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The PAMPA NEWS

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Board of Pardons: No clemency for Skinner

MICHAEL GRACZYK
 Associated Press



Skinner

HOUSTON (AP) — The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles unanimously rejected Monday a clemency request for convicted killer Hank Skinner, who faces execution later this week for a triple slaying more than 16 years ago in the Texas Panhandle.

The vote was 7-0, said Maria Ramirez, the

board's clemency director. Skinner, 47, had asked the panel for both clemency and a reprieve to block his lethal injection, set for Wednesday evening in Huntsville. His attorneys argued he needed extra time for DNA tests that they said could absolve him of the New Year's Eve 1993 slayings of his girlfriend and her two adult sons at their Pampa home. "We are disheartened that the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles has turned a deaf ear to Mr. Skinner's plea for a stay of execution to allow for DNA testing of key evidence that could prove his innocence," one of Skinner's

lawyers, University of Texas law professor Rob Owen, said. Skinner still has an appeal before the U.S. Supreme Court and a similar reprieve request before the governor. "It is now more urgent than ever that Gov. Rick Perry not allow Wednesday's execution to proceed until all of the facts are in," he said. "We urge the governor to take the reasonable and fair action of halting Mr. Skinner's execution so that readily available scientific evidence can be tested before he is put to death on Wednesday." **SKINNER** cont. on page 5

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RINGING IN THE SPRING



staff photo by Andrew Glover

Junior Taryn Eubank (right) shakes hands with Pampa High School Principal Tanya Larkin after receiving her class ring at the Junior Class Ring Ceremony in the school's auditorium this morning.

Hathcoat found competent; trial starts tomorrow

DAVID BOWSER
 dbowser@thepampanews.com

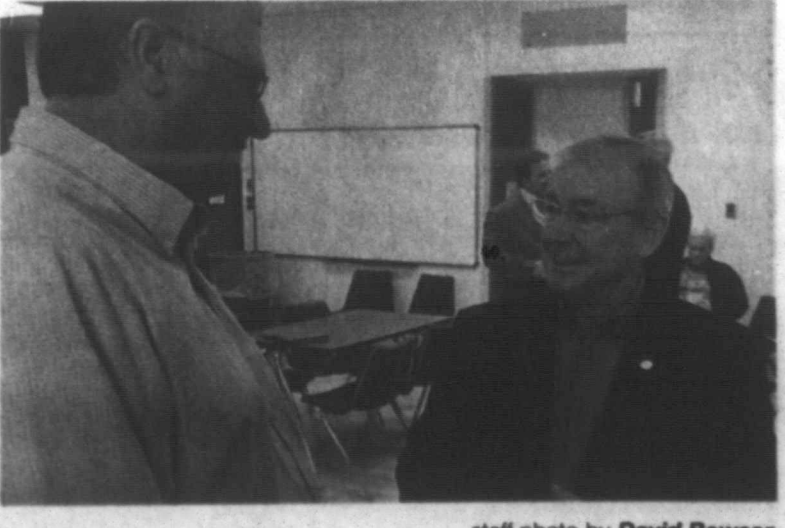
Darren William Hathcoat will go to trial Wednesday morning on charges of injury to an elderly person. Hathcoat, 44, was found competent to stand trial by an eight man, four woman jury in Judge Lee Waters' 223rd District Court today. Selection will begin again at 9 a.m. Wednesday for another jury in Judge Waters' court for the trial in which Hathcoat stands accused of attacking his aunt last year. It took the jury today less than 30 minutes to deliberate Hathcoat's competency. In final arguments this morning, Hathcoat's attorney, Todd Alvey, questioned his client's competency to stand trial. Alvey said that under the law, a person had to be mentally competent to be able to communicate with his attorney and understand the proceedings against him. Just knowing that he was in a courtroom and who was the defense lawyer and who was the prosecutor was not enough. It isn't enough for a defendant to know that he's in a courtroom. A defendant, Alvey argued, has to be able to understand the proceedings and the charges against him. Alvey argued that Hathcoat had filed numerous documents in the case that he didn't understand. That included filing grievances against Alvey, his own attorney. "Is that rational?" Alvey asked the jury. Citing several examples, Alvey questioned his client's competency. "He's not capable of making a rational decision," Alvey said. "He's not competent." Assistant District Attorney Jeromie Oney argued that Hathcoat's arguments and actions indicated the defendant's **TRIAL** cont. on page 5

Chisum: New biosecurity lab valuable for Panhandle

DAVID BOWSER
 dbowser@thepampanews.com

AMARILLO — Pampa's State Rep. Warren Chisum said that having a new biosecurity laboratory at the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab here will allow the livestock industry in the panhandle to respond quickly to any animal health emergency. "It's a valuable, valuable piece of the industry that we've been needing here a long time," Chisum said. "Now, we've got it." Chisum was among the guests and dignitaries from the livestock industry gathered here Monday afternoon for the groundbreaking of the new

biosecurity lab facility on the west side of Amarillo. State Rep. David Swinford of Dumas said Pampa's Warren Chisum along with the other state legislators in the panhandle are responsible for the new biosecurity laboratory scheduled to be built at the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab. "It's a great honor to work with him," said Swinford of Chisum. "It has always been a pleasure to have David ramrod the team for agriculture," Chisum said. "I make my living in agriculture, but I do it because I talk to people like David to see what to do next." **LAB** cont. on page 5



staff photo by David Bowser

Former Gray County Agent Danny Nusser (left) visits with Pampa's State Representative Warren Chisum at the ground breaking of a new biosafety lab for the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory in Amarillo this week. Nusser is now with the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Amarillo.

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PAMPA FORECAST

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
High 48 Low 32	High 53 Low 30	High 65 Low 39

Tonight: A 20 percent chance of showers after 1am. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 39. Northeast wind between 5 and 15 mph.

Wednesday: Showers likely, mainly after 1pm. Cloudy, with a high near 48. Wind chill values between 31 and 41 early. Northeast wind between 15 and 20 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70%.

Wednesday Night: Rain likely before 10pm, then rain and snow likely between 10pm and 1am, then a chance of snow after 1am. Cloudy, with a low around 32. Wind chill values between 23 and 28. North northwest wind between 15 and 20 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph. Chance of precipitation is 60%.

Thursday: Occasional flurries before 1pm. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 53. Windy, with a north northwest wind between 15 and 25 mph, with gusts as high as 35 mph.

Thursday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 30. North wind 5 to 15 mph becoming east. Winds could gust as high as 20 mph.

Friday: Sunny, with a high near 65. Calm wind becoming south between 10 and 15 mph. Winds could gust as high as 25 mph.

Friday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 39. South wind between 10 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

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Obituaries

Billie Elaine Allen, 67

Pampa—Billie Elaine Allen died March 21, 2010 in Oklahoma City.

Mrs. Allen was born January 22, 1943 in New Castle. She died in Oklahoma City after a long battle with brain cancer. Billie had been a resident of Pampa since 1969. She married Jimmie Allen on September 8, 1972 in Pampa. She owned and operated Texas Bail Bonds. Survivors include her hus-

band, Jimmie Allen of the home; two sons, Jason Allen of Pampa and Jeff Allen of Tennessee Colony; a daughter, Amber Patton of Claude; five grandchildren, one great-granddaughter; a brother, Stanley Tuthil of Idaho; two sisters, Louise Barnes of Oklahoma City, and Betty Garcia of Amarillo. Billie was preceded in death by a son, Tony Allen in 2009, and two sisters.

Services are pending with Carmichael-Whitley Funeral Directors.

Memorials may be made to OU Medical Center, Oncology Department, 700 NE 13th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73104.

Sign the on-line register at www.carmichael-whitley.com

EMERGENCY SERVICES

PAMPA EMS

The Pampa EMS Department reported the following incidents during the 72-hour period ending at 7 a.m. today:

Friday, March 19

8:20 a.m. - An MICU unit responded to the 200 block of Tignor, transported one patient to PRMC.

8:44 a.m. - An MICU unit responded to the 900 block of Osbourne, transported one patient to PRMC.

2:11 p.m. - An MICU unit responded to the 1600 block of Somerville, transported one patient to PRMC.

3:14 p.m. - An MICU unit responded to the 2200 block of Wells.

4:37 p.m. - An MICU unit responded to PRMC, transported one patient to BSA ICU.

7:55 p.m. - An MICU

unit responded to the 600 block of Nelson.

PAMPA PD

The Pampa Police Department reported the following incidents during the 24-hour period ending at 8 a.m. today.

Officers reported 11 traffic-related incidents and three accidents.

Animal control officers reported 16 animal-related calls.

Pampa EMS reported four ambulance calls. Lefors Volunteer Fire Department reported two medical calls. The Pampa Fire Department reported one medical call.

Monday, March 22

Officers served a warrant in the 400 block of North Lowry and attempts to serve in the 600 block of North

Deane and the 500 block of North Wells.

Officers had escort duty in the 600 block of North Ward.

A prowler was reported in the 1600 block of North Faulkner.

A theft was reported to police.

A burglary was reported in the 800 block of South Barnes.

A domestic disturbance was reported in the 300 block of Miami.

Disorderly conduct was reported in the 2600 block of Fir.

A domestic disturbance was reported in the 1800 block of North Evergreen.

Disorderly conduct was reported in the 1200 block of Market.

Property was found in the 1700 block of East Harvester.

Disorderly conduct was reported in the 400 block of South Hughes.

A domestic disturbance was reported in the 2200 block of Duncan.

Phone harassment was reported in the 1900 block of North Wells.

SHERIFF'S DEPT.

The Gray County Sheriff's Office reported the following arrests during the 24-hour period ending at 8 a.m. today.

Monday, March 22

Curtis Wayne Matlock, 51, was arrested by deputies on charges of possession of a controlled substance.

Luis Alberto Garcia, 24, of Hedley, was arrested by police on charges of public intoxication.

Obama signs healthcare reform legislation into law

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama on Tuesday signed into law a landmark health care reform bill, presiding over the biggest shift in U.S. domestic policy since the 1960s and capping a divisive, yearlong debate that could define the November congressional elections.

The law will bring near-universal coverage to a wealthy country in which tens of millions of people are uninsured. The plan's provisions will be phased in over four years, and it is expected to expand coverage to about 95 percent of eligible Americans, compared with 83 percent today.

"We have now just enshrined the core principle that everybody should have some basic security when it comes to their health," Obama said at a signing ceremony at the White House, where he was joined by House and Senate Democrats who backed the bill as well as ordinary Americans whose health care struggles have touched the president.

The plan will eventually extend coverage to 32 million uninsured Americans, reduce federal budget deficits and ban such insurance company practices as denying coverage to people with existing medical problems.

Republicans united in opposition pledged to repeal Obama's redesign of the health care system, which they criticized as a costly government takeover affecting one-sixth of the U.S. economy. The Republicans lack the votes needed to repeal the measure, but the minority party plans to use the issue to try to regain control of Congress in the November elections.

Shortly after Obama signed the bill, mostly Republican

attorneys general from 13 states said they are suing the federal government to stop the health care overhaul, arguing that the provision that requires Americans to carry health insurance is unconstitutional. Experts say the effort will likely fail because the U.S. Constitution states that federal law supersedes state laws, but it will keep the issue alive until the November elections.

Democratic lawmakers say they have delivered on Obama's campaign pledge for change, revamping a system in which the spiraling costs have put health care and insurance out of the reach of many Americans.

Now the president must sell the law's merits to a wary American public.

The next act begins Thursday, when Obama visits Iowa City, Iowa, where he announced his health care plan as a presidential candidate in May 2007. There Obama plans to talk about how the new law will help lower health care costs for small businesses and families, selling the overhaul to Americans who are deeply divided over the plan.

The House passed the 10-year, \$938 billion bill Sunday night after a rancorous debate. Not one Republican voted for the bill. Some Democrats also voted against it.

The measure represents the biggest expansion of the U.S. federal government's social safety net since the 1960s, when President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted the Medicare and Medicaid government-funded health care coverage programs for the elderly and poor.

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DAILY HOROSCOPE

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Wednesday, March 24, 2010:

This year, expect the unexpected. This summer could surprise you. What could be a mistake is to hold on to what isn't working. The courage your sign is known for will need to emerge. Sometimes change is scary. Many of you will find it exciting. If you are single, you could meet someone who knocks your socks off. If you are attached, the two of you break into a brand-new world together. Let the excitement invigorate your bond. Someone born under the sign CANCER can be oh so emotional.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

*** Observe and watch. You'll see much more than many, but you'll also realize that your power to effect change or even to maintain could be at a low. Move when you feel the timing is right. Trust your judgments. Tonight: Hang at home.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

***** You know how important a decision might be. Listen to someone and what he or she shares. The more information you get, the stronger the action you might take. Don't take a reversal personally; rather, use the unexpected. Tonight: Maintain a high profile.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

*** You can only do so much. Take stock of your assets. Your actions point to a strong reaction after a decision. Still, someone's reaction could be surprising. Regroup and reorganize. Don't worry about a job. Tonight: Treat yourself well.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

***** A surge of questions helps you focus. Use the process to come out on top of what is necessary. Others respond strongly to your efforts. Demonstrate your grasp of the facts and an ability to put them in the power perspective. Tonight: Take the lead.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

*** Much goes on behind the scenes. You sense what is going on. The smart Lion refuses to take action, though an associate could throw a tantrum. Realize what is happening and use time as an asset. Discover that someone close could make all the difference. Tonight: Vanish while you can.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

***** Zero in on what you want. You could be disconcerted by someone's attitude. Drop the reaction and stay focused on what must happen. Others can react all they want; don't lose your focus or centering. Tonight: Where people are.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

***** Take charge and step up to the plate. You can lead others as only few can. Your sense of humor comes through at the end of the day. You can avoid frustration with the gift of perspective. Someone close might be observing you. Tonight: A must appearance.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

***** Reach out for experts, especially if you hit a logjam. Realize that you might have too much information on your plate. Sorting facts from opinions could be a full-time job. Tap into your intuitive knowledge. Tonight: Let your mind wander.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

***** You might want to revamp your

ideas after considering a partner's suggestion. Work with the unanticipated as it happens. You could be put off by someone's attitude, but you'll get around it just fine. Know the extent of the damages. Tonight: Easy works.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

***** Others continue to be a touch defiant or demanding. You cannot change their gyrations. Understand what is happening within a select group of people. Realize you could be worn out by them. Tonight: Be with only those you can relax with.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

*** Stay level, as the unexpected does occur. Your way of handling a financial matter could be quite off-the-wall to some people, but easily could prove effective. Knowing your limits is very important as well. You could be a touch self-indulgent. Tonight: Put your feet up.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

***** Your imagination could misread a situation and make more of it than what is really going on. Laugh and relax with the company of others; even an associate makes a great companion over lunch. Your light attitude does have an impact. Tonight: Let your playfulness spin out.

BORN TODAY

Actor Steve McQueen (1930), pro wrestler Mark "The Undertaker" Callaway (1965), actress Alyson Hannigan (1974)

Jacqueline Bigar is on the Internet at www.jacquelinebigar.com

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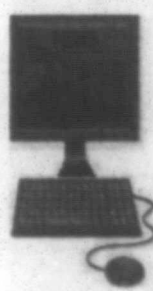
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CHEER GENIUS



submitted photo

Gymnastics of Pampa's House of Cheer recently brought home first place honors in their division at the Redline Cheer and Dance Regional Championships. The team, coached by Kathy Rice and Collin Rains, includes Karoley Villareal, Samara Villanueva, Tristen Morgan, Holly Osborne, Lindzy Hill, Carly Crockett, Savannah Davis, Kelsey Henry, Samantha Clancy, Calista Bolin, Alexis Valenzuela, Kaitlyn Jones, Maddie Yates, Victoria Valenzuela, Riley Lindley, Adamari Lopez and Cheyanne Day.

Neugebauer admits to 'baby killer' shout

WASHINGTON (AP) — Texas Republican Rep. Randy Neugebauer acknowledged Monday that he is the lawmaker who shouted out "baby killer" during a floor speech by Rep. Bart Stupak, an anti-abortion Democrat whose vote was crucial to passing the Democratic health care bill Sunday evening.



Neugebauer

Neugebauer, who has represented a solidly GOP district that includes the city of Lubbock since 2003, said he had apologized to Stupak for his outburst, which drew a rebuke from the chair during the often-rowdy debate.

"Those that are shouting out are out of order," said Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., who was presiding in the chair at the time.

Neugebauer insisted in a statement that he was not referring directly to Stupak but to the agreement that the Michigan Democrat helped work out with the White House. That eleventh-hour agreement, under which President Barack Obama said he would issue an executive order pledging that no federal funds be used for abortions, helped seal the last votes Democrats needed to pass the bill.

He said his exact words, referring to that agreement, were "it's a baby killer."

"While I remain heartbroken over the passage of this bill and the tragic consequences it will have for the unborn, I deeply regret that my actions were mistakenly interpreted as a direct reference to Congressman Stupak himself," he said.

But Neugebauer also acknowledged that the House chamber "is a place of decorum and respect. The timing and tone of my comment last night was inappropriate."

Neugebauer is one of the House's most conservative members, consistently speaking out about the need for lower taxes and smaller government. Last year he co-sponsored a resolution requiring that presidential candidates produce copies of their birth certificates. That followed "birther" movement allegations that Obama was born outside the United States and not qualified to be president.

Texas threatens lawsuit over federal healthcare overhaul

AUSTIN (AP) — Attorney General Greg Abbott threatened a lawsuit to overturn the newly passed federal healthcare legislation as Texas Republicans voiced strong opposition to the reform bill Monday, and one Texas congressman admitted he shouted "baby killer" during debate at the U.S. Capitol.

Abbott said Texas will join other states in filing a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the legislation as soon as President Barack Obama signs the bill, which is expected Tuesday.

"To protect all Texans' constitutional rights, preserve the constitutional framework intended by our nation's founders, and defend our state from further infringement by the federal government, the State of Texas and other states will legally challenge the federal healthcare legislation," Abbott said in a written statement late Sunday night after the U.S. House of Representatives approved the measure. He also discussed plans for the lawsuit on Facebook.

Attorneys general for several other states indicated Monday they would join the lawsuit.

House members voted 219-212 late Sunday to approve the healthcare overhaul that would extend coverage to 32 million uninsured Americans. It also would significantly

expand Medicaid, the federal-state healthcare program for the poor; place new federal regulations on the insurance industry; and allow parents to keep children up to age 26 on their family insurance plans.

Most Americans would have to buy insurance or face penalties. There would be subsidies to help families with incomes of up to \$88,000 a year pay their premiums.

Prominent Texas Republicans, including Abbott and Gov. Rick Perry, have been outspoken against the Democratic-backed healthcare measure. Perry called it a "gross federal overreach."

"Unfortunately, the healthcare vote had more to do with expanding socialism on American soil than it does fixing our healthcare finance and delivery systems. The Obama healthcare bill undermines patient choice, personal responsibility, medical innovation and fiscal responsibility in America," Perry said in a prepared statement.

Perry's Democratic opponent for governor, Bill White, said Perry has provided no leadership on healthcare in Texas, which has the highest proportion of residents without insurance in the nation. About 6 million Texans lack health insurance, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

"As governor, I will encourage Texans to take responsibility for their own health, and I will work hard with both providers and Texas consumers to ensure more affordable primary care," White said in a written comments that did not directly state his opinion on the federal legislation.

No Republican joined House Democrats in voting for the bill, and Rep. Randy Neugebauer, a West Texas Republican, admitted he shouted "baby killer" during a Sunday evening speech by a Democratic colleague whose vote was crucial to the bill's passage.

Ugly discourse accompanies healthcare vote

NEW YORK (AP) — Remember how shocking it was six months ago when Rep. Joe Wilson shouted "You lie!" to the president?

Suddenly, that outburst seems positively genteel. From the "N-word" and anti-gay slurs being leveled at congressmen by protesters right outside the Capitol, to a shout of "baby killer!" within the chamber itself, to veiled and not-so-veiled threats online, the weekend saw an explosion of stunningly ugly discourse.

What is going on? Is our political culture sinking ever lower?

Actually, say political historians, not necessarily, though it surely may seem so. In reality, they say, such a descent into incivility happens periodically at times of significant political change.

The difference is that now we hear about every shocking outburst again and again, on 24-hour cable news, on YouTube, on Twitter and on blogs too numerous to count.

"This stuff is always out there," says Steven Cohen, professor of public administration at Columbia University. "It's just that now, we can't get away from it. That's what's new. With the Web's insatiable appetite for conflict, everything becomes magnified, even if it's often an expression of a fringe minority."

Observers were shocked by some of this weekend's developments. First there were the racist slurs shouted by protesters at black congressmen outside the Capitol on Saturday, only feet from the actual debate inside.

Rep. Andre Carson, D-Ind., said that as he left the Cannon House Office Building with Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., 70, a leader of the civil rights era, they were taunted with chants of "the N-word, the N-word, 15 times."

A spokeswoman for Democratic Whip Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., said a protester spit on Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo., who is

also black. "I heard people saying things today that I have not heard since March 15, 1960, when I was marching to try to get off the back of the bus," Clyburn told reporters.

"It was like going into a time machine," Carson said of his experience.

Also targeted this weekend was Rep. Barney Frank, the openly gay congressman from Massachusetts. Protesters used common anti-gay slurs against him.

"Yes, they called me faggot, homo, several times," Frank said in a telephone interview Monday.

House Minority Leader John Boehner, speaking Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," called the racial and anti-gay remarks to Democratic members of Congress "reprehensible." He added: "Let's not let a few isolated incidents get in the way of the fact that millions of Americans are scared to death" of the health care bill.

Sudoku

Answer to yesterday's puzzle:

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

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

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Viewpoints

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, March 23, the 82nd day of 2010. There are 283 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 23, 1775, Patrick Henry delivered an address to the Virginia Provincial Convention in which he is said to have declared, "Give me liberty, or give me death!"

On this date:

In 1743, George Frederic Handel's oratorio "Messiah" had its London premiere. (During the "Hallelujah Chorus," Britain's King George II, who was in attendance, stood — followed by the entire audience.)

In 1806, explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, having reached the Pacific coast, began their journey back east.

In 1910, Japanese movie director Akira Kurosawa was born in Tokyo.

In 1919, Benito Mussolini founded his Fascist political movement in Milan, Italy.

In 1933, the German Reichstag adopted the Enabling Act, which effectively granted Adolf Hitler dictatorial powers.

In 1956, Pakistan became an Islamic republic.

In 1965, America's first two-person space flight began as Gemini 3 blasted off from Cape Kennedy with astronauts Virgil I. Grissom and John W. Young aboard for a nearly 5-hour flight.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan first proposed developing technology to intercept incoming enemy missiles — an idea that came to be known as the Strategic Defense Initiative.

In 1994, Luis Donaldo Colosio, Mexico's leading presidential candidate, was assassinated in Tijuana.

Ten years ago: Pope John Paul II paid his respects at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial. In a first, Speaker Dennis Hastert named a Catholic priest, the Rev. Daniel Coughlin, as the new House chaplain.

Five years ago: A federal appeals court refused to reinstate Terri Schiavo's feeding tube and the Florida Legislature decided not to intervene in the epic struggle over the brain-damaged woman; Schiavo's parents then filed a request with the Supreme Court. An explosion at a BP oil refinery in Texas City, Texas, killed 15 people.

One year ago: The Obama administration unveiled a plan to take over up to \$1 trillion in sour mortgage securities with the help of private investors; Wall Street responded by hurtling the Dow Jones industrials upward nearly 500 points.

Today's Birthdays: Sir Roger Bannister, who broke the 4-minute mile in 1954, is 81. Motorsports Hall of Famer Craig Breedlove is 73. Singer-producer Ric Ocasek is 61. Singer Chaka Khan is 57. Actress Catherine Keener is 51. Actress Hope Davis is 46. Actor Richard Grieco is 45. Rock singer-musician Damon Albarn (Blur) is 42. Actress Michelle Monaghan is 34. Actress Keri Russell is 34. Actress Nicholle Tom is 32.

Thought for Today:

"A man who fears suffering is already suffering from what he fears." — Michel de Montaigne, French essayist (1533-1592).



Healthcare reform is a tough call

MARTHA RANDOLPH CARR
CaglePost.com



Carr

The health care bill has finally passed and will move on to President Obama for a signature. Whether or not this is good news or creates a creeping sense of dread depends on a few variables.

Doctors who treat Medicare or Medicaid patients will be seeing a decrease in payouts without something to replace the practice's lost income and will still have long-standing patients who need care. Many older doctors are mumbling something about early retirement. Their headaches with insurance providers and government care will increase, not decrease. Their income levels will be inversely proportionate to the hassle factor.

However, those of us, and this would include me, who have pre-existing conditions will have a better chance at getting insurance and therefore treated for that condition that could kill us. Children will not be able to be turned away for the same reason and it'll be harder for insurance companies to cap treatment and treat human beings like we have an expiration date stamped on our foreheads. Those were the real death panels.

Here's the kink in all of

insured, was deleted as too controversial and expensive to the average taxpayer. However, it's still going to be expensive to the average taxpayer and at least this way we would have known that everyone who needed coverage was getting it.

There is a balance to democracy that dictates entrepreneurship mixed with an even dose of charity toward others. It's the balance that's now out of whack.

Big corporations, which should have been in the entrepreneurship category, were treated as charity cases and after they had the cash went back to behaving like independent businesses to the taxpayers' detriment. That's what generally happens when those who caused the problem are bailed out. They learn nothing and are only relieved at not having to pay for their mistakes.

Those who could use some help to recover such as displaced homeowners or small business owners or charities big and small got very little assistance or nothing at all. That means the roots of our economy in America have not been watered but the blooms at the top look great. It's all an illusion though and without a solid base consisting of a healthy middle class the recovery isn't

going to hold, regardless of our health insurance status.

Most of this can not be laid at the Obama administration's door. The seeds were planted in previous administrations from both parties who deregulated the financial markets, disregarding why the regulations were needed in the first place. Then, in 2005 when sub-prime mortgages began to be traded like they were actual gold, the Great Recession became an inevitable consequence.

What's more surprising is how little has been done to reign in the excess. Wall Street appears to have learned nothing more than how to ignore the jeers from the regular taxpayers while they keep cashing their bonus checks.

That leads to the big looming question about the new legislation. The ones who will end up paying for this new bill for the most part are small business owners, the backbone of the economy who employ more people than all of the large corporations combined. Just how long will they continue to pay for other people's mistakes before they have finally had enough? The answer will probably come in the mid-term elections and will have far more to do with the unemployment rate and the GNP than the health insurance coverage.

Nutrition program should be Texan priority

TODD STAPLES
Commissioner, Texas Dept. of Agriculture

Last year, Texas schools served an average of 2.1 million lunches at free or reduced prices each day to children from lower-income families. Yet, during the summer, fewer than 322,000 lunches were served at no cost on average each day.

To help close this hunger gap in Texas, I'm issuing a Mayors Challenge to encourage all mayors across the state to raise awareness of and increase participation in the Texas Department of



Staples

Agriculture's Summer Nutrition Programs. These federally funded programs provide free meals during the summer to children who typically

rely on meals served at school. Sponsoring organizations, such as schools, non-profit organizations and churches are reimbursed for providing summer meals to youth 18 years of age and under.

Last summer, with the help of the Mayors Challenge, 536 Summer Nutrition Program sponsors served more than 19 million meals - up from 17.8 million meals the summer before.

Closing the hunger gap in Texas should be a priority for all Texans. Research shows a definite link between hunger and obesity - two

troubling areas in which Texas leads the nation. With obesity costing our state's businesses an estimated \$3.3 billion in 2005, changing these trends will save all Texans tax dollars.

Together, we can help close the hunger gap and make Texas a healthier state.

For more information on how to become a Summer Nutrition Programs sponsor, visit SummerFood.org or call the Food and Nutrition Division office at 877-TEX-MEAL, 877-839-6325. Applications are due by April 15.

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Second border sweep nets 25, many with gang ties

EL PASO (AP) — El Paso police and Texas state troopers have waged a second assault against suspected members of the Barrio Azteca border gang, arresting 25 people in a second phase of "Operation Knock Down," city and state police said Monday.

In a statement issued Monday, El Paso officials said 10 of 25 people arrested were confirmed members of the Barrio Azteca gang. U.S. and Mexican authorities have said they suspect the gang was involved in the March 13 killings of three people with ties to the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

Consulate employee Lesley A. Enriquez and her husband, Arthur H. Redelfs, were killed March 13 in Juarez when gunmen opened fire on their sport utility vehicle after they left a birthday party.

Jorge Alberto Salcido, the husband of a Mexican employee of the consulate, also was killed by gunmen after leaving the same event in a separate vehicle.

"Operation Knock Down" is a city, state and federal operation that has been seeking new leads into the slayings.

El Paso police tactical units helped with warranted searches over the weekend that led to the 25 arrests.

Assisting El Paso police and the Texas Department of Public Safety were the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the El Paso County Sheriff's Office.

Investigators also are seeking information that could help them find the leader of the gang's Juarez operations, Eduardo "Tablas" Ravelo, who was named to the FBI's

Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list last year.

Earlier this week, Mexican authorities said U.S. intelligence pointed toward involvement in the slayings by the Aztecas, who operate on both sides of the border and work for the Juarez drug cartel.

Initially a Texas prison gang, Barrio Azteca expanded across the Rio Grande into Juarez in the late 1990s, U.S. authorities have said. The FBI has said the gang is known simply as the Aztecas on the Mexican side of the border.

EPA to tighten drinking water standards

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency is tightening drinking water standards to impose stricter limits on four contaminants that can cause cancer.

In a speech Monday, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said the agency is developing stricter regulations for four chemical compounds: tetrachloroethylene, trichloroethylene, acrylamide and epichlorohydrin. All four compounds can cause cancer.

Trichloroethylene, also known as TCE, and tetrachloroethylene are used as industrial solvents and can seep into drinking water from contaminated groundwater or surface water. The other two compounds are impurities that can be introduced into drinking water during the water treatment process.

Jackson said the EPA will issue new rules on TCE and tetrachloroethylene within the next year. Rules for the other two compounds will follow.

Jackson made the comments Monday as she announced a new strategy to better protect public health from contaminants in drinking water. With budgets strained and new threats emerging, the EPA, states and utilities need to foster innovation that can increase cost-effective measures to protect drinking water, Jackson said.

"To make our drinking water systems work harder, we have to work smarter," she said in a speech to the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies.

Jackson called for greater collaboration among states and the federal government, as well as development of new technologies to meet the needs of rural, urban and other water-stressed communities.

The new strategy would address contaminants as a group to improve efficiency; develop new technologies to address health risks from a broad array of contaminants; use a combination of federal and state laws to protect drinking water; and form partnerships with states.

EPA's current approach to drinking water protection is focused on detailed assessments of individual contaminants and can take many years, Jackson said, resulting only in "slow progress."

TCE is especially problematic. The compound was used to clean nuclear missiles and was frequently dumped at missile sites.

Exposure to high concentrations of the chemical can cause nervous system problems, liver and lung damage, abnormal heartbeat, coma and death, according to the Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

'Idol' middle ground 'risky,' says Brown

NEW YORK (AP) — "American Idol" contestant Lacey Brown says her last performance fell in the middle of the pack and that's why she was sent home.

The 24-year-old from Amarillo was voted off the FOX show last week after singing a lackluster rendition of the Rolling Stones' "Ruby Tuesday" (Brown insisted that her performance was of the version by Melanie Safka).



Brown

She says her performance landed her in the middle of the group, which she classifies as a risky place for a contestant.

Brown says a contestant needs to stand out with an amazing performance or be the underdog to get votes from viewers.

The judges also decided not to use on Brown their save tactic, a one-time decision to keep a contestant from going home.

"American Idol" is in its ninth season. This week Miley Cyrus will be a guest mentor as the remaining 11 contestants perform Billboard No. 1 hits.

Trial

competency.

A jury has to find that the defendant can talk with his lawyer with the rational ability to understand the charges against him, Oney said.

The assistant district attorney said that Hathcoat had come up with three areas of defense in his case.

Alvey said none of the three panned out despite assigning an investigator to review them.

The investigator, Travis Garret, testified Monday afternoon.

Oney argued that Hathcoat had filed grievances in the case, following the proper channels.

"That doesn't indicate incompetency," Oney said. "There is no credible evidence that shows he incompetency."

Dr. Steven Schneider, an Amarillo psychologist who

had examined Hathcoat, testified Monday afternoon that the defendant was competent under the law even through Hathcoat had reported that he hears voices.

Alvey said that Hathcoat has suffered three medical disorders and has been on medicine for six years.

Dr. Schneider testified that four of the medicines were to calm Hathcoat down.

Alvey argued that Hathcoat was paranoid, had grandiose visions, heard voices and wasn't rational.

"We don't leave these kinds of decisions to a judge and lawyers," Alvey said.

The law states that a jury will decide the competency of a defendant, he said.

Thirty-five minutes after retiring to consider the case, the jury returned to the courtroom to pronounce Hathcoat fit to stand trial.

cont. from page 1

Lab

Chisum said that the biosecurity lab was a major step for this area.

"We've got the animals up here," he said.

With the addition of dairies to the panhandle's agricultural sector and the growing number of hog farms, Chisum said there is increasing the need for the expansion of the state's veterinary facilities in the area.

"I'll never forget when (State Senator) Teel Bivins was up here as a cattleman promoting a hog farm," Chisum said. "You'd a

thought it'd really hurt him, but you know what, the hogs have been good for us."

They've created more agricultural industry in the panhandle, he said.

"Things have gotten better because of them," Chisum said.

"The dairies are doing a fine job."

The cheese factories that are locating in the area are expanding the agricultural sector, he said.

"It really helps us along," Chisum said.

But the key, he said, have been

the cattle and the cattle feeders.

"Let me tell you," he said, "this country would not be what it is today without cattle feeding."

He cited the Texas Cattle Feeders Association as a political power in the state capitol.

"We are excited about getting this (biosecurity) lab in place up here," Chisum said. "We know it will make our industry better to respond to some really serious business that could put us out of business in a short amount of time."

cont. from page 1

Skinner

Perry's office Monday acknowledged receiving the request but said the governor had taken no immediate action.

Skinner was convicted of the fatal bludgeoning of Twila Busby, 40, and the fatal stabbing of her sons, Elwin Caler, 22, and Randy Busby, 20.

Skinner long has insisted he was incapable of carrying out the killings because he was passed out on a couch, sick from alcohol and codeine use, when they occurred.

His execution this week would be the fifth this year in the nation's most active death penalty state. He's among at least 10 Texas death row inmates with execution dates in the coming months.

cont. from page 1

Dear Abby...

By Pauline & Jeanne Phillips



DEAR ABBY: I am a high school secretary, and I'm writing about your reply to "Sick of It in Iowa" (Jan. 28), who is upset at the school secretaries for questioning or commenting on her frequent absences. You were right that her medical history is of no concern to the secretary, but her attendance record is very much the business of the secretary.

The principal makes the decision regarding when a student is required to bring a doctor's note with every absence. This procedure is called Persistent Absence, and it means someone has been out of school at least 25 days that school year, or has developed a pattern with his or her absences.

School rules are governed by the state. You would be surprised how many parents receive citations and must go to court because of their student's poor attendance. When a student has a chronic illness, backed by a physician's statement, the school will bend over backward to work with them, ensuring they receive the best possible education available.

It's not that I don't empathize with that young lady, but part of an education is teaching students that in the real world, they have a responsibility to maintain a good attendance record that will precede them into college, the work force and life itself. -- DIANE S., SPRING CITY, PA.

DEAR DIANE S.: Thank you for straightening me out. It appears from the mail I have received from educators and school administrative staff that my answer left something to be desired. Mea culpa. For the benefit of parents and students who may not be aware, I'll share a few more. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: For your information, many times school secretaries are charged with the unpleasant task of having to contact the truant officer, children's services and

others in law enforcement if a child doesn't come to school and can't provide a valid doctor's excuse. The principal and superintendent do these jobs, but it is up to US to track these kids and make sure they attend school as they are supposed to do. -- BOTHERED IN MUNCIE, IND.

DEAR ABBY: I'm a school secretary. We are required by law to ask for a doctor's note when a student has accumulated more than five absences due to illness. When a student arrives at school more than 30 minutes late, or leaves more than 30 minutes early (three or more times), that student is considered truant.

With today's economic mess we need to know why a student is not in school. In California, schools lose more than \$30 a day when a student is not in his or her seat, and that money adds up. So, yes, Abby, it IS "our business" to know a student's medical history. -- VICTORIA IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR ABBY: "Sick of It" and her mother should speak to the school social worker. She may qualify for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, including an individualized education plan that could cover services such as in-home schooling, extended time on assignments and the ability to leave school with little or no warning. This is called a 504 Plan. -- KATHRYN IN NEWARK, DEL.

DEAR ABBY: The girl with frequent illness said she plays the clarinet. Has anyone suggested to her that her clarinet could be the culprit? As a band director for more than 30 years, one of the first lessons I go over with beginning or continuing students is to throw away reeds that were used prior to any illness and clean the mouthpiece thoroughly. -- SARAH JANE IN SEVERNA PARK, MD.

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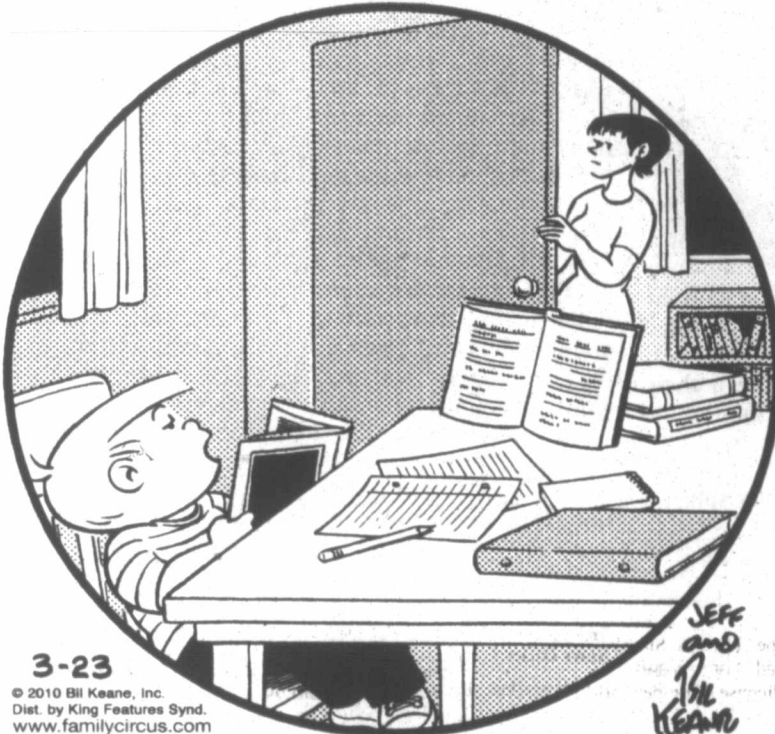
Marmaduke



"I thought I was your pet?"

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



3-23

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"Feel free to interrupt me while I'm doing my homework."

Daily Crossword Puzzle

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 2 Louvre
 - 1 Florida contents team
 - 3 Sticky stuff
 - 7 Recite the rosary
 - 4 Source
 - 11 Ark's landing site
 - 5 Did yard work
 - 12 Colossal
 - 6 Proofing note
 - 13 Areas over home plate
 - 7 Light particle
 - 15 "Understand?"
 - 8 Use the track
 - 16 Put down
 - 9 Grow older
 - 18 Liner stop
 - 10 Agreeable
 - 21 Sentence subject, usually
 - 22 Garage job
 - 14 Close, as a jacket
 - 22 Shoe shade
 - 24 FBI worker: Abbr.
 - 23 For each
 - 25 Tourist's aid
 - 25 Catchphrase
 - 26 Homer's dad
 - 28 Mississippi explorer
 - 27 Chef Ramsay
 - 29 Surgery reminder
 - 30 Russian refusal
 - 31 Hardens
 - 32 Impassive
 - 34 Places to drive slowly
 - 40 Verse expert
 - 41 Swiss city
 - 42 — Domini
 - 43 Complete the bill

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Yesterday's answer

- 19 Respond to
- 20 Brass band members
- 21 Carp
- 22 Shoe shade
- 23 For each
- 25 Catchphrase
- 28 Mississippi explorer
- 29 Minute part
- 31 Measured
- 33 Gymnast Korbust
- 34 Masseur's place
- 35 Dupe
- 36 Chick's mom
- 37 Court divider
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- 39 Jazz horn

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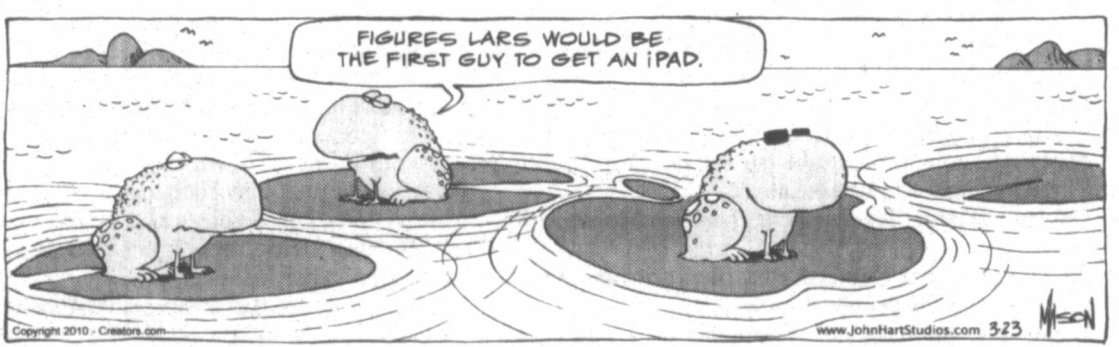
Beetle Bailey



Marvin



B.C.



Hagar The Horrible



Peanuts



Blondie



Flo & Friends

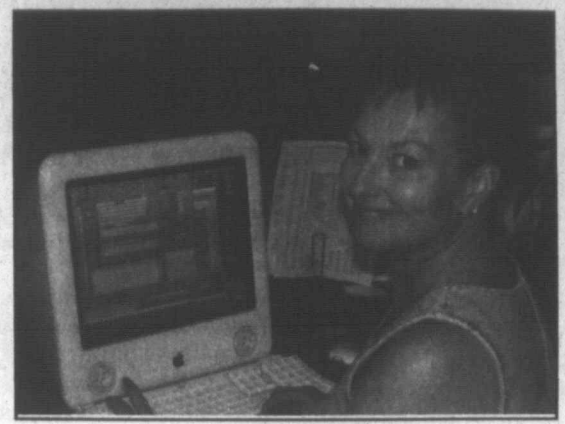


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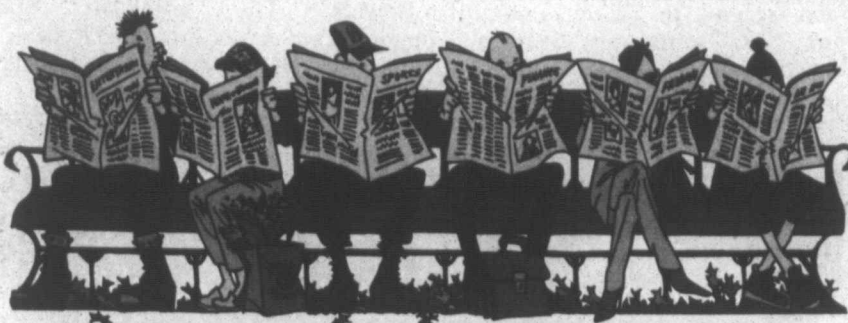
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One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-23 CRYPTOQUOTE

BUTL DH RWZR QWLP AHJN
MWUBONLP RWUPX HY
YZUNPLDD, MZNUPS ZPO
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AHJ. — W. IZMXDHP VNHQP IN.
Yesterday's Cryptquote: MUCH UNHAPPINESS HAS COME INTO THE WORLD BECAUSE OF BEWILDERMENT AND THINGS LEFT UNSAID. — FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

Classifieds Work! Call Beverly Today at The Pampa News! (806) 669-2525.

Sports

Gymnastics of Pampa competes in Muleshoe Invitational

BY ANDREW GLOVER
aglover@thepampanews.com

Gymnastics of Pampa competed at the Muleshoe Invitational Tumbling and trampoline meet.

Alexis Bolton won fourth place in trampoline, seventh in tumbling and ninth in double mini-trampoline. Chandler Petty won first place in trampoline, fifth in tumbling and fifth in double mini. Mariah Fulton finished second in trampoline, third in tumbling and third in double mini. Allison Pooley won first in trampoline, sixth in tumbling and sixth in double mini. Bethany Jo Roden

won fourth in trampoline, fourth in tumbling, fifth in double mini. Kinley Beyer finished second in trampoline, fourth in tumbling and third in double mini. McKenna Etheredge won first in the trampoline, third in tumbling and second in double mini.

Riley Elliff won third in trampoline, third in tumbling and second in double mini. Allyson Chisum earned second in the trampoline, fourth in tumbling and first in double mini. Kaitlyn Hare won first in trampoline, first in tumbling, second double mini. Reagan Stroud won first in

trampoline, third in tumbling and first in double mini. Lauren Hurst won third in trampoline, fifth in tumbling and third in double mini. Brittany Hare finished fourth in trampoline, seventh in tumbling, and fourth in double mini. Ally Roberson earned third in the trampoline, third

in tumbling and third in double mini. Kristen Duree won fourth in the trampoline, sixth in tumbling and fifth in double mini.

Kadye Heiskell won third in the trampoline, fifth in tumbling and second in double mini. D.J. Ford won first in the trampoline, sixth in tumbling and sixth

in double mini. Taylor Lindley earned second in trampoline, fourth in tumbling and first in double mini. Ericka Nanez won first in trampoline, third in tumbling and fourth in double mini. Misti Bowers won fourth in trampoline, third in tumbling and second in double mini. Millie

Borunda won third in trampoline, fourth in tumbling and third in double mini. Dakota Etheredge won first in trampoline, first in tumbling and first in double mini.

The gymnasts are coached by Carrie Reagan, Nat Villanueva and Kala Lindley.

Gonzaga ladies upset Texas A&M

SEATTLE (AP) — A year ago, Texas A&M admittedly got caught peeking at a potential matchup with Connecticut in the regional finals. They never got there, handily beaten by Arizona State in the round of 16.

A year later, the Aggies' NCAA tournament is over far earlier than expected. This time, there was no looking ahead. The Aggies simply got taken out by the upstarts from Gonzaga.

Vivian Frieson scored 23 points, including the go-ahead 12-footer with 17 seconds left, to lead seventh-seeded Gonzaga to a 72-71 win over second-seeded Texas A&M on Monday night in the second round of the NCAA women's tournament.

"We had the game in hand and we didn't finish," Texas A&M coach Gary Blair said. "They finished a lot stronger than we did."

Down 13 early in the second half, the Aggies rallied to take their first lead with 11:49 left on a 3-pointer by Tanisha Smith. Instead of folding, the underdog Zags kept it a one-possession game for the final 11 minutes with neither team leading by more than three points.

Eventually, Frieson the Bulldogs' do-everything senior got her chance and sent the Zags to the regional semifinals for the first time in school history.

"It means the world to me. Me and Heather (Bowman) have been a part of a lot of firsts here at this university," said Frieson, who added nine rebounds, five assists and four blocks. "It felt great to go to the NCAA tournament for the first time in 2007. It felt

great to win our first game last year against Xavier and it feels even better to go to the Sweet 16."

The Aggies felt despite a Big 12 tournament championship they were flying undetected into the tournament with the dream still lingering of a Final Four trip to San Antonio just a three-hour drive from campus.

But those hopes all ended in the Pacific Northwest.


Given a tough task having to face Gonzaga just 300 miles from its campus, the Aggies (26-8) dug themselves a 13-point deficit early in the second half, only to rally behind their defense. Texas A&M led 71-70 on Smith's baseline drive and basket, while being fouled, with 37 seconds left. But Smith fell hard on her hip and missed the ensuing free throw, one of seven misses at the line by the Aggies.

"I'm not going to blame an injury on the free throw. I just missed it," Smith said. "We missed a lot of free throws tonight and that was a big part of it."

With West Coast Conference MVP Courtney Vandersloot having fouled out with 1:21 left after one of her worst performances of the season, the Bulldogs went to Frieson, their senior leader. Texas A&M had a final chance, but Danielle Adams' forced 18-footer was short in the final seconds.

"That last timeout I might have seemed as cool as ice but in my head I was like, 'I'm not ready to go home. I can't go home right now. This is not how I wanted to finish my senior year,'" Frieson said.

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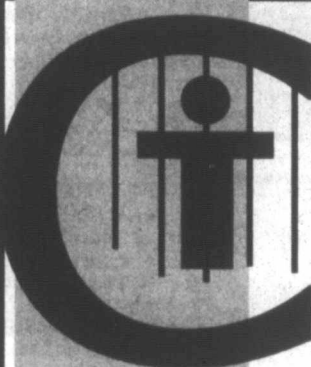
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