

# BIG SPRING HERALD

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"Reflecting a Proud Community"

50 CENTS DAILY/\$1.25 SUNDAY

TUESDAY

March 21, 2000

## WEATHER

Today:



PARTLY CLOUDY

TODAY 73°-75° TONIGHT 43°-45°

## Deadline extended for BSSH fundraiser

The deadline for mailing reservations for the Big Spring State Hospital fundraiser "Denim and Diamonds" has been extended to Friday. The event is planned May 5.

Donors must reserve a spot by Friday to have their names printed on the May 5 invitation.

Benefactors can contribute \$200 a couple; patrons, \$100 a couple; and Sponsors, \$50 a couple. The donations entitle partygoers to attend a pre-dance reception at the home of Don Newsom and law office of Troyce G. Wolf, and include two dance tickets.

All money raised by the event goes to benefit the patients at the state hospital. Call 268-7833 for more information.

## WHAT'S UP...

### TODAY

- Intermediate line dance classes, 9 a.m. Senior Citizens Center.
- Big Spring Rotary Club, noon, Howard College Cactus Room.
- Big Spring Art Association, 7 p.m., Library Annex, 500 Main, Community Room.
- Big Spring Chapter No. 67, Order of the Eastern Star Meeting, 7 p.m., Masonic Lodge, 219 Main.

### WEDNESDAY

- Optimist Club, 7 a.m., Howard College Cactus Room.
- Senior Circle Big Spring Mall walkers meet 9:15 a.m. in front of movie theater box office.
- Big Spring Downtown Lions Club, noon, Howard College Cactus Room.
- Line dancing, 1 p.m., Senior Citizens Center, Industrial Park.
- Eagles Lodge Ladies Auxiliary, 7 p.m., Eagles Lodge, 704 West Third.

### THURSDAY

- Gideons International, Big Spring Camp No. U42060, Hermans, 7 a.m.
- Big Spring Senior Citizens Center Art Classes, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. for 55 and older.
- Kiwanis Club, noon, Howard College Cactus Room.
- Masonic Lodge, No. 598, 7:30 p.m., 219 Main.

### FRIDAY

- Signal Mountain Quilting Guild, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., St. Mary's Episcopal Church. Call 267-1037 or 267-7281. Bring a lunch.

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## Vol. 97, No. 124

To reach us, please call 263-7331. Office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you miss your paper, please call 263-7335 before 7 p.m. on weekdays and 11 a.m. on Sunday.

## HC hosts UIL competitions

By LYNDEL MOODY  
Staff Writer

Howard College will host University Interscholastic League contests this week with more than 400 area high school students participating.

"We are very excited to be coordinating the UIL contests this year, and we are looking forward to as many exciting events as we have in years past," said Dr. Amy Burchett, administrative dean of student services.

The District 5-4A One Act Play contest kicks off the UIL competition today with six schools presenting plays from classic

and contemporary theater works, with close to 100 students participating.

Big Spring High School students, under the direction of Tim Haynes, will perform "And They Dance Real Slow in Jackson," by Jim Leonard Jr.

"I have 14 students participating in the play this year with most of them playing multiple roles," Haynes said. "I feel very confident about the play. We had an excellent rehearsal last night."

Participating in the play as actors are Lauren Fraser, Julie Adams, Pricilla Flores, Laura Davis, Haley Haynes, Sarah Smith, George Williams, Toryn

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## Citizens urged to collect, sign copies of Herald's 'Letter to Vestas'

HERALD Staff Report

The Big Spring Herald is sponsoring an effort to get local citizens involved in letting Vestas Corp. know we're interested in that firm moving its North American headquarters and building a manufacturing facility in Big Spring.

In Sunday's edition of the Herald, a "Dear Vestas" letter was included on the back page of Section B.

We encourage citizens of Big Spring to tear out that page and circulate it wherever you go — to work, church and

school — to collect as many signatures of friends and neighbors as possible. We also urge you to sign copies of that letter wherever they may be available.

A copy of the letter is available at the Herald office, 710 Scurry, for those who want to sign it. Signed pages can also be dropped off at the Herald office or Moore Development for Big Spring, at Third and Gregg.

We will make certain the pages are collected and the signatures counted so that Vestas knows we want it as part of our community.



Brandon Garvin picks up a loaf of bread for his dad, James, at HEB. Shoppers there are taking advantage of the store's new Fuel Rewards program which gives discounts for gas purchases.

## Local grocery shoppers can earn 'rewards' to cut fuel costs

By CARL GRAHAM  
Staff Writer

A new promotion at HEB Food Stores is aimed at helping consumers cope with rising gas prices.

The Fuel Rewards program is designed to help shoppers earn discounts on gas while doing their regular grocery shopping, store officials said.

Upon entering the grocery store, shoppers should pick up a fuel rewards shopping list at the business center or at the gas pump. While shopping, look for the Fuel Rewards sign next to products throughout the store. The signs will show the amount of your fuel discount as a "reward" for buying

that item.

According to HEB Store Director Kirk Kiser, the results have been good.

"The results have been immediate and positive," said Kiser. "We are receiving positive feedback and comments on the promotion already."

Kiser said the free reward promotion items would change on a month to month basis with at least 300-500 items in the store that have gas rewards with them.

"Discounts on selected items range from a minimum of 10 cents to as much as \$1 off," said Kiser. "What makes it even better is the items are name brand items."

Kiser said the receipts for gas are good up to 10 days from

purchase. Shoppers just need to present them to the attendant at the fuel pump who will apply that amount of discount toward your fuel purchase.

"It gives a nice, competitive edge as well as a great value to the consumers," said Kiser. "It's a win-win situation no matter how you look at it."

Kiser said sale items are included in the promotion, and coupons will be still accepted.

Fuel Rewards is available to those paying for groceries with the Lone Star Card, and the discount is redeemable on any grade of gas. More than one Fuel Rewards discount receipt may be used when gas is purchased, as long as the receipts do not exceed the cost of the fuel.

## Farmers

### Extension Agent says need for measurable rain critical as time for planting arrives

By CARL GRAHAM  
Staff Writer

According to Howard County Extension Agent David Kight, there is almost nothing cotton farmers in this area need more than a good, measurable rain during the next few days.

"Cotton producers are in a situation that, due to the low prices of cotton and the high inputs of growing the cotton, if they do not get adequate moisture in order to plant, and what I mean by adequate is at least four or five inches, they will be in trouble," said Kight.

Kight said most everyone, including ranchers, would like to see any moisture at all.

"Of course most everyone in the county would like to see rain, but as far as the cotton producers go, they need a lot," said Kight. "In fact only once or twice in the past 40 years have we had a year that we didn't have adequate moisture for planting. But this could be one of those years."

Kight said the cost of equipment for farmers has soared while the price of cotton has been at a low.

"Everything has gone up except the price of cotton," said Kight. "The average cost for a tractor now probably runs around \$100,000 and a pickup that may have cost \$6,000 in the '60s now costs \$25,000 and

*'Only once or twice in the past 40 years have we had a year that we didn't have adequate moisture for planting. But this could be one of those years.'*

David Kight,  
Howard County  
Extension Agent

up, depending on what your requirements are."

Despite the lack of rain, Kight said that cattle prices have been holding fairly steady. The price of feeder cattle is fairly strong while the price of milk cows is low due to most not having a place to put them.

"Talk of alternative crops has been discussed, but to be quite honest, it's difficult to find a viable alternative crop to cotton," said Kight. "It's hard to find any crop that doesn't need some kind of moisture to survive."

Some hope of rain was given by the National Weather Service in Midland, which forecasted a 20-percent chance of rain today and an even greater chance of possibly heavy rains on Wednesday for Big Spring and the area.

"Rains up to an inch to an inch and a half could be anticipated around the Lake J.B. Thomas area," said NWS meteorologist Michael Young. "Those individuals in Howard County and Borden County seem to be most favorable in the party line."

## Remembering old times: Musician visits local friends

By LYNDEL MOODY  
Staff Writer

An accomplished steel guitar player and former Big Spring Police officer visited friends here last week.

Weldon Myrick, a 32-year veteran of the Grand Ol' Opry staff band, has been playing in Nashville with a number of famous artists almost too long to list.

Before he retired a few years ago, Myrick played with some of the top stars in the country at the Opry. They included Trisha Yearwood, Skeeter Davis, Johnny Cash, Tex Ritter, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Johnny Rodriguez, Colin Ray, Sammy Kershaw, Reba McEntire, Smokey Roberts, Charlie Pride, Alan Jackson, Olivia Newton John and the list goes on and on.

"I am just a good old Texas boy who's got lucky," Myrick said.

Raised in Jayton, Myrick's love of music came early in life and turned serious when he started picking on his brother's Hawaiian steel guitar around the age of 8.

In the early days, he would often visit a friend in Lubbock, and go to know some of the guys involved in the music scene there, including Buddy Holly, Sonny Curtis and



Weldon Myrick, at right, accomplished steel guitar player and former local resident, enjoyed visiting Big Spring friends last week. Pictured front left is Judi, Myrick's wife, Back row from left are Toni and Eddie Owen. Eddie Owen performed with Myrick on a local country-western show called the Circle 4 Ramblers.

Johnny Duncan. Myrick moved to Big Spring in 1956. He worked at various jobs including on a country-western television show and as a Big Spring Police Officer.

"Being a police officer was just one of my ambitions in life," he said.

Myrick played steel guitar and sang on a local television

show called the Circle 4 Ramblers back in the late 1950s.

"Weldon played steel guitar, Ben Hall played guitar and ran the show. Ben's wife, Dena, played bass, and J. D. Rowland played fiddle," said Eddie Owen, a friend of Myrick. "I would sing with Weldon on harmony."

"Weldon had several local hit



Weldon Myrick, shown at the microphone, was inducted into the International Steel Guitar Hall of Fame in 1997. The former local resident was inducted into the Texas Steel Guitar Hall of Fame in 1991.

songs including 'Only Seventeen' which he wrote, and on the flip side of that record was 'Season for Love,' Owen continued.

In 1963, Myrick had a two-week vacation from the police department coming, but instead, he decided to turn in his notice and move to Nashville.

Today, Myrick has been inducted into the Texas Steel Guitar Hall of Fame and into the International Steel Guitar Hall of Fame in St. Louis.

"I was in the Grand Ol' Opry staff band for 32 years, and the latest thing I have been doing is playing in forums with several

See MUSICIAN, Page 2

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### Hostage standoff continues, frustration builds among those evacuated from homes

DUNDALK, Md. (AP) — A hostage drama that has riveted the Baltimore region entered its fourth day as a suspected killer held police at bay with random gunfire and frustration built among neighborhood residents evacuated from their homes.

Police delivered pizza via robot late Monday night and continued sporadic phone negotiations with Joseph Palczynski, but reported no breakthroughs.

One round fired inside the home early Monday afternoon came after Palczynski had broken off talks with police negotiators for several hours. Police would not say specifically if any of the hostages were injured, but did say that there were no "life-threatening" injuries.

The standoff began Friday when Palczynski allegedly forced his way into the home in a suburban Baltimore neighborhood, taking the mother of his former girlfriend and two others hostage.

Palczynski is accused of fatally shooting four people over a two-day period starting March 7, kidnapping the ex-girlfriend, Tracy Whitehead, and leading police on a manhunt that lasted more than a week.

Whitehead later escaped. Newspaper and broadcast reports have said Palczynski's main demand during the hostage crisis has been to speak to her.

At one point Monday, a man and a woman, believed to be hostages, were heard yelling

out the window asking police to put Whitehead on the phone or Palczynski would do something drastic.

Police would not say whether Whitehead has been involved in the negotiations.

Palczynski also fired on a police armored vehicle for the second straight day. Police in the car were trying to get Palczynski to pick up the phone to reopen negotiations.

Meanwhile, Baltimore County Police answered allegations that they did not do enough to protect the three hostages, who included Lynn Whitehead, Tracy's mother.

Tracy's 18-year-old sister, Laura, told the (Baltimore) Sun in today's editions that she had asked for police protection Thursday, one day before Palczynski took Lynn Whitehead, Andy McCord and 12-year-old Bradley McCord hostage.

Police spokesman Bill Toohy disputed that claim, saying the Whitehead family had turned down offers from the department to post an officer inside the home.

"We had some information that he had some high-priority targets and this was not one of them," he said.

As police continued negotiating, the ordeal dragged on for residents of the four-block area surrounding the home where Palczynski was holed up. Police cordoned off the area but allowed some residents to leave Sunday.

### Former employee sought in shooting at car wash

IRVING (AP) — Police were looking for a former car wash employee suspected of fatally shooting five people and critically wounding another during an apparent robbery at the shop three days after he was fired.

"We haven't seen anything this gruesome, this vicious in quite some time," police spokesman David Tull said Monday.

The suspect, Robert Wayne Harris, 28, was fired Friday by Mi-T-Fine Car Wash after he was arrested for exposing himself to two women at the business.

Police identified three of the dead at the scene as car wash employees Dennis Lee, 48; Rhoda Wheeler, 45; and Augustin Villaseñor, 36; all of Irving. Villaseñor's brother, Benjamin, 32, and Roberto Jimenez, Jr., 15, died at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas. An unidentified man was in critical condition at Parkland.

Police declined to say if the other victims worked at the car wash.

Officers told The Dallas Morning News in today's editions that Harris is a suspect in the disappearance of Sandra Gaye Scott, an Irving woman who was last seen near the car wash Nov. 29. Her vehicle was

found Dec. 3.

There is a "strong connection" between the suspect and Scott's disappearance, Irving police Lt. Tim Kelly told the newspaper.

Harris was arrested Friday on indecent exposure charges and was released Sunday on \$500 bail. Dallas County officials said the suspect also has several past arrests, including a 1991 burglary charge for which he received an eight-year prison term.

An employee arriving for work Monday discovered the shooting victims, Tull said. A former employee said workers generally arrive about 7 a.m.

"They're my friends," said Lance Turner, a former employee. "I worked side by side with them. When hard-working people get hurt like that, it's a sad deal."

Lee, a nine-year car wash employee, had called his wife shortly before 7:30 a.m. to say he was at work and about to open for the day, relatives said.

The car wash is located along a busy thoroughfare in a residential section of Irving.

"There is no factual, rational, or logical explanation for this act of criminal lunacy," Mi-T-Fine owner Luke Ramsey said in a brief statement.

### Trapped driver tried to cut off his own hand

DOWNEY, Calif. (AP) — Trapped for days in a crashed van as traffic whizzed by only a few feet away, Lee Risler got so desperate he tried to cut off his pinned hand with a pocketknife.

Risler's van veered off Interstate 605 and overturned in a ditch around 3 a.m. Saturday. The 53-year-old sandal maker spent the next 2-1/2 days stuck there, his left arm was trapped outside the van, between the door and some trees.

Risler was freed around noon Monday when a California Department of Transportation worker spotted his 1991 Ford hidden by trees a few yards off the freeway, about 15 miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles.

Risler complained of a tremendous thirst and was bleeding from the hand, but he was coherent, rescue workers said. He told them he began cutting at the wrist and fingers of his left hand, struggling to get

free.

"He did more damage to his arm than the accident," said Downey Fire Department Battalion Chief Chuck Seely told the Los Angeles Times in today's editions. "This guy was definitely in desperation."

Rescue workers rushed Risler to the St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood, where he was in fair condition late Monday, said hospital spokeswoman Lisa Ciccanti.

Risler was driving from his high desert home in Lucerne Valley to sell sandals at a craft fair in Hermosa Beach when the accident occurred. Investigators did not immediately determine Monday why his van left the highway.

Risler's wife, Bryn Risler, said family members went to the Hermosa Beach show and wondered where Risler was. They even called the Highway Patrol. "I knew he was hurt," Bryn Risler said.

### Two workers found dead inside chemical plant boiler

CHANNELVIEW (AP) — Two workers were found dead early today inside a large boiler they had been cleaning at a chemical plant.

They had been working on a scaffold, performing routine sandblasting inside the 22-by-27-foot boiler, said David Harpole, a spokesman for the Equistar Chemicals LP plant.

"They were being provided with breathing air because of the nature of the space they

were in and because of the sandblasting operation," he said.

He added that information was still sketchy and the cause of the deaths was not yet known. He did not use the word when the two were last heard from.

Harpole said officials were not aware of any chemical being released in the area where the contract employees were working.

### Waco field test Both sides claim victory, but actual test results await

HOUSTON (AP) — Despite spinning by the government and Branch Davidians, the actual results from a re-enactment of the Waco siege may not be known until British infrared experts release their own report.

The elaborate Sunday demonstration — which featured tanks, planes and combat-garbed soldiers — was designed to resolve whether federal agents fired at sect members during the final hour of the 1993 standoff.

A federal judge refused to let video from the test immediately be released to the public. Yet both sides scrambled to claim victory Monday, saying their legal positions were enhanced by findings of the British experts from Vector Data Systems, who handed over raw test data to officials after certifying its accuracy.

Vector was hired by Special Counsel John Danforth to oversee the test as a neutral expert and was slated to file a report to U.S. District Judge Walter Smith within 30 days.

Infrared experts working for U.S. attorneys and Davidian lawyers will also analyze the data, comparing it to FBI video footage captured during the waning moments of the standoff.

U.S. Attorney Mike Bradford acknowledged that with the differing spins, the public may be confused about the results of the test held at Fort Hood, a Texas military post.

"We had raised some of these questions about whether or not the test could accurately be reproduced and whether it may raise more questions than give a final answer to," he said.

"We're going to have Vector Group at some point offering their opinion. We have experts that are going to offer our opinion," he said.

But the lead counsel for Davidian plaintiffs who are suing the government, Mike Caddell, said the outcome of the demonstration will prove that federal agents fired on the remote side of the Davidians' retreat as it burned on April 19, 1993. The FBI denies that its agents fired on the compound.

The test "clearly supports the plaintiffs' case," Caddell said at a Houston news conference Monday.

Davidian leader David Koresh and some 80 followers died during the fire that occurred several hours into an FBI tear-gassing operation. The government contends their deaths, whether from fire or gunshot wounds, came by their own hand.

### Inmate may have used dental floss to escape cell

HOUSTON (AP) — A Texas inmate and suspected gang member accused of killing a rival used dental floss or a similar, coated string to painstakingly cut his way out of his cell, state prison officials say.

Inmate Antonio Lara a suspected member of the prison gang Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos, is accused of crawling out from under his cell bars and killing Roland Rios as he was being escorted by guards to the shower, said Alfred M. "Mac" Stringfellow, Texas Board of Criminal Justice chairman.

Stringfellow said he did not know how many steel bars Lara managed to cut through at the Coffield Unit of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice near Palestine, or how long it took.

"He was very dedicated at doing this," Stringfellow told the Houston Chronicle in today's editions. "They are very resourceful people. That's all they have is time, so they can sit there and saw away until they finally cut through."

Lara, 26, is serving a 15-year sentence for attempted murder, robbery and aggravated assault out of Webb County.

Stringfellow said Lara coated the nylon string with toothpaste or another abrasive in order to cut through metal bars.

Rios, 41, was serving a 10-year term for aggravated robbery and injury to a child from Nueces County. Prison officials said he was a confirmed member of the Texas Syndicate gang.

Rios' stabbing death resulted in confinement of some 122,000 Texas prison inmates to their cells in a rare systemwide lockdown to collect contraband and try and prevent further gang warfare from erupting.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice spokesman Glen Castlebury said wardens at units across the state began gradually allowing some inmates out of their cells on Monday.

He did not know how many prisoners remained in lockdown status, or how many weapons or how much other contraband was found.

Sports, news and information in your Big Spring Herald.

**BIG SPRING'S "HOSPICE" SINCE '95 WELCOMES KIM GEE, R.N. AS A NURSE CASE MANAGER**

**915-263-4673 1-800-505-4265**

**"How To Fall In Love God's Way" Gospel Meeting**

**March 26 - 29**

**Coahoma Church of Christ**

**Sunday: 9:30 & 10:20 AM & 6:00 PM**

**Monday - Wednesday: 7:00 PM**

Speaker: **Gary Montgomery** from Midland, Texas

Sunday: 9:30 AM - The Greatest Is Love  
10:20 AM - When I Discover God's Love  
6:00 PM - Love, The Christians Badge

Monday: Falling In Love With Your Family  
Tuesday - God Wants Me To Love Me, Too  
Wednesday - How To Hate Sin and Love This World

Everyone is invited to stay for lunch on Sunday

**Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce presents 9th Annual**

**West Texas AG Expo**

**BIG SPRING, TEXAS**

**Thursday, March 23, 2000**

**One day only!!**

**Exhibit Show**

**Agricultural Appreciation Lunch**

**Free Tickets To All Area Farmers & Ranchers**

**Announcement of the Ag Producer of the Year**

**Open to Public**

**Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**Dorothy Garrett Coliseum, Howard College Campus, Big Spring**

**Free Admission**

**Exhibits - Workshops - Seminars - and More!!**

**For information call 263-7641**

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MARCH 21 2000



# Shipping company employees arrested in theft of 55 Oscars

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Two employees of a shipping company were arrested in the theft of 55 Oscar statuettes, most of them found in a trash bin, authorities said today.

Anthony Keith Hart, 38, and Lawrence Edward Ledent, also 38, were arrested Saturday and booked for investigation of grand theft, police Chief Bernard Parks said during a news conference at police headquarters.

Hart and Ledent, employees at the Roadway facility in Bell for about 10 years, were being held in lieu of \$100,000 bail.

"They did it for profit. They

thought they could make money," police Detective Marc Zavalla said. Investigators followed a lead to the men, but Zavalla and the chief wouldn't elaborate.

A Roadway representative said there are security measures at the Bell facility, including surveillance cameras, but he noted there were 65 to 70 people working at the time of the disappearance. The company had shipped the statuettes from the manufacturer in Chicago.

Bell is the same Los Angeles-area community where 4,000 Oscar ballots were misplaced at a post office earlier this month.

Parks said the men told police where they thought officers could find the missing Oscars, but officers didn't find them there.

Instead, salvage man Willie Fulgear found 52 of the missing Oscars late Sunday while rummaging through a trash bin in the city's Koreatown section. Three were still missing.

"I've got more Oscars than any of the movie stars," said Fulgear, who makes a living salvaging and recycling discarded items.

The 8-pound statuettes were packed in 10 boxes and wrapped together on one palette, which

weighed about 470 pounds.

Police Capt. David Powers said a special mark proved they were the awards. But it is unlikely any of the awards would be returned in time for Sunday's presentation.

"This is a theft, a criminal investigation, and we have to proceed cautiously," Powers said early today.

Regardless, the show will go on.

The academy placed an emergency order last week for dozens of replacement Oscars after the theft was discovered.

Planning to move from his nearby one-room apartment,

Fulgear said he literally stumbled over one award while searching for large packing boxes.

"My foot hit one. It was heavy and I opened it up. ... Everybody knows who Oscar is," Fulgear said.

He stuffed the trunk of his car with the boxes and called his 22-year-old son to help him find out what they were doing in the trash. The son called police.

"I had no idea how many I had," Fulgear said. "I just knew that if I didn't get them, somebody else would." Fulgear said he not heard the Oscars were missing.

Roadway Express had put up a \$50,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the thieves.

Company spokesman John Hyre declined to say whether Fulgear would be offered a reward.

"This is still an open investigation, so I think it would be inappropriate for me to comment now," he said earlier today.

The manufacturing cost of the statuettes was about \$18,000.

Fulgear said he hopes to collect a reward — he wants to help his son put a down payment on a home.

## Roughnecks wanted

### Experienced oilfield workers in dwindling supply as demand grows for their skills

NEEDVILLE (AP) — James Vrana has been sinking steel into Texas soil his entire adult life, sweating over countless wells seeking oil and natural gas more than a mile below.

Vrana works for San Antonio-based South Texas Drilling Co. as a toolpusher, meaning he's in charge of every aspect of keeping an oil rig running.

These days Vrana, 40, finds himself among a dying breed. Thousands of colleagues abandoned the oil patch when crude prices bottomed out in December 1998.

"A bunch of my friends, when it (oil prices) got low, they just found something else," Vrana, 40, said over the din of Rig No. 11, about 25 miles southwest of Houston.

Now that prices have nearly tripled, and operators try to seize upon \$30-a-barrel oil to mend their balance sheets, industry insiders fear any move to boost drilling will be stilted by the exodus of pros like Vrana.

"It's already happening," said Morris Burns, executive vice

president of the Permian Basin Petroleum Association, an industry association in oil-rich western Texas and eastern New Mexico.

It's been nearly a full year since the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries cut production by 4.3 million barrels a day to gradually increase the per-barrel price from around \$10 — below break-even for just about any U.S. well — to above \$30.

Producers, wary of the market's unceasing volatility, have used this time of expensive oil to concentrate on reducing debt and restoring cash reserves. Still, Houston-based Baker Hughes Inc.'s most recent count of U.S. land-based rigs showed 626 in action, better than 50 percent above the historic lows set last spring.

"We're looking at the lull before the storm if prices continue to stay up," said Jim Henry, president of Henry Petroleum in the West Texas city of Midland, hub of the continental United States' most active onshore oil patch.

The U.S. oil and gas industry

has lost 26 percent of its payroll over the past decade, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. The steepest one-year drop was in 1999, when the number of workers fell 14 percent to 293,100 from 339,200 in 1998.

Roughnecks, the workers responsible for feeding pipe into an oil well to set up a rig, make about \$20,000 a year to start, if there's enough work to last the year.

The drain on qualified personnel hasn't been limited to the field. Layoffs and cutbacks in an otherwise vigorous economy have driven knowledgeable oil workers at all levels to myriad competing industries, said Mark Kobelan, president of Marquee Corp. in Houston.

"I think people are getting opportunities to get a job elsewhere: geologists, engineers, landmen," Kobelan said. "If they found something good, they're not coming back. Why should they?"

"Why come back to an industry where there can be one good year and three bad."

## Panel urges permanent tax ban on Internet access, repeal of phone tax

DALLAS (AP) — Congress should permanently ban taxes on access to the Internet and repeal a century-old telephone tax, and lawmakers should refrain from now trying to apply state sales taxes to purchases online, a federal e-commerce panel decided Monday.

A majority of the 19-member Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce endorsed a proposal from its business members that also would extend by five years a moratorium expiring in October 2001 on new Internet taxes. The proposal also would encourage state and local governments to simplify their sales tax systems.

"This is definitely a no-new-taxes-on-the-Internet proposal, but it's not a no-sales-taxes-ever proposal," said David Pottruck, president of Charles Schwab Corp. "It's a starting point."

The proposal also asks Congress to define what the Supreme Court meant in a 1993 ruling that requires a business based outside a state's borders to have a physical presence, or "nexus," in the state before the state can collect sales taxes on the business sales in the state. The plan suggests that such things as Internet service providers and World Wide Web

pages should never be considered a physical presence.

Several state and local government representatives on the panel objected to that section and to language exempting sale of digital products such as books and music, as well as their physical counterparts sold in stores.

Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk, a Democrat, called that "a huge money grab for the business members of this commission." The panel includes top executives of AT&T, America Online, Time Warner and MCI Worldcom.

"I don't think business is at all grabbing for money," responded Robert Pittman, president and chief operating officer at AOL. "It's less about taxes than it is about where you deploy your resources."

The decision marked a defeat for most of the state and local officials on the commission, who wanted a clear statement supporting equal sales tax application to goods sold in stores or via the Internet. Business members said if states simplified their thousands of different sales tax rates, the tax eventually could apply to the Web.

"I don't think any form of dis-

tribution should have an advantage over any other form of distribution," said AT&T Chairman Michael Armstrong.

The panel planned another meeting Tuesday to wrap up its work, which is due April 21 in Congress. Given its freeform rules, it was possible that the commission could endorse one of several other positions, or that a two-thirds majority could be achieved in last-minute negotiations over sales taxes.

"We are awfully close to getting the required consensus," Kirk said.

In Monday's vote, the six business members gained support of the panel's chairman, Gov. Jim Gilmore, R-Va., and others who have taken fierce anti-tax positions throughout the panel's 10-month life.

All three Clinton administration members of the panel abstained on the business proposal, along with Govs. Gary Locke, D-Wash., and Mike Leavitt, R-Utah, and other local government officials. Kirk cast the lone vote against. The final vote was 11 in favor, one against and seven abstentions.

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# Blue Devils plan to press the issue against Florida in round of 16

DURHAM, N.C. (AP) — Duke didn't take long to come up with a game plan to combat Florida's full-court press — attack, and then attack some more.

"If we are going down, we're going down firing all our bullets. That's how I want to go down," senior Chris Carrawell said of Friday's night's East Regional semifinal game against the Gators in Syracuse, N.Y.

Fifth-seeded Florida employs a press, trying to set an up-tempo pace that can wear teams down. And while most clubs are happy to get the ball across midcourt and set an offense, the top-seeded Blue Devils (29-4) won't be content to sit back.

"We've been a very loose team on

offense this year," forward Shane Battier said. "We're not going to be gun-shy. A team like Florida that uses the press is more effective against a team that isn't used to having that openness, that relaxation on offense."

Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said Maryland's press comes the closest to the Gators' plan of attack.

"Florida's press stays with you," Krzyzewski said Monday. "There are some presses that trap once and then fall back and they just want to get you out of your rhythm. Florida is actually trying to get something from its press. It's probably good we have a couple of days of preparation to get into that mode."

Duke's 281 3-pointers are 12 shy of the school record set last season, and all of Krzyzewski's players have the green light to let the ball fly.

"That's true even after a 2-for-17 outing from 3-point range in a 69-64 second-round win Sunday over Kansas.

"If you get an open look, it is going to be in a quick situation, you are going to have to knock it down to get Florida out of its press," Carrawell said. "It's exciting, the kind of game you want to play in."

Florida coach Billy Donovan used his press last season when the Gators (26-7) visited Cameron Indoor Stadium. It was a disaster, as Duke won 116-86. Krzyzewski downplayed that game,

saying both teams this year are much different. However, the Blue Devils will run drills this week that include shooting on the run in order to attack on offense.

"We're not licking our chops," said Krzyzewski, whose club's 88.3-point scoring average is the very best in the nation.

"We respect their press because they do it all the time and we don't break presses all the time."

The press can wear down a team in more ways than one, Krzyzewski admitted.

"Sometimes in the middle of those TV timeouts, you see four new guys coming in and it can work on you men-

tally," said Krzyzewski, who has 50 NCAA tournament wins.

But longer TV timeouts during the NCAA tournament are an advantage for the Blue Devils.

"The 30-second timeout is 45 seconds — at least," Krzyzewski said. "So instead of standing, you can sit them down."

Nate James said Florida's plan might be flawed, especially if it includes trying to wear out No. 1 Duke, a program gunning for its third straight 30-win season.

"We are not going to let fatigue get in the way of us accomplishing something very special for this team," James said.

## Cubs' Valdes will open season on disabled list due to tendinitis case

The ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Chicago Cubs traded for Ismael Valdes to shore up their starting pitching. So far, it's not working out.

The right-hander, scheduled to start the season opener against the New York Mets in Tokyo on March 29, was put on the disabled list Monday because of tendinitis in his right shoulder. He'll be eligible to come off April 5.

"I'm angry," Valdes said. "I'm not happy with the decision, but there's nothing I can do. I have to go with it. I don't want to make an issue out of it. It's what it is."

Valdes has had a sore shoulder the past few days, and manager Don Baylor said Saturday that Valdes might miss the rest of the spring. Valdes started taking anti-inflammatories Sunday, and the shoulder felt better by Monday morning.

"We just want to make sure we take care of it now and it's not an issue that moves into April and May and June," general manager Ed Lynch said.

With Valdes out, Jon Lieber will likely pitch the opener and Kyle Farnsworth, the second game.

Cubs pitcher Kerry Wood, the 1998 NL Rookie of the Year, also figures to start the season on the DL as he recovers from reconstructive elbow surgery. Wood, who pitched for the first time last weekend, is expected back later in April.

Outfielder Glenallen Hill also appears headed for the disabled list after pulling his left hamstring Sunday. Doctors have said it could be 2-3 weeks before Hill is ready to play, manager Don Baylor said.

Sammy Sosa, meanwhile, sat out Monday's game and will skip today's because of a banged-up knee he got in a home-plate collision with Colorado Rockies catcher Scott Servais.

"It's swollen a little bit, but it's nothing we need to worry about," Sosa said. "Nothing big."

At Kissimmee, Fla., the Atlanta Braves said reliever Kerry Ligtenberg is expected to pitch as scheduled today despite getting hit in the face by a batted ball in Venezuela last weekend.

Ligtenberg, struck by a shot from Quinton McCracken in Saturday night's game at Caracas, sustained a cut on his cheekbone and a bruise under

his right eye.

"I honestly thought I had it," said the Lichtenberg, coming off ligament replacement surgery in his right elbow. "I don't know if it hit the ground and hopped, but I put my glove up. I thought I had it judged. It got on me a lot faster than I thought. ... I'm lucky it didn't hit me in the eye or nose."

At Jupiter, Fla., Mark McGwire hit a three-run homer, but the Philadelphia Phillies overcame a seven-run deficit to beat the St. Louis Cardinals 8-7 on Tomas Perez's RBI single in the 10th inning.

McGwire made it 5-0 in the third inning with a three-run homer off Andy Ashby, McGwire's second of the spring and first since March 10. Ashby also allowed a two-run homer in the fourth to Ray Lankford and another two-run homer in the sixth to Shawn Dunston. In all, Ashby gave up seven runs and 11 hits in 5 1/3 innings. His ERA rose to 8.84.

In other games:

**Marlins 7, Dodgers 6**  
At Melbourne, Fla., Cliff Floyd and Derek Lee hit three-run homers to overcome Shawn Green's home run. Los Angeles dropped to a major league-worst 4-15 this spring.

**Royals 9, Tigers 4**  
At Haines City, Fla., Brian Moehler, scheduled to start the opener of Comerica Park in Detroit next month, gave up seven runs and 11 hits in four innings.

**Twins 7, Red Sox 4**  
At Fort Myers, Fla., Ramon Martinez was roughed up for seven runs — five earned — on eight hits and a walk in 1 2/3 innings. Nomar Garciaparra, Mike Stanley and Carl Everett homered for Boston.

**Mets 4, Indians 2**  
At Port St. Lucie, Fla., Glendon Rusch, fighting for the fifth-spot in the Mets' rotation, allowed one run and five hits in 5 2/3 innings. New York released third baseman Charlie Hayes.

**Athletics 16, Padres 6**  
At Phoenix, Olmedo Saenz hit a grand slam and David McCarty hit two home runs and drove in six runs. Ramon Hernandez also hit two homers and drove in three runs for the A's, who have the best record in the majors this spring at 14-3.

## For 7-foot Chris Mihm, a big decision awaits

AUSTIN (AP) — The clock is ticking for Chris Mihm and the NBA.

Considered the best pure center in college basketball, the 7-foot Texas junior, All-American has until May 14 to declare for the June 28 NBA draft or return for his senior season.

"I don't know at this point," he said. "Right now, I'm going to have to take some time, and I'm going to decide. And when the time comes, I'm going to call a press conference."

Every NBA team has scouted Mihm, a sure lottery pick. He had said he would delay his decision until after the season, which ended with a loss to LSU in the second round of the

NCAA tournament.

"I'd like to talk to Tim Duncan, sit down and run some stuff by him," Mihm said.

Duncan had a chance to leave Wake Forest early, but stayed for his senior season. With another year of college experience, Duncan made an immediate impact with the San Antonio Spurs.

Mihm averaged nearly 18 points and more than 10 rebounds as Texas (24-9) cracked the AP Top Ten for the first time since 1982. Mihm was the first Longhorn to make the AP All-America basketball team.

"I can only tell you I think this has been a real hard year

for him, with everyone saying, 'What are you going to do? What are you going to do?'" coach Rick Barnes said.

After winning the Big 12 Conference regular-season title in 1999, Texas was ranked the entire season and hoped to go far in the NCAA tournament. But Mihm had a sub-par game against LSU, and one of the worst foul shooting teams in the league had another dismal game from the line.

"We accomplished a lot this year," senior forward Gabe Muoneke said. "You don't want to take away from the fact that we felt we probably gave the game away in many different sequences."

"Not to take anything away from LSU because they have a very good team, but we feel that we didn't play the way we are capable of playing."

The Longhorns' 24 victories were the most since 1993-94 and tied for the third most in the school history.

All nine of Texas' losses were against teams that made it as far as the second round of the NCAA tournament. Along the way, Texas' knocked off Michigan State, which went on to become the top seed in the Midwest Regional.

"You know what?" Barnes said after the LSU loss. "We're going to be good at Texas. We are going to stay good."

## Lakers finish another impressive Eastern trip

The ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Los Angeles Lakers are returning home after another hugely successful road trip, this one almost as impressive as the last one.

Shaquille O'Neal had eight points and a dazzling assist during a 22-2 run that put Los Angeles ahead to stay, and the Lakers won 100-89 at Miami on Monday night in their final Eastern Conference road game of the season.

Less than a month ago, the Lakers returned home 4-0 from a road trip to the East. Then they left for another trip, and this one ended 4-1.

The Lakers, playing their fourth game in five nights, survived a slow start to win for the 22nd time in 23 games.

"This team is making me a believer," coach Phil Jackson said. "They're making me look good."

and 12 rebounds.

The Heat played short-handed up front because of injuries to forward P.J. Brown (sprained ankle) and Otis Thorpe (foot). Miami compensated by shooting 56 percent for a 55-42 lead at halftime, and O'Neal had just 12 points in 17 minutes because of foul trouble.

"We were only down 13, and we didn't play well at all," O'Neal said. "We just had to wake up."

The Lakers did just that, and 5 minutes into the third period, the score was tied. O'Neal then made a one-handed alley-oop pass to Kobe Bryant for a dunk that made it 59-41.

O'Neal then sank consecutive baskets to put Los Angeles

ahead, and the Heat were unable to mount a comeback. They shot just 29 percent in the second half and finished 2-for-15 from 3-point range.

Glen Rice finished with 28 points for the Lakers, and Bryant added 23.

**76ers 102, Hornets 96**  
Allen Iverson scored 25 points and Philadelphia withstood two second-half rallies at Charlotte.

Tyrone Hill had 16 points and Eric Snow and Theo Ratliff 14 each for the 76ers. Eddie Jones led Charlotte with 28, followed by David Wesley with 17.

The Sixers, trying to catch Toronto for fourth place in the conference and home-court advantage in the first round of

the playoffs, moved three games ahead of sixth-place Charlotte.

**Suns 110, Celtics 106**  
Clifford Robinson made six free throws in the final 1:46, helping Phoenix cut off Boston's attempts to rally.

Robinson finished with 22 points and nine rebounds as the Suns gained their fourth consecutive victory.

Jason Kidd had 16 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds, and Shawn Marion scored 18 points. Rodney Rogers added 17 and Penny Hardaway 13 in the balanced Suns attack.

Paul Pierce scored 27 points for the Celtics, who were stymied in their bid to win three road games in a row.

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Wife bites her tongue when guests hang around for dinner

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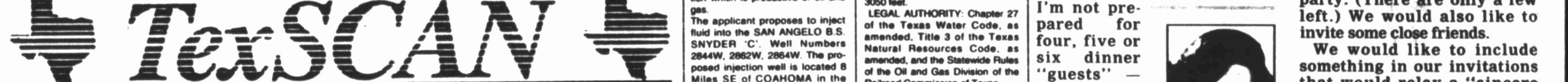
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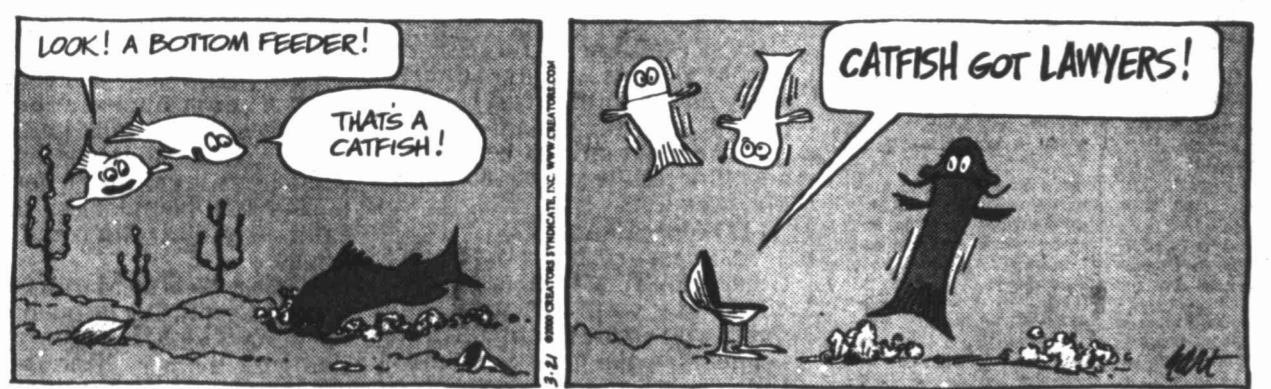
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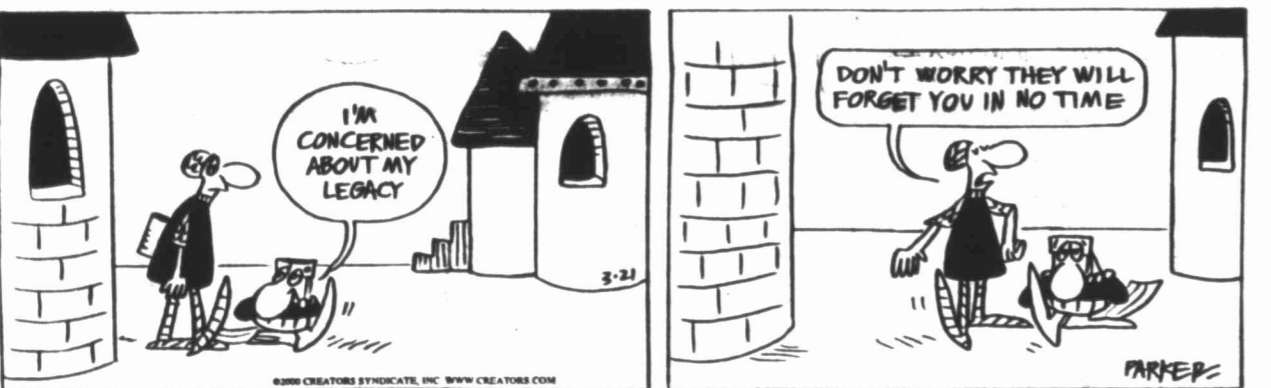
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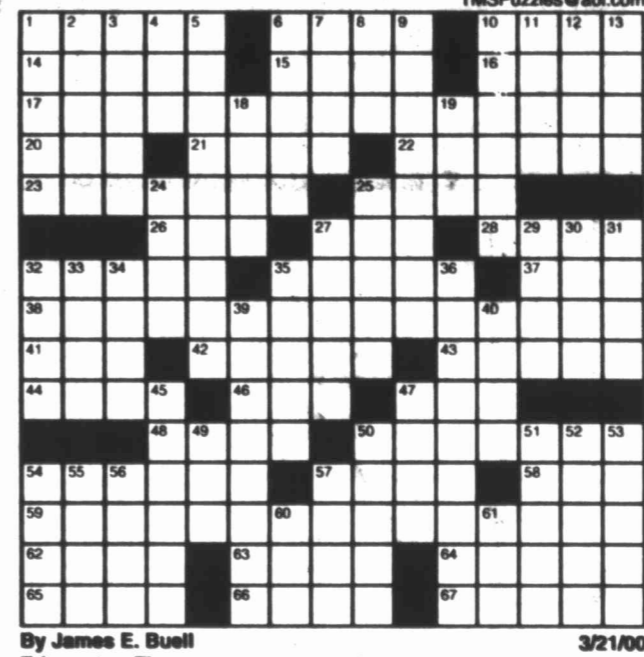


THIS DATE IN HISTORY

The ASSOCIATED PRESS Today is Tuesday, March 21, the 81st day of 2000. There are 285 days left in the year.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

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By James E. Buell Edgewater, FL



- DOWN 1 Invite to enter 2 Buff 3 Burlap bags 4 Noah's craft 5 Polite acceptance 6 lazuli 7 Rehan and Huxtable 8 Adam's donation? 9 Full of spirit 10 Excuse for poor performance 11 Sticking stuff 12 Not as much 13 Sunrise place 18 Secondhand 19 Letters for Republicans 24 Copse element 25 Short and fat 27 Lawbreaking 29 Competent 30 "Over Parador" 31 Couch 32 In the thick of 33 Mexican menu item 34 Impose a bias upon 35 Abides by 36 Signs up for another tour 39 In-depth studies 40 Grad 45 Knots for rustlers 47 Band of hoods 49 Anger 50 Pocket change 51 Watching 52 Self-perception 53 Confiscates 54 Saudi or Syrian, e.g. 55 Speed contest 56 Actress Sorvino 57 Slope ride 60 Frazier's foe, often 61 Oolong or Darjeeling

BIG SPRING HERALD Reflecting A Proud Community 915-263-7331 (Main switchboard) 915-263-7335 (Circulation calls only) (Fax) 915-264-7205 John H. Walker Publisher Ext. 250 John A. Moseley Managing Editor Ext. 230 Edwin Vela Advertising Sales Manager Ext. 225 Mark Sheedy Circulation Manager Ext. 240 Tony Hernandez Production Manager Ext. 255 Dianne Marquez Business Office Manager Ext. 255 Office Hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday The Herald is a member of The Associated Press, Texas Press Association, Audit Bureau Circulation and Southern Newspaper Publishers Association. Published alternate Mondays through Friday and Sunday mornings, except Christmas Day. All materials copyrighted. Postmaster: Send address changes to Big Spring Herald, P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, Texas 79727. Periodicals postage paid at Big Spring, Texas. USPS 1431-08.

Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany. In 1790, Thomas Jefferson reported to President Washington in New York as the new secretary of state. In 1804, the French civil code, the "Code Napoleon," was adopted. In 1806, Mexican statesman Benito Juarez was born in Oaxaca. In 1945, during World War II, Allied bombers began four days of raids over Germany. In 1946, the United Nations set up temporary headquarters at Hunter College in New York. In 1960, some 70 people were killed in Sharpeville, South Africa, when police fired on demonstrators. In 1963, the Alcatraz federal prison island in San Francisco Bay was emptied of its last inmates at the order of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. In 1972, the Supreme Court ruled that states may not require at least a year's residency for voting eligibility. In 1979, the Egyptian Parliament unanimously approved a peace treaty with Israel. Ten years ago: Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev increased pressure on the breakaway republic of Lithuania, ordering its citizens to turn in their guns. Secretary of State James Baker met black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela in Namibia. Five years ago: Thousands of Japanese police raided the offices of a secretive religious group, Aum Shinri Kyo, in connection with nerve-gas attacks on Tokyo subways that killed 12 people and sickened thousands. One year ago: Israel's Supreme Court rejected a final effort to have American teenager Samuel Sheinbein returned to the United States to face murder charges. (Under a plea agreement with Israeli prosecutors, Sheinbein was later sentenced to 24 years in prison for the murder of Alfred Tello Jr.) At the Academy Awards, "Shakespeare in Love" won seven Oscars, including best picture and best actress for Gwyneth Paltrow; Roberto Benigni won best actor for "Life is Beautiful," while Steven Spielberg won best director for "Saving Private Ryan." Today's Birthdays: Actor Al Freeman Jr. is 66. Actress Kathleen Widdoes ("As the World Turns") is 61. Actor Timothy Dalton is 58. Actress Marie-Christine Barrault is 56. Singer-musician Rose Stone (Sly and the Family Stone) is 55. Rock singer-musician Roger Hodgson (Supertramp) is 50.