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St. Lawrence Fall Festival being expanded in 49th year

By STEVE REAGAN

Staff Writer

Now that fall has arrived — both temperature and calendar-wise — attention can be properly turned to autumn traditions.

And one of the biggest in this area will be held Sunday when the 49th annual St. Lawrence Fall Festival will be held.

The festival traditionally offers some of the finest German sausage to be found in West Texas, but there's lots more to the event this year, according to Martha Schwartz, publicity chairman for the

festival.

For the first time ever, the event will be opened to outside vendors, and Schwartz expects up to 10 booths at the festival, offering a variety of clothing and household items.

Also new this year is a petting zoo, featuring small farm animals. Other entertainment booths will include plinko, bean bag toss, grab bag, pan for gold, Coke ring toss, golf and a mini-train ride. Bingo will be played from noon until 4 p.m.

Live entertainment is also scheduled throughout the day, featuring polka and

country-western music.

Two auctions will be held. A silent auction, featuring smaller donated items, will be held from 10:30 a.m. until 4 p.m., while a live auction will begin at 2 p.m.

A staple of the St. Lawrence festival, handmade German sausage, will of course be featured, as well.

"They'll begin making the sausage early Saturday," Schwartz said. "Depending on how much meat they have, and how much help they have, they should finish around 1 p.m. Then, they'll put it in the smokehouse

overnight."

Uncooked sausage will be sold for \$4.50 per pound, beginning at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at the "Sausage Haus," located directly behind the church's Parish Hall.

Lunch will be served from 10:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. Aside from sausage, the menu will consist of barbecue brisket and all the trimmings. Homemade pies and cakes will be served for dessert.

Cost for lunch is \$7 for adults and \$5 for children.

For more information, contact Schwartz at 397-2268.

Moore Board looks at highs, lows of year

Setback on Air Force IFT project may wind up being both setback and success

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

Figuratively speaking, strikes and gutterballs in 2004-2005 were the focus of Tuesday night's meeting of the board of directors for Moore Development for Big Spring Inc.

The board looked at the successes and defeats the economic development firm has seen during the past fiscal year, which comes to a close in approximately a month.

One "gutterball" the board discussed was the failed attempt to bring an Air Force Introductory Flight Training (IFT) program to McMahon-Wrinkle Airpark.

"We hinged so much — probably about 80 percent of our time, effort and resources at Moore Development — on the Air Force proposal that Boeing, Durango Air and Big Spring put together," said Executive Director Kent Sharp. "Obviously, to come up short and not even be on the short list doesn't make us happy. There are times when I still stomp my feet like a kid losing a game over this."

"I think Phil Handley from Durango Air said it best. We don't mind los-

ing a fair fight, but we like it to be fair. We really feel like it wasn't a level playing field."

In mid-January, Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen announced Big Spring's McMahon-Wrinkle Airpark was chosen by aero-engineering giant Boeing as the site for IFT program.

Big Spring missed the Air Force short-list for the project after efforts to bring the program to Big Spring began in mid-2004, when Moore Development, the city and several other local agencies joined forces to try to land the project in Big Spring.

Sharp said the battle to be the home for the project may have been lost, the long-term war made a major step in the right direction thanks to the project.

"We discovered there were things the city, college and county could do working together with other entities that we didn't collectively realize," said Sharp. "We all know there's a synergy that happens. We know the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, but I don't think we ever tested that theory until the IFT



Tommy Churchwell, outgoing president of the board of directors for Moore Development, accepts a resolution from newly elected president Richard Steel commending him for his work with the economic development agency during its Wednesday meeting. Fellow Moore Board member Ben Bancroft also received a similar resolution.

project came along and we put our collective minds together."

Sharp said the project was a learning experience

for all the local entities involved, and he expects to carry the same type of cooperation and full-tilt attitude into 2006.

"We learned a lot. We came together as a community and found out what we can accomplish when we come together,"

said Sharp. "The four or five projects I mentioned tonight very broadly will

See **MOORE**, Page 3A

Graumann opens fourth season with symphony Saturday night

Special to the HERALD

Dr. Keith Graumann is in his fourth season as music director and conductor of the Big Spring Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and will appear as co-conductor of the Big Spring Symphony opening production, "An International Spectacular," at 8 p.m. Saturday in the Municipal Auditorium.

John Giordano serves as

guest conductor for the concert that will feature Davide Cabassi, a 2005 Van Cliburn Piano Competition finalist.

Tickets to Saturday's performance are available at the *Big Spring Herald*, the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce, First Bank of West Texas and Heritage Museum.

Tickets are \$5 for students, \$10 for senior citizens and \$15 for adults. Hurricane survivors and their host families may

receive free admission by stopping by the *Big Spring Herald* to receive tickets.

A native of Big Spring, Graumann has enjoyed a widely varied musical career as performer, conductor, educator and scholar in community, semi-professional, collegiate, church and school venues.

He attended Texas Christian University and the University of Oklahoma on full tuition

scholarships. He earned the bachelor of music education, the master of music theory and composition and the doctor of musical arts degrees.

While in Oklahoma, he held positions as assistant conductor of the University of Oklahoma Symphony Orchestra and the state-wide Oklahoma Youth Orchestra, music director of Hillcrest Christian Church, and as founding conductor of the Norman Community

Choral Society, now in its 27th season.

He has held positions as director of choral activities at Brazosport College, Lake Jackson and at Livingston University in Alabama.

Choruses under his direction have also appeared with the Oklahoma City, Ala.; Birmingham, Ala.; Brazosport, Meridian, Miss.; and Midland-Odessa symphony orchestras.

He was interim conductor of the Midland-Odessa Symphony Chorus during the 2001-2002 concert season.

Graumann was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to Italy, gaining international recognition for his research and publications on the music of Vivaldi. In Italy, he also met his wife, the former Ann Barrow of Arbroath, Scotland.

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AEROBATIC DISPLAY

The second Webb Air Force Base Reunion begins Friday with a community luncheon and aerobatic display.

The luncheon, which is free to the public, will be held at the Hangar 25 Air Museum, organizer Jan Foresyth said.

It also will feature an aerobatic display by Jan Colmer and his German-built FINA Extra 300L plane, who will perform later this weekend at the Commemorative Air Force Airshow in Midland.

For more information concerning other reunion activities, contact reunion committee co-chairman Jim Little at 264-2362.

DELAY INDICTED



Shadowed by scandal, House Republicans face an uncertain new era after a day of upheaval that left Majority Leader Tom DeLay under indictment and forced to surrender his powerful post.

House and Senate Republican leadership were due at the White House Thursday afternoon to plot legislative strategy with President Bush.

See Page 5A

WISH GRANTED

A local youngster will appear on national television Friday in a show that will touch hearts.

Six-year-old Forsan kindergartner, Tristin Rangel appears on the NBC television program, "Three Wishes," with host Amy Grant at 8 p.m. Friday.

The show will be on local Channel 9. Rangel suffers from acute lymphocytic leukemia and was granted his wish, to see Spider Man.

That wish was granted during a surprise birthday party Aug. 6 in at Covenant Children's Hospital in Lubbock.

The party was provided by NBC.

Obituaries

Lucy Myrlene Rogers



Lucy Myrlene Rogers, 92, of Big Spring died Wednesday, Sept. 28, 2005, in a local nursing home. Funeral services will be held at 4 p.m. Friday, Sept. 30, 2005, at the Nalley-Pickle & Welch Rosewood Chapel with the Rev. Jim Binnix, pastor of Midway Baptist Church and Ralph Anderson, minister of Birdwell Lane Church of Christ, officiating. Interment will follow at Trinity Memorial Park.

The family will receive friends from 7 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. today at the funeral home.

She was born March 31, 1913, in Hood County and married W.J. "Dub" Rogers Dec. 25, 1932, in Howard County. He preceded her in death Jan. 9, 1974.

Mrs. Rogers came to Howard County in 1929, in a covered wagon, from Hood County. She and Dub farmed in the Fairview Community from the time of their marriage to 1974. Mrs. Rogers was a homemaker and a member of the Pioneer Sewing Club and loved quilting and hand crafts.

She also loved working in her yard and garden, tending her flowers. After Dub's death, she and her traveling companion, Theda Broughton, traveled extensively in North America.

She was a member of Birdwell Lane Church of Christ.

Survivors include two sons, A.G. "Jerry" and Dorothy Rogers of Big Spring and Duane and Dona Rogers of Eules; one daughter, Juanee Broughton of Big Spring; seven grandchildren; Sherri Gonzalez and husband, Wally of San Marcos, Kelly Rogers and wife, Renee of Albuquerque, N.M., Jack Broughton of Big Spring, Lori Johnson and husband, Steve of Roswell, N.M., Bruce Broughton and wife, Tina of Coahoma, Kerri Brown and husband, Ron of Godley and Brandon Rogers and fiancée, Amanda Parker of The Woodlands; 12 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren; a sister-in-law, Wynelle Rogers Bailey of Big Spring; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

She was also preceded in death by a son-in-law, Harold Broughton, a great-grandchild, Weldon Bruce "Bo" Broughton Jr., eight brothers and three sisters.

The family suggests memorials to Medina Children's Home, 21300 State Hwy 16 N., Medina 78055.

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

Paid obituary

Helen Ruth Louder

Helen Ruth Louder, 86, of Stanton died Wednesday, Sept. 28, 2005, in a local nursing home. Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Friday, Sept. 30, 2005, at the First Baptist Church of Stanton with the Rev. David Harp, pastor, officiating. Interment will follow at Evergreen Cemetery Stanton.

She was born to Noah and Ruth Range Nov. 12, 1918, in Waco and married Tull Ray Louder Dec. 22, 1945, in Dallas. He preceded her in death May 21, 2001.

Mrs. Louder taught school at the Chapman Ranch, which included children from the King Ranch and Buckner Orphans Home in Dallas, which was her favorite teaching job. She also taught school in Stanton, Grady and Garden City, retiring in the early 1970s.

Her hobbies were her children and grandchildren; she enjoyed story telling and reading. She was a member of First Baptist Church, was active in church and Sunday school, was also a member of Beta Sigma Phi which she especially enjoyed, Stanton Music Club, worked with the American Cancer Society, was active in the American EX-POW, and worked with Cub Scouts.

Survivors include three sons and two daughters-in-law, Ray and Judy Louder of Odessa, Jim Louder of Stanton and Gene and Becca Louder, also of Stanton; three grandsons, Darrell, Dewayne and Tullie Louder; two granddaughters, Carly and Sarah Louder; two great-grandsons, Cory and Nicholas Louder; one great-granddaughter, Brittny Robbins; and two sisters, Catherine Willhoite of Long Beach, Calif., and Joan Stark of Midland.

She was also preceded in death by her parents and one brother, Haskell Range. The family suggests memorials be made to Buckners Childrens Home, P.O. Box 16206, Lubbock 79490 or to the American Cancer Society, 2304 W. Wadley, Midland 79705.

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

Paid obituary

Roy Wyatt



Roy Wyatt, 67, of Big Spring died Tuesday, Sept. 27, 2005, at his residence. Funeral services are 2 p.m. Friday, Sept. 30, 2005, at Myers & Smith Chapel with the Rev. James Byler, Odyssey Hospice Chaplain, officiating. Burial will be at Mount Olive Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. today at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

He was born June 14, 1938, in Charleston, W.V. He was a machinist for Newport News Shipyard and later Lockheed Aviation. Then, he opened and ran a CB Shop in Scottsburg, Va., with his wife, Joann.

He is survived by his wife Joann Wyatt of Big Spring; two daughters, Deborah Melton of Big Spring and Vanessa Dix of Keysville, Va.; seven grandchildren; and two brothers, Troy Wyatt of Red Oak, Va., and Lloyd Wyatt of Paynesville, W.V.

Arrangements are by Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Pay your respects online at www.myersandsmith.com.

Terry Lynn Hagler

Terry Lynn Hagler, 55, of Big Spring died Monday, Sept. 26, 2005, in Big Spring. His services are pending with Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Big Spring.

Police blotter

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

- **TAMMY HELMS**, 32, of Odessa, was arrested Wednesday and held for the HCSC.
- **MARY GARCIA**, 39, of 1603 Bluebird, was arrested Wednesday and held for the HCSC.
- **MELINDA EMMONS**, 50, of 5536 Mapp Road, was arrested Wednesday and held for the HCSC.
- **ERIC HERNANDEZ**, 36, address unknown, was arrested Wednesday and held for the Cameron County Sheriff's Office.
- **JENNIFER REGALADO**, 19, of 1304 Tucson, was arrested Wednesday on charges of resisting arrest and interfering with the duties of a police officer.
- **DARREN LEE HEFFINGTON**, 36, of 2600 Crestline, was arrested Thursday and held for the HCSC on a Bexar County warrant.
- **THEFT** was reported in the 900 block of Willia.
- **RESISTING ARREST, SEARCH OR TRANSPORTATION** was reported in the 1300 block of Tucson.
- **INJURY TO AN ELDERLY PERSON - FAMILY VIOLENCE** was reported in the 500 block of Union.
- **FORGERY OF A FINANCIAL INSTRUMENT** was reported in the 200 block of Washington.
- **CRIMINAL MISCHIEF** was reported:
 - in the 2500 block of Dow.
 - in the 3600 block of Calvin.
- **ASSAULT/CLASS C** was reported in the 600 block of Sixth Street.
- **ASSAULT CLASS C/FAMILY VIOLENCE** was reported in the 3600 block of Calvin.

Sheriff's report

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

- **DAVID EDWARD JONES**, 49, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSC on a charge of assault with intent to cause bodily injury - family violence.
- **MARY ELIZABETH BIHL**, 34, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSC on a charge of tampering with a governmental record to defraud/harm.
- **JOSE NAVA**, 26, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on charges of possession of marijuana - two ounces or less and failure to identify - giving false information.
- **ADOLFO CANTU JR.**, 34, was arrested Wednesday by DPS on a charge of conspiracy to commit theft - more than \$20,000 less than \$100,000.
- **VICTOR MANUEL DEHOYOS**, 24, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on a charge of driving while license invalid.
- **LINDA GRACE EMMONS**, 50, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSC on a motion to revoke probation for driving while intoxicated.
- **JESSE JAY JUAREZ**, 21, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSC on a motion to revoke probation for driving while intoxicated.

Fire/EMS

The Big Spring Fire Department reported the following activity:

- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1900 block of Simler. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1700 block of Morrison. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1300 block of Marijo. One person was transported to the VAMC.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 1800 block of Scott. Service was refused.
- **MEDICAL** was reported in the 1700 block of Lancaster. Service was refused.
- **TRAUMA** was reported in the 1000 block of Ranch Road. One person was transported to SMMC.
- **TRAFFIC ACCIDENT** was reported near North Moss Lake Road. No one was transported.
- **AUTOMOBILE FIRE** was reported near mile marker 172 on Interstate Highway 20.

Take note

• **TRISTIN RANGEL, ELBOW ELEMENTARY KINDERGARTNER**, appears on the NBC television program "Three Wishes" with host Amy Grant at 8 p.m. Friday on local Channel 9.

• **PARENTS OF BIG SPRING HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2007** meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Trinity Baptist Church Craven Annex Building, junior high school department to discuss the junior-senior class prom 2006. Call Valerie Robertson at 267-7404, Patti Adams at 263-4491 or Janet Abner at 264-0023 for more information.

• **HOWARD COLLEGE CONTINUING EDUCATION** is offering country-western dance lessons from 1:30 p.m. until 2:30 p.m. each Saturday through Oct. 22 beginning this week. Cost is \$30. Ballroom dance lessons, including the waltz, fox-trot, tango, rumba, cha-cha and meringue are set for noon until 1:30 p.m. each Saturday through Oct. 22. Cost is \$40. For more information, call 264-5077.

• **THE 49TH ANNUAL ST. LAWRENCE FALL FESTIVAL** begins with Mass celebration at 9 a.m. Sunday on the church grounds. Lunch will be served from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. A variety of activities are planned.

• **GREATER BIG SPRING ROTARY CLUB** meets at noon Friday at Hangar 25 Air Museum. Members are cooking hamburgers for the Webb Air Force Base reunion. This may serve as a make-up meeting.

• **NOMINATIONS FOR OCTOBER'S VETERAN OF THE MONTH AT HANGAR 25 AIR MUSEUM** are due Friday. Call the museum at 264-1999 to make a nomination.

Bulletin board

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

TODAY

- Estate planning and probate law attorney Kristi Franklin Hyatt will speak at the Howard County Pachyderm meeting at noon in the Big Spring Country Club. Public invited.
- Kiwanis Club meets at noon in the Howard College Cactus Room. Call 267-6479.
- Business After Hours at Displays of Splendor.
- The Prospector's Club meets at 7:30 p.m. at 606 E. Third St. The public is invited to these meetings. For more information contact Lola Lamb at 263-3340 or Doyle and Virginia McClain at 263-8407.

FRIDAY

- Forsan homecoming.
- Webb Air Force Base Reunion 2005.
- Signal Mountain Quilting Guild meets from 9 a.m. until about 3 p.m. at 1 Courtney Place, bent Tree Apartments No. 604. All members should bring a salad. Call 267-1037 or 267-7281 for more information.
- AMBUCS meet at noon in La Posada Restaurant.
- Greater Big Spring Rotary Club meets at noon at Hangar 25 Air Museum. Members are cooking hamburgers for the Webb Air Force Base reunion.
- Spring City Senior Citizen's Center country and western dance from 7:30 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. featuring Monroe Casey and the Prowlers. All area senior citizens are invited.

SATURDAY

- Big Spring Symphony at 8 p.m. in the Municipal Auditorium.
- Eagles Lodge Dance at 8:30 p.m. at 703 W. Third.
- Webb Air Force Base Reunion 2005.

SUNDAY

- The 49th annual St. Lawrence Fall Festival begins with Mass celebration at 9 a.m. on the church grounds. Lunch will be served from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. A variety of activities are planned.
- Webb Air Force Base Reunion 2005.

MONDAY

- Keep Big Spring Beautiful meets at noon in the Spanish Inn Restaurant.

Weather

Tonight — Partly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. Lows in the lower 50s. Light and variable winds. The chance of rain is 20 percent.

Friday — Partly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. Warmer. Highs in the upper 80s. South winds 10 to 15 mph. The chance of rain is 20 percent.

Friday night — Partly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. Warmer. Lows in the mid 60s. South winds 10 to 15 mph. The chance of rain is 20 percent.

Saturday — Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 90s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.

Saturday night — Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 60s.

Sunday — Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 80s.

Sunday night — Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 60s.

Monday — Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 80s.

Monday night — Mostly cloudy. Lows in the mid 60s.

Tuesday — Partly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. Highs in the upper 80s. The chance of rain is 20 percent.

Tuesday night — Partly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. Lows in the lower 60s. The chance of rain is 20 percent.

Wednesday — Partly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. Highs in the upper 70s.

Lottery

Results of the Lotto Texas drawing Wednesday night: Winning numbers drawn: 4-11-15-40-44. Bonus Ball: 40.

Number matching five of five, plus Bonus Ball: 0. Estimated jackpot for Saturday night drawing: \$4 million.

...

Results of the Cash 5 drawing Wednesday night: Winning numbers drawn: 8-15-27-33-34.

Number matching five of five: 2. Prize per winner: \$14,764.

Winning tickets sold in: Tyler and Kilgore. Next Cash 5 drawing: Tonight.

...

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Wednesday night, in order: 3-6-3

BIG SPRING HERALD

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Coronary condition possible cause of fatal accident

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

The preliminary autopsy of a Big Spring man who ran his vehicle into a home in the 100 block of Airbase Road late Monday night points to a possible coronary condition as the cause of death.

Terry Lynn Hagler, 55, was pronounced dead by

Justice of the Peace Kathryn Wiseman at 11:28 p.m. after striking two vehicles and garage portion of a home located at 108 Airbase Road.

According to Justice of the Peace Kathryn Wiseman, the autopsy showed no physical trauma, leaving the cause of Hagler's death a mystery. "The autopsy found no

obvious physical trauma to Mr. Hagler," said Wiseman. "They did find some coronary problems, but we won't know the cause of death for sure until the toxicology reports come back."

Wiseman the idea that Hagler had been killed as a result of the crash was doubtful early on in the investigation.

"All of the police officers that responded to the accident said it didn't appear he suffered any serious trauma as a result of the wreck," said Wiseman.

According to Sgt. Tony Everett, public information officer for the Big Spring Police Department, said dispatchers received the call

at approximately 11:19 p.m. Monday night.

"Patrol officers responded to the 100 block of Airbase Road in reference to a possible vehicle accident," said Everett. "Officers found that a white 1997 Chevrolet van had struck two vehicles and the garage portion of the home. The driver was still in the vehicle and

medics responded to the scene and found no signs of life."

Everett said the death is currently under investigation.

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



Howard College cosmetology students Jaci Martinez, left, and Stephanie McIntosh, center, work on student instructor Kathy Caudill's hair during an open house for the cosmetology department Monday evening.

College's enrollment, hours increase

By STEVE REAGAN
Staff Writer

Death, taxes and Howard College enrollment?

Like those first two certainties, HC enrollment figures are becoming something college officials can almost count on.

Enrollment numbers for the junior college district have remained constant for the past four years, trustees learned during their monthly board meeting Monday.

Barbara Brumley, institutional research officer for the district, said 2,785 students are enrolled at district campuses this year. In comparison, 2,763 students were enrolled at this time in 2004, while fall enrollment figures in

2002 and 2003 were 2,794 and 2,796, respectively.

In a switch from last year, the Big Spring campus reported the largest number of students (1,296), while 1,205 students were enrolled at the San Angelo campus.

SouthWest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf had 127 students, while 120 were enrolled at the Lamesa campus and 37 at the Federal Correctional Institute training programs.

College President Dr. Cheryl Sparks said she was encouraged by the steadiness shown in enrollment figures.

"With the declining enrollment we've seen in the public school districts in this area, that we've been able to maintain our

numbers, and in some areas, increase them, has been encouraging," Sparks said. "However, we continue to look at ways to recruit and retain students."

Like enrollment figures, contact hour numbers have remained relatively unchanged in the past five years.

Contact hours — the number of hours students are physically in classes or labs — are important because they are the main measuring stick the state uses when determining how much money colleges receive.

This fall, the junior college district is generating 519,312 contact hours, compared to 508,672 from the same time four years ago, Brumley said.

Graumann's orchestral conducting teachers include Legh Burns, Sir Guy Fraser Harrison and John Giordano.

He is a member of Pi Kappa Lambda, national music honors society, the

Fulbright Association, the Midland-Odessa Symphony & Chorale Board of Directors and the Greater Big Spring Rotary Club.

During his tenure as music director of the

puts us a step ahead of all the other communities around us in being able to achieve that kind of synergy that quickly."

The board also discussed some of its victories, including the study that not only took the Big Spring State Hospital off the state government's "chopping block," it moved it into a position to begin expanding and

accepting more patients.

The board also went over several tax abatements

Moore Development helped facilitate between local government agencies and Wind Plus — which is preparing to build a number of new wind turbines south of Big Spring — and Sid Richardson Carbon Black, which is currently building an energy cogen-

Council sees Siemens contract as clearly a 'win, win situation'

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

It's a "no-brainer."

That's the term that keeps coming up in relation to the city's joint effort with corporate giant Siemens Building Technologies to conduct a detailed energy audit that could spawn a savings of more than \$5 million.

The council approved final reading of a resolution that will execute a notice of intent with Siemens to conduct a detailed energy audit, phase two in what city officials have labeled a "win-win" situation.

The decision — which made it's way through first reading on a unanimous vote — is the result of a budget session presentation from Siemens account executive Chad Nobles, who brought a program to the Big Spring City Council that would allow the city to make improvements based solely on money saved through energy and utility conservation.

Nobles described a 12-year contract between the city and Siemens that would net the company 4 percent interest on an estimated \$5.5 million loan that would be paid for through renovations to the city's infrastructure, including facilities, buildings and the municipal water services.

"This allows the city to improve its buildings — meaning lighting, air conditioning and water meters — without the need to increase capital or budget. Without having to raise tax rates, raise water rates. We're doing it all out of your current operating budget," said Nobles. "The beauty of the process is we guarantee you, as a city, the results. If we don't make those savings

that we promised here today then we have to cut the city a check for the difference."

Director of Public Works Todd Darden said he expects to see work on the audit begin soon.

"Siemens will bring a team into Big Spring to meet collectively with city staff and look at the entire scope of the project," said Darden. "Then we'll break that into the individual components where parts of the team will go off and start looking at the various projects, which includes everything from heating and air conditioning to lighting."

"Right now we're also looking at possible projects out at the municipal golf course. We're also going to be looking at their automatic meter reading system for the water office and a water audit. Those are the main components we'll be looking at."

Darden said once both entities are comfortable with the data, the group will move on to the next phase.

"Once they've collected that data, they'll analyze it and determine whether or not there's a project where they can save the city money through its operating budget," said Darden. "Then they will come back and present us with those savings in the form of a cash flow scenario."

"Once we all feel comfortable with those numbers, it will go back to the council to decide whether or not we want to pursue those projects. If the council decides to pursue them, there will be a third-party independent review by and outside entity to look at their numbers and determine if they're correct."

Nobles said by updating

BSSO&C, a four-concert season has consistently been offered, including major choral works.

He established the chamber music series "On Stage," the educational outreach program

has increased two-fold and the annual Pops in the Park concert and fireworks display that has become the most widely attended in Western Texas.

was elected president of the board, while Niklasch was named vice president. McLellan was named secretary-treasurer for the group.

Board member Raul Marquez was unable to attend the meeting.

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

many of the electrical and water devices taken for granted on a daily basis — water faucets, lighting fixtures, air conditioning units and even insulation — the city can save more than \$500,000 a year, which would more than cover the annual cost of the overall loan.

"The process has been around for years," said Nobles. "With the local government code being recently passed, the cities' now have access to this type of process."

Darden said the detailed audit shouldn't take more than a couple of months to complete.

"According to the staff members I've talked to with Siemens, we should have something by the end of December," said Darden. "It's a fairly short order type thing. It's a matter of going through each building individually and looking at them line item by line item. Looking at what fixtures we have and what upgrades we can make to enhance energy usage within those facilities."

Mayor Russ McEwen said with Siemens' guarantee to save the prescribed amount or cut the city a check for the difference is a win-win situation.

"You're in a situation where you have a corporation as large as Siemens coming in and saying they've identified these savings and they will go out and assist us in borrowing the money," said McEwen. "But, these important numbers are telling us they are confident in their numbers, if we don't meet our projections, they will guarantee these savings. And if we don't meet those savings, they will write a check to us for the difference."

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EDITORIAL

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

-FIRST AMENDMENT

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

Susanne Reed
Publisher

John A. Moseley
Managing Editor

Bill McClellan
News Editor

OUR VIEWS

Symphony offering international flavor in Saturday opener

Italian pianist Davide Cabassi will be featured Saturday evening, as the Big Spring Symphony Orchestra opens its 2005-2006 concert season schedule with "An International Spectacular."

The event's show is aptly named because in addition to Cabassi, a finalist in this year's Van Cliburn Piano Competition; Maestro John Giordano, an internationally acclaimed conductor and composer, will come to Big Spring as guest conductor for the show.

During Saturday's concert, Cabassi will perform Beethoven's Concerto No. 3 in C Minor Opus 37, while Giordano will conduct the symphony's performance of Tchaikovsky's "Symphony No. 4."

The setting for this delightful performance is the Big Spring Municipal Auditorium. Time is 8 p.m.

Tickets to Saturday's performance are available at the *Big Spring Herald*, the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce, First Bank of West Texas and Heritage Museum.

Tickets are \$5 for students, \$10 for senior citizens and \$15 for adults. Hurricane survivors and their host families may receive free admission by stopping by the *Big Spring Herald* to receive tickets.

For more information, contact the symphony office at 264-7223.

In addition, tickets will be available at the door on Saturday.

We hope you'll take advantage of what promises to be a very entertaining evening with the Big Spring Symphony.

Justice DeLayed needs noticing

A political party is in big trouble when a criminal indictment may be the best thing that could happen to it. Yet it may well be that the indictment by a Texas grand jury of House Majority Leader Tom DeLay finally prods GOP biggies to stumble before a mirror and take a long look at what they have become. Only a mother could love the bleary, bloated faces staring back.

Forget whether DeLay, who has stepped aside as majority leader, is guilty of a conspiracy to violate Texas campaign law. It is quite possible that he will be exonerated, given Travis County District Attorney Ronnie Earl's record of indicting Lone Star State big fish — GOP Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison and former Democrat Attorney General Jim Mattox — only to see to the cases crumble and juries acquit.

Besides, the state of election law these days is such that a politician practically has to take out a paid advertisement announcing that he broke the law before he is held accountable.

DeLay most certainly is guilty of losing touch with the American public. You could see it in his recent statement that the GOP-controlled Congress had cut all the fat in federal spending. Even before Katrina, domestic spending — not including homeland security and defense — rose \$303 billion since 2001, according to the American

Conservative Union. Yet DeLay, who says he wants less government, declared "victory" on overspending.

"The Hammer" also is guilty of rolling around in too much money. The indictment concerns charges of money laundering that involve a political action committee controlled by DeLay which apparently had so much cash on hand it could pass it through to other committees, and end up helping Texas candidates. At worst, the case involves the laundering of \$190,000 in illicit corporate contributions; at best, it is a sign that the DeLay machine was raising too much money.

DeLay also is guilty of living too large. He traveled in lavish style to South Korea and the United Kingdom. The Washington Post found the trips may well have been funded with cash laundered by a registered foreign-agent and lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

Abramoff, you should know, is the target of criminal and congressional investigations involving the millions he was paid from casino-owning Indian tribes. His ties to DeLay, other GOP members and a former White House aide, David Safavian, who was indicted this month, suggest that the Texas charges will not be the end of DeLay's or the GOP's woes.

Ellen Miller, of the left-leaning Campaign for America's Future, predicted on a conference call Wednesday that Rep. Bob Ney, R-Ohio, would be the next GOP shoe to drop. The Washington Post has reported that Ney has hired a criminal lawyer, as his name appear in e-mails being studied by

the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, which is looking into Abramoff's dealings with big-casino tribes.

DeLay also is guilty of playing it too cute. The House ethics committee has chastised him for offering a political favor in exchange for a vote, for asking federal aviation workers to check on a plane during a Lone Star political squabble and for appearing at an energy-company fund-raiser that seemed too cozy. So when it looked as if the ethics folks might fault him for his own personal Travelgate, DeLay, with the help of Speaker Dennis Hastert, ousted Chairman Joel Hefley, R-Colo., and tried to rig House rules.

Defiant in his own defense, DeLay faulted "the politics of personal destruction" Wednesday. No, like the GOP giant Newt Gingrich before him, DeLay should recognize the politics of self-destruction. It's an old story. A scrappy young man goes to Washington to change the political culture, only to become the very things he once resented — a defender of bloated government and a party hack who put power before principle. But he doesn't change the system, it changes him.

Over time, he is surrounded by committee chairmen and other long-timers who think as he does. They're so important, they decide, taxpayers should excuse their indulgences and subsidize their pork — just to keep them in office.

Until the day they realize that their fearless leader could cost them re-election. Then, it's man overboard.

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YOUR VIEWS

TO THE EDITOR:

It seems every store I have shopped at lately asks at checkout if you want to donate your change to the hurricane victims.

I've read stories in your paper about the many people who are helping with these efforts. You can rely on Wal-Mart, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the many other organized organizations helping out.

I have to ask though, is every Dollar General, Family Dollar and all the other smaller companies who ask for contributions actually sending 100 percent of these donations to the victims?

I'm not the only person who has had to mention to the clerks at these lesser known contributors that I have given all I can. My contributions went straight to the Red Cross, my employer and to the local known entities with clothing donations to the Chalet and giving at Wal-Mart on some visits. I'm confident in these people — many are even doing some matching funds and such.

Have I missed out on a story about these other collection efforts that would make me sure I'm donating to a reliable institution?

I would ask if you could put out a story which would explain which small change donations, as I've men-

tioned, are the most effective way to directly help the truly needy at this time. I worry about how much of the money being collected, without the corporate entities being involved in some way, is actually getting to where it can be used.

Hopefully this money is not going in someone's pocket or some company's slush fund, but to those entities who match or have the strength to put something behind the money.

I realize we all want to help, but I believe everyone would agree it is terrible that there are people who would take advantage of this situation.

DARRELL THOMAS
BIG SPRING

TO THE EDITOR:

As many of your readers know, Skip and I have decided to relocate to the Hill Country where we will be closer to family and take significantly less call for anesthesia.

Rest assured, you have a good community hospital here in Big Spring with top-notch coverage for general surgery, orthopedics, urology, ob/gyn, pediatric dentistry, podiatry and pulmonary medicine. This complement extends to the non-surgical specialties, as well. Your operating room crew is superb and the hospital is generous in funding for updating equipment and supplies. The nursing and ancillary staff throughout the hospital is, without question, among the best I've ever encountered.

Skip and I have never felt unappreciated in any way. It is our deepest desire to leave on good terms and to reassure the public that Scenic Mountain Medical Center is indeed a good hospital.

We will always feel at home in Big Spring and would never hesitate to use Scenic Mountain for our own medical care.

DR. BONNIE MCKENZIE
BIG SPRING

TO THE EDITOR:

As we can all attest, the people of Howard County are a giving people. For years, they have supported the United Way, and each year they raise more money than ever to help make Howard County a better place to live.

At this time of year, it seems like everyone is raising money. The kids are back in school selling magazines, knick-knacks and candy. The little football players and soccer players are in full gear also. Jerry Lewis has just had his MDA telethon, and of course, everyone knows about the great job we all do for Relay for Life.

All these activities are normal annual requests, but this year we have had added needs as the hurricanes displaced many people and once again you, the citizens of this great area rose to the challenge and turned out a massive effort.

You are to be commended for your generosity. However, I need to ask you to remember the United Way. The United Way has started the 2005-2006 campaign and we need your assistance. Each year we ask you to support our agencies by contributing. This year I am asking you to do that once again, but I am also asking you to use your influence to encourage your friends and neighbors to also give.

At the Kick Off, Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen challenged the United Way to raise its goal by \$25,000. We have accepted his challenge, but this means we must either ask fewer people to give more, or ask more people give something. To meet this goal 500 people will have to donate \$600, however if each person in the county who lives above the poverty level would donate just \$20, we would meet our goal.

We need to ask you to join in an old fashion multi-level marketing campaign. As you make your donation, think of one other person you can personally invite to support the United Way. Use your circle of influence to build the base for giving.

Our egos and pride may fool us into thinking that we will never assistance, but as our new neighbors from Louisiana can tell us, you should never say never. You can never predict when you may be a victim of violent crime and need assistance from Victim Services. Alternatively, when a fire might strike and leave you homeless and needing the American Red Cross. Or when you might want a new, four-legged friend from the Humane Society.

Maybe we will not need assistance, but it may be someone you know. Would you want the little old lady at church to go without meals on wheels? Would you want one of your children's classmates to go hungry because Isaiah 58 ran out of food? These are just a few examples of the great things your contribution can help accomplished.

We are extremely blessed. I encourage you to open up not just your wallets and hearts, but also your mouths. Tell your friends that you gave to United Way today and encourage them to do the same.

Because we do not know what tomorrow make bring, give today while the giving is good!

God bless you and thank you.

FRANKLIN E. WEBER
CAMPAIGN CHAIRMAN
UNITED WAY

LETTER POLICIES

The Herald welcomes letters to the editor.

- Limit your letters to no more than 300 words.
- Sign your letter.
- Provide a daytime telephone number, as well as a street address for verification purposes.
- We reserve the right to edit for style and clarity.
- We reserve the right to limit publication to one letter per 30-day period per author.
- Letters that are unsigned or do not include a telephone number or address will not be considered.
- Letters should be submitted to Editor, Big Spring Herald, P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721. They can also be e-mailed to editor@bigspringherald.com

A SMALL PRAYER

by K. Rae Anderson

May we brainstorm with You, Lord, through our prayers.

Amen

New areas of New Orleans opened to business owners, residents

By JULIA SILVERMAN
Associated Press Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Streams of cars filled with business owners started to make their way back into newly reopened sections of hurricane-ravaged New Orleans on Thursday, some vowing to rebuild their city, some pulling out.

A month after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin invited business owners back into the city, and prepared to allow most residents to return over the next week.

For some, Thursday marked their first view of what was left. Others didn't need a formal invitation to return. Those who had already slipped in were ready to welcome

back their fellow business owners and patrons.

At Igor's, a pub and coin laundry in the city's Garden District, owner Halina Margan had returned after Katrina. She was ready to open for business on Thursday, and get ready for the influx of returning residents.

"Igor's has never closed until this nasty little ... hurricane," Margan said. "It's lonely here. We need people."

At precisely 7:20 a.m., a long line of cars began snaking down St. Charles Avenue, the Garden District's main thoroughfare, lined with stately homes and small businesses.

Mary Russo, of Jefferson, La., parked her car Thursday in front of Shanty Too, her niece's

boarded-up boutique on chic Magazine Street, and started to cry. The trash on the streets was the worst, she said through her tears.

Her niece couldn't bear to come, so Russo and other relatives were there to bring what was salvageable to her other shop in St. Francisville, about 30 miles north of Baton Rouge.

The Magazine Street store will close down for good, Russo said.

"I just can't believe this has happened to the city," she said. "So much of this could have been avoided."

At least in the early hours, the return seemed orderly and smooth, without massive holdups on the highways leading into the city.

Thousands had come in by around 8 a.m., Police

spokesman Capt. Marlon Deffillo said.

"We're experiencing no real difficulty," he said. "Everybody's cooperating. We see a great number of people coming in."

A day earlier, Nagin said he's fighting a national impression "that we're tainted, we're not ready."

Nagin opened the city to business owners from the French Quarter, the Central Business district and Uptown, which includes the historic Garden District of New Orleans.

"People are saying it's too early to bring back jazz, the gumbo and the red beans," Nagin said Wednesday in Baton Rouge. "If it's too early, when is the right time?"

Nagin complained that state opposition to reopen-

ing the city was feeding a misperception about New Orleans, saying: "We're fighting this national impression that we're tainted, we're not ready."

Still, a handout from Nagin's office struck a cautious note.

"You are entering the city of New Orleans at your own risk," it reads, before going on to detail potential health hazards from water, soil and air, and advising residents to bring in food.

Electricity has been restored to some dry parts of the city, although Entergy Corp. said only about 17 percent of the city has power.

The mayor has disagreed with the head of the state's health department about the condition of the city's water, insisting residents could now

wash in it, though they cannot drink it.

Earlier this week, Nagin formally opened the Algiers neighborhood, which has electricity and clean water. Nagin told legislators Wednesday that "everything you hoped to happen is happening. Algiers is alive and well and breathing."

If all goes well, as of Oct. 5 only the Lower Ninth Ward, which was hit especially hard by the flooding, will remain cordoned off, Nagin said.

Louisiana's official death toll from Katrina rose to 896 on Wednesday. Only 32 bodies have been positively identified and released to funeral homes chosen by their families, said Dr. Louis Cataldie, who heads the body recovery process in Louisiana.

Stepping in for DeLay, Blunt says to focus on agenda

By DAVID ESPO

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Shadowed by scandal, House Republicans face an uncertain new era after a day of upheaval that left Majority Leader Tom DeLay under indictment and forced to surrender his powerful post.

House and Senate Republican leadership were due at the White House Thursday afternoon to plot legislative strategy with President Bush.

"What we do here is more important than who we are," Missouri Rep. Roy Blunt said Wednesday after the rank and file named him as DeLay's replacement, at least for the time being. "We have an agenda to move forward here."

Democrats, 11 long years in the minority, said the GOP offered nothing of the sort.

DeLay's indictment marks "the latest example that Republicans in Congress are plagued by a culture of corruption at the expense of the American people," said Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, the Democratic leader.

Even as DeLay professed his innocence and his lawyers said they hoped to avoid having him handcuffed, fingerprinted and photographed, potential for fresh controversy surfaced.

Records on file with the Federal Election Commission show that Blunt's political action committee has paid roughly \$88,000 in fees since 2003 to a consultant facing indictment in Texas in the same case as DeLay.

Keri Ann Hayes, executive director of the Rely on Your Beliefs Fund, said officials of the organization have not discussed whether to end the relationship with the consultant, Jim Ellis, in light of his indictment.

"We haven't had that conversation," she said, adding that so far, Ellis' indictment had no impact on his work.

DeLay's indictment produced a public show of unity among Republicans and a scarcely concealed outbreak of power politics, at a time when polls show dwindling support for President Bush and the GOP-controlled Congress. Additionally, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., faces federal investigations into the sale of stock.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert, Blunt and other senior GOP lawmakers said they expected DeLay to be exonerated. "This temporary arrangement



Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas), the Majority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, talks to reporters in the Capitol in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday after he was indicted by a grand jury in Austin on conspiracy charges regarding campaign donations.

will allow us to continue our work until (he) can resume his duties as majority leader," said Rep. Eric Cantor of Virginia, the deputy whip who will assume many of Blunt's old duties in the leadership shuffle.

"It is our sincere hope that justice will remain blind to politics. As Tom DeLay clearly stated today, House Republicans will continue to focus on the business of the American people," party chairman Ken Mehlman said in a statement that did not assert the Texan's innocence.

Some Republican lawmakers, who refused to be identified by name as a condition for disclosing their personal opinions, said they doubted DeLay would ever return to the leadership table. Others spoke of the possibility for political damage.

"Any time you have anything that smacks of scandal, it hurts all of us," said Rep. Joel Hefley of Colorado, who served as chairman of the House ethics committee at a time when the panel three times admonished DeLay for his actions.

Several officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said an aide to Hastert contacted California Rep. David Dreier on Monday about assuming the majority leader's duties in the event DeLay was indicted. Several lawmakers said such a change would have made it easier for the Texan to eventually regain his post.

By Tuesday, as the grand jury completed its work in Austin, Texas, Blunt forcefully asserted his claim to the job in conversations with the speaker, according to several GOP officials.

At the same time, conservative lawmakers quickly made known their unhappiness with Dreier as a potential stand-in for DeLay.

At a private midday meeting, several conservative lawmakers argued that Dreier's voting record was too moderate. According to officials who spoke on condition of anonymity, some participants in the meeting said the Californian had voted in favor of expanded federal funding for stem cell research and against a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. There also was grumbling that the Californian favored a less restrictive policy on immigration than many conservatives.

"There was a lot of discussion in that room about will ... he advance the conservative agenda?"

said Rep. Jack Kingston, R-Ga., who attended the meeting and said he personally would have been comfortable with Dreier in the post.

Other officials said a show of hands near the end of the session showed support for a postponement in selecting a temporary majority leader if it were to be Dreier. A delegation was dispatched to inform Hastert, who in the meantime had decided to recommend Blunt instead.

The speaker presented his recommendation not long afterward at a closed-door meeting of the rank and file, saying it was designed as a stopgap solution.

Even then some lawmakers expressed concern about inadvertently making an open-ended

See DeLay, Page 6A

Earle known for taking on bigger names in politics

By APRIL CASTRO

Associated Press Writer

AUSTIN — Prosecutor Ronnie Earle may be the only Democrat left in Texas with broad enough power to make life difficult for the GOP.

On Wednesday, the longtime Travis County district attorney showed just how much clout he wields, bringing charges of criminal conspiracy against one of the nation's most powerful Republicans.

House Majority Leader Tom DeLay was indicted for allegedly conspiring to violate political fundraising laws, forcing him to temporarily step aside from his post. He is the highest-ranking member of Congress to face criminal prosecution.

DeLay said he had done nothing wrong and blasted Earle as a "partisan fanatic."

Other Republicans joined him in calling the DA's three-year investigation into the 2002 state legislative campaigns a political witch hunt.

But Earle, 63, who has called the DeLay investi-

gation the most important of his career and abandoned plans to retire last year so he could finish it, shrugged off the accusations about his motives: "What else are they going to say?"

With all statewide offices and both houses of the Legislature firmly in the hands of Republicans, Earle is widely regarded as one of the most powerful Democrats remaining in Texas. But he points out that he's investigated four times more Democrats than Republicans, including some friends. He once even filed charges against himself for missing the campaign finance reporting deadline by a day.

William Gibson, foreman of the grand jury that indicted DeLay, said Earle did not pressure the group — only presented jurors with evidence. While prosecutors typically have sway over the outcome of a grand jury, only the jurors can issue indictments.

Wednesday's indictment stems from a plan

See EARLE, Page 6A

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Great look

Milan's fashion dresses up the line at Mercury in 2006

By JIM MATEJA

Chicago Tribune

For 2005, the Ford Five Hundred and Mercury Montego sedans and Ford Freestyle crossover were added as part of Ford's strategy to win back buyers — and profits.

To save development costs, the trio were derived from the Volvo XC90 platform and are built in the Chicago plant.

For 2006 Ford comes up with another trio aimed at capturing buyers and some dough — the midsize Ford Fusion, Mercury Milan and Lincoln Zephyr sedans, all derived from the Mazda6 sedan and all built at a plant in Hermosillo, Mexico.

The midsize Fusion/Milan are slightly smaller and lower priced than Five Hundred/Montego and aimed at attracting a larger volume of customers as well as younger ones.

Fusion/Milan are expected to attract buyers in their mid-30s, and Five Hundred/Montego to capture those in their

mid-50s.

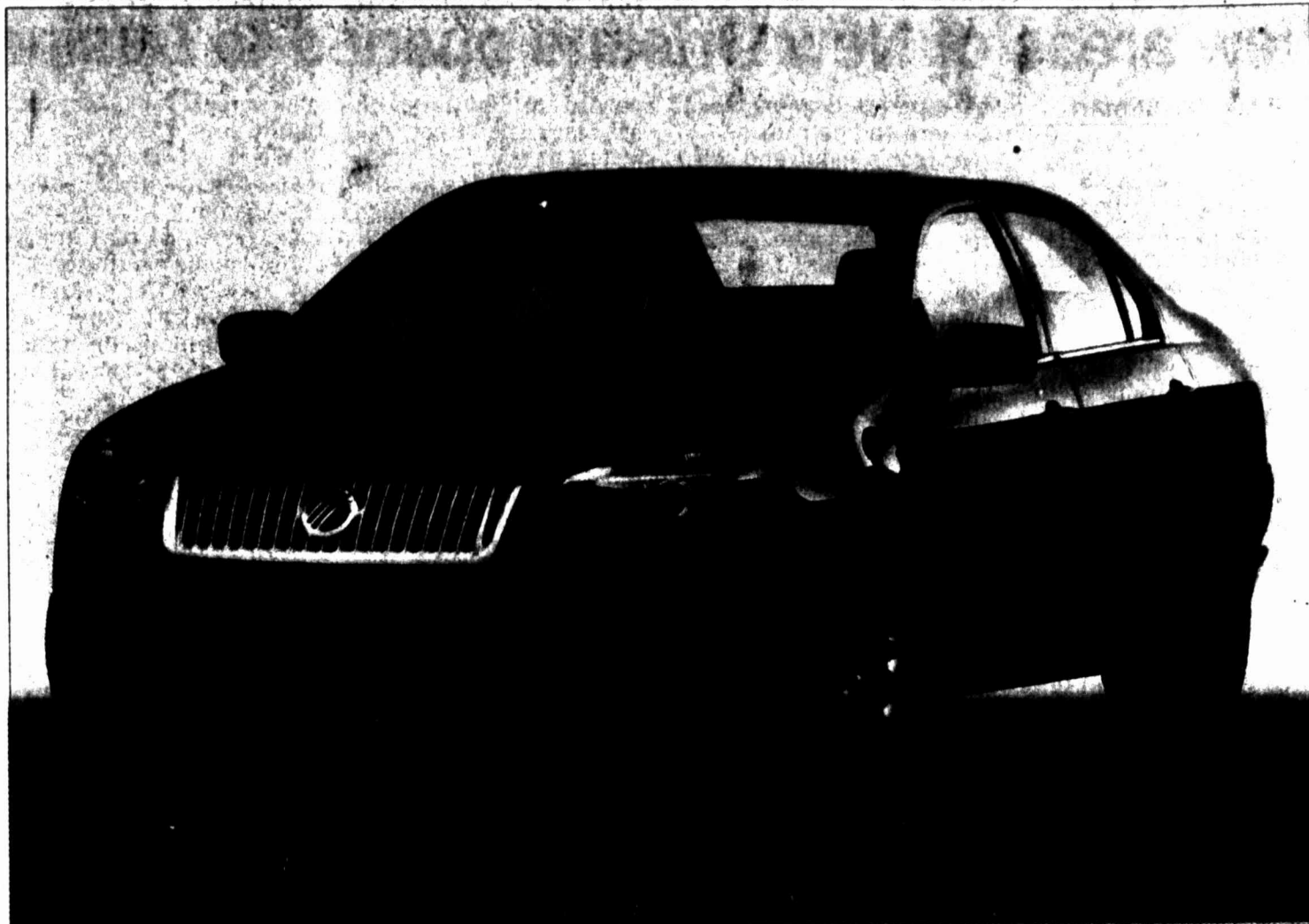
Montego and Milan take the place of the Sable, though Montego is bigger (112.9-inch wheelbase, 200.9-inch length) and Milan is smaller (107.4 inches/191.4 inches) than Sable (108.5 inches/197.6 inches).

Milan is offered in base and top-of-the-line Premier versions. It has a distinctive and attention-grabbing satin-aluminum waterfall grille and LED taillamps that light up quicker and shine brighter. Inside, satin aluminum appointments add to the rich, luxury look.

The paint not only shines, it also has a luster usually reserved for cars that run \$30,000 and up. Milan is as distinct and appealing to the eye as Camry and Accord are dull.

With smaller dimensions than Montego, which holds five adults in comfort, Milan can carry four adults and a child.

And while Montego can hold eight golf bags in its cavernous trunk, Mercury says it hasn't tossed in a pile of bags to



The 2006 Mercury Milan

learn what Milan can handle. A guess would be about four.

But holding people is more important, and you aren't squeezed into a Milan front or rear. You have ample room to flail legs, arms and head without striking someone or something so there's no penalty for long-distance travel.

The suspension has been tuned to absorb road imperfections so tar marks don't feel like logs. And you don't suffer a lot of road noise coming into the cabin.

However, the suspension is firmer than in a soft-as-silk Lincoln Town Car, so the bumps in the road will serve as a reminder that this is an \$18,000 sedan and not a \$30,000 number.

Milan, like Fusion, is powered by a choice of a 2.3-liter, 160-horsepower 4-cylinder with 5-speed manual or automatic or a 3-liter, 221-h.p. V-6 with a 6-speed automatic.

It tips the scales at just under 3,200 pounds with the 4-cylinder, just over 3,300 pounds with the V-6. Regardless of engine, you are piloting the weight of a Mercedes C-Class sedan. Though not cumbersome when pulling out to pass or slipping into the parking space, you'll feel the weight in the wheel when taking a corner sharply. Expect body lean when you do.

Our test car came with the V-6.

A gripe with Montego is

that its 3-liter, 203-h.p. V-6 is a tad underpowered, obvious when carrying a full load of occupants and their golf clubs or climbing steep inclines.

The 3-liter V-6 in Milan differs by adding variable valve timing to increase horsepower and provide more low-end torque for more spirited movement away from the light.

Some will argue it still could use a little more energy for steep grades.

The zero- to 60-mph acceleration time is about 8.5 seconds, which means no need to carry a stopwatch.

Since the Mazda6 offers a manual, Ford is considering adding one to the V-6 Milan for more energetic starts.

No word when or whether it may be added, though we have to ask why because manuals are more in keeping with sports coupes, not family sedans, and account for pitifully low volume.

Ford will try to end Montego power gripes with a 3.5-liter V-6 coming soon — no mention when — but there's no plan to fool with the 221-h.p. V-6 in Milan or Fusion.

With a 23 m.p.g. city/29 m.p.g. highway rating (25/31 with 4-cylinder), most will settle for spirited, if not neck-snapping, acceleration, at least until — if — gas prices are \$1.50 a gallon again.

Montego offers a choice of front- or all-wheel-drive, and so will Milan, but not until the '07

model year to keep first-year production simple and focus on quality. Fusion and Zephyr will add AWD in '07 as well.

Originally, Ford wasn't going to offer AWD until the '08 model year, but moved up the timetable based on the fact that up to 40 percent of buyers demand it in Five Hundred and Montego.

The addition of AWD no doubt will mean more controlled all-season motoring, as well as swifter reaction to steering input to lighten the feeling of weight in the wheel.

Milan and Fusion also will add a higher mileage gas/electric version for 2008.

The base Milan starts at \$18,345, the base Fusion at \$17,145. Milan adds more standard equipment to justify the price spread, including anti-lock brakes (an option on Fusion) and rich-looking, two-tone leather seats and LED taillamps (neither available on Fusion).

The Premier tested starts at \$22,845. All Milans offer as standard power windows with driver one-touch down, power heated mirrors, power locks, power driver's seat, air conditioning, premium audio system with an AM/FM single CD/MP3 player, analog clock, overhead console with sunglasses holder, covered flip-up storage bin on top of the dash, cruise control, tilt and telescoping steering

wheel and remote keyless entry. In addition, Premier adds a premium six-disc CD changer with MP3 player and six speakers and 17-inch all-season radials.

While leather is standard, heated seats run \$295. And though ABS is standard, traction assist adds \$95. Traction assist is a wise choice. One other option is a must, the side-curtain air bags along with side-impact air bags in the \$595 security package. Another should be considered: a power sunroof at \$795.

For a division written off only a few years ago, Mercury gets an upscale and expressive, yet affordably priced, sedan in Milan that's as fashionable as Sable was a frump.

Mercury is counting on Milan to do what Montego has done in just one year: attract 45 percent of its buyers from folks who hadn't shopped, much less owned, a Mercury before.

As its lowest-priced model, Mercury is counting on Milan to contribute to increasing sales from 300,000 vehicles annually to more than 500,000 per year by the end of the decade. A Mercury crossover derived from the Ford Freestyle will be added to the Chicago plant, probably for '07, to contribute as well.

Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.



2006 Mercury Milan V-6 Premier

Wheelbase: 107.4 inches

Length: 191.4 inches

Engine: 3-liter, 210-h.p. V-6

Transmission: 6-speed automatic

Fuel economy: 23 m.p.g. city/29 m.p.g. highway

Base price: \$22,845

Price as tested: \$24,250. Includes \$295 for heated front seats; \$420 for audiophile sound system; \$95 for traction assist; and \$595 for safety and security package with side-curtain air bags and side-impact bags upfront. Add \$650 for freight.

Pluses: Terrific styling outside and above-average attention to detail and amenities inside so it assumes the role of a midsize luxury car when it is a midsize economy car. Neat touches such as stowage compartment in top of dash. Decent mileage. Decent trunk space. Decent back-seat room.

Minuses: Some will argue the V-6 could use a tad more power. Feel lots of weight in the wheel. Can't get all-wheel-drive until '07 model year.

DeLay

Continued from Page 5A

commitment, and Hastert pledged that the issue could be reopened in three months' time. That leaves DeLay little time to clear his name and reclaim his post before a potential round of elections in which Blunt, Cantor or others face challenges, with the winners emerging with clear mandates of their own.

DeLay flashed defiance during the day as he embarked on a round of post-indictment media interviews. Summoning reporters to his office in the Capitol — the one he would soon vacate — he denounced Texas prosecutor Ronald Earle as "an unabashed partisan zealot."

"I am innocent. Mr. Earle and his staff know it. And I will prove it," he added.

"Our job is to prosecute abuses of power and to bring those abuses to the public," Earle responded in Texas. Rebutting charges of partisanship, he said he has investigated four times as many Democrats as Republicans.

DeLay, 58, was indicted on a single felony count of conspiring with two political associates — Ellis and John Colyandro — to violate state election law by using corporate donations illegally. Texas law prohibits use of corporate contributions to advocate the election or defeat of candidates.

DeLay is the highest-ranking member of Congress ever to be indicted, according to Don Ritchie, a Senate historian.

EARLE

Continued from Page 5A

DeLay helped set in motion in 2001 to help Republicans win control of the Texas House in 2002 for the first time since Reconstruction.

A state political action committee he created, Texans for a Republican Majority, was indicted earlier this month on charges of accepting corporate contributions for use in state legislative races. Texas law prohibits corporate money from being used to advocate the election or defeat of candidates; it's allowed only for administrative expenses.

With GOP control of the Texas legislature, DeLay then engineered a redistricting plan that enabled

Republicans to take six seats in the U.S. House away from Democrats — including one lawmaker switching parties — in 2004 and build its majority in Congress.

Attorneys for the defen-

dants say the exact definition of administrative costs, as defined in state law, will play a large role in their defense.

With nearly 30 years in office, Earle is one of the nation's longest serving district attorneys. During

his tenure, he has won national attention for his reputation as a capital punishment watchdog, selectively determining which defendants he believes deserve to die before the decision is ever allowed to reach a jury.

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IN BRIEF

Coahoma sets booster club dates

The Coahoma Athletic Booster Club will meet each Monday at 7 p.m. in Coach Alan Nichols' classroom through the football season. The meetings after football season will take place only when needed.

For more information, contact Donna Wright at 267-6723.

Quarterback club sets remaining weekly meetings

The Big Spring football booster club (quarterback club) will meet every Monday at 7 p.m. at the ATC through the football season.

For more information, contact Gene Piercefield at 816-1134.

Big Spring starts junior tennis league

Big Spring tennis pro Ted Olesen has announced the start of a junior tennis league.

League play will take place every Monday for the next six weeks at the Figure 7 Tennis Center in Comanche Trail Park and will last from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The league is for children in grades four through six (ages 8-12).

Participants should bring a racket. Provided rackets will be limited.

For more information, contact Olesen at 806-236-8901 or visit bigspringtennis.com.

YMCA sets final skateboard contest

The Big Spring YMCA has announced the final skateboard contest of 2005 will take place Saturday at the YMCA Skate Park.

The contest is scheduled to begin at noon. Participants can enter one of two age groups — 15 and under or 16 and over.

The registration fee is \$15 and awards will be presented to the top two finishers in each age group.

Interested skaters can register at the YMCA. For more information, call the YMCA at 267-8234.

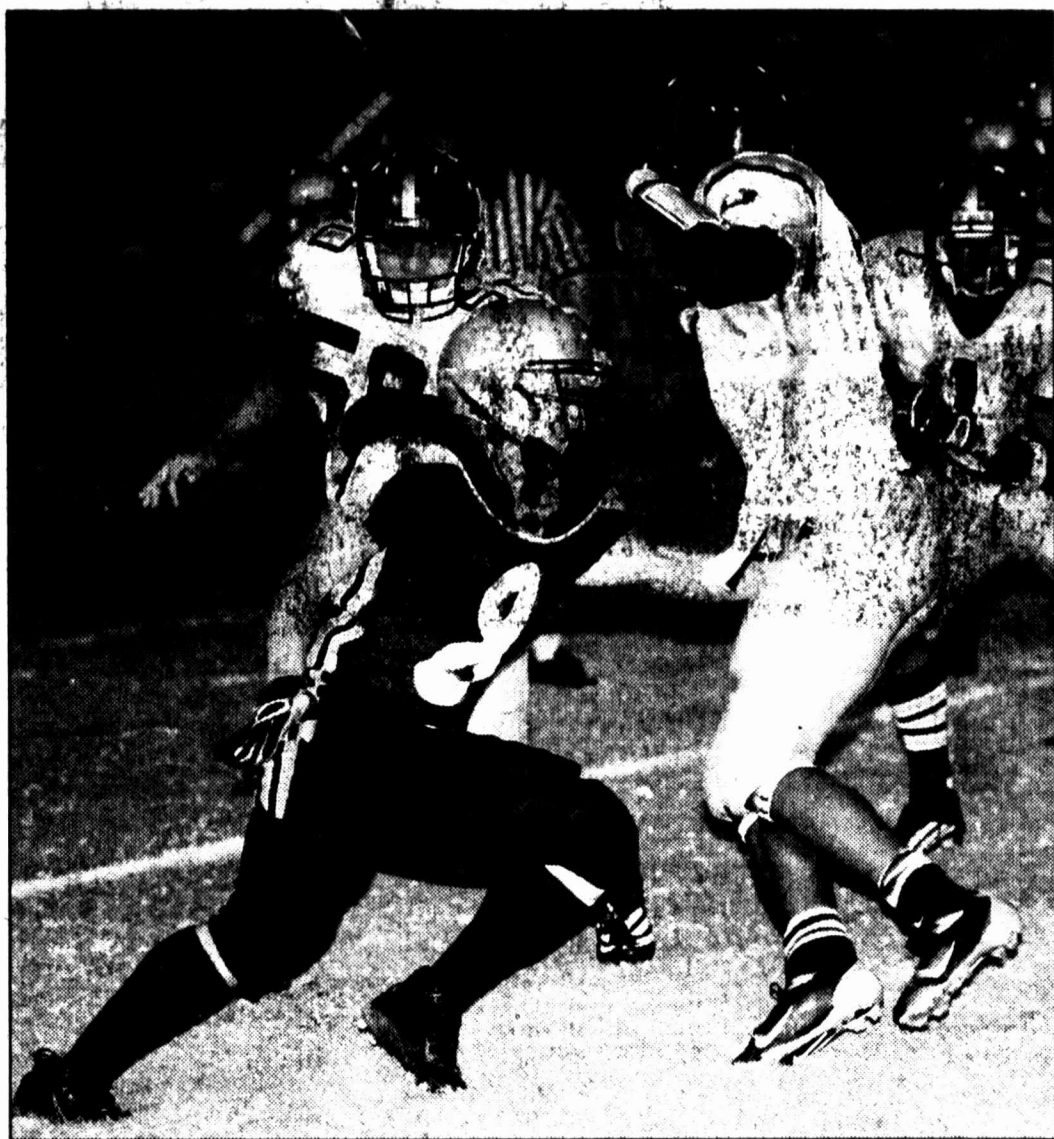
Midland Rotary Club sets golf tourney

The Midland Daybreak Rotary Club has announced its second annual golf tournament.

The tournament will take place Monday and will start at 1 p.m. at the Green Tree Country Club. The entry deadline is Wednesday. The tourney is limited to 32 teams with four people to a team.

The proceeds will benefit local youth scholarships to college, Rotary Diabetes Camp and Rotary Youth Leadership Camp.

Gift certificates to the Green Tree Country Club will also be awarded to the top three teams.



Big Spring's Zac Chesworth tries to get into position to make the tackle against Lubbock High's Marshaun Moses Sept. 16. The Steers travel to San Angelo Friday to take on Central at Bobcat Stadium. Both teams are looking for their first win of the season.

Big Spring remains upbeat after tough start to season

• Steers hope to get over hump with win against 5A Central

By TROY HYDE
Sports Editor

There is still optimism around Big Spring about the school's varsity football team despite the Steers' 0-4 start.

Big Spring has played well enough to win in three out of its first four games and first-year head coach Tim Holt said the team is coming together at the right time as the District 4-4A season nears.

"I think the kids have played pretty well considering the situation they have been put in with the new coaching staff and not having as much time to prepare for games early on as other teams," said Holt. "They will continue to get better and I think they are starting to peak at the right time. We have a reason to be upbeat. Our goal the whole time has been to get the kids ready to go by district and they are getting there."

The reason to be upbeat lies within the district as only Frenship and Plainview have recorded wins this year. The other four teams are winless and most likely battling for the third and final playoff spot.

Before the district season begins, however, the Steers have one more challenge as they come off their bye week.

Big Spring and San

Angelo Central will meet at Bobcat Stadium in San Angelo and something has to give as both teams are 0-4 this year.

The Bobcats have lost to Midland High 41-21, Abilene High 48-7, Abilene Cooper 30-17 and they lost to Odessa High, 14-3, last week.

"Central is better than what they have shown," said Holt. "They have hurt themselves really. They are big, physical and will play hard."

The Steers could be 3-1 this year as the only team that beat them soundly was Odessa Permian in Week 1. Big Spring led Odessa High before losing 28-21, scored late against Hereford to take the lead only to lose on an 80-yard bomb and then lost to Lubbock High 27-26 in its last game.

"We have a good football team here and I think we can blossom late and make some noise in the district and possibly the playoffs," said Holt.

Holt said the key on defense will be to tackle well and to be able to handle the Bobcats up front. Offensively, the Steers need to be patient and take what is given to them.

Central got some good news Tuesday when Cole Williams decided he was ready to return to the field.

Williams has been the team's starting quarterback for the past two years, but dislocated a bone in his throwing

hand against Midland and has missed most of this year.

Although Williams is returning to the lineup, the Bobcats should still run more than they pass with tailback Chebur Dobbins, who has compiled 460 yards this year and has a 5.1 yard per carry average.

The Bobcats' other offensive threat is Justin Galles, who is the team's leading receiver with six catches for 157 yards. He returns to the lineup this week after spraining an ankle against Abilene Cooper earlier in the year.

The Bobcats will run a 50 base formation on defense. They are led by free safety Blake McCarthy and four senior linebackers. McCarthy is the team's leading tackler with 38 and he also has an interception return for a touchdown.

Take away the two long touchdowns from Odessa High last week and the Central defense gave up just 90 yards.

The last three meetings against these two teams have been extremely close.

Big Spring won 28-27 in 2002, but Central has won the last two meetings, winning 13-7 in 2003 and 17-16 last year in overtime.

Big Spring's Johnny Williams, the team's fastest player, has been practicing throughout the off week and should return to the lineup for the Steers Friday.

Garden City gets ready for prolific Six-man rusher

• Midland Trinity invades Bearkats for homecoming

By TROY HYDE

Sports Editor

The best six-man matchup in the area could take place in Garden City Friday night as the 11th ranked Bearkats host undefeated Midland Trinity for homecoming at Bearkat Stadium at 7:30 p.m.

Midland Trinity, which is ranked No. 4 in the state among private schools, will look to run the ball with the state's leading rusher Matt Roam and Chris Compton.

Roam already has ran for more than 1,000 yards this season and got around 240 last week against Garden City's district rival Water Valley. Midland Trinity also defeated Water Valley 51-32. Roam led the state in rushing yards last year with more than 2,000, but was held under 100 against Garden City.

"Matt and Chris will get the ball 90 percent of the time I would say," said Garden City head coach Ken Hoskins. "I would guess they will try to run the ball against us and keep the clock moving. We need to limit their big plays and contain their two runners."

Midland Trinity's quarterback is sophomore left-hander Preston Midkiff.

"He'll check off at the line a lot of times and must do it well because they are 5-0," said Hoskins. "We need to make sure our defense is in the right position because they can put points on the board if we aren't."

Midland Trinity runs a

3-2 on defense. They have given up a lot of yards, but they make plays when they have to, said Hoskins.

"We must take care of the ball Friday against their defense," said Hoskins, whose Bearkats have had six turnovers in four games this year with five coming in one game against Grandfalls-Royalty. "We also need to score when we have the opportunity."

Hoskins doesn't anticipate any problems that may come with homecoming. The Bearkats took care of their bonfire and other activities early in the week and should be focused for the game Friday, he said.

"We have been pretty focused this week," said Hoskins. "It should be a pretty exciting game and we are expecting the game to have a lot of fans on both sides of the field."

Garden City defeated Midland Trinity last year in Midland 53-8 as the game was ended in the fourth quarter. Trinity was 5-0 at that point, too.

"We need to keep the momentum going," said Hoskins. "We must first worry about Midland Trinity and then we will start thinking ahead to district play next week." "The Bearkats' depth was a hit last Friday as junior all-region wide receiver Taylor Niehues went down with an injury in the first half. His condition is not good as he will miss the rest of the season with two broken bones in his forearm.

"Anytime you lose an all-region receiver it is going to concern us," said Hoskins. "However, it is part of football and we'll have to shuffle guys around and move on."

Taking Niehues' place on offense will be junior Colton Schwartz during spread formations. Junior Alex Halfmann will start at safety.

Friday Night's Area Lineup

Big Spring @ San Angelo Central, 7:30 p.m.
*Midland Trinity @ Garden City, 7:30 p.m.
*Sterling City @ Forsan, 7:30 p.m.
Coahoma — does not play
Stanton — does not play
Grady — does not play
Sands — does not play
*denotes homecoming

Comanche Trail Ladies Golf Association Club Championship Tournament results

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1. (tie) Joan Daniel — 82, first low gross
3. Annie Ward — 70, first low net

First Flight
1. Patsy Sharpnack — 62, first low net

Second Flight
1. Ramona Harris — 71, first low net

The Hunt for Major League Baseball's October

AL East

The New York Yankees have a one-game lead on the Boston Red Sox with four games to go. The Yankees finish their series with Baltimore tonight, while Boston ends a three-game set with Toronto.

The Red Sox and Yankees clash at Fenway Park over the weekend for three games to decide the division.

AL Central

The Chicago White Sox have a three-game lead on the Cleveland Indians with four games to go. The White Sox finish their series with Detroit and the Indians play host to Tampa Bay Thursday. The White Sox travel to Cleveland for a weekend series against the Indians to decide the Central. The White Sox need two wins in their final four games to clinch the division.

NL/AL West

The Anaheim Angels have clinched the AL West and the San Diego Padres have won the NL West. All other teams from these divisions have been eliminated from postseason play.

NL Central/East

The St. Louis Cardinals have won the NL Central and the Atlanta Braves clinched its 14th straight NL East title Tuesday.

AL/NL Wild Cards

• The Boston Red Sox and Cleveland Indians were both tied for the wild card lead as of Wednesday night. Boston trails New York by one game, while Cleveland still has hope in the Central as it only trails the White Sox by three games. Both teams have big three-game sets with their division rivals this weekend.

• The Houston Astros continue to take care of its own business by beating the St. Louis Cardinals the last two nights. They are currently 2.5 games up on the Philadelphia Phillies for the final playoff spot in the National League. The Astros end the season with four games against the Chicago Cubs starting tonight, while the Phillies travel to Washington Friday for three games against the Nationals. Houston needs two wins against Chicago to clinch the wild card.

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BACKYARD SALE: 812 West 18th Street, Friday & Saturday 8:00am-5:00pm. Lots of new items, house-ware and a few antiques.

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CITY OF Big Spring is taking applications for Customer Service Supervisor/Water Office. Applications may be obtained at City Hall, 310 Nolan (432)264-2346. The City of Big Spring is EOE.

CLINE CONSTRUCTION is now accepting applications for the following: CDL Dump Truck Drivers, General Laborers, experience with Loader-Backhoe and Grader, Lineman and Pole Truck Operators. Drug test and drivers license required. Call (432)267-6006.

DISTRICT MANAGER for West Texas. Richeson Companies, stable 33-year multi-unit Dairy Queen group, seeks qualified district manager for 8-store group, ability to travel a requirement, 55-60 hour work week includes weekends. Must have restaurant management, prefer DQ. Relocation a must. References, background check and drug test required. Salary plus bonuses. Phone, Amy Moore 800-346-7472.

DRIVERS BE HOME DAILY. Coastal Transport is a leader in transport of LPG Asphalt & Petroleum Products. Coastal serves high profile accounts & needs dedicated professionals to join our growing team in Big Spring. Qualify 23 with class A & One year driving experience. Inquire about Sign-on Bonus. **Call Jay at 888-527-7221.**

EXPERIENCE TRUCK mechanic needed to work on Cummins & Caterpillar engines. Salary DOE, health insurance, 401K plan. Apply at Price Construction, 2701 N. Hwy 350, Big Spring, TX 79720 or fax resume to (432)263-6012. EOE.

EXPERIENCED LEAD Guitarist needed for local Texas country band. Practice one night a week required. Serious performers only. Call (432)264-9726, 270-0644.

JOB OPPORTUNITY
MIXER DRIVERS WITH 6 MONTHS EXPERIENCE
START AT \$10.25 NEW MIXER DRIVERS START AT \$9.75 AND INCREASE TO \$10.25 AFTER 6 MONTHS.
Ready Mix Drivers needed in Big Spring. Full time position with Transit Mix Concrete & Materials Co., a leader in the ready mix industry in Texas. Full benefits package and 35 hours guarantee. Must have good driving record and CDL license. Experience a plus. Apply at Transit Mix Concrete: 605 North Benton Street, Big Spring, Texas (432)267-6348. Transit Mix Concrete is an EOE/A employer.

LOOKING FOR (2) Part-time Personal Banker/Teller. Experienced preferred but not required. Apply at www.woodforest.com

PHARMACY TECHNICIAN Opening. Wal-Mart Pharmacy is currently looking for Certified Pharmacy Technician. Salary negotiable. Apply in person or call Kandy at (432)267-1585.

PROVIDERS NEEDED in the Big Spring area. Background check will be performed. Call Karime or Annabella, 432-570-4475 or 800-551-6451.

WELDERS & Flange Mechanics needed. Travel required. Home most weekends. Pay per denim. Welding test required. Drug screen required. Contact: Office 432-264-0590.

Help Wanted

SOLID COMPANY expanding! Our drivers average \$3500/month wages, plus paid travel, per diem, and lodging. Home one week every month! Medical and life insurance! Oil field work, not driving only! 2 years Class A CDL experience required. Good driving record. Call 1-800-588-2669.

THE MARTIN County Hospital District is seeking a Director of Nursing. Candidates must have 10 years experience in nursing, 5 years experience in management, experience in Critical Access and Trauma Care. Certification required TNCC and PALS. B.S.N. preferred but not required. Please contact Paul McKinney, CEO at 610 N. Saint Peter, Stanton, Texas or (432)756-3345, ext. 225.

Wanted a night Female Detention worker on a needed basis. Must be 21 years old, High School Diploma or GED, No criminal record. Apply in person at Howard County Juvenile Probation Office 315 S. Main Suite C.. Please bring Drivers License, and Social Security Card. Only those interested in working night shift need to apply.

Warehouse & Yard Assistant Maintain drip irrigation inventory and physical plant. Functions include load/unload delivery trucks, labeling/stocking inventory, assisting customers, yard maintenance, forklift operation. Ability to lift heavy items, travel within West Texas area. Possess and maintain valid Texas Driver License. Irrigation, farming, mechanical or computer experience a plus, but will train. Opportunity for growth.

Send Resume to:
Eco-Drip Irrigation, P.O. Box 126, Garden City, 79739
-OR-
Apply in person at Eco-Drip Irrigation

Approximately 4 miles east of Garden City on Hwy 158. Call for more info. 432-354-2339.

WAREHOUSE/ DELIVERY
Wanted for local Rental Store. Benefits include paid vacation, retirement & health insurance. Requirements are background check, drug screening, good driving record and be at least 21 years old. Apply in person, Credit World, 1611 Gregg.

Instructional

PIANO & VOICE LESSONS
Beginners through Advance. Years of teaching experience. 2607 Rebecca. Call (432)263-3367.

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LOST- GERMAN short haired female. Vicinity of Buffalo Fina and South 87. Reward! Call (432)263-7478.

Miscellaneous

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1111 EAST 13TH. 2 bedroom, 1 bath. Call (432)267-3841 or 517-0642.

1215 RIDGEROAD 2 bedroom, 1 bath. \$300. monthly, \$150. deposit. **604 GOLIAD**, 2 bedroom, 1 bath. \$300. monthly, \$150. deposit. Call (432)263-1792, 816-9984.

1313 OIL Mill Road. 3 Bedroom with apartment in rear, CH/A, fenced yard. \$600.00 Month, \$500.00 No pets. Call (432)267-5759.

2 BEDROOM, 1 Bath cute older, renovated home. Corner lot. \$450.00 Monthly. (432)816-9881.

2110 NOLAN. 2 Bedroom, 1 bath, carport. No indoor pets. \$275.00 month, \$125.00 deposit. Call (432)267-5464 leave message.

2401 CHEYENNE. Large 2 bedroom, 1 bath, 2 living areas. Central air and heat. Nice neighborhood. \$500. Month, \$300. deposit. Call (432)270-3848 for more information.

Real Estate for Rent

2604 ENT. 3 Bedroom 2 bath. References. \$400. month, \$250. deposit. HUD accepted. Call (432)267-7449.

408 West 5th. Furnished efficiency apt. Bills paid, \$335/mo., \$150/dep. Sorry, no pets. (432)263-4922.

4220 HAMILTON. 4 bedroom, 1-1/2 bath, fenced yard, ceramic tile. No indoor pets. \$550. month, \$400. security deposit. One year lease required. (432)263-6514. Owner/Broker.

602 LINDA LANE: 3 bedroom, 1 bath. Central Heat/Air, washer and dryer connections. Fenced yard. No Hud. \$460. monthly, \$395. deposit. Call (432)263-8005 or 816-1330.

620 STATE 3 bedroom, 1 bath. 1308 Baylor 3 bedroom, 1 bath. New carpet and tile. \$550. Month, \$300. deposit. Call (432)270-3848 for more information.

628 CAYLOR. Three Bedroom, one bath. \$250. month, \$150. deposit. Call (432)267-5386.

807 ANNA- 2 bdrm- \$300.00. 502 Goliad- 1 bdrm Duplex- \$225.00. Also 505 Goliad- 2 bdrm- \$245.00. Call Moren (432)267-7380.

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Big Spring, Tx. 79720
(432)267-6500

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Beautiful 4 bdrm, 4 bath, 2 fireplaces, guest home, 4 car garage. 5570 FM 2319. Minutes from Colorado City. \$197,000. Call Tammy or Lana at Coldwell Banker EPR (432)270-5570, 264-8166.

FOR SALE: 3000 sq. ft. metal building, 1617 East 3rd. Street on approx. 2 ac. Possible owner finance on good terms. Call (432)263-8106.

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Vehicles

DEALS OF THE MONTH

7 New 2004 Models
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500 W. 4th 267-7121

1996 LINCOLN Town Car (Maroon). Very good condition \$5,950.00. Also 1991 Ford T-Bird, will sell for parts. \$500.00 OBO. 1301 East 4th. Call Bill (432)213-0426.

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All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1988 which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin, or an intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination."

This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis.

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS
Mercury and Neptune conspire to strengthen the voice of your intuition. Muses are also graced with vocal amplification. So whether you tune in or tune out, the universe is trying to tell you something, and the message blasts clear as a bell. The Leo moon favors outrageously big-hearted acts — the bigger the gesture, the better received it will be.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Habits change. The improvements are small but meaningful. You're like the squirrels, putting away a few "nuts" for the winter. While you're at it, stash away a few pleasant thoughts about all that's occurred this month.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You're working so hard today that you could lose yourself entirely. Who are you? You're no longer a person but a machine. You'll get back some of your human qualities tonight, especially if you spend time with a Virgo or a Libra.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). The No. 1 way to blow a relationship is to assume someone is meant to be yours and yours alone. Reserve a sense of wonder about your sweetheart, even if you've been together for many years.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You're a love magnet. You know better than to test a partner with your worst behavior. When you need to, you can lay on the charm and lay it on thick. There is no shortage of admirers around you.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). It's one of those days when you feel like you're in the eye of a hurricane. You wake up and wonder, "How did I get here?" and everything you do is that much more vivid because it's so unfamiliar.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). When you tell a joke to a group of people and only one of them laughs, hone in on that one and don't let go. People who get you are of a more intelligent strain and should not be wasted. Comedy is in the mind of the beholder.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Wow. This is it. You have a few things going on in your life that you love and a few more that you're working toward. You might even say that you're happy. It only gets better if you share it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your signmate Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, claims that he

didn't set out to achieve any kind of wealth or influence. Your recent interesting endeavor has the potential to blow up and take over your life.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You're not completely innocent when it comes to relationships. Hearts have been broken, expectations dashed ... but hey, if you can't take the heat, get out of the fire, right? Defending your position is part of the deal today.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Some people just aren't comfortable unless they are hiding a bunch of emotional stuff under their dry, sarcastic humor. You may relate to these folks very well now. You may, in fact, be one of them.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You feel daring, enthusiastic and spontaneous (after you've had your morning coffee). A conversation with the funniest person you know is in order. Someone tattles on you tonight.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Whether your helplessness is an act or not, people like to take care of you now. Sit back, and let them. Giving is its own gift. Questions of style arise, and you won't go wrong by being completely understated.

ASTROLOGICAL QUESTIONS: "I was born Nov. 20, 1952 at 2:15 a.m. in Hammond, Ind. I have always felt like I am a day late and a dollar short, in the wrong place at the wrong time. Am I destined to spend this lifetime learning?"

Um ... yeah! Aren't we all? But with Saturn conjunct Neptune in your first house (self image, personality), I can see why you are particularly hard hit by life's lessons.

This aspect implies that you always feel you are in debt, either monetarily or karmically. Because you're so busy trying to make up for your supposed shortcomings and slights, it's hard for you to feel in the moment. But of course, that's where life's sweetness lies. Furthermore, you've never experienced learning as something fun. What to do? What every Scorpio is best at ... transforming! 1. Forgive yourself. Don't you think you've suffered enough? Wipe your debt clean. The past is over. 2. Learn to meditate. There are countless books on the subject. You need to learn to get back to the now moment. 3. Turn your life into a celebration. You have forgotten to celebrate for many years now, and there's much to make up for. I'm imagining you in revelry right now!

CELEBRITY PRO-

FILES: Theater, television and film all encapsulate the over 20-year career of handsome Eric Stoltz. Libran idealism will push his career in a more hands-on path. He's dabbled lightly in directing for television, and this year, we can expect an attempt at directing and starring in a self-produced feature film. Libran natives are natural directors — they expertly charm others into seeing their very specific vision.

If you would like to write to Holiday Mathis, please go to www.creators.com and click on "Write the Author" on the Holiday Mathis page, or you may send her a postcard in the mail. To find out more about Holiday Mathis and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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Annie's Mailbox

Dear Annie: My daughter just learned that a registered sex offender is living next door to her and her family. She has a young son and daughter. We also have a pre-teen granddaughter living a block away. This offender has served a long prison sentence on multiple charges, at least one of which involved a minor.

This is extremely distressing to all of us. My daughter's kids are prisoners in their home. She can't let the children play in the fenced backyard unless an adult is out there with them all of the time. She can't even sell their house. The law requires full disclosure, so the sellers can't keep it a secret. Who will want to buy it?

Everything we have read on the subject indicates that sex offenders can't change. What can be done? Aren't there supervised living facilities for these people? We know they have rights, too, but what about the rights of the greater majority?

Could your experts give us advice? — Not Living in Peace in Tallahassee, Fla.

Dear Tallahassee: Even sex offenders get to have a home in a nice neighborhood. In fact, it is only in recent years that the community has been entitled to know about it.

According to the Polly Klaas Foundation, your daughter's family will have to be vigilant. Their Child Safety Kit will help (available at www.pollyklaas.org), but they also recommend a good physical skills training program such as radKIDS (www.radKIDS.org), which teaches kids how to spot the danger signals and how to escape if necessary. The family also can ask the police to come to their home and talk about general home security.

By the way, the Foundation also says it's a myth that all sex offenders always re-offend. It is the sexually violent predators who have the high recidivism rates.

Dear Annie: I suffered a stroke two years ago, and one of the many side effects is that I tire easily and am unable to walk more than a few feet. I've noticed in the women's public restrooms that the handicapped stall is always the farthest from the entrance. This means I not only must walk a greater distance, but I must also pass the opening and closing doors of the other stalls and risk being knocked into. Is there a logical reason for this placement? — Seated in the Back



KATHY MITCHELL
MARCY SUGAR

Dear Seated: Our personal "Bob the Builder" says the reason for this inconvenient placement is floor space. The radius needed to maneuver a wheelchair makes it difficult to put the stall anywhere other than in a corner of the restroom. The entry corner would block the other stalls, which means the back corner is the only option. In spacious restrooms, the handicapped stalls can be closer to the front.

Dear Annie: This is in response to "Just Wondering," who said two coworkers have been seen arriving at work together and being overly friendly. Why does everyone assume that because two members of the opposite sex spend time together that they are having an affair?

I am a married male and have had many business lunches with the same female coworker. I've heard the whispers about our "torrid affair," and it cracks me up. My wife is aware of these lunch dates and has no problem with them. Tell "Just Wondering" to mind her own business. — Miffed Manager in Michigan

Dear Miffed: "Just Wondering" knows it's none of her business, and she isn't looking to gossip. She was concerned that one of those coworkers could lose a job if the extremely flirtatious behavior signified an affair. But thanks for letting us know that where there's smoke, there doesn't have to be a fire. Sometimes it's just the neighbors having a barbecue.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to annie@mailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, P.O. Box 118190, Chicago, IL 60611. To find out more about Annie's Mailbox, and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com. © 2005 CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

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	Dallas	Midland	Spanish	Odessa	Odessa	Telamundo	Midland	Atlanta	Odessa	Odessa	Discovery	Classics	Spike TV	Atlanta	Black Ent.	Disney	ESPN2	ESPN	Sci-Fi
6	News (CC)	News Wheel-Fortune	Inocente de Ti	My Wife-Kids	News	La Tormenta	News	Raymond	Joe McGee	News-Latino	Dangerous		CSI: Crime	Law & Order	Live	That's Raven	With Smith	College	Movie: Ex
7	Ent. Tonight	Ent. Tonight	Contra Viento	The O.C.	Survivor: Gua-	El Cuerpo del	Joey (CC)	Friends (CC)	Update/Israel	New This Old	To Be	Movie: Above	CSI: Crime	Movie: U.S.	The Parkers	Movie: The	Streetball	Football	(CC)
8	News (CC)	News (CC)	La Esposa	Reunion	CSI: Crime	Los Plateados	Friends (CC)	Friends (CC)	Light of the	The Settles:	Gang Tribal		Movie: The	Movie: The	Girlfriends	Girlfriends	Streetball	Air Force at	Movie: Path
9	Primetime	Primetime	Noticias	My Wife-Kids	Without a	Decisions	ER (CC)	Movie:	Shaped a	The Years	Dirty Jobs	Movie: The	Saga	Movie: U.S.	Classic	Buzz-Maggie	Baseball	SportsCenter	
10	News (CC)	News (CC)	Noticias	70s Show	News	Noticias	News	Movie:	The Hour of	Charlie Rose	Catching Bank		The Ultimate	Marshall	Soul Food	That's Raven	Baseball	(CC)	Surface (CC)
11	Ent. Tonight	Jimmy Kimmel	La Hora	Becker (CC)	Letterman	Laura	Late Night:	10 Movie:	Del Sanchez	To Be	Kickboxer	15 Movie:	CSI: Crime		BET After Dark	Phil of Future	ESPN Holly	Baseball	The Outer
12	Live (CC)	Extra (CC)	Amigas y	Becker (CC)	Show	Maria Celeste	Conan O'Brien	Update/Israel	Jesse Lee Pe	Gang Tribal			Real TV	Movie: Dead	Classic	Lizzie McGuire	Bound for	SportsCenter	Inside: Serenity
	News (CC)	Mercury Media	Rivales (SS)	King of the Hill	The Insider	The Insider	Sanfield (CC)	Faye Hardin					Blind Date	Presidents	ComicView	Proud Family	Glory	(CC)	Twilight Zone

DENNIS THE MENACE



"No cows in this neighborhood, Ruff. I guess we'll hafta round up cats."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



"... unless they're in casinos."

HAGAR



BLONDIE



This Date
In History

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 29, 1978, Pope John Paul I was found dead in his Vatican apartment just over a month after becoming head of the Roman Catholic Church.

On this date:

In 1789, the U.S. War Department established a regular army with a strength of several hundred men.

In 1829, London's reorganized police force, which became known as Scotland Yard, went on duty.

In 1918, Allied forces scored a decisive breakthrough of the Hindenburg Line during World War I.

In 1943, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Italian Marshal Pietro Badoglio signed an armistice aboard the British ship Nelson off Malta.

In 1955, a one-act version of the Arthur Miller play "A View From the Bridge" opened in New York. (Miller later turned it into a two-act

play.)

In 1963, the second session of Second Vatican Council opened in Rome.

In 1979, Pope John Paul II became the first pope to visit Ireland as he arrived for a three-day tour.

In 1982, seven people in the Chicago area died after unwittingly taking Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules laced with cyanide.

In 1988, the space shuttle Discovery blasted off from Cape Canaveral, Fla., marking America's return to manned space flight following the Challenger disaster.

In 1994, the House voted to end the age-old practice of lobbyists buying meals and entertainment for members of Congress.

Today's Birthdays: Movie director Michelangelo Antonioni is 93. Actress Elizabeth Scott is 83. Actor Steve Forrest is 81. Actress Anita Ekberg is 74. Actor Eddie Barth is 74. Singer Jerry Lee Lewis is 70. Actor Ian McShane is 63. Jazz musician Jean-Luc Ponty is 63. Lech Walesa, the former president of Poland, is 62. Television-film composer Mike Post is 61. Actress Patricia Hodge is 59. TV per-

sonality Bryant Gumbel is 57. Rock singer-musician Mark Farner is 57. Rock musician Mike Pinera is 57. Actor Drake Hogestyn is 52. Singer Suzzy Roche (The Roches) is 49. Singer-musician Les Claypool is 42. Actress Jill Whelan is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Devante Swing (Jodeci) is 36. Actress Emily Lloyd is 35. Country musician Danick Dupelle (Emerson Drive) is 32. Country singer Katie McNeill (3 of Hearts) is 23.

Thought for Today: "If you want work well done, select a busy man... the other kind has not time." Elbert Hubbard, American author and publisher (1856-1915).

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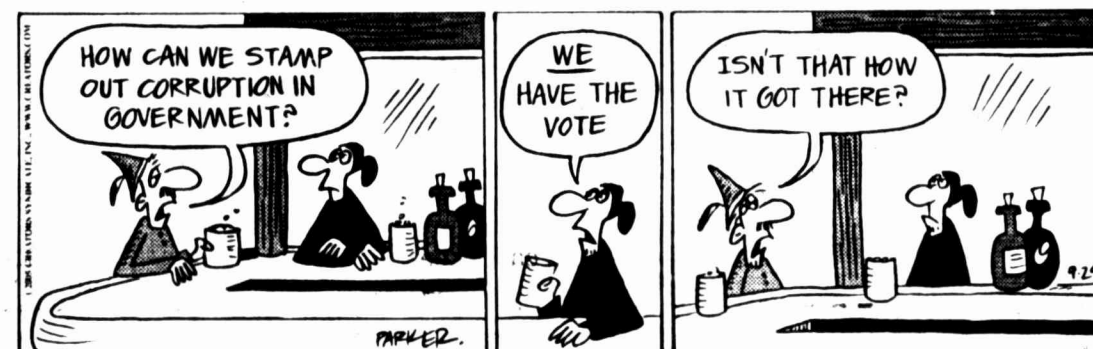
Answer to previous puzzle

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AVE ALIST ECONO
TEM RENTA BANTU
CROMAGNONMAN
ASTIN CAB BUM
TEEN BORER MAKE
ADOBE XRAYED
CROWDIANS
ATHEEL DUSTY
ROOT EPSOM EBBS
POW BRA AARON
RUSSELLCROWE
SHRUG TRIER WOE
AMONG ATONE SUR
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WIZARD OF ID



AGNES



HI AND LOIS



THE OTHER COAST



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BEEBLE BAILEY



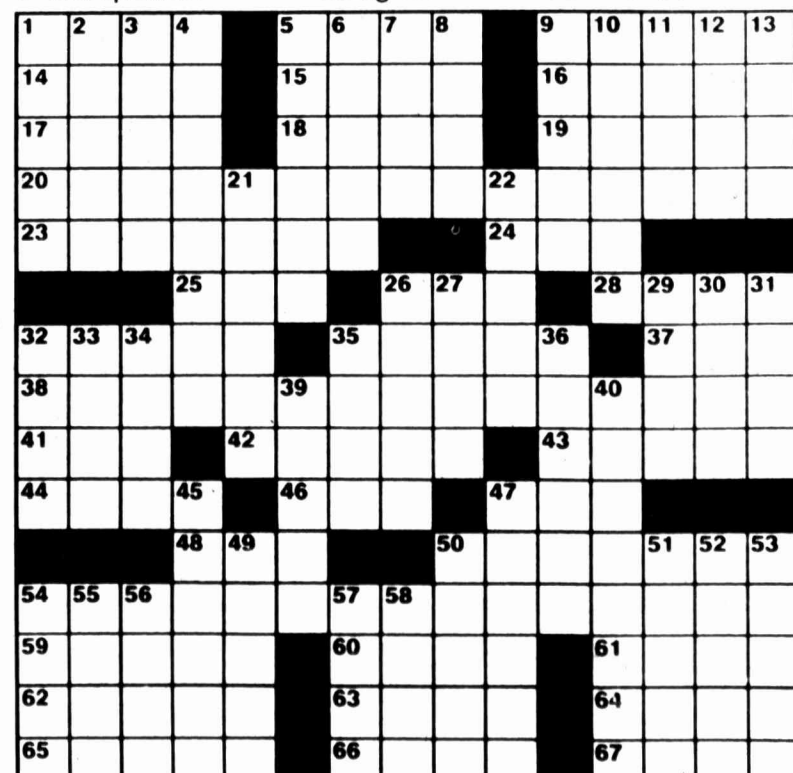
Newsday Crossword

BY DEGREES by Doug Peterson

Edited by Stanley Newman

www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS**
- 1 Shredded side dish
5 Actress Penélope
9 Brook dweller
14 Simpson sibling
15 Gardener's coil
16 Zing
17 European peaks
18 All tucked in
19 To a great degree
20 Cornflower
23 Miss (Clue suspect)
24 Novelist Harper
25 Frequently, in verse
26 Ft. Worth school
28 Bit of rain
32 Translator's obstacle
35 Butterfield 8 author
37 Lateral lead-in
38 Painting used to promote gramophones
41 Popular ISP
42 Dapper
43 Dogpatch name
44 Lacking color
46 Feathery scarf
47 Martians, e.g.
48 Durocher of baseball
50 Bison habitat
54 How prescriptions are taken
- DOWN**
- 1 Hefty slices
2 Pastel shade
3 Animal lovers' org.
4 Spot with sinks
5 Swiss home
6 Sci-fi machine
7 Manipulator
8 Canadian finales
9 Brimless hat
10 Beat handily
11 Leave out
12 As far as
13 Not now
21 Dharma & Greg star
22 Fuzzy images
26 Greek letter
27 Roger in North by Northwest
29 Botch
30 First word of "The Raven"
31 Spot for docking
32 "If a Hammer"
33 "New Look" designer
34 Cuba, to Carlos
35 Grid great Graham
36 Incarnation
39 Clunky shoe
40 Arrowhead material
45 Woman's top
47 Whittles away
49 Brilliance
50 Sacred song
51 Back in vogue
52 Tabriz resident
53 Organic compound
54 Cold capital
55 Gas in a sign
56 Finishes a "J"
57 City near Santa Barbara
58 Filches



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That's Racin'

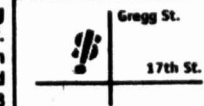
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THIS WEEK'S RACE

UAW-FORD 500

Where: Talladega Superspeedway, a 2.66-mile highly banked paved tri-oval located in Talladega, Ala.

When: Sunday at 1:30 p.m. (all times ET).
Qualifying is: 4:10 p.m. Friday.
TV: NBC.**Radio:** Motor Racing Network.**Purse:** \$4,975,638.**Last year's winner:** Dale Earnhardt Jr.
Worth mentioning: Jeremy Mayfield has won three poles at Talladega. All three came with different team owners: Cale Yarborough (July 1996), Roger Penske (April 2000) and Ray Evernham (April 2003).

A Chevrolet has won the last 13 races at Talladega. Ford has not posted a Talladega victory since Dale Jarrett won the Winston 500 (October 1998). Dodge last won there with Dave Marcis in the Talladega 500 (August 1976).

POLL POSITION

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

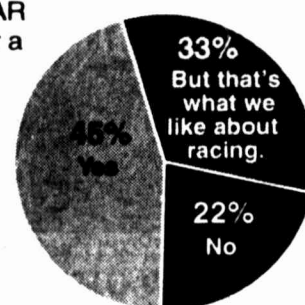
Jeff Gordon needs one restrictor plate victory to tie Dale Earnhardt for the most all-time. Will he get it this weekend?

Cast your vote at:

www.thatstracin.com

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

Should NASCAR park drivers for a race after they're involved in on-track altercations like those at New Hampshire?



STOP 'N' GO

WHO'S HOT

Ryan Newman is the only driver to finish in the top five in the first two races of the Chase for the Nextel Cup.

Kevin Harvick has climbed from 16th to 12th in points over the last four races.

Rusty Wallace (second in points) is at his highest points position since he ranked first after Race No. 2 at Rockingham in February 2001.

Mark Martin has four straight top-15 finishes.

WHO'S NOT

Greg Biffle ended a 26-race streak of ranking among the top five in the points standings since California in February. He dropped to sixth in points after last weekend's race at Dover, Del.

Dale Jarrett has finished 14th or worse in his last 11 races.

Jeff Gordon ranked first in points at this point one year ago. This year he is 14th.

— Jim Utter

BY THE NUMBERS

NEXTEL CUP POINTS LEADERS

The top-40 drivers as of Sept. 25:

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1. Jimmie Johnson	5362	21. Kasey Kahne	2878
2. Rusty Wallace	5355	22. Michael Waltrip	2864
3. Ryan Newman	5350	23. Ricky Rudd	2746
4. Mark Martin	5341	24. Bobby Labonte	2672
5. Tony Stewart	5339	25. Casey Mears	2667
6. Greg Biffle	5339	26. Jeff Green	2546
7. Jeremy Mayfield	5281	27. Mike Bliss	2541
8. Carl Edwards	5259	28. Kyle Petty	2496
9. Matt Kenseth	5238	29. Sterling Marlin	2473
10. Kurt Busch	5192	30. Ken Schrader	2460
11. Elliott Sadler	3222	31. Scott Riggs	2459
12. Kevin Harvick	3182	32. Dave Blaney	2426
13. Jamie McMurray	3175	33. Scott Wimmer	2333
14. Jeff Gordon	3150	34. Travis Kvapil	2261
15. Dale Jarrett	3085	35. Mike Wallace	1948
16. Joe Nemechek	3079	36. Bobby Hamilton Jr.	1725
17. Dale Earnhardt Jr.	3069	37. Robby Gordon	1656
18. Brian Vickers	3032	38. Jason Leffler	1538
19. Kyle Busch	3000	39. Kevin Lepage	1128
20. Jeff Burton	2964	40. Terry Labonte	937

BUSCH SERIES POINTS LEADERS

The top-20 drivers as of Sept. 24:

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1. Martin Truex Jr.	4063	11. Greg Biffle	3120
2. Clint Bowyer	4037	12. Ashton Lewis	3062
3. Reed Sorenson	3805	13. J.J. Yeley	3009
4. Carl Edwards	3733	14. Johnny Sauter	2951
5. Denny Hamlin	3496	15. Stacy Compton	2793
6. Rusty Wallace	3483	16. Randy LaJoie	2704
7. Paul Menard	3330	17. Jon Wood	2703
8. David Stremme	3194	18. Justin Labonte	2648
9. David Green	3193	19. Kevin Harvick	2493
10. Jason Keller	3147	20. Stanton Barrett	2252

NEXT RACE: Oct. 8, United Way 300, Kansas City, Kan.

TRUCK SERIES POINTS LEADERS

The top-10 drivers as of Sept. 24:

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1. Dennis Setzer	2877	6. Jimmy Spencer	2593
2. Ted Musgrave	2872	7. Bobby Hamilton	2577
3. Ron Hornaday Jr.	2877	8. David Starr	2507
4. Mike Skinner	2827	9. David Reutimann	2493
5. Todd Bodine	2593	10. Matt Crafton	2483

NEXT RACE: Oct. 22, Kroger 200, Martinsville, Va.

DIVIDED THEY STAND

 BY DAVID POOLE
 Knight Ridder Newspapers

Funny, isn't it, how nobody seems worried about teammates Rusty Wallace and Ryan Newman "gang-ing up" on anybody in the Chase for the Nextel Cup.

With five Roush Racing-owned Fords in the Chase, there has been much discussion about the potential impact that "team orders" might have.

But Wallace and Newman are teammates, too. Both drive for Penske Racing South, and both are solidly in contention for this year's championship.

Going into Sunday's UAW-Ford 500 at Talladega Superspeedway, Wallace is in second, just seven points behind leader Jimmie Johnson, and Newman is just five points behind Wallace.

The reason nobody's talking about Wallace and Newman combining their efforts in some way, of course, is that they've been openly feuding since a bumping incident between their two Dodges nearly a year ago at Martinsville Speedway.

"It's pretty much the same," Wallace said of his relationship with Newman. "We talk occasionally now. It is what it is. I'm tired of beating myself up over it. So I'm just doing my deal. I'm driving as hard as I can."

"I don't have anything against (Newman's) team except they just don't do things the same way I do it. I'm afraid it's going to be that way, because when I retire, then he can move on to the new partner. Maybe those two can get along. But right now I think it's a lost cause for me."

With this being Wallace's last full-time season in Nextel Cup, he's not spending a lot of time worrying about mending fences. He's trying to go out with a second career championship on his resume.

Newman, who'll have 2004 champion Kurt Busch as a teammate no later than 2007 and perhaps as soon as next year, got the Chase off to a grand start this year with a victory at New Hampshire. He added a fifth-place finish at Dover and goes into the weekend at Talladega trailing the points leader by the same number of points that he has on his car — 12.

Wallace finished sixth at New

Neither the Chase nor their lackluster records at Talladega will change the frosty relationship between teammates Rusty Wallace and Ryan Newman

Hampshire and third at Dover, continuing his remarkable streak of consistency this year. Although Wallace has yet to win a race, he's finished outside the top 15 only twice in the 19 races since the season's first visit to Talladega.

"In 1993, I won 10 races but winning all those races didn't win me a championship," Wallace said. "Dale Earnhardt still beat me by 60 points or something (80, actually). So I've done all that where I've won all the races and that still hasn't earned me the title."

"This championship race is always built on consistency. You've got to finish the race and get as much points as you can to get it done."

Now, would it sound better to be real consistent and have a win? Yeah it would, and that's what I'm trying to do. I'd love to have a win just to make it sound better. Do you have to do that? No, you don't have to do that.

"I'd like to win the last one. I'd like to go out a winner and a champion, too. It would be a great thing."

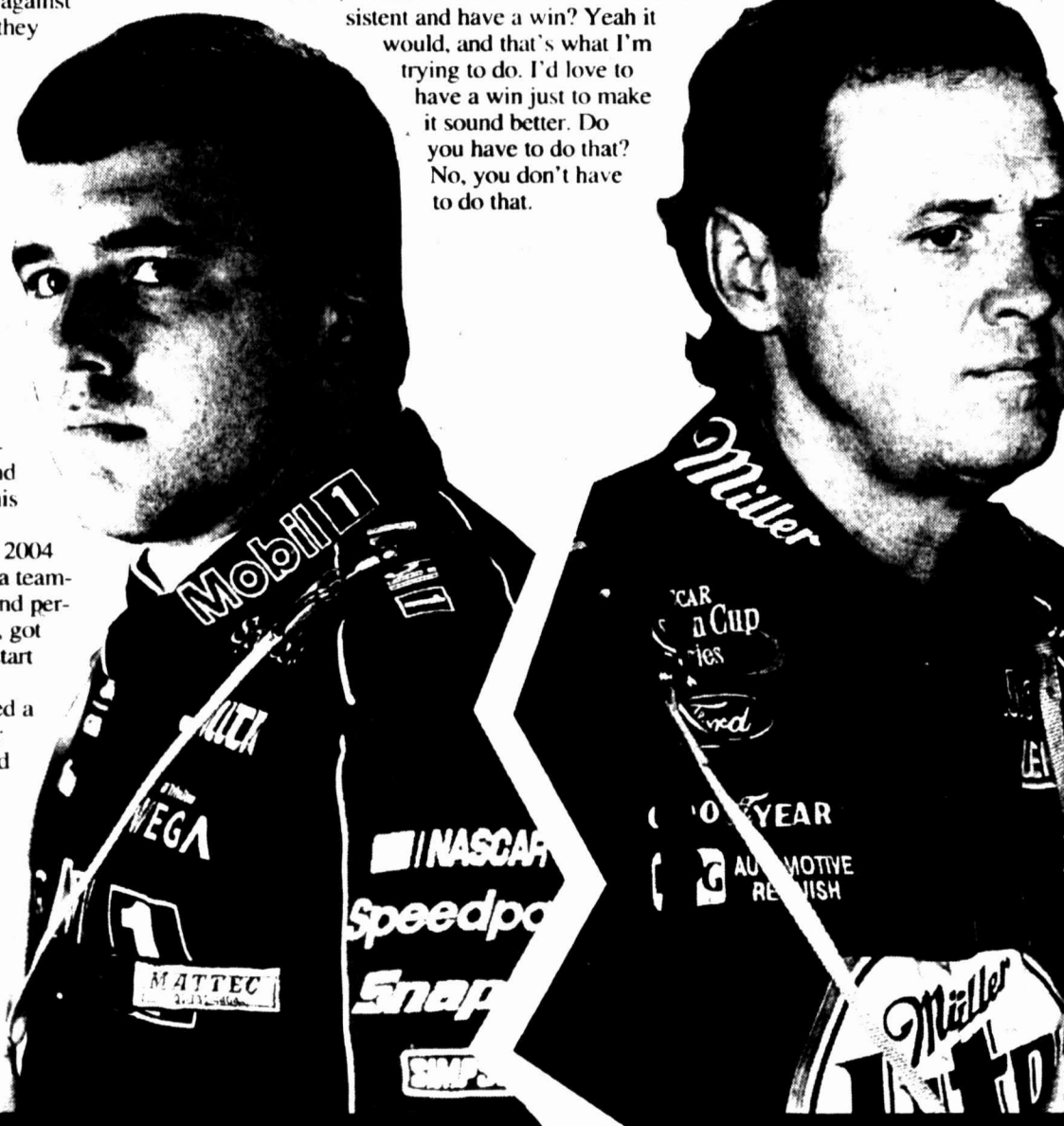
Wallace has never won at Talladega or at Daytona, the two tracks where carburetor restrictor plates are used. Neither has Newman, and between them Newman's fourth-place finish in the fall race in 2003 is the best career Talladega finish.

Newman made the Chase last year, but after getting wrecked at New Hampshire and winning at Dover, he finished 16th at Talladega and 33rd at Kansas, and he fell out of title contention. He's looking for a different pattern this year.

"There's no one thing that's happened to our team," said Newman, who like last year made it into the Chase by being in 10th place after the 26th race at Richmond. "We had some personnel changes back five or six weeks ago. We took the same racecar to Loudon as we did the previous race. So, there's no one thing other than a lot of effort and just pure performance to make the car go faster and us look better."

"There's nothing that stands out in my mind that says, 'Man, this is why we're running good.' It's not like we've found some trick right-front spring or something. There's nothing that stands out."

"We just try to keep the car going faster and faster each run. Yeah, it has been sort of a turnaround. But I don't think that you can consider one or two races at the right time of the season a turnaround. But, we've got a good start on a series of 10 races, and hopefully we can do that for all of them."

 Rusty Wallace
 AUTOSTOCK

 Ryan Newman
 AUTOSTOCK

RANKINGS

THAT'S RACIN'S TOP PICKS

1. Tony Stewart (car No. 14): We're ranking for the season, not just last week. Stewart has still had the best year. Last week: 1.

2. Jimmie Johnson (car No. 48): Talladega's big. The No. 48 car has never been running at the end of a fall

race there. Last week: 7.

3. Rusty Wallace (car No. 2): Give him a 10th at Talladega right now and he'd never go into Alabama this weekend. Last week: 5.

4. Ryan Newman (car No. 12): He's had some rough days at Talladega where his average finish is 22.7 in seven tries. Last week: 4.

5. Greg Biffle (car No. 16): If Biffle wins the title, salvaging a 13th-place finish at Dover will be part of

the reason. Last week: 2.

6. Mark Martin (car No. 6): Took two tires on last Dover stop in a bid to win. Nice to see him take that risk even if it didn't work. Last week: 6.

7. Matt Kenseth (car No. 17): Could Goodyear have it in for these guys? Tire woes have dogged the No. 17 in Chase. Last week: 3.

8. Jeremy Mayfield (car No. 19): Hanging in there so far. This team also finished fourth at Talladega early

er this year. Last week: 9.

9. Carl Edwards (car No. 99): Turned a less-than-stellar afternoon into a ninth-place finish last weekend at Dover. Last week: 10.

10. Kurt Busch (car No. 97): It's Bizarro Chase. In 2004, Busch stayed near the top and Johnson fell behind early. Last week: 8.

For the rest of the top-40 rankings, go online and visit www.thatstracin.com.

Racing 'clean' in the Chase is a tough thing to do

Keep it clean. Jimmie Johnson could have been talking about adhering to NASCAR President Mike Helton's pre-race admonishment promising swift and decisive reactions to retaliatory actions on the racetrack.

But he wasn't. What Johnson was talking about is the Chase for the Cup contender's still-to-be-accomplished plan to get through all 10 races without having a "bad" race.

"If anybody can make it clean and not have a DNF (did not finish) and not finish in 30th, they'll probably be the champion," Johnson said after his victory Sunday. "That's if anybody can make it clean. I don't know who it will be. I hope it's us."

Last year, nine of the 10 Chasers had at least one finish of 30th or worse. Mark Martin had three second-

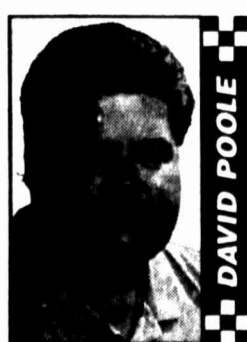
place finishes in the 2004 Chase but finished between 11th and 20th in the others. It wasn't enough to win a title.

Still, the obvious formula for success in the Chase is the "clean" approach. Had Kurt Busch finished, say, 15th instead of 42nd in the race at Atlanta during last year's Chase,

his top-10s in the other nine races would have made the season finale at Homestead far less dramatic than it was.

The issue, of course, is that going 10 straight races without having a problem or misfortune is a lot easier in theory than in execution.

What's happened two races into this year's Chase is something of a



DAVID POOLE

role-reversal between the two drivers, who wound up eight points apart atop the standings at season's end last year.

Busch and his team won the 2004 title by capitalizing on every opportunity to turn potential setbacks into solid finishes. People talk about how lucky Busch was because he had several spins in which he didn't get

hit, and because when his wheel came off at Homestead it did so in a way that allowed him to get to pit road as the caution for his problem was coming out.

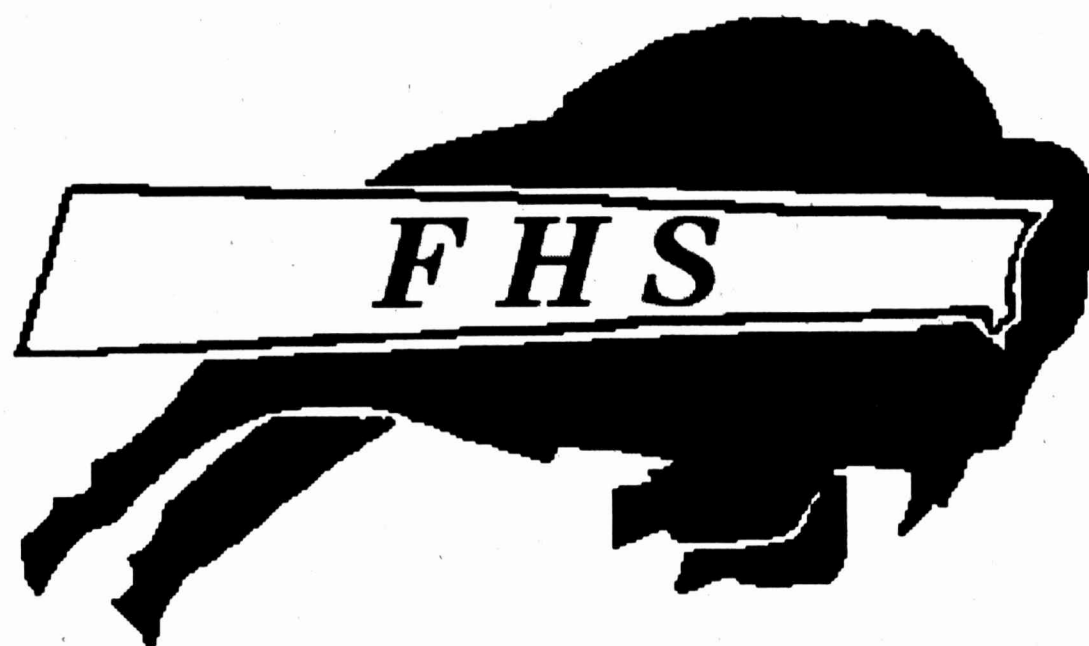
All of that is true, but the team never gets enough credit for keeping its collective wits about them and turning those breaks into good finishes.

There has been little Busch's team

could do this year, however, about getting wrecked on the third lap at New Hampshire and then having a tire go flat late in Sunday's race at Dover. Those two problems have the No. 97 team 10th in the standings, 170 points behind Johnson.

Last year, Johnson started the Chase with an 11th at New Hampshire and a 10th at Dover. But he lost an engine and finished 37th at Talladega and crashed and finished 32nd at Kansas. That put Johnson 247 points behind, and his furious finish of four victories with a second and a sixth in the final six races fell short.

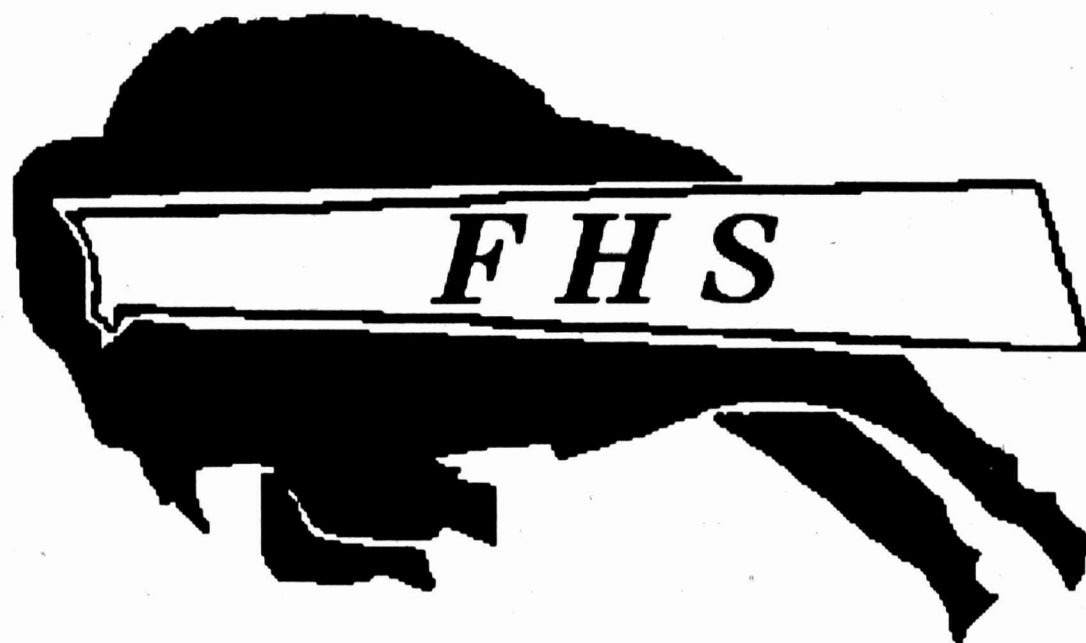
"You've got to believe that anybody is a threat," Johnson said. "We lost a title last year by eight points and we had some troubles at the start of the Chase. And this year, hopefully we'll make the right decisions and not have any weird things happen to us."



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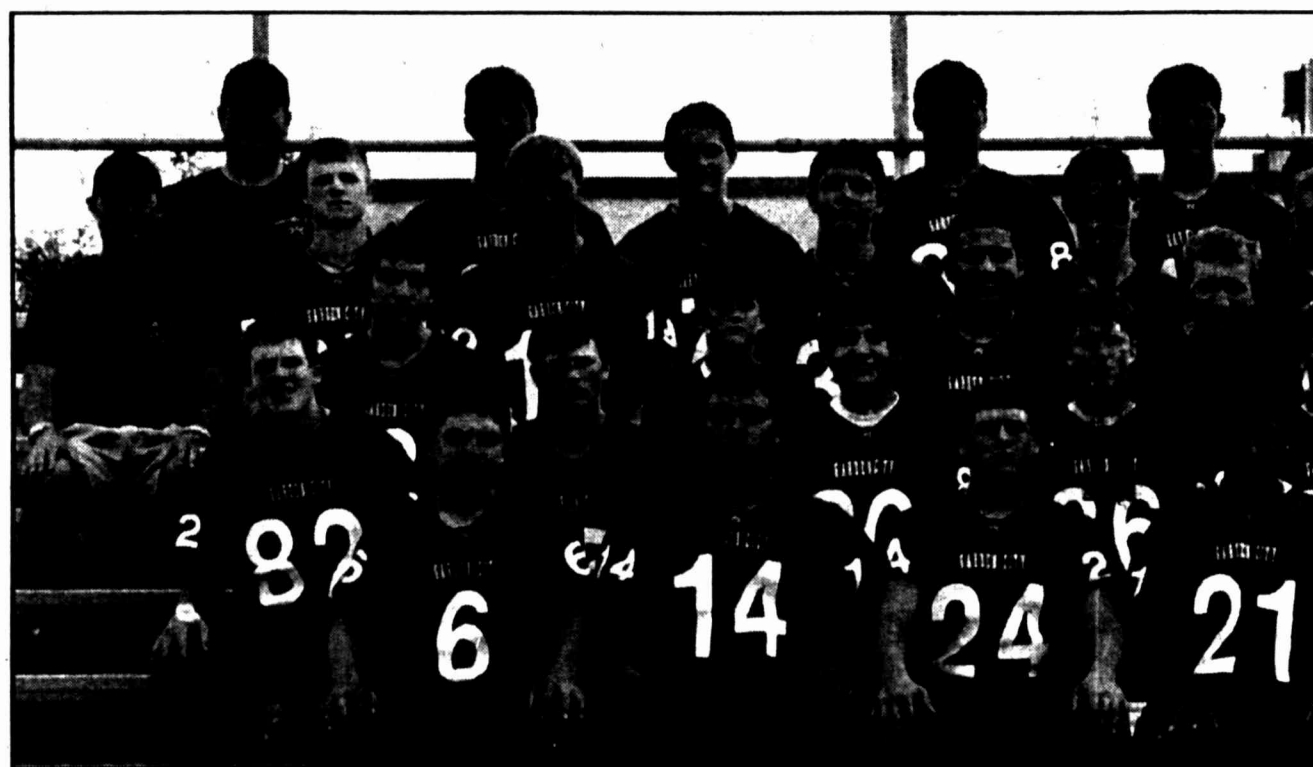
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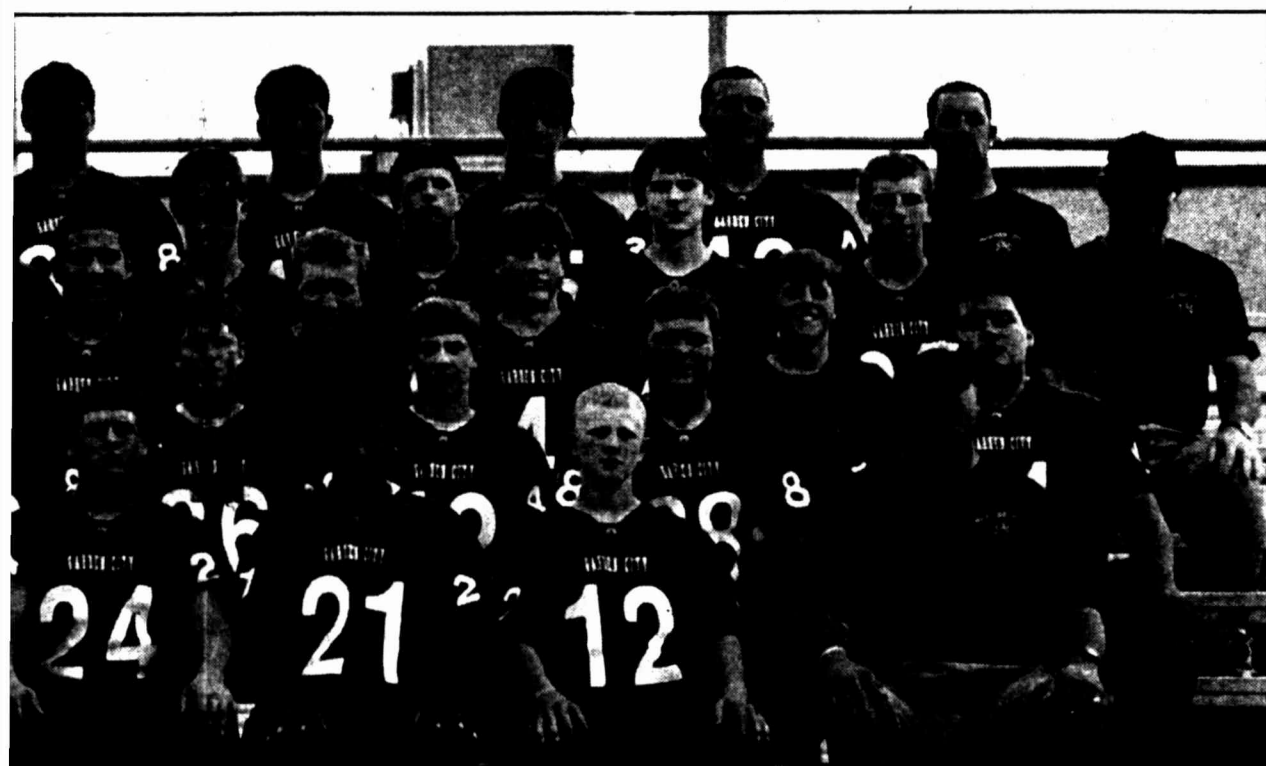
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