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WTIC Posted - $17.75
Natural Gas - $2.555

THE SNYDER DAILY NEWS

THURSDAY

Jan. 3, 2002
Vol. 53 No. 211
10 Pages 50¢

Home of Greg Graves

Ted Crenwelge, Janet Stribling...

County judge's race draws two more candidates

As expected, a contested race has developed for Scurry County Judge. The unexpected, however, was the list of hopefuls.

The judge's race is one of three contested locally.

Incumbent County Judge Ricky Fritz changed his mind and will not seek re-election, but a second Republican candidate filed late Wednesday along with a Democratic hopeful.

Ted Crenwelge, a Snyder farmer and rancher and unsuccessful candidate for judge four years ago, filed as a GOP candidate Wednesday.

Also on Wednesday, school board member Janet Stribling, became a Democratic candidate for county judge.

Crenwelge will face former Snyder mayor Rod Waller in the March 12 Republican primary. Waller ran unsuccessfully for state representative 14 years ago.

Crenwelge

Both Crenwelge and Waller have been active in Snyder civic affairs, and both currently serve on the board of directors of the Colorado River Municipal Water District.

"My motivation is the same as it was four years ago," Crenwelge said. "Nothing has changed, I want to serve the community and I feel that my experience and qualifications will allow me to do the citizens a good job.

"I feel I have the leadership abilities to unify the commissioners' court and get it back to doing what is best for the taxpayers of the community."

Crenwelge has lived in Scurry County since 1961 following his graduation from Texas Christian University.

Crenwelge is vice chairman of the board of the Upper Colorado Soil and Water Conservation District. He served 15 years on the Snyder school board and three terms as president. Crenwelge also served five years on the Cogdell Hospital board of managers and was board chairman.

A member of the Snyder Lions Club 29 years, Crenwelge also has been active in Snyder youth league baseball and the Scurry County Livestock Association.

He and his wife, Jane, have two grown children, Scott Crenwelge and Carrie Cox, and they are members of the First Baptist Church.

Stribling, 49, has lived in Scurry County 45 years. A graduate of Snyder High School, Western Texas College and West Texas State University, Stribling has been active in the local Democratic party, serving as secretary.

"I would like to be a part of keeping Scurry County as a place we can call home," Stribling said. "I think we can keep the good qualities we have and expand on them. I know the county judge plays a big part in the businesses that come to Snyder and the activities that go on in the county. I would like to keep our momentum going."

A member of the Snyder school board since 1983, she has served two terms as secretary. Stribling worked in the accounting field before beginning work with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice at the Price Daniel unit a year ago. She is the accountant in the furniture factory. Stribling also is active in county-wide 4-H work and is a member of the Fluvanna Volunteer Fire Department.

Her husband, Jimmy, owns a welding shop in Fluvanna. They have three children. Annie is a fourth grader, Dana is a freshman at WTC and Justin is married and works in the family welding business.

Stribling

In other contested races, Republicans Robby Floyd and Clifford Hall are vying for the nomination for Precinct 2 commissioner. The winner will face Democrat Jerry House in the November general election.

In Pct. 4, incumbent Democrat commissioner Chloanne Lindsey is being challenged by Ronnie Clawson in the March 12 primary, and the winner will face Republican Keith Hackfeld in the general election.

Incumbent Republicans who are seeking re-election without opposition are District Clerk Trina Rodgers, County Clerk Joan Bunch, County Treasurer Nelda Colvin and Precinct 1 Justice of the Peace Deborah Boyd.

Running unopposed for re-election as a Democrat is Sheriff Darren Jackson.

The race to replace Rob Junell as state representative drew a fourth Republican hopeful on Wednesday and a third San Angelo attorney in the race.

Lawyer Mark Brown filed for the 72nd District seat which includes Scurry, Mitchell, Coke and Tom Green counties. Brown has lived in San Angelo since 1982.

Other GOP candidates in the state representative's contest are attorneys Drew Darby and Thomas Goff. The other GOP hopeful is farm and ranch magazine publisher Scott Campbell. The lone Demo candidate is Christoval business owner Jeri Sloan.

Another contested race in 2002 is that of the U.S. representative's seat held by Democrat Charlie Stenholm who is unopposed in the primary.

Republican candidates are businessman Rob Beckham and airline pilot Russell Gill, both of Abilene.

Scurry County Political Lineup

County Judge
Rod Waller - R
Ted Crenwelge - R
Janet Stribling - D

Sheriff
Darren Jackson - D

District Clerk
Trina Rodgers - R

County Clerk
Joan Bunch - R

County Treasurer
Nelda Colvin - R

Pct. 2 Commissioner
Robby Floyd - R
Clifford Hall - R
Jerry House - D

Pct. 4 Commissioner
Chloanne Lindsey - D
Ronnie Clawson - D
Keith Hackfeld - R

Pct. 1 JP
Deborah Boyd - R

State Representative
Drew Darby - R
Thomas Goff - R
Scott Campbell - R
Mark Brown - R
Jeri Sloan - D

State Senator
Robert Duncan - R

U.S. Representative
Charles Stenholm - D
Russell Gill - R
Rob Beckham - R

Fritz not seeking third term; future plans are not revealed

For the past month, County Judge Ricky Fritz has steadfastly contended that he would seek a third term.

Ricky Fritz

However, with the passing of the 6 p.m. filing deadline on Wednesday, Fritz will not be a candidate.

Fritz reportedly told some of his decision not to run Wednesday morning, but at the same time would not reveal his future plans.

This morning Fritz would not comment on his decision. "I did not file and that's all I have to say about it."

There has been speculation that Fritz would take a job in Austin. His current term as county judge runs the remainder of the year.

Fritz, a Republican, was first elected county judge in 1994, unseating incumbent Bob Doolittle in the primary and holding off a challenge of former Democratic Judge Bobby Goodwin in the general election.

Fritz won his second four-year term in 1998, defeating Republican challenger Ted Crenwelge.

Prior to serving as county judge, Fritz was Snyder chamber of commerce manager.

Fritz' tenure has been marked with high profile issues and controversy. In 1997, Fritz proposed the leasing of Cogdell Memorial Hospital to a Tennessee-based firm. That proposal was ultimately defeated by county voters.

The hospital was an issue again when the commissioners' court overturned a pay raise for hospital employees that had been granted by the court's appointed board of managers.

Fritz was, however, eventually successful last year in pressing for a change of managers at the hospital.

In the most recent controversy, Fritz and the court reduced the proposed subsidy for the operation of the Scurry County Coliseum.

The commissioners' court decided against the issuance of a request for proposals for management of the coliseum, and the county took over the day-to-day coliseum operations from the Snyder chamber of commerce on Jan. 1.

The manner in which the commissioners' court reached its decision on the Scurry County Coliseum prompted a lawsuit filed by the Snyder Daily News.

The suit, which is pending in 132nd District Court, contends that the commissioners' court violated the Texas Open Meetings Act.

The suit is seeking no monetary damages, but rather is asking for a permanent injunction against further violations of open government.

Lane first winner of Bash Cash

Birth date numbers printed on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday

Robert L. Lane is the first winner of The Snyder Daily News' Birthday Bash Cash contest.

Lane's birth date matched the Bash Cash numbers printed in Tuesday's edition of the SDN.

He will be awarded $50 for his birth date numbers of 09-06-29.

The contest, a new feature of the SDN, will appear each Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday and prizes must be claimed by 5 p.m. the following day.

Each Bash Cash starts with $50 and increases $10 each time there is no winner.

Contestants win if the Bash Cash numbers match their birthday in sequence.

Players must be 16 years old and reside in Scurry County.

Proof of birth date and legal residence can be provided by presenting a driver's license, voter registration card, birth certificate, telephone book listing, utility bill or other documentation.

YEAR'S FIRST BABY — Michael and Melanie Alarcon are parents of Kaden Matthew Alarcon born Jan. 2 in Cogdell Memorial Hospital. He weighed eight pounds and was 20¾ inches long. He has a brother, Kaleb Michael Alarcon. Grand are Derwin and Betty Thompson and Danny and JoAnn Tovar. His great-grandparents are Rosie Williams and Zella Thompson, Eva Fuentes and Paul and Janie Tovar. (Staff Photo by Jo Ann Nunley)

THE SDN COLUMN

By Roy McQueen

The feller on Deep Creek says, "Many people excel in life because someone said they could — and sometimes because someone said they couldn't."

The Washington Post ran a contest in which entries were asked to tell the younger generation how much more difficult it was in the "ole days."

Second runner-up: In my day, we couldn't afford shoes, so we went barefoot. In winter, we had to wrap our feet with barbed wire for traction.

First runner-up: In my day, we didn't have MTV or in-line skates, or any of that stuff. No, it was 45s and regular old metal-wheeled roller skates, and the 45s always skipped, so to get them to play right you'd weight the needle down with something like quarters, which we never had because our allowances were way to small, so we'd use our skate keys instead.

We'd end up forgetting they were taped to the record player arm so that we couldn't adjust our skates, which didn't really matter because those crummy metal wheels would kill you if you hit a pebble anyway, and in those days roads had real pebbles on them, not like today.

And the winner: In my day we didn't have rocks. We had to go down to the creek and wash our clothes by beating them with our heads.

Honorable mentions:

—In my day, we didn't have fancy health-food restaurants. Every day we ate lots of easily recognizable animal parts, along with potatoes.

—In my day, we didn't have hand-held calculators. We had to do addition on our fingers. To subtract, we had to have some figures amputated.

—In my day, we didn't have any water. We had to smash together our own hydrogen and oxygen atoms.

—Kids today think the world revolves around them. In my day, the sun revolved around the world, and the world was perched on the back of a giant tortoise.

—Back in my day, 60 Minutes wasn't just a bunch of gray-haired, liberal 80-year-old guys. It was a bunch of gray-haired, liberal 60-year-old guys.

—In my day, we didn't have virtual reality. It was a one-eyed razorback barbarian warrior chasing you with an ax. You just had to hope you could outrun him.

—Back in my day, they hadn't invented electricity. We had to watch TV by candlelight.

—And in my day, we didn't have Strom Thurmond. Oh, wait. Yes, we did.

ASK US

Q—What is the maximum blood-alcohol content allowed for Texas drivers before they can be charged with DWI?

A—Beginning last September, the law set .08 percent or higher as the maximum level.

FORECAST - ALMANAC

Snyder Temps: High Wednesday, 34 degrees; low, 14; 7 a.m. Thursday, 21; trace of precipitation.

Area Forecast: Tonight, cloudy, low near 30; S winds 5-15 mph. Friday, cloudy, high near 50; S winds 5-15 mph. Friday night, cloudy, 20% percent chance of snow or rain.

Jesse Rivera
Cloudy

Sunset: 5:53 p.m.
Sunrise: 7:43 a.m.

Of two days in 2002, the sun has shone two days in Snyder.

TODAY'S THOUGHT

Winners make their goals; losers make excuses.
—Nido Qubein

JAN 03 2002

New mayor of NYC focuses on budget

NEW YORK (AP) — In his first full day at City Hall on Wednesday, Mayor Michael Bloomberg worked in his new communal office space and again warned that the city faces tough economic times.

"Everybody has just got to understand we have to find a way to do as much as we can with less," said Bloomberg, who pledged in his inaugural address to cut the staff of his office by 20 percent and urged other departments to follow suit.

City officials say they expect at least three successive years of budget deficits between $4 billion and $5 billion.

Even the police department, sacrosanct in Rudolph Giuliani's administration, likely will be asked to cut back, Bloomberg said.

He said construction projects, such as the planned refurbishments of Lincoln Center and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, will also probably be delayed. Bloomberg said he does not foresee layoffs.

Work stations were installed last week in the converted office space where Bloomberg and about 30 others, including his deputy mayors, will do business. Bloomberg instituted a similar no-office policy at Bloomberg L.P., his financial information company.

"I'm a believer in openness," he said. "It applies to me as well as it applies to everyone else. Sitting out in the open I think is the best way to encourage communications to hear what's going on."

The 59-year-old Bloomberg spent $69 million of his own money in his bid to succeed Giuliani. Bloomberg has said he would take a salary of $1 a year rather than the $195,000 pay.

As he talked about his plans on the network morning television shows Wednesday, Bloomberg said his businessman's style will be different than that of his tough-as-nails predecessor.

Unproved bioterrorism protection sold

WASHINGTON (AP) — Internet sites continue to market dubious devices offering bioterror protection or treatments despite government warnings that the claims are exaggerated or false.

After the Sept. 11 hijackings and subsequent anthrax attacks, the Federal Trade Commission found more than 200 Web sites selling products related to bioterrorism, including gas masks that may not work as advertised and ultraviolet lights falsely promoted as anthrax killers.

In November, the FTC sent e-mail warnings to operators of 50 sites peddling questionable treatments for anthrax, smallpox and other potential biological weapons. The ineffectual remedies included dietary supplements such as oregano oil and zinc mineral water.

While half those sites have dropped their claims, the rest still broadcast the false claims, the agency said Wednesday. If Web site operators fail to remove the unsupported claims, they could be fined, banned from operating or required to repay consumers, the FTC said.

"Products that may have a legitimate use and a legitimate function are being promoted for things that they won't do," said Howard Beales, the agency's director of consumer protection.

The agency also announced it has warned another 71 Web site operators to quit making unproved claims about bioterrorism protection. The FTC didn't name the sites involved but said 60 warnings involve devices such as gas masks and protective clothing advertised as protection against the effects of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons.

Some of the products might work against certain hazards, but the FTC suspects the Web sites are promoting the devices with misleading or unsupported claims that overstate the protection offered, Beales said. He said claims that one type of gas mask can filter all hazardous materials are false.

The government is particularly wary of sites selling used and imported gas masks that may have expired filter cartridges, Beales said. He said signs of a more reliable gas mask would be certification by the Defense Department or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which approves respirators for hazardous work environments.

The FTC has been working with the Food and Drug Administration and law enforcement officials in 30 states to scour the Internet for misleading claims. Dubious products that bother government investigators also include mail sterilizers, biohazard test kits and dietary supplements such as colloidal silver and thyme.

In December, the Environmental Protection Agency ordered Homeland Security Plus of Gilbert, Ariz., and Testing Kits Inc. of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to stop the illegal sale of pesticides they promoted as effective against anthrax. The EPA has not approved the substances for such use. The companies removed their Internet advertisements, the EPA said.

New York authorities last month charged four businessmen who sold on the Internet an unproven gadget called the DeGERMinator, which they claimed used ultraviolet light to "wipe out surface germs in less than five seconds, including anthrax."

There is no evidence ultraviolet light devices can kill anthrax, Beales said, nor is there evidence supporting other Web site claims that ozone-producing machines can wipe out the deadly spores.

The government has approved prescription antibiotics — not dietary supplements — to prevent or treat anthrax, the FDA said. A smallpox vaccine exists, but there is no proven treatment for smallpox, nor any FDA-approved home anthrax test.

"If you buy one of these products and it's really fraudulent, it's going to be hard to get your money back," said Jack Gillis, a spokesman for the Consumer Federation of America. "The claims are so vague it's hard to follow up and prove they were false."

On the Net:
FTC health fraud guidelines: http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/health/frdheal.htm

events

TEXAS LOTTERY

RESULTS

Lotto Texas

AUSTIN (AP) — No ticket matched all six numbers drawn Wednesday night for the twice-weekly Lotto Texas game, state lottery officials said.

The ticket was worth an estimated $6 million.

The numbers drawn Wednesday night from a field of 54 were: 2-15-20-27-45-47

Saturday night's drawing will be worth an estimated $9 million.

Pick 3

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

9-0-5

Fed judge dismisses Puerto Rico's lawsuit

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge dismissed Puerto Rico's lawsuit to stop the Navy from resuming bombing exercises on the territory's island of Vieques. The Puerto Rican government said Wednesday it would appeal.

U.S. District Court Judge Gladys Kessler said that while the political and policy issues surrounding the case were complex, "the legal issue, in contrast, is simple and straightforward."

President Bush has said the Navy should abondon its training on Vieques no later than May 2003. Many in Puerto Rico, however, fear that the U.S. war in Afghanistan will cause him to back away from the pledge.

Puerto Rico filed its lawsuit last April after Gov. Sila Calderon signed a law banning loud noises along the island's shores. That law cited the U.S. Noise Control Act of 1972, which allows states — or, as in Puerto Rico's case, U.S. territories — to set noise-control laws.

In a ruling issued Monday and released Wednesday, Kessler said she must dismiss Puerto Rico's case "for lack of subject matter jurisdiction." She said the Noise Control Act "does not provide plaintiff a cause of action to sue in federal district court for the violations alleged."

Puerto Rican Justice Secretary Anabelle Rodriguez pledged to appeal.

"We think the decision is erroneous," she said at a news conference Wednesday in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

"It's sad," said Nellie Rodriguez, wife of the Vieques mayor, Damaso Serrano. "We'll have to keep fighting another way; for example, by putting a lot of pressure on the president."

Despite Bush's pledge to eventually end naval training on Vieques, Congress passed legislation last month to bar the Navy secretary from closing the site until he and top military leaders certify the availability of a site or sites that would provide "equivalent or superior" levels of training.

A Pentagon spokesman would not comment Wednesday because he had not seen the ruling.

Dana Perino, a Justice Department spokeswoman, said government attorneys were analyzing the ruling but were pleased with the decision.

Puerto Rican researchers have linked heart disease and other health problems found among Vieques residents to naval gunfire and pollutants released during military exercises.

The Navy denies the allegations.

Opposition to the Navy's use of Vieques intensified after a jet dropped two errant bombs in 1999 that killed a civilian Puerto Rican guard.

The Navy owns about half of Vieques, and the bombing range covers 900 acres on the island's eastern tip.

Birthday Bash CASH!

If Your Birthday Numbers Match Birthday Bash Cash Numbers You Can Win Cash!!

Today's Birthday Bash Cash $50

Bash Cash value increases $10 when there is no winner.

Thursdays Birthday Bash Cash Numbers

1 2 - 0 2 - 1 0
Month Day Year

Deadline 5 p.m. Friday, 01-04-02

New Birthday Bash Cash Numbers In The Sunday Edition Of The Snyder Daily News

HOW TO PLAY:
-You win if BASH CASH numbers match your birthday in sequence.
-Each BASH CASH starts with $50.
-BASH CASH increases $10 each time there is no winner.
-NEW BASH CASH numbers will be published Tuesday, Thursday & Sunday Editions of The Snyder Daily News.

ELIGIBILITY:
-Resident of Scurry County
-Must be at least 16 year old.
-Employees of the Snyder Daily News, their spouses and children are not eligible.

TO CLAIM BIRTHDAY BASH CASH
-Prize must be claimed in person by deadline.
-In case of multi-winners prize will be divided equally.
- Prize is claimed at Snyder Daily News, 3600 College Ave.
-Must provide proof of birthday and legal residence.
-Proof: driver's license, voter registration card, birth certificate, phone book, utility bill or other documentation.

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Berry's World

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HOUSTON, TEXAS 77056
dfriend@billbasslaw.com

Not certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization.
We often work in conjunction with other law firms on clients' cases.

Date Book

Thursday, Jan. 3, 2002

Today is the third day of 2002 and the 14th day of winter.

TODAY'S HISTORY: On this day in 1847, the name of the city of Yerba Buena, Calif., was changed to San Francisco.

On this day in 1904, Marines from the USS Dixie arrived in Panama.

On this day in 1970, the Beatles recorded "I, Me, Mine." It was the last song they recorded together.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS: Lucretia Mott (1793-1880), abolitionist-feminist; Father Damien (1840-1889), missionary; J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973), writer; Victor Borge (1909-2000), comedian-pianist; Sergio Leone (1921-1989), director; Bobby Hull (1939-), hockey great, is 63; Victoria Principal (1945-), actress, is 57; Stephen Stills (1945-), musician, is 57; Mel Gibson (1956-), actor, is 46.

TODAY'S SPORTS: On this day in 1983, Tony Dorsett of the Dallas Cowboys set an NFL record by scoring a 99-yard touchdown. The Cowboys lost, however, to the Minnesota Vikings 31-27.

TODAY'S QUOTE: "A smooth sea never made a skillful mariner." — English proverb

TODAY'S MOON: Between full moon (Dec. 30) and last quarter (Jan. 5).

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New coin minted

LONDON (AP) — Britain is minting a new five-pound coin to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's 50 years on the throne, officials said Wednesday.

Engraved on the Golden Jubilee coin are the Latin words "Amor Populi Praesidium Reg," or "the love of the people is the queen's protection."

The front shows the monarch riding a horse.

THE SNYDER DAILY NEWS

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Lifestyles

OUT WITH T
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shelves with n
by Jo Ann Nu

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By Phillip

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Opening

Thursday,

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semifinal

By Phillip Al
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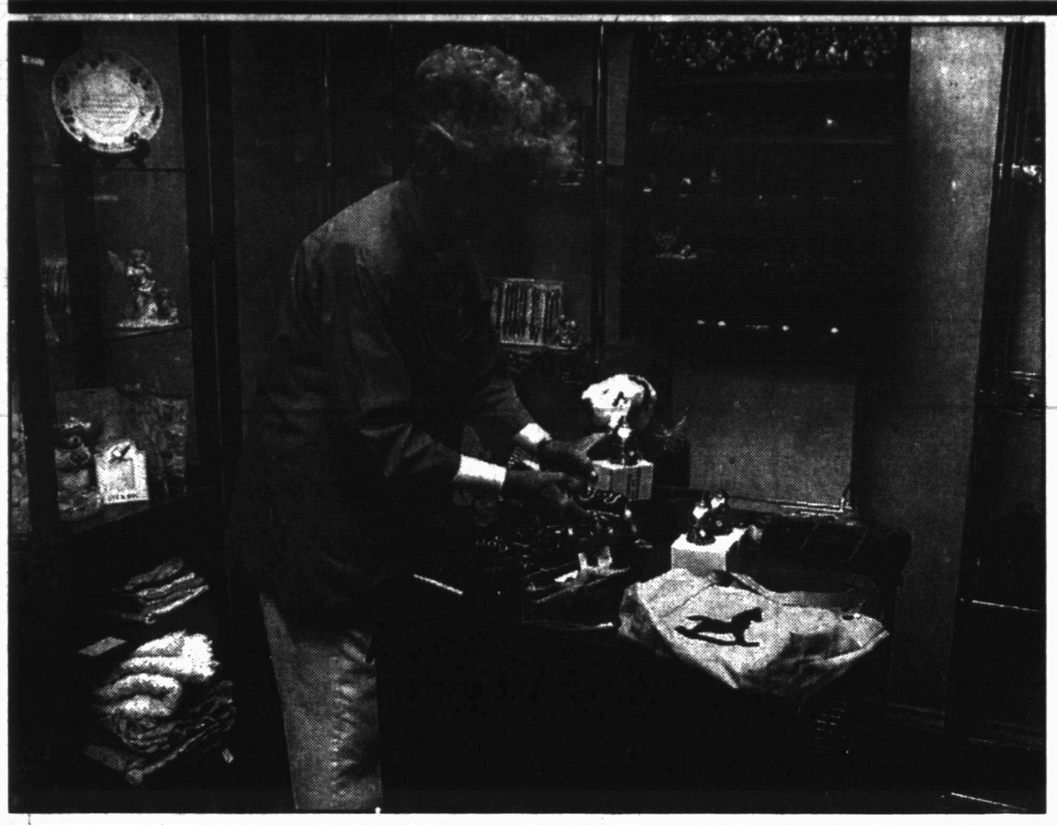

OUT WITH THE OLD — Virginia Johnston, Cogdell Memorial Hospital Auxiliary volunteer, arranges the few Christmas items on the sale table in the Gift Shop. They are restocking their shelves with new items and some handwork that has been donated by volunteers. (Staff Photo by Jo Ann Nunley)

Easy steps to kick start your mood

Winter is not an easy time for some. While the days are shorter, the weather colder and the skies grayer, many find that winter brings sunken moods, apathy and other symptoms of the blues, especially around the holidays. Fortunately, for those who experience these symptoms, there is hope.

"A gloomy day can make anyone feel down and out," says Richard Brown, M.D., associate professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University, practicing psychopharmacologist and co-author of Stop Depression Now. "Particularly in the Northeast and Midwest regions of the U.S., winter is a time when people stay indoors more, eat more and become less active overall. If these feelings of sadness overwhelm you and seem to recur around this same time every year, there are steps you can take to combat the problem."

Doctors also believe the limited amount of light exposure we get during colder months is another reason why some experience profound sadness during wintertime. Limited light is associated with low levels of melotonin, seratonin and other compounds that support the body's feelings of stability and emotional balance. Shorter, colder days also contribute to increased carbohydrate cravings, less energy and sleep disturbances.

To jump start your mood, Dr. Brown offers the following tips:

• Monitor your diet. Take your vitamins and make sure to get enough fresh fruits and vegetables. Concentrate on consuming fish and other high-quality proteins while avoiding refined sugars, which can alter your mood. An unhealthy diet leads to an unhealthy mind.

• Exercise. As always, exercise is an important part of feeling good. Just a 10 minute walk, three times a day, is enough to help you regain the energy that you can lose with the winter blues. Also, Dr. Brown recommends yoga, which is helpful for relieving feelings of anxiety due to its breathing and meditative practices.

• Socialize. Withdrawal is a classic symptom of the winter blues. Socializing engages the mind and forces you to think constructively, helping to overcome feelings of loss and confusion.

• Try a natural remedy. SAM-e (pronounced "sammy" and short for S-adenosylmethionine) is a naturally occurring compound found in all living organisms, and has been clinically proven to help enhance mood and emotional well-being. For over 20 years, European doctors have administered SAM-e to enhance moods and thousands of Americans have been reaping its mood-elevating benefits since it arrived in the U.S. in 1998. Dr. Brown also strongly recommends trying either one of these supplements in conjunction with regular therapy or counseling sessions.

"Taking SAM-e regularly is one of the best ways to enhance mood," adds Dr. Brown. "Studies have shown that it often starts working in half the time or less than is needed for traditional products and has very few, if any, side effects."

Consumers, pharmacists or other health professionals can learn more about Nature Made SAM-e by calling the Nature Made information hotline at (800) 276-2878, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. PT.

There are many ways to tackle the winter blues, including dietary supplements.

Teens need to be aware of dangers in winter driving

As parents, have you taught your teenager the dos and don'ts of safe winter driving? There are unwritten rules that come with the driving experience that teens lack.

"As a parent, I take great concern in making sure my children are aware of the dangers involved with winter driving conditions," said Richard Courtney, Director of Research & Development and Technical Services/Consumer Relations for Prestone Products. "First and foremost, I have their vehicles checked thoroughly. Winter tends to magnify any problems a vehicle might have."

"Make sure your new driver checks their tire tread and windshield wipers as well as washer fluid and antifreeze/coolant levels. The proper mixture of antifreeze/coolant is necessary to avoid engine freeze-ups in frigid temperatures. Prestone Antifreeze/ Coolant protects engines from — 84 degrees F to +276 degrees F for cooling systems in automobiles and light trucks," continues Courtney.

It's also a good idea to switch to a winter wiper blade. They are more durable and designed to handle snow and ice better. If wipers aren't working properly or if there is a lack of fluid in the reservoir, the combination of salt and ice may reduce your teen's ability to see other vehicles or objects on the road. Remind teens to turn on their headlights any time they need to use their windshield wipers. It will help improve their visibility and allow them to be seen better by other motorists and in some states, it's the law.

Emphasize the importance of clearing off the entire car, not just a portion of the windshield. If the vehicle hasn't been properly cleared off, it not only creates hazardous situations for your child, but other motorists on the road as well.

We recommend using a washer fluid that doesn't freeze when temperatures plummet," suggests Courtney. "Prestone De-Icer Washer Fluid helps remove light ice and frost. The yellow formula won't freeze in the washer reservoir to temperatures as low as -34¡F, and guards against re-freeze. Many generic fluids can either freeze in the reservoir or crystallize on the windshield, making it nearly impossible to see clearly."

Although these preventative maintenance tips do help, they by no means serve as a complete deterrent to potential problems. Prepare your teen for a roadside emergency with a special winter kit that includes:

• A cell phone
• A portable jump starter
• A flashlight and extra batteries
• Emergency flares
• A tire inflator and sealer
• Warm clothes and blankets
• Extra de-icer washer fluid and a spray de-icer
• Ice scraper with a snow brush
• Tire traction product
• Shovel

Courtney adds, "It is a good safety precaution to keep more than a half tank of gas in the vehicle during winter. It'll be the only source of heat if they are stranded. And stress the importance of always wearing seat belts with your teenage driver."

Parents should accompany their teenager on their first road trip and let them practice before venturing onto slick, snowy roads for the first time.

Emphasizing the significance of these safety tips may change a disastrous situation into a simple inconvenience.

Community Calendar

THURSDAY

Horseshoe Pitching For Fun; horseshoe courts located at the coliseum; everybody welcome, for further information call 573-9762.

Rock and Roll Quilting Club evening meeting; Hermleigh Community Center; for more information call 863-2426; 6:30 p.m.

Deep Creek Cloggers lesson; WTC; 6:30 to 8 p.m.

New Horizons AA, closed meeting; for information call 573-8268, 573-4048 or 573-1141; 8 p.m.

Nuestra Nueva Esperanza AA; Park Club; for information call 573-8494 or 573-1141; 8 p.m.

FRIDAY

Free blood pressure clinics; Senior Citizens Center; 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Blood pressures will be taken at Cogdell Hospital Home Health Services, 1800 Cogdell Blvd., Suite B; 1-2 p.m.

ABCL Open Pairs Duplicate Bridge; Snyder Country Club; 1:30 p.m.

Cornelius-Dodson House; open by appointment, call 573-0538 or 573-0770.

Scurry County AA closed meeting; Park Club in Winston Park; for information call 574-1292 or 573-9458; 8 p.m.

Al-Anon open meeting; Park Club; 573-3733, 573-2101 or 5731141; 8 p.m.

SATURDAY

NA-Just For Today open meeting; Park Club; for information call 573-1438; 7 p.m.

SUNDAY

Scurry County AA open meeting; Park Club in Winston Park; for information call 574-1292 or 573-9458; 10 a.m.

Bridge

By Phillip Alder

North 01-03-02
♠ 10 7 6
♥ —
♦ A Q J 8 7 3
♣ A 7 5 4

West
♠ A J 9 2
♥ K Q J 2
♦ 6 5 4 2
♣ 10

East
♠ 8
♥ A 10 9 8 7
♦ K 10 9
♣ J 8 6 3

South
♠ K Q 5 4 3
♥ 6 5 4 3
♦ —
♣ K Q 9 2

Dealer: East
Vulnerable: East-West

South	West	North	East
			Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
2 NT	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

Opening lead: ♣ 10

Thursday, Jan. 3, 2002

The Bermuda Bowl semifinals in Paris

By Phillip Alder

In the semifinals of the Bermuda Bowl, Italy faced Norway and USA-2 played against Poland.

The Italians, after their decisive victory over the top-ranked USA-1 team, were expected to cruise to the gold medal. However, they lost the first four sessions to Norway to trail by 46 points. Then the Italians staged a tremendous rally. With one deal to go, the margin was only five. This was that deal.

Both teams reached four spades by South. Against Norwegian Tor Helness, Norberto Bocchi led the heart king. Declarer ruffed in the dummy and called for the diamond queen, covered and ruffed. Back in dummy with a heart ruff, Helness threw his remaining hearts on the ace-jack of diamonds. Next came the spade 10 to the king and ace. West returned a heart, making declarer ruff. If Helness had played on clubs, he would have succeeded, but he cashed the spade queen. This allowed West to ruff the second club, draw South's last trump, and cash the heart jack for one down.

Lorenzo Lauria won with dummy's club ace; then the diamond queen was covered and ruffed. Now declarer had to lead a top spade to get home — not an obvious play, because he didn't know the 10-9 of diamonds were coming down. Instead, Lauria ruffed a heart in the dummy, threw a heart and a club on the ace-jack of diamonds, and played a club to his king. However, after ruffing, West, Terje Aa, continued with the ace and jack of spades, leaving declarer with two heart losers. One down, and Norway was into the final.

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Births

Carter Lane West was born to Eric and April West at 3:01 p.m. on Dec. 31 in Midland Memorial Hospital, West Campus. Carter weighed eight pounds, 1½ ounces and was 21 inches long.

Grandparents are Monte and Linda West of Snyder, Bobby and Kalah Beale of Lubbock, and great-grandmother is Joy West McKinney of Midland.

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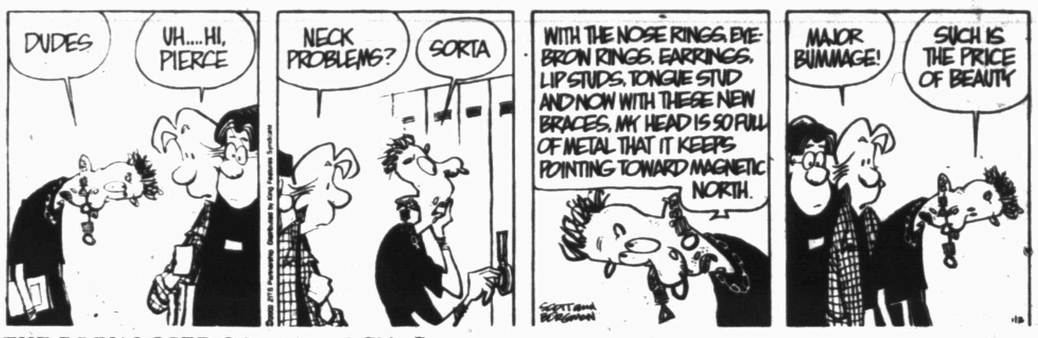

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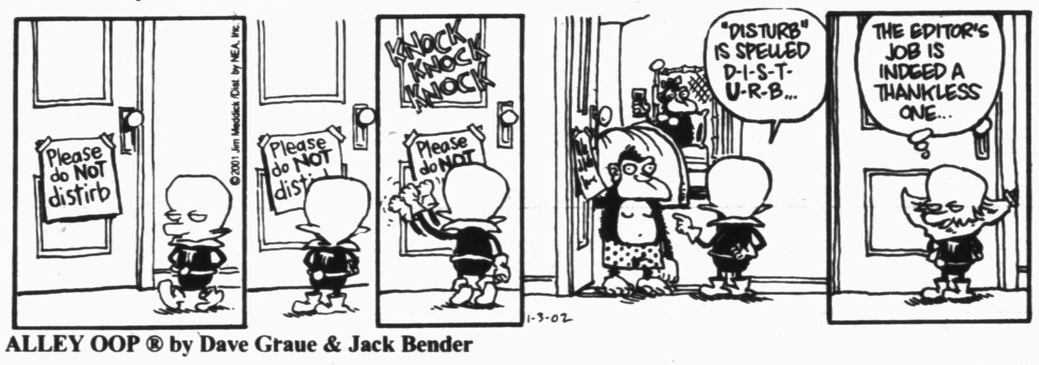

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"Have you been waiting long?"

KIT 'N' CARLYLE ® by Larry Wright

NEA Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1 Cobra toxin
6 Golf strokes
11 "Maria —"
12 See eye to eye
13 Fluffy quilts
15 Stick
16 Frowns
18 Tease
19 Scurry
21 Melancholy
22 Round starter
23 Mex. miss
25 Sault — Marie
28 Consolidate
30 Actress Francis
31 Leather punch
32 Spiral molecule
33 Broad st.
35 Monikers
37 Role model, maybe
38 Husks
40 Came apart
41 Adhesive
42 Pool length
43 Cry loudly
46 Dome
48 Tactless
50 Male or female
54 Number of Fates
55 Tiber site
56 More certain
57 Aesop specialty

DOWN

1 Peace gesture
2 Inventor Whitney
3 Actor Beatty
4 By — (alone)
5 Artist Chagall
6 Walks softly
7 "Yuck!"
8 Hike
9 Garr of "Mr. Mom"
10 Pit or stone
14 Plants
15 Comic-strip queen
17 Very angry (2 wds.)
19 Hair rinse
20 Homer opus
22 Melville's Billy
24 Rand of fiction
25 Margaret Mead locale
26 Punk
27 Besides
29 Shrill bark
34 Trend
36 Falcons' town
39 Air pollution
43 Bane of pvts.
44 Kauai neighbor
45 Mason portrayer
46 "Mask" star
47 Explorer Ericson
49 Fair grade
51 A little bit
52 Building wing
53 Deli bread

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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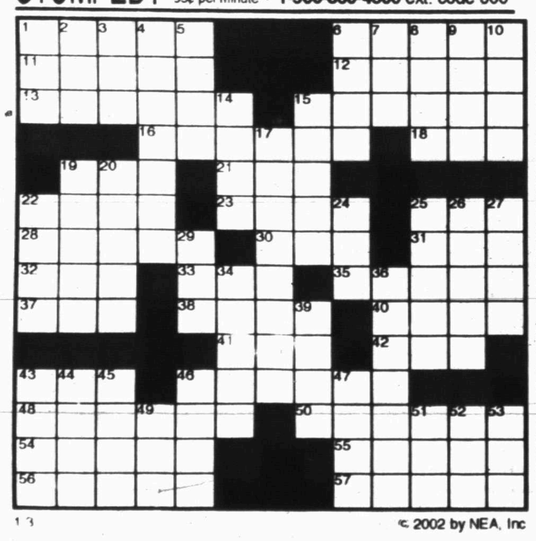

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Snyder Daily News Comics

DENNIS THE MENACE ® by Hank Ketcham

"SHE THOUGHT THAT WOLF WAS HER GRANDMOTHER? WHAT KIND OF RELATIVES DID SHE HAVE?"

SPORTS

Snyder returns to district hoops competition tonight

After two weeks away from the grind of league play, the Snyder Tigers and Lady Tigers return to District 4-4A competition tonight.

Snyder hosts Plainview for a pair of conference tilts this evening at the SHS gym. Girls action gets underway at 6 o'clock, followed by the boys match-up at 7:30.

The Lady Tigers (1-2, 6-11) face the daunting task of trying to upend the defending state champions, while the Snyder boys (1-0, 5-11) look to maintain their unblemished district mark.

The SHS girls, who captured the league opener before dropping two straight, will try to hand the Lady Bulldogs (3-0, 17-1) just their second loss. Plainview is currently ranked second in the state poll, but is sure to move up after knocking off No. 1 ranked Canyon over the weekend.

"It's a challenge for sure anytime you play the best team in the state," said Snyder coach Mike Martin. "Plainview's program is at a level where we would like to be in the future. We're going to go out and compete, and when the game is over we'll be a better team for having played against them. The only way you can build toward being the best is to the play against the best."

The Lady Tigers closed out the recent Abilene tournament with a victory over Lake View in which junior post players Zipporah Peoples and Afton Schwertner combined for 29 points. Martin said his squad needs a similar showing in the paint tonight.

"Their big girls are tough. They play well inside and on the perimeter," said Martin. "All of their players seem to always be in the right position to make plays, so we have to do a good job of taking care of the basketball."

Like the Lady Tigers, the SHS boys need strong performances inside from senior Corey Clay and junior Josh Mendoza to offset the post-oriented Bulldogs.

Plainview (1-0, 9-7) is led by 6-4, 240-pound senior Bryson Davis and 6-2, 195-pound senior Brylon Bradic. At the recent Austin Westlake tournament, Davis averaged 21 points in four outings against Class 5A competition, with Bradic dropping in just over 16 a game.

"There's no secret about what Plainview likes to do," said Tigers coach Bud Birks. "They like to pound it inside to Davis, or let Bradic create off the dribble. We have to do a good job defensively, and make those two take tough shots."

After playing short-handed at the Brownwood tournament, the Tigers are as close to healthy as they've been in a while. Mendoza, who sat out the entire tourney due to illness, and junior guard T.J. Jones, who missed one game with an ankle injury, will be back on the floor tonight.

"It'll be nice to have Mendoza back in the line-up, because you need all the post players you can get your hands on when you face a team like Plainview," Birks said. "And with T.J. available, it gives us a good rotation at point guard along with Colter (Bedell)."

In other district action tonight, Andrews visits Estacado. Frenship hosts Levelland, and Lake View travels to Big Spring.

District 4-4A Girls Basketball

	District		Season	
Team	W	L	W	L
Plainview	3	0	17	1
Estacado	3	0	15	4
Levelland	2	1	16	5
Big Spring	1	2	10	8
Snyder	1	2	6	11
Andrews	1	2	12	5
Frenship	1	2	12	8
Lake View	0	3	2	15

Tonight's games: Plainview at Snyder; Lake View at Big Spring; Andrews at Estacado; Levelland at Frenship.

Saturday's games: Snyder at Frenship; Andrews at Big Spring; Levelland at Lake View; Estacado at Plainview.

Tuesday's games: Snyder at Andrews; Plainview at Big Spring; Estacado at Levelland; Frenship at Lake View.

District 4-4A Boys Basketball

	District		Season	
Team	W	L	W	L
Snyder	1	0	5	11
Estacado	1	0	16	4
Plainview	1	0	9	7
Andrews	1	0	10	6
Frenship	0	1	12	6
Big Spring	0	1	7	9
Levelland	0	1	9	12
Lake View	0	1	6	11

Tonight's games: Plainview at Snyder; Lake View at Big Spring; Andrews at Estacado; Levelland at Frenship.

Saturday's games: Snyder at Frenship; Andrews at Big Spring; Levelland at Lake View; Estacado at Plainview.

Tuesday's games: Snyder at Andrews; Plainview at Big Spring; Estacado at Levelland; Frenship at Lake View.

Local Schedule

TODAY

Basketball: Plainview at Snyder varsity and JV girls, 6 and 7:30.

Basketball: Plainview at Snyder JV and varsity boys, 6 and 7:30.

FRIDAY

Basketball: Ira girls and boys at Sands, 6:30 and 8 p.m.

Basketball: Blackwell at Hermleigh girls and boys, 6:30 and 8 p.m.

SATURDAY

Basketball: Snyder varsity and JV girls at Frenship, 6 and 7:30.

Basketball: Snyder JV and varsity boys at Frenship, 6 and 7:30.

'Huskers, Hurricanes set for national championship tilt

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — Huskers vs. Hurricanes in the Rose Bowl — what a way to finish college football's craziest season.

No. 4 Nebraska challenges No. 1 Miami in the national title game of the Bowl Championship Series on Thursday night, and the result will determine whether there will be one or two champions.

If the favored Hurricanes win, there's no debate. Miami (11-0) would finish as the nation's only unbeaten team and win its fifth national title, all since 1983.

Miami would collect trophies from the two polls that crown national champions, the AP media poll and the USA Today-ESPN coaches poll.

"Our goal is to win by one point," Miami rookie coach Larry Coker said, "and if we win by one point, we're the undisputed national champions."

If the Cornhuskers win, then No. 2 Oregon (11-1) would have a strong chance to become AP national champions when the sports writers and broadcasters cast their ballots.

The Rose Bowl winner is automatically crowned national champs in the coaches poll. The AP voters are not restricted in who they vote for in the final poll.

In both polls, Miami is first, followed by Oregon, Colorado and Nebraska. Oregon beat Colorado 38-16 in Monday's Fiesta Bowl.

The Huskers, beaten 62-36 by Colorado in their last game on Nov. 23, are ready to redeem themselves.

"We are very hungry for a victory," Huskers Heisman Trophy winner Eric Crouch said. "And we want to go out and prove to the whole world we're a better football team than we showed the last time we played."

All week here in L.A., Nebraska players and coaches fielded questions about whether they deserve to be in the Rose Bowl, which is playing host to the BCS title game for the first time since the series started in 1998.

"Yes, it's tiring answering the same question over and over again," Huskers coach Frank Solich said. "But we will be a team filled with confidence entering the national championship game."

Even Coker backed the choice of Nebraska. "It's ridiculous to criticize them for being here," he said. "This is the system we're using."

Only an extraordinary string of upsets allowed Nebraska to get here after its humiliating loss to Colorado. Oklahoma lost, then Florida, Texas and Tennessee, and Nebraska was back in the chase.

Miami and Nebraska have played three national title games, all at the Hurricanes' home field in the Orange Bowl. Miami won 31-30 in the '84 game and 22-0 in the '92 game; the Huskers won 24-17 in the '95 game.

"We've had a few tussles, Nebraska and u[illegible] Art Kehoe, Miami's longtime offensive line coach, said. "Once again, they are real good. They will be real physical. We're going to have to play our tails off and find a way to win."

The game could be another classic, matching Nebraska's power against Miami's speed.

As usual, the Huskers led the nation in rushing at 314.7 yards per game, while averaging 37.4 points. The Hurricanes were the nation's top defense, allowing just 9.4 points per game and coming up with 45 turnovers, 27 from interceptions.

Crouch is Solich's option genius, piling up 1,115 yards and 18 touchdowns rushing and 1,510 yards and seven TDs passing.

Miami will rely on its speed to stretch the option and force Crouch to pitch early. Huskers tackle Dave Volk says his team can counter by "wearing them down and playing mistake free. We need to hold onto them, sustain our blocks, play power football and get them tired of getting hit. That's our best chance."

College Bowl Schedule

All Times EST

Tuesday, Dec. 18
New Orleans Bowl
$750,000
Colorado State 45, North Texas 20

Wednesday, Dec. 19
GMAC Bowl
Mobile, Ala.
$750,000
Marshall 64, East Carolina 61, 2OT

Thursday, Dec. 20
Tangerine Bowl
At Orlando, Fla.
$750,000
Pittsburgh 34, N.C. State 19

Tuesday, Dec. 25
Blue-Gray Classic
At Montgomery, Ala.
Blue 28, Gray 10
Las Vegas Bowl
At Las Vegas
$800,000
Utah 10, Southern California 6

Thursday, Dec. 27
Seattle Bowl
$750,000
Georgia Tech 24, Stanford 14
Independence Bowl
At Shreveport, La.
$1 million
Alabama 14, Iowa State 13

Friday, Dec. 28
Galleryfurniture.com Bowl
At Houston
$750,000
Texas A&M 28, TCU 9
Music City Bowl
At Nashville, Tenn.
$750,000
Boston College 20, Georgia 16
Holiday Bowl
At San Diego
$2 million
Texas 47, Washington 43

Saturday, Dec. 29
Motor City Bowl
At Pontiac, Mich.
$750,000
Toledo 23, Cincinnati 16
Alamo Bowl
At San Antonio
$1.2 million
Iowa 19, Texas Tech 16
Insight.com Bowl
At Phoenix
$750,000
Syracuse 26, Kansas State 3

Monday, Dec. 31
Humanitarian Bowl
At Boise, Idaho
$750,000
Clemson 49, Louisiana Tech 24
Sun Bowl
At El Paso, Texas
$1 million
Washington State 33, Purdue 27
Silicon Valley Classic
At San Jose, Calif.
$750,000
Michigan State 44, Fresno State 35
Liberty Bowl
At Memphis, Tenn.
$1.3 million
Louisville 28, Brigham Young 10
Peach Bowl
At Atlanta
$1.8 million
North Carolina 16, Auburn 10

Tuesday, Jan. 1
Outback Bowl
At Tampa, Fla.
$2.2 million
South Carolina 31, Ohio State 28
Cotton Bowl
At Dallas
$2 million
Oklahoma 10, Arkansas 3
Gator Bowl
At Jacksonville, Fla.
$1.4 million
Florida State 30, Virginia Tech 17
Citrus Bowl
At Orlando, Fla.
$4.25 million
Tennessee 45, Michigan 17
Fiesta Bowl
At Tempe, Ariz.
$11-13 million
Oregon 38, Colorado 16
Sugar Bowl
At New Orleans
$11-13 million
Louisiana State 47, Illinois 34

Wednesday, Jan. 2
Orange Bowl
At Miami
$11-13 million
Florida 56, Maryland 23

Thursday, Jan. 3
Rose Bowl
At Pasadena, Calif.
$11-13 million
Miami (11-0) vs. Nebraska (11-1), 8 p.m. (ABC)

National Basketball Association

By The Associated Press
All Times EST

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New Jersey	20	10	.667	—
Boston	19	11	.633	1
Washington	16	14	.533	4
Orlando	15	18	.454	6½
New York	13	17	.433	7
Philadelphia	13	18	.419	7½
Miami	6	23	.207	13½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	18	11	.621	—
Toronto	17	14	.548	2
Indiana	18	15	.545	2
Detroit	15	14	.517	3
Charlotte	13	17	.433	5½
Cleveland	13	18	.419	6
Atlanta	11	19	.367	7½
Chicago	6	24	.200	12½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	22	7	.759	—
Dallas	22	9	.710	1
Minnesota	21	9	.700	1½
Utah	16	15	.516	7
Denver	10	20	.333	12½
Houston	9	22	.290	14
Memphis	9	22	.290	14

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	22	6	.786	—
Sacramento	24	9	.727	½
Phoenix	18	14	.562	6
L.A. Clippers	16	15	.516	7½
Seattle	16	15	.516	7½
Portland	13	18	.419	10½
Golden State	12	19	.387	11½

Wednesday's Games
Boston 110, Orlando 94
Cleveland 113, Golden State 98
New Jersey 92, Memphis 74
Minnesota 95, Milwaukee 77
Dallas 107, Chicago 97
San Antonio 97, Detroit 85
L.A. Lakers 87, Denver 86
Philadelphia 102, Phoenix 81
Toronto 95, Portland 84
Sacramento 105, L.A. Clippers 91

Thursday's Games
Golden State at Charlotte, 7 p.m.
Dallas at New York, 7:30 p.m.
Detroit at Houston, 8:30 p.m.

Friday's Games
Chicago at Washington, 7 p.m.
Cleveland at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Miami at Boston, 7:30 p.m.
Orlando at New Jersey, 7:30 p.m.
Atlanta at Memphis, 8 p.m.
Utah at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
Indiana at San Antonio, 8:30 p.m.
L.A. Clippers at Denver, 9 p.m.
Philadelphia at Seattle, 10 p.m.
Phoenix at L.A. Lakers, 10:30 p.m.

Gators rout Terrapins in Orange Bowl, 56-23

MIAMI (AP) — Brock Berlin was decent, Rex Grossman was much better and speedy receiver Taylor Jacobs led a long list of talented players who could make any Florida quarterback look great.

Forced to watch from the sideline for the first 24 minutes of the Orange Bowl, Grossman again showed he belongs on the field Wednesday night. He led Florida to touchdowns on his first six drives, and the No. 5 Gators smashed No. 6 Maryland 56-23 on a record-setting night.

Grossman threw for 248 yards and four touchdowns. Jacobs caught 10 passes for 170 yards, both Orange Bowl records, and Steve Spurrier's quarterback shuffle turned into a stunning offensive highlight show.

"It looked like our wideouts were running past them pretty good," Spurrier said. "Defensively, we were the faster team."

Indeed.

Overall, Maryland (10-2) just didn't match up too well in its first bowl game in 11 years.

"I'm not proud of the way we played," said first-year Terps coach Ralph Friedgen, who led the surprising Terps to the Atlantic Coast Conference title. "I'm embarrassed. It's my fault. I'm embarrassed for the state of Maryland."

Jabar Gaffney caught two touchdowns passes for Florida (10-2), and tailback Earnest Graham ran for 149 yards and two scores. Florida gained 659 yards to break a 49-year-old Orange Bowl record, and the Gators showed they might, indeed, have the most talent in the nation.

But they won't be playing for the national title in the Rose Bowl due to a 34-32 loss to Tennessee on Dec. 1.

"I'll watch it with interest," Spurrier said. "But you can't look back. You never get them back. You just try to move on."

Jacobs caught two touchdown passes — one from Berlin, one from Grossman. Surprisingly, some people thought Spurrier's decision to bench Grossman for missing curfew would be a distraction.

The Heisman Trophy runner-up entered to big cheers with 6:03 left in the second quarter and showed exactly how he earned the starting position and kept it through all 11 regular-season games.

There were too many highlights to count, but the second touchdown — both the drive and the scoring pass — were testament to how he became Florida's No. 1 quarterback.

He directed a six-play, 64-yard touchdown drive that started with 1:25 left in the first half. The scoring play was a perfect lob in coverage to Gaffney, a pass that only a quarterback with perfect knowledge of his receiver's capabilities would dare throw. It gave Florida a 28-10 lead.

"Rex gave us a nice lift," Spurrier said. "Brock hadn't played much. We wanted to see what he could do. Then, it was time to get Rex in there. Rex was sharp. He may have played his best game of the year."

Gaffney finished with seven catches for 118 yards, but Jacobs was the best receiver on this night, and he was selected the game's Most Valuable Player.

Florida's 659 yards surpassed the 596 gained against Syracuse in the 1953 Orange Bowl by Alabama, a record so old it came before Bear Bryant coached the Crimson Tide.

Mavs stretch win streak to 10

CHICAGO (AP) — Michael Finley wasn't there, and Dirk Nowitzki had trouble scoring. Still, the Dallas Mavericks found a way to win their 10th straight game.

Steve Nash had 24 points and 11 assists, and Nowitzki scored all 18 of his points in the second half Wednesday night in the Mavericks' 107-97 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

"We have to play more consistently if we're going to win consistently," Nash said. "Tonight was a lucky one."

Finley missed his second straight game because of a strained left hamstring, and Nowitzki was 0-for-4 with nine rebounds in 17 first-half minutes. The 7-foot Nowitzki reversed himself in the second half, getting his 18 points, but no rebounds.

"I just wish Dirk would be more consistent," Mavs coach Don Nelson said jokingly. "Seriously, the reason we didn't play well was because of the Bulls' good defensive play. Give them credit for that."

The Mavericks held a 43-42 halftime lead because of a goofy play.

They missed what should have been their last shot of the half, but after Bulls center Brad Miller came down with the rebound, he tried to throw a baseball pass from a sitting position. Reserve forward Eduardo Najera picked off the pass and put up a quick jumper, which bounced in as time expired. It was one of 19 Bulls turnovers.

Ron Artest tied his career-high with 29 points before fouling out for the Bulls, who had won two straight under new coach Bill Cartwright.

Najera scored 15 and Greg Buckner shot 9-of-12 for a career-high 18 points for Dallas, which also played without center Shawn Bradley.

Dallas opened a 9-0 lead about three minutes in and led 17-15 after one quarter.

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Bush, unions tangle

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush has been focusing more attention on labor issues of late, much to the chagrin of major union officials.

Bush has repealed a Clinton-era rule favored by unions that prevents the government from awarding contracts to businesses that have broken environmental, labor, tax or other federal laws.

He also has threatened a recess appointment of conservative labor lawyer Eugene Scalia, son of Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia, to inspector general at the Labor Department.

The Bush administration also has announced plans to eliminate the 10 regional offices of the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department and failed to deal with workplace safety after Congress repealed ergonomics regulations last spring.

Since the administration turned to labor issues, said the AFL-CIO's Karen Nussbaum, "There's been plenty of action. It's been all negative."

President Clinton signed the lawbreaking contractor rule in 2000, a few months after a computer analysis by The Associated Press found hundreds of contractors remained eligible for new federal business despite convictions or lawsuits for defrauding the government.

The Bush administration had suspended enforcement of the rule in March and repealed it for good last week.

Business groups praised repeal, contending the regulation went too far and unfairly blacklisted companies that had minor infractions or had not been proved guilty.

"This rule gave government agents blanket discretion to blacklist federal contractors based on subjective and arbitrary notions of satisfactory compliance with any federal, state or even foreign law," said Randy Johnson, U.S. Chamber of Commerce vice president for labor and employee benefits. "Mere allegations of wrongdoing could prevent a business from winning a federal contract."

The chamber organized the National Alliance Against Blacklisting and lobbied Congress with other business groups.

Union officials retorted that a violator of labor, employment, environmental, civil rights or other federal laws cannot be trusted to receive government contracts.

"To ordinary citizens who play by the rules every day, the Bush administration has said that it's OK for corporations that violate the law to be rewarded with millions of taxpayer dollars," the AFL-CIO said.

Unions also are bracing for a Bush recess appointment of Scalia, which means he could serve without Senate confirmation until next January. The Senate went on its holiday break without taking up the nomination.

Scalia refused to discuss his nomination Wednesday. Organized labor opposes the appointment because of Scalia's opposition to a Clinton-era ergonomics regulation, killed by Congress last spring, which was aimed at reducing workplace injuries. Scalia criticized the rule as "quackery" based on "junk science." Ergonomics deals with human characteristics to be considered in the design and arrangement of things to prevent injury to people who use them.

Unions also are awaiting a decision by Labor Secretary Elaine Chao about how the agency will handle workplace safety, with new regulations or voluntary guidelines.

Congress repealed Clinton-era regulations last year after a big legislative fight that pitted business against labor unions. The regulations mandated that employers make changes to reduce the incidence of worker injuries related to ergonomics. After the repeal, Chao promised a "comprehensive plan" by her agency to reduce such injuries.

The Bush administration also is considering elimination of 10 regional offices of the Labor Department's Women's Bureau.

AOL promises solution to new hacker problem soon

WASHINGTON (AP) — As AOL Time Warner engineers opened their presents and spent time with their families, a team of young hackers planned a holiday surprise: a major security hole in one of the company's flagship programs.

The international group released a program that turns AOL's Instant Messenger into a key that could unlock many home computers. Now the hackers are being criticized by security experts for not giving AOL sufficient time to react.

The group, founded by a 19-year-old Utah college student, discovered a security hole in AOL's Instant Messenger program that can let a hacker take control of a victim's computer, the company confirmed Wednesday.

An AOL spokesman said the problem will be fixed soon, and users won't have to do anything.

"We have identified the issue and have developed a resolution that should be deployed in the next day or two," AOL's Andrew Weinstein said. "To our knowledge, this issue has not affected any users."

The problem affects the newest as well as many earlier versions of AOL's Instant Messenger program, which boasts more than 100 million users. Only the Windows version is at risk; Instant Messengers for Macintosh, Palm and other platforms are not. America Online Internet access service customers are safe as well.

"You could do just about anything: delete files on the computer or take over the machine," said Matt Conover, founder of the hackers' group, "w00w00."

Conover said w00w00 has more than 30 active members from 14 states and nine foreign countries. Until AOL's fix is released, Conover said, Instant Messenger users should restrict incoming messages to friends on their "Buddy Lists."

"It will at least keep someone from attacking you at random," Conover said. But even that wouldn't help if the attack code were added to a virus that propagated without the victim's knowledge. AOL said it has given its users no advice in the interim.

Conover, who attends Utah State University, said the group found the problem several weeks ago but didn't contact AOL until after Christmas. The group didn't get any response from AOL to an e-mail sent during the holiday week, he said, so w00w00 released details — and a program that takes advantage of it — to public security mailing lists less than a week later.

The program released by w00w00 remotely shuts down a user's Instant Messenger program but could be modified to do more sinister things.

That practice is under scrutiny by security professionals. While some independent researchers argue for a "full disclosure" policy and say software vendors are trying to hide their mistakes, many companies say users are better protected if companies have time to react.

"I think that's pretty dangerous," said Chris Wysopal of the security company AtStake, "especially since they pretty much acknowledged that they hadn't gotten a response back from AOL yet."

Russ Cooper, who moderates a popular security mailing list and works for the security firm TruSecure, said Conover's action was irresponsible because it helped hackers.

Bomb-sniffing dogs trained by ATF are in higher demand

FRONT ROYAL, Va. (AP) — Find a bomb, get some kibble. Find a gun, get some more kibble.

That's the message drilled into the dogs at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' Canine Training Center, which turns out about 50 Labrador retrievers each year to sniff out weapons and explosive materials.

Law enforcement agencies around the world have long relied on the ATF's bomb-sniffing dogs, but demand has been especially strong since Sept. 11.

"I used to get about one call a week asking about our program. Now I get four or five," said Shawn Crawford, one of about 10 dog trainers at the ATF site.

The ATF facility trains dogs for its own agents and for local, state, federal and international police agencies. The Front Royal dogs are now used by K-9 officers in 38 states and 12 countries.

The dogs are held to strict standards. In the final test of their training, they are given 80 unmarked samples and required to identify the 20 that contain explosive material. They are allowed just two "false positive" errors — mistaking an innocuous sample for an explosive.

The dogs spend 16 weeks learning to identify five nitrogen-based compounds that are essential to almost every explosive and firearm. Any time a dog finds an explosive, it sits quietly to alert its handler. If the dog is correct, it is rewarded with food.

In fact, the only time the dogs ever eat is when they identify an explosive material. That means the dog's handler must practice with his dog every day, allowing it to identify samples to earn its meals.

The system also ensures that dogs won't be distracted from their work by the scent of salami on rye.

"We train them to ignore novel odors that a normal dog would be attracted to," Crawford said. "They're conditioned pretty quickly to learn that if they smell food, it doesn't mean that they're going to eat food."

The food-reward system is quite different from methods used by the U.S. Customs Service, which trains its dogs at a nearby site also located in Front Royal, about 60 miles west of Washington.

Customs dogs are taught to sniff out narcotics and currency, not explosives. A dog that identifies those substances responds by pawing and biting at the material, and is rewarded with a game of tug-of-war.

Carl Newcombe, acting director of the Customs Service's canine program, said the agency is considering a change in training procedures to teach dogs to find other substances.

"Based on our current objectives, anti-terrorism is now our No. 1 priority. So we may be training our own explosive dogs," Newcombe said.

Hills in Wyoming desert battlefield for various parties

FARSON, Wyo. (AP) — The Jack Morrow Hills are a sprawling landscape in southwestern Wyoming that contain desert, towering buttes, breathtaking vistas and a rare elk herd.

But the hills are also home to massive natural gas, coal and oil reserves that have made the terrain a battlefield for energy, environmental, recreation and ranching interests.

Debate over the hills, which lie mostly on federal land in the 4.5 million-acre Red Desert, heated up in 2000 when the U.S. Bureau of Land Management decided that 65 new oil and gas wells could be drilled there. The area already has 150 wells.

Environmentalists are seeking some type of federal protection to prevent additional drilling, while drilling companies say locking up the area would deprive America of large energy reserves.

Mac Blewer, of the Wyoming Outdoor Council, said too much of the Red Desert has already been developed.

"It's a world-class landscape," he said. "You can go from red-rock country into a sea of sagebrush and then into a landscape resembling Saudi Arabia. I know of no place in America where you can do that."

But drilling supporters say the area is so wide open that a few more wells won't spoil the view or harm the elk, mule deer, antelope and wild horses that roam the high desert.

"We honestly believe that we can have a balance between environmental protection and economic growth. We do it all the time," said Dru Bower, vice president of the Petroleum Association of Wyoming. "There is a tremendous gas reserve in the Jack Morrow Hills, and we don't believe it should be withdrawn or excluded from development."

The potential for drilling new wells isn't the only thing that draws people to the hills. The terrain is popular among mountain bikers, hunters, anglers, backpackers, horseback riders, rock climbers and photographers.

They come for the picturesque views of the buttes, volcanic formations and the largest shifting sand dunes in North America. The elk herd that roams the desert is especially rare.

A handful of other groups have also staked out positions on the future of the Jack Morrow Hills, named after a hard-drinking thief and swindler who once killed a man in a gunfight. American Indians want their ancestors' religious sites protected, while paleontologists value the fossils. And historians want to preserve remnants of the Oregon, California and Mormon Pioneer trails that pass through the hills.

Scott Kier, preparing to ride his all-terrain vehicle over dunes in the hills recently, said he doesn't want to see the area roped off.

"It needs to be a happy medium for everybody and it seems like a lot of environmentalists push for either their way or no way," said Kier, vacationing from Larkspur, Colo.

Bruce Babbitt, interior secretary under President Clinton, announced during in his last days on the job that he was rejecting the Bureau of Land Management plan to add wells. He ordered the agency to adopt a more conservation-oriented alternative.

During Clinton's tenure, the president protected 5.9 million acres of land by designating and expanding national monuments. But such a move wasn't an option in the Jack Morrow Hills because monuments cannot be declared in Wyoming without congressional approval.

Markets

Midday Stocks

NEW YORK (AP)

	High	Low	Last	
AMR Corp	22.79	21.95	22.79	+ .87
AOL TimeWrn	32.15	31.15	31.30	—.30
AT&T Corp s	18.84	18.56	18.61	—.09
Albertsons	31.75	31.05	31.27	—.30
Alltel	62.55	62.00	62.24	—.27
AmEl Pw	43.94	43.44	43.85	—.10
AndarkPtr	55.15	53.76	54.09	—.96
ATMOS Egy	21.80	21.52	21.56	+ .11
Aviall	7.58	7.47	7.58	+ .09
BP PLC	46.20	45.75	46.02	—.03
BakerHughes	36.00	34.72	35.05	—.51
Bank of Amer	63.79	62.76	63.75	+ .79
BellSouth	39.45	38.90	39.01	—.29
vjBeth Steel	.62	.55	.58	+ .03
BurlNoSFe	29.55	28.90	29.55	+ .75
Caterpillar	52.10	51.46	52.03	+ .38
ChevronTex	89.97	89.05	89.45	—.03
Citigroup	51.40	50.46	50.81	—.20
CocaCola	47.65	46.75	46.85	—.62
ColgatePal	57.38	56.87	56.95	—.67
ComclMetals	34.99	34.59	34.99	+ .35
CooperIn	35.61	35.25	35.56	—.04
DaimlrChry	44.61	44.10	44.61	+ 1.13
DeltaAirl	29.85	29.27	29.39	+ .18
Dillards Inc	16.20	15.95	16.19	+ .25
DowChem	35.50	33.70	35.04	+ .85
DuPont	43.87	42.70	43.83	+ .91
EastmanChem	39.92	38.99	39.80	+ .80
EstKodak	29.50	29.13	29.39	+ .08
EDS Corp	67.10	64.74	64.90	—2.35
Entergy	39.67	39.15	39.33	—.47
ExxonMobil s	39.90	39.41	39.90	+ .30
FstBksAm	31.60	31.60	31.60	+ .08
FootLocker	15.85	15.45	15.65	+ .14
GenDynam	80.50	80.00	80.50	+ .49
GenElec	40.92	40.40	40.54	—.41
GenMills	51.05	50.55	50.82	—.13
GenMotors	48.71	48.20	48.71	+ .07
GaPacGP	27.72	27.42	27.72	+ .14
Goodrich	26.62	26.21	26.62	+ .80
Goodyear s	24.00	23.62	23.72	—.22
GtAtlPac	24.42	24.15	24.40	+ .40
Halliburtn	12.25	11.08	11.21	—1.06
Hanson ADS	34.40	34.20	34.38	+ .33
HarteHanks	27.75	27.40	27.44	—.33
HomeDepot	50.39	50.00	50.22	—.17
HoneywellIntl	34.35	33.45	34.14	+ .74
IBM	122.32	120.79	122.06	+ .56
IntlPaper	40.66	39.88	40.60	+ .45
Johnson	58.72	57.88	58.27	—.43
K mart	4.66	4.45	4.49	—.25
KinderMorg	55.99	55.25	55.47	—.38
Kroger Co	20.65	20.42	20.51	—.01
LockheedM	46.50	46.01	46.34	+ .10
Lowes Cos s	45.50	44.90	45.18	—.19
Lubys	5.70	5.61	5.65	—.01
LucentTech	6.80	6.61	6.79	+ .21
MarathonOil	29.80	29.35	29.41	—.34
MayDeptStr	36.70	36.05	36.60	+ .12
Medtronic	50.04	49.02	49.35	—.65
Motorola	15.97	15.50	15.73	+ .19
NCR Corp	38.86	37.80	38.84	+ .59
Navistar	39.13	38.75	39.00	—.12
PNM Rescs	29.40	28.46	28.64	—.17
Penney JC	26.44	26.10	26.24	+ .04
PepBoys	17.19	16.90	17.14	+ .34
PepsiCo	49.37	48.40	48.88	—.27
Pharmacia	42.14	41.76	41.84	—.21
PhelpDodge	32.40	31.85	32.30	+ .19
PhilipPet	60.56	59.40	59.75	—.37
PilgrmPrd B	13.69	13.35	13.36	—.28
Praxair	55.78	54.30	55.09	+ .23
ProctGamb	79.58	78.61	79.20	—.80
RadioShack	30.00	29.35	29.68	—.02
ReliantEngy	26.90	26.15	26.63	—.17
RoyalDut	49.75	49.28	49.64	+ .40
SBC Comm	40.00	39.41	39.98	+ .08
SaraLee	22.08	21.70	22.01	—.16
Scripps EW	67.97	67.75	67.76	—.04
SearsRoeb	47.74	47.10	47.56	+ .06
SherwinW	27.65	26.90	27.65	+ .56
SouthernCo s	25.34	24.96	25.20	—.30
SwstAirl s	18.76	18.30	18.37	+ .12
SprintFON	20.04	19.73	19.86	—.09
SprintPCS	25.19	24.01	24.15	—.60
Sunoco Inc	37.87	37.02	37.16	—.30
TXU Corp	48.01	47.41	47.87	+ .15
TempleInland	56.90	56.16	56.85	+ .52
TexInd	36.60	35.80	36.54	+ .58
TexasInst	30.19	29.00	30.19	+ 1.37
Textron	42.75	41.74	42.00	—.51
TriconGlbR	48.60	48.02	48.29	+ .30
TrinityInds	26.89	26.55	26.74	+ .02
TylerTech	4.70	4.58	4.65	—.03
UnionPacif	57.70	56.46	57.70	+ 1.10
USSteel	18.23	17.60	18.18	+ .68
UnitedTech	65.50	64.56	65.45	+ 1.11
Unocal	35.74	35.12	35.32	—.23
VerizonComm	49.10	48.41	49.09	+ .60
WalMart	58.30	57.62	57.98	—.07
WellsFargo	43.73	43.25	43.73	+ .29
WstrnGasRs	32.30	31.85	31.90	—.09
WinnDixie	14.34	14.16	14.16	—.21
Xerox Cp	10.45	10.25	10.36	—.06

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Senate group to investigate Enron collapse

WASHINGTON (AP) — Enron's business practices had the mark of "a massive shell game with multiple layers of conflict of interest," says a senator who plans to subpoena documents as part of a broad investigation into the energy company's collapse.

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Governmental Affairs investigations subcommittee, said his committee will within weeks subpoena documents from Enron's board of directors, senior managers and its auditing firm.

At the same time, the full Governmental Affairs Committee will hold a hearing Jan. 24 into why government regulators failed to see the "red flags" at Enron and protect investors and the company's employees who have lost hundreds of millions of dollars as Enron stock plummeted.

Enron Corp., filed for bankruptcy Dec. 2 as its stock fell from a high of $90 a share a year ago to less than $1. Thousands of Enron workers were prevented from selling Enron stock in their 401k retirement plan during the collapse.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., the full committee's chairman, promised Wednesday "a search for the truth, not a witch hunt." But he did not rule out an examination of Enron's relationships with the Bush administration.

"We're going to go wherever the search takes us," Lieberman said at a news conference, noting Enron Chairman Kenneth Lay's involvement in crafting the administration's energy agenda last spring. "We've got to ask whether the advice rendered (by Lay) was at all self serving."

Lay, a longtime friend of the president, was a prominent contributor and fund raiser for Bush's presidential campaign. Other Enron executives also gave significantly to Bush's campaign, according to the watchdog Center for Public Integrity.

The Senate committee's initial focus will be on why the Securities and Exchange Commission, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and other regulators did not foresee the problems and raise concern about Enron's business practices.

"The untimely and wholly unexpected failure of a corporate giant like Enron is an alarm call to all of us in government," said Lieberman. He said it has sent shockwaves into the investment community and concern about energy industry deregulation.

Levin's subcommittee planned to target Enron's board of directors and auditors to determine what they knew of Enron's sometimes secretive business dealings, including the use of questionable partnerships and what Levin called "offshore entities."

Internal Enron documents reportedly show that top company officials were directly involved in the creation and oversight of the partnerships, and that they viewed them as crucial to company growth — even as they disguised an estimated $500 million in Enron debt not included on the company's books.

The procedures set up by Enron required former chief executive and president Jeff Skilling and two other senior Enron officials to approve all transactions with the partnerships, the Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday, citing the documents.

Levin said he was dismayed about "what appears to be a massive shell game with multiple layers of conflict of interest" that contributed to Enron's collapse at a time when most investors believed the company to be thriving.

Top Enron executives and directors "apparently reaped almost $1 billion in stock sales in 2000 and 2001," said Levin, while hundreds of Enron workers were barred from selling Enron stock in their 401k retirement fund during the company's collapse.

Maine Sen. Susan Collins, the subcommittee's ranking Republican, said in a statement that she wants to know whether Enron executives and board members, when selling their stock, "knew of the company's impending financial situation."

Enron — once the seventh largest in the country in terms of revenue — filed for bankruptcy protection on Dec. 2.

Last month, during a House hearing, Arthur Andersen LLP defended its work for Enron, but its chief executive conceded shortcomings in the accounting profession. "Our system of regulation and discipline will have to be improved," said Anderson chief Joseph Berardino.

On Wednesday, Andersen released the results of an independent review that found the company's work provides "reasonable assurance of compliance with professional standards." The review was conducted by another accounting firm, Deloitte & Touche.

The Senate Governmental Affairs Committee is among a half dozen committees and subcommittees expected to hold hearings in both the House and Senate in the coming months on Enron's collapse, one of the largest ever. The Securities and Exchange Commission and the Labor Department also have investigations under way.

Minimum tax should be repealed by Congress

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress should repeal or at least ease the alternative minimum tax to begin chipping away at the tax code's bewildering complexity, the nation's taxpayer advocate says — and the IRS should fix its spotty telephone service.

Coinciding with the beginning of another income tax filing season, the Internal Revenue Service's taxpayer advocate listed these among the most important of dozens of recommendations aimed at making it easier for people to figure out and pay their taxes.

"For many U.S. taxpayers, tax filing season brings stress, anxiety and frustration," said the advocate, Nina E. Olson. "We shouldn't be making people tie themselves up like pretzels so they can comply with the tax laws."

The advocate is part of the IRS, functioning as a tax system watchdog and problem-solver, and was given greater authority when Congress overhauled the IRS in 1998. Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa, top Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, said lawmakers and the IRS should have paid more heed to previous reports.

"I'm concerned that the national taxpayer advocate's annual report to Congress is becoming just a voice in the wind," Grassley said.

"These things could make a big difference to a lot of people," Olson added.

Americans this year will send the IRS an estimated 132 million individual returns, more than half prepared by professionals to avoid mistakes and confusion. The root of most problems is the complexity that has been built into the tax code over the years.

Among the most vexing is the alternative minimum tax.

Originally intended to ensure that a few wealthy people didn't escape taxation through legal loopholes, the alternative minimum tax could snare more than 35 million people by 2010. Some taxpayers earning less than $50,000 paid the tax last year. Simply determining if the tax applies requires a 13-line worksheet and a 54-line form.

Olson says Congress should eliminate the tax, but lawmakers could find the price tag prohibitive given the looming deficits in the federal budget. Millions of people could be removed from the AMT through less costly fixes such as establishing a gross income threshold below which the tax would not apply.

"We might be able to chip away at it year after year," Olson said.

The report also says Congress should:

—Create a single, uniform definition of a "qualifying child" for tax purposes. Right now, a child that qualifies for one tax provision doesn't automatically qualify for another one, leading to millions of IRS error notices each year.

—Allow married couples filing jointly to separate their income and tax liability, avoiding a potentially unfair burden on one spouse if the IRS takes action against the other.

—Let the IRS charge higher interest for underpayment of taxes but repeal the failure to pay penalty, simplifying the system.

The IRS itself remains an aggravation to millions of taxpayers. The No. 1 problem is the inability of many taxpayers to get through on toll-free telephone lines. And after waiting an average of four minutes to talk to an IRS representative, people get inaccurate information one-quarter of the time.

IRS Commissioner Charles Rossotti said in a recent interview the agency is relying on more automated calling systems and accurate routing of calls to improve performance. "We've been improving on two things: access and quality," he said. "We're still well below where we should be."

In all, the report listed 23 "most serious problems" encountered by taxpayers, including difficulty tackling complex issues such as the earned income tax credit, lack of timely explanation about changes or delays in refunds and the inability of many low-income people to find adequate tax advice or access to computers.

El Salvador struggles to adjust to U.S. dollar

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Salvadorans have a message for Europeans trying to adapt to a new currency — it might take a while.

This Central American nation is still struggling to adjust to using the U.S. dollar a year after it was adopted as an alternative currency alongside the local money, the colon.

Twelve European nations began using the euro on New Year's Day in the largest currency changeover in history.

Salvadorans say that dollars, while proving a boon to the economy as a whole, still have them calculators and scratching their heads.

"We are still in the process of adapting," said Jose Zavala, a 55-year-old fruit vendor in San Salvador's central market. "The confusion with small change is where we come out losing sometimes."

Zavala still works with a calculator in his hand as he waits on dozens of customers per day.

President Francisco Flores said people are becoming more familiar with the dollar, and praised the measure for adding stability to this Central American country's economy in the face of battering 7.6 and 6.6-magnitude earthquakes in 2001.

"We could have faced capital flight, exchange-rate risks or devaluation following the earthquakes," Flores said in his year-end address.

In the region, Guatemala, Ecuador and Panama also accept the U.S. dollar as legal tender.

In the end, accepting the dollar "depends on the Salvadorans themselves," said Central Bank President Rafael Barraza.

But Barraza said the benefits have already become apparent. "Interest rates have decreased by about 6 percentage points since early 2000. That is a great benefit, that is putting money in the pockets of the Salvadorans."

Kenny Chesney's career is going well

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Country singer Kenny Chesney says "things really have never been better" for him.

"My career's going great. I've got a lot of great friends," he said in an interview. But the 33-year-old says it isn't easy finding women who like him for himself.

"There's a few more people out there that know my name these days. And so it is hard," he said. "The last thing I want to do is go to a bar when I'm home. I can't really meet anybody on the road. So what do you do?"

Chesney says that if he has a few lonely moments, that's OK.

"A lot of that's self-inflicted. I could go out to the bars and have a good time with a lot of my buddies but I don't feel comfortable doing that. ... There's a certain way I want to represent myself. ... And that's just not how I run my business and run my life."

Dear Abby

By Abigail Van Buren

Mom who left her family must first gain strength to return

DEAR ABBY: I am responding to "Lost Mother in the Midwest," who ran away from her family and now yearns to return to the fold. She should see a counselor immediately and begin to climb out of the horrible pit she is in. I have been there and recognize the words "unneeded, disrespectful, ignored, my fault," and "don't deserve their forgiveness."

Her self-confidence is bankrupt, and professional help can guide her through rebuilding who she is. She must learn to care for and love herself before anyone else can love her. She must learn to confront and halt abusive treatment. She deserves better. Life outside the "pit" is worth living.

I wish her the joy I now have. — **FREE IN GAINESVILLE, FLA.**

DEAR FREE: I received some criticism for calling what "Lost Mother" did "irrational behavior." While I do not believe that her leaving was irrational, I do take exception to the WAY in which she did it — leaving behind her clothes, mementos, friends and even her mother for a year without a word. She could have achieved the same effect without isolating herself. **Read on:**

DEAR ABBY: If that woman had been in a work setting and her boss had talked to her in irritated tones, and her co-workers were disrespectful or ignored her altogether, she would have cause for filing harassment charges.

Were she in a school setting and the teacher always spoke to her in irritated tones, and her classmates were disrespectful or ignored her altogether, you would have advised her to take the teacher to task and be concerned that her classmates were harassing her.

Is that behavior more acceptable in a family setting because the perpetrators are her husband and sons? Absolutely not!

It appears she was at the breaking point and escaped the only-way she could. Many people have chosen suicide at that point, but she chose to run away from home.

She should seek counseling, but only to see if she would really care to go back to an abusive situation. — **DISAPPOINTED IN NEILTON, WASH.**

DEAR DISAPPOINTED: I did not advise her to return to an abusive situation. I told her to seek counseling to be sure she was strong enough to face what might lie ahead. Once she was on firmer emotional footing, the counselor — or a clergyperson — could mediate and facilitate the family reunion. **Read on:**

DEAR ABBY: Had her family been supportive and seen to it that she had been evaluated physically and mentally, maybe she would owe them an apology. But as it stands, the husband and the sons should be begging her for forgiveness. She should not return to them until the entire family has completed therapy. Only then will they deserve **HER FORGIVENESS. — ROBYN IN TACOMA**

DEAR ROBYN: On that point I certainly agree. **Read on:**

DEAR ABBY: I would like to say to "Lost Mother": Get help, get strong — and THEN tell your kids how much you love them. It may take a while for them to fully understand why you left — but in time they will. Also, don't go back to your husband unless he is willing to admit that he was wrong and agrees to go to counseling, too.

Good luck. I'm rooting for you. — **BEEN THERE, TOO**

DEAR "TOO": I hope "Lost Mother" sees your letter — and that she knows we are all rooting for her.

**

Pauline Phillips and her daughter Jeanne Phillips both share the pseudonym Abigail Van Buren. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

**

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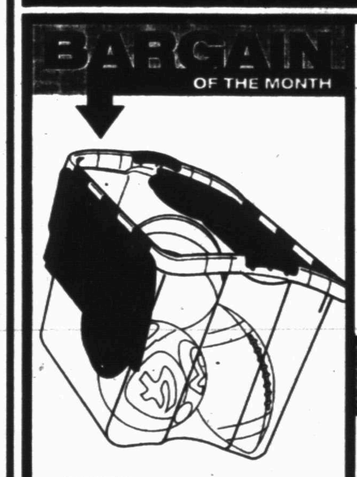
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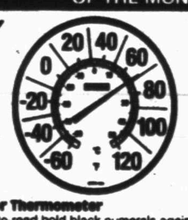
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Ref

SAN ANTONIO last minute of 2001, gy Corp. swallow refiner Ultramar Shamrock Corp., an doubled its revenu workforce more th and added thousan tions.

But Valero's amb on more corporate tinues, says CEO who has presided decade rise from gas venture to one top three oil refiner

"There's going consolidation in and more opportun Wednesday, the fi after the $6 billi takeover was comp

Fed g

FARGO, N.D. federal Agriculture is asking a judge t lawsuit filed by far the governmen stopped offering durum, a wheat va make pasta.

In court papers, ment contends t "crop revenue co cies were disco durum wheat because it could n a base price — the at which farmers w tected.

You Bir

Friday, Jan. 4, 2

Something that m a side venture in th may end up being th the dog. Doing wha rally to you might b fortunes lie.

CAPRICORN (D 19) — Making a go today with others wh same plane as you something valuable t fashioned chitchat. D your thoughts. Get

Dr. Go

By Peter Got

Best wish

DEAR DR. GOT you've ever receive this before.

I have an elderly is 88 years old and She's of sound mind ing from multiple my been in a skilled nur about 18 months.

Time passes very places, and she has helps pass the time. read the evening n cuts out "Dennis the "The Family Circus." cial book for each tapes the items in ea

She has another two by now, with y the covers in which s daily columns.

Once I asked her w your column and she a lot of good read Short and sweet, hul

Her name is Flor won't give her last you could publish thi would make her very

DEAR READER: lishing your letter a own back. Rather, I w it. Yes, her complime sweet. But, most im Florence Louise to counts, is fortunate friends and is in my I believe that her extraordinarily perce my column appears papers alongside oth such as Dear Abby - rence Louise hasn't with a celebrity. My Benjamin, for examp year of teaching at a middle school. This the pay is deplorable it, and the kids love tributing his substan betterment of young celebrity material, a of him. I wish that F could meet him.

I digress. Thanks

Refining giant Valero seeks new conquests

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — In the last minute of 2001, Valero Energy Corp. swallowed up rival refiner Ultramar Diamond Shamrock Corp., and in doing so doubled its revenue, upped its workforce more than sevenfold and added thousands of gas stations.

But Valero's ambition to pack on more corporate weight continues, says CEO Bill Greehey, who has presided over its two-decade rise from small natural-gas venture to one of America's top three oil refiners.

"There's going to be more consolidation in our business and more opportunities," he said Wednesday, the first workday after the $6 billion Ultramar takeover was completed. "We're going to look aggressively at making more acquisitions."

Greehey wouldn't say whether any deals were in the works, but he said Valero would be looking at pre-merger prospects under consideration by Ultramar management.

Some stock analysts agree that continued growth is a smart strategy for Valero, and that the company shouldn't have much trouble finding assets to buy.

"Bill Greehey is the person to call if you have a refinery you're thinking of selling," said Fadel Gheit, who follows the energy sector for Fahnestock & Co. in New York. "He is in everybody's Rolodex."

Gheit said terms of the 1999 merger that created Exxon Mobil Corp. might lift a refinery or two onto the trading block, as could last fall's marriage between Chevron Corp. and Texaco Inc.

Andrew Rosenfeld, an analyst at Prudential Financial in Menlo Park, Calif., identified the Midwest and Northeast as areas where Valero might go shopping, though he said the Ultramar assets should be fully integrated before making any more purchases.

"They have a good track record (in acquisitions), but they've never done anything this big," said Rosenfeld, who last month downgraded Valero from buy to hold. "They have their work cut out for them, to say the least."

The companies, both based in San Antonio, had much in common in their size and businesses.

Ultramar had sales of about $13.3 billion through the first nine months of 2001, about $1 billion more than Valero over the same period. Each refined roughly a million barrels of oil each day, and each had sizable distribution systems.

But a significant difference was in retail — where Ultramar built up a network of more than 4,500 gas station/convenience stores, Valero had only a dozen that it owned and operated.

Greehey said the retail outlets were an attractive part of the Ultramar purchase to diversify Valero's business, and that he plans to grow that sector by updating many of those stores and expanding into new markets.

"(Ultramar) has a good management team and good sites," he said. "If we had to start from scratch, it would be a very expensive business to get into."

The retail component accounts for the bulk of Valero's increase from about 3,000 workers before the merger to some 23,000. There have been no job losses associated with the deal, Valero officials say.

Greehey did a few things to make Day One a memorable one for those at the former Ultramar headquarters on the city's outskirts.

First he created a more formal, corporate air by replacing Ultramar's casual dress code with skirts, suits and ties, the daily attire at Valero's downtown office tower.

Then he and his top executives donned chef's aprons and staked out the employee entrances, greeting early arrivals with hot breakfast tacos and a warm handshake.

As a condition of the merger, Valero has to sell a northern California refinery and some gas stations to settle concerns of federal regulators that the company might have too big a market share in that region.

Greehey says part of the proceeds from that sale, expected to be in excess of $1 billion, will be used to buy back Valero stock to boost its value, with some being available to buy refining capacity elsewhere in the country.

Another source of spending money, he says, could come from selling a portion of its 76 percent stake in Valero LP, a pipeline and distribution company picked up in the Ultramar deal. Valero LP was formerly known as Shamrock Logistics LP.

"The new company will be a lot more profitable than either of the companies standing alone," he said. "In this case, one plus one equals three."

Fed government wants durum lawsuit dismissed

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — The federal Agriculture Department is asking a judge to throw out a lawsuit filed by farmers who say the government unfairly stopped offering insurance for durum, a wheat variety used to make pasta.

In court papers, the government contends the so-called "crop revenue coverage" policies were discontinued for durum wheat last spring because it could not determine a base price — the lowest price at which farmers would be protected.

The government said there had not been enough trades on the durum futures market to calculate a price. The North Dakota durum farmers who brought the case contend the government could have set a price if it had examined a longer period of futures transactions.

They argue the government only wanted to avoid "significant payments to the farmers, which was the very purpose for which the policy was sold," lawyers Sarah Vogel and Beth Baumstark wrote in court papers.

The farmers are asking for a court order reinstating the crop revenue coverage, which protected them against low prices and poor crop yields. A base price is a key component to the protection.

U.S. District Judge Rodney Webb has not ruled on either request.

The USDA's Risk Management Agency notified insurance companies and farmers in March that it would not offer crop revenue coverage for durum.

The decision to withdraw the durum policies came less than two weeks before the deadline for farmers to sign up for coverage.

The government said the farmers had other options, including insuring their durum under policies for spring wheat, which generally sells for less than durum.

The number of durum acres in the state dropped about 29 percent last year, to 2.3 million, according to the Agriculture Department.

In 1999, durum farmers won a $41 million judgment against the government over their claims that terms of the crop revenue policies for durum were unfairly changed. About 8,400 farmers around the country received checks over the next two years.

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1912	*	1.90	.77	.72	1.68	2.54	1.30	.76	.80	2.80	*	1.12	14.39
1913	.25	.58	1.57	2.48	1.52	2.44	2.58	.24	2.44	3.45	3.79	3.05	24.39
1914	.22	.04	1.04	4.06	2.59	4.78	3.03	5.54	1.22	3.58	1.59	1.27	28.96
1915	.22	.83	1.00	8.03	2.25	2.70	.50	4.48	5.40	3.77	**	.82	30.09
1916	.15	*	.34	3.58	1.67	.65	1.40	.49	1.52	2.00	.76	.05	12.61
1917	.34	*	.34	.88	.99	.83	1.04	2.18	1.53	**	.02	*	08.15
1918	.32	.57	.21	.45	2.46	1.14	**	.34	1.20	3.73	.62	1.28	12.32
1919	.99	.21	3.43	3.45	2.19	3.72	1.82	2.93	3.20	5.63	1.13	**	28.70
1920	1.08	.25	**	**	4.66	4.01	.50	11.27	2.37	1.55	.22	*	25.91
1921	.13	.96	1.05	.30	.87	7.05	.70	.40	3.15	.70	*	.03	15.34
1922	.58	.02	1.20	7.43	5.19	4.48	.05	1.75	**	.93	1.65	**	23.28
1923	.40	2.25	2.05	4.28	.75	2.40	.93	2.10	2.00	6.88	3.15	1.30	28.55
1924	**	.05	1.15	4.34	4.27	.45	.57	1.55	1.40	2.00	**	*	15.78
1925	.40	**	**	2.75	4.26	.25	1.13	2.47	5.00	3.55	**	**	19.81
1926	.75	*	1.98	4.20	3.10	1.47	1.91	4.35	2.59	3.60	1.10	3.30	28.35
1927	1.25	1.20	.90	1.83	.70	3.05	6.35	3.85	5.30	.05	*	.50	25.85
1928	.40	.80	.40	.27	5.35	1.17	5.87	2.82	.98	.35	1.52	.28	20.21
1929	.60	*	1.99	1.05	3.97	.50	2.76	.61	2.51	1.61	.52	.10	16.22
1930	1.02	*	.27	4.05	5.00	2.52	.10	1.67	.25	4.95	1.85	1.25	22.95
1931	1.40	1.15	.57	1.62	1.30	1.10	1.74	.18	.13	5.35	1.80	1.80	18.14
1932	1.78	3.01	.05	2.25	3.57	3.12	1.12	5.79	10.60	.43	*	4.10	35.82
1933	.20	1.63	.70	.10	2.30	.02	3.60	1.90	**	2.63	1.20	1.13	15.46
1934	.35	.22	2.70	.56	.65	.30	.21	1.25	1.58	.24	2.69	.03	10.78
1935	.05	1.03	1.61	.42	4.07	4.09	4.58	.21	2.54	1.79	2.11	.67	23.13
1936	.64	1.12	.44	1.03	2.40	.33	.92	**	9.01	1.79	.77	.67	18.06
1937	.17	.25	1.36	.06	4.25	1.55	1.45	2.38	1.76	.44	.68	1.03	15.40
1938	1.55	3.51	1.73	1.00	3.35	2.76	3.51	.12	.94	1.22	.84	.06	20.59
1939	2.42	.20	1.00	.29	6.38	7.46	.65	2.28	*	1.66	1.09	.71	24.14
1940	.22	1.50	.32	1.44	1.37	2.81	.30	3.51	.78	.49	2.63	.29	15.66
1941	.91	2.04	2.20	4.85	5.97	5.39	6.70	2.66	2.37	9.81	.21	.91	44.02
1942	.14	.09	.54	1.50	1.10	1.48	2.56	6.35	3.59	3.61	1.80	1.50	24.26
1943	.15	**	1.30	.60	4.37	2.17	.19	.05	.37	.25	1.31	1.49	12.25
1944	.83	1.84	.20	.69	7.34	1.11	6.04	1.13	2.22	1.05	2.49	2.41	27.35
1945	1.20	.36	1.25	1.03	1.45	2.51	5.44	3.00	2.60	4.02	.34	.48	23.68
1946	1.53	*	.53	.41	3.49	2.42	.04	1.52	.97	2.71	.75	2.60	16.97
1947	.30	*	.92	.36	6.64	2.13	.80	1.06	1.77	.37	1.81	1.60	17.76
1948	.21	1.98	.06	.29	4.38	1.67	7.30	*	*	2.55	*	*	18.44
1949	2.30	.47	.23	3.22	3.69	3.70	1.04	1.94	2.32	1.82	*	.55	21.28
1950	.40	.66	*	2.55	7.37	2.00	3.03	.98	4.20	**	*	**	21.19
1951	.14	.67	.30	1.06	1.42	1.57	.80	1.42	2.36	.48	**	.04	10.26
1952	.12	.18	.80	2.19	1.60	*	3.18	1.85	2.42	*	1.89	.90	15.13
1953	.15	.48	1.17	1.75	.66	.08	1.73	3.30	.98	3.70	.10	.15	14.25
1954	.30	.03	.10	2.93	3.55	1.20	.18	.81	**	.64	.55	.07	10.36
1955	.46	.18	.39	.21	6.21	1.40	3.21	.61	1.59	3.39	.10	*	17.75
1956	.19	.11	*	2.97	2.50	.45	1.88	.24	*	1.77	.28	1.01	11.40
1957	.53	2.80	.16	3.61	7.13	2.29	2.93	.82	1.38	1.52	2.83	.04	26.04
1958	1.01	1.11	.94	3.72	2.73	2.32	.55	2.06	1.44	2.41	.55	*	18.84
1959	**	.21	1.03	.97	2.46	6.95	5.05	.37	.57	2.23	.20	1.22	21.22
1960	1.40	.28	.02	.28	.97	.47	6.28	2.56	.35	3.40	*	1.18	17.16
1961	1.87	.54	.66	.71	2.12	5.90	3.63	.26	2.95	2.22	3.36	.56	24.79
1962	.01	*	.60	1.16	.22	5.16	2.23	1.36	6.47	2.30	.69	.81	21.01
1963	**	.23	.43	1.16	3.05	2.46	.17	.47	1.63	1.15	2.21	1.13	14.09
1964	1.15	.25	.57	.04	2.07	2.72	.94	.88	1.70	1.34	.71	.57	12.94
1965	.15	.46	.03	.29	7.21	3.20	1.21	3.14	1.05	2.11	.40	.41	19.66
1966	.72	.55	.47	4.51	.91	3.32	.68	5.20	1.98	1.04	.15	*	19.48
1967	*	.14	1.59	.47	.10	8.44	1.58	.94	3.19	1.91	.91	.57	19.64
1968	2.19	1.68	2.02	3.39	2.90	1.60	1.44	.87	.74	.37	3.30	.19	20.63
1969	*	.40	1.24	1.01	5.72	2.46	.70	.55	2.95	3.65	.62	1.98	21.28
1970	*	1.15	2.25	1.31	3.30	1.40	*	.50	2.11	2.42	*	.26	14.70
1971	*	.49	*	.56	3.77	2.02	1.78	16.7	4.0	3.62	.27	.45	33.66
1972	*	.05	*	3.35	2.95	1.03	1.07	7.60	7.59	6.25	.29	.03	30.21
1973	2.09	2.47	3.19	1.25	1.12	2.07	.87	*	4.14	.29	*	*	17.49
1974	.19	.35	.50	2.32	.62	2.37	.10	6.41	8.24	5.80	.63	1.08	28.61
1975	.33	2.04	.15	.31	3.33	1.14	6.24	2.43	5.38	.58	2.36	1.01	25.30
1976	.02	*	.31	4.79	1.09	.56	6.16	.45	5.30	6.69	.12	*	25.49
1977	.58	.63	1.77	3.81	1.35	4.03	4.71	5.38	.07	.37	.30	.09	23.09
1978	.46	1.28	.11	.15	7.37	2.70	1.01	1.79	5.68	1.84	.86	*	23.25
1979	.62	.68	1.26	.17	3.88	3.02	4.05	2.73	.02	.44	1.19	2.40	20.46
1980	.50	.53	.48	.59	5.77	1.94	.96	.60	11.91	.44	.55	1.43	25.70
1981	.56	.70	.59	6.60	1.51	3.08	1.53	.81	.58	3.27	.70	.16	20.09
1982	.68	.35	.81	2.25	8.04	6.59	2.71	1.19	.52	.28	1.48	1.72	26.62
1983	2.91	.43	.47	1.17	3.11	1.37	.42	1.22	.20	4.33	1.06	.10	16.79
1984	.52	.01	.30	*	.81	1.75	1.76	2.0	2.70	4.15	1.78	2.40	18.19
1985	.10	1.06	2.71	4.55	5.28	2.30	3.16	.18	2.9[illegible]	4.79	.36	*	27.45
1986	.19	.35	.29	1.19	3.73	3.98	3.58	3.89	3.88	6.53	.71	1.88	30.20
1987	.18	2.82	.15	.71	7.76	3.17	1.35	*	1.96	.06	.05	.92	19.13
1988	.25	.55	.77	1.06	1.61	1.20	3.81	4.51	1.02	5.52	.22	.72	21.24
1989	.76	1.72	.19	.53	.48	2.95	.11	2.71	1.21	.82	.03	.16	11.67
1990	1.14	1.90	3.11	4.20	.19	.21	5.69	4.16	5.30	1.60	1.57	1.42	30.49
1991	1.64	*	*	.19	3.68	5.83	4.10	1.90	5.16	2.21	.93	4.27	29.91
1992	1.81	4.48	.56	1.61	6.04	3.87	2.43	2.07	.95	*	2.10	1.79	27.71
1993	.96	.80	1.25	1.83	1.25	3.32	1.58	1.27	1.55	1.83	.46	.19	16.29
1994	.53	.47	.11	.81	3.40	*	.54	.23	2.76	2.16	.41	.79	12.21
1995	.81	.90	1.29	.48	6.40	1.93	.88	1.23	5.11	.64	.12	.19	19.98
1996	.21	*	.39	1.33	.29	2.75	1.22	3.33	2.82	1.10	4.80	*	18.24
1997	.42	4.48	.18	5.55	2.07	6.74	.31	1.52	.68	1.25	0.36	2.13	25.69
1998	1.20	1.56	2.03	.21	.31	.26	.18	.76	.02	1.43	2.28	0.26	10.50
1999	.95	0	1.74	2.12	1.55	7.23	3.68	2.04	1.83	.66	.00	.06	21.86
2000	.73	.75	5.83	.11	.84	5.55	.97	*	*	4.05	2.07	.30	21.20
2001	1.36	2.11	1.74	.19	3.29	.57	.19	1.99	3.51	1.02	3.73	1.07	20.77
Avg.	.65	.83	.93	1.87	3.12	2.62	2.10	2.17	2.48	2.28	1.01	.83	20.88

Astro-graph

By Bernice Bede Osol

Your Birthday

Friday, Jan. 4, 2001

Something that may start out as a side venture in the year ahead may end up being the tail that wags the dog. Doing what comes naturally to you might be where your fortunes lie.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — Making a good connection today with others who think on the same plane as you could yield something valuable through an old-fashioned chitchat. Don't hold back your thoughts. Get a jump on life by understanding the influences that'll govern you in the year ahead. Send for your Astro-Graph predictions by mailing $2 to Astro-Graph, c/o this newspaper, P.O. Box 1758, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156. Be sure to state your Zodiac sign.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) — A smart way to resolve an important matter you want to finalize will reveal itself today. It may come through an exchange with others or from some inner knowledge you possess.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) — Before you seek suggestions from just anyone who happens along today, turn to a trusted friend or associate who has always been a good adviser.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) — In matters that directly affect your career, your thinking will be sharp, quick and precise today. Yet even though chances are you'll have the edge, don't underestimate the competition.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — You can be open-minded when it comes to going along with what others say, but when it comes to anything about which you feel strongly today, you'll wisely stand your ground.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) — Through wise and thoughtful reflection, you may come up with something today that could breathe new life into an endeavor you were about to write off. Put on your thinking cap.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) — Take the advantage of an opportunity you'll get today to spend some quality time with a person to whom you haven't been too attentive lately. It'll pay off in handsome returns.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — When it comes to anything of a financial nature, follow your own instincts and judgment today in all situations that are important to you career-wise. You'll be right on the money.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — There's a very strong possibility you may learn of something through a social encounter with a friend today that will turn out to be quite valuable.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) — Both your logic and your intuitive perception will be finely tuned today. When put to the test, this could prove to be a very valuable tool concerning a personal matter.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) — You, as well as a couple of associates with whom you'll be dealing today, could be an original thinker. Better yet, you'll know how to use the best of their ideas along with your own.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) — Put your money where your efforts are placed today. You'll do better than usual financially in involvements where you have the ability to earn what you receive.

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Dr. Gott

By Peter Gott, M.D.

Best wishes to Florence Louise

DEAR DR. GOTT: I doubt that you've ever received a letter like this before.

I have an elderly neighbor, who is 88 years old and a former RN. She's of sound mind but is suffering from multiple myeloma and has been in a skilled nursing facility for about 18 months.

Time passes very slowly in those places, and she has a hobby that helps pass the time. After she has read the evening newspaper, she cuts out "Dennis the Menace" and "The Family Circus." She has a special book for each one and she tapes the items in each book daily.

She has another book, actually two by now, with your picture on the covers in which she places your daily columns.

Once I asked her why she cut out your column and she said, "There's a lot of good reading in there." Short and sweet, huh?

Her name is Florence Louise; I won't give her last name. Maybe you could publish this letter. It sure would make her very happy.

DEAR READER: I am not publishing your letter as a pat on my own back. Rather, I was touched by it. Yes, her compliment is short and sweet. But, most important, I want Florence Louise to know that she counts, is fortunate to have caring friends and is in my thoughts. Also, I believe that her judgment is extraordinarily perceptive. Because my column appears in many newspapers alongside other columnists - such as Dear Abby - I hope that Florence Louise hasn't confused me with a celebrity. My youngest son Benjamin, for example, is in his first year of teaching at a New England middle school. This is tough and the pay is deplorable. But he loves it, and the kids love him. He is contributing his substantial skills to the betterment of youngsters. This is celebrity material, and I am proud of him. I wish that Florence Louise could meet him.

I digress. Thanks for writing.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I'm a registered nurse who has suffered from irritable bowel syndrome since my teens. I am now in my 40s and have tried every imaginable remedy from fiber products to prescription drugs. Despite therapy, my gas, bloating, abdominal discomfort and diarrhea/constipation cycles have persisted for decades.

About a year ago, I was encouraged to experiment with a new treatment: Paxil, an anti-depressant.

It has worked wonders. I have had virtually no problems in the last 12 months, except for occasional inconsequential bloating. The medicine has so changed my life that my employer (an internist who specializes in infectious diseases) has begun prescribing it for his patients who have not responded to traditional therapy. They, too, have experienced stunning improvement. Please print this letter to inform your readers of this treatment.

DEAR READER: With pleasure.

No one knows the precise cause of IBS, although many theories abound. Also, no one - to date - has hit on a consistently effective therapy. Not being a gastroenterologist, I cannot comment on whether Paxil treatment is generally accepted, consistently effective or universally appropriate. But your testimonial is impressive, so I am printing it to aid other readers - and, I hope, to get some feedback from practitioners who have had success with this therapy.

To give you related information, I am sending you a copy of my Health Report "Irritable Bowel Syndrome." Other readers who would like a copy should send $2 plus a long, self-addressed, stamped envelope to Newsletter, P.O. Box 167, 44092-0167. Be sure to mention the title.

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Enjoyed new role

• NEW YORK (AP) — British actor Sean Bean is known to American audiences for the villains he's played, so he says it's nice to be able to show his sympathetic side in "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring."

Bean plays the regally flawed human Boromir in the Peter Jackson-directed film, based on J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy.

"Over here I'm sort of seen as the villain really," he told reporters recently. "This film has given (me an) opportunity to move away to more sympathetic roles."

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2nd Front Page

THE SNYDER DAILY NEWS

Documents, guns found at compound

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Marines helping search for leaders of Afghanistan's Taliban militia and the al-Qaida terror network found documents, guns and other items that could be useful, defense officials say.

Starting Monday, about 200 Marines searched a 14-building compound west of Kandahar for 29 hours, the Pentagon said.

The operation was part of U.S. efforts to eradicate the al-Qaida network and locate former Taliban rulers who went underground after the fall of Kandahar, their final stronghold. Officials said Wednesday it was not specifically an effort to capture Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar or Osama bin Laden, the alleged al-Qaida mastermind.

"To say that we have U.S. forces that are specifically ... going to look for these two individuals wouldn't be correct," Rear Adm. John Stufflebeem told a Pentagon news conference.

Instead, he said, American forces sought evidence that may eventually lead to the capture of Omar and bin Laden.

"We're casting a relatively wide net to build intelligence," said Stufflebeem, deputy director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Other U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the intelligence value of the materials found appeared to be modest.

American forces also are searching for clues in caves in the Tora Bora area of northeastern Afghanistan. Al-Qaida fighters fled from there last month after weeks of relentless U.S. aerial attacks. Some believe that bin Laden has been in Tora Bora, but Stufflebeem said his current location is a mystery.

Small groups of surviving al-Qaida members appear to be trying to regroup, Stufflebeem said.

As evidence of that, he cited a U.S. airstrike last Friday on what he described as a military compound north of the city of Gardez, in eastern Afghanistan. He did not elaborate but implied that the compound was struck because it was believed to contain al-Qaida fighters.

India's PM: Diplomacy might avert war

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP) — India's prime minister said today he had no intention of holding face-to-face talks with Pakistan's president at a regional summit to defuse tensions between the rival nations, but he suggested diplomacy could avert war.

Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf warned that his country would strike back hard if India launched a full-fledged attack. The sides traded mortar and small-arms fire overnight in disputed Kashmir, a flashpoint between the neighbors. And Islamic militants in Kashmir reportedly threanted new anti-India attacks.

With both countries' tone softening as their leaders headed to Nepal, India's foreign minister, Jaswant Singh, said his country understood it would take Pakistan time to dismantle Islamic militant groups — New Delhi's chief demand to Islamabad. He said Pakistan's arrest of about 50 militants in recent days was a step in the right direction.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair arrived in Bangladesh on today, starting a tour of the subcontinent that has gained new urgency since relations between the former British colonies sharply deteriorated. Blair was expected to meet with Indian leaders over the weekend.

"War is not a must," Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said before flying to Nepal's capital today for the South Asian leaders summit. "Efforts are being made to avoid war through diplomatic channels. If that succeeds, there will be no need to opt for other alternatives."

Musharraf arrived in Beijing today and left by motorcade to consult with Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji, a key ally, before flying to Katmandu on Friday. Musharraf said he was "going with an open mind" to the summit but gave a warning to India.

"Pakistan wants peace and de-escalation but should a mistake of attacking Pakistan be made, they would regret their decision," Musharraf told his military commanders and Cabinet.

Musharraf's flight over China enables him to avoid passing over Indian air space, now closed to Pakistani airlines. India had offered to make an exception for Musharraf's jet, but he declined.

The two nuclear-armed nations — who have fought three wars since 1947 — have massed tens of thousands of troops at their borders since a Dec. 13 attack on India's Parliament. India blamed two Pakistan-based Islamic groups and said Pakistan's spy agency sponsored the attack.

Pakistan denied the accusation. But it has frozen accounts for the two groups — Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammed — and arrested dozens of their members.

Singh, the Indian foreign minister, called those actions "steps in the right direction," though he said Pakistan needs "to act much more in that direction."

EU officials: Debut of euro hasn't led to price increases

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — European Union officials insisted Thursday that the euro's debut had no general effect on prices despite complaints businesses are exploiting consumers' unfamiliarity with the new currency.

The European Central Bank did its part Thursday to keep the changeover smooth, leaving its key interest rate unchanged for the dozen countries using the new currency.

While Europeans have greeted the new euro notes and coins this week with general enthusiasm, they also have complained bitterly about basic items that have suddenly become more expensive by 10 percent or so: a breakfast croissant in Brussels, a glass of beer in Germany, or a churros and hot chocolate in Spain.

Deluged with complaints about price hikes accompanying the euro's debut at the start of the year, European Union officials insisted such cases were isolated and were not the single currency's fault.

Gerassimos Thomas, a spokesman for the EU's executive Commission, admitted there was "anecdotal evidence" that "prices of specific products have gone up here and there."

"We also have specific examples to the contrary," he said, citing supermarkets in Germany and Greece that have lowered prices by as much as 2 or 3 percent.

"This rounding down doesn't indicate that in general prices have gone down," he said. "It indicates that there are incidents where some prices have gone up and some prices have gone down."

Overall, he said the 12 countries using the euro have reported "no general impact on prices."

With attention focused on the launch of euro cash, the European Central Bank left its key interest rate unchanged, a decision that had been widely expected. The Frankfurt, Germany-based bank last cut its main refinancing rate Nov. 8, lowering it by a half percentage point to 3.25 percent.

Many expect it to reduce the cost of borrowing further in coming months, but recent comments from ECB President Wim Duisenberg suggest it will wait for more data on Europe's sluggish economy before moving again.

Central bank governors all pronounced themselves satisfied with the changeover, reporting no major problems.

"This success proves the euro is really going to change Europe," said Portugal's Vitor Constancio.

Already by the second day the euros were in circulation Wednesday, 200 million people had euro coins in their pockets, and 60 million people had euro notes, obtained either from cash machines, bank withdrawals or as change from cash transactions, the European Commission in Brussels said Thursday.

A full 20 percent of all cash transactions were carried out in euros — ranging from 3 percent in Italy to 50 percent in France and the Netherlands, the commission said. More than 90 percent of cash machines in the 12 euro zone countries were dispensing euros by Wednesday.

Non-Muslims offer help after vandalism

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Non-Muslims have offered space, money and other support for worshippers after vandals drilled holes in the floors of the city's oldest mosque, ripped up copies of the Quran and pulled water pipes from walls.

Mohammed Shareef, president of the Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio, said the three-story the Islamic Center of Columbus will not be usable for some time. The vandalism caused more than $100,000 in damage.

The Congregation Tifereth Israel and the Rotary Club of Columbus have offered to help while the center is closed, and the Rev. Timothy Ahrens of the First Congregational Church has offered the use of classrooms and its parish hall, which can hold about 300 people.

Muslim community leaders want authorities to pursue the vandalism as a hate crime because stiffer penalties would apply. Leaders believe it was a hate crime, noting that Qurans and other religious artifacts were desecrated, but no money was taken from collection boxes.

Police say they can't say whether it's a hate crime until they make an arrest.

"The only thing that makes this suspect is Sept. 11 because church vandalisms aren't anything new," he said Wednesday.

Mosques around Ohio have been targeted since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

At least one window was damaged by gunfire at The Islamic Center of Toledo, while a mosque in Parma, near Cleveland, has reported damage to windows.

On Dec. 12, a suburban Cleveland man pleaded guilty to felony charges of burglary, ethnic intimidation and vandalism for ramming his car into the Islamic Center of Cleveland six days after the terrorist attacks.

Obituaries

Pearl Sellers

1910-2002

Pearl Lee Sellers, 91, died this morning in Cogdell Memorial Hospital following a lengthy illness.

Services for Mrs. Sellers, a homemaker, are pending at Bell-Cypert-Seale Funeral Home.

Born Aug. 22, 1910 in Cisco, she married Milburn Earnest Basket in 1925. He died in 1962. She married L.D. Sellers who also preceded her in death.

Mrs. Sellers, a member of the Trinity United Methodist Church, was an upholsterer and had been a resident of Snyder since 1955.

She also was preceded in death by a daughter, Ethel Sewell; and a granddaughter, Glenna Moseley.

Survivors include a daughter and son-in-law, Jane and Glen Moseley of Snyder; one brother, James Foy Randolph; a sister, Walter Nell Metcalf of Albuquerque; four grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

Manuel Barrientez

1939-2002

Manuel G. Barrientez of Snyder died this morning at his residence.

Services for Mr. Barrientez, 62, are pending at Bell-Cypert-Seale Funeral Home.

He was born Jan. 20, 1939.

Survivors include his wife, Maria Barrientez of Snyder; and a son, James Hernandez.

Personal, Professional Service

BELL CYPERT-SEALE FUNERAL HOME

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Warrants get three arrested

•Arrests

Officers arrested a 33-year-old man in the 1900 block of Ave. G Wednesday afternoon on two outstanding local warrants.

At 3:20 p.m. Wednesday, a 27-year-old woman was taken into custody in the 2500 block of College Ave. for local warrants.

A 36-year-old man was arrested on College Ave. at 9:20 p.m. on warrants for driving with a suspended license and possession of marijuana.

•Wild dogs

Jenna Jones requested a deputy at her residence on CR 148 Wednesday morning after seeing four possibly wild dogs roaming in the area. A deputy responded to the location, but the dogs had left the area.

•Close patrol

A woman on Waco Ave. requested a close patrol at 7 p.m. Wednesday after finding an unsecured window at her residence.

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events

WHAT'S UP?

ONGOINGS

Masonic Lodge meeting

Scurry Lodge No. 706 will have a slated meeting at 7:30 this evening with work in the E.A. degree.

Weigh Down workshop

Registration remains open for the Weigh Down workshop that begins at 7 tonight at His Joy Ministries, 904 26th. Call 573-9615 for further information or to sign up.

Lions Club meetings

The Snyder Lions Club will resume regular meetings at noon Tuesday with a program about the Texas Boys Ranch.

FBC support groups

Support groups dealing with divorce, death, cancer or caring for elderly parents meets at 6:30 p.m. the second Thursday of each month at the First Baptist Church educational building. A special group for students facing these problems is held at the same time.

Funeral expense account

An account has been opened at West Texas State Bank for donations to assist in funeral expenses for accident victim Stacy Copeland. Contact Lisa Williams at 573-2980 or Beth Bowen at 573-2670, for additional information.

Windbreak trees

Upper Colorado Soil and Water Conservation District is taking orders for windbreak trees, both evergreen and hardwoods. Call 573-6317.

VFW membership drive

The VFW is conducting its annual membership drive. Membership is restricted to veterans who served overseas in times of conflict or war. For more information, contact the post commander Jim Bailey at 573-5338.

Nurse testing dates

Testing for the next class of the Vocational Nursing program at Western Texas College will be Jan. 22 and Jan. 29, with the last day to interview set for Feb. 2. Classes are scheduled to begin March 4. Potential students must bring a photo ID. To schedule an appointment, call the Counseling Center at 573-8511 ext. 313.

Military support group

Family members, volunteers, friends, and active or inactive soldiers of Scurry County interested in forming a local Military Support Group are asked to contact Dale or Elaine Byrd at 573-8088 after 4 p.m., or e-mail the byrds@ntsonline.net. The purpose of this group is to provide an avenue of mutual support, assistance, community resources, and a network of communication.

Cancer treatment transportation

Transportation for cancer patients to Lubbock, Abilene or Midland is available free of charge. Call Sammie Jarrell at 573-5993 or Blakey Fargason at 574-8041. If not home, leave message on answering machine.

Morales files for governor

AUSTIN (AP) — Minutes after learning former Attorney General Dan Morales had plunged into the Texas governor's race, fellow Democratic candidate Tony Sanchez shook supporters' hands and appeared unfazed.

Like a businessman with a business plan, Sanchez insisted he'll stick with the strategy his campaign has worked on for the past year in his bid for governor.

"It's not going to change anything for us," Sanchez said Wednesday evening. "I'm going to be successful in this campaign."

But the race had taken a stunning turn.

Morales, after repeatedly saying he was considering a bid for U.S. Senate, sent in his candidacy paperwork for governor with less than an hour remaining before the 6 p.m. deadline Wednesday.

Morales, who was in Austin at the time, drove back to his San Antonio home, then met at his parents' residence in west San Antonio with about 30 loyalists and friends.

Morales told the San Antonio Express-News that supporters motivated him to shift his political focus. He will make a formal announcement at 11 a.m. Saturday at the Sheraton Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, Morales said.

Dressed casually and sporting a denim baseball cap, Morales said he spent most of the fall traveling throughout the state meeting with backers and "just good ol' Texans."

"They indicated that my experience and expertise in dealing with state issues was really valuable, and I started taking them seriously," Morales said.

The switch was such a secret that the red, white and blue invitations for Saturday's campaign launch weren't printed until after Morales' intentions were officially registered in Austin.

His candidacy is not a reaction to Sanchez's bid, Morales said.

"I have not a thing in the world against him," he said. "I believe he wants to serve Texas for all the right reasons."

Neither is there a wide ideological difference between him and Sanchez, Morales said, predicting a mutually respectful campaign.

His decision surprised Sanchez, a multimillionaire from Laredo who had been considered the front-runner in the March 12 party primary and the likely opponent of Republican Gov. Rick Perry in the November general election.

Texas Democratic Party chairwoman Molly Beth Malcolm said she had heard a rumor that Morales would run for governor, but said, "I am actually surprised."

Though party leaders gathered on opening day of candidate filing in December and rallied around Sanchez's candidacy, Malcolm said party officials don't side with one Democratic candidate over another.

"This is a contact sport. Certainly there are leaders on all sides that are supporting these different candidates," she said after Morales entered the race.

Sanchez, a rookie campaigner who got mediocre reviews early on from some of the party faithful, appeared composed and comfortable Wednesday night as he and other Democrats gathered at a Travis County candidates' forum, where musicians played and supporters nibbled on food beneath Texas and American flags.

Sanchez said he had learned of Morales' decision only about 15 minutes earlier.

"We might be forced to spend more on organization early than we were planning to, but I think it's going to serve a good purpose," Sanchez said. "With these changes we'll be able to draw the attention of the voters and pick up a lot of steam."

Morales, a lawyer from San Antonio, brings with him name recognition, having served as attorney general from 1991-1998.