



## Buckle up, don't drink and drive, trooper warns

By THOMAS JENKINS  
Staff Writer

Area residents planning their New Years Eve celebration will want to pay close attention to the mixture of alcoholic beverages and driving, as the Department of Public Safety will be out in force during the holiday.

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 expect any holiday mercy.

"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 antici-



**"We have a zero-tolerance approach to both seat belt and intoxicated driving violations. Absolutely no warnings will be written for either."**

— Jason Hester, DPS trooper

pating traffic will be very heavy this season, so there's no room for these type of mistakes."

Dubbed "Operation Holiday," Hester said the annual effort is a very important part of keeping

the roadways safe during the holiday season — especially New Years Eve and New Years Day.

"Operation Holiday means that all available troopers will be out on the roads," said Hester. "They're going to be looking really close at drivers to make sure they are following the law, especially the three violations that

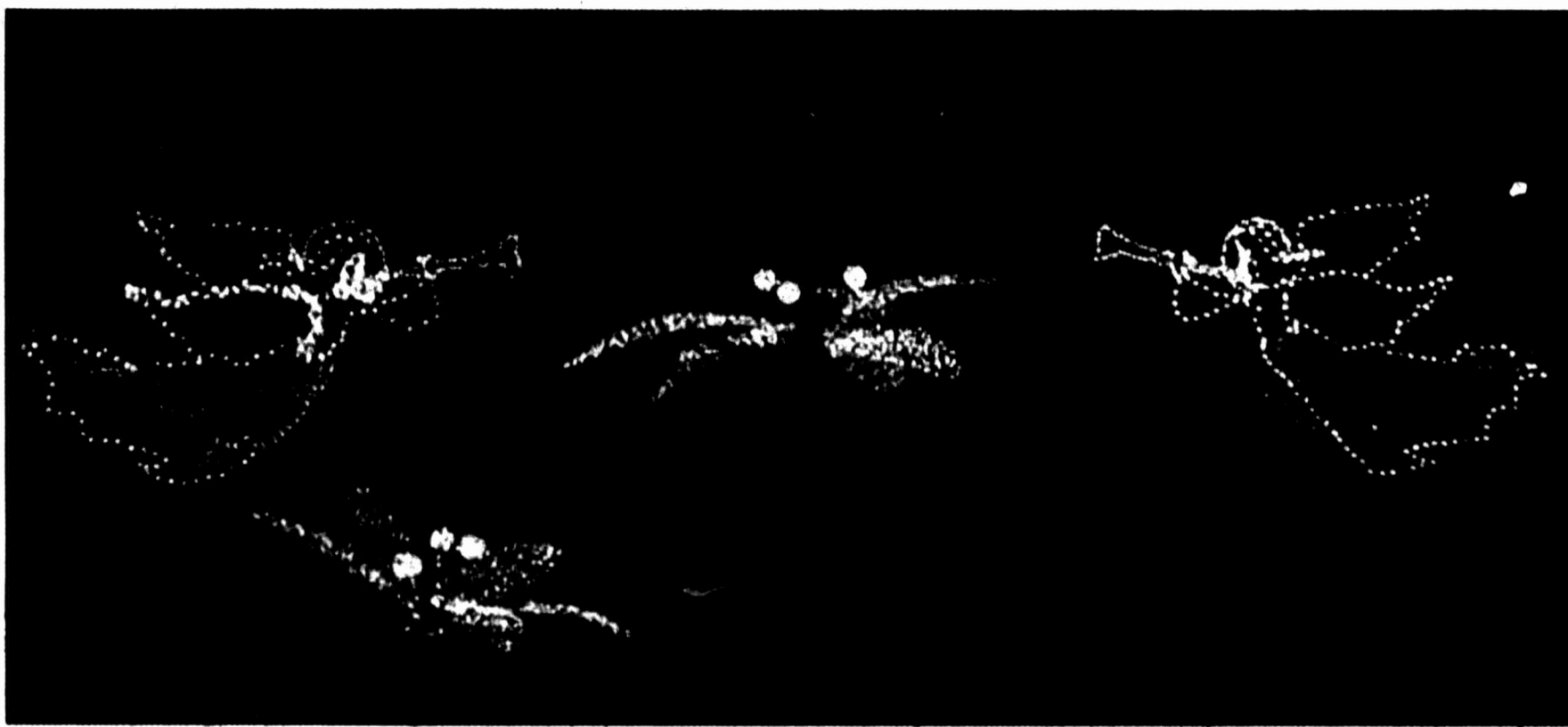
are the deadliest — speeding, no seat belts and driving while intoxicated."

Hester said planning your trip — as well as your route — ahead of time can really pay off in the event of an emergency.

"If you're traveling to see family, be sure to tell

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## THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



Herald photo/Bruce Schooler

The Festival of Lights at Comanche Trail Park has drawn thousands of spectators since it opened earlier this month. Sunday is the final night of this growing annual exhibit. If you have not driven or walked through the many displays, time is running short. There is no fee though donations are accepted. Start at the Whipkey Drive entrance to the park, off U.S. Highway 87. Hours are from dark until 10 p.m. nightly.

## Wait! Don't throw out that Christmas tree

By THOMAS JENKINS  
Staff Writer

It's a few days after Christmas and many area residents are faced with the same problem — what to do with those trees they took so long to decorate.

Enter the city of Big Spring, which will once again be recycling one of the most popular Christmas decorations of all time.

"We'll be collecting the Christmas trees in containers at the Municipal Landfill and the

city Compost Facility," said city Landfill Supervisor Kenny Davis. "We also have a drop off location in front of the old Wal-Mart in Coronado Plaza."

Davis said the seasonal effort is two-fold.

"The compost facility will grind the trees up to be used in the compost," he said. "That way we're recycling them and not just throwing them in the landfill. The other reason we do this is to keep people from putting the trees in their dumpsters. When people put them in their dump-

sters they get stuck and cause a serious problem for us."

For those who choose to dispose of their trees in dumpsters, Davis said the results could get serious.

"If someone puts their tree in a dumpster or next to the dumpster, we won't pick it up," he said. "We'll simply notify code enforcement and let them handle it."

Davis said dropping your tree off at the landfill and other designated locations is free of charge, and there are only a few

simple guidelines to follow.

"We need people to make sure all of the lights and ornaments are off the tree," he explained. "We also can't take it if it's still wrapped in plastic or anything like that. You also need to make sure the tree stand has been taken off. Once they drop it off, we'll take it from there."

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

## Saddam lawyer: Don't give him to Iraqi authorities

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA  
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Saddam Hussein's chief lawyer implored world leaders Thursday to prevent the United States from handing over the ousted leader to Iraqi authorities for execution, saying the former dictator should enjoy protection from his enemies as a "prisoner of war."

Iraq's highest court on Tuesday rejected Saddam's appeal against his conviction and death sen-

tence for the killing of 148 Shiites in the northern city of Dujail in 1982. The court said the former president should be hanged within 30 days.

"According to the international conventions it is forbidden to hand a prisoner of war to his adversary," Saddam's lawyer, Khalil al-Dulaimi, said in Amman, Jordan.

"I urge all the international and legal organizations, the United Nations secretary-gener-

al, the Arab League and all the leaders of the world to rapidly prevent the American administration from handing the president to the Iraqi authorities," he told The Associated Press.

An official close to Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has said that Saddam would remain in a U.S. military prison until he is handed over to Iraqi authorities on the day of his execution. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not

authorized to address the media.

Al-Dulaimi warned that turning over Saddam to the Iraqis would increase the sectarian violence that already is tearing the country apart.

"If the American administration insists in handing the president to the Iraqis, it would commit a great strategic mistake which would lead to the escalation of the violence in Iraq and

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## TAKS

Task force finds no wrongdoing by local schools

By STEVE REAGAN  
Staff Writer

Three Big Spring Independent School District campuses are among almost 600 schools statewide that were cleared of possible wrongdoing on the state standardized test.

An analysis conducted by Caveon Test Security earlier this year flagged 700 schools as having "data anomalies" during the 2005 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) testing period.

Among the anomalies noted by Caveon were large score gains, excessive erasures, and an unusual similarity in test answers.

A task force set up by Texas Education Agency Commissioner Shirley Neeley concluded that security audits and on-site investigations found no evidence of action that violated state's test security system at 592 schools, including local campuses Marcy Elementary, Goliad Intermediate and Big Spring Junior High School.

The three BSISD campuses were flagged because of multiple erasures on test booklets or answer sheets, Superintendent Michael Downes said.

"Each of the 700 campuses were asked to submit desk audits regarding the circumstances surrounding the allegations," Downes said. "Those audits required us to answer questions posed by TEA and address any supporting data we might have had."

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### FDA: CLONED MEAT OK

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government has decided that food from cloned animals is safe to eat and does not require special labeling.

The Food and Drug Administration planned to brief industry groups in advance of an announcement today. The FDA indicated it would approve cloned livestock in a scientific journal article published online earlier this month.

Consumer groups say labels are a must, because surveys have shown people to be uncomfortable with the idea of cloned livestock. However, FDA said cloned animals are "virtually indistinguishable" from conventional livestock.

### AREA DOCTOR SENTENCED

SAN ANGELO (AP) — An obstetrician/gynecologist who was found guilty of sexually assaulting a sedated patient in his office was sentenced to six years in prison and fined \$10,000 Wednesday.

Dr. Randolph Rountree, who pleaded no contest to the charge, will be eligible for parole in three years. The Texas Medical Board suspended his license in April and he will have to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life, the San Angelo Standard-Times reported in its online editions.

Rountree could have faced up to 20 years in prison.

### ONE OF THE GOOD PEOPLE

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP) — When the bikes Dennis and Tamie Leporin bought themselves for Christmas to ride with their young son disappeared from their front lawn, the couple posted a sign to let the thieves know their disappointment.

"I hope U crooks enjoy our bikes U stole; Merry X-Mas," the sign read. The next evening the couple heard a knock at their door and found an envelope with \$200 inside.

"Inside was a note that read, 'For every crook, there are 1,000 good people,' Dennis Leporin said. 'I thought it was awesome. We moved here from St. Louis, and folks just don't do that in St. Louis.'"



Obituaries

Spc. Robert James 'R.J.' Volker



Spc. Robert James "R.J." Volker, 21, of Big Spring, died Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2006, while serving his country in Iraq. Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 30, 2006, at the First Baptist Church with the Rev. Craig Felty officiating. Interment will follow at Trinity Memorial Park. The family will receive friends at the funeral home Friday from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

He was born Aug. 7, 1985, in Big Spring and married Martha Ramsey on April 7, 2006, in Belton.

Robert was a 2003 graduate of Big Spring High School where he played the French horn in the Steer Band. He attended UTI where he graduated the auto body repair course in 2004. Robert worked at the Big Spring Collision Center before joining the United States Army Sept. 22, 2005. He served his country during the Iraq war where he was awarded the Combat Action Badge, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, National Defense Service Medal and the Army Service Ribbon. He volunteered to serve his country and for this mission. Robert was a loving son, brother, husband, friend, patriot and a hero.

Survivors include his wife, Martha Volker of Big Spring; his parents, Robert and Melissa Volker of Big Spring; one brother, Johnathan Volker of DDG USS Roosevelt, Mayport, Fla.; his grandparents, Jim and Gloria Roe and Chuck and Janet Frank, all of Big Spring; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

He was preceded in death by his uncle, James Drury; grandfather, Henry Drury; mother-in-law, Mary Johnson; father-in-law, Larry Ramsey; and a sister-in-law, Susan Ramsey.

The family suggests memorials be made to the Force Ministries, P.O. Box 720130, San Diego, Calif. 92172-0130, or www.forceministries.com

Arrangements are under the direction of Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Big Spring. Online condolences can be made at: www.npwelch.com

Paid obituary

Edith June Lollar Woods



Edith June Lollar Woods, 80, died Dec. 25, 2006. Services will be held Saturday, Dec. 30, 2006, at Wilson Funeral Home, Canon City, Colo.

June was born June 22, 1926, in Hooker, Okla., to John Benton and Mayme Ruth Lollar. June was married to Joseph C. Woods on June 19, 1944, in Hooker. She worked at the Big Spring State Hospital for many years. She then opened a day care center and retired in 1978. June was a Methodist by faith.

June is survived by her husband, Joseph C. Woods; her children, Michael C. Woods of Abilene, Kathleen M. Smart (Kenny) of Cambridge, Wis., and Donna P. Newell (Kerry) of Cotopaxi, Colo.; five grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; four brothers, Wayne Lollar of Shawnee, Okla., James Delbert Lollar and Byron Lollar of Amarillo and Clayton Lollar of Fowler, Kan.; four sisters, Alice Hayden (Pee Wee) of Fowler Kan., Marie Hicks (Merle) and Joye Hicks (Calvin) of Guymon, Okla., and Esther Parker (Corky) of Beaver, Okla.; a sister-in-law, Juanita Lollar of Amarillo; two brothers-in-law, Johnny Dixon of Guymon, Okla., and Victor Woods (Peggy) of Seguin; and many nephews and nieces.

June was preceded in death by her parents, Benton and Mayme Lollar; her father and mother-in-law, Victor and Lela Woods; three brothers, Earl Lollar, Jack Lollar and Johnny Lollar; a sister, Irma Lollar Dixon; two daughters, Patricia June Woods and Carole Elizabeth Woods Waters; and a grandson.

Donations may be sent to Sangre de Cristo Hospice, 1439 Main, Canon City, Colo. 81212.

Lottery

AUSTIN (AP) — Results of the Lotto Texas drawing Wednesday night:

Winning numbers drawn: 3-8-10-33-50-51.  
Number matching six of six: 0.  
Estimated jackpot for Saturday night drawing: \$17 million.

...

AUSTIN (AP) — Results of the Cash 5 drawing Wednesday night:

Winning numbers drawn: 6-9-11-17-33.  
Number matching five of five: 0.

...

AUSTIN (AP) — The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Wednesday night by the Texas Lottery, in order: 8-3-8

Tory Mitchell



Tory Mitchell, 26, of Big Spring died Sunday, Dec. 24, 2006, in Big Spring. Funeral services will be 2 p.m. Saturday at 14th and Main Church of Christ with the Rev. Holston Banks officiating. Burial will be at Trinity Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m. Friday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Tory Deon Mitchell was born May 21, 1980, to Mary Magnum and Bobby Earl Williams in Big Spring. Tory graduated from Big Spring High School in 1999, where he was a champion athlete which included football and track. Tory set the sophomore age group national record. He attended Miami University and Texas Tech University.

In addition to his parents, he is survived by three sons, Tory Deon Mitchell, Jabari Mitchell, and Omari Mitchell, all of Denton; two brothers, Jerome Mitchell of Big Spring and Charles Magnum of Sweeney; one sister, Erica Mitchell of Big Spring; grandmother, Almonia Mitchell of Big Spring; grandfather, Buster Williams of Midland; five aunts; three uncles; his companion, Lisa Lopez of Big Spring; and a host of cousins and friends.

Tory was preceded in death by his grandfather O.T. Mitchell; grandmother, Dorothy Sue Williams; and a beloved aunt, Josephine Mitchell.

The family will be at 1213 Ridgeroad. Arrangements are by Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Pay your respects online at www.myersandsmith.com

Morris Metcalf

Morris Metcalf, 62, of Stanton, formerly of Wichita, Kan., died Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2006, in Stanton. Burial was held at Hope Cemetery in Arkansas City, Kan.

He was born Aug. 5, 1944, in Arkansas City, Kan. Mr. Metcalf was the son of Theodore and Ella May Metcalf of Wichita, Kan. He was a longtime resident of Wichita, Kan. He was a Free Methodist.

Survivors include several aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents and one brother, James W. Metcalf.

The family suggests memorials be made to the James Bruner T.K. Ranch at Sunset, PO Box 879, Bowie 76230.

Arrangements under the direction of Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Big Spring. Online condolences can be made at: www.npwelch.com

Police blotter

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

- ENRIQUE BENITO CALDERON, 29, of 2600 Chanute, was arrested Tuesday on 14 local warrants.
- FORTUNATO ALVAREZ III, 19, of 1503 Sycamore, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of driving while license suspended.
- THEFT was reported in the 700 block of Interstate Highway 20.
- POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA - TWO OUNCES OR LESS was reported in the 100 block of Ninth Street.
- ASSAULT CLASS C/FAMILY VIOLENCE was reported in the 3200 block of Auburn.

Sheriff's report

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

- Note — Officials with the Howard County Jail reported having 43 inmates at the time of this report.
- MELANIE HENDERSON, 23, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of possession of marijuana - two ounces or less.
- JOLANDA JIMENEZ GONZALES, 37, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on a charge of displaying a fictitious motor vehicle inspection certificate.
- GREGORIO SANCHEZ, 28, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of failure to appear.
- FORTUNATO ALVAREZ III, 19, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on a charge of driving while license suspended/invalid.
- JUAN ANGEL MADRID, 20, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of evading arrest or detention.
- DON RAY HENSON, 47, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of Class C assault - family violence

Bulletin Board

If you have items for the Bulletin board, contact the Herald news room at 263-7331 or email editor@bigspringherald.com

**TODAY**  
• The Prospector's Club meets at 7:30 p.m. at 606 E. Third St. The public is invited to these meetings. For more information contact Lola Lamb at 263-3340 or Doyle and Virginia McClain at 263-8407.

**FRIDAY**  
• AMBUCS meet at noon in La Posada Restaurant.  
• Greater Big Spring Rotary Club meets at noon in the Big Spring Country Club.  
• Spring City Senior Citizen's Center country and western dance from 7:30 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. featuring Monroe Casey and the Prowlers. All area senior citizens are invited.

**SATURDAY**  
**NEW YEAR'S DAY**

**TUESDAY**  
• Coahoma Senior Citizen luncheon is set for 11 a.m. in the Coahoma Community Center.  
• Big Spring Rotary Club meets at noon in the Howard College Cactus Room, 1001 Birdwell Lane.

Fire/EMS

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

- TRAUMA was reported in the 1300 block of Mulberry. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1100 block of East Fourth Street. One person was transported to SMMC.
- TRAUMA was reported in the 1200 block of Settles. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 300 block of Alice. Service was refused.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 3200 block of Auburn. Service was refused.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1800 block of North Highway 87. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the area of Glen Wick Cove. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 3200 block of Drexel. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 700 block of West Interstate Highway 20. Service was refused.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 2800 block of Goliad. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1800 block of North Highway 87. One person was transported to the VAMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1600 block of Vines. One person was transported to SMMC.
- TRAUMA was reported in the 300 block of Aylesford. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1400 block of North Highway 87. One person was transported to SMMC.

Weather

Tonight...Mostly cloudy. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms in the evening...Then scattered showers after midnight. Lows around 40. Southeast winds 10 to 15 mph in the evening becoming light and variable. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Friday...Mostly cloudy. Chance of showers and thunderstorms in the morning...Then a chance of rain in the afternoon. Highs in the mid 50s. Northwest winds around 10 mph shifting to the west in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 40 percent.

Friday night...Mostly cloudy. Lows in the mid 30s. West winds around 10 mph.

Saturday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s. West winds 10 to 15 mph.

Saturday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 30s.

Sunday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s. Sunday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 30s.

New years day...Mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 50s.

Monday night...Mostly cloudy. Lows in the lower 30s.

Tuesday...Mostly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s. Tuesday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 30s.

Wednesday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s.

**Jimmy Hopper Auto Sales**

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

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

USPS 1431-48 USPS 0055-940 ISSN 0746-6811  
BY THE MONTH HOME DELIVERY: \$9.65 monthly; \$93.42 yearly (includes 10% discount). MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$12.50 monthly Howard & Martin Counties; \$13.25 elsewhere.

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# DOING THEIR PART FOR UNITED WAY



Local United Way Executive Director Cynthia Scott, left, accepts a check for \$300 from Gwen Dunson, vice president of the Greater Big Spring Rotary Club, and club president Carl Condray at the Cactus Room.

HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins

## DRIVING

Continued from Page 1A

them what your route will be," said Hester. "That makes it a lot easier when we have to go out and look for someone. Also, be sure to keep emergency items in the vehicle, such as first-aid kits and blankets. No one wants to

think about what can go wrong out on the road, but it's always a good idea to be prepared."

With temperatures forecasted to drop to the low 30s — possibly even colder in the evening hours — during the New Year holiday, Hester said the weather can 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 or by e-mail at [citydesk@bigspringherald.com](mailto:citydesk@bigspringherald.com)

## TAKS

Continued from Page 1A

The recent news from TEA was welcome, but unsurprising to Downes, who had known for some time that the local campuses had not engaged in improper activity.

"We knew in June that

our campuses were clean," he said. "It's unfortunate that a cloud of uncertainty from the state level was allowed to hang over us this long."

Downes said the multiple erasures were the results of a simple process of elimination — students were instructed to cross out the known

wrong answers on the test, then erase those markings when they deduced the correct answer.

"Our kids and faculty work hard and it's a shame that they and many fine educators across the state were so unfairly labeled," Downes said.

Of the 700 schools originally flagged by Caveon, investigations continue at 105 campuses. Three schools have since closed, TEA officials said.

Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331, ext. 234, or by e-mail at [reporter@bigspringherald.com](mailto:reporter@bigspringherald.com)

## SADDAM

Continued from Page 1A

the eruption of a destructive civil war," he said.

Saddam urged Iraqis in a letter posted on a Web site Wednesday to "remember that God has enabled you to become an example of love, forgiveness and brotherly coexistence."

But he also voiced support for the Sunni Arab-dominated insurgency, saying: "Long live jihad and the mujahedeen."

He urged Iraqis to be patient and rely on God's

help in fighting "against the unjust nations."

An official from Prime Minister al-Maliki's Dawa Party, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media, said Wednesday that "the government wants Saddam executed as soon as possible."

Issam Ghazzawi, another member of Saddam's defense team, said there was no way of knowing when the former dictator's execution would take place.

"The only person who can predict the execution

of the president ... is God and (President) Bush," Ghazzawi said Thursday.

Saddam is in the midst of another trial, charged with genocide and other crimes during a 1987-88 military crackdown on

Kurds in northern Iraq. That trial was adjourned until Jan. 8, but experts have said the trial of Saddam's co-defendants is likely to continue even if he is executed.

## Online shoppers armed with new iPods, iTunes gift cards overwhelm Apple's music store

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Swarms of online shoppers armed with new iPods and iTunes gift cards apparently overwhelmed Apple's iTunes music store over the holiday, prompting error messages and slowdowns of 20 minutes or more for downloads of a single song.

Frazzled users began posting urgent help messages Monday and Tuesday on Apple's technical forum for iTunes, complaining they were either not allowed into the store or were told the system couldn't process their request to download songs and videos.

It was not immediately clear how many people were affected by the slowdowns, and Apple Computer Inc. would not immediately comment Wednesday on what caused the slowdown and whether it had been fixed.

Analysts said the problems likely were the result of too many people with holiday iPods and iTunes gift cards trying to access the site at once.

at the start of his journey from Georgia to New York.

"It's going to be a royal day in Harlem," Sharpton said. He promised "the kind of homecoming we haven't seen in a long time, if ever, in the Harlem community."

Sharpton said the road trip was necessary because logistical problems had made air travel impossible.

## Colorado braces for more snow

DENVER (AP) — Still recovering from last week's blizzard, Colorado cities braced for another storm that could bring more than a foot of snow and high winds to the state and cause planes to be grounded at Denver International Airport again.

The National Weather Service said a storm, expected Thursday, could pack gusts up to 45 mph, whipping the heavy snow into blinding whiteouts. Weather Service forecasters said flights from Denver's airport could be delayed or even canceled but cautioned the storm's path and intensity were difficult to predict.

## Singer James Brown's body to return for last stop at Apollo Theater

NEW YORK (AP) — The Rev. Al Sharpton promised a "royal day in Harlem" as he raced through the night in a van to make sure the late singer James Brown did not miss his last date at the historic Apollo Theater.

A horse-drawn carriage waited to take Brown's body through Harlem on Thursday morning to begin three days of wake, remembrances and a funeral of the kind normally reserved for royalty.

"He was a superstar for common people, and I wanted to make sure that common people got to see him one last time," Sharpton, Brown's close friend, told The Associated Press shortly after 9 p.m. Wednesday.

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

Tory Mitchell, 26, died Sunday. Funeral Services will be at 2:00 PM Saturday at 14th and Main Church of Christ. Burial will be at Trinity Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 6:00 until 7:00 PM Friday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

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HENRY BACKES



## 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.

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## OUR VIEWS

## Gerald Ford may have been too nice a guy

Gerald R. Ford was the regular-guy president. Friendly and unassuming, Ford, whose death at 93 was announced Tuesday, came into office after the Watergate affair forced out Richard Nixon. Ford's openness and humanity was a refreshing contrast to the icy awkwardness and extensive covering up of his predecessor.

"Our long national nightmare is over," Ford proclaimed memorably on the day he assumed office. He and his wife, Betty, immediately telegraphed a more affable mood in Washington. Ford engendered a more candid relationship with reporters and a less combative stance toward Congress, where he had served for 25 years in the House representing Grand Rapids, Mich., including eight years as minority leader.

Two accidents of history propelled Ford to the presidency. After Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned in 1973, Nixon wanted a loyal No. 2, someone who could win easy approval in Congress and, some historians suggest, a man whose lack of presidential bearing might blunt the efforts that were brewing to remove Nixon. Ten months later, Nixon was out, and for the first time in U.S. history, a man who had never run for president or vice president became commander in chief.

In his two-plus years as president, Ford faced a tortuous gamut of foreign and domestic challenges, including the communist takeover of Vietnam, disarmament talks with the Soviet Union and raging inflation domestically. In day-to-day governing, his heavy reliance on the presidential veto opened him to criticism that he was less of a leader and more of a reactor. After all the controversies that have dogged presidents since, however, the Ford presidency looks relatively calm.

Ford will be remembered most for one act: his pardon of Nixon, just one month after the resignation. Ford wanted to govern as the president who led his nation out of the long shadow of Watergate. Yet his ill-timed and ill-considered pardon actually drew the shadow of Watergate over Ford's own presidency, destroying the Republican Party's chances in midterm elections that year and perhaps contributing to Ford's re-election loss to Jimmy Carter in 1976.

The pardon was a mistake, inconsistent with the fundamental principle that everyone, including the president, is equal before the law. Nixon tried hard to defy that principle and, coming so soon after his resignation, the pardon did the same. Some of those who once criticized Ford's pardon have softened their views over time, arguing that we needed healing and forgiveness. In 1974, however, after so much Nixonian stonewalling and evasiveness, our system of government would have been better served by letting the legal process take its course, no matter how uncertain.

History shows that Ford's top advisers were baffled by his determination to forgive Nixon right away. Ford's intention, some believe, was to prove that he could act as his own man and follow his own conscience. Others suggest he was influenced by the ghost of his own father, an abusive man who was devastated when Ford's mother divorced him and who died before the son had a chance to forgive him. Ford himself wrote in his memoirs that he knew the pardon was the right move and that he did not anticipate the virulence of the reaction against it. He may have been too nice a guy.

- The Los Angeles Times

## Is the unthinkable now thinkable?

America has the greatest health care in the history of the universe, but the system is fraught with problems that are getting worse every day. It has become so complex that prospects for significant reform seem bleak. But putting aside political considerations, the solutions might be simpler than we assume.

The main problem is that we have crowded out market forces and reduced consumer choice. What the system needs is a robust dose of capitalism.

No one has done a better job of making that case than Dr. David Gratzner in his book, "The Cure: How Capitalism Can Save American Health Care." The late Dr. Milton Friedman endorsed Dr. Gratzner's recommendations in his foreword to the book.

Friedman explained that before World War II, medical care, like other consumer goods and services, was dispensed through a mostly free market. Patients could choose their own doctors and were responsible for paying the fees. Health care insurance generally didn't cover routine treatment, only catastrophic events.

But when wartime wage and price controls led to a shortage of workers, employers offered benefits, including health care, to make jobs more enticing. Eventually, the government reinforced the practice by exempting this benefit from taxation. In time, our market-driven system became a "top-down" bureaucracy, with "exploding costs" and "widespread dissatisfaction" of patients and providers.

Dr. Gratzner recommends a three-pronged solution centered on unleashing market forces. He would make health insurance portable, primarily by eliminating the employer-paid health insurance deduction. He would shore

up Medicare, partially by setting aside part of the payroll tax into registered health accounts, to be invested in the market. Finally, he would attempt to "create a market that will catalyze innovation in drugs and medical services."

Dr. Gratzner says that by reintroducing market forces, "American health care will become cheaper, better, and more accessible for everyone. Capitalism is not the cause of America's health-care problem. It is the cure."

How true. But sadly, the market approach is precisely the opposite of what Democrats — and some Republicans — favor.

Liberals have this regrettable habit of increasing government control over institutions and sectors of the economy, then denying responsibility when their supposedly good intentions just exacerbate the problems.

We've seen this from the war on poverty and welfare, to education. But with blind faith in their failed prescriptions, they always demand heavier doses of the same poisons: government money and control.

One would hope there would be such an adverse reaction to full-blown socialistic policies that supporting them would be political suicide. Indeed, many conservatives believe that universal health care is still so unpopular that Hillary Clinton's sponsorship of it in the Nineties could sabotage her presidential ambitions today.

But I fear Americans' concern over health care has grown enormously since HillaryCare imploded. There is so much anxiety about rising costs that it is conceivable — perish the thought — that a politician's endorsement of socialized medicine could actually benefit him politically.

In fact, just last week, a news story reported, "As Democrats prepare to take control of the 110th Congress a new approach to healthcare reform is expected — universal coverage."

Imagine that. The electorate sent Republicans packing in November, due, in part, to their unbridled spending proclivities, and now

Democrats believe they have a mandate to spend recklessly greater amounts. (We tried to warn you about the dangers in "throwing the bums out," just to replace them with bigger bums.)

But there is a method to the Democrats' madness. The same news story reveals — disturbingly — that "a majority of Americans would favor government intervention." The good news is that the majority is not yet behind wholesale "government-run health care."

Then again, Democrats have not yet revved up their propaganda engines. If you think they shamelessly demagogued President Bush's noble efforts to reform Social Security, just wait 'til they get the chance to demonize anyone courageous enough to propose reasonable, market reforms to health care.

John Edwards will probably resurrect his "two Americas" stump speech. John Kerry will tell us that if it hadn't been for Bush's war for oil everyone would be covered. Al Gore will say that Bush's refusal to surrender America's car keys to Kyoto has intensified global warming, which has made us all sick and health care costs skyrocket.

Bill Clinton will say, "I did not have sex with that woman, Ms. Lewinsky." Hillary will say, "Yes, you did. But if instead you had put more energy into my health care reform plan, I could have run (and won) in 2000 instead of that idiot Al Gore."

Let's not underestimate the gravity of the problems with our health-care system, nor the stakes involved in choosing the right cure.

To find out more about David Limbaugh, please visit his Web site at [www.davidlimbaugh.com](http://www.davidlimbaugh.com). And to read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com).

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## No more new Wheat Thins!

Ever dunked a cookie into a cup of hot chocolate a split second too long? Of course you have. Maybe you're doing it right now. (Check!) Either way, you know what you end up with: A contaminated drink with a cookie stub hovering above its own disintegrated body.

This is an experience you'd want to repeat?

Well, apparently someone in corporate marketing thinks so, because now you can buy S'mores-flavored Nesquik, the world's first drink engineered to taste like an after-school snack accident. By comparison, Mini Marshmallow Nesquik sounds like Dom Perignon.

On the other hand, Nesquik isn't nearly as disturbing as the new Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Pop-Tarts. Raw dough inside a baked tart. I don't even get how that is possible.

So, as a new year approaches and we all get busy making resolutions, this seems a perfect time for some:

**RESOLUTIONS FROM THE PEOPLE WHO COME UP WITH NEW FOODS**

We, the country's strange and unseen food consultants, do solemnly pledge:

This coming year, we will not add sour cream 'n' onion flavoring to anything else. Not to a baked version of a previously fried snack,

not to a trans-fat free version of a previously baked snack, not to nothin'. We are fully aware that just opening a container of sour cream 'n' onion anything makes the whole room smell like a frat house where not one of the so-called "brothers" was willing to wash out the dip bowl. There it sits. So adios to sour cream 'n' onion.

Note: We did not promise anything about sour cream 'n' chives!

OK. OK. No sour cream 'n' chives, either.

This is the year we will also stop fiddling with Wheat Thins. There is simply nothing left for us to do with them. We've done parmesan/basil, "harvest garden vegetable" (and any other word we could throw in to conjure up the kind of farm-fresh food this isn't), and we've done ranch, of course, and honey (never hurts to make a food sweeter!). We've even done Big Wheat Thins, which look like something you're supposed to put in your shoe. So, frankly, we're done. If you don't like the Wheat Thins there on the shelf, you're not going to like any new ones we can dream up. Try a Ritz.

But don't expect any new weird Ritz shapes, either! Even WE are

embarrassed by Ritz Sticks, which claim to help "dip, dunk, scoop." Like the round ones were so impossible to maneuver? Like they weren't the best-selling cracker in human history? No new shapes!

No new blue kiddie drinks, either. Promise. Kids lose all aesthetic appeal when their lips get blue. We see that.

Nor will we add pomegranate to any drinks, even though, frankly, we could sell pomegranate milk at this point. Pomegranates are the new sour cream 'n' onion. (NOTE TO BOSS: Sour cream 'n' onion milk in '08?)

Finally, we will refrain from giving diet and health foods the kind of scrumptious names that make people fly out of the organic aisle and drive straight to the Butterfat Hut. So no more chocolate pecan pie diet shakes. Ditto, caramel nut brownie fiber bars.

We will strive to make only responsible brand extensions in the coming year.

Unless the folks at Coke want to talk graham cracker crumbs. With lime.

To find out more about Lenore Skenazy ([lskenazy@yahoo.com](mailto:lskenazy@yahoo.com)), and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com).

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# Ford achieved by chance what others strive for mightily

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Gerald R. Ford was a man of limited ambition who, through bizarre circumstances never before experienced by the country, achieved an office that others win through the greatest determination and calculation.

The nation's 38th president, Ford wanted only to become speaker of the House.

History had another place for him.

Ford was comfortable in the House, representing a Michigan congressional district for 25 years, rising to Republican leader and working toward his dream of one day running the chamber, when President Nixon called.

He needed a new vice president; scandal had chased Spiro Agnew from the office.

Ford wasn't Nixon's first choice, but the president agreed that the amiable Republican would be the easiest to win confirmation by both houses of Congress. So it went, and Ford became vice president in December 1973.

Yet eight months later, the scenario got even stranger.

The scandal of Watergate drove Nixon to become the only president to resign.

Ford, who died Tuesday at 93 at his home in the California desert, again was left to fill a void.

And so the man who did not covet the presidency, who never had sought national office and who wanted only to become the "head honcho" of the House, became president by chance — unlike many since who have devoted huge amounts of time and money in

pursuit of the Oval Office.

"I have not campaigned either for the presidency or the vice presidency," Ford told the nation in his inaugural address on Aug. 9, 1974. "I have not sought this enormous responsibility, but I will not shirk it."

Charles O. Jones, a political scholar at the Brookings Institution, said Ford "truly was an accidental president and he ought to be judged that way." Ford, he said, had the least political capital of almost any president because he wasn't elected.

"He had to come in entirely depending upon the difference of himself and Nixon," Jones said Wednesday.

What little capital Ford did have was quickly spent when, just a month after taking office, he granted Nixon a federal pardon for all crimes committed as

president — further angering the country.

"It wasn't handled well," Erwin Hargrove, who taught political science at Vanderbilt University, said Wednesday. "He could have prepared the path for a pardon. He did it too abruptly."

Many believe the pardon contributed to Ford's loss to Democrat Jimmy Carter in 1976.

By then, Ford had come to enjoy being president. He once told Congress he would not run for a full term in 1976 even if he succeeded Nixon, but changed his mind within weeks of taking the oath of office.

"The Oval Office is large, comfortable and inspiring," Ford wrote in "A Time To Heal," his autobiography. "I knew there were many far-reaching things that I as presi-

dent could do, but I never sat in the chair behind my desk and said, 'I'm a powerful man. I can press a button or pull a switch and such and such will happen.'"

He occupied the White House for 895 days. During that time, the Vietnam War ended and Ford inked a pivotal arms control treaty with the Soviet Union, regarded as a major foreign policy achievement on his watch.

But it was not to last. Years later, Carter withdrew the pact from Senate consideration after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Ford promised to compromise and cooperate with his former colleagues in Congress, but relations between them were not always smooth. He vetoed 66 bills, and Congress overrode him on 12 of those.

## Texas briefs

### Ordinance foes succeed in petition effort

FARMERS BRANCH (AP) — Opponents of a city ordinance prohibiting landlords from renting to illegal immigrants have collected enough valid signatures to force the City Council to repeal the measure or put it to a city vote.

The petition drive gathered at least 908 valid signatures, more than the 721 required, city spokesman Tom Bryson said.

The Farmers Branch City Council in November unanimously adopted a policy requiring property managers or owners to verify the immigration or citizenship status of apartment renters.

### Lightning strikes Port Arthur priest's car

PORT ARTHUR (AP) — The Rev. J.C. Coon didn't know what came over his car as he was driving home from visiting members of his parish at the Medical Center of Southeast Texas, but he thinks a guardian angel was watching out for him.

The car shook. And the Catholic priest let the car drift to the side of the road last week so that he could survey the damage as smoke filled the inside of the vehicle. A closer inspection found the back passenger window blown out and the metal frame around the window mangled and twisted.

Lightning had struck, although Coon told the *Port Arthur News* that he never saw a flash when it hit.

Coon said police and firefighters who responded to the scene were dismayed.

### Santeria priest sues over sacrifice ban

EULESS (AP) — A Santeria priest is suing the city of Euless to keep officials from enforcing ordinances he believes restrict him from practicing his religion.

In a federal suit, Jose Merced, 45, alleges city officials denied him a permit to perform Santeria ceremonies with animal sacrifice inside his home, even though people outside would not have been able to see or hear them.

An ordained Oba, Merced explained that blood sacrifices of animals are essential to practicing Santeria, a religion that mixes Roman

Catholicism with African beliefs.

"We do not want to break the law and yet we are entitled to practice our religion," Merced said in an affidavit.

Police have gone to his home at least four times in the past two years, citing complaints from a neighbor over animal slaughter that weren't warranted, Merced said.

A call made Wednesday night to Euless city offices was not immediately returned.

### Police detective faces sex charge

AUSTIN (AP) — An Austin police detective has been indicted on a charge of attempted sexual assault stemming from an alleged off-duty encounter with a woman at a hair removal business.

A Travis County grand jury issued an indictment

Wednesday charging Andrew Perkel, 45, with felony attempted sexual assault and misdemeanor charges of public lewdness and indecent exposure.

"The charges are not true and we are anxious for a trial," said Chris Gunter, Perkel's defense lawyer.

"Everything that transpired between these two people was consensual," Gunter said, declining to elaborate on the September incident.

Perkel, a 14-year veteran of the Austin police, has been placed on temporary suspension with pay pending the outcome of the criminal cases and an internal affairs investigation, the Austin Police Department said in a statement.

The department's integrity crimes unit forwarded the case to the district attorney's office after investigating the

incident, according to the statement.

### Councilwoman ordered to pay city's legal fees

EL PASO (AP) — City Councilwoman Melina Castro has been ordered to pay El Paso's legal fees in a lawsuit she filed against the city attorney over documents she wanted to review.

Castro sued El Paso City Attorney Charles McNabb after she said a series of requests for records related to a wrongful termination suit against the city were denied.

Castro sought records connected to a \$500,000 settlement with a former city employee approved last summer.

She has complained that McNabb should not have done any work on the settlement because he was a friend of the former employee.

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© Puzzles by Pappocom

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

The Borden County Independent School District (I.S.D.) in Gail, Texas, is presently accepting transfer students for the spring semester of 2007.

The Borden County I.S.D. is a "Recognized District," as named by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the 2005-2006 school year. This past year, the district also received ten (10) Gold Star Performance awards from the TEA for high percentages of "Commended" students on all five TAKS testing areas, completion of the Recommended/Distinguished Achievement graduation planes, college readiness in both mathematics and language arts, student attendance, and completion of advanced academic courses.

- The Borden County I.S.D. also has a rich tradition in the following:**
- Maintaining a high-qualified faculty and staff
  - Offering concurrent college credit for juniors and seniors (27 on-site college hours available)
  - Promoting high college and post-secondary attendance rates at various universities.
  - Successful and competitive University Interscholastic League academic teams.
  - Successful and competitive University Interscholastic League athletic programs (six-man football, cross-country, basketball, track, tennis, golf, baseball, & softball)
  - Active FFA chapter with successful and competitive leadership/judging teams
  - Providing a safe and drug-free school environment

Please contact Mr. Jimmy Thomas, Borden County I.S.D. Superintendent, at (806) 756-4313 or (806) 756-4316 if you are interested in transferring your child for the spring semester of 2007.

**Amy E. Reese**  
D.D.S., P.C.  
432-267-4102

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# Rare combination of style, performance

## Bentley convertible

By MARK PHELAN

Detroit Free Press

Would somebody at least try to compete with Bentley?

It won't be easy, but it can be done. It's hard to believe the rest of the world's automakers wouldn't like a slice of the rich, chocolate-truffle cake Bentley has to itself today.

Would the menu at Tribute be so exquisite if the Lark didn't exist? Would the Detroit Institute of Art scramble to mount the best exhibitions if it weren't looking over its shoulder to see what's up at the Art Institute of Chicago?

Competition is good, but at the moment Bentley has the field to itself. No other brand offers the same combination of unique styling, opulent interiors, exclusivity and breathtaking performance. Rolls-Royce has the heritage, but lacks Bentley's grace and performance. BMW has the performance, but BMWs are not rare enough. Lamborghini and Ferrari have the style and speed, but not the passenger and luggage space.

Volkswagen AG, which owns Bentley, has proven a mass manufacturer can build a museum-worthy automobile with unique looks and the snob appeal of box seats at the Met.

In the four short years since VW took over Bentley, the brand has risen from obscurity to one-word status symbol. Baccarat. Burberry. Bentley.

Bentley's latest creation is the 2007 Continental GTC, a sumptuous 552-horsepower convertible with a base price of \$193,600, including a \$3,700 gas-guzzler tax. I tested a Cote d'Azur blue GTC that stickered at \$198,320. All prices exclude destination charges, which themselves total a tidy \$2,595.

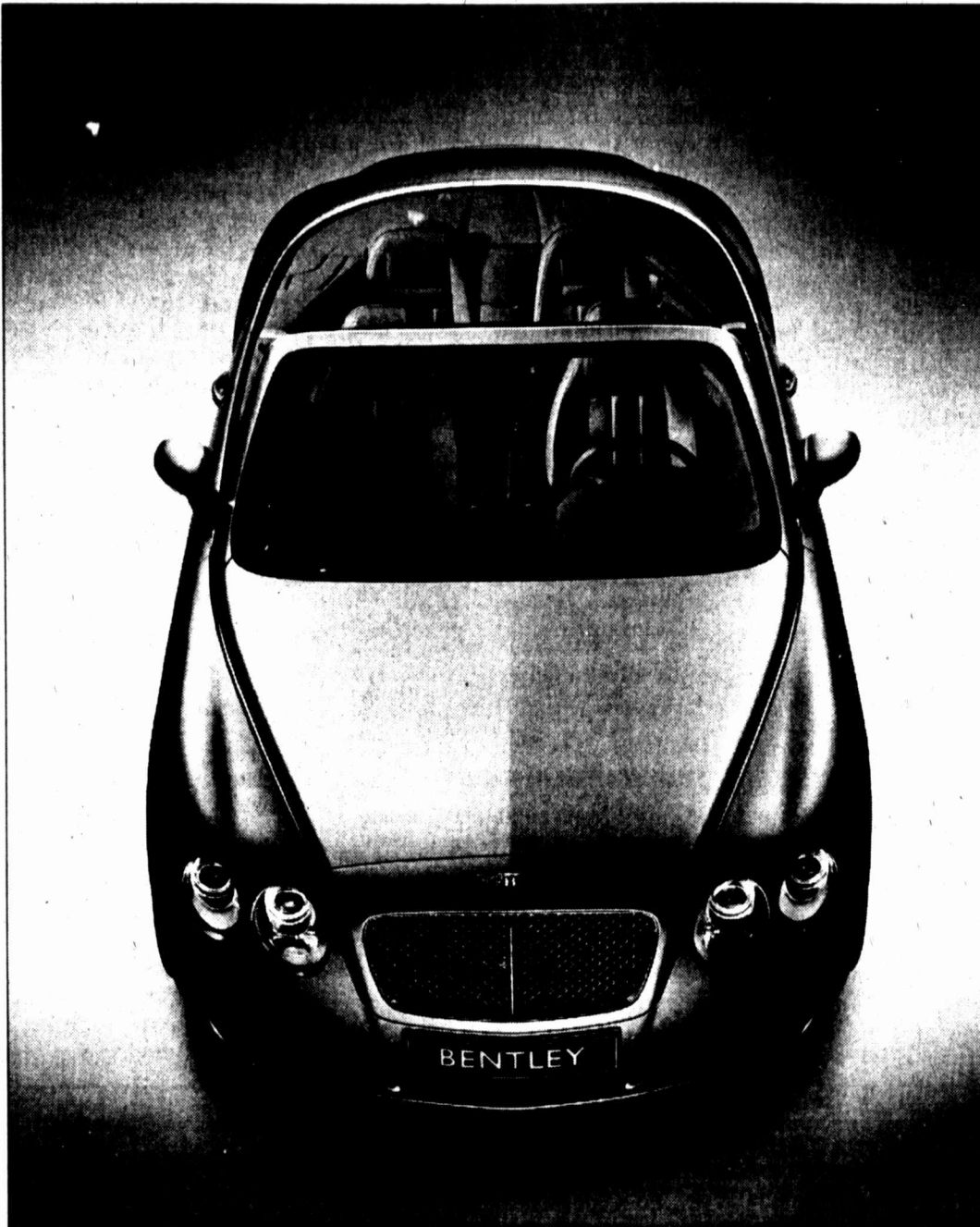
You can pay nearly that much for a Mercedes-Benz SL 65 AMG, but the Mercedes badge looks almost generic compared to Bentley's silver wings. Simply everybody at the club has a Mercedes, darling. How do you even know which one's yours in the parking lot?

At this pinnacle of exclusivity, it's not enough to slip a 604-horsepower twin-turbo V12 engine under the hood of an SL roadster, as Mercedes did to create the 65 AMG. You have to start from scratch and build something unique.

The true wonder of Bentley is that its cars have such impact despite borrowing liberally from VW's parts bin. The engine, transmission, all-wheel-drive system and electronics all have their roots in VW and Audi models, but Bentley has millionaires waiting in line for its cars because the cars look and feel like nothing else on the road.

The GTC pulls this trick off by using the same 6.0-liter twin-turbo 12-cylinder engine as Bentley's GT coupe and Flying Spur sedan.

The engine pulls with the irresistible force of gravity, only quicker. The GTC has a top speed of



195 mph (just 190 with the power soft top open) and reaches 60 mph in 4.8 seconds.

The six-speed automatic transmission and performance-tuned all-wheel-drive system transmit the engine's massive power smoothly, and the adjustable air suspension smothered bumps and held the car flat and stable through fast curves.

For all the careful detailing of the GTC's appearance, interior function could have used a bit more thought.

There's very little interior storage space, almost no rear legroom, and the single cup holder is an accident waiting to happen.

The glovebox-mounted CD changer is badly out of place in this exquisite luxury car. If Toyota can fit an in-dash changer into a \$15,450 Corolla S, Bentley should be able to do it for 12 times the money.

The lack of such a basic amenity is all the more amazing when you consider that the GTC's standard equipment includes creamy hand-stitched leather on almost every surface, four-zone climate control, a DVD navigation system, walnut trim, a Breitling clock and a power soft top with three layers of insulation and an actual dome light.

The top keeps the ele- gantly

hushed at high speeds, and there's very little wind noise with the top open.

However, the plastic plate behind the driver's door pulled off in my hand once. It clicked back in neatly, but a loose piece of trim is extremely disconcerting in a car like this, even a pre-production GTC like the one I tested.

Despite its few shortcomings, the GTC is an extraordinary car, worthy of the attention it attracts. The only thing that's likely to make it better is when some other automaker summons up the nerve and imagination to compete with Bentley.

### 2007 BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GTC

Vehicle type: All-wheel-drive four-passenger luxury convertible

Base price: \$193,600 (excluding destination charges, including gas-guzzler tax)

As tested: \$198,320

Standard equipment: Antilock brakes; brake force distribution and emergency brake assist; electronic stability control; driver and front passenger side air bags; power locks, windows, seats and mirrors; heated seats; reinforced windscreen surround; memory for seats, mirrors and steering wheel; power soft top with rollover protection and rear-seat located rollover bars; seat belt pretensioners; steering wheel paddles for manual shift mode; air suspension with manual driver adjustment for ride height and damper settings; 19-inch alloy wheels with high-performance tires; four-zone climate control; heated seats; navigation system; AM/FM stereo with 12 speakers and digital sound processing; glovebox-mounted six-disc CD changer; power latching doors; seven-bow, triple insulated fabric roof with glass rear window and dome light; leather interior trim including seats, tonneau, dashboard and doors; bull's-eye air vents with chrome organ-stop controls; Breitling analog clock; hand-stitched leather steering wheel with multifunction controls; Bluetooth hands-free system for phone, PDA, etc.

Options: Alloy Mulliner fuel cap; upgrade wood trim to bird's-eye maple; deep-pile carpet mats with hide trimming color-matched to carpet; lumbar massage for both front seats; veneer inserts to front door and rear quarter panels; 19-inch thin-spoke bright machined sports wheels; valet parking key.

#### Specifications as tested

Engine: 6.0-liter DOHC 48-valve W12

Power: 552 horsepower at 6,100 r.p.m., 479 pound-feet of torque at 1,600 r.p.m.

Transmission: Six-speed automatic

Fuel economy: 11 mpg city/18 mpg highway

Wheelbase: 108.1 inches

Length: 189.1 inches

Width: 82.7 inches

Height: 55.0 inches

Curb weight: 5,500 pounds

Where assembled: Crewe, England

## Contract Bridge

Sylvia

South dealer.

Neither side vulnerable.

**NORTH**

♦ Q 9 5

♥ A J 10 9

♦ 10 8 3 2

♣ Q 3

**WEST**

♦ 10 8 6

♥ 7 5

♦ A K Q J 9

♣ 9 7 2

**SOUTH**

♦ A 7

♥ K Q 6 3 2

♦ 6 5

♣ K J 8 6

**EAST**

♦ K J 4 3 2

♥ 8 4

♦ 7 4

♣ A 10 5 4

**THE BIDDING:**

South West North East

1♥ 2♦ 2♥ Pass

4♥

Opening lead — King of diamonds.

I remember as though it were yesterday the first time I played against Sylvia. My introduction had come on the previous deal when I opened one spade, Sylvia passed, my partner bid two spades, and Sylvia's partner bid three spades.

This cuebid, announcing a huge hand void of spades, was not in Sylvia's repertoire at that time, and she cheerfully passed, holding J-x-x-x of spades and little else. Her partner could have made six clubs, but at three spades he went down four!

When her spluttering partner

asked Sylvia why she had passed, her reply was to some extent logical. With both opponents and her partner bidding spades, she felt her partner was the one to be trusted. That ended the brief discussion, her partner having been struck speechless!

The next deal, the one shown, revealed Sylvia's versatility. West led the A-K-Q of diamonds, Sylvia (South) ruffing the third round as I discarded a spade from the East hand.

After leading a low heart to the nine, Sylvia ruffed another diamond and led a low club to the queen. I took the ace and returned a club. Sylvia cashed the K-J, then played the K-Q of hearts, overtaking with dummy's ace.

At this point, dummy had the jack of hearts and Q-9 of spades. I had the K-J of spades and ten of clubs, and Sylvia had the A-7 of spades and eight of clubs.

Sylvia cashed the jack of hearts, and I was in deep trouble. If I discarded a spade, she could discard a club and make two spade tricks. Instead, I let go of the club, and she discarded a spade. She then took the last two tricks with the spade ace and eight of clubs.

In effect, Sylvia had executed a dummy reversal followed by a squeeze! However, she could never understand why I discarded the high club!

Tomorrow: Bidding quiz.

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## IN BRIEF

### Rangers issue deadline for Zito

The Texas Rangers want Barry Zito to decide by the end of this week if he's going to accept their contract offer.

Rangers general manager Jon Daniels confirmed the reported deadline in an e-mail to The Associated Press.

Zito and his agent, Scott Boras, met with owner Tom Hicks, Daniels and other Rangers officials in a visit to Texas back on Nov. 30.

Zito and Boras have also met with the New York Mets. There is also a rumor that the New York Yankees will pursue the 2002 AL Cy Young Award winner if they trade Randy Johnson.

Texas would still be interested in Zito after this weekend, but its offer is likely to change if the negotiation lingers on much longer.

### Rockets win behind Battier's 3-pointers

Shane Battier hit a career high seven 3-pointers and scored 23 points to lead visiting Houston.

Tracy McGrady added 17 points and six assists for the Rockets.

Houston defeated the New Jersey Nets by a score of 96-71 Wednesday night.

### Toronto Raptors squeak by T-Wolves

T.J. Ford, the former University of Texas star, scored 28 points and Anthony Parker added 19 for host Toronto, which is 6-4 without leading scorer Chris Bosh (left knee injury).

The Raptors needed all the scoring as they won the contest 100-97.

### AP names '06 sports story of the year

It was, even by Tiger Woods' standards, an exceptional year: eight PGA Tour victories, including a stretch of six in a row that took him from the British Open to the beginning of October.

What made that finish most remarkable, though, was the loss that preceded it. For anyone who's watched Woods dismantle opponents and golf courses alike and come away wondering if he was indeed human, the May death of his beloved father Earl was a heart-breaking reminder he is.

Woods' ability to channel his grief into an extraordinary run of six straight PGA Tour wins, including the British Open and the PGA Championship, was chosen as the sports story of the year in voting by members of The Associated Press.

Woods received 422 total points in the voting. Vince Young leading the Texas Longhorns to the national title with a thrilling fourth-quarter rally over defending champion Southern California came in second place with a total of 380 points.

# 'Noles regain winning edge in bowl game

## Florida State 44 UCLA Bruins 27

By GREG BEACHAM  
AP Sports Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — While UCLA hung tight with Florida State for three quarters, the Emerald Bowl seemed just as challenging to Bobby Bowden as any national championship game.

The Seminoles' three-decade streak of winning football was in trouble — until they blew out the Bruins by channeling a season's worth of frustration into a fantastic fourth quarter.

Lorenzo Booker ran for 91 yards, caught five passes for 117 more and scored two touchdowns, leading Florida State to a 44-27 victory Wednesday night to complete Bowden's 30th straight year with a winning team.

In their 21-point final period, the Seminoles (7-6) were everything they wanted to be all season long. Greg Carr caught a go-ahead, 30-yard touchdown pass on fourth-and-9, and Booker capped his final college game with a key third-down catch and a 3-yard TD run with 6:17 left.

"We took the game to a Florida level, and I don't think they were used to that," Seminoles linebacker Buster Davis said. "We kept believing in each other, and we finished. ... We've been through a lot of adversity this season. We just wanted to come out to California and take care of business. That's all this week was about."

This was no fairy-tale finish for a program that once dominated the sport and won two national titles. Wracked by injuries and beset by coaching turmoil that led to Jeff Bowden's in-season resignation as offensive coordinator, the Seminoles finished with their worst record since

going 7-4-1 in 1986.

But the 77-year-old Bowden still hasn't coached a losing club since going 5-6 in his first season at Florida State — and with a fine finish against the Bruins (7-6), the Seminoles are headed into 2007 with more momentum than they've had all season.

"That's what Florida State used to do all the time," Bowden said. "I hope this is a good sign for us. I've been looking for that sign."

A 3-5 record in ACC play, including four losses in six games to close the regular season, forced Florida State to finish an ignominious year with the longest road trip in school history. The Seminoles have played in 25 straight bowl games, but the last 15 were played in January, with considerably bigger stakes and payouts.

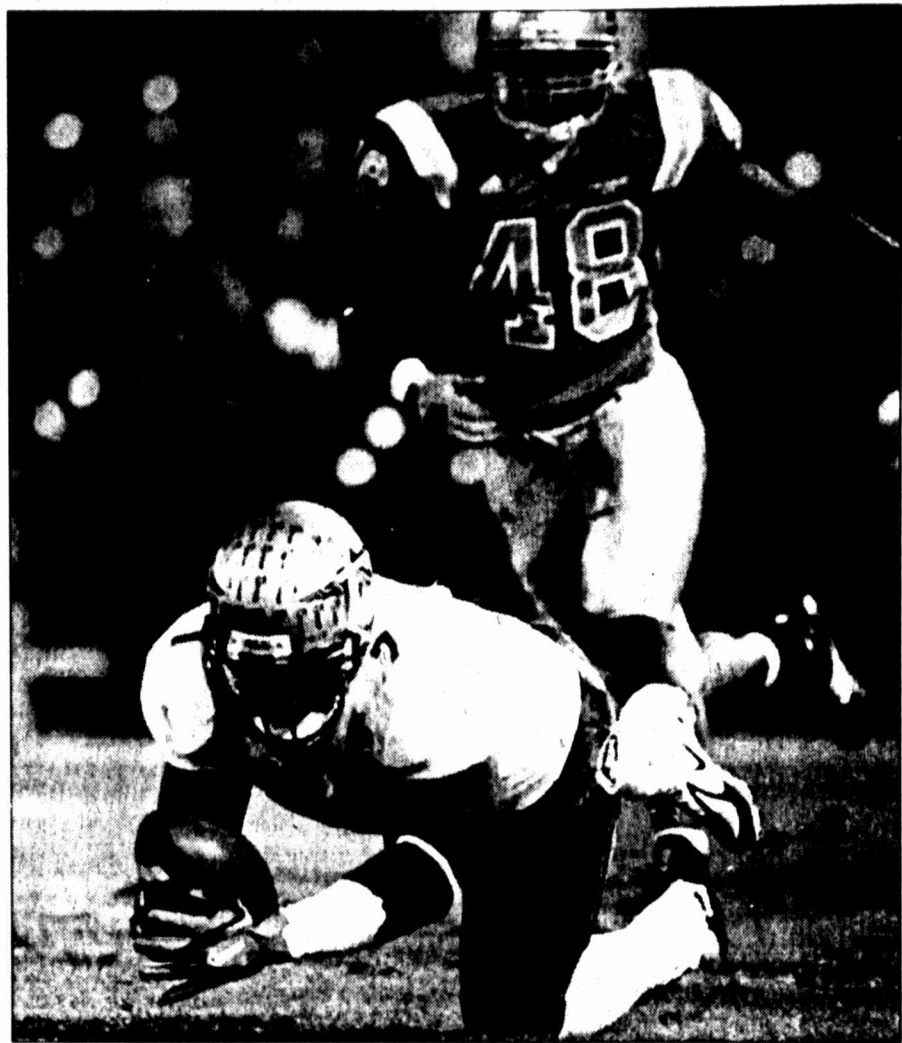
Don't tell that to Booker, a California native who got a chance to impress 130 friends and family members in the stands. This minor bowl was a major win.

"We have a 30-year streak, and we're proud of our history," said Drew Weatherford, who overcame a shaky start to pass for 325 yards, 126 in the fourth quarter. "We had to keep it going, and it gives us a head start and a boost for next season."

Patrick Cowan passed for 240 yards and Chris Markey ran for 144 for the inconsistent Bruins, who came in with a three-game winning streak, highlighted by a 13-9 victory over archrival USC 3 1/2 weeks ago.

"When you look at the score the next day, I'm sure people are going to say, 'Wow, what happened?'" UCLA coach Karl Dorrell said. "But it was a lot different game than the score indicated. We played three pretty good quarters."

Yet the Seminoles rolled over the Bruins on offense, defense



MCT photo/Karl Mondon/Contra Costa Times  
Florida State's Buster Davis recovers a first quarter fumble by UCLA's Chris Markey during the Emerald Bowl at AT&T Park in San Francisco, Wednesday night.

and special teams in the second half. Lawrence Timmons returned a blocked punt 25 yards for a score in the third quarter, and Carter's return was just one of several big stops.

When a Florida State drive stalled early in the fourth quarter with the Seminoles trailing by four, Bowden and his son proved they had nothing to lose by boldly going for it on fourth and long. Carr easily made his TD catch a step from the end zone when his defender fell

down. Most patrons in the sellout crowd of 40,331 were cheering for UCLA, but Florida State had a surprisingly solid rooting section for a game on the opposite end of the coast.

"We have to use this to drive ourselves to getting better," UCLA linebacker Christian Taylor said. "We need to work even harder in the offseason, because we know we have some weaknesses. Someone had to lose and it's disappointing it was us."

## Auburn suspends players

By JOHN ZENOR  
AP Sports Writer

AUBURN, Ala. — The Auburn Tigers aren't sure how the suspension of three teammates will affect them in the Cotton Bowl, but they're already feeling their absence off the field.

Starting linebacker Tray Blackmon, reserve linebacker Kevin Sears and backup tailback Brad Lester were all suspended indefinitely earlier this month for unspecified violation of team rules.

It leaves a void everywhere from the depth chart to the position meetings for Monday's game against No. 22 Nebraska (9-4).

"They're both impact guys. Even not having them in the meeting room has been different,"

Karibi Dede said Wednesday. "Early on when I first found out, I kind of felt a moral and spiritual letdown."

"Those are high-energy guys, a lot of fun to be around. It's like a part of your family is staying home."

Coach Tommy Tuberville downplays the potential impact of the suspensions. Auburn (10-2) resumed practice Wednesday with a workout at SMU's Ford Stadium.

"It's not a big drop-off for us in the fact that it's just one game," Tuberville said. "If it were five or six games it would be a little bit more of a concern because you'd have depth problems. With it being a 60-minute contest, there

shouldn't be any problems."

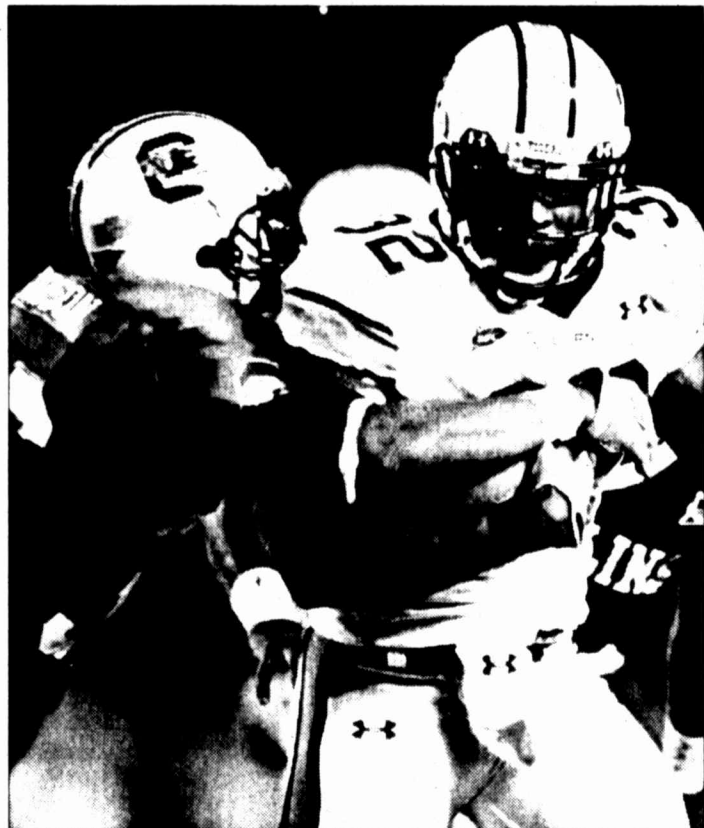
Lester is the team's No. 2 rusher with 510 yards, behind Kenny Irons. But he also had scored a team-high nine touchdowns despite starting only two games.

That leaves either Carl Stewart, Ben Tate or Tre Smith to get some more carries. Tuberville didn't say who would move up to the top backup spot.

"I think it will be a surprise to me," he said.

The circumstances keep him from totally welcoming the shot at more playing time.

"I'm not even going to call it an opportunity. That's a devastation for us because we are a family out there," Stewart said. "It's like we're missing a family member."



MCT photo/Erik Campos/The State  
Auburn running back Carl Stewart breaks a tackle against the South Carolina's Stoney Wilson in early season SEC action.

## Rookie leads Dallas past Denver

By PAT GRAHAM  
AP Sports Writer

DENVER — Stars rookie Chris Conner woke up Wednesday in Des Moines, Iowa, traveled to Denver for an NHL game and planned to sleep in a hotel bed when he got to Dallas.

At least he hoped to sleep in a hotel.

"I think they set us up?" Conner said after he scored his first NHL goal in the Stars' 5-4 win over the Colorado Avalanche on Wednesday night. "It's been kind of crazy."

And memorable. "I'm just trying to help the team win," he said.

Conner was recalled from Iowa of the AHL earlier in the day to replace captain Brenden Morrow, who was back home in Dallas recuperating from wrist surgery. Morrow

was injured in Dallas' loss to the Chicago Blackhawks on Tuesday and underwent surgery later to repair severed tendons in his right wrist after he was stepped on by a skate.

The Stars were also without alternate captain Mike Modano (hip flexor), Eric Lindros (upper body injury) and Steve Ott (fractured ankle) and yet still found a way to earn the win.

"This after losing a heart and soul guy in Brenden," said Jeff Halpern, who had a goal and two assists. "The young guys and the veterans balanced out well for us. The young guys got us started and the veterans finished it up."

Trailing 4-3, Dallas got goals from Halpern and Sergei Zubov 1:16 apart early in the third period.

Dallas' scoring spree also ended the night of Avalanche goalie Jose Theodore. Colorado coach Joel Quenneville pulled Theodore with 18:08 remaining in the game and put in Peter Budaj. Theodore saved just 17 of 22 shots.

"The goaltending wasn't good enough at that stage of the game," Quenneville said. "Putting Peter in gave us a little spark, and we needed better goaltending."

Marty Turco was his typically solid self — especially of late — stopping 28 shots and winning for the third time in his last four starts.

To get the win, though, Turco and the Stars survived a 6-on-4 opportunity when the Avalanche pulled Budaj with 43 seconds left in the game.



MCT photo/Sharon M. Steinhilber/Fort Worth Star-Telegram  
Dallas Stars' Marty Turco had another solid game on the ice as the Stars defeated the Avalanche, 5-4 on Wednesday night.



# That's Racin'

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

**BEST QUOTE:** First, I'd like to say something nice about (Truck series director) Wayne Auton and his entire officiating crew. ... I'd really like to say something nice, but I can't think of anything."

— Todd Bodine, at the series banquet in Orlando, Fla.

## The highs and lows of 2006

By JIM UTTER  
McClatchy Newspapers

The trophies have been delivered and the checks have been cashed. All that's left of the 2006 NASCAR season is our wrap-up of season superlatives of the Busch and Craftsman Truck series.

There was plenty of talk about Nextel Cup drivers competing in the Busch Series, so it should be little surprise one of them — Kevin Harvick — won the series championship. The Cup series was also well-represented in Trucks, with former Cup driver Todd Bodine winning the series championship and current Cup star Mark Martin winning the most races (six).

### Busch Series



**DRIVER OF THE YEAR:** This one is easy — Harvick, and it's not even close. Harvick captured his second series championship in dominating fashion, earning nine wins while driving for three different teams and setting the record for the biggest margin of victory in series history (824 points over Carl Edwards).

**TEAM OF THE YEAR:** Richard Childress Racing's No. 21 Chevrolet. Harvick drove for this team most of the season, but it also earned a victory with RCR teammate Jeff Burton behind the wheel for a total of 10 wins in 35 races.

**BEST RACE:** The August race at Michigan, which saw Dale Earnhardt Jr. spin leader Carl Edwards on the last lap to gain the victory. In what can only be described as a shocking moment in NASCAR history, Earnhardt Jr. was unmercifully booed by fans while in Victory Lane.

**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Kevin Harvick Inc. rookie Burney Lamar. He started the year finishing second in the season-opening race at Daytona Beach, Fla., then ended the season without a ride.

**WORST NASCAR DECISION:** It's a tossup between allowing John Andretti, who has more than 300 Nextel Cup Series starts, to compete as a rookie and awarding rookie of the

year honors to Danny O'Quinn Jr., who finished 35th in the series' final race while Andretti finished 16th. The two were tied in rookie points heading into the final event.

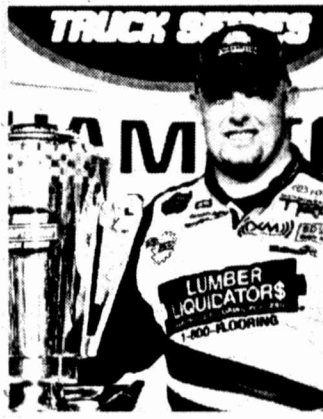
**2007 CHAMPION PREDICTION:** While the number of Cup drivers competing in both series will drop in 2007, Edwards will continue double-duty and should be the favorite to win his first championship.

**2007 SURPRISE:** Expect a strong showing from Jon Wood, who will run the full Busch schedule as well as make his Cup series debut next year.



Carl Edwards

### Craftsman Truck Series



**DRIVER OF THE YEAR:** It's a tough call, with Bodine winning his first NASCAR championship — also Toyota's first in NASCAR's three national series — on the one hand, and Johnny Benson's stellar season (five wins) on the other. We'll give the nod to Bodine, driver of the No. 30 Toyota Tundra, since he came close last season and was able to put it all together this year.



Mark Martin

**TEAM OF THE YEAR:** Roush Racing's No. 6 Ford. Martin drove the truck in 14 races and David Ragan, who will debut as a rookie in the Cup next season, did nine more races with the team. Martin won six races, while Ragan earned two poles and six top-10 finishes during his stint.

**BEST RACE:** The June race at Michigan which saw Benson win his first series race while holding off a determined Martin, who finished second. Benson would win four more times during the season.

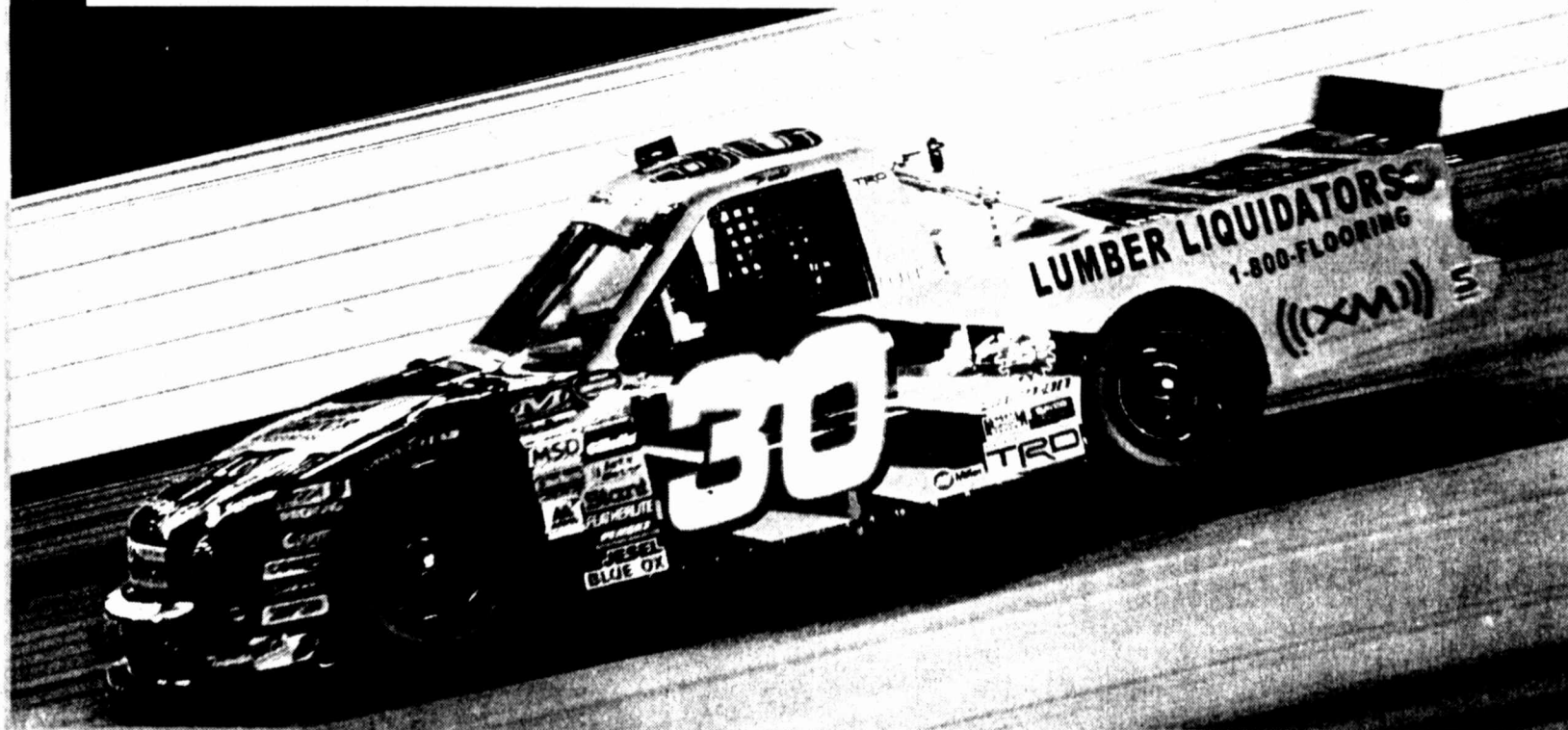
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** It was a tough year for Morgan-Dollar Motorsports, which had contended for the championship in recent years with veteran Dennis Setzer. Setzer finished 13th in points and left for Spears Racing at the end of the season.

**2007 CHAMPION PREDICTION:** There is little doubt Toyotas should remain strong and since Benson seemed the most consistent at the end of the season from that group, we'll go with him.

**2007 SURPRISE:** A reorganization and rededication of Brendan Gaughan's team — the seeds of which were planted late this season — should return Gaughan to the title hunt in 2007.



Johnny Benson



RUSTY JARRETT/GETTY IMAGES

## Your test for today: Renaming the 'Car of Tomorrow'

Can you beat "Zipper?" What should the name of NASCAR's "Car of Tomorrow" be once it's the car of today? David Poole starts the bidding with Zipper — you'll have to read this column to understand why. Got a better one? E-mail [dpoole@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:dpoole@charlotteobserver.com) your suggestions.

The floor is officially open for suggestions on a nickname for the "Car of Tomorrow." Please, everyone, keep it clean. NASCAR's new racing vehicle, which will be used in 16 of the 36 Nextel Cup races in 2007, will debut March 25 at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway. On March 26, we won't be able to call it the "Car of Tomorrow" because it will have raced yesterday. Tony Stewart has offered "flying brick," but NASCAR's not

going to go for that. We certainly don't want to leave this up to television announcers, who in recent years have foisted such terms as "lucky dog" onto the sport's lexicon.

Some critics would lean toward terms such as "piece of junk" or "waste of money." Their minds are made up that the "Car of Tomorrow" is a pestilence and the sport's ruination. It will make NASCAR another International Race of Champions, where every car is so much alike that nobody can tell — or care — who's who. Maybe the car is "new Coke," racing's answer to the greatest soft-drink marketing blunder in history. But shouldn't final judgment be withheld until the cars have raced? It's a certainty that some races with the new car will be unwatchable. We know this because the same has been true of every

car in every era of the sport. We know the new car wasn't designed to kill racing. NASCAR set out to build a safer car that also makes racing less about check-books and engineering staffs. What they've come up with might not do that, but that's the aim. December has been busy at the NASCAR research and development center near the Concord (N.C.) Regional Airport, where Cup teams must bring their "Car of Tomorrow" chassis to be certified. Each team a car plans to use must go through the approval process. NASCAR has been getting to about four or five chassis per day, and it will double that with two

surface plates in a part of the building that will be dedicated to the process. Using a portable coordinate measuring machine — a robot arm hooked to a laptop — inspectors check points on each chassis in relation to the leveled surface plate on which it sits. With the plate serving as zero, as the arm is moved to specified spots on the chassis the computer plots those points on vertical, horizontal and diagonal axes. This "XYZ" system, named for the three-dimensional coordinates generated, holds teams to more carefully controlled specifications on how their cars are built from the skeletons outward.

Teams with bigger budgets, theoretically at least, can't engineer advantages into their chassis that other teams might not be able to afford so the competition is on a more level plane. Sections of each chassis are also measured with ultrasound equipment to make sure materials are of the proper thickness. When approved, NASCAR places nine radio frequency ID tags at prescribed points around the chassis. Each tag's unique code is recorded in a database and matched to a number engraved into a roll cage bar that serves as a vehicle identification number. If any of the RFID's don't match when a car comes to the track, NASCAR will want to know why. The chassis must then be recertified. The new car is wider and taller

and the windshield "stands up" straighter than on the current cars. The driver sits a little further to the right to allow for more protection from side impacts through door bar construction and energy-absorbing foam, and there's more headroom in his compartment, too. It's all fascinating stuff. But none of it helps us with the new name. Because the car has a wing instead of a rear spoiler, I thought about "Batmobile" — a bat is a winged creature. "Hermes" was a winged messenger from the gods to man in mythology, but that's too highbrow. Until I hear something better, I'm going to call the "Car of Tomorrow" Zipper. The Zipper. You know "XYZ" coordinates? Define your own. Get it? OK, do better.



DAVID POOLE

### POLL POSITION

**THIS WEEK'S QUESTION**  
Will the 2007 Busch Series champion be a full-time driver in NASCAR's Nextel Cup Series or someone who is a "regular" Busch competitor?  
Cast your vote at:  
[www.thatracing.com](http://www.thatracing.com)

**LAST WEEK'S QUESTION**  
Due to a technical error, last week's Poll Position question on the top NASCAR story of 2006 was not posted to the [thatracing.com](http://thatracing.com) Web site. No poll results are available.

### BY THE NUMBERS

**2007 BUSCH SERIES SCHEDULE**  
The dates and tracks for the coming season of races:

Feb. 17	Daytona International Speedway
Feb. 24	California Speedway
March 4	Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez
March 10	Las Vegas Motor Speedway
March 17	Atlanta Motor Speedway
March 24	Bristol Motor Speedway
April 7	Nashville Superspeedway
April 14	Texas Motor Speedway
April 20	Phoenix International Raceway
April 28	Talladega Superspeedway
May 4	Richmond International Raceway
May 11	Darlington Raceway
May 26	Lowe's Motor Speedway
June 2	Dover International Speedway
June 9	Nashville Superspeedway
June 16	Kentucky Speedway
June 23	The Milwaukee Mile
June 30	New Hampshire International Speedway
July 6	Daytona International Speedway
July 14	Chicagoland Speedway
July 21	Gateway International Raceway
July 28	O'Reilly Raceway Park
Aug. 4	Circuit Gilles Villeneuve
Aug. 11	Watkins Glen International
Aug. 18	Michigan International Speedway
Aug. 24	Bristol Motor Speedway
Sept. 1	California Speedway
Sept. 7	Richmond International Raceway
Sept. 22	Dover International Speedway
Sept. 29	Kansas Speedway
Oct. 12	Lowe's Motor Speedway
Oct. 27	Memphis Motorsports Park
Nov. 3	Texas Motor Speedway
Nov. 10	Phoenix International Raceway
Nov. 17	Homestead-Miami Speedway

### BY THE NUMBERS

**2007 CRAFTSMAN TRUCK SERIES SCHEDULE**  
The dates and tracks for the coming season of races:

Feb. 16	Daytona International Speedway
Feb. 23	California Speedway
March 16	Atlanta Motor Speedway
March 31	Martinsville Speedway
April 28	Kansas Speedway
May 18	Lowe's Motor Speedway
May 26	Mansfield Motorsports Park
June 1	Dover International Speedway
June 8	Texas Motor Speedway
June 16	Michigan International Speedway
June 22	The Milwaukee Mile
June 30	Memphis Motorsports Park
July 14	Kentucky Speedway
July 27	O'Reilly Raceway Park
Aug. 11	Nashville Superspeedway
Aug. 22	Bristol Motor Speedway
Sept. 1	Gateway International Raceway
Sept. 15	New Hampshire International Speedway
Sept. 22	Las Vegas Motor Speedway
Oct. 6	Talladega Superspeedway
Oct. 20	Martinsville Speedway
Oct. 27	Atlanta Motor Speedway
Nov. 2	Texas Motor Speedway
Nov. 9	Phoenix International Raceway
Nov. 16	Homestead-Miami Speedway



THURSDAY

	WFAA (2)	KMID (3)	UNI (4)	KPEJ (5)	KOSA (7)	KTLE (8)	KWES (9)	WTBS (11)	KMLM (12)	KPBT (13)	DISC (20)	AMC (21)	SPIKE (22)	TNT (23)	BET (26)	DISN (27)	ESPN2 (28)	ESPN (29)	SCIFI (64)
	Dallas	Midland	Spanish	Odessa	Odessa	Telamundo	Midland	Atlanta	Odessa	Odessa	Discovery	Classics	Spike TV	Atlanta	Black Ent.	Disney	Sports	Sports	Science Fic.
6	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)
7	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)	Ugly Betty (CC)
8	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)	Grey's Anatomy (CC)
9	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)	Man in Trees (CC)
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12	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)	News (CC)

DENNIS THE MENACE



"THEY HAVE 'AFTER CHRISTMAS SALES' TO GET RID OF SANTA'S LEFTOVERS."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS



"Just before Christmas, you said it was better to give than to receive!"

HAGAR



BLONDIE



BC



WIZARD OF ID



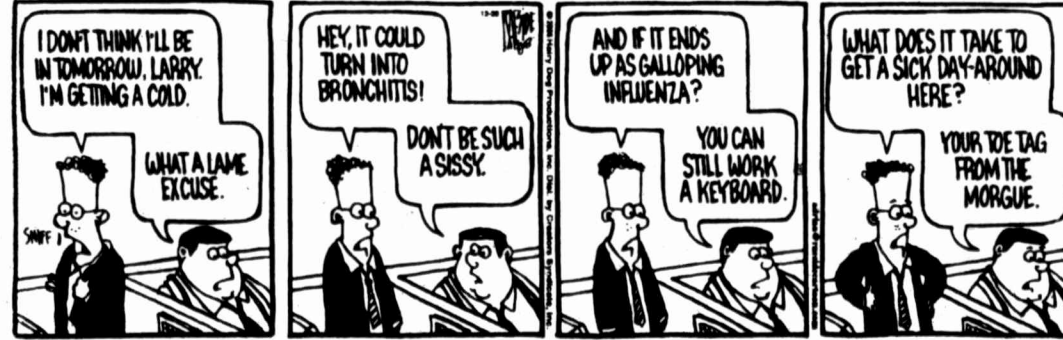
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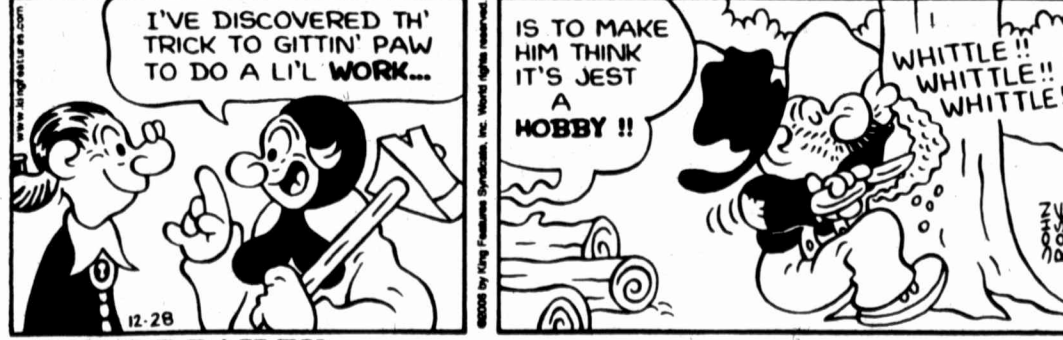
HI AND LOIS



THE OTHER COAST



SNUFFY SMITH



BETLE BAILEY



This Date In History

Today is Thursday, Dec. 28, the 362nd day of 2006. There are three days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

One hundred and fifty years ago, on Dec. 28, 1856, the 28th president of the United States, Thomas Woodrow Wilson, was born in Staunton, Va.

On this date: In 1694, Queen Mary II of England died after five years of joint rule with her husband, King William III.

In 1832, John C. Calhoun became the first vice president of the United States to resign, stepping down over differences with President Jackson.

In 1846, Iowa became the 29th state to be admitted to the Union.

In 1897, the play "Cyrano de Bergerac," by Edmond Rostand, premiered in Paris.

In 1917, the New York Evening Mail published a

facetious essay by H.L. Mencken on the history of bathtubs in America.

In 1945, Congress officially recognized the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1973, Alexander Solzhenitsyn published "Gulag Archipelago," an expose of the Soviet prison system.

In 1981, Elizabeth Jordan Carr, the first American "test-tube" baby, was born in Norfolk, Va.

One year ago: Former top Enron Corp. accountant Richard Causey pleaded guilty to securities fraud and agreed to help pursue convictions against Enron founder Kenneth Lay and former CEO Jeffrey Skilling.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lou Jacobi is 93. Bandleader Johnny Otis is 85. Comic book creator Stan Lee is 84. Former United Auto Workers union president Owen Bieber is 77. Actor Martin Milner is 75. Actress Dame Maggie Smith is 72. Rock singer-musician Charles Neville is 68. Rock singer-musician Edgar Winter is 60. Rock singer-musician Alex Chilton (The

Box Tops; Big Star) is 56. Actor Denzel Washington is 52. Country singer Joe Diffie is 48. Country musician Mike McGuire (Shenandoah) is 48. Actor Chad McQueen is 46. Country singer-musician Marty Roe (Diamond Rio) is 46. Actor Malcolm Gets is 42. Actor Mauricio Mendoza is 37. Comedian Seth Meyers is 33. Rhythm-and-blues singer John Legend is 28. Actress Sienna Miller is 25. Actress Mackenzie Rosman is 17.

Thought for Today: "More persons, on the whole, are humbugged by believing nothing, than by believing too much." — Phineas T. Barnum, American showman (1810-1891).

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Answer to previous puzzle

ROTC	GRAS	ORGAN
EMIR	AIDE	MARIA
FAMILY	GATHERING	
ENEMIES	TALENTS	
RIFLE	PROTE	
ACAP	STRESS	
ELK	ELOPE	ALIT
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STEPIE	TENOR	
	APES	TAMED
ISLAMIC	ORIGAMI	
STAMP	COLLECTION	
MEDIA	LUGE	ANTE
SPANS	EGAD	GEEES

Newsday Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 Loses firmness
  - 5 Resell illegally
  - 10 Does something
  - 14 Contaminant-free
  - 15 Donald Duck nephew
  - 16 Work hard
  - 17 Working hard
  - 18 Netman Agassi
  - 19 Jacques of Mon Oncle
  - 20 Old phone feature
  - 22 Big Apple tennis stadium
  - 23 Fair-to-middlin'
  - 24 Soda-bottle size
  - 25 "Ars gratia"
  - 28 Taking five
  - 32 Bestowed kudus on
  - 34 Aerial stunt
  - 35 Put into service
  - 38 Mucky stuff
  - 39 State one's view
  - 41 Rescue, with "out"
  - 42 Aardvark's morsel
  - 43 Nolo contendere, e.g.
  - 44 Shows disdain for
  - 46 Ill-mannered
  - 49 Elks' home
  - 50 Crackerjack
  - 52 "We're in trouble"
  - 54 Off the mark
  - 55 Intellectual's retreat
  - 61 Neural transmitter

- 62 Lunar valley
  - 63 Like butter
  - 64 French river bank
  - 65 Completely unfamiliar
  - 66 Toledo's lake
  - 67 Forest foragers
  - 68 Info-gathering exchange
  - 69 Does batik
- DOWN**
- 1 Rigging support
  - 2 Wheels, so to speak
  - 3 Abrasive stuff
  - 4 Hold for later
  - 5 Wows, in comedy
  - 6 Andean flier
  - 7 BMW competitor
  - 8 Old Trevi toss-in
  - 9 Fruit coat
  - 10 Accomplish
  - 11 Shore-defense group
  - 12 Give 10%
  - 13 More crafty
  - 21 Stood up
  - 24 Back talk
  - 25 mater
  - 26 Ballgame delayer
  - 27 Cooing bird
  - 29 Inventor Howe
  - 30 "My \_\_\_, the doctor"
  - 31 Tot's "piggies"
  - 33 Noodlehead
  - 36 Perform an aria
  - 37 Foreign word
  - 40 Chinese-born architect
  - 41 Blubbered
  - 43 Propel, as a shot
  - 45 Coagulate
  - 47 Kitchen device
  - 48 Threw forcefully
  - 50 Tony or Oscar
  - 51 Old South
  - 53 Scavenging beast
  - 55 Sunni Triangle locale
  - 56 TV handyman
  - 57 Lena of Chocolat
  - 58 Lean and muscular
  - 59 Nobel author
  - 60 Bakery loaves

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64											66	
67											69	



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**COLORTYME HAS** immediate openings for the following positions...

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(432)268-1987 Fax  
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Help Wanted

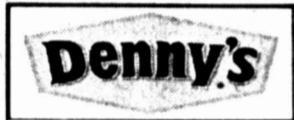
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**SECRETARY NEEDED** for Legal Office. Send resume to P.O. Drawer 2117, Big Spring, TX 79721.

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**THE MARTIN** County Hospital District of Stanton is seeking a Physician Assistant for employment in a Rural Health Clinic. Please contact Paul McKinney, CEO or Alison Israel, CFO at 610 N. Saint Peter, Stanton, Texas or call (432)756-3345.

**WAREHOUSE/ DELIVERY** Wanted for local Rental Store. Benefits include paid vacation, retirement & health insurance. Requirements are back ground check, drug screening, good driving record and be at least 21 years old. Starting pay \$8.50 per hour. Apply in person, Credit World, 1611 Gregg.

**WANTED: EXPERIENCED** electrician/ instrument tech @ natural gas plant NE of Big Spring. Mail resume to: Plant Supervisor, 11703 E. FM 846, Coahoma, TX 79511 or Fax to: 432-399-4290 or email to: mwyco@procom.net.

Help Wanted

**TRUCK DRIVER**  
Helena Chemical Company, a national agricultural-chemical company, has an immediate opening for an experienced truck driver. This position will make deliveries, load and unload product, utilize a forklift, and perform general warehouse duties. Requires high school diploma or equivalent, CDL with HAZMAT endorsement. We offer an excellent working environment and outstanding compensation and benefits package. For consideration, please apply in person: Helena Chemical Company  
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Instructional

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**WASHER/ DRYER.** Must Sell! \$100. for the pair. Also women's clothing, size 6/8. Take it all for \$20. Call (432)264-6794.

Miscellaneous

**ALL NEW Mattress Set,** Full Size still in packaging. Sell for \$119. Call 432-349-4043.

**BRAND NEW** Queen pillow top mattress set. In wrapper. Warranty. Must Move. Sacrifice \$149.00. 432-349-4043.

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Miscellaneous

**CAMPER SHELL** for short wide bed pickup. Call (432) 267-1810.

**COMFY COUCH** and loveseat. Microfiber \$489, Leather \$799. 806-549-3110.

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**SACRIFICE; 6 pc** sleigh bedroom set. Still boxed. \$499. 806-549-3110.

**URGENT SELL** -- King mattress set \$210. Full mattress set \$109. PERFECT CONDITION Microwave \$225. 806-549-3110.

**ZERO ACHES,** NASA memory foam mattress set. List \$1599. Sell \$399. Warranty. 806-549-3110.

On the Farm

**FOR SALE,** fence posts, 8" diameter, treated wood, 70" tall. Call (432)935-6699 or (623)606-5898

Pets

**FREE 1/2 Pitbull & ?**, 9 wk old, female. Has 1st shots. Call 432-816-7641.

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Real Estate for Rent

**104 WEST 13th.** Large 1 bedroom, 1 bath with garage. \$300.00 month or \$550.00 with All Bills Paid, \$150.00 deposit. Call (432)264-6611.

**SEVERAL OFFICES** available. Call (432)263-6514, 517-0038, (432)770-5656.

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**2210 LYNN.** 3 Bedroom 2 bath, garage, fenced yard. One year lease required. No indoor pets. \$650. month plus deposit. Call (432)263-6514 Owner/Broker.

**BUILDING FOR** Rent on West Hwy. 80. Great for storing your RV, boat, etc. or use for a workshop. Call 432-935-6699 or 623-606-5898.

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE** at 421 Main for rent. Approx. 3,000 sq. ft. includes executive offices, reception area, file storage and break room. Call (432)263-7676.

**FOR LEASE** 207 North Gregg. 40x100 Building with offices. \$600.00 Month plus deposit. Call (432)263-5000.

**FOR LEASE** 40x120 Building with 2 offices, 4 over head doors on 2 acres, fenced land. 1514 Hwy. 30. \$750 Month + deposit. Call (432)263-5000.

**VERY NICE** 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom home for rent. Many recent upgrades with central AC and Heat. \$550 plus deposit. Call Yolanda at 432-267-2771.

Real Estate for Sale

**1518 VINES.** 3 bedroom, 2 bath, 2 living areas. Owner finance available. Call for information, Kim Pollard, Heart of the City Realty (432)213-2842.

2 Thru 6 Bedrooms, Brick Homes. No. Down Payment. Owner Financing. Bad Credit OK. 6 Month warranty. Call Maria (432)263-3461.

**2600 CARLETON,** 3 bedroom, 2 bath, Central H/A, clean, new fence, & covered carport. Corner lot, quiet neighborhood, a must see. Call (432)213-2681 or 213-2688 for more info.

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**CLASSIFICATIONS:**  
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**BIG SPRING HERALD**



Real Estate for Sale

**CUTE LITTLE** Cottage w/backyard playhouse. \$39,900 OBO. 1108 Mulberry. Owner Finance Available. Call for information Kim Pollard, Heart of The City Realty 432-213-2842.

**OWNER FINANCE** 2503 Central Drive, Big Spring. Newly Remodeled. \$3,950.00 Down, flexible terms. Must Sell. Call 866-999-8499.

**SMALL PARTIAL** land for sale. 5 miles south of Big Spring & 1 1/2 miles west of Coahoma. Owner will Finance or Texas Veterans. (432)263-8785.

**THREE BEDROOM**, one bath, CH/A, 1224 sq. ft. Close to Goliad school. Nice covered patio and yard. \$46,500. Call (432)264-8983, (432)263-0118.

Vehicles

**(2) New 2005 7 Passenger Vans \$9,500 Off!**  
**Bob Brock Ford**  
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**1981 FIAT Spider** Convertible. Must sale do to Military Transfer to Cuba. 80% Complete. Good running car. Needs little work. \$4500 OBO. Call (432)394-4352.

**2006 HARLEY SPORSTER** 1200. Color is black cherry, 7,000 miles. Samson pipes, custom seat, windshield. Asking payoff or best offer. Please call (432)816-9567.

Legals

**INVITATION FOR BIDS**  
Sealed proposals addressed to Mr. John Grant, General Manager of the Colorado River Municipal Water District, will be received at the District's office, P.O. Box 869, Big Spring, Texas, 79721, 400 E. 24th Street, Big Spring, Texas 79720, until **3:00 PM, Thursday, January 18, 2007** for the purchase of the following fleet vehicles:

- Utility Vehicles
- 1/2 & 3/4 ton Trucks

At this time and place the proposals will be publicly opened and read aloud. Any bid received after closing time will be returned unopened.

Specifications are on file and may be examined without charge in the office of the Colorado River Municipal Water District. Inquiries regarding equipment specifications are to be directed to Ralph Truskowski, P.E., Operations Manager, (432)267-6341, FAX (432)268-1196, ret@crmwtd.org.

In case of ambiguity or lack of clearness in stating proposed prices, the Colorado River Municipal Water District reserves the right to adopt the most advantageous combination thereof, to reject any or all bids, and to waive formalities. The District anticipates that it will notify the successful bidder(s) by issuing a Purchase Order(s) within thirty (30) days after the bid date. No bid may be withdrawn within ninety (90) days after date on which bids are opened.

**COLORADO RIVER MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT**  
John W. Grant, General Manager  
#5194 December 21 & 28, 2006 and January 4, 2007.

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

With Mercury newly exploring Capricorn, personal politics become a focus. Giving trust too freely may be regrettable, but not giving it at all only hurts you. A diplomatic approach requires seeing things from the point of view of your opposition. It also helps to listen more closely — there's a good chance your burning question will be answered.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19). Your heart wants what it wants, and it won't give up. There's no escaping! Even when you dream, you're conscious that you're dreaming. Take serious steps to appease your heart.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20). The link between you

and greatness is a simple habit — like carrying a notebook to write down subconscious messages that cross your mind throughout the day. Such a habit encourages more brilliant thoughts to pop in.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21). You're a fan of society — in part because society is such a fan of you! But society often teaches you to distrust your own thoughts and lean on the opinion of experts. Silly society. You're too smart for that.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22). Personal relationships require you to be insightful. By doing so, you ward off deception. If others think you'll be open to the truth, they'll choose that first. Scorpio and Pisces people are especially candid.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22). Attach a date to that dream you're starting to flesh out. It's impossible to get any momentum without a deadline. Also, fellow fire signs, Sagittarius and Aries, are there to inform your choices.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Meetings, dates and social doings go well, so long as you remain somewhat guarded. Giving others something to work toward isn't a bad thing. You'll be glad you didn't reveal yourself too readily.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Get back to basics. The best solution to a problem is the one where less can go wrong. You might have to completely ignore a "helpful" friend. You're the best gauge of your situation.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Judging by certain comments you hear, it

Tomorrow's Horoscope

might be hard to tell that family members are actually on your side. Try to take the high road. But if you err, as humans do, make sure the conflict is solved by bedtime.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The secret to happiness is simple today. At work, work. When not at work, do your own thing O as long as it's not working! The world will be a better place when you're well rested.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You're enjoying the different packages people come in. You don't mistrust someone just because they sport an arm full of tattoos and have a weird way of communicating. A little guarded tolerance goes a long way.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Your inner savvy emerges with a sideways smirk, ready to prove you're not only capable, but stylish — snap, snap. Make a checklist so you don't have to think or worry. You're fabulous.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20). There's so much to get done now that you'll wish you had your own staff — unless, of course, you do have your own staff, and then you'll wish they were slightly more efficient.

**ASTROLOGICAL QUESTIONS:** To the 8th grade class of Nativity Catholic School in Torrance, Calif., who sent letters asking: "How do you come up with the horoscopes? Do you guess?"

Great question! First, I find out where the stars are in relation to one another as we see them from earth. This is done

through the use of a scientific book of data called an Ephemeris, which charts how the planets, sun and moon are moving through the universe. Then I look for significant transits. Transit is a word that just means movement. Through studying astrology for many years, I've learned the meanings of many transits. These meanings are both ancient and modern. They're based on interpretations that are thousands of years old, but also on new interpretations. Everyone has their own interpretation of astrology, but there are some widely held beliefs that most astrologers base their predictions on, such as when the moon is full there's usually an emotional release that occurs, humans get in touch with the more impulsive and wild part of themselves, and as a result, things get more chaotic than, say, when the moon is new.

**CELEBRITY PROFILES:** True movie stars transcend their beings, only needing to be referred to by their first names. Denzel Washington is no exception to that silver-screen rule, as proven by spectacular performances in films such as "The Color Purple," "Man on Fire" and, recently, "Deja Vu." A devoted husband, father of four and artist, Washington is a multi-million dollar Capricorn talent with another Oscar nod in his future.

If you would like to write to Holiday Mathis, please go to [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com) and click on "Write the Author" on the Holiday Mathis page, or you may send her a postcard in the mail.

Legals

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
The Howard County Auditor's Office will accept sealed bids until 10:00 a.m. on January 4, 2007 for the installation of a Fire Piping Riser at the Howard County Courthouse. Specifications may be obtained in the Auditor's Office, 300 S. Main, Room 203, Big Spring, TX or by calling (432) 264-2210. Bids will be presented to the Commissioners' Court at 10:00 A.M. on January 8, 2007 for their consideration. The Court reserves the right to reject any or all bids.  
#5200 December 21 & 28, 2006

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Puzzles by Pappocom

**ANSWERS**

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

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Annie's Mailbox

Dear Annie: I used to work at the World Trade Center. My favorite times were during the Christmas season. The entire plaza would come alive with festivities and goodwill. The year before 9/11, my office was loaded with gifts being hidden until Christmas Eve. All of us, from all faiths, looked forward to the annual Christmas party where we let our hair down for a night of laughter and excitement.

We worked hard in the city. Sometimes, we didn't leave the office until 9 p.m., when all was quiet and dark, and the cold wind blew across the plaza floor. Before 9/11, there were these huge white block letters in the plaza that spelled "PEACE ON EARTH." I never knew how the letters got there or who put them there. They were like a smile greeting me in the morning and wishing me a good night.

I did not know it would be the last Christmas I would see them. What happened to these letters of hope? I sure would like to see them again. — D.C. in Beacon, N.Y.

Dear D.C.: We contacted Pasquale DiFulco, spokesperson for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and discovered that those letters were stored in the World Trade Center.

Here is his reply: "The letters were destroyed on 9/11, but the message of hope that they conveyed remains as vibrant as ever. As we celebrate the holidays this time of year with family and friends, it is the perfect occasion to remember the spirit of that message and do what we can, each in our own way and together as one, to work toward peace on earth."

Dear Annie: My co-worker, "Ed," likes to

engage anyone who will listen in "discussion." However, if you don't agree immediately with his viewpoint, it quickly escalates into an argument. Ed loses control, becomes extremely loud, and his face turns bright red. At this point, most people choose to end the "discussion," which Ed interprets to mean he has lost the argument. He then complains that he can never win a debate, since everyone is so close-minded and they interrupt him and talk over him, which, in actuality, is exactly what HE does.

Any suggestion how to deal with this man? He is an otherwise valuable employee. — Ed's Co-worker

Dear Co-worker: Poor Ed. He's so insecure he has to feel superior to everyone. We don't understand why you and your co-workers continue to engage in these "discussions" when you know the outcome won't be pretty.

Unless Ed's superiors tell him the rants must stop, it's best if you learn how to deal with him as he is. When he starts up, nod and say, "You may have a point," and then make it clear you are too busy to stay and chat. What do you care if he thinks the entire office is close-minded? If you do not become involved in his arguments, he will not be able to respond in his usual inappropriate way. Disengage.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to [anniesmailbox@comcast.net](mailto:anniesmailbox@comcast.net), or write to: Annie's Mailbox, P.O. Box 118190, Chicago, IL 60611.

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