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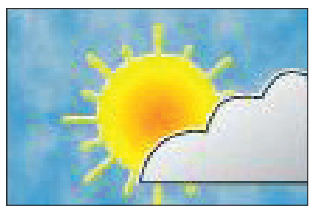
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FARMERS

HIGH SPRING HERALD

TUESDAY

JANUARY 4, 2011



VOLUME 106, NUMBER 28

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50 CENTS DAILY/\$1.25 SUNDAY

PBUWCD gathering level data

Special to the Herald

Permian Basin Underground Water Conservation District personnel began conducting their annual depth-to-water level measurements this week.

The data collected helps the PBUWCD determine the effect of the 2010 pumpage on groundwater levels in the aquifers, the Ogallala aquifer being within Howard and Martin counties. Water level measurements are made in a network of 120 wells, most privately owned.

"We will be taking these measurements until the project is complete," said PBUWCD Manager Leatrice Adams. "It is important for producers to know that district personnel will be visiting observation well sites from early January until completion of this work effort. The staff of the PBUWCD appreciates

See UWCD, Page 3



Bundles of artificial turf material are stacked adjacent to Steer Park Sunday evening. Installation of the new baseball surface should be completed by Jan. 15, officials said.

HERALD photo/Steve Reagan

No scuttlebutt on skull

By THOMAS JENKINS
 Staff Writer

Law enforcement officials say they are still waiting on preliminary findings from the laboratory examining what is believed to be a piece of a human skull discovered Dec. 20 in Howard County.

Howard County Sheriff Stan Parker said he had hoped to have a preliminary report on the skull last week, but as of yet the laboratory examining the evidence has not yet re-

leased any information.

"We had hoped to have the results of the preliminary examination by now, but we're still waiting at this point," Parker said. "The investigation is still open and ongoing, so I can't discuss the details at this time. We're just going to have to be patient."

A press release issued by the Howard County Sheriff's Office Dec. 20 stated law enforcement officials were called to the scene — believed to be

a salvage yard in the northern part of Howard County — around 11 a.m. after what appeared to be a piece of a human skull was found.

Parker said he's hopeful an examination of the skull will turn up some key information, either confirming or disproving the piece of evidence is indeed a human skull, as well as information such as sex and age.

When asked if the skull is believed to be tied to any oth-

er ongoing investigations — such as a missing person or possible homicide — Parker declined to comment, once again citing the open investigation.

A local resident, however, speaking on the condition of anonymity, confirmed to the Herald 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.

See SKULL, Page 3

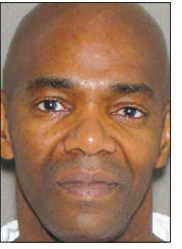
SKULL

Texan jailed for 30 years expected to be cleared

JEFF CARLTON
 Associated Press

DALLAS — Cornelius Dupree Jr. finally made parole in July, after spending 30 years in prison for aggravated robbery with a deadly weapon. A week later, DNA test results came back proving his innocence.

The 51-year-old Texas man will finally get his own day in court Tuesday, when a judge is expected to set aside his conviction on claims of actual innocence. The hearing comes a day after Dallas County District Attorney



Dupree

Craig Watkins said the DNA testing shows Dupree "did not commit this crime."

If the conviction is overturned as expected, Dupree will have the unhappy distinction of being the longest-serving DNA exoneree in Texas, which has freed 41 wrongly convicted inmates through DNA since 2001 — more than any other state.

Nationally, only two other

DNA exonerees spent more time in prison, according to the Innocence Project, a New York-based legal center representing Dupree that specializes in wrongful conviction cases. James Bain was wrongly imprisoned for 35 years in Florida, and Lawrence McKinney spent more than 31 years in a Tennessee prison.

Dupree's 30 years in prison will surpass James Woodard, who spent more than 27 years in a Texas prison before he was cleared of murder in 2008.

There have been 21 DNA exonerations in Dallas alone since 2001, more than any other county in the nation.

Dallas' record of DNA exonerations is unmatched nationally because the county crime lab maintains biological evidence even decades after a conviction, leaving samples available to test. In addition, Watkins has cooperated with innocence groups in reviewing hundreds of requests by inmates for DNA testing.

Watkins, the first black

See CLEARED, Page 3

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EDITORIAL

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

-FIRST AMENDMENT

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

Ron Midkiff
Publisher

John A. Moseley
Managing Editor

Bill McClellan
News Editor

OUR VIEW

There’s still time to get your tax payments made

It’s that time of year. It’s January and it’s time for us to remind people about paying their property taxes. And we’re convinced it’s again time to remind everyone that a word to the wise is sufficient — at least that’s the way the adage goes.

We’ve made that point before in this space on a number of occasions, because it applies to so many different matters we all face in life. That’s especially true when it comes time to paying your property taxes.

Area property owners can avoid the annual last-minute dash to pay their taxes by getting them out of the way early in the month, according to County Tax Assessor Kathy Sayles.

“Once the taxes go delinquent in February, the penalties and interest start at 7 percent and increases each month,” said Sayles. “As of July 1, penalty and interest grows to 18 percent, with an additional penalty tacked on for attorney fees.”

Sayles said taxpayers have until Jan. 31 to pay their taxes and avoid penalties and interest. After that date, things can get rather costly.

“Taxpayers have from Oct. 1 to Jan. 31 to pay their taxes without any penalties or interest,” said Sayles. “In February, the penalties will start at 7 percent (6 percent penalty, 1 percent interest), and increases each month.”

The tax penalty and interest schedule is as follows: After Jan. 31, 6 percent penalty and 1 percent interest; after Feb. 28, 7 percent penalty and 2 percent interest; after March 31, 8 percent penalty and 3 percent interest; after April 30, 9 percent penalty and 4 percent interest; after May 31, 10 percent penalty and 5 percent interest; and after June 30, 12 percent penalty and 6 percent interest, including an additional 20 percent attorney fee.

For more information, contact the Howard County Tax Collector’s Office at 264-2232.

“Some individuals don’t get their statement for whatever reason,” said Sayles. “We can pull up their name on the system and tell them the amount that’s due. So if you haven’t received a statement, call us or come by the office. Some people, because of their homestead exemptions, have no taxes, so we don’t send them a notice. However, if they just want to make sure everything is OK, all they have to do is call.”

“They can reference their check with an account number that we can give them so they can get their payment in the mail. Once that’s done, we mail them back a receipt for their payment.”

For taxpayers over the age of 65 or currently on disability, Sayles said there is a special installment plan that can help them avoid penalties and interest, which can quickly add up.

“There is a provision that allows taxpayers over the age of 65 to pay their taxes in four installments without any penalties or interest,” said Sayles. “You make your first payment in January, then you just make the remaining three payments in April, June and Aug. 1. This is for people 65 and older or are receiving disability.”

And one more thing. Remember that Sayles and her employees go by the postmark on the envelope, so make sure those tax payments get mailed by the end of this month.

OK. That’s more than a few words to the wise, but that are, we think, words well spent.

A SMALL PRAYER

by **K. Rae Anderson**

You, Lord, are our Heavenly resource for everything good in our life.

Amen

Slow-growing population? Great!

The analyses of the new census numbers were predictable, and I take issue with nearly every one. Let’s start with the suggestion that population rising at the lowest rate since the Great Depression is to be lamented. Anything likened to the Great Depression can’t be a positive development, right? Wrong.

But this is how USA Today put it: “The U.S. population grew 9.7 percent in the past decade to 308,745,538, according to the first results of the 2010 Census — the slowest growth since the Great Depression for a nation hard hit by a recession and housing bust.”

Nearly 10 percent population growth is slow only in relation to that of Burundi, the African country with the world’s lowest per capita gross domestic product. Our population growth rate is comparable to Mexico’s, Brazil’s and Indonesia’s.

For Americans concerned with a loss of open space and thickening congestion, a 10 percent growth rate should seem darn high. If unemployment were 2 percent and houses were selling like Justin Bieber tickets, a sharp hike in population would still be nothing to cheer. By the way, Nevada had the nation’s fastest population growth and

now the highest unemployment and the worst housing collapse.

As it happens, America had half as many people in 1950. Was America less lovely then? It was certainly more powerful.

Tied to the notion that a population boom equals success is the oft-repeated headline that the census report produced “winners” and “losers.” CBS News’ Political Hotsheet wrote: “The biggest winner out of the government’s decennial population count? It is without a doubt the state of Texas, which will see its House delegation and Electoral College representation increase by four seats.”

Well, greater political clout is something any state would welcome, and there’s lots of room in Texas.

But anyone who drives on Dallas’ North Central Expressway at 4 p.m. on a workday knows the meaning of “crowded.” The Lone Star State’s big growth has been in the urban corridors, where there’s no shortage of company.

Those who declare New York state a “loser” in the census count, meanwhile, may not have visited Rockefeller Center in recent weeks. Yes, the Empire State will have two fewer congressional seats than before, but ask New Yorkers this: How many of you would prefer competing with several million more souls for space to losing some Electoral College votes?

One must note that New York and other “losers” — Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and

Massachusetts — have actually gained population in the past decade. They just added fewer people than states in the South and West.

The less nuanced commentary treated population gains in so-called Red States and losses in so-called Blue States as an unalloyed blessing for the Republican Party. A GOP advantage, for sure, but limited.

Delivery room doctors in Texas or Arizona don’t stamp “Republican” on the cute bottoms of newborns, and the babies are ever likelier to be Latino and part of a group that traditionally votes for Democrats. Until recently, Texas Republicans have been able to corral Latinos into bizarrely shaped districts. But their creativity will be taxed as the state’s Hispanics overtake Anglos in number.

Of course, it’s nonsense to imply that any state is permanently dyed red or blue. Changing populations change the politics. And changing parties change the politics even where populations are stable. The people’s republic of Vermont used to be the most reliably Republican state.

I don’t know many Americans, or noncitizen immigrants for that matter, who think that 100 million more people would make the United States a better place. If the U.S. population is slowing, let’s celebrate — and hope it slows more.

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FROMA HARROP



New goal: Cut spending, taxes

It is often said that: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Congress would be mindful to remember these wise words as we move forward to address the country’s most critical problems in the new session of Congress.

The last Congress, led by an overwhelming Democratic majority in both the House and Senate, pursued a legislative agenda that moved against the tide of public opinion, economic realities, and budget constraints. They forced through a government takeover of our health care system, a failed economic stimulus bill, and tripled the federal deficit. Not surprisingly, unemployment continues to hover near 10 percent.

After nearly two years of rising jobless rates and record deficits, on November 2, 2010, voters said, “enough.” The Democrat leaders in Congress did not prioritize the country’s greatest concerns: job creation and the soaring federal deficit, and many paid the price at the ballot box for out-of-control spending and their role in growing the size of the federal government.

In the final weeks of the 111th Congress, key votes on taxes and spending give us some reason to hope that job-creating policies and fiscal restraint will be priorities moving forward.

During a lame duck session in December, Congress passed a compromise two-year tax agreement which prevented a massive, job-killing tax increase on New Year’s Day. Raising taxes during an economic recession is unthinkable. Although the agreement was not perfect, I believe it was necessary and ultimately a victory for all Americans.

The tax agreement maintains the current tax policy. It blocks higher taxes on capital gains and dividends, extends relief from the marriage penalty, preserves the \$1000 per child tax credit, and protects at least 21 million additional families from the Alternative Minimum Tax. And it also alleviates the burden of the death tax, an egregious policy that punishes families and small businesses for success and ultimately discourages the American dream.

After holding the line on tax increases, Senate Republicans stood united in opposition to the 2,000 page, \$1.3 trillion dollar omnibus spending bill.

Passage of the omnibus would have cemented spending increases for the next year and tied Republican hands in the next Congress by making fiscal reforms and budget cuts more difficult.

Later this month, the newly elected Republican majority in the House and the strengthened Republican ranks in the Senate will now have greater influence in future spending decisions.

With the start of the new Congress, Republicans have the opportunity to take the lead

on budget issues and make the tough yet necessary decisions to cut federal spending and put our country back on a sustainable and responsible fiscal track.

There is much the United States can and should learn from history regarding deficit reduction.

In a research study by the American Enterprise Institute, building off the earlier work of two Harvard economists, analyzed the policies employed to fix unsustainable government spending by 21 countries. Their findings clearly show that successful reform efforts to balance budgets were almost entirely done by cutting government spending, while failed attempts predominantly focused on tax increases.

The federal government has been spending at the expense of economic growth and job creation, as well as stability and credibility in global financial markets.

Ultimately future generations of Americans will bear the greatest cost. We have an opportunity to restore fiscal sanity to the federal budget and make the tax cuts permanent. This will allow businesses to have certainty for their future planning which will spur hiring and job creation.

The American people expect Congress to have learned from the mistakes of the recent past — and not repeat them.

Kay Bailey Hutchison is the senior U.S. Senator from Texas and is the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.



KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON

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New Year's Word Find

Just in time for New Year's Day, find the hidden words in the puzzle.

| | | |
|-----------|----------|-------------|
| BALL | CONFETTI | NEW |
| BALLONS | DANCING | PARTY |
| CELEBRATE | JANUARY | RESOLUTIONS |
| CHAMPAGNE | MIDNIGHT | YEAR |

R Q O F F R P J Z E M J
 Y S Z M D B A J N T I A
 P S N L X N X G H A D P
 H B P O U Y A V J R N F
 Y W A A I P C L S B I B
 W T R L M T L P X E G K
 A Y R A L A U Q O L H T
 U K H A B O E L G E T F
 I C W W P M O M O C R U
 G N I C N A D N D S A Q
 C O N F E T T I S N E W
 G D S R H C V Q U N Y R

THIS DAY IN...



HISTORY

- 1894: W.K. DICKSON RECEIVES A PATENT FOR MOTION PICTURE FILM.
- 1927: THE FIRST TRANSATLANTIC PHONE CALL IS MADE.
- 1990: THE INTERIOR OF THE LEANING TOWER OF PISA IS CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC BECAUSE OF SAFETY CONCERNS.

Holiday Match

Match the symbol with the holiday to which it belongs.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Menorah | A. New Year's Day |
| 2. Mistletoe | B. Independence Day |
| 3. Noisemakers | C. Chanukah |
| 4. Fireworks | D. Christmas |

Answers: 1. C, 2. D, 3. A, 4. B



resolution

a firm decision to do or not do something



IN ANCIENT TIMES, THE NEW YEAR WAS CELEBRATED ON WHAT DAY?

ANSWER: FIRST DAY OF SPRING

How they SAY that in...

- ENGLISH:** Day
- SPANISH:** Día
- ITALIAN:** Giorno
- FRENCH:** Jour
- GERMAN:** Tag

Did you know?



JANUARY 1, 2011, ALSO KNOWN AS NEW YEAR'S DAY, FALLS ON A SATURDAY.

GET THE PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

ANSWER: NOISEMAKER

SLYLOCK FOX and COMICS FOR KIDS

BY BOB WEBER JR.

When Slylock Fox is not solving mysteries, he enjoys watching movies. But Slylock can't turn off his detective skills. He often finds mistakes on the screen. Besides the obvious omission of life-supporting space suits, what error did Slylock see in this scene of aliens visiting the moon?

NOV SHMOZ KA POP! (FROZEN WATER HERE!)

SPA FON! (EXCELLENT!)

Solution: -- On the moon there is no air. Sound can't travel in a vacuum. The aliens would not be able to hear each other.

HOW TO DRAW a cat

WEBER 1-2

YOUR DRAWING

What's wrong with this owl?

Today's artist is Jack Anderson, age 12

Creepy Frog

Submit your drawings at www.kidcartoonists.com

Find six differences between these panels.

www.kidcartoonists.com

Answer -- Cherry, bandage, shell, whiskers, tooth and collar.

The fourth Find the six differences is here. Send \$4 (check/money order in U.S. funds made payable to King Features) with your name and address to Six Differences No. 4, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475

Bird Poop:

Kestrel survives
being wounded
by BB gun pellet

Large portions of "down town" had withered away. At Poncho's, however, those seeking a wide variety of newspapers, magazines, or books competed for parking spaces with the populace seeking the advice and wares of the tobacco connoisseur.



BEBE
McCASLAND

Across from the vacant Settles Hotel, the rare gem of West Texas beckoned to strangers as well as town folk.

The narrow aisles ensured your being drawn to the latest store could offer.

Even those who worked in the two-story building across the street enjoyed using their break time to visit the eclectic shop. While searching through the rows of printed offerings, office workers often laughed at the avian antics of the resident parrot.

Greeting a potential buyer, the raucous voice of patronage hawked not only Poncho's diversity, but also its own colorful appearance. From movie stars to bus drivers, the bird had earned its keep.

Having stayed late to finish a report and finally leaving for home, an employee, whose office faced west, noticed the last tinges of a vivid sunset highlighting the buildings behind and to the north of the shotgun-style "news stand." Reminding her of times gone by, some of their dark silhouettes now stood silently empty.

As she stepped from the curb into the street, she noticed a movement near the rear tire of a customer's vehicle. Assuming it to be the usual trash-blown castaway of a thoughtless person, she did not give it a second glance.

Hurriedly purchasing from Poncho's the latest paperback, she pushed open the heavy, glass door at the entrance. Another step forward and again she saw what she thought was trash. In the shadows cast by the store and customers leaving for home, she was finally able to discern the outline of a bird.

When it disappeared under an adjacent car her interest became acute. Kneeling on the uneven pavement, she glanced under the vehicle. Quickly half-running, half-walking, the shadowy being ducked under a truck, then turned to the west.

With the woman in pursuit, the bird's effort to run soon turned into a struggle to fly. Elevating about a foot and a half above the surface of the parking lot adjacent to Poncho's, the creature soon touched down, ran, and then tried again to gain altitude.

After chasing it through the open space, she realized it was headed for the alley at the back of the store. She had no choice. To find out why that bird couldn't readily leave the area made her run even harder.

Metal garbage cans, some with and without lids, peppered the alley as relics of another time. Abandoned, they looked like dwarfs compared to modern



Courtesy photo

A small, slender falcon, the American kestrel easily uses the wind to hover over possible prey. Facing into a breeze with its body tilted slightly upward, the raptor seems to hang in the air. After occasionally beating its wings to remain in position, it suddenly plunges toward the ground and its unsuspecting catch.

dumpsters assigned to take their place.

Skirting behind some discarded boxes scattered nearby, the desperate bird hid quietly as the woman approached. Removing her coat, she was reminded of the unforgiving cold of early January.

One by one, she moved a box out of the way. Then another. As she started to slide the last box aside, she heard something. Hoping she had made the right decision, she quietly placed her coat between the box and a building's wall.

Tip-toeing to the other end of the cardboard structure, she would use her foot, both hands and upper body to stop the bird from escaping.

Taking a deep breath, she moved the box, saw a movement and grabbed the elusive, frightened bird. With a lack of gratitude, it bit

her hand repeatedly. Its feet flailed at her arms as she finally brought it under control.

It was then she realized its tiny talons had penetrated her sweater to inflict even more pain as they gripped whatever skin was available.

Having seen the woman chasing something in the parking lot and alley caused a patron to rush to her aid. Untangling what looked like a small hawk, she and her rescuer hurried to use the phone in the store.

On entering Poncho's, Art and I could readily sense the chagrin felt by the parrot as it looked down on its sudden feathered competition. On the floor, someone had placed an American kestrel inside a small cage for safekeeping.

Protesting to his fullest capacity as I extracted him from the enclo-

sure, the smallest of falcons screamed avian profanity that was deafening at close range. After briefly allowing interested patrons to see the bird, we hurried home to examine our feisty fellow.

Extending his left wing revealed a small, round bloody spot. With no evidence of broken bones, this "sparrow hawk" had a good chance for recovery. After medicating the wound, we placed him inside an enclosure that insured his privacy.

Delivering the kestrel to Midge Erskine at the Eos Sanctuary in Midland, we had our suspicions confirmed. The handsome falcon had been shot with a BB gun.

As she took him from my hand, I memorized once again the beauty of his blue gray head topped with a russet crown.

His white throat and

cheeks were augmented with vertical black stripes. Accenting his blue gray wings was his rusty back with black bars. Even his rusty tail had black bands. Below, his buff-colored breast and sides were highlighted with numerous small black spots.

Indignant at being captive, the kestrel would be assured his wildness as he recovered.

After demonstrating at a later date his ability to master a flight cage, the colorful falcon could return to scanning and hunting the ground for prey.

The easements and alleys that always attract rodents had encouraged his journey into our town and unfortunate mishap.

Bebe McCasland is author of *The Scoop from Bird Poop*. She is federally and state licensed to rehabilitate wild birds.

Cleanup of San Antonio River Walk begins

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Henry Rymers hawked cheap eats Monday at his restaurant along San Antonio's famed River Walk, but his coveted waterfront tables had an unappetizing view: the river freshly drained, filthy with trash and mud, and prowled by dirt-cov-

ered workers collecting sunken garbage.

"It's a miracle we didn't close today," said Rymers, a seating host at the Lone Star Café.

San Antonio is cleaning the river gunk out of the River Walk, draining the busiest quarter-mile stretch of the iconic Texas tourist des-

ination as part of a historic, sediment-removing scrub down that is far more thorough than the city's usual annual cleanup.

The city plans to finish removing more than 6,000 tons of water-clogging sediment from the winding downtown waterway over the next two weeks. Muck-hoisting cranes closed usually busy streets packed with tourists, and loud bulldozers and pumps rumbled in the riverbed outside lavish hotels and white-tablecloth restaurants.

Few are around to notice the commotion. The city cleans the

River Walk each year during the predictable lull of early and chilly January, when the last Alamo Bowl fans and New Year's Eve revelers have left town and the convention center is without a big event.

They're missing a bigger tidy-up than normal: city officials said the project marks the first time that sediment has been removed from the River Walk on this scale, getting rid of the dirt and silt stirred up by barges and boats.

The result will be cleaner, clearer water in the "Historic Bend" swath of the river at the heart of downtown,

said Paula Stallcup, the city's downtown operations director.

"When I started this job four years ago, this was something we never attempted to address," Stallcup said of the sediment removal. "Probably because the question has never been asked."

Crews began removing sediment last year along a quieter portion of the River Walk and hope to finish the project this year. Efforts to improve water quality have included boarding up a bridge where a colony of bats made their home — and a mess beneath them.

On Monday, three city workers in rubber boots dragged garden hoes along the drained river bottom that is normally a five-foot deep waterway. They scooped up cameras that tourists long ago helplessly watched sink, silverware from waterside Tex-Mex restaurants and beads from any number of floating parades. One worker fished out a tire wall and chucked it onto the riverbank.

Outside the Lone Star Café, there was no wait and practically no potential customers for Rymers to lure out of the gloomy, 50-degree afternoon.

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Steers at home against Lubbock Cooper



Heather Leiphart/Odessa American

Big Spring's Chazzell Robertson shoots a basket during the Steers' game against Monahans earlier this season. The Steers are back at home against Lubbock Cooper at 7:30 p.m. today in Steer Gym.

BY ADAM COLEMAN
Sports Editor

While Big Spring boys' basketball head coach Cliff Thompson is counting down the days until District 5-3A play begins, he's also making sure the Steers are fully equipped for the ride.

That includes making sure every aspect of his team is at its highest level before that Jan. 14 matchup at Brownwood and adding a few new wrinkles to the offense.

The Steers have been adding new plays and hope to test them in tonight's game against Lubbock Cooper at 7:30 p.m. in Steer Gym.

"We're really anxious to see how we execute those," Thompson said. "Hopefully they'll be in man (defense) so we can get the chance to run them. Coming up to district, we want to get the execution of our plays where it needs to be. It's not quite there."

The Lubbock Cooper

See **STEERS**, Page 12

Garrett's day-after duties could indicate a return as head coach

The Associated Press

IRVING — Jason Garrett stood before the Dallas Cowboys on Monday and gave them their marching orders for the offseason. He encouraged them to watch the playoffs and to be frustrated over not being a part of it. He talked about things they can do to become a playoff team next year.

Speaking to reporters, Garrett said he'll be at the Senior Bowl later this month to check out potential draft picks and that "going forward, we will continue to implement the changes in regards to the offseason and how we do training camp and some of those things."

In every way, he sounded like a guy who plans to remain in charge.

Garrett has led like a permanent coach since becoming the team's interim leader two months ago. So the image he projected Monday was no surprise.

If anything, team owner Jerry Jones allowing

Garrett to fill those roles Monday was the latest indication he will be returning.

"It's probably not the day to talk about that, to be honest with you," Garrett said. "Today is really a day to start the evaluations of our players and, in due time, we'll have some conversations about that."

Garrett has built a strong case by taking a team that had been 1-7 and going 5-3, with the losses by a total of seven points. He might already have the job if not for a league rule requiring Jones to interview a minority candidate.

Jones is expected to meet with receivers coach Ray Sherman, who is black. He's talked about meeting with outside candidates, too. Jones also said he plans to keep the pool small and wants to decide soon. When asked Sunday about the new coach's involvement on hiring assistant coaches, Jones may have revealed his intentions by replying, "That is certainly something that Jason needs to have input in."

Garrett said he and Jones have no meetings set up. Don't read anything into that because Jones already has said he doesn't need to interview Garrett.

"The last eight games spoke for themselves," said linebacker Bradie James, a defensive captain. "That's why he was able to address us today. If they wouldn't have went the right way, he wouldn't have been up there. It would've just been Jerry."

Other teams with vacancies could seek permission to interview Garrett. Technically, when the season ended Sunday his status reverted to assistant head coach and offensive coordinator. He's under contract for those jobs for one more season.

Asked if he would even talk to other teams, Garrett said, "We'll just let that whole situation unfold."

While Garrett dancing around most aspects about his future, he offered morsels of insight. Such as

See **COWBOYS**, Page 12

Texans keep Gary Kubiak as coach but fire defensive coordinator

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Gary Kubiak kept his job and could bring in Wade Phillips to revamp the Houston Texans' awful defense.

The Texans said Monday that Kubiak will return as head coach next season, but the team fired defensive coordinator Frank Bush, second-year coach David Gibbs, linebackers coach Johnny Holland and assistant linebackers coach Robert Saleh.

Houston (6-10) lost eight of its last 10 games, mostly due to a defense that

gave up a league-high 4,280 yards passing along with 33 touchdown passes, tied with Dallas for the most.

"We've got some serious problems that we've got to address," Kubiak said. "It definitely wasn't all coaching, in my opinion. We've got issues across the board. I had to make a decision on how we can get better, and so doing that, I made that decision to let those four guys go."

Kubiak acknowledged that he'll consider Phillips to fill the vacancy. Phillips has been out of work since

the Cowboys started 1-7, their lone victory a 27-13 win over the Texans in Houston in Week 3.

Phillips was the defensive coordinator in Denver from 1986-92, overlapping Kubiak's playing career as John Elway's backup for the Broncos.

"I know Wade, I've competed against him many times," Kubiak said. "I have a lot of respect for him as a coach, but we'll talk to a number of people. It's pretty safe to say that Wade will be one of the people we'll talk to, and it'll probably be very

quickly."

Pro Bowl middle linebacker DeMeco Ryans, who sat out the final 10 games with a ruptured Achilles' tendon, expected a staff shakeup, but was surprised the team released Holland, who had worked with Kubiak for all five seasons in Houston.

"It's tough to lose a guy who's been with me for my first five years in the league," Ryans said in a phone interview. "I learned a lot from him. That

See **TEXANS**, Page 12

Luck leads Stanford past Va Tech in Orange Bowl, 40-12

The Associated Press

MIAMI — John Elway flashed his familiar grin and Jim Harbaugh gave a jubilant shout from the sideline as Andrew Luck sprinted up the field to join a celebration in the end zone.

Nearly a quarter remained

in the Orange Bowl, but the Stanford Cardinal were on the way to their first bowl victory in 14 years. And it was a blowout.

Luck, the Heisman Trophy runner-up, threw for 287 yards and four touchdowns Monday night to lead fifth-ranked Stanford past No. 12

Virginia Tech 40-12.

"I'm extremely excited," Luck said. "Couldn't be happier for the Stanford community."

It was a performance reminiscent of Elway, the former Stanford quarterback who is expected to become the Denver Broncos' chief football ex-

ecutive this week. He served as an honorary captain, and ex-Stanford QB Jim Plunkett was also on hand to lend support.

The Cardinal (12-1) likely will end the season ranked in the top 5 for the first time since the unbeaten 1940 team finished No. 2. Their success

comes only four years after they went 1-11 and hired Harbaugh as coach to lead a turnaround.

Virginia Tech (11-3), playing in a bowl game for the 18th consecutive year, fell to 1-27 against top-5 teams.

See **LUCK**, Page 12

Sports in brief

Big Spring Fall Banquet for athletics

Big Spring High School will host its athletic banquet for fall sports at 6 p.m. Jan. 8 in the high school cafeteria.

Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased at the door. Football players, volleyball players and cross country runners will be recognized at the annual event. If there are any questions, call Denise Carillo at 432-816-1685.

Men's city bowling tournament

This tournament takes place Jan. 23 and 24 at Bowl-A-Rama in Big Spring.

The entry forms are to be turned in by Jan. 17. Entry forms can be picked up at the Bowl-A-Rama. The local USBC Chapter is donating \$150 to the prize fund.

For more information contact Diana Ewing at 432-816-7631, Claud Fryar at 432-517-0475, or Sheila Armstrong at 432-270-7596.

2011 MAYB River City Shootout Basketball Tournament

Registration is ongoing for the 2011 MAYB River City Shootout Basketball Tournament to take place on February 19 and 20. The tournament is for boys and girls, grades 3 through 8. Please email wardca@yahoo.com or call (979) 417-3721 for additional information. Online registration is available at www.otcybc.com.

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Tomorrow's Horoscope

Today brings the first of six eclipses in 2011, four solar eclipses and two lunar eclipses. If you think this sounds like a lot of eclipses for one year, you're right. There are only six years in the entire century that hold this many eclipses. Such a phenomenon has, through the ages, made human-



HOLIDAY MATHIS

kind uncomfortable. Have faith that the sun will shine again.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Get rid of the temptations that are around you, and make it very difficult, if not impossible, to get to them. You'll find it easier to indulge in moderation when that is the only option available to you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). No one can be just like you, least of all you. You'll try to execute a job or performance the same way you did last time, and it's not the way it will go down. But the new way is good, too, for different reasons.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). The composer Igor Stravinsky, your sign maker, claimed that his music was best understood by children and animals. Likewise, you will deliver gifts to the world that are meant to

be felt, not intellectualized.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Just when you think you really understand another person, doors open to deeper and unknown territory. Let this learning unfold naturally. There's no reason to push things along.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). It is not so easy for any accomplished person to be modest, but for the emotionally immature, it is extremely difficult. That's why the quality is as rare as it is appealing in a young person.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You will participate in an act of sublime surrender. You will produce things of beauty, hold them up and open your hands, letting the wind carry them where she will.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Make a conscious effort to dream. Try to stay lucid and guide the imagery that is the language of your mind toward scenes that give you great satisfaction. Your reality will interpret your dreams.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Reconnect with the people, areas of

interest and games that make you feel the most playful. You could use something to confirm your status as a grown-up child.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You will be protecting your interests and forwarding them, as well. Be like a warrior with a keen sense of when to attack and when to retreat. Stay flexible and aware as you keep your options open.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Whether you are cooking a meal, constructing a building or directing a boardroom, if you can do things simply, you will do them well. Your job is to pare down a complicated task to its essence.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Just because you are hopeful doesn't mean you're naive. When the odds are not in your favor, you may realize this fact and then go forward nonetheless, acting out of a combination of faith and loyalty.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You will show tremendous heart as you support someone who may or may not

come through. This is more about loyalty than winning. Loved ones appreciate your encouragement.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 4). You have figured a few things out since your last birthday, and you're ready to show the world. This month brings an important new member of your team. February brings a financial injection. In love, trust that things will work out and they will. Your creation will be celebrated in March and again in August. Aquarius and Libra people adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 6, 13, 42, 19 and 28.

SOLAR ECLIPSE RITUAL: For some, the word "ritual" brings to mind visions of ugly green witches chanting around a fire as they stir up a poisonous brew that will ruin the princess and spice up the fairytale. For me, it's a simple word describing a series of actions that has value beyond the practical implications. For instance, a ritual like drinking coffee in the morning can do more than provide a desired caffeinated response. The actions taken in making the brew, pouring the liquid, dressing up the drink with sweetener or cream, and sipping from the cup from a certain place in the kitchen could be as much of a signal to the body and mind to start the day as the drink itself. A ritual is a symbolic orchestration that sets the mind on a particular inten-

tion. Here's a ritual to acknowledge the energies of the solar eclipse in Capricorn. Go for a walk, especially one that includes a hill. Decide your destination beforehand. Pick up a rock at the beginning of your journey, and set the rock down when you reach your destination. Let nothing stop you from reaching that point. As you complete this goal, consider that other goals in your life could be just as easily accomplished.

CELEBRITY PROFILES: Rumor has it that actress January Jones was named for the month of her birth, as well as for a character in a Jacqueline Susann novel. Her cool Capricorn earth-sign beauty is balanced by the energy of Mars and Saturn in the ever-hot fiery realm of Leo. The result is an irresistible magnetism that has contributed significantly to the effectiveness of hit movies and television shows such as "Mad Men."

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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6 5 4 9 3 2 1 7 8
8 3 9 7 1 4 6 5 2
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West dealer. East-West vulnerable.
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A Q J
K 10 6
J 8 4 3
10 9 2
WEST EAST
6 3 7 5
J 7 5 3 Q 9 8 2
Q 2 K 10 9 6
A K 6 4 3 J 7 5
SOUTH
K 10 9 8 4 2
A 4
A 7 5
Q 8
The bidding:
West North East South
Pass Pass Pass 1
Pass 3 Pass 4
Opening lead — king of clubs.
Assume you're in four spades and West leads the K-A and another club. You ruff, but the outlook is bleak because it seems likely you'll lose two diamond tricks and go down one.
Upon further consideration, though, you see that you might be able to execute an elimination play that would allow you to make the contract. Accordingly, you cash the
Tomorrow: The Gordian knot.
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Howard College men, women pick up wins in Arizona

The Howard College men's and women's basketball teams won each of their games in Arizona this past weekend. The women beat South Mountain Community College 75-51 Saturday, Phoenix College 89-80 Sunday and Glendale

Community College 66-42 Monday.

The men took care of business in the 2010 Fiesta Bowl Junior College Shootout by beating Scottsdale Community College 63-59 and Mesa Community College 54-47.

The Howard College men (12-1) and women (13-2) are off until WJ-CAC play picks up against South Plains on Jan.10 in Big Spring.

STEERS

Continued from Page 7

game starts a three-game stretch, which also includes another home game against Levelland and a trip to Andrews, before district play begins.

Having a chance to work out any kinks during this three-game stretch is vital before a district game Thompson said might be the toughest in Brownwood.

Adding the new plays almost acts as a Plan B for the Steers. Thompson said the Steers' district opponents will continue to learn more about what Big Spring can do on the court and it will be nice to

have other options on offense.

On the other hand, defense continues to be a focus for Thompson. He said his players have to get stops and rebounds, two things that haven't been consistent.

As for Cooper tonight, the Steers might be getting a preview of what district play will be like. Thompson compared Cooper's style of play with one of the tougher teams in District 5-3A.

"I've called about four or five coaches who have played them and they say we matchup with them pretty well," Thompson said. "I know they have a new coach. I don't think they'll be really athletic, but I think they'll be pretty well-coached and fundamental. They're kind of more like an Abilene Wylie."

Area basketball: District play continues for area teams

Coahoma-Stanton

Coahoma and Stanton jump back into District 3-2A play today against one another in Coahoma. The Bulldogettes play the Lady Buffs at 6 p.m. and the Bulldogs are scheduled to play the Buffs at 7:30 p.m. The Bulldogettes are coming off a subpar showing in the tournament at Reagan County and hope to get back on track with a win tonight. On the boys' side, the Buffs are led by Tyler Fulton, who is one of the go-to players for Stanton.

Forsan

The Forsan Lady Buffs and Buffs are on the road against Post today, picking district play back up as well. The Lady Buffs play at 6 p.m. and the Buffs play at 7:30 p.m. in Post. Ambra Hill has been lighting it up as of late for the Lady Buffs, while Ty Johnson and the Buffs hope to build off a win over Coahoma to open district play.

Sands

Both Sands girls and boys' teams will be in Gail tonight to open district play

against Borden County. The girls are scheduled to play around 6 p.m. and the boys will follow. The boys won first place in the Sterling City tournament last week.

Garden City

District play continues for the Garden City Bearkats and Lady Kats. The Lady Kats will take the court against Veribest at 6:30 p.m. and the boys' game starts at 8 p.m. The Bearkats started district play with a win over Paint Rock, while the Lady Kats are 2-1 in district play after wins over Robert Lee and Paint Rock and a loss to Sterling City

Grady

The Grady boys and girls' teams hope to continue their hot streaks against O'Donnell in Lenorah. Play for the varsity girls is scheduled for 6 p.m. and the boys' game will follow.

COWBOYS

Continued from Page 7

his belief that being both offensive coordinator and head coach — as he's done since early November — is "an efficient way to do it."

He avoided a direct answer about whether he and Jones have discussed removal of the interim tag by saying, "A large, large majority of our conversations have been what we're doing each and every day." Thus, a small, small minority of their conversations were about that.

"We've always had the feel that he's our head coach since he's taken over," said third-string quarterback Stephen McGee, who led Dallas to a victory over Philadelphia on Sunday in his first career start. "He got everybody to buy in from the very beginning. ... I think everybody that's played for him believes in him and would love to play for him."

Jones spoke to the club Monday, too, and brought up his favorite subject: the Super Bowl.

Failing to make this one extends Dallas' drought to 15 straight seasons, the longest in franchise history. This failure hurts more because the game

will be played in Cowboys Stadium.

"I encourage every teammate to watch it and let your stomach boil a little bit," tight end Jason Witten said. "That's what it's about, the play-offs and seeing those teams celebrate and go for the ultimate prize."

Jones was counting on the Cowboys becoming the first team to play in a Super Bowl at home. It seemed realistic coming off a division title and a playoff win.

But the season spun out of control early, forcing him to fire coach Wade Phillips midway through. When he promoted Garrett, all Jones asked was to make the team competitive

again. Garrett did that from the start, taking Dallas to New York and beating the division-leading Giants.

"What I told them today was I was very proud of them, of how they played the last eight weeks," Garrett said. "To continue to play hard — win some hard-fought games, lose some hard-fought games, but continue to go about it the right way — it was impressive to me as a coach and really as a fan of football."

Garrett has to feel good about having drawn that out of them. He can't celebrate that quite yet, though, not until Jones said it was good enough to cement the job.

TEXANS

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was definitely shocking, that he had to go."

The Texans are 37-43 in Kubiak's five seasons, and the franchise is still seeking its first playoff appearance. The best Kubiak has done so far is guide the Texans to a 9-7 mark in 2009, the only winning record in the team's nine seasons of existence.

Kubiak, whose contract runs through the 2012 season, admitted that he felt fortunate that owner Bob McNair decided to retain him.

"We visited and decided on a new direction," Kubiak said. "Obviously, him giving me a chance to move us in that direction, I'm very thankful for that. But I know I've got a lot of work to do and a lot of problems to fix."

Bush seemed resigned to his fate after the final practice of the season on Friday.

"I've got to go out and try to find a way to sell myself to another organization," Bush said. "I'll stay positive, I'll stay upbeat, I'll keep believing in the things I do. Quite frankly, I felt like we had the right approach. Things didn't

work out, but I'll stay positive about the whole situation and keep moving forward."

Bush was promoted to defensive coordinator after the Texans finished 8-8 in 2008. The Texans' defense played well over the final 13 games of 2009, giving up 19 points and 84 yards rushing in that span.

But the unit was bad from the start this season, yielding 410.5 yards through the first six games. The Texans only started 4-2 because the offense topped 30 points in each of the victories.

After Ryans was injured, the defense never got better.

Kubiak was also hurt by his preseason decision to start rookie Kareem Jackson and second-year pro Glover Quin at cornerback. Houston's secondary was beaten repeatedly on long pass plays, most critically in the fourth quarter.

Defensive line coach Bill Kollar is keeping his job, even though the pass rush was also an issue.

Defensive end Mario Williams had 8 1/2 sacks through the first 13 games, but then went on injured reserve with a sports hernia. Houston had 30 sacks to rank 23rd in the league.

"I like the way he does his job," Kubiak said. "It has a lot to do with where I see us going forward."

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LUCK

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Stanford threw a completion for a bizarre safety and blew two extra points, but overcame those mistakes with six plays gaining more than

30 yards. Two came in succession on a two-play, 97-yard "drive," and the Cardinal outscored Tech 27-0 in the second half.

"They're really good, and we helped them be good," Hokies head coach Frank Beamer said.

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