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BIG SPRING HERALD



INSIDE
Rangers,
Millwood
agree to
\$60 million,
five-year
deal
Page 1B

VOLUME 102, NUMBER 28

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2005

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50 CENTS DAILY/\$1.25 WEEKEND



Andrea Villareal, left, along with her mother, Cynthia Villareal, and father, John Villareal, check out the after-Christmas sales at Beall's in the Big Spring Mall Monday afternoon.

Merchants pleased with seasonal sales

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

Most area businesses are reporting holiday sales that either match totals posted in 2004 or are slightly below, with eyes set firmly on 2006. Jody Swinney, owner Sears in the Big Spring Mall, said his business came in just under sales totals from last year, but the comparison can be somewhat deceiving. "We really had an above average year in 2004," said Swinney. "When everything is closed out this year, I expect we'll be pretty much in-line with what we expected. "All of the oddities this year — from gas prices to the hurricanes — hurt a lot of people this year. It's certainly understandable, however. Every time you think things

"We've had a really good Christmas. The customers have been really patient, and you couldn't ask for a better team of associates to work with. We're very pleased."



Granados

are going to settle down something else happens." Swinney said he's already looking to next year, which he expects to be a good one for retail sales. "We're expecting a better year in 2006. With the way the cotton crops have come in and the farmers are doing this season, it should help

lift things up. I also think the economy is going to continue to get better, which should also help." Yolanda Robles, manager of the Payless Shoesource on Gregg Street, said her overall totals are in line with last year, but going into the new year things are still looking up. "When you compare this year with 2004 sort of back-to-back, we came out pretty even," said Robles. "It's still been very good, however, and we still have people coming in for the sales and markdowns. There haven't been as many returns this year, either." Sharon Cofferen, a manager with Beall's Department Store in the mall, said the local clothing hot-spot came away better this year.

See SALES, Page 3A

Fraud alleged at Red Cross claim centers

By JACQUELINE SALMON
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Nearly 50 people have been indicted in connection with a scheme that bilked hundreds of thousands of dollars from a Red Cross program to put cash into the hands of Hurricane Katrina victims, according to federal authorities. Seventeen of the accused worked at the Red Cross claim center in Bakersfield, Calif., which handled calls from storm victims across the country and authorized cash payments to them. The others charged were the workers' relatives and friends, prosecutors said last week. The scam came to light when Red Cross officials noticed a suspiciously

In one fairly typical case, according to the indictments, three Spherion workers allegedly set up false accounts for one another and for several relatives and friends.

high number of people were picking up Red Cross money at Western Union outlets near the Bakersfield center, even though few evacuees were in the area. The Red Cross called law enforcement authorities. Forty-nine people in See FRAUD, Page 3A

Time to check your 'voter readiness' for the March primaries

Monday, Feb. 6, is the deadline to register to vote.

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

With the Republican and Democratic party primaries just around the bend, area residents planning to cast their ballots must be registered to vote by the first part of February. The deadline to register to vote in the primaries, which is slated for March 7, is set for Monday, Feb. 6, and according to Howard County Voter Registrar Sandra Bloom, it's time to check on your "voter readiness."

"The registration deadline for any election is 30 days prior to the election day," said Bloom. "This year the deadline actually falls on a Sunday, so the state is giving everyone the following working day, which is a Monday, to get voter registration cards in." Bloom said registering to vote is easy and can be completed without ever having to leave home. "If they haven't received their card or aren't sure if they're registered, all they have to do is come by the office," said Bloom. "They can fill out the voter registration See REGISTER, Page 3A

Troopers to be out in force this weekend

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

Department of Public Safety troopers will be out in force New Years Eve, as the state agency prepares to tackle the second part of its annual Operation Holiday safety program. According to DPS Sgt. Jason Hester, if you're pulled over by a trooper for one of the key holiday violations — speeding, no

seat belts and driving while intoxicated — don't get your holiday hopes up. "We have a zero-tolerance approach to both seat belt and intoxicated driving violations," said Hester. "Absolutely no warnings will be written for either. We're anticipating traffic will be very heavy this season, so there's no room for these type of mistakes. "Operation Holiday means

that all available troopers will be out on the roads. They're going to be looking really close at drivers to make sure they are following the law, especially the three violations that are the deadliest — speeding, no seat belts and driving while intoxicated." With temperatures forecasted to be in the low 30s — possibly even colder — New Years Eve, Hester said the weather can



Hester

also be a big concern for holiday-goers who find themselves on the road. "One of the biggest factors to consider is the weather," said Hester. "You can get road condition reports by calling 800-452-9292, or pay close attention to the local weather channel. We

report all road closures to both. Pay close attention to bridges and overpasses during freezing weather as well. "Another thing to remember is to allow extra time for travel because the high level of traffic is going to increase how long it takes to get where you're going." Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232.

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TOMORROW 66°-68°
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SIMMONS DIES AT 69

DOUGLASSVILLE (AP) — Wallace R. Simmons, an editor whose career at Texas newspapers spanned nearly 50 years, has died. He was 69. Simmons had battled cancer and died at his home Christmas Day, the Texarkana Gazette reported. He had recently retired from the Citizens-Journal in Atlanta after heading the newspaper's sports department. Simmons previously worked at daily newspapers in Texarkana, Abilene, Odessa, Pampa, Haringen and Borger, serving in various editor positions. He also worked at bi-weekly publications in New Boston and Winnsboro.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Mobile Meals program that delivers meals to the elderly, chronically ill and homebound needs volunteers to help with deliveries. If you can spare one hour per week to deliver eight or 10 meals, your help is needed. About 85 to 90 meals are prepared, packaged and delivered to recipients within the city limits of Big Spring. Mobile Meals is a voluntary, non-profit organization. If you would like to volunteer, or need more information about the Mobile Meals program itself of the organization, please call 263-4016 before 3 p.m.

CHURCH SETS GIVEAWAY

LA MARQUE (AP) — In a game show style giveaway, a church plans to award a \$120,000 three-bedroom house to one of its worshippers New Year's Eve. Since 2003, Abundant Life Christian Center has given away a car, a motorcycle and furniture, but this year the lure is a house. "It encourages people to come to the service, and it helps keep people off the street with all that revelry going on," Pastor Walter Hallam said. A parishioner built the house and charged the church \$53,000 for materials. It should be completed next month; the winner will be responsible for closing costs and taxes.



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Obituaries

Eddie White

Eddie White, 82, of Stanton died Saturday, Dec. 24, 2005, in a Big Spring nursing home. Funeral services are 3 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2005, at the First United Methodist Church of Stanton with the Rev. Daniel Armstrong officiating. Interment will follow at Evergreen Cemetery.

The family will receive friends and relatives today from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m.

He was born May 11, 1923, in Clybelt Spring, Ga., and married Lovell Simon White Feb. 24, 1979, in Stanton. She preceded him in death Aug. 29, 1996. He served in the United States Army during World War II and came to Martin County in 1938. He worked as a mechanic for John Deere in Stanton, Lovington, Midland and Brady and as a custodian in Lovington and Stanton schools for four years. He was a member of First United Methodist Church.

Survivors include one son and daughter-in-law, Richard and Charlotte White of Lenora; one daughter and son-in-law, Linda and Walter Taylor of Stanton; four grandchildren; three great-granddaughters; and two great-grandsons.

He was preceded in death by five brothers, Walter White, Newt White, Henry White, D.M. "Slim" White, Dewey White, an infant sister and one granddaughter.

The family suggests memorials made to Alzheimer's Association, 4400 N. Big Spring St., Midland 79705 or to a favorite charity.

Arrangements under the direction of Gilbreath Funeral Home of Stanton. Online condolences can be made at www.npwelch.com.

Sue Pool

Sue Pool, 100, of Big Spring died Monday, Dec. 26, 2005, at her residence. Her services are pending with Nalley-Pickle and Welch Funeral Home and Crematory of Big Spring.

Sheriff's report

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

- **JOSE MANUEL BUSTILLO**, 30, was arrested Friday on a charge of violation of parole.
- **DEVON LEE BUTLER**, 20, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on charges of possession of marijuana - more than two ounces less than four ounces and possession of a controlled substance.
- **STEVEN RAY EVANS**, 17, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on charges of possession of marijuana - more than two ounces less than four ounces and possession of a controlled substance.
- **TONY RANDALL PARTEE**, 46, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on charges of driving while intoxicated - third or more offense and a probation violation.
- **RICKY LEE TATE**, 17, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on a charge of possession/consumption of alcohol by a minor - third offense enhanced.
- **MIGUEL ANGEL GRAJEDA**, 43, was arrested Friday by DPS on a charge of driving while license invalid.
- **JONETTA PASTORLA TATE**, 41, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of driving while intoxicated - second offense.
- **MICHAEL SCHELL MADRY**, 43, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of driving while intoxicated.
- **CURTIS DWAYNE WOODRUFF**, 20, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of minor in consumption of an alcoholic beverage.
- **NATHANIEL JAMAL AUSBIE**, 22, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of possession of a controlled substance, possession of marijuana - two ounces or less and possession of marijuana in a penal institution.
- **TYRONE DEION SMITH**, 25, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon and theft of a firearm.
- **BRIAN EUGENE VANDERBILT**, 26, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of no driver's license, failure to appear and terroristic threats.
- **JOHN BASCOM WINTERS**, 37, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of theft by check, public intoxication/capias pro fines and driving while license invalid.
- **CHANCELLA MCKENZIE PARRISH**, 21, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on a charge of possession of marijuana, two ounces or less.
- **SHEILA CAIN**, 32, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on a charge of driving while license invalid.
- **JOE OLIVIO JR.**, 33, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on a charge of driving while intoxicated.
- **JOSE ALFREDO MELENDEZ**, 22, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on a charge of evading arrest or detention.
- **CARTAVIOUS JEROME GROAGE**, 17, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on two charges of criminal mischief.
- **GONZALO HERNANDEZ GONZALEZ**, 29, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on charges of driving while intoxicated and driving while license suspended - enhanced.
- **VICTOR MANUEL CASTILLO**, 33, was arrested Sunday by DPS on charges of driving while intoxicated with a passenger 15 years or younger, no driver's license, failure to maintain financial responsibility,

The Big Spring Fire Department reported the following activity:

- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1300 block of Mesquite. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2600 block of Chanute. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1900 block of Wasson. Service was refused.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1900 block of Wasson. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 700 block of Highland. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 800 block of Lancaster. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAFFIC ACCIDENT** was reported near the intersection of Fifth Street and Settles. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1700 block of Lancaster. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2600 block of Chanute. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2900 block of Virginia. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 200 block of Highland. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2600 block of North Anderson Road. Service was refused.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2900 block of West Highway 80. One person was transported to the VAMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported near the 190 mile marker of Interstate Highway 20. Service was refused.
- **STRUCTURE FIRE** was reported in the 500 block of Gregg Street.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 300 block of Aylesford. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 1700 block of Lancaster. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 1800 block of North

littering and violation of a promise to appear.

- **DAVID ANDREW BELEW**, 29, was transferred to the county jail Sunday by the BSPD on a charge of interfering with an emergency phone call.
- **JAMES ANTHONY BURNS**, 47, was transferred to the county jail Sunday by the BSPD on charges of failure to identify as a fugitive from justice - giving false information and insufficient funds checks.
- **ERIC MARTIN ZARRAGA**, 22, was transferred to the county jail Sunday by the BSPD on a charge of evading arrest or detention.
- **CATHERINE RENEE CHISM**, 19, was transferred to the county jail Sunday by the BSPD on charges of possession of marijuana - two ounces or less and driving while license invalid.
- **JOHN MANUEL SOLIS**, 20, was transferred to the county jail Sunday by the BSPD on a charge of assault on a public servant - Collin County warrant.
- **CHRISTOPHER ALLEN BRIGHT**, 23, was arrested Sunday by the HCSO on charges of criminal mischief, theft, expired motor vehicle inspection certificate - capias fines and failure to appear.
- **YESENIA SAUCEDA LEDESMA**, 18, was arrested Sunday by DPS on charges of failure to identify as a fugitive from justice, bondsman off bond for theft, probation violation and failure to appear.
- **JESUS LEDESMA**, 46, was arrested Sunday by DPS on charges of forgery to defraud or harm another, failure to identify as a fugitive from justice, two charges of tampering with governmental records to defraud or harm, no liability insurance/failure to maintain financial responsibility and evading arrest or detention.
- **HEATHER ATKINSON**, 25, was arrested Monday by the HCSO on a charge of bondsman off bond for possession of a controlled substance.
- **ENRIQUE MAYERS III**, 27, was transferred to the county jail Monday by the BSPD on a charge of driving while intoxicated.
- **DONALD FRANK ATKINSON**, 56, was arrested Monday by the HCSO on charges of unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon, parole violation - burglary of a building and possession of drug paraphernalia.
- **TRAVIS CLINT HULL**, 32, was arrested Monday by the HCSO on charges of unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of a shotgun/prohibited weapon.
- **DANYA LEE ATKINSON**, 28, was arrested Monday by the HCSO on charges of unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Police blotter

The Big Spring Police Department reported the following activity between 8 a.m. Monday and 8 a.m. today:

- **LANCE ALAN LISTER**, 27, of 2405 Alabama, was arrested Monday on charges of driving while license suspended - enhanced and possession of drug paraphernalia.
- **DANYA LEE ATKINSON**, 27, of 110 Scout Road, was arrested Monday and held for the HCSO.

NORMAN HARRIS, M.D.

OBSTETRICS-GYNECOLOGY

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NEXT CLINIC VISIT 12-29-05

Fire/EMS

Highway 87. One person was transported to the VAMC.

- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 300 block of Aylesford. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 600 block of Sgt. Paredez. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 2600 block of Gregg Street. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1400 block of Settles. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1500 block of Scurry. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 3600 block of Dixon. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 3200 block of Parkway. One person was transported to SMMC.

Take note

• **HANGAR 25 AIR MUSEUM IS COLLECTING RECIPES** to be included in a 2006 cookbook which will display memories of Big Spring over the years. Share your memories and your recipes. Contact the Hangar at 264-1999 for recipe forms.

• **HOME HOSPICE HAS COOKBOOKS** with nearly 500 recipes on sale for \$18 with proceeds to benefit Hospice House. Recipes submitted by volunteers, coordinators and owners of Home Hospice. Call Sherry Hodnett at 264-7599 for more information.

• **THE HOWARD COUNTY CHILD WELFARE BOARD** seeks Christmas help for the 69 children in foster care. To 'adopt' a child or family for the holidays, contact Patti Richard at 432-559-6953 or 268-4550.

• **ODYSSEY HOSPICE NEEDS VOLUNTEERS** to work in the office and perform patient services. For more information or to volunteer, call 263-5999.

• **THE MOBILE MEALS PROGRAM** that delivers meals to the elderly and homebound needs volunteers to deliver meals. If you can spare one hour per week to deliver eight or 10 meals, you are needed. About 85 to 90 meals are prepared, packaged and delivered to recipients within the city limits of Big Spring. If you can volunteer, please call 263-4016 before 3 p.m.

• **ROAD TO RECOVERY**, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, seeks volunteers to drive cancer patients to treatment in Midland. This requires just a few hours commitment each month. To volunteer, or to request a ride for treatment, call LaWanda Hamm at 263-7827.

• **BIG SPRING AND SURROUNDING** counties are in critical need of foster families. Foster parents are the caretakers for the children in the community who have been abused or neglected. For more information on becoming foster parents or adoptive families, call the Children's Protective Services office at 263-9669.

Weather

Results of the Cash 5 drawing Monday night:
Winning numbers drawn: 1-10-12-15-29.
Number matching five of five: none.
Next Cash 5 drawing: Tuesday night.

Results of the Texas Two Step drawing Monday night:

Winning numbers drawn: 4-15-16-19. Bonus Ball: 20.
Number matching four of four, plus Bonus Ball: none.

Estimated jackpot for Thursday night drawing: \$225,000.

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Monday night by the Texas Lottery, in order: 5-1-4

Lottery

Tonight—Mostly clear. Colder. Lows in the mid 30s. Northwest winds 10 to 20 mph.

Wednesday—Increasing clouds. Highs in the upper 60s. West winds around 10 mph.

Wednesday night—Mostly clear. Lows in the lower 30s. West winds around 10 mph.

Thursday—Mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 70s. Southwest winds 10 to 15 mph.

Thursday night—Increasing clouds. Lows around 40.

Friday—Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 60s.

Friday night—Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 30s.

Saturday—Partly cloudy. Highs around 70.

Saturday night—Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 40s.

New years day—Mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 70s.

Sunday night—Partly cloudy. Lows around 40.

Monday—Mostly sunny. Highs in the mid 60s.

BIG SPRING HERALD

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FRAUD

Continued from Page 1A

The Bakersfield area have been indicted in the past three months for filing false claims with the center.

More indictments are expected soon, said Stanley Boone, an assistant U.S. attorney in Bakersfield.

The incident reveals a sometimes chaotic system that the Red Cross cobbled together after the devastating storm in order to put cash into the hands of desperate evacuees. Many had fled their homes with only the clothing they wore and what they could carry.

Before winding up the program two weeks ago, the Red Cross gave out \$1.3 billion to evacuees in more than 1.4 million households. It was the charity's largest cash-assistance program ever — double the amount of cash it distributed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, according to financial statements.

"We went in knowing that we had a great need, almost an incomprehensible need," said Michael Brackney, manager of the Red Cross's client services program.

But charity experts said that in this era, when a highly visible disaster can trigger an outpouring of hundreds of millions of dollars, relief groups are under enormous pressure to give the money away as quickly as possible or risk the ire of donors.

In the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, when the Red Cross was criticized for attempting to use some of the money to prepare for future disasters, donors have little tolerance for diverting funds to other causes, say those who study charitable giving. But that presents challenges to charities that usually are careful to parcel out aid based on need.

"Sometimes they have so much money, there is no obvious, easy way to give it out," said C. Eugene Steuerle, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute, who conducted studies of the money donated to charities after Sept. 11.

In the days after Katrina tore through the Gulf Coast, Red Cross officials realized they faced a gargantuan task. Hundreds of thousands of evacuees fleeing the storm would need money quickly. Some left their homes with no identification, no cash and no access to their local banks.

Red Cross workers usually meet individually with victims of disaster — whether a house fire or a hurricane — to determine how much money will be needed to get through the first few days. But with more than 1 million evacuees headed to 47 states, Brackney said, "the scope became apparent, and we realized we had to enact nontraditional means for getting assistance to people." Otherwise, Red Cross officials calculated, it might have taken until March to get all the cash to those who needed it.

Red Cross officials decided to give aid to those who lived in Zip codes designated by the Federal Emergency

Management Agency as the most severely damaged areas. They also set up call centers to field most of the claims — the first time in its history it had done so.

Regardless of the damage suffered or individual needs, payments to evacuees were the same: \$360 for a single-person household to a maximum of \$1,565 for households with more than four people.

To run the call centers, the charity contracted with a North Carolina company, 2XCL, which in turn subcontracted with a Florida staffing company, Spherion Corp., to hire hundreds of temporary workers to handle calls to the Bakersfield center and smaller call centers in Falls Church and Niagara Falls, N.Y. Red Cross also arranged with Western Union to issue cash to evacuees after they had been approved for assistance through the call centers.

The call centers, however, soon became overwhelmed. Up to 16,000 calls a day flooded the Bakersfield center, where 450 Spherion employees and Red Cross volunteers were on duty.

A Red Cross volunteer from Bowie, Md., who worked in the Bakersfield call center said the facility's call agents had to use three or four awkward database systems to determine eligibility. It made it relatively easy to cheat by filing multiple claims, she said, asking that her name not be used because she is an active volunteer.

Some evacuees remained on hold as long as eight hours while waiting for an available call center agent. Sometimes they fell asleep.

"We would have to get on the phone and yell: 'Hello! Hello! Hello!'" said Jen Elliott of Bowling Green, Ohio, a volunteer who worked in the Bakersfield call center in September. If they were unable to wake up callers, they would have to hang up, she said.

The work was stressful, workers said. Some frustrated evacuees who had spent days trying to get through cursed and shouted at the workers.

Some Spherion employees, according to criminal complaints filed in the cases, found ways to manipulate the system to their advantage.

Information provided by victims — such as names, addresses and birthdates — was supposed to be verified by call center agents before evacuees were issued a claim number that they could submit to a Western Union office to receive payment.

But word spread through the center, prosecutors said, that the system's security could be circumvented. Some Spherion call center workers started creating files for themselves and for others, obtaining claim numbers and picking up cash at local Western Unions, prosecutors said.

In one fairly typical case, according to the indictments, three Spherion workers — 23-year-old Robert Johnson, 19-year-old Aminah Randle and 20-year-old Candice Brown — allegedly set up false accounts for one another and for several relatives and friends. All have been

charged with wire fraud. Johnson's sister, Nashima Johnson, was arrested after she picked up relief funds at a Western Union outlet in a check-cashing store in Bakersfield. The store manager recognized her as a regular who had lived in Bakersfield for several years and called the FBI.

Among those indicted, six people have pleaded guilty.

Red Cross officials emphasize that no Red Cross workers have been accused in the fraud and that the amount stolen was a tiny fraction of their cash program. They plan to seek restitution.

But they say they have learned from the experience. They are testing systems for the next hurricane season that offer more security but also speed up the process for victims.

"We knew we ran the risk of putting assistance in the hands of potentially unscrupulous individuals not affected by the hurricanes," Joe Becker, a Red Cross official, told a congressional Ways and Means subcommittee at a hearing this month on the charity response.

REGISTER

Continued from Page 1A

card and their card should be mailed to them in time for the November election.

"For those who can't get out, they can call us and we'll mail them the form. They can fill it out and just mail it back to us. It's a very easy process."

Bloom said the registra-

tion cards require a Texas driver's license or identification card number, or the last four digits of the prospective voter's Social Security number.

"If the person registering doesn't have any of that information, there's a box on the card they can check and still complete the process," said Bloom. "However, their name will be flagged in the computer, and when

they go to the polls to vote, they will be asked to present identification."

Bloom said anyone who isn't sure about their registration status should contact her office, and if a replacement card is needed, one can be provided free of charge.

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

SALES

Continued from Page 1A

"We're extremely pleased with the turnout," said Cofferen. "We actually came in above last year's totals. People were definitely spending more money this year than they were in 2004."

Much like Payless Shoesource, Cofferen said the numbers are still rolling in.

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Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232.

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL
24th & Johnson 267-8288

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STOCK-UP SALE

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SALE 26.99
LEVI'S JEANS FOR GUYS
Men's and young boys 505' regular-fit jeans. Reg. 40.00.

40% OFF
VAN HEUSEN DRESS SHIRTS
Men's shirts in a variety of styles/colors, reg. 37.00, **SALE 22.50**. Entire stock ties, 19.99

25% OFF
LONGHORN ROSE BOWL
Logo tees, fleece, collectibles and more. Reg. 18.00-58.00, **SALE 13.50-43.50**

14.99-19.99
GIRLS & BOYS LEVI'S JEANS
Girls 2T-16 517' flare-legs. Boys 2T-20 loose-fit, 5-pocket styles and carpenters. Reg. 22.00-30.00.

30% OFF
GIRLS & BOYS FURNISHINGS
Tights, underwear, socks, bras and more. Reg. 3.50-12.00, **SALE 2.45-8.40**

17.99-31.99
MISSES JEANS
By Bill Blass, Levi's, Gloria Vanderbilt, more. Reg. 24.99-40.00.

24.99-34.99
JUNIORS FASHION DENIM
By Vigoss' Jeans, Squeeze', L.E.I.' and more. Assorted washes. Reg. 34.00-44.00.

BUY 1, GET 1 50% OFF
LADIES BASIC PANTIES
A great selection, reg. 5.50-9.50. *2nd item must be equal or lesser value.

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Ladies "Princess", men's "Classic Ace" and ladies and men's "601". Reg. 45.00-60.00.

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ANY SINGLE CLEARANCE ITEM



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BEALLS

*Total savings off original prices. Selection varies by store. Interim markdowns may have been taken. Entire stock only where indicated.

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WED., DEC. 28 - 10 AM - 9 PM FRI., DEC. 30 - 10 AM - 9 PM SUN., JAN. 1 - CLOSED

INSIDE THE BIG SPRING MALL • 263-0273

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Obituaries

Eddie White

Eddie White, 82, of Stanton died Saturday, Dec. 24, 2005, in a Big Spring nursing home. Funeral services are 3 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2005, at the First United Methodist Church of Stanton with the Rev. Daniel Armstrong officiating. Interment will follow at Evergreen Cemetery.

The family will receive friends and relatives today from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m.

He was born May 11, 1923, in Clybelt Spring, Ga., and married Lovell Simon White Feb. 24, 1979, in Stanton. She preceded him in death Aug. 29, 1996. He served in the United States Army during World War II and came to Martin County in 1938. He worked as a mechanic for John Deere in Stanton, Lovington, Midland and Brady and as a custodian in Lovington and Stanton schools for four years. He was a member of First United Methodist Church.

Survivors include one son and daughter-in-law, Richard and Charlotte White of Lenorah; one daughter and son-in-law, Linda and Walter Taylor of Stanton; four grandchildren; three great-granddaughters; and two great-grandsons.

He was preceded in death by five brothers, Walter White, Newt White, Henry White, D.M. "Slim" White, Dewey White, an infant sister and one granddaughter. The family suggests memorials made to Alzheimer's Association, 4400 N. Big Spring St., Midland 79705 or to a favorite charity.

Arrangements under the direction of Gilbreath Funeral Home of Stanton. Online condolences can be made at www.npwelch.com.

Sue Pool

Sue Pool, 100, of Big Spring died Monday, Dec. 26, 2005, at her residence. Her services are pending with Nalley-Pickle and Welch Funeral Home and Crematory of Big Spring.

Sheriff's report

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

- **JOSE MANUEL BUSTILLO**, 30, was arrested Friday on a charge of violation of parole.
- **DEVON LEE BUTLER**, 20, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on charges of possession of marijuana - more than two ounces less than four ounces and possession of a controlled substance.
- **STEVEN RAY EVANS**, 17, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on charges of possession of marijuana - more than two ounces less than four ounces and possession of a controlled substance.
- **TONY RANDALL PARTEE**, 46, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on charges of driving while intoxicated - third or more offense and a probation violation.
- **RICKY LEE TATE**, 17, was transferred to the county jail Friday by the BSPD on a charge of possession/consumption of alcohol by a minor - third offense enhanced.
- **MIGUEL ANGEL GRAJEDA**, 43, was arrested Friday by DPS on a charge of driving while license invalid.
- **JONETT F ASTORIA TATE**, 41, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of driving while intoxicated - second offense.
- **MICHAEL SCHELL MADRY**, 43, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of driving while intoxicated.
- **CURTIS DWAYNE WOODRUFF**, 20, was arrested Saturday by DPS on a charge of minor in consumption of an alcoholic beverage.
- **NATHANIEL JAMAL AUSBIE**, 22, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of possession of a controlled substance, possession of marijuana - two ounces or less and possession of marijuana in a penal institution.
- **TYRONE DEION SMITH**, 25, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon and theft of a firearm.
- **BRIAN EUGENE VANDERBILT**, 26, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of no driver's license, failure to appear and terroristic threats.
- **JOHN BASCOM WINTERS**, 37, was arrested Saturday by DPS on charges of theft by check, public intoxication/capias pro fines and driving while license invalid.
- **CHANCELLA MCKENZIE PARRISH**, 21, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on a charge of possession of marijuana, two ounces or less.
- **SHEILA CAIN**, 32, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on a charge of driving while license invalid.
- **JOE OLIVIO JR.**, 33, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on a charge of driving while intoxicated.
- **JOSE ALFREDO MELENDEZ**, 22, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on a charge of evading arrest or detention.
- **CARTAVIOUS JEROME GROAGE**, 17, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on two charges of criminal mischief.
- **GONZALO HERNANDEZ GONZALEZ**, 29, was transferred to the county jail Saturday by the BSPD on charges of driving while intoxicated and driving while license suspended - enhanced.
- **VICTOR MANUEL CASTILLO**, 33, was arrested Sunday by DPS on charges of driving while intoxicated with a passenger 15 years or younger, no driver's license, failure to maintain financial responsibility,

The Big Spring Fire Department reported the following activity:

- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1300 block of Mesquite. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2600 block of Chanute. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1900 block of Wasson. Service was refused.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1900 block of Wasson. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 700 block of Highland. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 800 block of Lancaster. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAFFIC ACCIDENT** was reported near the intersection of Fifth Street and Settles. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1700 block of Lancaster. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2600 block of Chanute. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2900 block of Virginia. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 200 block of Highland. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2600 block of North Anderson Road. Service was refused.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 2900 block of West Highway 80. One person was transported to the VAMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported near the 190 mile marker of Interstate Highway 20. Service was refused.
- **STRUCTURE FIRE** was reported in the 500 block of Gregg Street.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 300 block of Aylesford. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 1700 block of Lancaster. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 1800 block of North

Fire/EMS

Highway 87. One person was transported to the VAMC.

- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 300 block of Aylesford. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 600 block of Sgt. Paredez. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 2600 block of Gregg Street. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1400 block of Settles. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1500 block of Scurry. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 3600 block of Dixon. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 3200 block of Parkway. One person was transported to SMMC.

Take note

• **HANGAR 25 AIR MUSEUM IS COLLECTING RECIPES** to be included in a 2006 cookbook which will display memories of Big Spring over the years. Share your memories and your recipes. Contact the Hangar at 264-1999 for recipe forms.

• **HOME HOSPICE HAS COOKBOOKS** with nearly 500 recipes on sale for \$18 with proceeds to benefit Hospice House. Recipes submitted by volunteers, coordinators and owners of Home Hospice. Call Sherry Hodnett at 264-7599 for more information.

• **THE HOWARD COUNTY CHILD WELFARE BOARD** seeks Christmas help for the 69 children in foster care. To 'adopt' a child or family for the holidays, contact Patti Richard at 432-559-6953 or 268-4550.

• **ODYSSEY HOSPICE NEEDS VOLUNTEERS** to work in the office and perform patient services. For more information or to volunteer, call 263-5999.

• **THE MOBILE MEALS PROGRAM** that delivers meals to the elderly and homebound needs volunteers to deliver meals. If you can spare one hour per week to deliver eight or 10 meals, you are needed. About 85 to 90 meals are prepared, packaged and delivered to recipients within the city limits of Big Spring. If you can volunteer, please call 263-4016 before 3 p.m.

• **ROAD TO RECOVERY**, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, seeks volunteers to drive cancer patients to treatment in Midland. This requires just a few hours commitment each month. To volunteer, or to request a ride for treatment, call LaWanda Hamm at 263-7827.

• **BIG SPRING AND SURROUNDING** counties are in critical need of foster families. Foster parents are the caretakers for the children in the community who have been abused or neglected. For more information on becoming foster parents or adoptive families, call the Children's Protective Services office at 263-9669.

Weather

Results of the Cash 5 drawing Monday night:
Winning numbers drawn: 1-10-12-15-29.
Number matching five of five: none.
Next Cash 5 drawing: Tuesday night.

Results of the Texas Two Step drawing Monday night:
Winning numbers drawn: 4-15-16-19. Bonus Ball: 20.
Number matching four of four, plus Bonus Ball: none.
Estimated jackpot for Thursday night drawing: \$225,000.

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Monday night by the Texas Lottery, in order: 5-1-4

Lottery

Tonight—Mostly clear. Colder. Lows in the mid 30s. Northwest winds 10 to 20 mph.
Wednesday—Increasing clouds. Highs in the upper 60s. West winds around 10 mph.
Wednesday night—Mostly clear. Lows in the lower 30s. West winds around 10 mph.
Thursday—Mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 70s. Southwest winds 10 to 15 mph.
Thursday night—Increasing clouds. Lows around 40.
Friday—Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 60s.
Friday night—Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 30s.
Saturday—Partly cloudy. Highs around 70.
Saturday night—Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 40s.
New years day—Mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 70s.
Sunday night—Partly cloudy. Lows around 40.
Monday—Mostly sunny. Highs in the mid 60s.

Police blotter

The Big Spring Police Department reported the following activity between 8 a.m. Monday and 8 a.m. today:

- **LANCE ALAN LISTER**, 27, of 2405 Alabama, was arrested Monday on charges of driving while license suspended - enhanced and possession of drug paraphernalia.
- **DANYA LEE ATKINSON**, 27, of 110 Scoutthut Road, was arrested Monday and held for the HCSO.

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FRAUD

Continued from Page 1A

the Bakersfield area have been indicted in the past three months for filing false claims with the center.

More indictments are expected soon, said Stanley Boone, an assistant U.S. attorney in Bakersfield.

The incident reveals a sometimes chaotic system that the Red Cross cobbled together after the devastating storm in order to put cash into the hands of desperate evacuees. Many had fled their homes with only the clothing they wore and what they could carry.

Before winding up the program two weeks ago, the Red Cross gave out \$1.3 billion to evacuees in more than 1.4 million households. It was the charity's largest cash-assistance program ever — double the amount of cash it distributed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, according to financial statements.

"We went in knowing that we had a great need, almost an incomprehensible need," said Michael Brackney, manager of the Red Cross's client services program.

But charity experts said that in this era, when a highly visible disaster can trigger an outpouring of hundreds of millions of dollars, relief groups are under enormous pressure to give the money away as quickly as possible or risk the ire of donors.

In the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, when the Red Cross was criticized for attempting to use some of the money to prepare for future disasters, donors have little tolerance for diverting funds to other causes, say those who study charitable giving. But that presents challenges to charities that usually are careful to parcel out aid based on need.

"Sometimes they have so much money, there is no obvious, easy way to give it out," said C. Eugene Steuerle, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute, who conducted studies of the money donated to charities after Sept. 11.

In the days after Katrina tore through the Gulf Coast, Red Cross officials realized they faced a gargantuan task. Hundreds of thousands of evacuees fleeing the storm would need money quickly. Some left their homes with no identification, no cash and no access to their local banks.

Red Cross workers usually meet individually with victims of disaster — whether a house fire or a hurricane — to determine how much money will be needed to get through the first few days. But with more than 1 million evacuees headed to 47 states, Brackney said, "the scope became apparent, and we realized we had to enact nontraditional means for getting assistance to people."

Otherwise, Red Cross officials calculated, it might have taken until March to get all the cash to those who needed it.

Red Cross officials decided to give aid to those who lived in Zip codes designated by the Federal Emergency

Management Agency as the most severely damaged areas. They also set up call centers to field most of the claims — the first time in its history it had done so.

Regardless of the damage suffered or individual needs, payments to evacuees were the same: \$360 for a single-person household to a maximum of \$1,565 for households with more than four people.

To run the call centers, the charity contracted with a North Carolina company, 2XCL, which in turn subcontracted with a Florida staffing company, Spherion Corp., to hire hundreds of temporary workers to handle calls to the Bakersfield center and smaller call centers in Falls Church and Niagara Falls, N.Y. Red Cross also arranged with Western Union to issue cash to evacuees after they had been approved for assistance through the call centers.

The call centers, however, soon became overwhelmed. Up to 16,000 calls a day flooded the Bakersfield center, where 450 Spherion employees and Red Cross volunteers were on duty.

A Red Cross volunteer from Bowie, Md., who worked in the Bakersfield call center said the facility's call agents had to use three or four awkward database systems to determine eligibility. It made it relatively easy to cheat by filing multiple claims, she said, asking that her name not be used because she is an active volunteer.

Some evacuees remained on hold as long as eight hours while waiting for an available call center agent. Sometimes they fell asleep.

"We would have to get on the phone and yell: 'Hello! Hello! Hello!'" said Jen Elliott of Bowling Green, Ohio, a volunteer who worked in the Bakersfield call center in September. If they were unable to wake up callers, they would have to hang up, she said.

The work was stressful, workers said. Some frustrated evacuees who had spent days trying to get through cursed and shouted at the workers.

Some Spherion employees, according to criminal complaints filed in the cases, found ways to manipulate the system to their advantage.

Information provided by victims — such as names, addresses and birthdates — was supposed to be verified by call center agents before evacuees were issued a claim number that they could submit to a Western Union office to receive payment.

But word spread through the center, prosecutors said, that the system's security could be circumvented. Some Spherion call center workers started creating files for themselves and for others, obtaining claim numbers and picking up cash at local Western Unions, prosecutors said.

In one fairly typical case, according to the indictments, three Spherion workers — 23-year-old Robert Johnson, 19-year-old Aminah Randle and 20-year-old Candice Brown — allegedly set up false accounts for one another and for several relatives and friends. All have been

charged with wire fraud.

Johnson's sister, Nashima Johnson, was arrested after she picked up relief funds at a Western Union outlet in a check-cashing store in Bakersfield. The store manager recognized her as a regular who had lived in Bakersfield for several years and called the FBI.

Among those indicted, six people have pleaded guilty.

Red Cross officials emphasize that no Red Cross workers have been accused in the fraud and that the amount stolen was a tiny fraction of their cash program. They plan to seek restitution.

But they say they have learned from the experience. They are testing systems for the next hurricane season that offer more security but also speed up the process for victims.

"We knew we ran the risk of putting assistance in the hands of potentially unscrupulous individuals not affected by the hurricanes," Joe Becker, a Red Cross official, told a congressional Ways and Means subcommittee at a hearing this month on the charity response.

REGISTER

Continued from Page 1A

card and their card should be mailed to them in time for the November election.

"For those who can't get out, they can call us and we'll mail them the form. They can fill it out and just mail it back to us. It's a very easy process."

Bloom said the registra-

tion cards require a Texas driver's license or identification card number, or the last four digits of the prospective voter's Social Security number.

"If the person registering doesn't have any of that information, there's a box on the card they can check and still complete the process," said Bloom. "However, their name will be flagged in the computer, and when

they go to the polls to vote, they will be asked to present identification."

Bloom said anyone who isn't sure about their registration status should contact her office, and if a replacement card is needed, one can be provided free of charge.

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

SALES

Continued from Page 1A

"We're extremely pleased with the turnout," said Cofferen. "We actually came in above last year's totals. People were definitely spending more money this year than they were in 2004."

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"We're having a great deal of success with our after-Christmas sales and markdowns," said Cofferen.

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EDITORIAL

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

-FIRST AMENDMENT

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

Susanne Reed
Publisher

John A. Moseley
Managing Editor

Bill McClellan
News Editor

OUR VIEWS

Time running short to file for primaries

Time is running short for anyone who might be thinking about running for office in the March Democrat and Republican party primaries. There are just a few days left in the filing period. Your final opportunity is Monday.

There are already several locally contested races, which we are glad to see. It's always a positive sign to see people interested in serving their community. Right now there are six people who have indicated they want to serve as the next county judge, two having filed on the Republican ticket and four on the Democratic ticket.

Two people have filed as Republicans for the Precinct 2 county commissioners post. To date, the Democratic Party has not generated a candidate for that race.

In the race for Precinct 4 county commissioner, there is one Democrat and one Republican.

One other local seat is contested. Two people have filed on the Republican ticket to fill the Precinct 1, Place 2 peace justice's post. There is no Democratic challenger.

Offices up for election with just one candidate thus far are many: District judge, district clerk, county clerk, county treasurer, county surveyor and Precinct 2 peace justice.

That, it itself, is no reason to run, of course, unless you are a die-hard Republican or Democrat who believes in a straight ticket and that each office up for election should have a party representative on the ballot.

On a local scene, however, people are inclined to vote for whomever they believe will get the job done, Democrat or Republican. In Howard County, for instance, most of us want qualified, hard-working, friendly individuals to represent our interests. And just as importantly, if we are, say, Republican, we want our candidates to have those qualities. We want to know the individual, at least to some degree. It's the same for Democrats. We want to feel confident in that person before we will cast our vote for him or her.

All of which is to say, most of us don't want someone in office who is "just looking for a job" or running because he or she has a battle to wage or a single cause to support.

But if you are truly interested in representing the people — if that is your reason for thinking about seeking office — be advised that time is running short.

To file for office, contact your party chairman. Democratic Party Chairman Wayne Burns can be reached at 263-3903. Republican Party Chairman Margarita Durand-Hollis can be reached at 264-0973.

Good luck.

YOUR VIEWS

TO THE EDITOR:

This Christmas season reminds us of the things for which we are thankful.

The good people of Big Spring and Howard County supported our Farmers Market from July through October. With your help, the market members were able to donate to many various causes. We gave a scholarship to a student at Howard College, donated produce for the Aggie auction and gave food to Isaiah 58 and Big Spring's Katrina survivors.

We joined the chamber

of commerce to show more support for our community. Our group is also working on alternative fuel sources that could boost our area's economy.

We are already gearing up for the 2006 season — hoping for bigger and better gardens.

Thanks again for your loyalty to the market.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! from the West Texas Producers and Farmers Market.

SHERRY NEWTON,
MARKET MANAGER,
BIG SPRING

My son and I, a game to learn

This year my knowing 11-year-old was told to write to Santa Claus, partly to keep the fun going for his younger siblings and partly because it forced him to write. He seized the opportunity to ask, naturally, for a computer game: more stuff to distract him from writing and books. But, hey, I'm not too worried. Hillary Clinton may accuse computer games of "making the difficult job of being a parent even harder," but I bought "Age of Empires III" with a clear parental conscience. The new conventional wisdom says that virtual games are healthy, enriching even. I'm thinking of trying them.

The new wisdom begins by questioning the idea that computer games cause violence. Lab tests have found that people do become aggressive right after a bout of zapping virtual enemies, but tests conducted outside labs have found no such result. For example, Dmitri Williams of the University of Illinois has tracked the behavior of a group that played a gory monster-slaying fantasy game regularly for one month and compared it with a game-free control group. The fantasy killers were no more likely to lose their tempers in real life.

Meanwhile, computer games have some advantages. They train players to master complex rules, to weigh odds and solve problems and make quick decisions. Indeed, players learn how to learn: The mysteries of a new and unknown game must be unlocked by trial and error. Marc Prensky, the author of the book "Don't Bother Me, Mom — I'm Learning," tells the story of Stephen Gillette, an entrepreneur who picked up his leadership and organizational

skills by playing online games. "I remember my mom and dad yelling at me," he quotes Gillette as saying. "They didn't know I had a 200-person (online) guild to manage."

Some games feature academic content. Spinach-pushing parents can buy games that teach algebra or engineering, and "America's Army," a game with some 6 million players, includes an opportunity to learn how to be a medic. Even the rampantly entertaining "Age of Empires III" conveys a sense of history. You begin at the dawn of the 16th century, and work your way into the mid-19th; you can choose among eight European civilizations; and you'd better build up the technological base of your home city if you want your empire to flourish.

I'm waiting to see whether this game will wean my son off "RuneScape," a multiplayer online fantasy. "RuneScape's" attraction is partly that his friends play it; it's a virtual after-school hangout. But the game's main attraction lies in its business challenge. My son has been buying logs, making longbows and selling them at a profit; he says the margins in the bow business fluctuate around 10 percent. Lately he's moved into buying magic herbs in bulk and retailing them individually. This is a dicier business, but the risk is balanced by reward. Herb-trading margins can be 100 percent or fatter.

Edward Castronova of Indiana University has just come out with "Synthetic Worlds," a book on the economics of these online universes. He explains that currencies in games such as "RuneScape" are subject to inflation: In a shamelessly populist bid to keep players happy, game masters tend to be monetary doves.

Players can earn money by hacking down trees or killing monsters. Because there's no limit to the number of monsters and trees available, the money supply grows

steadily.

When I first heard of this insight, I went home triumphantly to tell my son. He listened politely and told me that I'd only scratched the surface. Sure, the supply of money grows steadily, but the supply of swords and magic herbs grows, too, so prices move in both directions. For example, waves of aspiring bowmakers periodically flood into the industry, driving log prices upward. This pushes established bowmakers to quit, so log prices collapse. Although he didn't use the phrase, my son was describing a classic boom-bust cycle.

This account of two-way price moves fits with the remarkably detailed data one can find on trends in computer-game currencies, which trade against the dollar on well-developed markets. Of the 14 online games tracked by GameUSD.com, 10 have currencies that have fallen against the dollar over the past month, confirming the insight that games tend to monetary populism and inflation. But three of the games have steady exchange rates, and one game, "Eve," has a currency that's gained 15 percent against the greenback since November — support for the view that deflation can occur in virtual economies.

I'm sure that not all games are good for you, just as not all movies or newspaper articles improve your intellect or morals. Williams, the professor at the University of Illinois, has studied the impact of computer games on social patterns, and he finds results both good and troubling. But games that teach 11-year-olds about inflation or history can't be all evil, and they may be an improvement on Clue or Monopoly for all I know. Besides, kids clearly enjoy them. That surely ought to count for something.

Sebastian Mallaby is a member of The Washington Post's editorial page staff.



SEBASTIAN MALLABY

ADDRESSES

• GEORGE W. BUSH

President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

• JOHN CORNYN

U.S. Senator
Washington, DC 20510-4305
Phone: 202-224-2934

• RANDY NEUGEBAUER

U.S. Representative (19th

Cong. District)
1510 Scurry
Big Spring
Phone: (432) 264-0722

• RICK PERRY

Governor
State Capitol, Room 2S.1
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, 78711
Phone: (512) 463-2000

• KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON

U.S. Senator
703 Hart Office Building
Washington, 20510

Phone: 202-224-5922

• PETE LANEY

State Representative
Texas 85th District
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, 78768
Phone: (512) 463-0604

• KEL SELIGER

State Senator
401 Austin, suite 101
Big Spring, 79720
(432) 268-9909

HOWARD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

OFFICE — 264-2200.

BEN LOCKHART, COUNTY JUDGE — Home: 263-4155; Office: 264-2202.

EMMA BROWN — Home: 267-2649.

JERRY KILGORE — 263-0724; Work (Jerry's Barbers): 267-5471.

BILL CROOKER — Home: 263-2566.

GARY SIMER — Home: 263-0269; Work (Ponderosa Nursery): 263-4441.

Who let the dogs out this time?

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa never should have promised that he would fire L.A.

Department of Animal Services head Guerdon Stuckey when he was running for mayor.

Why? Because, when Villaraigosa fired Stuckey last week, he rewarded the violent tactics of the Animal Defense League and anonymous animal-rights activists who oppose city shelters euthanizing unwanted animals.

I, too, would like to see all city animal shelters adopt the no-kill policies supported by pet lovers. But I understand that shelters don't euthanize dogs and cats for kicks. They are overwhelmed with unwanted animals. The culprits are people who don't spay, neuter or take loving care of their pets — not those who work in shelters.

Even People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals kills animals in its shelter. In fact, PETA's 2003 rate for euthanizing animals was more than 85 percent. That's worse than Los Angeles, which is expected to euthanize half its animal population this year — according to the Los Angeles Daily News. As Rafael Pizarro of the union that represents Los Angeles shelter workers noted, putting animals down is devastating for those who must do it.

No wonder, then, that 149 Animal Service employees — about half of the department — sent a letter to Villaraigosa protesting Stuckey's dismissal.

"The terrorists will never be satisfied," they wrote. "They will never go away. It is time you stand up to them."

Anonymous activists have been harassing L.A. animal workers for some time.

They planted a smoke bomb in the building where former Animal Services Director Stuckey lived. The car of Stuckey's predecessor, Jerry Greenwald, was spray-painted with the word "murderer."

Los Angeles City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo recently filed charges against the Animal Defense

League for a two-year campaign of harassment against department manager David Diliberto. ADL leaders reportedly gave out Diliberto's address and announced to their followers "action alerts" — which entailed pounding on the door of his home at night, shouting at his four children, threatening his wife ... they even posted online the address of a neighbor who complained. There was a bomb threat. In August, two people dressed as mortuary workers showed up at his home to pick up a dead body. A false report of gunshots brought three squad cars and a police helicopter to the Diliberto home.

Angeleno author Joel Kotkin figures Villaraigosa made "a promise which I'm sure he's sorry he made."

The mayor's spokesman, Joe Ramallo, argued that Villaraigosa did not cave in to animal-rights extremists, but instead that Villaraigosa tried to work with Stuckey but "this guy was not up to the job." (Los Angeles Daily News writer Rick Orlov reported that Stuckey had no animal experience when he took the job and "he didn't even have a pet.") With

Villaraigosa's support of the criminal charges, Ramallo added, his boss is "doing something that upsets both sides."

Sorry, but I have to agree with David Martosko of the Center for Consumer Freedom, who observed that when you give in to terrorists, "you're just asking for more trouble." The mayor's spokesman told me that Villaraigosa will stand by Stuckey's replacement, Ed Boks, if the rat-huggers attack him.

Except Boks speaks their weird language.

As the Los Angeles Times reported, Boks said of the extremists' aggression: "Usually it erupts into what you call radicalism when people feel they haven't been listened to."

What you call radicalism? Try: threatening families, scaring children and destroying other people's property.

Not listened to? ADL spokesman Jerry Vlasak recently appeared before the Senate and on "60 Minutes" justifying the murder of medical researchers who use lab animals.

When radicals of any stripe — anti-abortion, anti-trade or anti-shelter — get what they want after resorting to harassment and intimidation, know that other extremists are paying attention. That's why you don't reward them. Ever.

E-mail Debra J. Saunders at dsaunders@schronicle.com. To find out more about Debra J. Saunders, and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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Support groups help new mothers avoid isolation

By **BARBARA FEDER OSTROV**
(KRT)

At a certain point after you have your first baby, after the relatives have come and gone, after Dad is back at work, after your mom stops calling every day to "see how you're doing," the truth strikes home with all the inevitability of a soggy diaper.

You have to get out of the house. You have to make some new friends who also have babies. And if you don't do either one pretty soon, you're going to go quietly, deeply bonkers.

"Raising a new baby is overwhelming," says Stephanie Wemusa, whose daughter, Laila, was born four years ago. "You're not getting enough sleep, you're totally consumed by taking care of this kid, you're not talking to grown-ups. No one else necessarily has a brand-new baby, even though you have lots of friends. No one else is doing what you're doing. What could be more isolating?"

It might have been easier to forge common ground with other mothers in earlier times, when fewer women worked full time outside the home, and relatives seldom strayed far from their hometowns. Today, however, many women can find themselves on maternity leave without knowing a single mother who lives nearby.

The resulting isolation and loneliness new mothers often feel can lower self-esteem and exacerbate postpartum depression, says Karen Friedland-Brown, parent education coordinator at the Parents Place family resource center in Palo Alto, Calif.

The enforced solitude that comes with raising a baby in the early months can make your life miserable whether you plan to go back to your job soon or raise kids full time for awhile. And it's even worse for mothers of colicky or otherwise high-maintenance babies.

"Isolation breeds isolation. The more you stay at home, the longer you stay home, the harder it is to get out," Friedland-Brown said. "You begin to feel unattractive, uninteresting, like you can't have a conversation or be social."

Friedland-Brown often assigns the mothers she counsels to make a plan

for getting out of the house every single day. A daily outing, whether for a Gymboree class, support group meeting or even a walk around the block, requires showering and putting on clothes, "a powerful act" that makes women feel human again, she says.

Hera Hong-Lee recalls trying to do it all on her own when her first child, Brody, was born in April. Her husband went back to work a week after the baby came, and she knew precious few people in San Jose, Calif., having moved from Boston when she was pregnant.

Making new friends was important to Hong-Lee, who worked in hospital administration and for a bridal designer in Boston. She plans to stay home while considering a career change. So she checked out a support group for new mothers run by Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose.

"Everyone was so nice, and since they all were in the same boat, it was really easy to talk to them," Hong-Lee said. "It was really comforting."

Now she is so active in one of the mother's groups organized by the hospital that she moderates its online message group.

Wemusa subscribes to the "it takes a village" philosophy not just for raising children, but also for taking care of herself. After being active in Las Madres, a well-known mother's group based in San Jose, Wemusa started a chapter of Mocha Moms, a national mothers group for women of color. Her involvement in mothers' groups has been a lifesaver, she says, and has handed her lasting friendships.

"It totally keeps you sane, especially if you've been a career woman," said Wemusa, a staffing program manager who took time off to care for her daughter and now wants to return to work full time.

"You work 24/7 as a mother, there's no break. You've never done anything harder in your life."

How to connect
Here are some tips for creating your own village from Karen Friedland-Brown, Stephanie Wemusa, Hera Hong-Lee and other mothers who have done it.

Join something. Doesn't matter what it is, as long as it gets you out of the house. Mothers' groups



A group of five mothers and their six babies meet for a "playdate," Dec. 9, 2005, at the San Jose home of Julie Steinbrinck, top left, and her 7-month-old daughter, Gracie. At right, Steinbrinck, right, holds her 7-month-old daughter, Gracie, as Karen Wildt looks on in the background.

offer breast-feeding and general mothers support groups. There are exercise boot camps for new moms, music and exercise classes for infants, even mommy-and-me yoga workouts.

Run something. Even if you're not a "joiner," scheduling a play date at your home or moderating a mother's group listserv, like Hong-Lee does, can help you reach out to other moms.

Go online. Many parents' groups have active listservs where you can post a question or vent frustrations and get an immediate response, not

to mention lots of sympathy. Exercise. Exercise. Exercise. Study after study has shown the power of exercise to lift mood. Besides, it'll help you lose that pregnancy weight.

Be patient. Just because you meet someone with a baby the same age as yours doesn't mean you have anything else in common. You may have to meet 20 moms before you find one you connect with. "It's a lot like dating. You just have to keep putting yourself out there," Friedland-Brown says.

Avoiding the travel bug nobody wants

Metro

Travelers love to bring home lasting memories of their trips, but the flu isn't one of them.

Getting sick far away from the comforts of home can ruin an entire vacation or business trip. Since travel often requires close contact with a large number of people, commuters are more susceptible to germs and flu than ever before.

"Confined to smaller spaces, breathing recycled air, and touching more common surfaces, travelers have increased risk of infection," said Dr. Robert Schiller, chairman of Family Medicine at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City.

"The proximity of passengers and high occupancy in airplanes, buses, trains and even cruise ships increases the chance of coming into contact with someone with flu. The anxiety of traveling, lack of exercise and sleep, and limited food choices associated with travel can take a toll on your health."

Since flu is often transmitted hand-to-hand, travelers should wash their hands often and avoid rubbing their eyes or nose.

Schiller also advises travelers to avoid putting their faces directly on airline-supplied pillows or blankets that haven't been cleaned.

Another general rule for air passengers is to drink at least 4 to 8 ounces of water for every hour of flight time, which keeps the body hydrated and lessens the chance of catching a virus.

For those unfortunate enough to get sick while traveling, many doctors recommend homeopathic medicine to combat the first signs of flu and symptoms like fever, chills, body aches and pains.

"I recommend homeopathic medicines like Oscillococcinum as a first course of treatment for everyone - from children age 2 and older to seniors," said Schiller.

"In general, homeopathic medicines are free of side effects and don't interact with other drugs. They don't mask symptoms so parents and doctors can detect and respond faster if a more



serious condition should arise."

Since homeopathic medicines can also be used in conjunction with other medications, they are safe for special-needs travelers like seniors and high-risk patients with heart disease or liver problems.

"Travel should be an enjoyable, stress-free experience for all involved," Schiller said.

"Those who take to the roads, rails and skies should take any precautions they can to ensure they are healthy enough to enjoy their time away."

Oregon surfer recovering from bout with great white

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A surfer who fended off a great white shark by punching it in the nose said he learned the tactic by watching television shows such as the Discovery Channel's "Shark Week."

Brian Anderson, 36, remained hospitalized Monday but was expected to make a full recovery from lacerations on his ankle and calf.

"It's like your worst nightmare," Anderson said by phone from his Portland hospital bed, though he also called the attack "an adventure which has made life that much more precious and

interesting."

Anderson was at a popular surfing spot near Tillamook Head, south of the community of Seaside, on Saturday when something grabbed his leg. Realizing it was a shark, he slugged the predator repeatedly in the nose to get it to loosen its grip.

He said he learned from television shows, including the Discovery Channel's "Shark Week," that a shark's nose is its most sensitive area.

Family Medical Center Spotlight
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Bird Poop

Looking healthy and alert, the barn owl used the wind to lift up and fly away before the game warden could approach.

Every attempt, however, only resulted in her flying about two feet above the ground and 15-to-25 feet forward. For some reason, her wings were not giving her the escape she needed and the warden easily caught up with the owl and grabbed her.

"Looks like a healthy bird, but for some reason that owl can't fly well," said Harry Hopkins, a friend who brought the owl to us. From his description of her efforts, the warden and Harry had given us the probable cause, a hairline fracture.

Local veterinarian, Scott Burt and I agreed on the health of the owl, but could not find any fracture. Dr. Burt thought the owl had an excellent chance for recovery if the flight problem could be solved, so we made a trip to the Wildlife Center in Lubbock.

Only through x-ray could the tiny break be seen on the outer part of her wing; it could be mended but the bird would never be capable again of sustained flight during the night to feed

itself and its young. Fortunately, the center needed another surrogate parent for incoming baby barn owls.

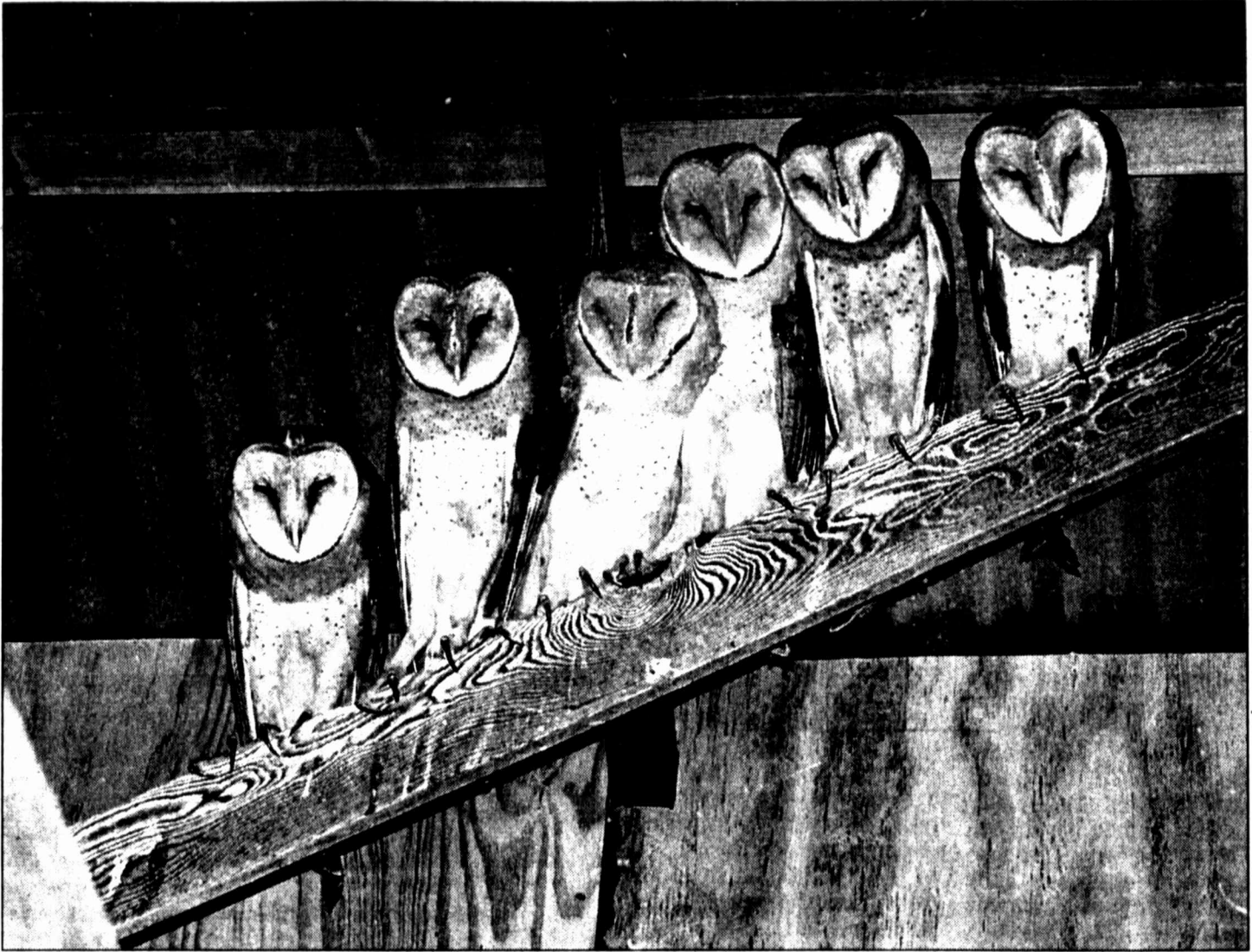
The owl was placed in a mew, an enclosed area for birds, with a male barn owl that was also non-releasable. They bonded quickly, with the female draping one wing around the male.

When we called some time later with baby barn owls from Crane, the center's manager said she had surrogate parents waiting for them.

When the owlets were placed with the adults it was instant family, with the adults feeding, nurturing, and teaching the nestlings how to be owls.

Knowing the surrogate parents would be permanent residents of the center, the volunteers named the female "Harriet" after Harry, who helps transport birds from around the Permian Basin to us.

The male was named "Wing." As much as possible, surrogate parents for the young ensure that they do not become imprinted on man. When the young owls have feathered, recognize food and can kill it, and are flying, they are released in barns. Many farmers welcome the newcomers since barn owls are great



"Wing" is third from the left and "Harriet" is second from the right

Courtesy photo

mousers. In the picture accompanying this column, "Wing" is third from the left. This is his typical leaning posture.

"Harriet" is second from the right. If you are

wondering how to tell the gender of a barn owl, the males are light or almost white and the females are much darker. At least this is a species that is almost color coded. Others are not. They are,

however, determined by their size.

At present, "Harriet" and "Wing" are still raising this year's young. Due to the rains from last year and this year, the rodent population exploded

and is feeding many generations of barn owls.

Bebe McCasland, licenses, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, Department of the Interior; Texas Parks & Wildlife.

'Fake baking' or tanning beds especially dangerous cancer threat

Metro Service

Vacations to tropical locales are all the rage during winter months. Residents of snow-covered areas seek the relief and refuge of sandy beaches and warm ocean waters. High school and college students frequent Caribbean resorts during school recesses or family trips.

When packing for warm-weather destinations, most remember the requisite bathing suit, beach towel and sandals, among other necessities. However, many are now bringing along something else on their winter getaways that has a potential health threat — a golden hue, courtesy of the local tanning salon.

In recent years, tanning salons have experienced a boom in business, particularly among adolescents.

According to Dr. Joshua Fox, dermatologist and spokesperson for the American Academy of Dermatology, frequenting tanning salons has become a new trend for the younger generation.

He reports that at least 10 percent of teenagers used a tanning salon in 2004. Most visit the salon before weddings, school photos and vacations, all in an effort to have what is perceived to be a healthy glow. Many teens fail to realize that tanning beds are as — if not more — dangerous than tanning in the traditional sense.

Tanning Bed Threats

Just like the sun, tanning beds give off UV radiation. Components of UV radiation include UVA, UVB and UVC.

UVB is considered the most harmful and is the

culprit most recognized for causing cancer. Melanin, a pigment made by the skin, protects the skin by absorbing UV radiation.

Darker-skinned people are less likely to suffer the cancerous effects of tanning beds than light-skinned individuals. Yet either way, there is the risk. Tanning beds are especially dangerous to teenagers, as their skin is experiencing rapid cellular activity. The powerful UV rays from the tanning beds can affect the skin, causing it to thin and be less likely to heal properly.

Tanning beds can also compound the effects of prior sun damage, leading to a greater risk for various types of skin cancer, including malignant melanoma.

It can take 10 to 30 years for melanoma to develop, so many don't realize the health risks until it is too late and years of skin damage have been experienced.

Other risks with tanning beds involve teens who are using acne medications such as Tetracycline. The UV rays can react with the medications, causing photosensitive conditions like skin blisters.

Lawmakers Take Action

Many states are now mandating that adolescents have parental permission before visiting a tanning salon. Such is the case in California, where Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed such a bill into law.

In Suffolk County, N.Y., anyone under 14 is banned from using tanning beds and teens ages

14 to 18 must be accompanied by a parent. In Nassau County, N.Y., lawmakers want signed parental approval or an accompanying parent before teens can frequent tanning salons.

Other states have similar proposals awaiting approval. These laws make parents personally responsible for the welfare of their children.

The idea is to make guardians realize that tanning presents a health — or even death — threat, and it should be taken just as seriously as the topics of promiscuous sex, drug use or drinking. Dermatologists and others want people to be more familiar with the risks associated with tanning bed use. Right now, there are warning statements posted on most beds, but they are long and involved, and most tanning bed users don't even read them over.

W. Howard Cyr, Ph.D., of the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health, wants to change these warning statements to bulleted text, which is easier to read, so most tanners will be in the know.

Golden Alternatives

Avoiding the sun and tanning beds does not mean the paler members of society need to spend

their lives with pasty white skin. There are other, safer alternatives.

Many salons and spas offer spray-tan services, where an FDA-approved colorant is sprayed on the skin to mimic the glow of a natural tan. The color will last anywhere from a few days to a week.

Do-it-yourself lotions, creams and sprays are also available at retail stores. Tanning pills, which contain color additives, are also available.

But these pills may cause side effects, like impaired vision, so their use is discouraged. Cosmetic companies also sell a variety of bronzers



Metro courtesy photo

Spray-on tans are a safer option than tanning beds and can offer a natural look.

and other powders, which can be dusted onto the face and body.

For more information on the risks of tanning, visit the National Cancer Institute's Web site at www.cancer.gov.

Dr. Kimberly Saenz

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Sports

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Page 1B
Tuesday, December 27, 2005

Rangers, Millwood agree to deal

By STEPHEN HAWKINS

AP Sports Writer
ARLINGTON — Free agent pitcher Kevin Millwood reached a preliminary agreement Monday on a \$60 million, five-year contract with Texas, giving the Rangers the legitimate No. 1 starter they have been seeking.

Texas can void the fifth year of the deal if Millwood doesn't pitch a certain number of innings in earlier years of the contract. Millwood is expected to undergo a physical Tuesday in Texas, and the deal likely will be finalized Wednesday.

Details of the deal were disclosed by two people familiar with negotiations who spoke on condition of anonymity because the contract had not been finalized. Millwood's decision to accept Texas' offer was first reported by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram on its Web site.

Millwood was 9-11 with a 2.86 ERA that led the American League this year, his only season for Cleveland. The right-hander, who turned 31 Saturday, rejected a salary arbitration offer from the Indians.

Millwood, who also was sought by Boston, will be the No. 1 starter in a revamped Texas rotation, already bolstered by two



KRT file photo
Cleveland's Kevin Millwood pitches against Kansas City at Jacob's Field in Cleveland, Ohio, on July 19. Millwood has reached tentative agreement on a five-year deal to pitch for the Texas Rangers.

trades this month. The Rangers got former All-Star right-hander Vicente Padilla from Philadelphia and acquired Adam Eaton from San Diego.

The only returning starters for Texas are Kameron Loe and Juan Dominguez. They ended

the season in the rotation, Dominguez making only 10 starts and Loe eight.

In nine major league seasons, Millwood is 107-75 with a 3.76 ERA. He won at least 17 games in three of his six seasons with Atlanta (1997-2002)

and was an All-Star in 1999. He pitched two seasons for Philadelphia before going to Cleveland last year.

Millwood's agent, Scott Boras, also negotiated big-money deals that

See RANGERS, page 2B

The lights are out, but party's not over

There will still be football on Monday night.

And Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, weekend and holiday nights, whatever night Guy Fawkes Day falls on and, for that matter, just about any night of the regular season the NFL pleases. None of them will seem quite as special anymore, especially when the games are clunkers like Patriots 31, Jets 21.

But that's how much clout the league has. It has colonized the tube like no sports rival before or since.

And really, that's what the hoopla over "Monday Night Football" moving from ABC to ESPN — essentially, from one screen in the Disney megaplex to another — is about. The NFL is throwing itself an anniversary party, with more than a little help from its friends.

Thirty-five years on, it's commemorating the night pro football began taking over as the real national

pastime. "It's been a phenomenal ride," play-by-play man Al Michaels said at the close of the telecast.

And as the NFL's most recent check from ESPN proves — \$8.8 billion for the next eight years — the party is still far from over.

On Sept. 21, 1970, when MNF made its debut, there were no sports on the air during the workweek, TV sets fit on end tables and coaxing the cameras down off the roof and onto the sidelines qualified as serious innovation. Today, those same sets are as big as garage doors, there's another 500 channels and even the MPC Computer Bowl will be available in Hi-Def.

So MNF's final broadcast luxuriated in its past. It loaded up on videotaped bits from Howard Cosell, Don Meredith and Frank Gifford, a string of puppets, presidents, celebrities and even a desperate housewife. It reminded anybody over a certain age that for the better part of two decades, MNF gave just as good buzz as it got.

Most kids couldn't identify Cosell & Co. without using Google. But at the start, they were the show. NBC had "Rowan &

See MNF, page 2B



JIM LITKE

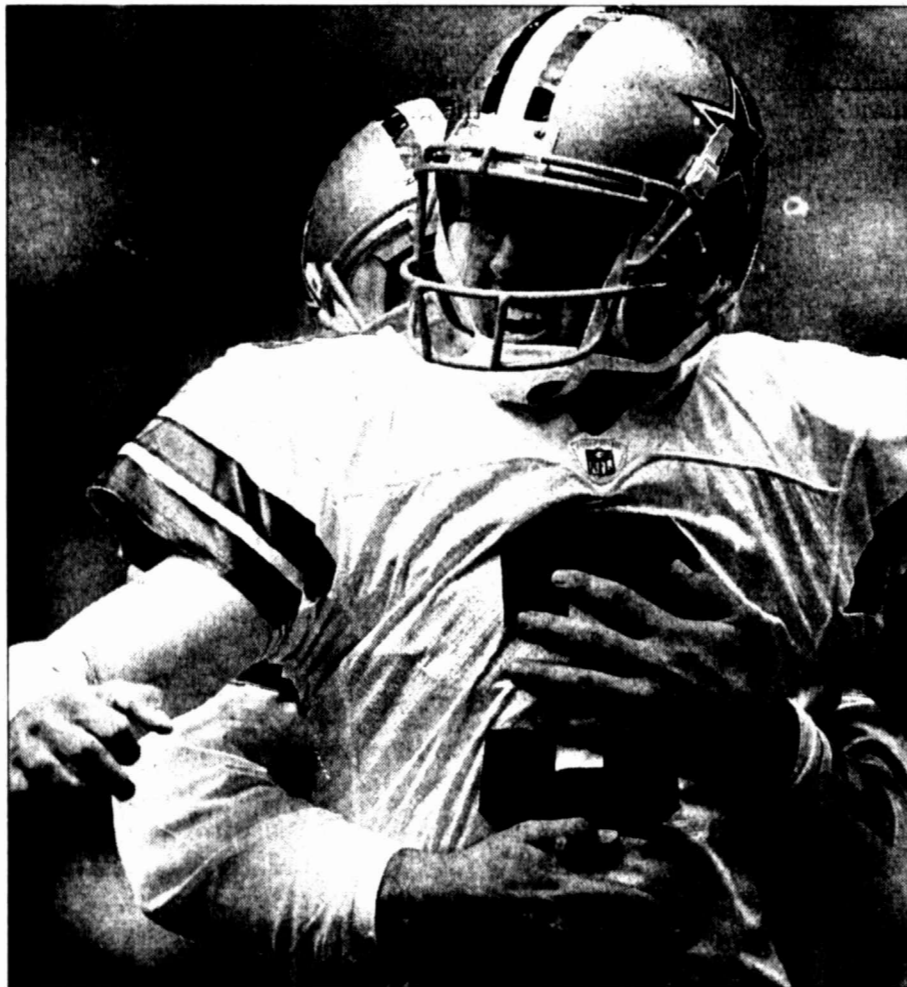
Cowboys boot Cundiff

IRVING — The Dallas Cowboys released inconsistent kicker Billy Cundiff on Monday, the team's fourth change at the position since training camp.

The Cowboys re-signed rookie Sean Suisham, who was cut when the team brought back Cundiff on Nov. 19. Suisham was first signed after Dallas cut Jose Cortez, who started the season after Cundiff hurt his leg during training camp and was released.

Cundiff made just one of his last three field goals, and had another short miss wiped out by a penalty against Carolina on Saturday. He was 5-of-

See CUNDIFF, page 2B



KRT file photo
Dallas kicker Billy Cundiff was released by the Cowboys Monday.

Who's the best in the West? Right now, it's the Mavericks

By JAIME ARON

AP Sports Writer
DALLAS (AP) — Between Devin Harris swishing a 20-footer that was supposed to be a pass and Jerry Stackhouse taking off for a powerful dunk that showed how healthy his knee is, the Dallas Mavericks moved to the top of the Western Conference with a flourish Monday night.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 23 points and Harris added 12 of his 20 in a first-quarter run that sent the Mavericks racing past the Indiana Pacers 102-80 in a game that was never close in the second half.

The victory improved Dallas to 21-7, matching the San Antonio Spurs for the best record in the West. The Mavericks earned this one by simply outworking the Pacers — grabbing 14 of the first 18 rebounds, taking 11 of the first 12 free throws and snatching seven of the first eight steals.

"We seemed to have a lot of

energy tonight," Dallas coach Avery Johnson said. "I gave them (two days) off and they gave me one back by responding with energy and concentration pretty much throughout the whole game. It's pretty rare for us to play that long of a stretch of good basketball."

The Mavericks have won 11 of 13, with both losses to the Lakers in games when Kobe Bryant scored 43 and 62 points. And they've done it without having the top of their expected rotation playing together at all this season.

Stackhouse, playing only his second game, had 15 points in 19 minutes, but it came with Keith Van Horn out because of the flu and Marquis Daniels missing his third straight with a neck problem. Josh Howard, who had 12 points and 10 rebounds, hurt his lower back and was examined by team doctors in the locker room afterward.

See MAVS, page 2B



KRT photo/Mike Cardow
The University of Memphis defense brings down Kris Kasperek of the University of Akron after a reception in the fourth quarter of the Motor City Bowl. Memphis defeated Akron, 38-31, at Ford Field in Detroit Monday.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BOWL SCHEDULE

2005-06 Bowl Schedule	OT	Peach Bowl
Bowl Championship Series	Motor City Bowl Memphis 38, Akron 31	Miami (FL) vs. LSU
Fiesta Bowl	Champs Sports Bowl Clemson vs. Colorado	Atlanta, Dec. 30, 6:30 p.m., CBS
Notre Dame vs. Ohio State Tempe, Ariz., Jan. 2, 3:30 p.m., ABC	Orlando, Fla., Dec. 27, 4 p.m., ESPN	Maine Ke Car Care Bowl South Florida vs. NC State Charlotte, N.C., Dec. 31, 10 a.m., ESPN2
Sugar Bowl	Inlight Bowl Arizona State vs. Rutgers Phoenix, Dec. 27, 7:30 p.m., ESPN	Liberty Bowl Tulsa vs. Fresno State Memphis, Tenn., Dec. 31, noon, ESPN
Georgia vs. West Virginia Atlanta, Jan. 2, 7:30 p.m., ABC	MPC Computers Bowl Boise State vs. Boston College Boise, Idaho, Dec. 28, 3:30 p.m., ESPN	Houston Bowl TCU vs. Iowa State Houston, Dec. 31, 1:30 p.m., ESPN2
Orange Bowl	Alamo Bowl Michigan vs. Nebraska San Antonio, Dec. 28, 7 p.m., ESPN	Colton Bowl Alabama vs. Texas Tech Dallas, Jan. 2, 10 a.m., Fox
Florida State vs. Penn State Miami, Jan. 3, 7 p.m., ABC	Emerald Bowl Georgia Tech vs. Utah San Francisco, Dec. 29, 3:30 p.m., ESPN	Outback Bowl Iowa vs. Florida Tampa, Fla., Jan. 2, 10 a.m., ESPN
Rose Bowl	Holiday Bowl Oregon vs. Oklahoma San Diego, Dec. 29, 7 p.m., ESPN	Gator Bowl Louisville vs. Va. Tech Jacksonville, Fla., Jan. 2, 11:50 a.m., NBC
USC vs. Texas Pasadena, Calif., Jan. 4, 7 p.m., ABC	San Diego Bowl Akron City Bowl Nashville, Tenn., Dec. 30, 11 a.m., ESPN	Capital Bowl Memphis
Non-BCS Schedule	San Diego Bowl Akron City Bowl Nashville, Tenn., Dec. 30, 11 a.m., ESPN	
New Orleans Bowl Southern Miss vs. Mississippi State Birmingham, Ala., Dec. 31, 11:30 a.m., ESPN	San Diego Bowl Akron City Bowl Nashville, Tenn., Dec. 30, 11 a.m., ESPN	
UAB Bowl Tulsa vs. UTEP Las Vegas Bowl California vs. Brigham Young	San Diego Bowl Akron City Bowl Nashville, Tenn., Dec. 30, 11 a.m., ESPN	
UAB Bowl Tulsa vs. UTEP Las Vegas Bowl California vs. Brigham Young	San Diego Bowl Akron City Bowl Nashville, Tenn., Dec. 30, 11 a.m., ESPN	

BRIEFS

Burial today for Dugy's son

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Tony Dugy and his wife stood for more than three hours greeting hundreds of mourners with handshakes and hugs. From NFL players past and present to well-wishers off the street, all came to offer the couple condolences for the loss of their son.

The Indianapolis Colts coach and his wife, Lauren, will bury 18-year-old James Dugy on

Tuesday. The Dungys took the time to thank each person for coming by to pay respect to James, who was found dead in his suburban apartment last week of an apparent suicide.

Duke No. 1

Duke held the No. 1 spot it has occupied since the preseason rankings after a light week of games failed to produce changes at the top of The Associated Press' men's college basketball poll.

But there was some movement near the bot-

tom of the rankings. Wisconsin came into the poll for the first time this season at No. 14, and West Virginia returned at No. 25 after

Jays close to signing Glaus

TORONTO (AP) — The Toronto Blue Jays hope to announce this week that they have acquired slugger Troy Glaus from the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Glaus and a prospect are expected to be sent to Toronto for reliever Miguel Batista and Gold Glove second baseman Orlando Hudson.

Glaus led Arizona in homers (37) and RBIs (97) last year, playing in 149 games despite a strained tendon in the back of his left knee.

Former pitcher arrested for robbery

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — Former major league pitcher Jeff Reardon was arrested on charges he robbed a jewelry store.

Reardon, 50, walked into Hamilton Jewelers at the Gardens Mall about 11:50 a.m. and handed an employee a note that said he had a gun.

Mavs

Continued from page 1B

"I got to the point where I couldn't move," he said.

The Pacers lost their second straight and fell to 5-3 since making Ron Artest inactive. They'll try to avoid an 0-3 road trip Tuesday night in San Antonio. The starters will have plenty of energy, as none played more than 35 minutes, with coach Rick Carlisle emptying the bench with 6:43 left.

Indiana led 2-0, then never again. The Pacers were down only nine at halftime, but a few minutes into the third quarter the deficit hit 10 and kept growing, peaking at 29. They had 11 turnovers by halftime, four of them traveling, en route to their second-biggest loss of the season.

"They played great and we didn't give them much of a game tonight," Carlisle said. "Our margin for error is slim. We can't have any slippage. Our rebounding was a disappointment."

Jermaine O'Neal led Indiana with 15 points. Stephen Jackson and Jamaal Tinsley scored 12 and Austin Croshere 11.

The Mavericks finished with a 49-30 rebounding edge, despite a season-low two from Nowitzki. Erick Dampier tied his season high with 14 boards; he had 10 at halftime, more than he'd had in any of his previous five games.

"We had chances early, but they hurt us on the offensive boards," Croshere said. "They get out on the break and we feed that when we turn the ball over like we did."

It's hard to get anything out of a game like this. We've got a big character game tomorrow in San Antonio.

... He again was tied at 16 when Harris entered. He made 6-of-7 shots the rest of the quarter, leading a 15-7 run that included a basket on what was meant to be an alley-oop pass to Stackhouse. Harris sheepishly held up

three fingers in hopes of it being ruled a 3-pointer. He did his best to hide a grin, slightly shaking his head as if saying he couldn't believe what had happened.

"It's happened before," Harris said. "I guess I'm not that good of a lob passer."

Playing at home for the first time this season, Stackhouse entered to a nice ovation midway through the first quarter. Late in the third, he had a burst of eight of Dallas' 10 points, starting with a jumper then driving through the defense and leaping over two Pacers for a dunk that got most in the building on their feet.

He was headed to the rim again the next time down the court and was taken down hard by Fred Jones. He made a steal on the other end soon after.

Notes: This was Dallas' biggest margin of victory ever against Indiana. ... The Pacers' worst loss this season was by 32 to Charlotte on Nov. 16. ...

Cundiff

Continued from page 1B

8 overall. "When you start thinking about going for it on fourth down and stuff like that ... you can't live with that's going on right now, the way it was," coach Bill Parcells said.

Four days after making a team-record 56-yard field goal against Detroit in his first game back, Cundiff missed a 34-yard attempt in the fourth quarter on Thanksgiving Day against Denver, a game the Cowboys lost in overtime.

Cundiff missed a 32-yard field goal against Carolina, a low kick that was partially blocked on the final play of the first half. He then missed a potential game-tying 33-yard kick with 1:08 left in the game, but Carolina was called for running into the kicker. That gave the Cowboys a first down, and they scored a touchdown and won 24-20.

MNF

Continued from page 1B

Martin's Laugh In" and CBS had "Gunsmoke." ABC took the gamble largely because it had nothing to lose.

To compete for viewers in that prime-time environment, a game needed some shtick. With Cosell calling the shots, that was rarely a problem. And with director Chet Forte skillfully wielding a few of the tools already in TV's arsenal — live drama, storytelling, tight reaction shots — and improving others, the games looked and sounded like nothing else on TV.

Breaking through the clutter, though, is a lot harder now. MNF aver-

aged a 10.9 rating this season headed into the finale on ABC; that's half what they were in the peak year of 1981. Even so, just hanging onto an audience as big as MNF did, for as long as it did, was no small feat.

That's why everything else on the broadcast looked so familiar: The shot of Pats quarterback Tom Brady looking to the sideline for a play call, zoomed in close enough to peg the day of his last shave; the slo-mo replay showing cornerback Assante Samuel's knee was down (and twisting painfully) before he fumbled; Jets coach Herm Edwards biting both lips every time New England carved up another piece of the Meadowlands.

More than perhaps any

other show, MNF changed not just when we watched sports, but what we expected to see. The back story on the hero. Frame-by-frame analysis of every big play. Crazy fans. Spectacle.

Kids today take all that — and more — for granted. They have video games every bit as vivid, and they can control the narrative. Being able to compete in a very different marketplace, three dozen seasons later, is why the NFL could ask for that \$8.8 billion and get it.

With five minutes left to play Monday night, Michaels wrapped up a discussion about all the stadiums MNF visited over the course of 555 telecasts. What he said at the end was telling.

"It's all about generating the revenue," he said. "What else is new?"

Just this: ESPN, a cable network, could pick up Monday nights at that exorbitant price because it makes money on subscriber fees AND by selling ads. ABC only pockets what it sells in ads. It didn't take much arm-twisting to move the show from one line on Disney's annual budget to another. The real trick going forward will be turning it from red back to black.

To be sure of that, ESPN must find a way to field competitive teams in games that matter every week — the one innovation that ABC couldn't come up with in 35 years.

Jim Litke is a national sports columnist for The Associated Press.

Rangers

Continued from page 1B

brought Alex Rodriguez (\$252 million, 10-year deal in December 2000) and Chan Ho Park to the Rangers. A-Rod and Park have since been traded.

Park signed a \$65 million, five-year contract in December 2001 to be the Rangers' No. 1 starter. But he had five stints on the disabled list and was 22-23 with a 5.79 ERA in 64 starts before being traded to the Padres in

July, with cash, for Phil Nevin.

After Park's failure, Rangers owner Tom Hicks said he wouldn't give any more five-year contracts to pitchers. When the pursuit of Millwood began, after Texas was spurned in its attempts to get Matt Morris and Josh Beckett, Hicks said he'd offer a fifth year only with certain protections included.

Hicks didn't respond Monday night to an e-mail seeking comment. Rangers general manager Jon Daniels, who was out

of town, didn't return messages left on his cell phone.

Millwood made \$7 million last season in Cleveland. He had signed a one-year deal with the Indians after being bothered by elbow swelling that limited him to 25 starts for the Phillies in 2004.

While Millwood was 9-6 with a 4.85 in his last season for Philadelphia, he won only two games after hurting his right elbow.

Texas' No. 1 starter last season was All-Star left-hander Kenny Rogers,

another Boras client.

He was 14-8 with a 3.46 ERA, but the Rangers didn't want the 41-year-old left-hander back after a videotaped tirade June 29 in which he shoved two television cameramen on the field.

Rogers, who has spent 12 of his 17 major league seasons during three stints in Texas, signed a \$16 million, two-year deal with Detroit during the offseason.

AP Baseball Writer Ronald Blum in New York contributed to this report.



THE TIME WHEN WE ALMOST DIDN'T HAVE A NEW YEAR

This story is from a very long time ago. It happened long before either you or I was even born. It was so long ago that neither your Great-Grandfather nor mine was even born.

It started out as a very good year, so long ago. The spring was so bountiful. Flowers were springing up everywhere, dotting the landscape with colors of their own choosing, each one trying to be prettier than the other. The animals had a good time, for there was more than enough grain and berries and fruits for all of them to eat. Even the warm sunshine was so perfect that Mr. Sun seemed happy as he covered the whole earth with his soft rays.

Then came the summer of that year. It was even better. Mr. Sun would come out for awhile to warm the world. Then Mr. Rain would come and sprinkle the earth with the sweet water he always

had hidden in his pouch made of clouds. The flowers grew. The trees grew. The grass was greener than ever before. The horses, cows, and rabbits loved the green grass, as well as the carrots and other fruits and vegetables that never seemed to end. It was a very good year.

Then came Fall. This was the time when all the pumpkins were getting ready to be picked to make some little jack o' lantern. This was the time when the ears of the corn seemed to be listening to the sweet sounds of the doves as they swarmed down into the corn patch to gobble up the wonderful kernels of corn. It is the time when little children all over the world dress up in funny and sometimes scary costumes to celebrate Halloween and the harvest of the crops. This was a fun time.

Then came winter. The white soft snow seemed to paint the whole world a color that everyone thinks is

so beautiful. The snow didn't even seem cold that year. We celebrate many holidays during the winter. It was a very happy time for all of them.

Then it came time for the new year. But, they might not have a new year that year. Old Father Time is in charge of giving them the new year each time as the winter starts to fade away. Old Father Time saw what a wonderful job he did when he gave them that year. Everyone was very happy with that year. Old Father Time had never seen so

many happy people and animals. He decided not to let a new year begin. He would just keep the old one.

It seemed like a very good idea at the time and who knows time better than Old Father Time? Then, everything had started to happen.

The old elm trees were not losing their leaves because the weather was never cold enough to make them fall.

The elm trees had to drop their leaves each year so brand new little ones would start growing in the Spring. The old leaves were of no use to anyone. The poor

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elm trees had to have their rest during the winter when they had no leaves, but now, they would have to work too hard and they would never be so strong again.

The little rabbits had grown so much fur for the Winter that they were too hot all the time now. They were getting very sick. They must have the cold weather back. The horses and cows, and the pigs and the sheep, and the wild animals of the forest all had the same problem. They must have their Winter back. They wanted a New Year!

All of the plants and trees in the forest needed the thunderstorms that never came that year. The big thunderstorms always filled up their lakes and rivers and

they always had enough water to drink. But now, none of the rivers were full. None of the lakes were full. The snowstorms that fell on the mountaintops even helped fill their lakes and rivers when there was no rain. In the Spring, when the weather was warmer and the frozen snow started melting, down the mountaintops it would come, running as fast as it could to give all the trees and animals their drink of water. But, there was no snow on the mountaintops that year. The lakes and streams and rivers and mountaintops all need the cold weather and snow.

Old Father Time looked around at all the suffering he was about to cause and decided to have a New Year again. He loved the animals and trees and plants and even bugs. He did not want any of them to suffer. He ordered the New Year to come again just as it always had done.

The cold weather came with the New Year. The cold weather brought the snow as if they were visiting hand-in-hand. The thunderstorms came with the New Year. The rivers filled again.

The streams filled again. The lakes ran over with the wonderful water. The elm trees lost their leaves and it felt good to them for now they could rest. They would be even stronger in the Spring.

The rabbits, horses, cows, and all the sheep and every animal in the forest loved to see and feel the cold weather come with the New Year. Now, they did not have too much fur to keep them warm, but they had just the right amount. The Summer brought more thunderstorms. The Fall brought many good things to eat.

Old Father Time saw that he did the right thing by letting a New Year come. He should never have tried to make things stay the same. No matter how good it looked! It was always better with change.

So now, we celebrate the New Year every year. I think it is a good idea, don't you? Old Father Time is the king of time, isn't he? Do you want to know what he just told me. He said that it's time for you to be asleep, so "Good Night."

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Tomorrow's Horoscope

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

Mars and Saturn square off in a battle of wills, bringing up an excellent question: What is worth fighting for? The struggle has been occurring since Nov. 1, and will continue into the new year, but today marks a crucial point in the conflict. Some of you will decide to drop your side of an argument, lawsuit or private crusade.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Life feels very much like a game today, and you won't have much fun warming up the bench. Suit up, and be ready for the starting line-up. A Gemini and a Libra on your team ensure a success.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The usual (but often overlooked) remedies — sufficient water and sleep — will help you deal with stress. You can handle anything thrown at you. Family members give (unwelcome) advice, but it's given with much love!

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Sacrifice is admirable now and again. When it occurs all the time, it's pathological. Your first priority should be to take care of yourself. Stop letting others take advantage of you.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You finally hang out with someone who can challenge you intellectually. It's a free exchange of information and ideas. Fortunately, you've plenty of both. Dare to test our weirdest theories.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). It's time to transition from mental to physical: Think less, and move spontaneously. Your body has its own intelligence, and it's deep, ancient and even more intuitive than your mind.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Make a lateral move

at work. It means a better long-term career path. People around you recognize your talents, even though it takes them a while. Keeping your genius a secret is so last week!

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Finance expert Suze Orman says, "Abundance is about being rich, with or without money." Today, you'll prove that you are wealthy in every way. Sagittarius people drive the point home.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). A winning combination: play, exercise and love. The balance makes your heart full, plus, improving your health benefits every other area of your life.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You're centered and purposeful. Fellow Sag Nelly Furtado sings, "I'm like a bird; I'll only fly away," which, at one time, was your anthem, but not now. You know where your home is. Hint: It's where your heart is, too.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You'll be mingling with the creme de la creme. Fashion choices could affect your attitude. Think ahead — make sure that you are dressed to feel comfortable among the well-heeled.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You've been slogging through your project for quite some time, and you're almost done. Way to keep your nose to the grindstone. It will all be worth it in the end, but you already knew that!

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You're in rhythm and harmony with your environment and you show it both in little and big ways. Music pours out of you. Sing in the car, stomp, clap or play a song using the touch-tone buttons on your phone.

Annie's Mailbox

Dear Annie: I have been married for 47 years. I am retired now, but have no money problems. I do, however, have a problem with my wife.

I love "Harriet" dearly, but when I tell her this, she always comes back with a nasty reply. She never makes eye contact with me, and we never have a conversation unless she is upset about something. I am not allowed to touch her in any way, and we have not been intimate for years.

When I ask her what I could possibly do to make things better, she says I have to "change." I have tried to change so many times that I no longer have a clue what I am supposed to do. I pray every night that Harriet will accept me as I am. I just want to hold her in my arms.

I have asked her to see our pastor or a counselor, but she refuses. I think the reason is that she's afraid the counselor will suggest we try doing something together, and she doesn't want that.

I love Harriet in spite of how things are. I recently said, "Let's just talk nicely to each other and see if that makes things better." She said no. I know she would never want to have sex, and I doubt very much that I could, even if I wanted to, but it would be wonderful just to hold one another. If you have any suggestions, I would certainly appreciate it. — Chicago

Dear Chicago: How sad for you. Has Harriet always been like this? If not, has she seen her doctor lately? Changes in personality can indicate physical or psychiatric problems that can be treated.

In the meantime, please consider counseling. We

know Harriet isn't likely to go with you, but you can go alone and develop some coping strategies. Ask your doctor or pastor for a referral, or try the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (www.aapc.org) and Samaritan Counseling Centers (samaritaninstitute.org).

Dear Annie: I am writing in response to "Jane's Sad Neighbor," who discovered that her neighbor had died and the children had no funeral service. Jane was wrong to make such a request of her children.

People need to realize that the funeral ritual provides a valuable and much-needed service to the grieving. I have had people say to me, "When I die, just throw me in the grave. I don't want anything." My response has been, "If you can say you want the same thing for your child or spouse if they were to die, then we will do it for you." Most can't.

People think they are doing their family a favor by saving them the grief of the funeral ceremony, when really they are doing them a disservice by not allowing them to grieve properly. I am not advocating spending beyond your means, but a life lived should be honored at death. — Sam Cummings Jr., President, Pennsylvania Funeral Directors Association

Dear Sam Cummings: We agree that funeral services can provide a way for friends and family members to say goodbye, and we hope our readers will keep that in mind when making their decisions. Thank you for your expert opinion.

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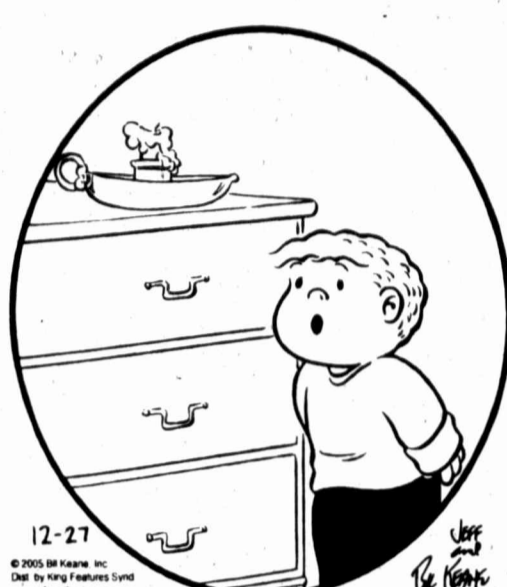
Table with 19 columns (WFAA, KMID, UNI, KPEJ, KOSA, KTLN, KWES, WTBS, KMLM, KOCV, DISC, AMC, SPIKE, TNT, BET, DISN, ESPN2, ESPN, SCIFI) and 6 rows (6:30, 7:30, 8:30, 9:30, 10:30, 11:30, 12:30) listing various TV programs and their channels.

DENNIS THE MENACE



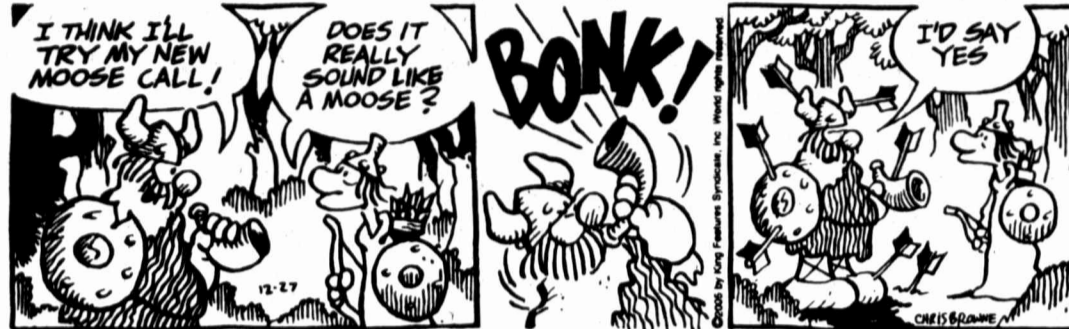
"SINCE IT'S SO COLD OUTSIDE, I TOLD OL' RUFF HE COULD HIDE HIS BONES IN HERE."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS



"Mommy! Your big candle got little!"

HAGAR



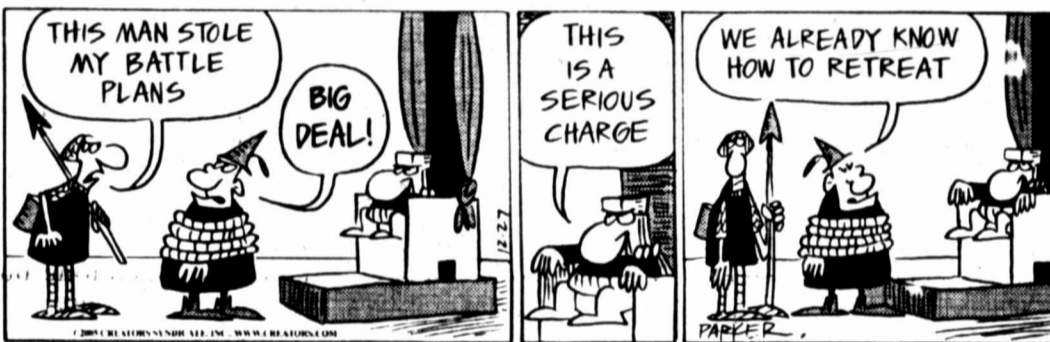
BLONDIE



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WIZARD OF ID



AGNES



HI AND LOIS



THE OTHER COAST



SNUFFY SMITH



BETLE BAILEY



This Date In History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 27, the 361st day of 2005. There are four days left in the year. Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 27, 1932, Radio City Music Hall opened in New York. On this date: In 1822, scientist Louis Pasteur was born in Dole, France. In 1831, naturalist Charles Darwin set out on a voyage to the Pacific aboard the HMS Beagle. In 1900, militant prohibitionist Carry A. Nation carried out her first public smashing of a bar, at the Carey Hotel in Wichita, Kan. In 1904, James Barrie's play "Peter Pan: The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up" opened at the Duke of York's Theater in London. In 1927, the musical play "Show Boat," with music by Jerome Kern and libretto by Oscar Hammerstein II, opened at the Ziegfeld Theater in New York. In 1945, 28 nations signed an agreement creating the World Bank. In 1968, Apollo 8 and its three astronauts made a safe, nighttime splashdown in the Pacific. In 1979, Soviet forces seized control of Afghanistan. President Hafizullah Amin, who was overthrown and executed, was replaced by Babrak Karmal. In 1985, Palestinian guerrillas opened fire inside the Rome and Vienna airports; a total of 20 people were killed, including five of the attackers, who were slain by police and security personnel. In 1985, American naturalist Dian Fossey, who had studied gorillas in the wild, was found hacked to death at a research station in Rwanda. Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Sen. James A. McClure (R-Idaho) is 81. Rockabilly musician Scotty Moore is 74. ABC News correspondent Cokie Roberts is 62. Singer Tracy Nelson is 61. Actor Gerard Depardieu is 57. Jazz singer-musician T.S. Monk is 56. Singer-songwriter Karla Bonoff is 54. Rock musician David Knopfler (Dire Straits) is 53. Broadcast journalist Arthur Kent is 52. Actress Maryam D'Abo is 45. Country musician Jeff Bryant is 43. Actress Eva LaRue is 39. Rock musician Guthrie Govan (Asia) is 34. Musician Matt Slocum is 33. Actor Wilson Cruz is 32. Singer Olu is 32. Thought for Today: "Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense." — Gertrude Stein, American author (1874-1946).

MUSIC TO YOUR EARS

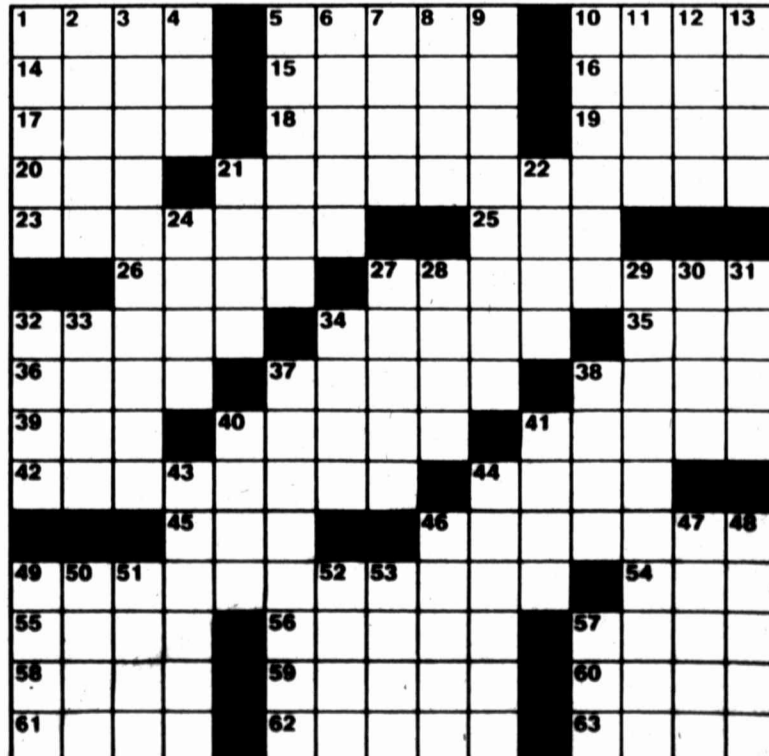
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Answer to previous puzzle: BASS CLIP ARCED ELLE HIRE VOICE ELAL EMMA ELTON FULLOFBALONEY SRO USO PUSHES EMIT OBIE ARE SOS NUN LIE HALFRICESALE PAL OOO DAD ALLI TOWN USED DOESOK SAD LES NEWYORKMINUTE SHADE BEAU IDEA PETAL OATS PEST AMENS EPEE SSTS

Newsday Crossword

MUSIC TO YOUR EARS by Norma Steinberg Edited by Stanley Newman www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS 1 Used to be 5 Top of a wave 10 Like some tales 14 "Now me down to sleep..." 15 Actor Burton 16 Toast topping 17 Advantage 18 Whirlpool competitor 19 Frost or Pound 20 Suffix for book 21 Undecided part of the electorate 23 Jack Webb TV program 25 Woolly mama 26 Prod 27 Court schedule 32 Nasal accent 34 Responded to applause 35 Bar order 36 Hard to find 37 Would be able to 38 Plant's beginning 39 Goal 40 Is boastful 41 Cowboy gear 42 Pilgrims' home 44 Coffee cups 45 That thing's 46 Carryall 49 Other such stuff 54 52, in old Rome 55 Booty 56 Serious play 57 Subjective atmosphere 58 Chess player's consideration 59 Kind of duck 60 Peachy- 61 "So be it!" 62 Brainsy 63 Admin. 64 Highly ranked group 65 Healing plant 66 Nasty look 67 Oodles 68 Fly in the ointment 69 Ran up a tab 70 Out of sight 71 Cold symptom 72 Shoemaker's tools 73 Soldier's formal wear 74 "The have it!" 75 Get new drapes, rugs, etc. 76 Golf-course hazard 77 Howl 78 Dinghy or barge 79 Aggressive campaigns 80 Wise one 81 These two things 82 Figure-skating jump 83 Hand covering 84 Subject of Amadeus 85 Less feral 86 Buenos 87 Goliath, for one 88 mater 89 Weaver's machine 90 Word on a valentine 91 Quick haircut 92 Actress Pinkett Smith 93 Police blotter abbr.



Wacky Facts

■ January is named for the Roman god Janus, guardian of gates, who is often shown with two faces — one looking backward and one looking forward.
■ Garnet is the birthstone for the month of January.
— World Almanac for Kids

Chatter Box

"I'm really lazy sometimes and disorganized. My bedroom is a mess! I really like it when it's clean, but I make excuses that I like it when it's dirty, too."
— Actress Erika Christensen, on her biggest flaw, on seventeen.com.

KID NEWS



Less is more

Small changes can bring big results in 2006

By EMILIE LE BEAU / Chicago Tribune

Tired of sloppy scribbles, Richie B., 11, pledged to perfect his penmanship last January. The year progressed, but his writing didn't. "The penmanship just got worse," he says. "I get tired of trying to write neat." Richie's New Year's resolution lasted "two or three months" before he gave up.

Like Richie, many Americans make resolutions at the beginning of each new year. More than half of Americans say they make a New Year's resolution — but only one-third of those resolvers are successful, reports the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Demanding total perfection is one reason people quit working on a resolution, says Chicago life coach Alison Miller.

"We get caught up in this idea that we are going to do it perfectly or forget it," Miller says. "Expect to mess up sometimes and (don't) beat yourself up for it."

Resolutions sometimes can be unrealistic. Going for a goal that's too hard to accomplish can leave a kid feeling sad, Miller says.

"Saying 'I'm going to look like a super-model' is going to make you unhappy," she says. "It's better to focus on moving your body and being healthy."

Even though "New Year's resolutions don't work" for him, Kevin M., 15, is planning to practice piano for at least an hour a day. He's considering a career in music, but says homework and school are his main focuses. Knowing his schedule, he says he'll "be lucky to get 30 minutes a day" of practice.

A bit is better than nothing, and making reminders can help you do a little at a time. Miller says kids should write down their goals and post a note that asks, "What can I do today to make my goal a reality?"

"It's just small steps along the way. It's not about doing it all at once," Miller says.

Claire K., 12, says, the focus isn't on her. Helping other people is her resolution, so she'll start by donating her old clothing.

Claire is hopeful that thinking about the reason for her resolution will help her keep it up. "Remember you are doing it for good and it will help you to be a better person or just do something better," she says.

Set realistic goals

Last year's resolutions a bust? Here's how you can keep your goals when it comes to three important areas:

Sports: Shatter the school's free throw record and run the fastest mile in gym class. Sound like a plan? Maybe. But sky-high resolutions might lead to disappointment, says Gary Crull, a kinesiology professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Goals like "I want to be the best" are all about comparison and very few ever achieve that status, he says.

Instead of going for the top-dog rep, getting personal can help kids see results, he says. Focus on your performance — can you shave a few seconds off your race time? Get more game play?

If all else fails, resolve to have more patience.
Family: Home life can be pretty perky on TV. But in real life, "it's not reasonable to say there will never be conflict," says Patti Criswell, social worker and author of "What Would You Do?"

The goal is to resolve family problems kindly. When a sibling ticks you off, keep cool and tell him how to make it right, she says. Criswell suggests using "kindness counts" tokens. Do something nice for your sibling, like carry up his laundry basket. Put the token on top so it's obvious that you wanted to be nice, she says.

School: Last semester not your best? A bit of organization can get you on the right track, says Jennifer Schmidt, a middle school teacher at Morgan Park Academy in Illinois.

Short-term goals, such as "I'm going to write down all my assignments," are easier to accomplish than lofty aims like "I'm going to get straight A's," Schmidt says.

Try writing down assignments and putting up a calendar to mark long-term projects. "Work on (a big project) 10 minutes a day so the night before it's due, you're not rushing to get it done," she says.

Can SpongeBob encourage kids to eat healthy food?

What do SpongeBob SquarePants, Dora the Explorer and Shrek have in common? All three popular characters are being used to promote non-nutritious foods to kids. Instead of smiling on candy and cookie wrappers, SpongeBob and others should be used to encourage kids to eat more fruits and vegetables, a new study says.



The report, released this month by the Institute of Medicine, says television advertising has a big impact on the diets of kids under 12. To develop their findings, the panel reviewed hundreds of studies. It also gathered scientific evidence of how food marketing affects kids' diets.

The report recommended that the food industry spend its money marketing nutritious food and drinks.

IS ADVERTISING PUTTING KIDS' HEALTH AT RISK?

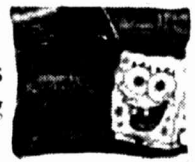
According to the report, advertisements for food and drinks are encouraging kids and families to make poor food choices. If kids are to avoid diet-related diseases such as obesity and diabetes, they must reduce the amount of high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and drinks in their diets, the report says.

"The foods advertised are predominantly high in calories and low in nutrition — the sort of diet that puts children's long-term health at risk," said J. Michael McGinnis of the Institute of Medicine.

TOUGH COMPETITION

The number of new foods advertised to kids is constantly growing. In 1994, 52 new food products were targeted at kids. In 2004, that number jumped to 500! With so much competition, many companies rely on advertising to get families to buy their products. Those companies often use popular characters or spokespeople to grab kids' attention.

Some companies are already working to make a change. In October, Nickelodeon launched a campaign focused on getting kids to eat healthier and get more exercise. The campaign features former President Bill Clinton, SpongeBob SquarePants and Dora the Explorer promoting fresh fruits and vegetables.

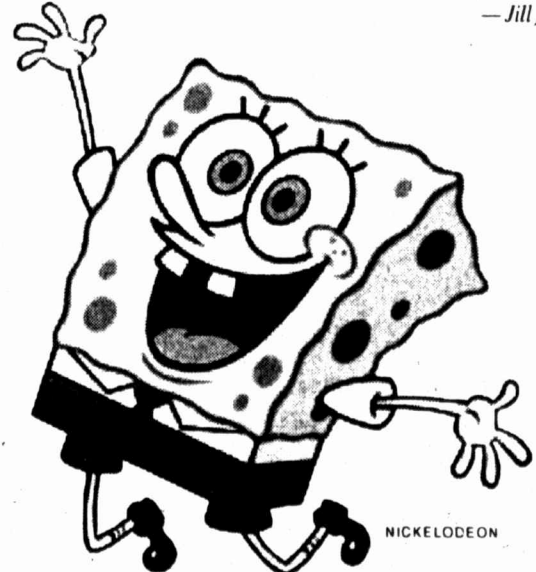


MAKING PROGRESS

Wally Snyder, president of the American Advertising Federation, says the report should recognize companies' efforts to make food products healthier.

"There's a long way to go, but the industry is responding, and it doesn't seem like there's any recognition of that in this report," he said.

— Jill Egan



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