



## TWC: Fraud cases will be pursued aggressively

By THOMAS JENKINS  
Staff Writer

If you think unemployment insurance fraud is a laughing matter, you may want to think again.

Johnny R. Dupree of Howard County was recently convicted of misdemeanor unemployment insurance fraud and ordered to pay \$10,527 in restitution to the Texas Workforce Commission, in addition to receiving two years probation.

According to Larry Jones, a spokesperson for TWC, Texans who fraudulently benefit from unemployment insurance or other TWC programs will find out the state agency isn't the least bit shy about wanting its money back — and in a hurry.

"TWC warns those who have applied fraudulently for unemployment insurance benefits that criminal convictions for these offenses are pursued aggressively," said Jones. "The TWC Regulatory Enforcement

**"Fraud is a serious crime, and conviction results in a criminal record."**

—Larry Jones, TWC spokesman

Division detects and prevents fraud, waste and abuse, and enforces all regulatory statutes within the jurisdiction of the agency, including unemploy-

ment insurance, Tax, Workforce, Trade Act, Skills Development, Self-Sufficiency, Child Care and all other programs administered by TWC.

"TWC administers unemployment insurance benefits to workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own and actively are seeking work. If TWC discovers that claimants have received unemployment insurance benefits through fraudulent applications, the agency seeks immedi-

ate reimbursement of overpayments."

Jones said unemployment insurance fraud may seem like a small crime, but those convicted will most likely disagree.

"Fraud is a serious crime, and conviction results in a criminal record," said Jones. "TWC may seek penalties under applicable laws, which may include a Class A misdemeanor and a felony charge for each offense.

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## COOL WAY TO BEAT THE HEAT



Beating the summer heat isn't tough if you're 13-year-old Mildred Sandridge, left, or 9-year-old Paige Palmer, as the step-sisters have an endless supply of tasty sno-cones at their fingertips. The girls help operate American Shaved Ice, located at the corner of Fourth Street and Young and open from 2 p.m. until 8 p.m. during the week.

HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins

## CRMWD to detail water reclamation study for citizens

Special to the Herald

The Colorado River Municipal Water District hopes to embark on a plan it says will provide an additional 13 million gallons a day of bottled-quality water to its customers.

CRMWD officials will discuss the details of the water reclamation study during a public meeting set for 1 p.m. Tuesday at the Dora Roberts Community Center.

The public is encouraged to attend.

The project under consideration is the feasibility of recovering surplus waste water effluent from Big Spring, Odessa, Snyder and Midland.

"Currently, treated wastewater typically travels through streams or is absorbed into the groundwater table. It eventually becomes part of the raw water supplies pumped out of surface reservoirs or water wells for treatment and consumption," explained Chris Wingert, CRMWD assistant gener-

**What:** Public meeting on water reclamation study, presented by the Colorado River Municipal Water District.

**Where:** Dora Roberts Community Center, 100 Whipkey Drive.

**When:** 1 p.m. Tuesday.

al manager. "The projects under consideration by the Colorado River Municipal Water District examine the feasibility of applying the same purification treatments used in many bottled water plants to the effluent."

According to Wingert, treatment technologies have improved and their cost has dropped significantly during the past 10 years.

"This process produces water of the same quality as bottled water and is even more economical in the long run, since it saves transmission costs by virtue of the fact that it is located at the point of

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## Coahoma ISD officials begin budget process

By STEVE REAGAN  
Staff Writer

Coahoma school officials have begun work on a budget that officials say will be very similar to last year's package.

But, like other school districts across Texas, CISD personnel know things could change very quickly. The Texas Legislature is currently wrangling with school finance reform, and anything that eventually comes out

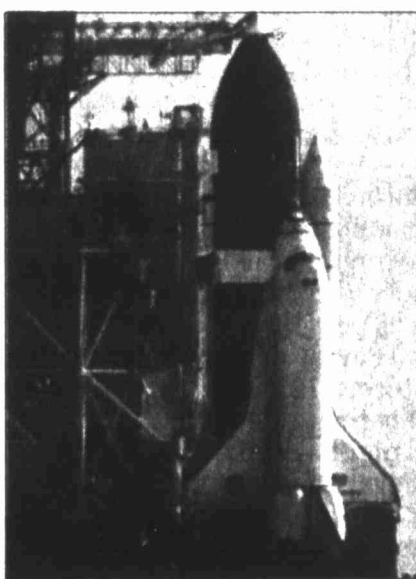
of Austin will have a definite impact on local budgets.

Also unknown at this point is what impact the proposed \$11.9 million bond issue will have on the 2005-06 budget. The bond, which will finance construction and renovation projects at all CISD campuses, will be decided by district voters on Sept. 10.

With all that in mind, school trustees will begin work on the 2005-06 budget within the next few weeks, Business Manager Gina McEndree said.

"Until we get something

See **CISD**, Page 3A



KRT photo/Bill Silkes, Orlando Sentinel  
The Space Shuttle Discovery sits on the launch pad at Kennedy Space Center. NASA aborted Wednesday's launch because of a fuel gauge that mistakenly read full instead of empty.

## Lift-off scrubbed

Fuel-gauge reading leads to delay of first shuttle flight in 2-1/2 years

By MARCIA DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA scrapped Wednesday's launch of the first shuttle flight in 2 1/2 years because of a fuel gauge that mistakenly read full instead of empty, a frustrating setback to the agency's bid to get back into space after the Columbia tragedy.

"All I can say is shucks," deputy shuttle program manager Wayne Hale said at a news

conference as he and other grim-faced NASA managers outlined the potentially fatal flaw.

The launch was delayed until at least Saturday, and the postponement could last much longer, depending on the repairs needed.

The disappointment came just a day after an embarrassing turn for NASA: A plastic cockpit window cover fell off the shuttle and damaged its fragile

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## WTO PUBLIC FORUM

West Texas Opportunities Inc. will conduct a public forum at 6 p.m. Monday in the county library meeting room to discuss the unmet needs of low-income people in Howard County. Topics will include a determination of available services and if they are adequate, as well as possible alternatives to meet citizens' needs. The tabulations will be forwarded to the Texas Department of Housing.

Howard County Library is located at 500 S. Main. Anyone with questions may call 267-9536.

## COMING THIS WEEKEND



Cover Story: Volunteer Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) are not as common as they used to be in rural areas and small towns. Still, they're the first

to respond during medical emergencies in places such as Nowata, Okla. (pop. 3,971) and Browns Valley, Minn. (pop. 690).

## HUMMER BUMMER

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Shannon Castillo was less than pleased when she took possession of the new Hummer she won in a radio contest.

Instead of the muscular Hummer H2 vehicle she expected, Castillo got a radio-controlled toy model.

It was an April Fool's Day prank. "I just couldn't believe that they would actually humiliate someone like that," Castillo said.

Castillo, 25, has sued radio station KBDS over the weeklong "contest" in which listeners were supposed to track the number of miles two H2s traveled around town.







NEWS BRIEFS

Bus driver killed after his bus rolled over him

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A bus driver who had stopped at a convenience store for a cup of coffee was killed when he fell under the bus after he saw it moving and tried to stop it.

A spokeswoman for VIA Metropolitan Transit said officials didn't immediately know what caused Santiago Rodriguez's bus to start rolling.

Rodriguez, 43, was following his normal routine Wednesday by stopping for a cup of coffee before he started his route, the San Antonio Express-News reported in its online edition.

Witnesses said Rodriguez struggled to open the doors and stop the bus, which hit a car.

Then, as several customers watched, Rodriguez fell under the bus, a wheel crushing his body.

Passers-by tried to move the bus off of him, but were unsuccessful.

"You could see the weight of it just crushing him," Cheryl Anderson said. "But there was nothing we could do."

Rodriguez had been a bus driver with VIA for 22 years.

Shark bites girl swimming in Gulf

PORT BOLIVAR (AP) — A 14-year-old North Carolina girl was injured Wednesday when a shark bit her left foot while she was swimming in waist-deep water off the Texas coast, officials said.

Lydia Paulk suffered lacerations on the top of her foot and was in fair condition Wednesday night after surgery, said Cathy Nall, a spokeswoman for the

University of Texas Medical Branch in nearby Galveston. Nall said additional surgery is planned for Friday to reattach tendons.

Lydia, whose family lives near Charlotte, N.C., was swimming with family and friends when she felt something hit her leg and grab her foot. She saw the 4-foot-long shark swim away after it had bitten her.

Galveston County Sheriff's Maj. Ray Tuttoillmondo said in a statement that officials believe the shark was feeding at the time. Sharks are believed to be feeding closer to shore because of the large number of smaller fish in the water that are part of their diet.

Marine experts have said sharks are on the move during summer months and frequently mine the shallow Gulf of Mexico waters for fish.



KRT photo/Moise Saman, Newday  
Former WorldCom CEO Bernard Ebbers leaves Manhattan federal court in New York after being sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Former WorldCom CEO gets 25-year sentence

NEW YORK (KRT) — Bernard Ebbers

cried openly Wednesday when a judge ordered him to prison for 25 years for engineering the nation's worst corporate scam.

The once brash WorldCom billionaire wept moments after Manhattan Federal Judge Barbara Jones tagged him with a sentence that will keep him behind bars until he's at least 85.

"Anything less would not reflect the seriousness of this crime," Jones told the fallen corporate titan. "This was not a minor fraud."

Ebbers, 63, earned the stiffest punishment so far in the wave of corporate fraud scandals for his \$11 billion book-cooking scheme in the company that later re-emerged as MCI.

Investors and former WorldCom employees who lost everything when Ebbers' house of cards collapsed in 2002 cheered the tough sentence.

"We want to see him pay for his crimes," said Gino Cavallo, 57, of Brewster, N.Y., whose retirement savings were wiped out when the company's stock plunged from \$60 a share to just pennies.

Ebbers, who splurged on fancy homes, marinas and even a hockey team, pushed a photographer on his way into the lower Manhattan courthouse. Inside, he did not plead for mercy.

The closest thing to an apology came when Ebbers' lawyer said his client "has grieved" over the massive scam.

But the lawyer, Reid Weingarten, went on to blame the scheme on WorldCom underling Scott Sullivan and issued an emotional defense of Ebbers' good deeds, including \$100 million in charitable donations.

When Weingarten called him an "angel" for using some of his ill-gotten gains to anonymously fund kids' education, Ebbers pulled out a napkin and wiped away tears.

Even with time off for good behavior, Ebbers should remain locked up until 2027.

10K reward offered for polygamist church leader

PHOENIX (AP) — The attorneys general for Arizona and Utah on Wednesday announced a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the reclusive leader of a polygamist church based in communities along the states' common border.

Warren Jeffs, who has not been publicly sighted in months but is reputed to head a compound in Eldorado, was charged in Arizona in early June with counts that include conspiracy to commit sexual conduct with a minor.

"I find it hard to believe (Jeffs is) the active leader of 10,000 and no one knows where he is," Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard said.

Jeffs is accused of arranging the marriage of a 16-year-old girl to another man. If convicted, he could face up to two years in jail.

Colorado City, Ariz., and Hildale, Utah, are dominated by the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a sect that broke away from the Mormon church and practices polygamy.

Capturing the 49-year-old Jeffs is considered to be a key in ending the turmoil in the two towns, where polygamist men marry one wife legally and then take on other women as so-called "spiritual" wives.

"It is because he is the leader. It is because he is the role model for literally thousands of people," Goddard said of the extensive efforts to locate Jeffs. "It is particularly, perhaps uniquely, important that he have to answer these charges before a court of law."

Autopsy finds toddler was killed by LA police during shootout with father

By GREG RISLING  
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — An autopsy found that a toddler whose father held her as a shield during a gun battle with authorities died of a single gunshot to the head, fired from a police officer's rifle.

Los Angeles County coroner's spokesman Craig Harvey released the autopsy reports Wednesday of 19-month-old Suzie Pena and her father Jose Pena, 34, who were both killed Sunday during a shootout at Pena's auto repair business.

The girl died from a single gunshot wound to the head, and her father died of multiple gunshot wounds, the reports said.

Police Chief William Bratton sent his condolences to the girl's family but adamantly maintained that Pena was responsible for his and his daughter's deaths. Bratton said the realization that it was a police officer who actually shot the girl was hard to take, for both himself and his officers.

"Believe me, as chief of police, and for the officers involved, it is very tough

to deal with that," Bratton said. "Some officers are going through therapy right now and I don't know if some will even come back (to work)."

A toxicological examination to determine whether Pena had drugs or alcohol in his system will take several weeks, Harvey said.

Luis Carrillo, one of the attorney's representing the girl's family, said the autopsy results did not come as any surprise.

"It only confirmed their worst fears," Carrillo said.

"The family has been in shock since their little angel was taken from them, and it's compounded by the fact by those officers who are there to protect us weren't able to protect this girl."

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said there will be a community meeting on Friday and urged people to reserve judgment until the investigation is completed.

"I am asking for the public's patience," he said.

"It was a terrible night that ended in a terrible tragedy for this city."

Ultimately, the police chief said, he expects an investigation now under

way will clear all of the officers involved in the gun battle.

"In the 38-year history of SWAT, I believe this is the first instance in which an innocent life in a hostage situation was taken by them," Bratton said. "That situation is compounded by the age of this young child."

The two were killed Sunday evening after a nearly three-hour standoff in which Pena exchanged gunfire with officers three separate times.

One officer was wounded in the shoulder during the third and final exchange between SWAT officers and Pena. Officer Daniel Sanchez, 39, has been released from a hospital and was recovering at home, police said.

Police said Pena told them during the standoff that he was not going to go to jail and shot at the officers repeatedly.

Pena's 17-year-old stepdaughter, who escaped during the shootout, told police Pena had threatened to kill his toddler daughter. Earlier in the day, Pena's wife had called 911 to report that he had threatened her life.

Pena's brother com-

plained Tuesday about the police handling of the standoff.

"It's been cruel what's happened to my brother," German Pena said. "They didn't have any patience, none at all, knowing that my niece was with him, that he was a father. They should have acted with more patience."

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**1702 MORRISON Dr.** 3 bdr., 1  
bath, CHA, fenced yard, newly  
remodeled. Nice neighborhood.  
\$500. month, \$350. deposit.  
Call (432)263-8005, 816-1330.

Real Estate for Rent

**1903 RUNNELS.** Two bed-  
room, one bath, stove & refrig-  
erator furnished. CHA, fenced  
yard, carport. \$300. month,  
\$175. deposit. Call  
(432)267-1543.

**2610 & 2632 Langley, 3 bed-**  
room, 1 bath. Stove, refrigera-  
tor & dishwasher furnished.  
\$425. Month, \$425. Deposit.  
Call (432)264-6595 or  
268-3152.

**3 BEDROOM, 1 1/2 bath,**  
CH/A, garage, fenced yard.  
1800 Wallace. Call  
(432)270-3848 for more infor-  
mation.

**412 Edwards, 3 bedroom, 2**  
bath. \$675. month, \$500. de-  
posit. **2523 Dow, 3 bedroom,**  
1 bath, CHA, carport. \$395.  
month, \$150. deposit. Call  
(432)263-1792, 816-9984.

**624 CAYLOR.** Very nice brick  
home. Possible 4 bedrooms, 1  
bath, central heat and air,  
washer/ dryer connections,  
fenced backyard. Deposit  
\$200. Rent \$550. Call  
(432)267-2112, leave mes-  
sage.

**712 GOLIAD.** 2 or 3 Bedroom.  
Stove and refrigerator fur-  
nished. Washer & dryer con-  
nections, CH/A. \$500. month,  
\$275. deposit. No HUD. Call  
(432)267-2296.

**800 1/2 NOLAN.** 1 Bedroom,  
1 bath. Utilities included.  
\$400.00 month, \$300.00 de-  
posit. Call (432)264-9907.

**911 EAST 15th.** Large clean 2  
bedroom. Stove & Refrigerator  
furnished. Water & gas paid.  
\$375 month, \$200 deposit.  
Sorry No Pets. Call  
(432)263-4922.

**HEIGHTS APARTMENTS**  
\$200. Move-In Special  
\$200. deposit.  
All Bills Paid  
403 East 8th  
Call (432)267-7771

**KING-SIZE bedroom & closet.**  
Furnished 1 bedroom apart-  
ment. Yesterdays elegance,  
modernized. 1 Non smoking  
person. No pets. \$225.00 plus  
utilities. 611 Runnels. Call  
McDonald (432)270-0707.

**Midway Area - Small 3 Bdrm**  
mobile home. Stove & refrig-  
erator, washer & dryer. CH/A.  
\$350.00 month \$150.00 de-  
posit. HUD approved. Call  
432-393-5585 or 270-3928.

**Sunset Ridge Apts**  
\$99 Move-In Special  
TNT, ESPN, CNN  
Nickelodeon  
Disney Channel  
Expanded Cable  
No Water Bill!  
24 Hour Laundry  
On-Site Mgr & Maint  
Family Friendly  
Large 2 BR avail.  
Melinda (432)263-2292

Real Estate for Rent

**THREE BEDROOM, one bath,**  
CHA. 3704 Calvin. Call  
(432)270-3848 for more infor-  
mation.

**THREE BEDROOM, one bath.**  
CHA. \$525.00 monthly, plus  
deposit. 2410 Carleton. Call  
(432)263-6997.

**THREE BEDROOM, two bath,**  
2502 Cheyenne. \$550. month,  
\$350. deposit. Call  
(432)264-9907.

**SOUTH PLAINS APARTMENTS**  
Newly Remodeled  
Studios, 1 & 2 Bdrm Units

**\$99** Move In Special  
W/6 Mo. Lease

**\*1 Move In**  
w/12 Mo. Lease

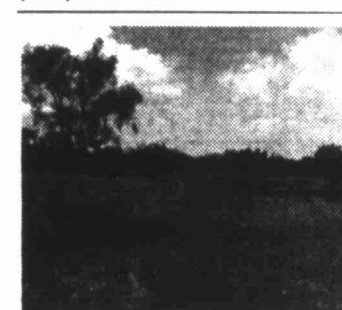
\* All utilities except electric paid  
\* Free High Speed Wireless  
Internet + Basic Cable  
On-site Mgr.  
Laundry & Vending Facility  
\$300 Deposit

Call Mary @  
**432-714-4840**

Real Estate for Sale

**\$1,000 TOTAL Move in Cost.**  
On 1306 Marijo. New 3 bed-  
room, 2 bath, 2 car garage  
home. Reasonably good credit  
required, lowered interest rates  
to Qualified Buyer. Call now  
(432)520-9848 Cameo Invest-  
ments Inc.

**10,000 square ft Commercial**  
building, plus 2000 sq ft metal  
building on 5 ac.. Close to hos-  
pital on Scenic Mountain. Call  
(432)213-2319.



**20 ACRES** 10 miles south of  
Big Spring, with or without  
2004 Singlewide Solitaire  
Manufactured home. Land-  
scaped, catfish pond, wildlife.  
Call (432)517-0295 or  
517-0588. \$155,000. Negotia-  
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**20 ACRES** on Hwy 176. Set  
up for Mobile Home. 44K.  
\$5,000.00 Down, assume  
\$270.00 monthly @ 7.4% for  
30 years. No Credit Check.  
(817)312-6322.

**WILL PAY Cash for Houses up**  
to \$25,000. Call Kelly  
(432)423-2222

**BARCELONA APARTMENTS**  
Choose Your Own Monthly Rent Options  
Such As ALL BILLS PAID  
**\$299** MOVE IN SPECIAL + APPLICATION & SECURITY DEP.  
538 Westover Housing Assistance Accepted 263-1252

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**No Down Payment**  
OWNER FINANCING  
**Bad Credit O.K.**  
2-3-4-5 & 6 Bedroom Brick Homes  
**"6 MONTH WARRANTY ON EVERYTHING"**  
Call Beverly 263-3461

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**TODAY!!**  
UP TO 25 WORDS.

**1st Week \$28<sup>00</sup>**  
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If Your Car hasn't Sold  
you get the **3rd Week FREE**  
Call or come by to place  
your ad, now!

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710 Scurry  
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**SAVE 52%**  
up to  
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YES! Start my subscription for \_\_\_\_\_ months.  
Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Real Estate for Sale

**2505 BROADWAY.** Very Private 2 Story House in great condition. 2150 sq. ft., 3 Bedroom, 2 bath, 2 living areas, office, fireplace. 2 large storage buildings, large gazebo, 3/4 acre. Beautiful yard. Low property taxes. Asking \$105,000. (432)263-4080.

**3709 CONNALLY.** 3 Bedroom, 2 bath, CH/A, excellent buy. Owner Anxious! \$400. month, \$2,000. down. Call (325)656-2324.

**50 ACRE** tract on I-20 in city limits. Super commercial building site. All or part. Call (432)213-2319.

**BEAUTIFUL 140 acre** tract in city limits. Flat, great commercial building site. All or part. Call (432)213-2319.

**BUILT in 1992,** 2.27 acres 4/3/3, 2 Living areas, formal dining, spacious kitchen, large breakfast room. Beautifully landscaped yard, water well. 1700 Allendale. \$259,000.00. (432)263-3778.

**COAHOMA AREA** 3 Bedroom, 2 bath, CH/A, inground pool with waterwell. Close to School. \$90,000.00. 503 North 5th. Call (432)394-4129 by appt. only.

**GREAT LOCATION** 817 West 18th. 2 Bedroom, 1 bath, CH/A, attached garage, fenced yard. New hard wood floors & Satin tile. \$55,000.00. Call (432)264-6592 or 213-2980.

**MOBILE HOME** for sale: Already established in nice park with lots of shade trees. Large master bedroom and bath. All appliances furnished. Call (432)268-3209.

**NO DOWN Payment** on 2 thru 6 Bedroom Brick Homes. Owner Financing. Bad Credit OK. 6 Month warranty on everything. Call Maria (432)263-3461.

The **WARMEST HOME** you'll ever own. Spacious home in Kentwood for sale, 3 bedrooms, 2 bath, 2 living rooms, open kitchen, covered patio, workshop. (432)816-3467.

**THREE BEDROOM,** two bath, large living, dining & kitchen. Workshop & pool. Extra Nice! Must See! Call (432)267-7369.

**2 HOMES** for Sale  
1202 E. 15th  
1114 S. Main  
Main price \$300.  
Owner finance,  
Bad Credit OK!!  
Flexible Down Payment  
432-978-6562

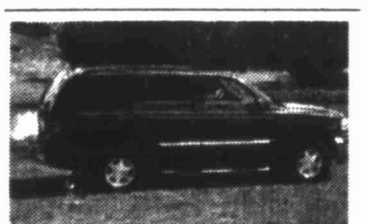
## Vehicles

**'04 Nissan Xterra**  
**\$3000 OFF**  
**MSRP**  
**Bob Brock Ford**  
500 W. 4th 267-7121

**1985 CHRYSLER** Fifth Avenue, 4-door. Real clean. Good condition. \$2,000. Call (432)264-0701.

**1989 FORD F350** Fully rigged for welding. Excellent condition. For more information call (432)263-8644 or 816-3463.

**1998 BMW** (Dark Green). Very Clean. Good Condition. Leather/power seats, power sun roof, alarm system, automatic, 96k. Reduced \$13,000.00. Call (432)263-1738



**2004 YUKON,** low miles, very clean, non-smoker. Still under warranty. \$27,000. Call (432)517-0295 or 517-0588 for more information.

**BUICK 2000 LeSabre Limited.** 66k, grey leather. Loaded, cassette. Excellent cond. Below book \$8,200.00. Call (432)816-6044.



All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1988 which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin, or an intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination." This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis.

**BY HOLIDAY MATHIS**  
The loving Libra moon promotes balance and justice for all. If you've been juggling too many balls, the right ones miraculously land in your hands at the right times — and the others keep joyously afloat. OK, maybe it's not such a miracle. Maybe it's all because the Libra vibes remind us to ask for help when we need it and chip in where we can.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19). Be the person only you can be. Originality is not just important now, it's vital to doing your job well. The late-great Aries blues artist Billie Holiday said, "If I'm going to sing like someone else, then I don't need to sing at all."

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20). Relationships demand attention. Here's how you can be in two places at once. You love and appreciate the one you're with so consistently that this person can feel your presence even when you're miles away.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21). If birds of a feather

flock together, you'll be hanging out with the peacocks today. You're in the mood to show your many beautiful colors and also to take in the vibrant energy of those with just as much to give!

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22). At some point today you'll look at the person standing next to you and wonder how you attracted this person. Think and feel positively about romance. With guidance, you can grow through a dilemma.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22). Sure, material things are only symbols that you want in order to fill a spiritual need. But knowing that doesn't make you want them any less. Be mindful of what you buy and what it says about you.

**VRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). What you have accomplished will speak for itself. Likewise, beware of people who claim to have accomplished things. (If they have to tell you about it, then the accomplishment has not spoken for itself.)

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're ready and eager to see more of the world. Take steps to do so! Make inquiries. After all, you don't get your expansive, generous point of view by

puttering around the house.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your finger is on the pulse, which is why you come up with cutting edge solutions. Everyone notices, too. You're the go to person. Higher-ups may give you more responsibility.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You are so easy for others to read now. Don't be surprised if someone states exactly what you are thinking! Your success comes because you genuinely like the people with whom you are dealing.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You win the award for the most brilliant ideas of the day. Be careful not to put brain, brawn and muscle into a project without putting enthusiasm, soul and excitement into it as well — or all your work will be for nothing!

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Your skills of invention are desperately needed by someone, and most likely, that someone is you. Instead of being preoccupied with the need for more money, get your head into ways to make more money.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20). When a colleague or employer doubts your

work, you must act quickly. Sometimes you have to sell yourself to yourself before you can convince anyone else. Tonight, you'll find out who thinks you're cute.

**DOG LOVERS' ASTROLOGY SPECIAL:** My mentor and friend Joyce Jillson, the great astrologer, had just finished writing "Astrology for Dogs" before her passing on October 1 of last year. Joyce said, "Every creature has a unique chart, just as every pet has its own personality. We love each of them and cater to their strengths and frailties."

In response to the reader who asked, "What can you tell me about my new puppy, Frank? He was born on the Fourth of July..." Joyce said:

"Your Cancer dog is a moody pup, but you'll appreciate his sensitivity when you're not at your best either. Keeping a positive outlook will help keep this dog's demeanor pleasant. Cancer puppy would like more time with you, and he enjoys the peaceful sound of running water. His favorite activity with his owner is receiving a scratch under the chin or on that spot behind the ear that's so hard for him to reach. As

far as dating goes, he's a romantic. Your Cancer dog seeks a relationship with a top-of-the-line femme particularly interested in his company. No beating around the bush for this guy. His best feature is his sweet heart and integrity." (Quotes are courtesy of Bow Tie Press.)

**CELEBRITY PROFILES:** Tommy Mottola is one of the most powerful names in the music business, having been involved in the careers of such divas as Jennifer Lopez, Destiny's Child and Celine Dion — not to mention ex-wife Mariah Carey. Cancer people love music for its healing properties. Music can help Cancer people let down their armor and allow life to strike to the core of their emotions.

*If you would like to write to Holiday Mathis, please go to [www.creators.com](http://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](http://www.creators.com).*

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## Annie's Mailbox : Advice for those in need

Dear Annie: My wife and I recently moved to a new town due to a job transfer by my company. We have two sons, ages 7 and 10, who have quickly made new friends. It turns out two of their buddies are children of neighbors living two houses away. They recently have taken to playing in our backyard and get along extremely well. We really like their friends.

Two weeks ago, we were invited over to meet the parents of these neighbors, and my wife and I were left gasping. It turns out they both are very heavy smokers. I mentioned that my wife is an asthmatic, but this made no difference to them. Without exaggeration, they smoked nearly a pack between them in



KATHY MITCHELL  
MARCY SUGAR

just over an hour. We finally had to make our exit, as I was afraid my wife would experience an attack.

Since that visit, we have begged off on subsequent invitations to get together and have curtailed our children's visits with flimsy excuses. We learned from another neighbor that this couple smokes incessantly in other people's homes, so asking them to come to our place is not an option.

The bombshell in this situation is this couple is tight friends with my new boss, and they get together frequently at their homes. My boss has invited us to dinner next month, and the human chimneys also will be there. (My boss smokes, but has never done so in our home or at work in my presence.)

How do I tactfully tell these folks that we cannot be with them due to their insidious addiction? — Breathe Free or Die

Dear Breathe Free: First, it might help if you treat this as something over which they have little or no control. It will be easier for them to swallow if they don't think you are being judgmental. Then explain quite simply that you wish you could see them more often, since they are such pleasant company, but your wife's asthma makes it difficult for her to be around cigarette smoke for any duration. Offer to meet up with them at some outdoor event or at a smoke-free restaurant.

Dear Annie: It's another season of parties, barbecues and graduations, and I have a question about what to do with the food and drink you bring to a potluck.

Upon leaving, do you take what you brought

back home with you, or do you leave it as a hostess gift? My husband and I differ in our opinions, so your answer will be helpful. — Mimi in Montana

Dear Mimi: Normally, leftover food remains with the hosts. However, potluck events tend to create huge amounts of food, and many hosts prefer that the guests take home their leftovers, in which case the host should say so before you leave.

Dear Annie: I am responding to the letter from "Nervous Mom in Nevada," who said her husband's 9-year-old nephew took great interest in the diaper changing of her 3-year-old daughter.

I agree with your response that "Mom" should tell the parents to talk with their son about the differences between girls and boys, but I am surprised that a 9-year-old doesn't already have this information. Also, why is a 3-year-old still in diapers? Parents today don't make the time or effort to discuss such issues and/or potty train their children. The same holds true for those 3- and 4-year-olds running around with pacifiers in their mouths. — Disgusted in Kansas

Dear Kansas: Many readers thought it peculiar that a 3-year-old is still in diapers, but we can tell you that it is quite common. As long as the child is potty trained by the time he or she reaches school, we aren't going to take issue with this more lenient practice. Extended use of pacifiers, however, can lead to dental problems, so it is in the child's best interest if the parents can break this habit earlier.

Dear Annie: My wife and I have been married for 31 fantastic years. Six years ago, "Shelley" was promoted, and her new job required her to do a lot of out-of-state business travel.

Shelley is very efficient and keeps annual logbooks with the details of her business travel. While I was cleaning up the basement storage area a few weeks ago, I came across her old logbooks, dating back to 1998. Out of curiosity, I opened one, and it had details of a

business meeting with a male client — their dinner and conversation, as well as the details of her activities with him in her hotel room. I was totally shocked to read the things they had done.

Shelley was out of town, so for the next three evenings, I went through all of her logbooks. Each had details similar to the first, not only with that man, but with two others. She has been with these three men on a regular basis.

Should I tell her that I know about her secret life or pretend I am still unaware of it? We are happily married, or so I thought. — Clueless in New York

Dear Clueless: Ignorance may be bliss, but you are no longer ignorant, and you are not going to simply forget the information in those logbooks. Tell Shelley what you found, and ask her to go with you for counseling. Your wife needs to put her marriage first, and that means making it more important than her job, which apparently provides too great a temptation.

Dear Annie: I am 12 years old, and my mom has a terrible habit. Whenever she relaxes, she picks at her armpit and leg hair. She claims it's because she is stressed. She started doing this about two years ago, and my family has been disgusted ever since. We have told her many times that this makes us sick, but she supposedly can't stop. What can we do? — Disgusted in California

Dear California: Yuck. Your mom probably has little control over this habit. It sounds like trichotillomania (compulsive hair pulling), and she may need therapy or medication to overcome it. You and your dad should contact the Trichotillomania Learning Center ([www.trich.org](http://www.trich.org)), 303 Potrero St., Suite 51, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

Dear Annie: My 75-year-old father recently had surgery, which went extremely well. Dad was able to move comfortably and seemed reasonably at ease upon arriving home.

The problem is, the doctor told Dad to "eat moderately." Dad thinks this

means a diet of about 300 calories. His "moderate" food intake for the day is two or three pieces of lightly buttered toast, and tea with skim milk. That's it.

It is possible the doctor explained his diet in more detail, but Dad has only partial hearing (God forbid he get a hearing aid as the world would end), and he may have missed instructions. We've asked Dad to take notes or bring a tape recorder, but he is embarrassed to do so. It would have been so helpful if the doctor could have written down some diet suggestions in the post-surgery packet, and perhaps a listing of sample meals. Medical personnel may not realize that older patients come home to caregivers who are completely mystified by these bits and pieces of information.

Right now, we're hoping that Dad's hunger pangs will force him into the kitchen for a more realistic diet. — Connecticut

Dear Conn.: You are right that older patients often are too embarrassed to ask for clarification when they cannot hear instructions, and it is a good idea for adult children or caregivers to inform the doctor's office of this before surgery.

Don't wait for those hunger pangs. Call Dad's doctor immediately and explain the problem. Your father is starving himself on 300 calories. He will lose weight and weaken, and that could undermine his recovery. Ask the doctor to send you written instructions or refer you to a nutritionist who will put Dad on an appropriate diet.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, long-time editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to [anniesmailbox@comcast.net](mailto:anniesmailbox@comcast.net), or write to: Annie's Mailbox, P.O. Box 118190, Chicago, IL 60611. To find out more about Annie's Mailbox, and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com).

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THURSDAY

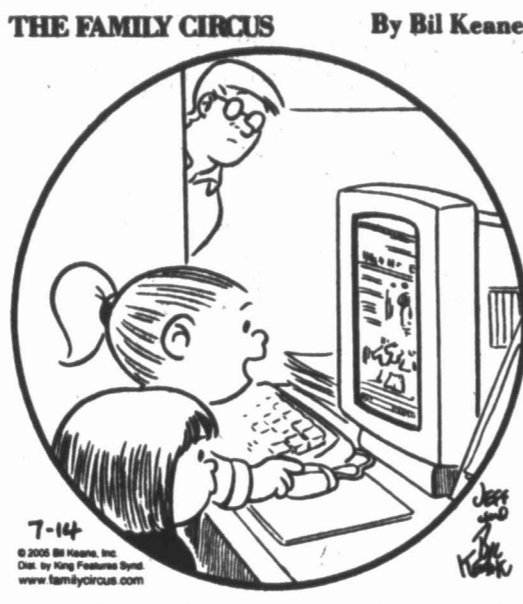
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6:30	News (CC)	News Wheel-Fortune	News Wheel-Fortune	Inocer to do Ti	King of the Hill Raymond	News Ent. Tonight	Be a Millionaire	MLB Baseball Atlanta Braves	Joe McGee John Hagan	News-Lehrer	American Chopper	Classics	Spike TV	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Line BET Style	Disney	MLB Baseball Teams to Be	All Car Show (CC)	Science Fic.
7:30	Extreme Makeover	Extreme Makeover	Apuesta por un Amor	70s Show	Big Brother 8 (CC)	La Mujer on al Español	Joy (CC) Joy (CC)	at New York Mets (CC)	Update/Forum J.R. Church	West Top Jm TX Monthly Talk	Secret Sub: Cuban Missile	Movie: The Great Escape	CSI: Crime Scene Investig.	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Coslin Jell College Hill	Movie: The Cheesecake Girls	Announced (CC)	Sportball	Real Red (CC)
8:30	Hooking Up (CC)	Hooking Up (CC)	La Madrastra	The O.C. (CC)	CSI: Crime Scene Investig.	Without a Trace (CC)	Decisiones (CC) WB & Grace	Movie: The Mask (CC)	Antiques Roadshow	Submarine Disaster	Submarine Disaster	Movie: Road House (CC)	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	College Hill Show/Up	Soul Food (CC)	American Dign Sister, Sister	Softball: 2005 World Cup	Baseball: X Games	Real Red (CC)
9:30	PrimeTime Live	PrimeTime Live	Aquí y Ahora	70s Show Malcolm-Mil.	News Late Show	Noticias Tularos y Mas	News Tonight Show	The Hour of Healing	YBA Cooking-Fire	Secret Sub: Cuban Missile	Movie: Wildcat Police Videos	Movie: Tin Cup	Highly News 100 & Park	That's Raven That's Raven	Highly News 100 & Park	That's Raven That's Raven	Baseball: X Games	Sportball	Real Red (CC)
10:30	News (CC)	News (CC)	Primer Impacto Noticias Univ.	70s Show Raymond	News Late Show	Noticias Tularos y Mas	News Tonight Show	The Hour of Healing	YBA Cooking-Fire	Secret Sub: Cuban Missile	Movie: Wildcat Police Videos	Movie: Tin Cup	Highly News 100 & Park	That's Raven That's Raven	Highly News 100 & Park	That's Raven That's Raven	Baseball: X Games	Sportball	Real Red (CC)
11:30	Ent. Tonight	Ent. Tonight	La Hora De las Noticias	Backer (CC) Becker (CC)	Late Late	Late Late	Late Night: Conan O'Brien	10 Movie: The Cable Guy (CC)	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Sign Off	Submarine Disaster	Submarine Disaster	NBA Rockies	Movie: The Cable Guy	Movie: The Cable Guy	Movie: The Cable Guy	Movie: The Cable Guy	Movie: The Cable Guy	Movie: The Cable Guy
12:30	AM Live (CC)	AM Live (CC)	British Open Extra (CC)	Amigas y Rivales (88)	Spin City Roseanne	Show The Insider	María Celeste Programa	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin	Update/Forum Faye Hardin

DENNIS THE MENACE



"WOULD YOU LIKE A PIECE OF TOAST FOR BREAKFAST?" "I'D RATHER HAVE A WHOLE ONE, THANKS."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS



"You just click on it and they put it in your shopping cart."

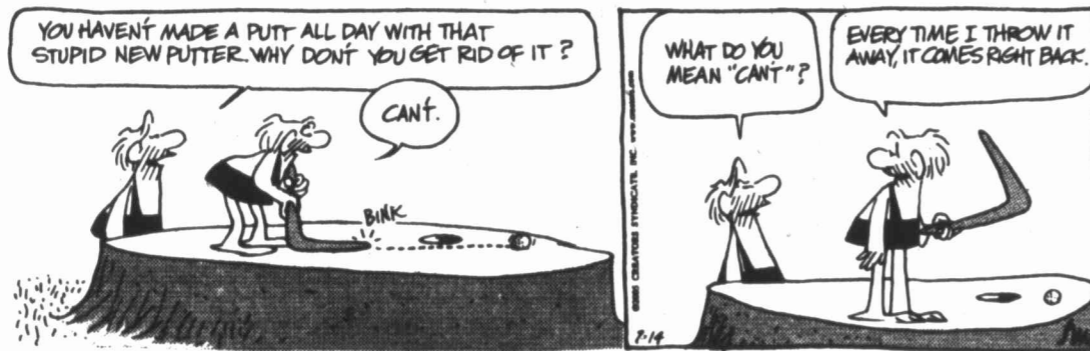
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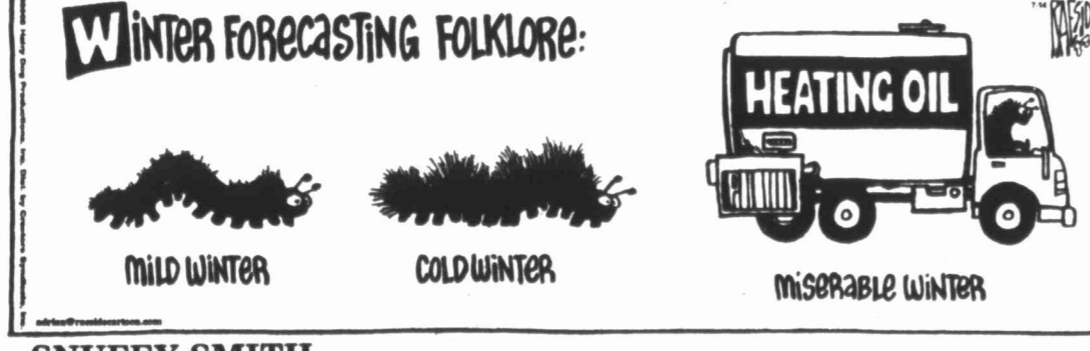
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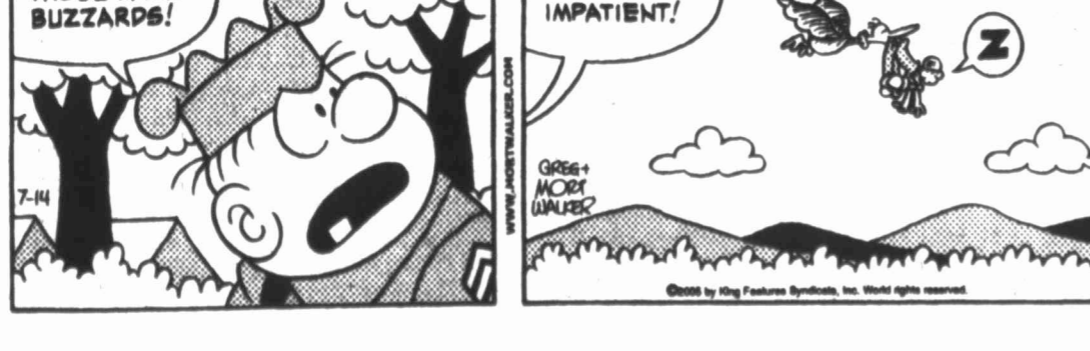
THE OTHER COAST



SNUFFY SMITH



BEEBLE BAILEY



This Date In History

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, July 14, the 195th day of 2005. There are 170 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 14, 1789, during the French Revolution, citizens of Paris stormed the Bastille prison and released the seven prisoners inside.

On this date:

In 1798, Congress passed the Sedition Act, making it a federal crime to publish false, scandalous or malicious writing about the United States government.

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry relayed to Japanese officials a letter from former President Fillmore, requesting trade relations.

In 1881, outlaw William H. Bonney Jr., alias Billy the Kid, was shot and killed by Sheriff Pat Garrett in Fort Sumner, N.M.

In 1933, all German political parties, except the Nazi Party, were outlawed.

In 1958, the army of Iraq overthrew the monarchy.

In 1965, the American space probe Mariner 4 flew by Mars, sending back photographs of the planet.

In 1966, eight student nurses were murdered by Richard Speck in a Chicago dormitory.

In 1978, Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky was convicted of treasonous espionage and anti-Soviet agitation, and sentenced to 13 years at hard labor. (Sharansky was released in 1986.)

Five years ago: A Florida jury ordered five major tobacco companies to pay smokers a record \$145 billion in punitive damages. (However, in 2003, a state appeals court reversed not only the award but also the class action, unifying hundreds of thousands of sick Florida smokers under a single lawsuit; the Florida Supreme Court agreed in May 2004 to review that decision.)

One year ago: The Senate scuttled a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage (48 senators voted to advance the measure —

12 short of the 60 needed — and 50 voted to block it).

Today's Birthdays:

Actress Gloria Stuart is 95. Former President Gerald R. Ford is 92. Movie and stage director Ingmar Bergman is 87. Actor Dale Robertson is 82. Former football player Rosey Grier is 73. Actor-director Eric Laneuville is 53. Movie producer Scott Rudin is 47. Rock musician Ellen Reid (Crash Test Dummies) is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Tameka Cottle (Xscape) is 30. Hip-hop musician Taboo (Black Eyed Peas) is 30.

Thought for Today:

"There are two kinds of statistics, the kind you look up and the kind you make up."

— Rex Stout, American author (1886-1975).

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Newsday Crossword

CARBON COPIES by Doug Peterson  
Edited by Stanley Newman  
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

- Piquancy
- Economist Smith
- Clinton's cat
- Cuba, to Carlos
- French seaport
- Qantas mascot
- Of ships: Abbr.
- Little bits
- Raised a notch
- Actor's acknowledgment
- Genealogy word
- Gymnast Korbust
- Like-minded voters
- Excessively ornate
- TD tossers
- Graceful mount
- That, in Tijuana
- When expected
- NFL coach Don
- Twain's "Jumping Frog" setting
- "Go fly \_\_\_!"
- Shenanigan
- Whisper sweet nothings
- Written agreement
- Qty.
- Hindu god
- Till fillers
- Medicine bottle
- Carpet cleaner, briefly
- "Minnie the Moocher" singer
- Send with a click

DOWN

- Brass component
- Brother of Jacob
- Speak ill of
- Fantasy Island role
- Sophocles tragedy
- Artemis counterpart
- Flexible, electrically
- Elevated plane
- Hamlet prop
- "Alley \_\_\_!"
- Skipper of cereals
- Swiss artist
- "Smooth Operator" singer
- Small recess
- Many oz.
- Pearl Harbor locale
- News summary
- Japanese city
- Multicolored pets
- '60s British fashion designer
- Top of the heap
- Illinois city
- Mississippi inlet
- Study in a hurry
- Church mixer
- Envelope abbr.
- Judge Judy's expertise
- \_\_\_ rule (generally)
- "We try harder," e.g.
- Brilliance
- Trumpet device
- Reject, as a bill
- Church shout
- Spill the beans
- Winnow
- Like crayons
- A long time
- Connecticut campus
- Furious feeling

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69

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# That's Racin'

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Go online and check out [www.thatracin.com](http://www.thatracin.com) for the latest information and news on stock-car racing, updated daily.

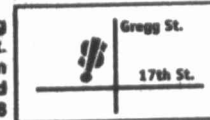
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## THIS WEEK'S RACE

### NEW ENGLAND 300

Where: New Hampshire International Speedway, a 1.058-mile paved flat oval located in Loudon, N.H.

When: Sunday at 2:10 p.m. (all times ET).  
Qualifying is 12:10 p.m. Saturday.

TV: TNT.

Radio: Motor Racing Network.

Purse: \$5,148,147.

Last year's winner: Kurt Busch.

Worth mentioning: A Ford has won 10 of the 20 races at New Hampshire, including both races last season.

Jeff Gordon has led 1,067 laps at New Hampshire, more than any other driver.

Greg Biffle ranked 23rd in points after 18 races one year ago. This year he is second.

## POLL POSITION

### THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

In August, NASCAR officials will visit five cities — Daytona Beach, Fla.; Kansas City, Mo.; Charlotte, N.C.; Atlanta; and Richmond, Va. — to determine a site for a stock-car racing hall of fame.

Where do you think NASCAR should locate its Hall of Fame?

Cast your vote at: [www.thatracin.com](http://www.thatracin.com)

### LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

Night races often are among the season's best, but sometimes rain delays push the action deep into the night. Last week's Pepsi 400 at Daytona is a prime example. Did you stay awake and watch the whole thing?

Number of votes: 9,542

Driver	No. of votes	Percent
Yes, every last lap.	6,153	64%
No, I balled out early.	1,955	21%
No, I caught a few winks in the middle but saw the finish.	960	10%
None of the above.	474	5%

## STOP 'N' GO

### WHO'S HOT

- Dale Earnhardt Jr. has two consecutive top-five finishes, including a win. They are his only back-to-back top fives this season.
- Rusty Wallace has finished 12th or better in his past seven races and climbed from 14th to fourth in points over the last eight races.
- Tony Stewart finished second, first, first and fifth in his last four races.
- Ricky Rudd has finished seventh or higher in two of the past three races.

### WHO'S NOT

- Jeff Gordon has finished 30th or lower in six of his past eight races and fallen from fifth to 15th in points.
- Bobby Labonte ranked sixth in points after 18 races last year. This year he is 24th.
- Dale Jarrett has led only two laps this season.

— Jim Utter

## BY THE NUMBERS

### NEXTEL CUP POINTS LEADERS

The top-40 drivers as of July 10:

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1. Jimmie Johnson	2548	21. Kasey Kahne	1800
2. Greg Biffle	2440	22. Brian Vickers	1781
3. Tony Stewart	2397	23. Sterling Marlin	1693
4. Rusty Wallace	2300	24. Bobby Labonte	1689
5. Elliott Sadler	2230	25. Casey Mears	1683
6. Mark Martin	2202	26. Scott Riggs	1681
7. Ryan Newman	2196	27. Ricky Rudd	1680
8. Jamie McMurray	2190	28. Ken Schrader	1644
9. Jeremy Mayfield	2179	29. Dave Blaney	1597
10. Kurt Busch	2172	30. Kyle Petty	1594
11. Dale Jarrett	2139	31. Jeff Green	1561
12. Carl Edwards	2073	32. Mike Bliss	1557
13. Dale Earnhardt Jr.	2057	33. Travis Kvapil	1541
14. Kevin Harvick	2052	34. Scott Wimmer	1476
15. Jeff Gordon	2046	35. Mike Wallace	1391
16. Matt Kenseth	1970	36. Jason Leffler	1287
17. Jeff Burton	1964	37. Bobby Hamilton Jr.	1122
18. Joe Nemechek	1958	38. Kevin Lepage	975
19. Michael Waltrip	1925	39. Robby Gordon	965
20. Kyle Busch	1886	40. Terry Labonte	557

### BUSCH SERIES POINTS LEADERS

The top-20 drivers as of July 9:

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1. Martin Truex Jr.	2681	11. David Green	2039
2. Clint Bowyer	2589	12. Paul Menard	1971
3. Reed Sorenson	2555	13. Kevin Harvick	1857
4. Carl Edwards	2466	14. Johnny Sauter	1830
5. Kenny Wallace	2369	15. J.J. Yeley	1827
6. Denny Hamlin	2276	16. Ryan LaJoie	1803
7. Ashton Lewis	2198	17. Stacy Compton	1786
8. David Stremme	2176	18. Jon Wood	1784
9. Greg Biffle	2104	19. Justin Labonte	1705
10. Jason Keller	2086	20. Stanton Barrett	1699

NEXT RACE: Saturday, New England 200, Loudon, N.H.

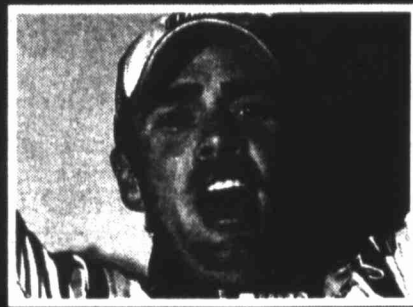
### TRUCK SERIES POINTS LEADERS

The top-10 drivers as of July 9:

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1. Dennis Setzer	1744	6. Jimmy Spencer	1587
2. Bobby Hamilton	1706	7. Terry Cook	1562
3. Ted Musgrave	1691	8. Jack Sprague	1501
4. Ron Hornaday	1610	9. Mike Skinner	1479
5. Ricky Craven	1597	10. Matt Crafton	1466

NEXT RACE: July 23, O'Reilly 200, Memphis, Tenn.

# MAKING THE GRADE



Jimmie Johnson



Greg Biffle



Tony Stewart

BY DAVID POOLE

Knight Ridder Newspapers

Halfway through the 2005 Nextel Cup season, three drivers have put themselves at the head of class.

Jimmie Johnson, Greg Biffle and Tony Stewart get the top grades on [thatracin.com](http://thatracin.com)'s annual midseason report cards after working their way to the top of the standings.

As things stand, with just eight races to go before the Chase for the Nextel Cup, the 400-point window would not come into play and only 10 drivers would advance into the championship battle. With Johnson, Biffle and Stewart running so well, all three of them would most likely have to stumble before the 400-point window opens back up.

### MIDSEASON GRADES

**A Johnson, Biffle and Stewart:** Johnson leads the circuit with eight top-five and 13 top-10 finishes in 18 races. Biffle is Nextel Cup's biggest story so far this year with five victories, while Stewart is unquestionably the hottest driver at the midpoint riding a streak of four straight top-five finishes, with two wins in that span.

**A- Rusty Wallace and Mark Martin:** Neither of these veterans has won a points race yet — Martin did win the Nextel All-Star Challenge — but you've got to give them both a little extra credit for putting themselves in the thick of the race to the Chase with their solid first-half performances in their final full Nextel Cup seasons. Each has nine top-10 finishes, and Wallace is now fourth and Martin sixth in the standings.

**B+ Carl Edwards, Kurt Busch, Elliott Sadler:** Even though he's slipped to 12th in the standings, Edwards does have two victories in the first half of his first full season in the Cup series. Aside from the top three,

## Measuring Cup drivers' progress at midseason

Busch is the only other driver with a win who's currently in the top 10 in points with eight other top-five finishes in addition to his Phoenix victory. Sadler is fifth in the points with only one top five, but he has finished between sixth and 10th eight times. While that strategy for making the Chase might not be terribly exciting, it has been effective so far.

**B Ryan Newman, Jamie McMurray, Jeremy Mayfield:** They're in the top 10 with eight races left before the Chase. Newman does have five poles, but none of these guys has won a race. With so much emphasis on the Chase — too much, as opposed to winning races, if you ask us — it's hard to count that against them too much.

**B- Jeff Gordon, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Kevin Harvick:** Gordon has three wins, while Earnhardt Jr. joined Harvick on the victors' list at Chicagoland. But Gordon has been in a free fall that's lasted more than two months now. Harvick has had trouble putting together any stretches of good finishes. Earnhardt Jr.'s win Sunday pulls him up into this grouping.

**C+ Kasey Kahne, Dale Jarrett, Kyle Busch:** Kahne's struggle since he got his first win at Phoenix is one of the season's big mysteries. If Jarrett's team could find a way to get a win soon, that might be enough to break it out of the logjam that's around the

Chase cutline right now. Kyle Busch gets a half-grade bump for being the odds-on favorite to be rookie of the year.

**C Matt Kenseth, Jeff Burton, Joe Nemechek, Michael Waltrip, Brian Vickers, Ricky Rudd:** Kenseth showed signs at Chicagoland of breaking out of his season's funk. Vickers and Rudd have had strong cars at times that put them in position to finish well, but not as often as they'd like. Anyone of these guys could win a race in the second half, and you'd frankly be surprised if at least one or two of them didn't.

**C- Sterling Marlin, Scott Riggs, Casey Mears, Ken Schrader, Bobby Labonte:** Each of these guys has three top-10 finishes in the season's first half. Of the group, Schrader should get the most credit for that level of performance because he's done it with a one-car team. Marlin's out of the No. 40 at season's end, while Mears and Riggs have options they'll be considering. Labonte has finally made it into the top 25 in points in what can only be considered a disheartening first half.



Sterling Marlin

**D Dave Blaney, Travis Kvapil, Kyle Petty, Mike Bliss, Jeff Green, Scott Wimmer, Mike Wallace, Kevin Lepage:** Except for Lepage, each has done well enough to keep his team in the top 35 in owner points. That'll be an important race within the race as the season winds down, since that means guaranteed starting spots for the first few races next year. Although Lepage has made just more than half the races so far, he can't be given a failing grade for fighting the uphill battle against the lack of resources so gamely.

**F Jason Leffler, Bobby Hamilton Jr., Robby Gordon:** Outside the top 35 and simply not getting the job done.

## RANKINGS

### THAT'S RACIN'S TOP PICKS

1. **Greg Biffle (car No. 16):** Keeps the top spot at season's midway point by virtue of his five race victories. Last week: 1.

2. **Jimmie Johnson (car No. 48):** It seems fairly obvious that the No. 24 ought to be looking for a little help

from here. Last week: 3.

3. **Tony Stewart (car No. 20):** The only downside of this team's recent run is that it didn't start with the 27th race. Last week: 2.

4. **Rusty Wallace (car No. 2):** If he wins the championship, is it possible that he could still stand to walk away? Last week: 5.

5. **Mark Martin (car No. 6):** Hanging in tenaciously in his effort to join Wallace in looking for flashy

farewell. Last week: 6.

6. **Elliott Sadler (car No. 38):** Tire problems at Chicagoland cut into the cushion this team had in the race to the Chase. Last week: 4.

7. **Ryan Newman (car No. 12):** Maybe a trip to Loudon, site of Newman's first career win, will kick start this team. Last week: 7.

8. **Jamie McMurray (car No. 42):** Will McMurray's odd contract status distract from this team's bid to stay in

the Chase? Last week: 8.

9. **Kurt Busch (car No. 97):** New Hampshire was very, very good to him last year — he won both Loudon races. Last week: 11.

10. **Jeremy Mayfield (car No. 19):** Don't look now, but he's back in the top 10. Have to admire this team's perseverance. Last week: 13.

For the rest of the top-40 rankings, go online and visit [www.thatracin.com](http://www.thatracin.com).

## Cost of doing business changes team, driver relations

NASCAR drivers' contracts once seemed to be about as binding as a rope made of Silly String.

"Multiyear" deals vanished as though written in disappearing ink. If a driver or car owner wanted to end things, they'd spit at each other through the media a few times then call a news conference to say they were parting "as friends."

With more and more money involved in Nextel Cup racing these days, though, both drivers and owners have grown more serious about what they're signing.

Drivers don't want to have the rug pulled out from under them for having an off year in a sport where even great drivers can't do much without good cars. Team owners and their sponsors, who are paying the millions of dollars flowing through the sport these days, don't want to build their teams and marketing plans around a driver without being reasonably sure

he's not about to bolt for greener pastures.

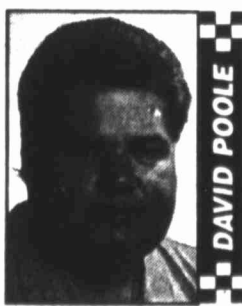
Last week, the news came that Jamie McMurray will leave Chip Ganassi Racing to drive the No. 6 Fords for Roush Racing, but not until 2007. McMurray still has another one-year option left on his deal in the No. 42 Dodges, and Ganassi plans to pick that up.

Filling a top-tier Cup ride has never been more complicated. A driver's availability now must be factored in along with his ability.

And right now, there's a whole lot of factoring going on.

Roush Racing still needs a driver for the No. 6 for next year after Mark Martin leaves full-time competition at the end of this season.

Rusty Wallace is leaving, too, and McMurray was considered to be a



DAVID POOLE

candidate to go there. Penske Racing South also made an offer to Martin Truex Jr., the reigning Busch Series champion, but Truex will move up to a third Cup team at Dale Earnhardt Inc.

Speaking of third teams, Evernham Motorsports plans to add one next year, one that will be sponsored by Valvoline, which has been Scott Riggs' sponsor in his first two seasons in the Cup series.

Riggs' contract also ends after this season. In many ways, that makes him as popular as the hot-shot high school quarterback whose cheerleader girlfriend just got grounded the week before prom.

Valvoline and Riggs seem to have a fine relationship, so it's fair to assume he'd at least be considered for the new Evernham ride. Or, perhaps,

for the No. 2 car, or for one of a handful of other teams who are supposedly considering a change for next year.

But hang on. His current team, MB2 Motorsports, would also like to keep him. Riggs has a contract offer in hand and says he likes where he is, but still wants to know who the new sponsor will be.

Things change in Nextel Cup, and the pace of that change is accelerating.

More veterans will follow Martin and Wallace out of Cup competition in the next few years, opening more opportunities for new faces in new places.

You hear drivers say all the time that winning races is all about putting yourself in the right place at the right time. More and more, that's beginning to apply long before races like the one Sunday at New Hampshire even begin.