	Lo	Cond.
Atlanta	50	28	sunny	Minneapolis	26	16	cloudy
Boston	38	23	sn shower	New York	38	27	pt sunny
Chicago	29	22	cloudy	Phoenix	60	44	rain
Dallas	54	47	cloudy	San Francisco	59	50	pt sunny
Denver	46	28	mixed	Seattle	48	44	rain
Houston	67	52	cloudy	St. Louis	36	28	cloudy
Los Angeles	61	48	pt sunny	Washington, DC	39	27	windy
Miami	74	53	mst sunny				

State briefs

Stepdad gets 45 years for death of McAllen toddler

EDINBURG (AP) — A man charged with beating his 2-year-old stepdaughter to death when she wouldn't stop crying as he watched a World Cup match on television has pleaded guilty to murder. A judge in Edinburg on Tuesday accepted the plea from 28-year-old Hector Castro and sentenced him to 45 years in prison. McAllen police in June arrested Castro after emergency personnel responded to a report of a girl choking. Police say a screw apparently was forced down her throat in an attempt to make it look like she choked. The girl had been beaten. Castro had been charged with capital murder and if convicted could have received the death penalty. McAllen police on Wednesday did not immediately return a call from The Associated Press to provide further details on the victim.

Money adding up from Central Texas toll roads

AUSTIN (AP) — Toll roads to ease congestion and speed traffic along in the Austin area are paying off. The tens of thousands of drivers who use the 78-mile Central Texas tollway system each day are generating more revenue than projected before the project was launched four years ago, a newspaper reported Wednesday. According to data collected in 2009 by the Texas Department of Transportation, traffic on Texas 45 North near the tollway's joining with Interstate 35 is close to 100,000 vehicles daily, according to the Austin American-Statesman. Figures show \$66.2 million was generated in the 2009-2010 fiscal year by the three financially intertwined roads of the Texas Department of Transportation's Central Texas Turnpike Project, including Texas 130, Texas 45 North and Loop 1. The number

SKULL

Continued from Page 1A

A local resident, however, speaking on the condition of anonymity, confirmed to the *Herald* Tuesday the skull was discovered in the trunk of a brown 1985 Buick. However, the informant could not confirm whether the skull was human. Parker declined to

comment on the claim, saying patience is vital at this point in the Sheriff's Office investigation. "I really can't comment on those or any other details at this point in the investigation. It's going to take some time to have it examined, and I would ask everyone to please remain patient in the meantime," Parker said. Parker did say no arrests have been made in connection with the investigation. "If it is a human skull, we don't yet know the identity of the person it belonged to at this time," he said. "Also, there haven't been any arrests as a result of the discovery."

Contractor gets 25 years over Lufkin tornado scam

LUFKIN (AP) — A building contractor convicted of scamming victims of a December 2009 tornado in Lufkin must serve 25 years in prison. A judge in Lufkin on Tuesday sentenced 43-year-old Jason Lynn McKnight of Wells. A jury in October convicted McKnight on five counts of fraud. He was accused of illegally securing building permits from the city on behalf of tornado victims without their knowledge or not having the residents under contract. McKnight, who says he was unfairly judged because he previously spent time in prison,

comment on the claim, saying patience is vital at this point in the Sheriff's Office investigation. "I really can't comment on those or any other details at this point in the investigation. It's going to take some time to have it examined, and I would ask everyone to please remain patient in the meantime," Parker said. Parker did say no arrests have been made in connection with the investigation. "If it is a human skull, we don't yet know the identity of the person it belonged to at this time," he said. "Also, there haven't been any arrests as a result of the discovery."

SAFE

Continued from Page 1A

you arrive safely, and for goodness sake, don't drink and drive. "Be cautious and plan ahead," said David Casteel, TxDOT assistant executive director for field and district operations. "Have fun, but be responsible." Here are some tips to consider before heading out: — Be patient, allow enough time to reach your destination and obey all traffic laws. — Roads will be crowded, and this could lead to some aggressive driving on the part of other motorists. Be courteous in these situations and avoid bad driving actions that may make the situation worse i.e., road rage. — Monitor the weather. If it's going to be bad, particularly ice or snow events, consider staying home. Or rearrange your travel plans to avoid bad weather situations. — If you plan on drinking, plan on not driving. Designate a driver or call a taxi or a sober friend. There were 1,159 serious injuries and 64 deaths from traffic crashes that occurred through the 2009/2010 Christmas and New Year's holiday reporting periods. — Be a responsible driver all year round. There were 12,408 alcohol-related fatal and injury crashes in Texas in 2009 that killed 956 motorists and injured 17,703 others.

comment on the claim, saying patience is vital at this point in the Sheriff's Office investigation. "I really can't comment on those or any other details at this point in the investigation. It's going to take some time to have it examined, and I would ask everyone to please remain patient in the meantime," Parker said. Parker did say no arrests have been made in connection with the investigation. "If it is a human skull, we don't yet know the identity of the person it belonged to at this time," he said. "Also, there haven't been any arrests as a result of the discovery."

Center at 800-452-9292 or visit TxDOT's website at www.txdot.gov.

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Virginia "Virgie" Munoz, 53, died Sunday. Vigil Services will be at 7 p.m. tonight at Myers & Smith Chapel. Funeral Mass will be at 10 a.m. Thursday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park. Jack Hanson, 87, died Tuesday. The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. tonight at Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Funeral Services will be at 3:00 PM Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel with burial at Trinity Memorial Park.

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The Big Spring Herald is a member of The Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce, Texas Press Association, West Texas Press Association, Texas Daily Newspaper Association, The Associated Press.

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Big Spring Herald, P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, TX 79721. Periodicals postage paid at Big Spring, Texas.

USPS 1431-48 USPS 0055-940 ISSN 0746-6811
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Must have a current license. Bilingual a plus. This full-time position offers a competitive salary, benefits, and holidays. Please mail resume/applications to Dale Moore, South Plains Rural Health Services, Inc. 1000 FM RD 300, Levelland TX 79336, or fax to (806)894-3378. EOE. No phone calls please.

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EDITORIAL

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-FIRST AMENDMENT

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

Ron Midkiff
Publisher

John A. Moseley
Managing Editor

Bill McClellan
News Editor

OUR VIEW

Remember, visit at Big Spring's Festival of Lights

Most Christmases are anything but boring but if you find yourself looking for an extra special treat one evening this weekend, then head over to Comanche Trail Park and the Festival of Lights. What a way to top off Christmas, huh?

In fact, the Festival of Lights will be on display through Friday of next week, and yes, that includes Christmas Eve, Christmas and New Year's Eve. Brave volunteers will be there to greet you from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. each evening. Donations are accepted, but there is no charge to view the individual displays which include almost a million lights.

The best way to enter the park is at the Whipkey Drive entrance off Highway 87. Just look for the gateway of poinsettias. From there, follow the scenes and giant postcards through the park and the circle drive at the spring, then exit near Kids Zone. Along the way you'll see dozens of traditional and not-so-traditional Christmas scenes.

And remember, you can park near the Dora Roberts Community Center and walk through the park, crossing over lighted bridges and getting a unique view of the displays.

What's more, there's now a very unique gift shop available for festival visitors.

Already, the Festival of Lights has drawn many out of town visitors. Past "festivals" — this is the event's 14th year — have attracted visitors from most of the 50 states and dozens of countries. Festival organizers are expecting to again top the 20,000-mark in attendance before turning out the lights shortly after 10 p.m. on New Year's Eve.

So, make plans this weekend to pile the family in the car and head out to the Festival of Lights. It's well worth the trip and just one more reason Big Spring is a great place to be during the holidays.

HOW TO CONTACT US

The Herald is always interested in our readers' opinions.

In order that we might better serve your needs, we offer several ways in which you may contact us:

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

LETTER POLICIES

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 discuss our future plans with You, Lord.
Amen

Looking at Darwin Awards finalists

For some folks, December means plenty of holiday cheer and ramping up for the New Year holiday. It's all about Christmas, gifts wrapped in bright, glittery paper, a little egg nog and spending time with friends and family.

And while I certainly enjoy all of those things, December is also the time of the year the top winners of the annual Darwin Awards are named, something I look forward to much like a child impatiently waits for Christmas morning.

For the uninitiated, the Darwin Awards are a tongue-in-cheek honor named after evolutionary theorist Charles Darwin. Awards have been given for people who "do a service to humanity by removing themselves from the gene pool" — i.e., lose the ability to reproduce either by death or sterilization in an idiotic fashion.

Here are the top three finalists for the 2010 honors.

Currently in third place, this particular tale makes me seriously question anyone's judgment when they decide to walk across, up or down a glacier. Maybe that's just the West Texas guy in me.

Either way, in the late fall and early winter months, snow-covered mountains in Washington and abroad become infested with hunters. One ambitious pair climbed high up a mountain in search of their quarry. The trail crossed a small glacier that had crusted over. The lead hunter had to stomp a foot-hold in the snow, one step at a time, in order to cross the glacier.

Somewhere near the middle of the glacier, his next stomp hit not snow, but a rock. The

lead hunter lost his footing and fell. Down the crusty glacier he zipped, off the edge and out of sight. Unable to help, his companion watched him slide away. After a while, he shouted out, "Are you OK?"

"Yes!" came the answer.

Reasoning that it was a quick way off the glacier, the second hunter plopped down and accelerated down the ice, following his friend. There, just over the edge of the glacier, was his friend... holding on to the top of a tree that barely protruded from the snow.

There were no other treetops nearby, nothing to grab, nothing but a 100-foot drop onto the rocks below. As the second hunter shot past the first, he uttered his final epitaph: a single word, which we may not utter lest our mothers soap our mouths.

It doesn't take a leap of the imagination to realize people in foreign countries don't exactly think in the same manner as Americans, however, from time to time, I honestly have to wonder if it's just something in the water.

Picture this: A young couple driving on Via Dutra, the major freeway in Brazil — with tons of heavy traffic at 6 a.m. under heavy fog — decided to park the car for "dating," according to the charming Google translation. And yes, they parked in the right lane of the freeway, not on the shoulder or at a gas station.

Naturally, a huge cargo truck comes by and runs right over the car, immediately killing both inside during the act. Yes, this is a double Darwin! Two people making two obviously stupid decisions, and natural selection acts at the very moment the two are attempting to reproduce.

Honestly, you would think one of the pair would have looked at the other and said, "Uhhh... Don't you think we she get out of the way of oncoming traffic?" But no, they just hop in the back

seat and cause their families and loved ones a lifetime of pain, and, depending on their sense of humor, maybe a few laughs.

I have a hard time imagining anyone at the pair's funeral saying, "Gosh, Bob and Tina had such a promising future." If I had to guess, it would sound more like, "Well, the staff at the Fritter Hut just got cut in half."

And finally, already with a rather convincing lead on the other nominees, we have a handicapped man from Daejon, South Korea. That, in itself, speaks volumes.

A handicapped man, annoyed that an elevator closed and departed without him, actually thinks it over before ramming his wheelchair into the doors not once, not twice, but three times — only to plunge down the now-empty elevator shaft to his death.

Simultaneous success and failure combine to earn the 40-year-old lasting immortality as a Darwin Award winner. The tragic downfall of this rashly rushing rammer provides a heartening example of how brilliant we Americans really are — compared to some.

The authorities traced the "problem" to elevator doors that cannot withstand a large impact. Safety regulations were strengthened three years after the elevator was installed, to prevent accidents "such as might happen to children and drunks." No kidding, that's the actual translation.

So, the next time a local politician makes you doubt the quality of the West Texas gene pool, think of this poor guy.

Am I the only one wondering how in the heck he ended up in that wheelchair in the first place?

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



Look close, offer a small kindness

A friend of mine has a 2two-year-old daughter. She's an adorable little thing, charming and delightful in a way that only little girls can be. Right in the Christmas spirit sweet spot, she knows of Santa and presents, but not of paying the rent, keeping the lights on and dealing with the grim reality of having to place food and shelter over presents.

My friend works with many other friends of mine and we all know her child.

We also know a mother who has very little, but works hard and does everything she can to give her daughter the best life she possibly can.

I imagine that someday the daughter would grow to appreciate these things, but a 2-year-old on Christmas morning knows nothing of sacrifice.

A 2-year-old on Christmas morning should know nothing of sacrifice. Instead, even if it's an illu-

sion, that child should know wrapping paper and unexpected delights — dollhouses and stuffed animals, new clothes and whatever else a 2-year-old girl dreams of.

Children of that age may not know what they don't have, but they certainly know what they do.

While adults strive for houses, better cars and a well-stocked pantry, a 2-year-old only knows the pure joy of a cherished item and the happiness of getting something new.

As adults, those of us who have things — be they meager or plentiful — have a deep responsibility to make sure that the children around us know happiness on Christmas and beyond.

I'm not talking about vaguely suffering kids in far off lands. While they deserve our supports as well, we must first make sure the children of our coworkers, neighbors and friends have some joy this holiday season.

Bring some light into the houses of those close to us and we'll all be able to bask in the glow.

In my case, few of us realized how hard our friend was working to get her daughter a handful of presents to put under the tree.

She never complained, never asked for help and though we should have known it would be a struggle for her, we never stopped to consider her difficult road.

Perhaps by chance or maybe through something greater, we learned of our friend's burden and quietly the kindness began.

In small increments people helped as they could. It was subtle and secret as we were doing it out of affection, not pity.

Our friend and her daughter have not had an easy road and there's nothing I will do this holiday season that makes me feel better than knowing I helped bring them both a smile on Christmas.

To take one worry off our friend's shoulders is a privilege I will not soon forget and I'm honored that she allowed us to help.

Whatever you have, there is someone who has less.

If we all share what we have with those who matter to us, than we are all wealthier for the experience.

Daniel B. Kline's work appears in more than 100 papers weekly. He can be reached by e-mail at dan@notastep.com



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Obituaries

Virginia 'Virgie' Munoz



Virginia "Virgie" Munoz, 53, of Big Spring died Sunday, Dec. 19, 2010, at Scenic Mountain Medical Center. Vigil services will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Funeral mass will be held at 10 a.m. Thursday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

Virginia was born Sept. 11, 1957, in Big Spring to Adelinda and Oscar Munoz Sr. She lived most of her life in Big Spring and San Antonio. She had been employed by the Big Spring Herald, Universal City Herald, Juvenile Probation Department of Howard County and the Big Spring Police Department. She was a graphic artist and was doing graphic design work

for Howard County at the time of her illness. She was loved by everyone and was a God-send to all she met.

She is survived by her father, Oscar Munoz Sr. of Schertz; two brothers, Oscar Munoz Jr. of Schertz and Rene Munoz of West Jordan, Utah; one sister, Patty White and husband Danny of Abilene; and a number of cousins, uncles and aunts, including Helen Rodriguez of Big Spring and cousin Benny Rodriguez Jr. of Midland.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Adelinda Munoz; and one sister, Maria Teresa Munoz.

Pallbearers will be Rene Munoz, Oscar Munoz Jr., Benny Rodriguez Jr., Ryan White, John Morales and Bobby Gonzales.

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

Paid obituary

Jack Hanson



Jack Hanson, 87, of Big Spring died Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2010, at the Veterans Administration Hospital. The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. Wednesday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Funeral services will be held at 3 p.m. Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel with the Rev. Elwin Collum and Jackie Hanson officiating. Burial will be at Trinity Memorial Park.

Jack was born July 27, 1923, in Big Spring to Mary and David Hanson. He married Mattie Frances "Bobbie" Sanders on Sept. 7, 1947, in Big Spring. Jack worked at Pollard Chevrolet. Later, he delivered for Dominos Pizza and the *Big Spring Herald*. He was a member of Hillcrest Baptist Church and was a lifetime resident of Big Spring.

Jack is survived by his wife, Bobbie Hanson of Big Spring; two sons, Jackie Hanson and wife Jeanie of Richmond and Roger Hanson of Midland;

one daughter, Sharon Shanks and husband Donnie of Lake Brownwood; two brothers, J.D. Hanson and wife Sandy and Bobby Sam Hanson and wife Joy Beth, all of Midland; two sisters, Pauline Whatley and husband Cecil of Midland and Mary Bott of Ranger; four grandchildren, J.P. Shanks and wife Angela of Dallas, Jeremy Hanson and wife Jean of Dickinson, Michael Hanson of Pearland and Ashley Hanson-Burlew and husband Rossie of Pearland; and 10 great-grandchildren.

Jack was preceded in death by two sons, Bobby Wayne and David Michael; one grandson, Michael Don Shanks; two sisters, Merle Ford and Lenora Nix; and one brother, Bill Hanson.

Pallbearers will be Jackie Hanson, Roger Hanson, Donnie Shanks, Jeremy Hanson, Michael Hanson and J.P. Shanks.

The family suggests memorials to Relay for Life, 1217 E. 17th St., Big Spring 79720; or Hillcrest Baptist Church, 2000 W. FM 700, Big Spring 79720.

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

Paid obituary

Maria G. Padron



Maria G. Padron, 75, of Big Spring died Monday, Dec. 20, 2010, at Scenic Mountain Medical Center. Memorial services will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday at Myers & Smith Chapel with Pastor Burt Gusman officiating.

She was born Dec. 6, 1935. She married Roberto Padron on May 30, 1981. She had worked at Webb Air Force Base and Fiberflex. She was a member of Iglesia Bautista Central and was a lifetime resident

of Big Spring.

She is survived by one daughter, Marina Ramirez of Midland; one granddaughter, Mercedes Ramirez of Midland; one brother, Edward Ramirez of Big Spring; one sister, Eulalia Viera of Big Spring; and a number of nieces and nephews.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Roberto Padron; four brothers, Mike, Pablo, Sixto and Chuy Ramirez; and two sisters, Inez Natividad and Cipriana Rodriguez.

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

Paid obituary

Take Note

• Big Spring's own Charley Johnson will be inducted as a member of the 2010 Class into the Texas Sports Hall Of Fame on Feb. 7, 2011, in Waco. If you can't attend but would like to list your name in an official program ad that congratulates Charley for this momentous achievement, contact Ken Johnson at 940-325-4366 for details or e-mail at kenrocknj@suddenlink.net. If you want to attend the ceremonies, contact Ken about discount tickets.

• Three-time Grammy Award winner and Tex-Mex artist Little Joe & La Familia, with special guest Robert Pulido, will be at the Howard County Fair Barn for a Christmas Eve dance. Tickets are \$20 and table reservations are \$15. For more information, call John Ontiveros at 432-816-5231.

SHERIFF

Continued from Page 2A

BSPD on charges of purchasing/furnishing alcohol to a minor and criminal trespass.

• CORY LEE PUGA, 19, was transferred to the county jail Tuesday by the BSPD on a charge of assault causing bodily injury.

• ANDRES DUENES, 37, was arrested Tuesday by the HCSO on charges of violation of bond/protective order and interfering with an emergency phone call.

• LACEY B. VAUGHN, 51, was transferred to the county jail Tuesday by the BSPD on a charge of public intoxication.

• MARTIN LEE BENTACUR, 43, was arrested Tuesday by the HCSO on a motion to revoke probation for driving while intoxicated.

• HENRY JOHN RAYMOND, 37, was transferred to the county jail Tuesday by the BSPD on charges of theft and public intoxication.

• FLOYD BYRON MCKENZIE, 65, was transferred to the county jail Tuesday by the BSPD on charges of theft and public intoxication.

• VINCENT PAUL GONZALEZ, 22, was transferred to the county jail Tuesday by the BSPD on a charge of dis-

orderly conduct - language.

• JUSTIN CLAY COLE, 32, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on a motion to revoke probation for possession of marijuana - two ounces or less and municipal warrants for displaying an expired registration (two counts), expired motor vehicle inspection, failure to maintain financial responsibility and driving while license invalid.

• LINDA RENE TORRES, 28, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on a charge of public intoxication.

• KYLE SHALOR SEBER, 21, was trans-

ferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on a charge of driving while intoxicated.

Fire/EMS

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

• MEDICAL was reported in the 1600 block of Lancaster. One person was transported to SMMC.

• MEDICAL was reported in the 1200 block of Sycamore. Service refused.

• MEDICAL was reported in the 1800 block of N. Highway 87.

One person was transported to SMMC.

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

• MEDICAL was

reported in the 1100 block of Lamar. Service refused.

• TRAFFIC ACCIDENT was reported near the intersection of Fourth Street and San Antonio. One person was trans-

ported to SMMC.

• AUTOMOBILE FIRE was reported in the 3300 block of W. Highway 80.

• MEDICAL was reported in the 1100 block of Lamar. Service refused.

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Tomorrow's Horoscope

There was a lot of activity yesterday, with the full moon, the total eclipse and the winter solstice all in the same 24-hour period. For those who went out on a limb with their emotions and are now in need of rescue, the best way under the Cancer moon is to put one foot in front of the other and step your way back to the homeland.



HOLIDAY MATHIS

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Today's luck is subtle. You have to be both mature and imaginative to see it. You will get the chance at an opportunity that never was available to your parents. Seize it.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Small steps would normally get you from point "A" to point "B" — but not today. What's necessary is a running leap. Anything less won't get you to the finish.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Unfinished business is too heavy of a mental weight. You can't be happy and creative with this load on your mind. Tie up loose ends. Afterward, you'll feel refreshed and ready for a new start.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You are a favorite playmate of the universe. This is not about pranks and mischief. Today's game is vigorous and challenging and will engage your body and mind.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Your meetings will be more important than

you realize. Give yourself twice as much time to get ready as you normally would, and spend a good deal of that time psyching yourself up.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You paid your dues. You obeyed authority, served the boss and put in your time doing thankless tasks. And though the work was considered lowly, the rewards were high. You stand tall today because of it.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You are used to enjoying yourself — some days less than others. In those instances, the remedy is simple. If you want to live a life of higher quality, give a greater level of attention to your endeavors.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Better to do one thing completely today than to attempt many and leave them unfinished. It will bring you good fortune and deep satisfaction to do so.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You will be amazed at the people who find success more challenging than failure. You, on the other hand, take to winning like you were born to do it. Indeed, you were.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Your ability to concentrate in spite of distractions is impressive. External events will be more easily ignored than internal mental chatter, but you shut out both in favor of finishing something that is very important to you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Your perspective is different from how others experience life. Right now, the small details seem as

bright and close as the large issues. You must distance yourself in order to decide what is truly important.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You tend to value the things that take a good deal of effort. But something you do effortlessly is of great value to another person. Recognize what it is, and deliver it to the one who needs it. This is how you'll make a difference.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 22). You'll move up in the world. Authority figures who once challenged you will extol your virtues. Relationships are smooth going into 2011, and you'll have wonderful times with friends and family. In January, you'll use your power to help someone attain what you have. There's a trip in March and a windfall in October. Libra and Scorpio people adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 30, 11, 3, 33 and 18.

ASTROLOGICAL QUESTIONS: "I'm a Capricorn who comes from a family that has a certain kind of reputation. Many associate my family name with wealth and privilege. And though many of my family members enjoy the perks of a lifestyle that few people in the world can afford, I have comparatively modest means. My children go to public school, and I shop with coupons and have many of the financial concerns that other parents have. And yet somehow I'm having trouble fitting in with the other moms at my school. They are cliquish and seem to assume lots of things about me

that aren't true. How can I make friends when my reputation is already tainted by my family name?"

Are you quite certain it's not in your head? Since you have had this family name your whole life, perhaps you are subconsciously expecting a certain kind of reception based on your past experiences. And here's a secret: "Fitting in with the other moms" is not so easy no matter what your name is. It requires diplomacy, friendliness and patience. You have all of these qualities, so it's a matter of being willing to use them. Once you decide to charm and disarm them, you'll be unstoppable.

CELEBRITY PROFILES: Jordin Sparks made her Broadway debut this year in the Tony Award-winning musical "In the Heights." This "American Idol" number six was the youngest to win the title. She's a Capricorn with her sun, Mercury, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune all in this cool, calm and collected sign. Sparks was made for competition and challenge. Her nerves of steel are the ideal secret weapon.

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

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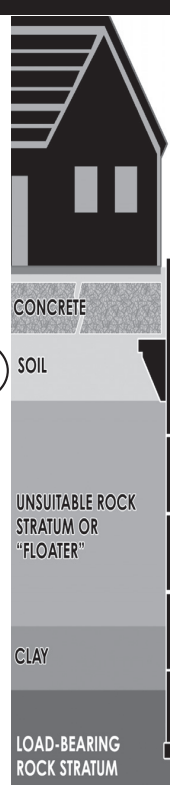
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News in brief

Obama signs bill letting gays serve in military

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fulfilling a campaign pledge, cheering his party's downcast liberals and striking a blow for what he sees as basic human rights, President Barack Obama is signing a landmark law Wednesday that tells America's armed services to let homosexuals serve openly for the first time.

So many gay rights and Democratic activists were expected at the signing ceremony that the White House booked a large auditorium at the Interior Department.

"This day has come!" said an elated Mike Almy, an Air Force major discharged four years ago when his sexual orientation became known. "Don't ask, don't tell" is over, and you no longer have to sacrifice your integrity."

While the elation is real, Pentagon officials caution it could be premature, since the bill requires service chiefs to complete implementation plans before lifting the old policy — and certify to lawmakers that it won't damage combat readiness, as critics charge.

Also, guidelines must be finalized that cover a host of practical questions, from how to educate troops to how sexual orientation should be handled in making barracks assignments.

Senate poised to approve nuclear pact with Russia

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate is poised to approve a nuclear arms pact with Russia, handing President Barack Obama a huge victory on his top foreign policy priority.

Passage of the New START treaty appeared assured after 11 Republi-

cans joined Democrats in a vote Tuesday to end debate on the pact. That signaled that Obama should have the two-thirds majority he needs when the Senate votes on final approval Wednesday.

The approval would mark a big comeback for Obama's arm controls efforts after the treaty appeared all but dead just weeks ago. It also would allow Obama to continue efforts to improve relations with Russia.

Ratification would mark a third recent major political victory for Obama, even though his Democratic party was trounced in last month's congressional elections. In recent days he won passage of a bipartisan tax deal and a vote ending the ban on gays openly serving in the military.

"We are on the brink of writing the next chapter in the 40-year history of wrestling with the threat of nuclear weapons," Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, a Democrat, said after the vote.

SKorea to stage massive firing drills near border

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea vowed Wednesday to "completely punish" North Korea if it attacks again, and mobilized hundreds of troops, tanks and helicopters for a massive military exercise prompted by high tensions on the peninsula.

The firing drills planned for Thursday near the Koreas' heavily armed land border signaled that South Korea is willing to risk further escalating tensions with North Korea, which shelled a southern island off the western coast on Nov. 23 and stirred up a war-like atmosphere.

The attack, which killed four people, was portrayed by Pyongyang as a retaliation for southern military exercises on Yeonpyeong island that

day.

South Korea has conducted 47 similar military drills this year, and it scheduled one more exercise for Thursday in response to the North Korean attack, an army officer said on condition of anonymity citing department rules. Thursday's drill will be the biggest-ever wintertime joint firing exercise that South Korea's army and air force have staged, an army statement said.

"We will completely punish the enemy if it provokes us again like the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island," Brig. Gen. Ju Eun-sik, chief of the army's 1st armored brigade, said separately.

Biggest storm yet heads for southern California

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After days of relentless rain, Southern California is awaiting the most intense storm system yet, with evacuations ordered, rescue crews on standby and residents anxiously eyeing already saturated mountainsides denuded by wildfires.

Forecasters expected more rain across the state Wednesday, but the focus clearly was on Southern California where a monster storm was expected to bring torrential rain, thunderstorms, flooding, hail and possible tornadoes and water spouts. Forecasters warned of possible rainfall rates of .75 inch to 1 inch an hour and thunderstorm rates of 2 inches an hour in the region.

Steady rain began falling late Tuesday and was expected to intensify into early Wednesday.

"It's going to be a three-ring circus," said National Weather Service spokesman Bill Hoffer. "There's going to be a six-hour time frame in the early morning when it's really going to be dumping on us."

Officials on Tuesday ordered evacuation of 232 homes in La Canada Flintridge and La Crescenta, foothill suburbs of Los Angeles below steep hillsides that burned in 2009 and where mudslides inundated homes and backyards in February.

France urges citizens to leave Ivory Coast

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — France urged its citizens to leave Ivory Coast on Wednesday after the U.N. chief warned the former French colony in West Africa faces "a real risk" of return to civil war following the disputed presidential election.

The United Nations and other world leaders recognize Alassane Ouattara as the winner of the Nov. 28 runoff vote. Laurent Gbagbo, the incumbent who refuses to concede defeat and leave the presidency, said late Tuesday that "the international community has declared war on Ivory Coast."

Gbagbo said in the televised speech that he doesn't want "any blood to be spilled," but maintained he was president of the country. Over the weekend, he ordered all U.N. peacekeepers

out of the country immediately in an escalation of tensions.

The U.N. considers Ouattara president and is staying put, raising fears that U.N. personnel and other foreigners could be targeted in violence as tensions mount. The U.S. State Department has already ordered most of its personnel to leave because of what officials called a deteriorating security situation and growing anti-Western sentiment.

Philadelphia police offer \$30K reward in strangling cases

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A serial killer who police say sexually assaulted and strangled three women, and possibly attacked three others, in a neighborhood rife with drugs and prostitution might want to hope that authorities find him before the neighbors do.

Residents of Kensington, who once severely beat a suspected rapist based on a police photo, have posted hundreds of comments and theories about the case on a Facebook page titled "Catch the Kensington Strangler, before he catches someone you love."

One post that falsely identified a suspect led to an angry crowd outside the man's home.

Fearing vigilantes, he called police — who later cleared him, and then scolded residents.

"We will not tolerate anyone taking vigilante action," Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey warned. "If you see someone suspicious, call 911. We will get there. We will handle."

Christmas travel chaos eases in Europe

LONDON (AP) — Europe's Christmas travel crisis eased slightly Wednesday but there were still substantial airport and train delays, particularly at London's Heathrow Airport, where crews were still struggling to remove ice.

About 70 percent of Heathrow's planned departures were expected to operate Wednesday — some 900 flights. Extra crews were working to remove ice buildup and clear the airfield of snow.

Crowds at Heathrow were smaller Wednesday with few people standing on line outside the terminals or sleeping on the floors.

Airport officials placed two tents outside Terminal 3 to handle overflow passengers, but only one was used. Computer screens there showed 11 out of about 50 incoming flights had been cancelled.

Germany's Frankfurt airport said schedules were slowly returning to normal after several days of widespread delays caused by winter weather.

About 70 flights were canceled Wednesday out of a daily total of about 1,300, a substantial improvement over the 550 cancellations on Tuesday.

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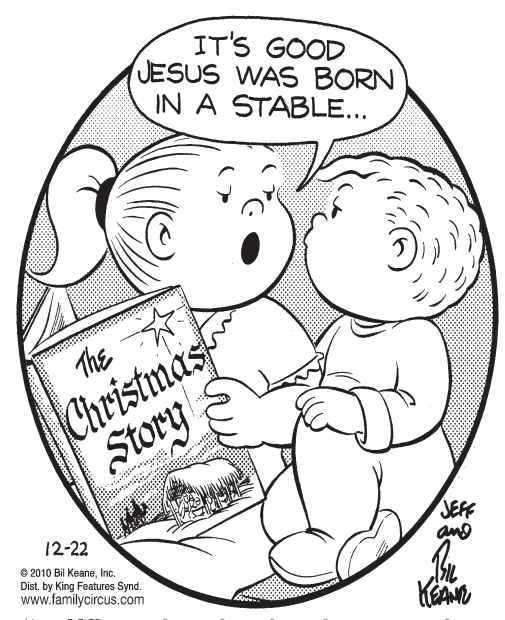
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7:30	News	Alma	Lopez	News	Noticias	Inside E.A.	Haymond	Swallow	Cybercra	Payne	Movie: Hoop House, Sam Elliott	CSI: Crime Scene	Law & Order	Cnn	Phineas	Arona	Faron	
5:30	News ABC	Notic.	Lopez	News	Noticiero	News	King	Mark	World	Lyrics!	MythBusters	Ways Die	Bones	106 & Park: BET's Top 10 Live	Hannah	Pardon	SportsCenter	
6:30	Jeopardy!	Llena de Amor (SS)	Two Men	News	Caso Cerado	News	Seinfeld	Faye H.	PBS News-Hour	70s Show	MythBusters	Ways Die	Bones			College Basketball	Football	
7:30	Middle Better	Eva Luna (SS)	Human Target	Home-Holidays	Aurora (SS)	Undercovers	Payne	Upd	Tree Lighting	Hellcats	MythBusters	Ways Die	Bones	BET 30: Movements and Moments	Movie: The Polar Express	College Basketball: Missouri at Illinois	Maaco Bowl Las Vegas - Boise State vs. Utah	
8:30	Family ABC (31) CMA Country Christmas	Soy Tu Duenia (SS)	Million Dollar	Criminal Minds	El Fantasma de	Law & Order: SVU	Browns	Light of the Southwest	The Buddha (DVS)	Hellcats	MythBusters	Ways Die	Bones					
9:30	News	Impacto	How I Met	News	Noticias	News	Conan	Uri Harel	Charlie Rose	King	MythBusters	Ways Die	Bones	Game	Fish	College Basketball: Xavier at Gonzaga	SportsCenter	
10:30	Nightline	Noticiero	Raymond	Letterman	Decisiones (SS)	Late Night	Lopez	Conan	World	South Pk	MythBusters	Ways Die	Bones	Game	Fish			
11:30	Jimmy Kimmel Live	La Verdad Oculta	Law & Order: SVU	Late														
12:30	Extra	Tontas Cielo	Tri-Vita	Decision														
1:30	Paid	Mujer... Cero	King-Hill	Insider	Pagado	News	Lopez	Light of the Southwest										

DENNIS THE MENACE



"LET ME GUESS... YOU WANT A NEW SET OF GOLF CLUBS FOR CHRISTMAS."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

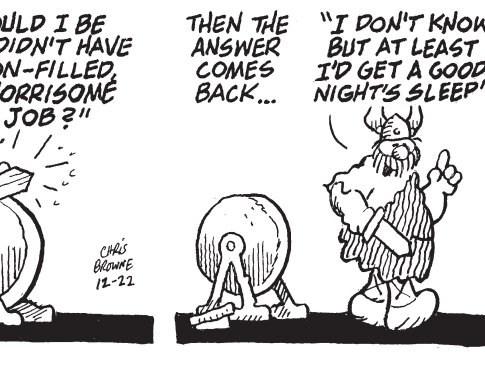


"... When the shepherds came they had a place to park their sheep."

HAGAR



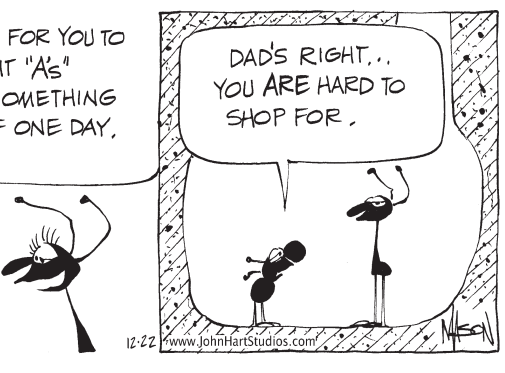
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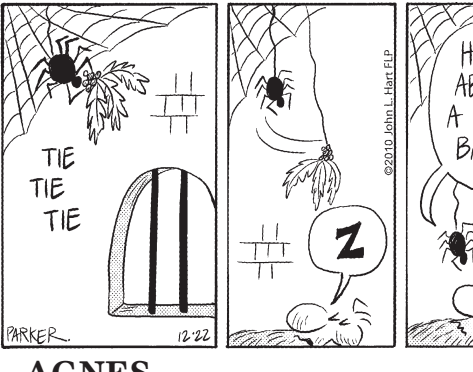
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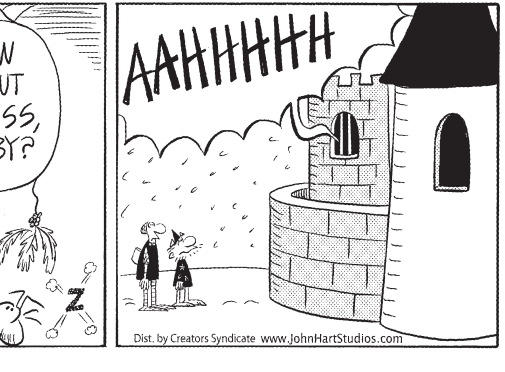
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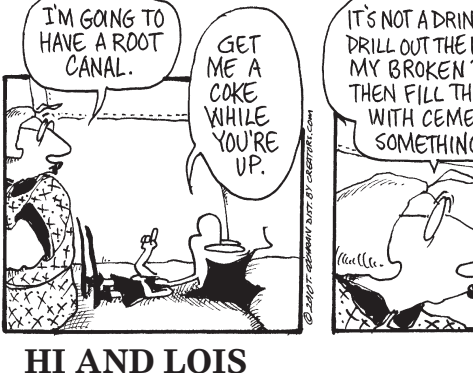
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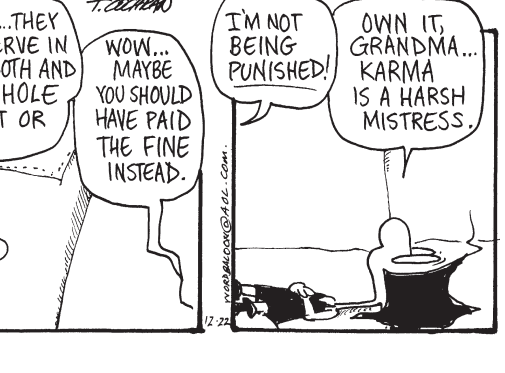
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THE OTHER COAST



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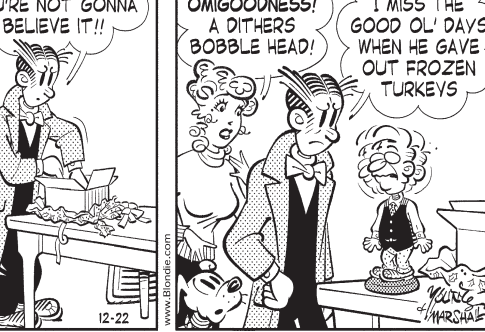
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This Date In History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 22, the 356th day of 2010. There are 9 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 22, 1910, a fire lasting more than 26 hours broke out at the Chicago Union Stock Yards; 21 firefighters were killed in the collapse of a burning building.

On this date:

In 1775, Esek Hopkins was appointed the commander-in-chief of the Continental Navy.

In 1808, Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67, Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68, and Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58, had their world premieres in Vienna, Austria.

In 1864, during the Civil War, Union Gen. William T. Sherman said in a message to President Abraham Lincoln: "I beg to present you as a Christmas-gift the city of Savannah."

In 1894, French army officer Alfred Dreyfus was convicted

of treason in a court-martial that triggered worldwide charges of anti-Semitism. (Dreyfus was eventually vindicated.)

In 1940, author Nathanael West, 37, and his wife, Eileen McKenney, 27, were killed in a car crash in El Centro, Calif. while en route to the funeral of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who had died the day before.

In 1944, during the World War II Battle of the Bulge, U.S. Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe rejected a German demand for surrender, writing "Nuts!" in his official reply.

In 1968, Julie Nixon married David Eisenhower in a private ceremony in New York.

In 1977, three dozen people were killed when a 250-foot-high grain elevator at the Continental Grain Company plant in Westwego, La., exploded.

In 1984, New York City resident Bernhard Goetz shot and wounded four youths on a Manhattan subway, claiming they were about to rob him.

In 1990, 21 sailors returning from shore leave to the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga drowned off Haifa when the Israeli ferry they were traveling on capsized. Lech Walesa (lek vah-

WEN'sah) took the oath of office as Poland's first popularly elected president.

Today's Birthdays: Former House Speaker Jim Wright is 88. Actor Hector Elizondo is 74. Country singer Red Steagall is 72. Former World Bank Group President Paul Wolfowitz is 67. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Steve Carlton is 66. ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer is 65. Rock singer-musician Rick Nielsen (Cheap Trick) is 64. Rock singer-musician Michael Bacon is 62. Baseball All-Star Steve Garvey is 62. Singer Robin Gibb is 61. Golfer Jan Stephenson is 59. Actress BernNadette Stanis is 57. Rapper Luther Campbell is 50. Country singer-musician Chuck Mead is 50.

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Answer to previous puzzle

SLATS	ADAM	SHAG
PUTUP	TOME	KILO
ALIBI	LOOT	INTO
SUPERMARKET	DAS	
AAS	OHSURE	
BUSILY	MERIT	
ASAN	BEAD	NURSE
BESTSELLING	BOOK	
ASHEN	ALTO	BLUE
NOELS	FRYERS	
VENDOR	BAA	
ALE	PRIMETIME	TV
LASS	AREA	SIREE
ETTE	TANS	ICIER
TEST	ASST	NEEDY

Newsday Crossword

NO LONG PANTS by Fred Piscop
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS**
- 1 Hogs' fare
 - 5 ___ instant (very quickly)
 - 9 Drive off
 - 14 Give birth to
 - 15 Half of a golf course
 - 16 Call forth
 - 17 Ceramist's appliance
 - 18 Development sites
 - 19 On-ramp sign
 - 20 Places for actors' clothing
 - 23 Genesis exile
 - 24 Language suffix
 - 25 Treasure stash
 - 28 Scroogian shout
 - 30 Collegian's quarters
 - 34 Prefers for surgeon
 - 35 Noisy parrot
 - 37 Stew veggie
 - 38 Some legal papers
 - 41 "I didn't know that!"
 - 42 Done in mosaic
 - 43 Split up
 - 44 Come across as
 - 46 Guitar innovator ___ Paul
 - 47 Nagging feeling
 - 48 Victoria's reign, e.g.
 - 50 Lost network
 - 51 Movie-theater extras of old
 - 59 Elm's offering
 - 60 Bar on a car
 - 61 Warm glow
 - 62 Went public with
- DOWN**
- 11 "Pulled" barbecue meat
 - 12 Ticker tests, for short
 - 13 Victor at Chancellorsville
 - 21 Rise in opposition
 - 22 Back-to-health process
 - 25 Conical home
 - 26 Indian currency
 - 27 Mine discovery
 - 28 Psycho motel owner
 - 29 Got 100 on
 - 31 Pundits' pieces
 - 32 Equip with new gear
 - 33 Flag holder
 - 34 Bothers persistently
 - 35 Tom, Dick, or Harry
 - 36 Mechanic's tool
 - 39 Air-freshener scent
 - 40 Gerund ending
 - 45 Blended
 - 47 Not here
 - 49 Like an oboe's sound
 - 50 Freud contemporary
 - 51 Branch of Islam
 - 52 Have coming
 - 53 New Mexico art town
 - 54 World's fair
 - 55 Boorish ones
 - 56 Hold sway
 - 57 Equestrian pace
 - 58 Depletes
 - 59 Long-faced

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65				66				67				

Fight looms after Texas gains four House seats

AUSTIN (AP) — A surge of Hispanic residents and other population gains have Texas poised to add more congressional clout than any other state, but a partisan fight now looms over exactly where the new seats should go.

Texas is gaining four seats in the U.S. House, twice as many as Florida, the only other state to pick up multiple ones, according to new population figures announced Tuesday by the U.S. Census Bureau. All told, Republican-leaning states will pick up at least a half dozen House seats thanks to the 2010 census, which found the nation's population growing more slowly than in past decades but still shifting to the South and West.

With Texas Republicans using recent elections to fortify their already solid control of the state Legislature, the political process of redrawing the state's congressional map would seem to benefit the GOP, too.

But Democrats say not so fast.

Boyd Richie, chairman of the Texas Democratic Party, said Hispanic and black population growth account for the additional seats, and he vowed to fight for a redistricting plan that takes their numbers into account.

"A legal and fair redistricting process must produce new congressional districts that reflect the Hispanic and African American population growth," Richie said. "Our Democratic

numbers may be down, but we are not out. Democrats cannot and will not allow our voices to be silenced in this critical process."

The Census Bureau said the nation's population on April 1 was 308,745,538, up from 281.4 million a decade ago. The growth rate for the past decade was 9.7 percent, the lowest since the Great Depression. The U.S. population grew by 13.2 percent from 1990 to 2000. Michigan was the only state to lose population during the past decade. Nevada, with a 35 percent increase, was the fastest-growing state.

The new numbers are a boon for Republicans, with Texas leading the way among GOP-leaning states that will gain House seats, mostly at the Rust Belt's expense. Following each once-a-decade census, the nation must reapportion the House's 435 districts to make them roughly equal in population, with each state getting at least one seat.

In all, the census figures show a shift affecting 18 states taking effect when the 113th Congress takes office in 2013.

The political power follows the high population growth, shifting toward the south and west and away from the industrial Midwest and northeast.

With reapportionment settled, the far more politically divisive process of redistricting is set to begin. In Texas, both major parties were bracing for a showdown over the state's new residents, beginning a fight that is sure to spark court action. But with Republican supermajorities in the Legislature, the temptation to run the table will be strong.

Rep. Pete Gallego, D-Alpine, said if the federal courts don't intervene to compel fairness, Republicans will likely produce a map that gives their party the advantage in three or perhaps even all four of the new seats.

"It is very easy to overreach when you're holding the map and have the pen in your hand," he said.

Despite the party's recent gains in the November legislative elections, Republicans won't have unchecked authority to draw the state's congressional map to benefit themselves.

Join us **Christmas Eve**, at 7:00p.m. for a **Silent Lord's Supper** in honor of the King of Kings at **East 4th Street Baptist Church**



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Christmas is the happiness that lights our children's eyes.

Christmas is a song of bells ringing through the skies.

Christmas is a time of peace, of contentment deep within,

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- Sherrill Thompson (Christmas Is...)"

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