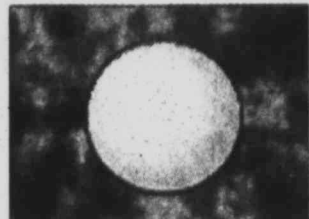


THURSDAY

December 9, 2004

WEATHER

Tonight:



TONIGHT 34°-36° TOMORROW 64°-66°

BRIEFLY

BSISD trustees meet this evening

Big Spring Independent School District trustees will consider budget amendments, district goals and a facility study when they convene at 5:15 p.m. today in the high school board room, 707 11th Place.

A contract renewal for auctioneer services, the 2004 tax roll, delinquent properties and the superintendent's report are also on the agenda.

Winter concert set for BSHS band

The Big Spring High School band will hold its winter concert at 7 p.m. today in the school auditorium. There is no admission fee but those attending are asked to bring cans of food which will be given to the Salvation Army.

The concert will feature the full band, playing selections such as "Christmas Festival" by Leroy Anderson, "Slovakian Folk Suite" by Alfred Reed, "Home for Christmas," "Greensleeves Rhapsody" and "Jingle Bells Forever."

The concert will be topped off with the band surrounding the audience and playing its entire marching show.

COMING THIS WEEKEND



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Vol. 101, No. 12

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www.bigspringherald.com

To reach us, please call 263-7331. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you miss your paper, please call 263-7335 before 7 p.m. weekdays and from 8 a.m. to noon Sunday.



Stacy Barr puts a finishing touch to her cowboy-theme Christmas tree in preparation for the Symphony Guild Holiday Tour of Homes Sunday. Barr's home, along with three other homes in Big Spring, takes part in the 22nd annual fund-raiser for the Symphony Guild, allowing patrons to tour each home, viewing Christmas decorations and interior decor.

Herald photo/Marsha Sturdivant

Tour of Homes slated Sunday

By MARSHA STURDIVANT
Features Editor

Gracious hospitality marks the 22nd annual Holiday Tour of Homes Sunday as four Big Spring families open their hearts and their homes to support the Big Spring Symphony Association.

"I've been asked several times before to be on the tour, but this was the first year I really felt like I was ready," said Carolyn Freeman, whose home in Highland will be part of the tour, scheduled for 1:30 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. Sunday.

Freeman's home was decorated through the help of her friend, Nancy

On the Tour

- Stacy and Mark Barr residence, 600 Mathews Ave.
- Carolyn and John Freeman residence, 1200 Mountain Drive.
- Bernadine and James Grissett residence, 715 Edwards Blvd.
- Dr. Michelle and Roy Worthy residence, 900 Mountain Park Dr.

Howard of Ackerly.

For the past 22 years, the Holiday Tour of Homes has marked the Christmas season for Big Spring.

See TOUR, Page 3A

'Just another day in the woods'

Attack on Pearl Harbor from a GI's perspective

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

As the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor came and went, this week, it may seem like nothing more than another anniversary to most Americans — however, Edward Thomas Prather isn't most.

At the age of 21, Prather was stationed at Hickam Field, an Army Air Corps base in the same area as Pearl Harbor. Serving in the Army, he was accustomed to the sounds of practice bombing runs and training exercises, a sound that took on a whole new meaning in December of 1941.

"I was on Hickam Field, which was the airport for Pearl Harbor, when the

"They hadn't bombed any of the troops or barracks — they were concentrating on the harbor — and it was a real blessing because they could have killed hundreds of soldiers if they had bombed the barracks."

—Edward Thomas Prather

attack began," said Prather. "It was just an ordinary day in the Army for me. We woke up to

See PRATHER, Page 3A



Far removed from the madness of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, 86-year-old Edward Thomas Prather plays dominoes with Margaret Savage, recreation therapist at the Big Spring VA Medical Center. Prather served in the U.S. Army in Pearl Harbor when it was attacked by Japanese bombers, plunging the U.S. into World War II.

HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins

Anthony Principi resigns as Veterans Affairs Secretary

From local, wire reports

Anthony Principi announced his resignation Wednesday as Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

"After four years dedicated to a profoundly important mission and a department I love, it is now time for me to move on to fresh opportunities and different challenges,"



PRINCIPI

Principi said in a resignation letter made public by the White House on Wednesday.

Principi's resignation was dated Nov. 16 but not made public until yesterday.

President Bush quickly nominated former U.S. ambassador to the Vatican Jim Nicholson to replace Principi.

"Jim Nicholson is a patriot, a man of deep conviction, who has

See PRINCIPI, Page 5A



State District 31 Sen. Kel Seliger, left, says hello to Wendell Jordan, a resident at the Big Spring State Veteran's Home, during a special presentation Wednesday afternoon. Seliger met with residents and administrators to discuss the upcoming legislative session, which will begin Jan. 11. Also pictured is Ben Mazzara, administrator for the veteran's home.

HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins

Sen. Seliger meets with veterans, says tough budget session coming

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

State Sen. Kel Seliger met with residents and administrators at the Lamun-Lusk-Sanchez State Veteran's Home Wednesday afternoon,

preparing himself for the upcoming legislative session and the tough budgetary decisions looming on the horizon.

"I'm here today as a member of Veteran's Affairs and a new member of the state legisla-

ture," Seliger told the group of residents and employees gathered at the facility. "My first legislative session will start on Jan. 11, and clearly the biggest thing we will deal

See SELIGER, Page 2A

Spring Tabernacle plans to help hundreds of youth with Christmas packages

By KENDRA WISS
Staff Writer

Spring Tabernacle in Big Spring ministers to needy families by providing toys — lots of toys.

"Last year we gave 224 children five toys each," said Mona Lue Tonn, who with her husband, Arnold, gives toys to needy families each year.

"This is the outreach ministry of our church.

What: Spring Tabernacle's gift of toys to area children.

Where: Spring Tabernacle, 1209 Wright St.

When: 10 a.m. Friday.

We love the people and we hope that they really

See TOYS, Page 2A

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Obituaries

William Holder



William Holder, 84, of Midland passed on Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2004, at his residence. Funeral services will be held at 9 a.m. Friday, Dec. 10, 2004, at the Nalley-Pickle & Welch Chapel in Midland with the Rev. Steven Calley, pastor of Assembly in Christ, officiating and the Rev. Tommy Williams of Fort Worth assisting. Interment will follow at Resthaven North in Midland.

He was born July 19, 1920, in Sabana and married Tempie Weed April 19, 1938. She preceded him in death Sept. 24, 2004.

William worked as a jet engine mechanic in civil service for the government in Big Spring for many years, retiring in 1975. He was a member of the music ministry at Assembly of Christ, where he played the guitar.

He was a wonderful father and "Papa." William was a man of honesty and integrity. He leaves a legacy of love and memories that his family will cherish forever.

God blessed him with many talents and he shared his love of music with his children and grandchildren. William was the pillar of his family, always believing in them and guiding them through the good times and the troubling times. He was always there for anyone who needed him.

We will miss his guidance, humor and most of all, his words of wisdom. Our family takes great comfort in knowing he is reunited with God and his loving wife. Together, they are enjoying beautiful heavenly music.

Survivors include two daughters, Alice Kayser and Sheila Scarbro, both of Midland; three grandsons, Edward Kayser of Arlington, Eugene Kayser and Gregg Scarbro, both of Midland; three granddaughters, Tonya Scarbro of Arlington, Jamee Cardenas and Patricia Mapp, both of Midland; and 11 grandchildren.

William was preceded in death by his parents, two brothers, Autry Holder and Spud Holder and one daughter, Madalyn Holder.

Pallbearers will be Edward Kayser, Eugene Kayser, Gregg Scarbro, Jayson Huerta, Javier Cardenas and J.D. Mapp. Honorary pallbearers will be Richard and Tommy Holder.

The family suggests memorials be made to Home Hospice, 901 W. Missouri, Midland 79701.

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

Paid obituary

Jessie Woodruff Sr.



Jessie Woodruff Sr., 40, of Big Spring died Tuesday morning in a house fire. Funeral services are 2:30 p.m. Saturday at Mount Bethel Baptist Church with the Rev. Jerome McNally, pastor of New Life Ministries, officiating. Burial will be in Mount Olive Memorial Park.

He was born July 14, 1964, in Big Spring to Peyton and Lottie Woodruff and graduated from Big Spring High School. He was employed at Comanche Trail Nursing Home and was a member of Powerhouse Church of God in Christ Church.

He is survived by his wife, Shelia Woodruff of Big Spring; two sons, Brian Vanderbilt and Jessie Woodruff Jr., both of Big Spring; one sister, Norma Jean Woodruff of Big Spring; three grandchildren; and a number of aunts, uncles and cousins.

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

Nollie K. Teague

Nollie K. Teague, 80, of Big Spring died Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2004, in Midland Memorial Hospital Hospice inpatient unit. Graveside funeral services are 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 11, 2004, at Trinity Memorial Park Peace Chapel with the Rev. Dr. Claude Craven, retired Baptist minister, officiating.

The family will receive friends Friday from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. at the funeral home.

She was born March 13, 1924, in Big Spring, and married O.T. Teague Sept. 10, 1940, in Big Spring. She was a lifelong resident of Big Spring and had worked in the food service department at Big Spring High School for many years. She was a Baptist.

Survivors include her husband, O.T. Teague of Big Spring; one daughter and son-in-law, Sue and Russell Austin of Fresno, Calif.; two brothers and sisters-in-law, Elliott and Mary Lou Digby of Big Spring and Eddie and Carlene Digby of Kingsville; one sister and brother-in-law, Ollie and Frank Stallcup of Odessa; two grandsons; and one great grandson.

She was preceded in death by her parents and two sisters.

The family suggests memorials be made to Midland Memorial Hospital Hospice inpatient unit, P.O. Box 2621, Midland 79702.

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

Mollie Patton

Mollie Patton, 89, of Big Spring died Sunday, Dec. 5, 2004, at Sterling County Nursing Home in Sterling City. Funeral services are 3 p.m. Friday at Myers & Smith Chapel with Don Davis, minister of the Sterling City Church of Christ, officiating. Burial will be in Mount Olive Memorial Park.

She was born Oct. 10, 1915, in Montague County to Elbert and Rosa Perryman and had been a long time resident of Howard County, until moving to the Sterling County Nursing Home in 2003. She married Harlen "Jene" Patton, Oct. 1, 1975, in Nocona. He preceded her in death July 30, 2002.

Survivors include two nephews.

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

Mary Martinez

Mary Martinez, 50, of Big Spring died Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2004, in Lubbock at Covenant Medical Center. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Sheriff's report

• **STEVEN LOYD BATEMAN**, 25, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of theft of services and a motion to revoke probation evading arrest or detention.

• **JASON PAUL BOLT**, 19, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on charges of ride not secured by safety belt - passenger, violation of a promise to appear and possession of a controlled substance.

• **SCHEMICKIN MARIE CROSBY**, 22, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on charges of interfering with an emergency phone call and assault/family violence.

• **BRYAN SCOTT RODRIGUEZ**, 34, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of prohibited weapon - switchblade/knuckles.

• **STEVE ALAN HANNABASS**, 46, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of theft.

SELIGER

Continued from Page 1A

with is the budget in the state of Texas. The money that goes to support services like these, and other services that go to veterans and others in the state of Texas."

While there are no easy economic answers for Seliger and his colleagues to fall back on in January, the freshman senator was adamant about the state keeping its promises to veterans, both today and far into the future.

"My father was a veteran of World War II and we grew up realizing what we enjoy in this country and that we owe it to the sacrifice and participation of America's veterans," said Seliger. "In the lifetime of a lot of American citizens there's probably no better time to have that discussion than now, when young men and women are doing to day what Americans have done for years and years, which is secure the freedoms and opportunities that we have in this country. That is to serve our military and our country in foreign lands, and it's at a very, very high cost."

"I think it should mean a lot to all Americans that realize that years from now, as we still enjoy the freedoms that those young men and women are working and fighting for today, this country will still have its same obligation and the same intentions to meet those obligations as today. That when those young people are at a retirement age and older there will be the facilities, health care and health care professionals available to see to it this country continues to meet its obligations."

Seliger took questions from the audience during the presentation, with the uncertainty concerning the future of the Big Spring VA Medical

Center taking center stage.

The senator said he believes changes are on the way for the VA Medical Center, but not the kind of changes that will see the doors to the facility close.

Seliger also fielded a question concerning the role the U.S. military is playing in Iraq and the Middle East.

"I'm one of those people that always thought there were weapons of mass destruction, and I suspect now they're in Syria," said Seliger. "I think history will show President Bush has contributed as much to the stability of the Middle East as almost anyone who has led this country."

Following the presentation, Seliger said it helps him and his staff to meet the "end users" of the states services before going into the legislative session, but in the end defining who the "end users" really are and prioritizing programs and funds can be a tricky business.

"Every time you see a child on the street, there's an end user," said Seliger. "Quite frankly, every time you see an adult, that's an end user of public education in the state of Texas as well. There are nothing but end users in the state of Texas as a practical matter, so it all has an impact. When you look at a dropout rate or facilities that take care of Texas veterans that are hard pressed for funds, the money is going for a very worthwhile purpose."

"It's somewhat argumentative to determine which is the most worthwhile purpose. The state has a lot of obligations and has taken them on voluntarily, and we go in with that view. There is a role for government to play in the lives of Texans, and we have to determine how best and how economically to play that role."

TOYS

Continued from Page 1A

feel that," said Tonn.

Donations come to Spring Tabernacle from all over Big Spring. Dolls, toys, clothing and housewares fill the church.

"We had to go to two rooms for all of the toys," said Tonn.

This year's toy give-

away is slated for 10 a.m. Friday, at the church.

"We don't make people bring documentation of income or anything like that," said Tonn. "We just ask that parents come and select items for their kids. But to keep it organized, we ask that parents arrange for childcare during the event."

Spring Tabernacle is located at 1209 Wright St.

Police blotter

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

• **LARRY BOUNDS**, 39, of 1610 Eubanks Road, was arrested Wednesday on a parole violation.

• **DOUGLAS BAILEY JR.**, 37, of 1508 Bluebird, was arrested Wednesday on a charge of driving while license suspended - enhanced.

Note: A police activity log for Wednesday, Dec. 8, through today was not available at press time.



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& Saturday, Dec. 11th**

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BY THE MONTH HOME DELIVERY: Evenings and Sunday, \$8.65 monthly; \$93.42 yearly (includes 10% discount for yearly).

MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$12.50 monthly Howard & Martin Counties. \$13.25 elsewhere.

Susan Tubbs-Crawford



Susan Tubbs-Crawford, 41, of Big Spring died Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2004, in an automobile accident south of Big Spring. Funeral services are 10 a.m. Saturday at Philadelphia Primitive Baptist Church with Elder David Machiavello officiating. Burial will be at Trinity Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. Friday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

She was born Feb. 20, 1963, in Big Spring to Grady and Linda Tubbs and married Ben Crawford Sr., June 24, 1991, in Gatesville. She was a registered nurse at Midland Memorial Hospital in the oncology department and was a member of Philadelphia Primitive Baptist Church.

She is survived by her husband, Ben Crawford Sr., of Big Spring; one daughter, Sohanna Tubbs of Big Spring; two stepsons: Ben Crawford II and Samuel Crawford, both of Tucson, Ariz.; parents, Linda and Grady Tubbs of Big Spring; one brother, John Tubbs of Big Spring; and several aunts, uncles and cousins.

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

Lottery

Results of the Cash 5 drawing Wednesday night:
Winning numbers drawn: 17-30-26-36-8.
Number matching five of five: 2.
Prize per winner: \$19,052.
Winning tickets sold in: Magnolia, Glen Rose.
Next Cash 5 drawing: Thursday night.

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Wednesday night by the Texas Lottery, in order: 2-0-0

Weather

Tonight - Mostly clear. Lows in the mid 30s. Northwest winds 10 to 20 mph.
Friday - Mostly sunny. Highs in the mid 60s. Northwest winds near 10 mph.
Friday night - Mostly clear. Lows in the mid 30s. West winds near 10 mph.
Saturday - Mostly sunny. Highs near 70. Southwest winds 10 to 20 mph.
Saturday night - Mostly clear. Lows near 40.
Sunday - Mostly sunny. Highs near 70.
Sunday night - Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 30s.
Monday - Partly cloudy. Cooler. Highs near 50.
Monday night - Partly cloudy. Lows near 30.
Tuesday - Partly cloudy. Highs near 50.
Tuesday night - Partly cloudy. Lows near 30.

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TOUR

Continued from P

Included in along with the home, is the James and Grissett, the for of Dorothy Gar time Big Spring thropist.

"We arrived Spring in Octo here to be a new managen the new dire goal is to sav hospital," said who moved f Alto, Calif., fo tion of chief tions and mat agement at

PRATHE

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"We all fell loaded us in t and headed f said Prather. out in the hi heat of the over. They s back and for sages about going on, and

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TOUR

Continued from Page 1A

Included in the tour, along with the Freeman's home, is the home of James and Bernadine Grissett, the former home of Dorothy Garrett, longtime Big Spring philanthropist.

"We arrived in Big Spring in October. I came here to be a part of the new management with the new director. Our goal is to save this VA hospital," said Grissett, who moved from Palo Alto, Calif., for the position of chief of acquisitions and material management at the VA

Medical Center.

Stacy and Mark Barr's home is also on the scheduled tour, and Barr said she accepted help from her mother and mother-in-law, as well as her employer, Lynda Elrod, to complete her holiday trimmings.

"We finished with the remodel of the home this year and felt this was a good year to become a part of the tour," Barr said.

Roy and Dr. Michelle Worthy's ranch-style home makes the fourth residence on the tour. Complete with emerald green Christmas trimmings, the Worthy's home, like the Barrs and the Grissetts, is located in

the Edwards Addition. Kay Bancroft and Debra Lusk with Faye's Flowers helped with the decorations in the Worthy's home.

"We knew we needed a home after the baby, Jeb, was born," Roy Worthy said. Jeb now is 22-months old.

As a preliminary step to the Sunday event, five hostesses, along with tour coordinator Angie Byerly, visited each home Tuesday to meet with the home owners, finalize plans and answer any questions.

"I had no idea the homes in this older addition had such spacious yards," said Symphony Guild member Janice

Bond.

Indeed, the landscaping at each home is as well-maintained and spacious as the home's interior.

The Symphony Guild Holiday Tour of Homes began in 1982 as a fundraising project for the symphony, created by Johnnie Lou Avery.

"Big Spring Today," hosted by Avery, which airs at 7:30 a.m. on Channel 9, will feature different segments about the tour this week.

"We've never had a bit of trouble and this is always a great event for our community," Byerly said.

The hostesses, Bond at the Freeman's home, Pauline Nelson and

Phyllis Graumann at the home of the Grissetts, Jo Beth Corwin at the Barrs and Suzanne Markwell at the Worthys, will greet each tour patron. They will also have tickets available for purchase.

Byerly will act as a liaison between the four locations.

Advance tickets are available at Blum's Jewelers, Faye's Flowers, Big Spring Printing, the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce, the Heritage Museum, First Bank of West Texas in Big Spring and Coahoma and the Big Spring Herald.

Tickets for the event are \$10 each. Tour patrons may begin the event at

any one of the four locations.

After touring the homes, patrons are invited to a reception at First Presbyterian Church, Eighth and Rannels streets, set for 3:30 until 5 p.m.

The church's choir, directed by Mike D. Mitchell, organist, will perform at 4:30 p.m.

For more information, contact the guild at 264-7223.

Watch for more information about the homes featured in the 2004 Symphony Guild Holiday Tour of Homes in the weekend edition of the Big Spring Herald.

PRATHER

Continued from Page 1A

he hell-bang of bombing, and when I first woke up I thought it was our planes. They did a lot of practice runs and that's what I thought it was until the NPO sent word out to the barracks telling us to fall out and take cover.

"We all bailed out into the streets with our field packs and rifles. We didn't have any ammunition, but we had our rifles," he said with a laugh. "The part that stands out most in my mind was when they came through telling us to get out. They hadn't bombed any of the troops or barracks — they were concentrating on the harbor — and it was a real blessing because they could have killed hundreds of soldiers if they had bombed the barracks."

Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and other military bases on Oahu lasted two hours. Twenty-one ships were heavily damaged and 320 aircraft were damaged or destroyed. Approximately 2,390 people were killed and 1,178 were wounded as a result of the attack, which plunged the United States headlong into World War II.

As Prather and his fellow soldiers made their way to safety amid the madness of the Japanese attack on the U.S. naval facilities, the Monahans native remembers it as "just another day in the woods."

"We all fell out and they loaded us in the GI trucks and headed for the hills," said Prather. "We camped out in the hills until the heat of the attack was over. They sent runners back and forth with messages about what was going on, and when they

thought it was safe they let us come back to the base. For us it was just another day in the woods."

Prather, who is currently being treated at the Big Spring VA Medical Center for a fractured hip and hopes to be able to return to his home in Monahans soon, said the madness didn't end for him and his unit with the attack on Pearl Harbor. In fact, it was only the beginning.

"I was with the 34th Engineers," said Prather. "We did reconnaissance, and when we had a bunch of armed soldiers going into an island, such as Saipan, we engineers made a landing to clear the way for the foot soldiers to get in. We would

hit the beach and bomb, shoot and raise hell until we cleared the way, and then the foot soldiers would come in and take over."

"We had planned on going into Japan with our front forces, and when we got to the Marianas Islands — it's three little islands, including Saipan, Guam and Tinian — we had to take Saipan by force. The natives on Tinian and Guam were

ticked to death to see us. They praised us because they didn't like the Japanese government and how they treated them."

As the time to attack the Japanese army on its own soil drew near, Prather said the tension mounted, only to be dispelled by the Japanese surrender on Sept. 2, 1945.

"We held those islands until we were getting ready to go into Japan. But before we could go,

Japan surrendered. At that point I was just getting packed up and ready to go home. I don't know how much stuff I just threw away just to get rid of it so I could get out of there," he said with a laugh.

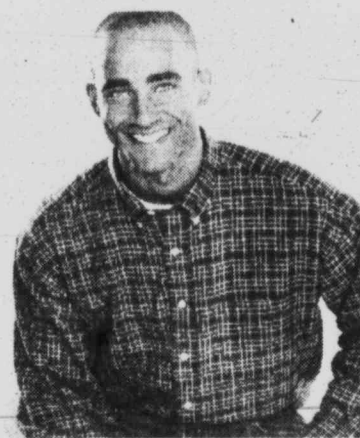
Nearly 60 years later, at the age of 86, Prather, like so many other veterans, watches the ongoing war in the Middle East with a great deal of care.

"I don't think we'll ever

be at peace with all of the nations in the Middle East," said Prather. "There's always going to be battles going on and friction between those nations, and how we'll ever settle that I really don't know. I'm proud of President Bush. I think he's preparing for the worst if it comes to that. I believe he's the man to do it."

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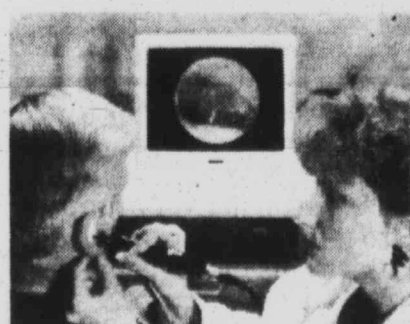
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EDITORIAL

"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
PublisherJohn A. Moseley
Managing EditorBill McClellan
News Editor

OUR VIEWS

This weekend promises more in holiday cheer

No rest for those who are having fun. If you thought last weekend's festivities with the community parade and Living Christmas Tree were spectacular, you were right. But celebration of the season doesn't let up one bit as we head into another busy weekend.

One of the most beautiful presentations in our area is the Drive Through Nativity, put on by the Community of Hope First Church of the Nazarene. Motorists drive by 17 live scenes that recreate the story of the life of Christ. First begun in 1987 with seven scenes, it now boasts a cast of more than 130 people. It runs Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights from 6:30 until 9:30.

A wonderful experience — and one that is for a good cause, as well — is the Big Spring Symphony Guild's 22nd annual Holiday Tour of Homes, which takes place from 1:30 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. Sunday.

There are four beautiful homes this year, all ready to welcome you. Tickets, at \$10 each, are available through the Guild, First Bank of West Texas offices in Big Spring and Coahoma, Faye's Flowers, Blum's Jewelers, Big Spring Printing, the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce, the Heritage Museum and the *Big Spring Herald's* offices.

The tour of homes really is remarkable and the funds go to help the Big Spring Symphony.

And after the tour, patrons are invited to a reception at the First Presbyterian Church from 3:30 p.m. until 5 p.m.

Also on Sunday, the annual Red Dress Tea will be presented by the Heritage Museum from noon until 2 p.m. at the Pottou House.

That event honors the tradition of a red dress tea, a turn-of-the-century event where ladies once donned their handmade red Christmas dresses and gathered at a home to sip tea and share dessert.

There is no charge for the event, which is open to the public.

Finally, it's not really on the weekend, but Wednesday marks the official beginning of the Festival of Lights this year at Comanche Trail Park. It's one of Big Spring's most well-known and loved holiday attractions. It will continue nightly through the holidays. Don't miss it!

Have a wonderful weekend.

Simon says: Steroids and college

Could it be that some journalists are using steroids? I've seen some very robust writing recently.

Harry Truman is the last president who did not go to college. Consider all the presidents since Harry Truman, and tell me that college has improved anything.

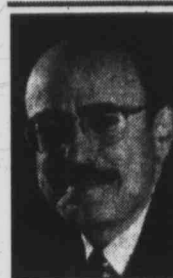
Nobody looks good while eating.

While the entire airport security system is dependent on those gray plastic bins, no mechanism is in place to make sure they are always available. They pile up at the back end of the system, and nobody seems in charge of carrying them back to the front end. I am sure the government could design a conveyor belt system for the bins that would cost only \$30-\$40 billion and would work intermittently.

"Pimp My Ride" may be the future of television.

Hardly anybody has a globe at home anymore.

I can't think of why this quote by H.L. Mencken, which first appeared in the Baltimore Evening Sun on July 26, 1920, has become so popular on the Internet these days: "As democracy is perfected, the office of president represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. On



ROGER SIMON

some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron."

There's nothing quite like sitting by a good fountain to lift the spirits. (I suggest Buckingham Fountain in Chicago.)

"Love Actually," now running on HBO, may be the best Christmas movie ever made. (And if you don't cry at the end, you are not human.)

Is it really possible to dissolve a pearl in a glass of champagne?

And why would you want to? Artificial logs are not acceptable. If you want to feel inadequate, try hanging wallpaper.

When demonstrations in Ottawa are more violent than demonstrations in Kiev, you know something is going on.

Don't worry about whether "Being Julia" is a chick flick or not. Just go see it.

I'll bet anything that you don't know your hat size.

So the Democrats raised more money than the Republicans in the last presidential election. That just goes to show it is not the money, but the message and the messenger that count.

Am I the only one who still remembers (and misses) "Spin and Marty"?

The Pentagon purposefully lied to CNN recently? I am shocked, shocked.

The thinner the sole, the more expensive the shoe.

Paperback Pick of the Month:

"Paul Revere's Ride" by David Hackett Fischer will delight and surprise you, teaching you things about Revolutionary America that you never knew.

Since almost nobody smokes a pipe anymore, where do little kids get pipe cleaners to play with?

If you could go through a shorter security line at the airport by letting law enforcement agencies check your background beforehand, would you do it? Some civil libertarians say, "No!" This civil libertarian says, "Sure!"

John Danforth resigns as United Nations ambassador after less than six months? What, he didn't like the food?

The top of the Washington Monument is capped with a metal, then considered rare, that today is used to wrap leftovers: That's right, aluminum.

Never trust a person who says, "frankly," "candidly" or "to be honest." He probably is none of those things.

Is there a kid left who still worships pro athletes? Naw. Kids are smarter than that.

If anybody finds a scarf, it's mine.

To find out more about Roger Simon, and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com.

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Inside report: Lindsey Graham's bargain

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina startled the capital's conservative network last month with a speech on Social Security reform at the Heritage Foundation. His call for private accounts was sound conservative doctrine, but he proposed financing it with a huge payroll tax increase for upper bracket Americans. This was heresy, conservatives said, by Strom Thurmond's successor.

Graham responds this is the only way President Bush's priority reforms will be passed. He states two axioms his fellow conservatives will not address. First, Social Security — the government's most popular program — cannot be saved without "some sacrifice." Second, the personal accounts Republicans want cannot be passed without bipartisan cooperation — meaning a high-profile Democratic co-sponsor.

Thus, Graham is proposing a bargain of historic proportions. To reform Social Security, each party must do something unthinkable. Democrats would have to swallow personal accounts declared anathema by the AARP, organized labor and every sector of the party. Republicans would have to go along with a tax increase falling heavily on the party's base.

Graham is a 49-year-old country trial lawyer just finishing his second year as a senator, but lack of seniority has not bothered him previously. Elected to Congress in the Republican sweep of 1994, he

helped lead the coup that almost ousted Newt Gingrich as speaker of the House in 1997 and in fact fatally wounded him. Ever since his 2002 election to the Senate, he has been pressing Social Security reform, and he now has the ear of important White House aides.

On Nov. 18, Graham introduced a bill that looks, superficially, like other Republican proposals. Current Social Security beneficiaries and workers aged 55 and older would not be affected. Workers aged 54 and younger could set aside 4 percentage points of their 12.4 percent Social Security payroll tax for private accounts that they and their heirs would keep forever. The distinctive Graham twist is that workers "who don't want to take part in a modernized system" would be taxed at higher rates — rising over the years.

Graham's bill and accompanying statement did not address the elephant in the living room that Republicans ignore: an estimated \$1 trillion in transition costs. He did address it, however, in his Heritage speech. Ruling out financing the cost through federal borrowing, his answer is the un-Republican solution of higher taxes — raising the \$87,900 income limit subject to the payroll tax by an unspecified amount. Boosting it to \$200,000 will completely pay for transitional costs in 10 years. As revenues grow, Graham's plan would reduce the 12.4 percent payroll tax rate.

This is a net tax hike for upper-middle income taxpayers who voted for George W. Bush as a tax cutter, not a tax hiker. Such an outcome would be hard for Republicans to swallow, and early reaction has been negative. "I just think Lindsey is trying to be vir-

tuous," one supply-side theorist told me. Graham responded: "Virtuous? I'm just trying to be practical."

His tax plan, Graham believes, is the only way he can attract Democratic co-sponsors for private accounts. Democrats correctly have viewed millions of lower income Americans holding stock and bond funds as a dagger at their breast. The voter who has discovered the joys of financial markets is automatically a potential Republican convert.

Although Democrats may find it even harder to accept private accounts than for Republicans to accept a higher tax base, there are Senate Democrats who qualify as possible co-sponsors: old-fashioned fiscal conservatives from "red" states who might buy into Graham's bargain. Ben Nelson of Nebraska and Bill Nelson of Florida are obvious, but both are junior senators. Graham needs a senior Democrat who has pounded away at the Bush deficits, such as Max Baucus or Kent Conrad, ranking Democrats on the Finance and Budget committees respectively.

It is difficult to measure the accumulated conventional wisdom on both sides of the aisle Graham must overcome. Time is not on his side. With Social Security heading the president's second-term agenda, he feels he has no more than six months to sell his plan. His bargain would be painful for both sides, but nobody else has an idea with a chance to succeed.

To find out more about Robert D. Novak and read his past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com.

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ROBERT NOVAK

YOUR VIEWS

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to take this time to thank those that stole our Santa Express Train from our front yard for the following reasons:

First of all, your timing couldn't have been better. My mother is in critical condition in the hospital hanging on threads for her life. You reminded us that some in this community only think of their own small thrills.

Second, that train set was given to us by my father, who has been deceased for several years. No amount of money could replace the love he had when he gave it to his grandchildren. I hope nothing like this treasure is ever taken away from you in a flash like you have done to his

family.

And finally, thank you for re-inforcing what others have told us — don't decorate because someone in this community will always take the spirit away.

We haven't decorated for five years because of neighborhood vandalism, but this year we needed our spirits filled.

But again, thank you for your timing on this matter and may God dampen your spirits as you have done ours.

For those that know mother (Mildred Franklin), please continue praying for her.

MARY CAIN
BIG SPRING

TO THE EDITOR:

I am greatly alarmed by

the programming on some of the so-called basic cable networks.

A new special report by the Parents Television Council shows just how licentious and depraved some of the programming on basic cable is. I urge you to read the report, which can be found at www.ParentsTV.org.

The PTC's report shows that basic cable is rife with some of the most obscene themes and content imaginable.

Why should I be forced to bring this sewage into my home in order to watch the Food Network or the Disney channel? Why should parents have to subsidize channels that undermine their core values and beliefs?

I ask you to consider

families like mine when you decide on cable choice. By offering me the ability to choose the channels I want, and to pay only for those channels, you put power back in the hands of the consumer and force the producers of indecent or violent programming to fund their own raunch.

These raunchy cable networks have been carried on the backs of American consumers long enough. It is time for this extortion to end and you have the power to stop it.

JERRY O'BRIANT SR.
SWEETWATER

TO THE EDITOR:

I am a concerned citizen. I live in Highland

and walk almost every day and see how fast some people drive. I believe the speed limit is 30 mph and people are driving 40 to 50 mph on Highland and Scott.

In the last year one deer and five squirrels have been killed and I know one of the reasons is speeding. I know these are just animals, so people, please slow down before a child is hit.

Also, the trash being thrown out if vehicles is unbelievable. I don't believe younger teens are being taught that it is a crime to throw trash out.

LETA COVERT
BIG SPRING

TO THE EDITOR:

To the individuals who stole the \$20 lighted wire-

frame deer out of our front yard on a Monday night:

Ha, ha, very funny trick to take Christmas decorations out of people's front yards.

Next time you are out though, would you please leave a note explaining your actions to my 4-year-old daughter who asked us specifically to buy her a deer for the yard and delighted each night as she watched us turn it on.

She cried for 30 minutes when she discovered it was missing.

I'm sure she will understand, even if I don't and would rather deal with you in some other way than "understanding."

RICHARD HICKAM
BIG SPRING

THE

Acura ho
of its Inte

By STEVEN CO
The Orlando Se

In 1990, Toyota launched Lexus, Nissan launched but there had been a successful Japanese premium for four years: Though Honda took Acura qui upscale as Lexus Infiniti aspire t Acura has carv very profitable builder of vehi are either a litt or a little more than comparab

Acura hit the with two cars: Integra, which er but sportier Honda Accord, Legend, which and more luxu the Accord. Ac quit building t — though its n changed to TL Integra briefly peared from th lineup altogether essentially ign

Integra to deat it age not-so gr until sales wer est there was r to keep it arou

That was nee years ago. For model year, A duced the RSX filling the slot Integra. "Partl because the R only as a coup the Integra wa available as a four-door seda seemed odd th would go with strategy when

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THE RSX

Acura hopes 'mild freshening' of its Integra will boost sales

By STEVEN COLE SMITH
The Orlando Sentinel

In 1990, Toyota launched Lexus and Nissan launched Infiniti, but there had already been a successful Japanese premium brand for four years: Acura. Though Honda never took Acura quite as upscale as Lexus and Infiniti aspire to be, Acura has carved out a very profitable niche as builder of vehicles that are either a little sportier or a little more luxurious than comparable Hondas.

Acura hit the market with two cars: The Integra, which was smaller but sportier than the Honda Accord, and the Legend, which was larger and more luxurious than the Accord. Acura never quit building the Legend — though its name was changed to TL — but the Integra briefly disappeared from the Acura lineup altogether. Acura essentially ignored the Integra to death, letting it age not so gracefully until sales were so modest there was no reason to keep it around.

That was nearly four years ago. For the 2002 model year, Acura introduced the RSX, partly filling the slot left by the Integra. "Partly," that is, because the RSX comes only as a coupe, while the Integra was long available as a coupe or a four-door sedan. It seemed odd then Acura would go with coupe-only strategy when sales of

two-doors lag behind four-door models, and it still does. Some small performance cars, such as the Dodge Neon SRT-4, the Subaru Impreza WRX and the Mitsubishi Lancer Evo do not even come in two-door trim.

But Acura seems pleased with RSX sales, though they sold only about 17,300 for the first nine months of this year. A mild freshening for the 2005 model year may help sales. The front and rear have been restyled — though only real RSX fans are likely to notice the difference — and the suspension has been refined. The higher-performance Type-S model gets 10 more horsepower from its sophisticated 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine, now totaling 210. The regular RSX's 2.0-liter engine stays at 160 horsepower.

The test car was the RSX Type-S, and it continued with the tight, buttoned-down personality of the RSXs before it. The so-smooth engine revs easily up to and above 7,000 rpm, and the six-speed manual transmission — maybe the best on any Japanese-brand car — matches the engine perfectly. The regular RSX has a five-speed manual or automatic transmission, but the Type-S gets only the six-speed manual. Fuel mileage is good — 23 miles per gallon in the city, 31 mpg on the highway. The Type-S likes premium gas, but the base RSX is happy on



2005 Honda Acura RSX

regular.

Handling is precise but predictable. The 17-inch tires and wheels work wonderfully on dry pavement, almost as well on wet pavement. For such a small car — length, at 172.4 inches, is three inches less than a Honda Civic — the highway ride is surprisingly good, even with Type-S' stiff springs.

The Type-S has no factory options, though dealers are free to add equipment if they want. Base price for the test car was \$23,570, and with shipping, \$24,140. That includes plenty of equipment, such as leather upholstery, an excellent Bose stereo with a six-disc CD changer, and a rear spoiler. The bargain RSX is the base version with the manual transmission — it lists for \$20,745, and includes a power sunroof, side airbags, air conditioning, a good six-speaker stereo

with CD player, and power windows, locks and heated mirrors.

Even so, the new Scion tC, similarly equipped and powered by a 160-horsepower four-cylinder, the same as the regular RSX, undercuts the RSX by more than \$2,500, though it does have more of an economy-car feel to it than the Acura does.

If you want performance, though, the RSX Type-S might well be worth the extra money.

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PRINCIPI

Continued from Page 1A

answered his country's call many times," Bush said.

The president also praised Principi.

"As a valuable member of my Cabinet, Tony Principi has served as a tireless advocate for 25 million veterans. He has insisted on results, and he has gotten results."

As secretary, Principi has directed the federal government's second-largest department, responsible for providing health care services and other benefits to 25 million military veterans.

Principi met with state

and local officials in Big Spring Aug. 23 to discuss the fate of the Big Spring VA Medical Center, which is one of many VA facilities examined by the CARES (Capitol Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) Commission, a group responsible for providing an independent review of the draft national plan to realign the DAV's health care system.

The CARES Commission suggested a feasibility study be conducted.

"During the course of drafting the national plan, it was decided that before a decision could be made a feasibility study should be done," Principi said following the visit. "The financials, econom-

ics, access and quality — none of that was gone into as part of the draft national plan with regard to moving Big Spring.

"It's the first feasibility study as to what should be done. What makes the most sense. The cost of building a new facility may be prohibitive — to spend \$100 million to \$200 million to build a new facility in Midland-Odessa. That may lead us to keep the facility right here and modernize it and do whatever is necessary."

Despite Principi's forecast the feasibility study would be completed by the end of 2004, his office later released a "due date" for the study in December of 2005.

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DECEMBER 9, 2004

East Side Baptist Church eighth annual children's Christmas fun festival set

By MARSHA STURDIVANT
Features Editor

Hand-made crafts, a puppet show, food, fun and fellowship take center stage at East Side Baptist Church from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Saturday with the eighth annual Children's Christmas Fun Festival.

"We tell the Christmas story in three different ways. First, a puppet show gets the kids excited and then the actors tell the Christmas story to the children in groups. The Christmas crafts are then used to illustrate the birth of Christ to the children," East Side Baptist Church pastor, the Rev. Doug Shelley, said.

Angie Cole, an organizer for the event, said the congregation looks forward to presenting the program.

"We do this each year and each year everyone has a lot of fun," Cole said.

Between 50 and 100 chil-

dren from ages 6 through 12 are anticipated to attend the day-long activity, and reservations are needed so organizers know how to prepare for the day.

"We'll start out with a puppet show, a team from Clyde who come to do this for us each year," Cole said.

After the puppet show, the children are divided into groups of about eight and placed into different classrooms for crafts and Christmas stories.

"Each project has a different Christmas story to tell," she said.

Each group rotates between the eight different craft centers so all the crafts projects are completed.

"We'll make paper Christmas stockings that the children will sew together," Cole said.

Other crafts projects for this event include Christmas wreaths, a manger scene, wire pic-

ture hangers and crosses, she said.

"We also have cloth bags that one of our ladies made so the children can take all their projects home."

At noon the children return to the sanctuary while some of the women of the church set the table for the feast they have prepared.

After lunch, the children continue the rotation between craft project stations until all eight projects are completed.

"We also do this for the parents, because the parents may drop their child off and know they are being supervised and are safe, while they do Christmas shopping or errands that they need to do without their children," Cole said.

The whole point of the project, she said, is to share Christian beliefs with the children as well as the entire story of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Cole said she has known one child who has attended each festival for the past several years who keeps all her projects and brings them out every holiday season.

"We are making a difference. We had seven children saved last year during the festival. This is sort of like vacation Bible school, only it's at Christmas," she said.

For more information or to make a reservation for your child to attend, call the church at 267-1915 and mention the fun festival on the answering



Courtesy photo

From 1999, a group of children attending the Children's Christmas Fun Festival at East Side Baptist Church. The annual event, now in its eighth year, is 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Saturday at the church for children aged 6 to 12 years. Reservations are needed by calling the church at 267-1915.

machine or call Cole at 267-1845. East Side Baptist Church is located 1108 E. Sixth St.

Marsha Sturdivant is features editor for the Herald.

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County Bible class names recent contributors

HERALD Staff Report

Members of the Howard County Bible Class fund board have released another list of donors who have contributed to the program.

The donations go to pay the Bible teachers, purchase Bibles, workbooks and incidentals for the classes which are taught at Big Spring, Forsan and Coahoma high schools. The class has been taught continuously in Big Spring since 1939 and may be the longest running Bible class in Texas.

The list of donors includes Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Hale Jr.,

Coahoma United Methodist Women, Dianna Walker, Mrs. Allene Hamilton, Community of Hope Nazarene Church, City Wide Fellowship, Robert and Holly Moore III Memorial, Lois Johnston and Genevieve Fisher, Sue Ellen Howell, Steven Stone CPA, H.M. and Emma Jean Hall, Ivy Lee Bedell, Macqueline Shortes, Bobby and Gloria McDonald, W.P. and Shirley Bodin, First Baptist Church of Coahoma TEL Class, Dennis and Nancy Schraer, Bailey & Bailey Electric Inc., Robert and Holly Moore III Memorial, Margarite

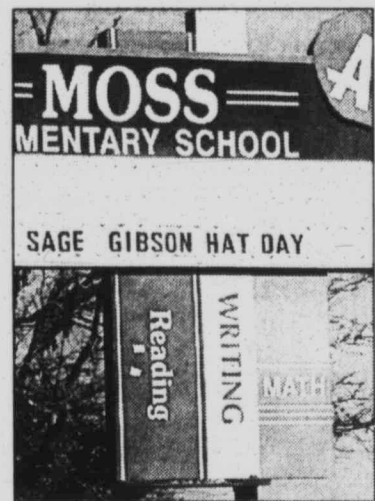
Stubblefield and Phillip Burcham, First Assembly of God Daughters of the King and First United Methodist Church Pathmakers.

Meetings of the fund board are held the even numbered months on the first Monday of the month at First Baptist Church at 7 p.m. and all community members are welcome to attend.

Donations may be mailed to Howard County Bible Fund, P.O. Box 494, Big Spring 79720-0494.

The Howard County Bible Class is a non-profit corporation with 501(c)3 tax status, therefore all contributions are tax deductible.

Welcoming Sage Gibson home with special hat day



Courtesy photo

Moss Elementary faculty and students dedicated Friday as Sage Gibson Hat Day, to welcome home the Goliad student from the hospital.

Make A Wish request for business cards a hoax

The news brief in Wednesday's edition of the Big Spring Herald concerning a request from a 7-year-old cancer

victim seeking business cards is false. Do not send any business cards to the address in Georgia, the mail will be rerouted to a

recycling center. The plea is a hoax and the Make A Wish Foundation does not endorse nor solicit replies of this kind.

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Children's Foundation



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IN B

Basketball needed for

The Cross is looking for ball officials for upcoming season.

For more information, contact Rodriguez at 517-0300.

The game played in 1 such as B Forsan and will be junior high school level.

B.S. football set for nex

The Big Spring ball banquet set for Monday p.m. in the Junior Cafeteria. The meal \$10. For more information, call Training Center 3662.

Booster more Lady

The Lady Booster Club received a grant of \$1,000.

The Booster Club carries jackets, long sleeve T-shirts, visors, tote bags, ear warmers.

They are offering and T-shirt sizes.

For more information, call Jerry at 264-0023 or Kerry at 263-6100.

Alomar Jr. with Texa

ARLINGTON Six-time All-Star Sandy Alomar Jr. signed a \$1 million contract with the Texas Rangers for the next season.

The Rangers traded Alomar Jr. to the Texas Rangers for a 60-game contract. Alomar Jr. played for the Texas Rangers in 2003, hitting .280 with 14 RBIs in 16 games.

In 16 games with Cleveland, Alomar Jr. hit .280 with 14 RBIs in 16 games. Alomar Jr. hit .280 with 14 RBIs in 16 games.

Several offer up a

NEW YORK Nomar Garciaparra stayed in Chicago. Radke remained in Minnesota. Boston Red Sox an arbitrator Pedro Martinez the first baseman the offseason and free agent.

A total of 10 were offered, including Beltran, Clemens, Adrian, Pavano (F

IN BRIEF

Basketball referees needed for season

The Crossroads area is looking for basketball officials for the upcoming season.

For more information, contact Adam Rodriguez at 263-8731 or 517-0300.

The games will be played in local areas such as Big Spring, Forsan and Coahoma and will be for the junior high and high school levels.

B.S. football banquet set for next Monday

The Big Spring football banquet has been set for Monday at 6:30 p.m. in the Big Spring Junior High Cafeteria.

The meal will cost \$10. For more information, call the Athletic Training Center at 264-3662.

Booster Club gets more Lady Steer gear

The Lady Steers Booster Club has just received a new shipment of Lady Steer Gear.

The Booster Club carries jackets, sweatshirts, long and short sleeve T-shirts, hats, visors, toboggans and ear warmers.

They are also now offering sweatshirts and T-shirts in youth sizes.

For more information, call Janet Abner at 264-0023 or 466-1711 or Kerry Rodriguez at 263-6100.

Alomar Jr. signs deal with Texas Rangers

ARLINGTON (AP) — Six-time All-Star catcher Sandy Alomar Jr. signed a \$550,000 contract Wednesday with the Texas Rangers to be a part-time player next season.

The Rangers anticipate the 38-year-old Alomar being a backup to Rod Barajas and playing no more than 60 games. Gerald Laird, the AL rookie of the month last April before breaking his thumb, will likely start next season at Triple A Oklahoma.

Alomar became a free agent after the Chicago White Sox didn't pick up his option for 2005. He hit .240 with two homers and 14 RBIs in 50 games.

In 16 major league seasons with San Diego, Cleveland, the White Sox and Colorado, Alomar has a .273 average with 111 homers and 557 RBIs. He has caught 1,237 games, seventh-most among active players.

Several MLB teams offer up arbitration

NEW YORK (AP) — Nomar Garciaparra stayed with the Chicago Cubs, Brad Radke remained with Minnesota and the Boston Red Sox made an arbitration offer to Pedro Martinez before the first big deadline of the offseason for teams and free agents.

A total of 41 players were offered arbitration, including Carlos Beltran and Roger Clemens (Houston), Adrian Beltre (Los Angeles) and Carl Pavano (Florida).

Hawk women continue to win

• Howard sweeps season series with Western Oklahoma State College

By TROY HYDE

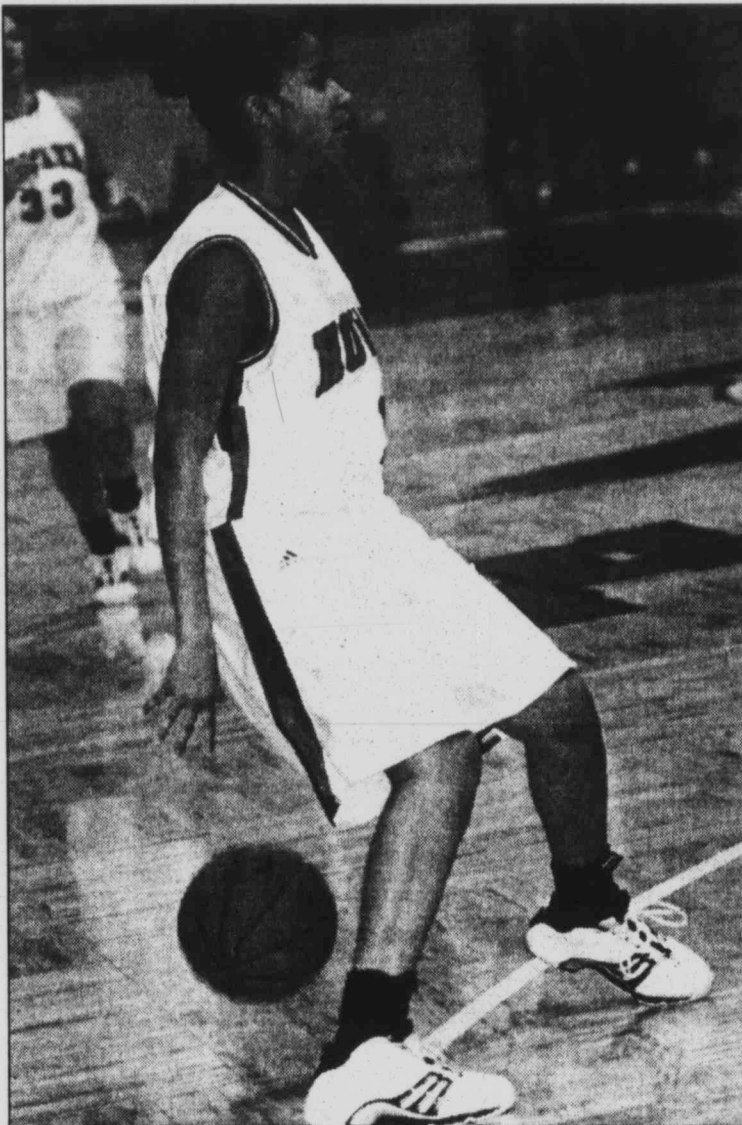
Sports Editor

BIG SPRING — Latoya Fairley's 24 points and six blocks led the Howard College women's basketball team to its 10th victory of the year Wednesday as the Hawk women defeated Western Oklahoma State College, 77-56, at the Dorothy Garrett Coliseum.

Howard led 40-29 at halftime. Western Oklahoma State went on a 10-2 run late in the first half and cut the Hawk lead to five with 10 minutes to play in the game before Howard opened it back up and finished strong.

Freshman Jennifer Pena added 16 points, while sophomore Ciara Tidwell pitched in with 12.

The Hawk women are now 10-5 this season. They will host the Hardin Simmons junior varsity team Friday beginning at 6 p.m. The men's team hosts the UTPB JV at 8 p.m. Friday.



HERALD photo/Troy Hyde
Howard College freshman Ariel Rhodes dribbles the ball behind her back Monday against the Wayland Baptist JV team. The Hawk women defeated Western Oklahoma State College Wednesday at the Dorothy Garrett Coliseum, 77-56, and improved their record to 10-5 this season.

Steers capture Division I crown

Special to the HERALD

The Division I Steers football team continued their winning ways Saturday, Nov. 20, by defeating the Coahoma Bulldogs, 26-20, in the Crossroads Division I Super Bowl game held at Bulldog Stadium in Coahoma.

Before the Super Bowl game with Coahoma, the Steers faced the Forsan Bulldogs for the 2nd time in three weeks with a berth to the Super Bowl on the line. The Bulldogs were waiting as the No. 1 seeded Coahoma team captured the division title with a 5-1 record.

The Steers and Buffs had split their previous two games. However, the Steers, behind great blocking from Diamond Bailey, Aric Rutledge, Devin Heffington, and Eric Rodriguez, controlled the clock and the game as Ty Ral Menefield scored both touchdowns in the 12-0 Steer victory.

A Super Bowl title was then on the line between Coahoma and the division runner-up Steers (5-2).

The teams electrified the frenzied crowd with two ties and three lead changes.

The Steers got the ball first, but fumbled the opening kickoff.

After struggling to gain a first down, Coahoma's Tanner Ruiz scampered 30 yards, which set up a first and goal for the Bulldogs. Ruiz was stopped just short of the goal line. Bulldog quarterback Alex Hill would sneak the ball into the end zone on the next play.

The two-point conversion put Coahoma up 8-0.

On Big Spring's next possession, Ty Ral Menefield, on third down and five, rumbled for 40 yards and the score. Fullback Shailem Menefield added the two-point conversion, tying the game.

In the second quarter of play, Shailem Menefield put the Steer offense on his shoulders. With gains of 13 and 25 yards, Shailem Menefield would give the Steers a first and goal from the one-inch line. The Steers were stopped on first and second down, but a quarterback sneak on third down gave Big Spring its first lead of the game.

Coahoma, which was helped by a Big Spring foul penalty, moved the ball on its next possession. However, the drive was halted right before halftime after Shailem Menefield intercepted a pass.

The Bulldogs regrouped on offense in the second

half and took the opening drive to paydirt. Ruiz, who took a direct snap from center, scored from 48 yards out for the touchdown and tied the game at 14.

The Steers offense was stagnant in the third quarter as Coahoma, with the help of several false start penalties by Big Spring, held the Steers to 13 yards in the quarter.

In the final period of play, the Bulldogs controlled most of the clock and the game. Ruiz would eventually put Coahoma back in the lead with a 12-yard touchdown run.

The Steers were not done, however. They had minimal time on the clock and no running game, but Ty Ral Menefield found the end zone on a quarterback keeper as scored on a 71-yard run. Another false start on the conversion attempt prevented the Steers from moving into the lead.

Big Spring got the ball on the next play after Shailem Menefield recovered an onside kick with 50 seconds left in the game. Ty Ral Menefield, who felt pressure off the play action pass on the play, took off and scored from 40 yards out, giving Big Spring the 26-20 lead with 25 seconds to play in the game.

Coahoma fumbled on its next possession, which ultimately gave Big Spring the 2004 Division I championship.

Ty Ral Menefield ran for nearly 200 yards and four touchdowns, while younger brother, Shailem had one interception, four tackles and an onside kick recovery.

OFF the BENCH

On Tuesday, Jan. 4, the two best teams in college football will battle it out in Miami for the national championship.

Or will they? Says who?

Oklahoma and USC have successfully gone through this season without losing and deserve to play for a national title.

However, Auburn, Utah and Boise State also went undefeated so how come they don't deserve to go.

I have to say I was a little upset when the BCS and other bowls were announced last weekend. There are five undefeated teams in college football and only one game will feature teams with a chance to win the title.

Tell me how this system did not fail once again?

OK. Maybe the mid-major conference schools like Utah and Boise State don't deserve to be put in the same category as USC and Oklahoma. Auburn is the one getting shaft, though.

The Tigers went 12-0 this year, including an undefeated run in the toughest conference in the nation. I know this is Big 12 country, but face it, the SEC is by far the best conference in the land with four top-20 teams in Auburn, Georgia, LSU and Tennessee. And even their average teams (Alabama, Arkansas, South Carolina, Clemson and Florida) are better than the Big 12 and Big 10 and bottom feeders such as Iowa State, Baylor, Nebraska, Missouri, Indiana, Illinois and Penn State. You want more proof. Colorado won the North Division at 7-4. That is all the proof you need there.

Auburn's only argument against them was its nonconference schedule that saw them hardly break a sweat. However, average out those three bad teams with the strongest conference in the nation and you get the ninth toughest schedule in the nation. USC and Oklahoma's overall schedules aren't even in the top-20.

The point: what makes the "experts" think that the two best teams are meeting for the national championship when neither one of those two

teams faced Auburn this year. Or Utah. Or Boise State.

Now if Auburn loses to Virginia Tech in its BCS game, then my argument is less valid, but that, in my opinion, won't happen.

To me Auburn deserves a shot to show themselves and they are not getting it, which leads me to believe that once again the BCS formula has failed.

California also got the shaft. They lose one time to the nation's No. 1 team by less than five points and they end up in the Holiday Bowl against Texas Tech. How is that justice?

The Rose Bowl could be partly to blame here because they chose to go away with the traditional Pac-10 vs. Big 10 matchup by choosing your state's beloved Texas Longhorns.

Now don't get all bent out of shape. I am not saying the Longhorns shouldn't be in a BCS. I am saying they shouldn't be in a bowl game at California's expense. They should be in a BCS game instead of Pittsburgh, who has three losses in a bad Big East Conference. They should also be in BCS game over Virginia Tech and Utah.

However, if we are arguing Texas vs. California then the Bears have just as good of an argument. Like I said before, California's only loss came to USC (No. 1) in a close battle at the Trojans' homefield. Texas's only loss came on a neutral site against Oklahoma (No. 2) and they got shutout, as well.

The system is definitely whacked when, in order for California to make a BCS game, the Bears pretty much had to run up the score in their final game against Southern Mississippi. That would have not only made the coach look bad, but it would have also ruined the integrity of the game.

The only system that will work in college football is a playoff system that settles answers on the field.

Instead, college football would rather make money on 25-plus bowl games and keep the worst system for deciding a champion in all of sports.

Sports Editor Troy Hyde can be reached at 263-7331, ext. 237 or sports@bigspringherald.com.

Several players, fans charged in last month's Indiana-Detroit brawl

By SARAH KARUSH

Associated Press Writer

PONTIAC, Mich. — Five Indiana Pacers players and five fans were charged Wednesday for fighting in the stands and on the court at the end of a game against the Detroit Pistons last month.

Players Ron Artest, Stephen Jackson, David Harrison and Anthony Johnson were all charged

with one count of assault and battery, a misdemeanor that carries up to three months in jail and a fine of up to \$500. Jermaine O'Neal, a three-time NBA All-Star, was charged with two counts of assault and battery.

All the fans were charged with misdemeanor assault and battery, including Pistons star Ben Wallace's brother, David. Bryant Jackson

also was charged with felony assault for allegedly throwing a chair into the fray, Oakland County prosecutor David Gorceyca said. He faces up to four years in prison if convicted.

Gorceyca singled out spectator John Green, who faces two assault counts and, the prosecutor said, "in my mind single-handedly incited this whole interaction

between the fans and players and probably is the one that's most culpable." Green is accused of throwing a cup at Artest, splashing him and sparking the melee.

John Ackerman and William Paulson, each facing an assault charge, also were accused of throwing cups in players' faces. In addition, two men were charged for walking onto the court at

The Palace of Auburn Hills.

James W. Burdick, Jackson's lawyer, said it was "unfair and inappropriate" to charge his client.

"The problem is this: a few crazed drunken fans who created a chaotic situation," Burdick said. "Steve responded in a way that he thought was necessary to protect himself and his friends."

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CITY OF Big Spring is taking applications for Heavy Equipment Operator/Streets and also General Maintenance/Golf Course. Applications will be accepted until December 20, 2004. Apply at The Personnel Department, 310 Nolan, Big Spring, TX 79720 or call (432)264-2346. The City of Big Spring is EOE. Applications may also be obtained from website: www.ci.big-spring.tx.us

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#4403 December 9, 10, 12, 2004.

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

The moon in Scorpio passes Venus and Mars, activating relationships in a sensual way. Colors seem more vivid and sounds more hypnotic as we fall into the trance of a n i m a l attraction. This weekend has truly magical potential for relationships. As on New Year's Eve, make sure you're with the one you want to accompany you in the new year.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Friends need you. If you make it a habit to assist to your comfort level, you'll keep being asked for the same help over and over. Instead, stretch out your arms, and do all you can. Together, you can heal this once and for all.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). For you, the time continuum generally keeps a plodding, consistent march forward — but not today. Time whizzes forward, whirls and flips, and boomerangs back. You feel like you're in an experimental film.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Independence is sexy — at least the way you do



HOLIDAY
MATHIS

it. You're strong and can take care of yourself. Finances improve as a result. Of course, just when you've got it all together, love steps in to confuse and bewilder you.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). The famous sociologist Erving Goffman claimed that we are all actors portraying ourselves to actors portraying themselves. Today, you see through all that acting and make people forget their "lines."

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You can work on your skills until the cows come home, but it's not your skills that will ultimately bring you the success you crave. The right attitude, coupled with the latest information, brings victory. Seek a qualified mentor.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Team effort is where it's at. With your allies, you'll face your rivals head on and meet much less opposition than you thought was there. Trust is key. Keep all your agreements, no matter how inconvenient.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You'll be the recipient of flattery and automatically wonder what your flatterer is up to. Your natural skepticism keeps you from falling to the ranks of the blissfully oblivious, but relax. Your admirer

speaks the truth.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It's hard to think of anything you hate more than being told what to do. If people suggest that they know better even through a vocal tone or slanted eyebrow, they'll find themselves "talking to the hand."

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You may make that figurative journey to the top of the mountain and meet not a wise sage, guru or holy man but an enlightened version of yourself. How does it feel to have all the answers?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). There are tangible reasons, things at stake, that keep you in a diplomatic mode of operation. Though it's easier to grin and bear the wrongs of others, it's not better for your long-term bottom line. Be truthful.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). There are too many openings for misinterpretation now to try and have a meaningful conversation, so keep it light. If you're thinking of upgrading your operating system, do research now but do not insert a single disk!

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Mechanical devices come in extremely handy. A techie friend is there to help you figure them out, but beware — it could

take all day. To avoid frustration, leave enough time. New and nerdy knowledge is ever so appealing!

ASTROLOGICAL QUESTIONS: "I was born Sept. 17, 1970. Last year, I was downsized from a job I hated, financial reporting. I had to sell my condo and move back with my parents. So I had no job and no home, and I felt like a failure. At first, I tried desperately to find a new job, to no avail. Then, I thought I should use this time to focus on what I really want to do — TV or playwriting. I've written a few spec TV scripts and a pilot and have entered them into contests, but I haven't gotten anywhere yet. Will I have any success in writing?"

Yes, if you use your natural Virgo seriousness and dedicate yourself to improving your craft. This kind of writing looks much easier than it is. Contests are a good start because they give you the deadline that every Virgo needs to do her best work! But your sign learns best in a professional setting. Look into the following jobs: writer's assistant, script supervisor, script reader or secretarial work at a production company. You need to be around mentors who can show you what it takes.

Annie's Mailbox

Dear Annie: My 20-year-old son, "Todd," is a college student who lives at home. Recently, his long-term girlfriend broke up with him in a pretty hurtful way, essentially saying he wasn't good enough for her. Todd was heartbroken. He had planned to marry this girl when they finished college.

A week after she broke up with him, Todd met another girl, "Heidi." Here's my problem. He met Heidi on Sunday, and by Tuesday, he practically moved in with her. Oh, he comes home every day to shower, change clothes and get his mail, but he hasn't slept in his own bed since he met her.

I know Todd is 20 years old, and I accept that he is sexually active, but it bothers me that he's on the rebound and won't admit it. I think he's using Heidi in a big way. Todd insists he wants a long-term relationship, but don't you think when sex enters the picture so quickly, the chances of success are pretty slim?

I've never met Heidi, but I get the impression she is emotionally fragile and needy, just like Todd. I think he's acting like a jerk, but talking to him does no good. Worse, Todd's behavior sets a terrible example for his two younger siblings.

We don't want Todd to move out entirely, because we believe that would push him further into this unhealthy relationship. How do I cope with this, and how do I impress on my younger children that this is not the way to handle a relationship? — Stressed-Out Mom

Dear Stressed-Out: Rebound relationships can be devastating if one person is more invested than the other. Unfortunately, there isn't much you can do. Todd needs consolation, and he's found someone to provide it.

If your younger children are teenagers, you can discuss this with them, explaining why you disapprove of Todd's behavior. Eventually, they may see for themselves that Todd's hasty decision was misguided. In the meantime, you might try to meet Heidi.



KATHY MITCHELL
MARCY SUGAR

You are making assumptions based on Todd's presumed state of mind, and it would be a good idea to see exactly what's what.

Dear Annie: This is for "Albany," who wants to reconcile with his 40-year-old daughter, but she can't forgive him for divorcing her mother and marrying the woman he had an affair with. He should respect his daughter's wishes and stop contacting her. He decided on this tradeoff when he left his wife for another woman. What did he expect when he broke up her home for "greener pastures"? He can't have his cake and eat it, too.

This is happening in my home right now. I neither encourage nor discourage our children to see their father. Slowly and surely he slips away more and more from them. He has a new life with a new family. — Ex-Wife in Lubbock, Texas

Dear Ex-Wife: We received a huge number of responses from bitter ex-spouses who agree with you. However, the relationship between a parent and child is different, and if there is any possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation, we think it's better than endless punishment and permanent estrangement. Thanks for writing.

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

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	WFAA (Dallas)
6:30 PM	News (CC)
7:30 PM	Wheel-For
8:30 PM	Extreme Makeover
9:30 PM	Life as we know it (C)
10:30 PM	PrimeTime Live
11:30 PM	News Nightline
12:30 AM	Ent. Tonight Jimmy K
1:30 AM	Live (CC) Oprah

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	Dallas	Midland	Spanish	Odessa	Odessa	Telemundo	Midland	Atlanta	Odessa	Odessa	Discovery	Classics	Spike TV	Atlanta	Black Ent.	Disney	Sports	Sports	Premium
6	News (CC)	News	La Mujer de Madera	Malcolm-Mid. Raymond	News Ent. Tonight	Anita No Te Rajes	News Seinfeld (CC)	Raymond	Joe McGee John Hagee	News-Lehrer	American Chopper	(CC)	CSI: Crime Scene Invstgn.	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Live BET Style	Sister, Sister That's-Raven	NFL Live High School	2004 College Football	
7	Extreme Makeover	To Cherish	Rubi	The O.C. (CC)	Survivor: Vanuat	La Mujer en el Espejo	Joey (CC) Will & Grace	Friends (CC)	Update/Israel Michal Ratiff	American Soundtrack	Nile: Land of the Crocodiles	Movie: Boiling Point	CSI: Crime Scene Invstgn.	NBA Basketball: The Parkers	Movie: Going to the Mat	College Basketball: College Basketball	Awards Show (CC)	Movie: Possessed	
8	Life as we know it (CC)	Life as we know it (CC)	Amor Real	North Shore (CC)	CSI: Crime Scene Invstgn.	Gitanas	The Apprentice (CC)	Friends (CC)	Light of the Southwest	To Be Announced	Pharaoh-Reven.	Movie: Unlawful Entry	Spring of Trivia MXC	NBA	Comicview	Lizzie McGuire Sister, Sister	Connecticut at Massachusetts	Texas Christian	Movie: King of the Arts
9	PrimeTime Live	PrimeTime Live	Aqui y Ahora	Malcolm-Mid. 70s Show	Without a Trace (CC)	Te Voy a Ensenar a Querer	ER (CC)	Movie: The Replacements	The Hour of Healing	To Be Announced	Nile: Land of the Crocodiles	15 Movie: Spencer's	Wildcat Police Videos	at Portland Trail Blazers	Midnight Love	Proud Family That's-Raven	Rodeo: Making of 3 NFL Live	SportsCenter (CC)	45 Movie: Ash Wednesday
10	News Nightline	News Nightline	Estamos Unidos	Becker (CC) Becker (CC)	The Late Late Show	Al Rojo Vivo-Maria Celeste	Show (CC) Late Night	40 Movie: Hardball	Update/Israel Michal Ratiff	Sign Off	Pharaoh-Reven.	15 Movie: Spencer's	Wildcat Police Videos	at Portland Trail Blazers	Midnight Love	Proud Family That's-Raven	Rodeo: Making of 3 NFL Live	SportsCenter (CC)	45 Movie: Ash Wednesday
11	Ent. Tonight Jimmy Kimmel	Ent. Tonight Jimmy Kimmel	Estamos Unidos	Becker (CC) Becker (CC)	The Late Late Show	Al Rojo Vivo-Maria Celeste	Show (CC) Late Night	40 Movie: Hardball	Update/Israel Michal Ratiff	Sign Off	Pharaoh-Reven.	15 Movie: Spencer's	Wildcat Police Videos	at Portland Trail Blazers	Midnight Love	Proud Family That's-Raven	Rodeo: Making of 3 NFL Live	SportsCenter (CC)	45 Movie: Ash Wednesday
12	AM Live (CC)	AM Live (CC)	Mujeres Eganadas	Spin City Dharma-Greg	The Insider	Noticias Laura	Show (CC) Late Night	40 Movie: Hardball	Update/Israel Michal Ratiff	Sign Off	Pharaoh-Reven.	15 Movie: Spencer's	Wildcat Police Videos	at Portland Trail Blazers	Midnight Love	Proud Family That's-Raven	Rodeo: Making of 3 NFL Live	SportsCenter (CC)	45 Movie: Ash Wednesday

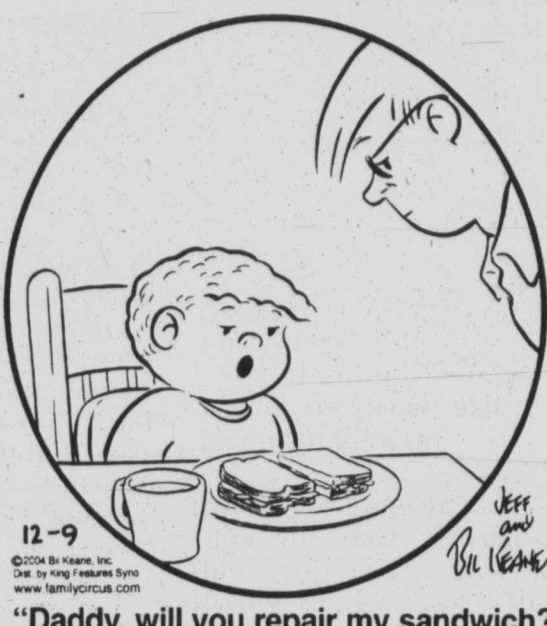
DENNIS THE MENACE



"WHEN I GET OLD ENOUGH, I'M GONNA VOTE TO MAKE WINTER LAST ALL YEAR."

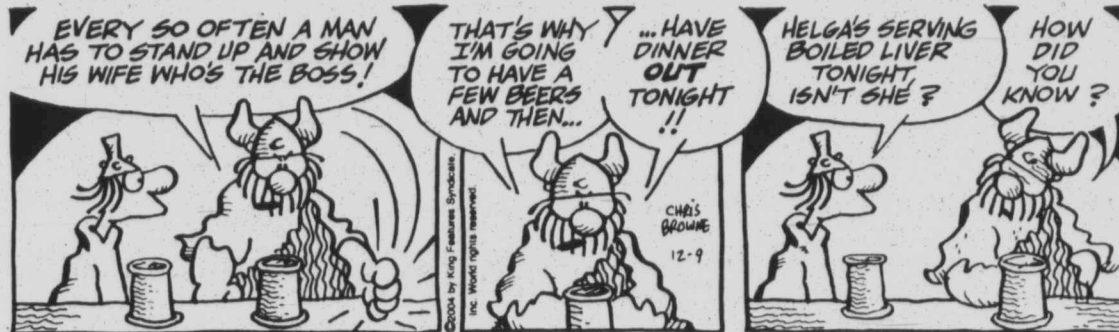
BC

THE FAMILY CIRCUS



"Daddy, will you repair my sandwich? I didn't want it cut in two."

HAGAR



BLONDIE



This Date In History

By the Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Dec. 9, the 344th day of 2004. There are 22 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 9, 1854, 150 years ago, Alfred, Lord Tennyson's famous poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade," was published in England.

On this date:

In 1608, English poet John Milton was born in London.

In 1907, Christmas seals went on sale for the first time, at the Wilmington, Del., post office; proceeds went to fight tuberculosis.

In 1940, British troops opened their first major offensive in North Africa during World War II.

In 1942, the Aram Khachaturian ballet "Gayane," featuring the

surging "Saber Dance," was first performed by the Kirov Ballet.

In 1958, the anti-Communist John Birch Society was formed in Indianapolis.

In 1965, Nikolai V. Podgorny replaced Anastas I. Mikoyan as president of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.

In 1979, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, the religious broadcaster, died in New York City at age 84.

In 1984, the five-day-old hijacking of a Kuwaiti jetliner that claimed the lives of two Americans ended as Iranian security men seized control of the plane, which was parked at Tehran airport.

In 1990, Solidarity founder Lech Walesa won Poland's presidential runoff by a landslide.

In 1993, the Air Force destroyed the first of 500 Minuteman II missile silos marked for elimination under an arms control treaty.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Kirk Douglas is 88. Actress

Dina Merrill is 79. Actor Dick Van Patten is 76. Actor-writer Buck Henry is 74. Actress Dame Judi Dench is 70. Actor Beau Bridges is 63. Jazz singer-musician Dan Hicks is 63. Football Hall-of-Famer Dick Butkus is 62. Actor Michael Nouri is 59. Former Sen. Thomas Daschle, D-S.D., is 57. Singer Joan Armatrading is 54. Actor Michael Dorn is 52. Actor John Malkovich is 51. Country singer Sylvia is 48. Singer/game show host Donny Osmond is 47. Rock musician Nick Seymour (Crowded House) is 46. Actor Joe Lando is 43.

Answer to previous puzzle

CHET PENS RAZES
HILLO ALOE EMIRS
IRAN LINE CUTIT
ELEVATOR MUSIC
ICE ERE
ALLEGED STD SIPS
HAITI ANAIS NAH
ESCALATOR CLAUSE
ASK SMART UNITE
DOSE ADE BITTER
MAS SEC
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SHORT MIRE ALER
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AGNES



HI AND LOIS



THE OTHER COAST



SNUFFY SMITH



BEETLE BAILEY



Newsday Crossword

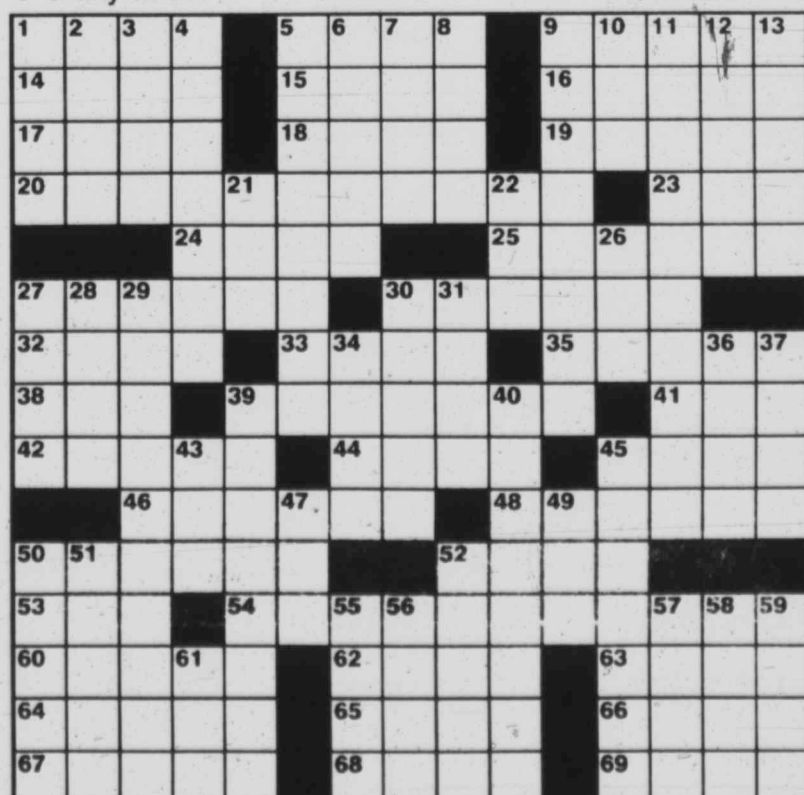
TRUE COLORS by Doug Peterson
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

- 1 Paula of CNN
5 Hendrix of rock
9 Abstract painter Max
14 "Ben Adhem"
15 Mary Kay competitor
16 Weasel out of
17 New Mexico river
18 Crook's haul
19 Actress Jessica
20 Rockefeller's company
23 Homer's neighbor
24 Text in an ad
25 Takes the wheel
27 Decadent
30 Hurly-burly
32 Was a tattler
33 Papa's mama
35 Wood nymph
38 Single-helix molecule
39 Carolina cash crop
41 ___ out a living
42 Mystery writers' award
44 Uncle Remus appellation
45 Nuisance
46 Gomer Pyle exclamation
48 Has a hankering
50 Recorded
52 Checkers move
53 "O Sole ___"
54 September sports news
60 The blabs
62 Two-way, as some radios

DOWN

- 63 Monopoly token
64 Social misfits
65 Scotsman
66 Metric prefix
67 Desirable quality
68 "Smooth Operator" singer
69 Goes on to say
1 Sharp turns
2 Slightly
3 Guatemala greeting
4 Subtle
5 Hot pepper
6 Scrimshaw medium
7 Attitude of the moment
8 Crazy about
9 In the money
10 Zsa Zsa's sister
11 Great business period
12 Gardener's implement
13 Hollow stems
21 Finish an "I"
22 Syr. neighbor
26 Corn serving
27 To be, in Bordeaux
28 Showing affection
29 Paving pieces
30 Render harmless
31 Show impatience
34 Mamma Mia! song source
36 Similar in nature
37 Hibernation stations
39 Silent monk
40 Throw in the towel
43 "I knew it!"
45 Devised egg seasoning
47 Snoring symbol
49 CPR specialist
50 Psi follower
51 Dressed to the
52 World-weary
55 Worn-out horses
56 March Madness org.
57 Dry as a bone
58 Dispassionate
59 Nephew of Cain
61 Four-stringed instrument



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Go online and check out www.thatstracin.com for the latest information and news on stock-car racing, updated daily.

THE TOP STORIES OF 2004



NASCAR Chief Operating Officer George Pyne; Earvin "Magic" Johnson, co-chairman of the Executive Steering Committee for Diversity at NASCAR; and Greg Calhoun, of Access Marketing, address the media at a press conference announcing NASCAR's Drive for Diversity program.

A YEAR OF CHANGE

BY DAVID POOLE

Knight Ridder Newspapers

This week, *That's Racin'* begins its look back at the top stories of the NASCAR season. Today, David Poole reviews the stories he ranks sixth through 10th. Next week, we'll look at the season's five biggest stories.

10. SPIN(OUT) THE BOTTLE

As silly as it might have seemed, the issue centering on a blue plastic prop bottle of PowerAde raises some significant issues about sponsorship conflicts in NASCAR.

For much of the first half of the season, drivers with deals that conflicted with the Coca-Cola product's bottle being on their cars find ways to get rid of the PowerAde bottle after climbing from their cars.

When Jimmie Johnson uses a sign for his sponsor, Lowe's, to obscure the bottle in Victory Lane at Pocono, Pa., NASCAR puts its commercial foot down and fines the team \$10,000. The next week at Indianapolis, Jeff Gordon does his celebrating on the track instead of Victory Lane where the bottle was, and NASCAR is steamed again.

The real issue is whether NASCAR should be able to sign a deal with a sponsor and then require drivers and teams, who get no part of the money from that deal, to adhere to agreements NASCAR had made.

The answer, as it turned out, is yes.

9. THE FORTUNATE SON

Dale Earnhardt Jr. suffers burns in a fiery crash July 18 during practice for an American Express 500 race.

Even though the burns hamper Earnhardt Jr.'s Nextel Cup driving for several weeks, his

Sponsorship, diversity and rule changes played a big role in 2004

team and substitute drivers keep him in the top 10 to qualify for the Chase for the Nextel Cup.

The incident again raises questions about the wisdom of allowing Nextel Cup stars to race in extracurricular events.

Given his popularity in NASCAR, however, had Earnhardt Jr. been severely injured, or worse, this story would have ranked much higher on this list.

8. YOU'VE GOT TO BE &*&(\$@ KIDDING!

Earnhardt Jr. uses a four-letter word in Victory Lane at Talladega, Ala., after winning a Chase race.

NASCAR penalized two Busch Series drivers earlier in the year for using the word in broadcast interviews. So it applies the same penalty to Earnhardt Jr., fining him \$10,000 and docking him 25 points.

Instead of being applauded for consistency, however, NASCAR is ripped for taking points from a Chase driver. National talk-radio shows, many of which spent hours and hours ripping the NFL and CBS for the Janet Jackson "nipple-gate" incident in the Super Bowl, jump all over the story.

NASCAR holds its collective breath, hoping the point penalty won't be the difference between having Earnhardt Jr., the sport's most popular driver, win or lose the championship.

Ultimately, it does not.

7. VIVE LA DIFFERENCE

Signs of progress and rumbles of controversy mark the year's efforts to make NASCAR a more ethnically and culturally diverse sport.

A NASCAR-backed diversity program puts four African Americans and one woman into weekly racing series cars and a number of minority crew members onto Truck Series teams. Joe Gibbs Racing also starts a development program in conjunction with former NFL great Reggie White, and basketball legend Earvin "Magic" Johnson agrees to serve as a diversity consultant for NASCAR.

At the same time, a group calling itself the National Association for Minority Race Fans kicks up dust, saying NASCAR isn't doing what it could to make its events a safe environment for fans who aren't white males.

6. THE TALLADEGA MOB RULES — GREEN-WHITE-CHECKERED FINISH IT IS

After fans litter Talladega Superspeedway with debris when the Aaron's 499 is allowed to end under caution, NASCAR elects to bring the green-white-checkered policy being used in the Truck Series to Nextel Cup and Busch.



Martin

Races in all three series now will make one effort to run two laps to a green-flag finish, extending some races beyond scheduled distances.

At Indianapolis, Mark Martin has a flat tire in "overtime" that could have cost him a shot at making the Chase. In the finale at Homestead, Fla., Dale Jarrett runs out of fuel in the extended laps and loses a top-five finish.

At least the fans are happy.

POLL POSITION

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Which change that NASCAR made in 2004 worked out the best?

Cast your vote at:

www.thatstracin.com

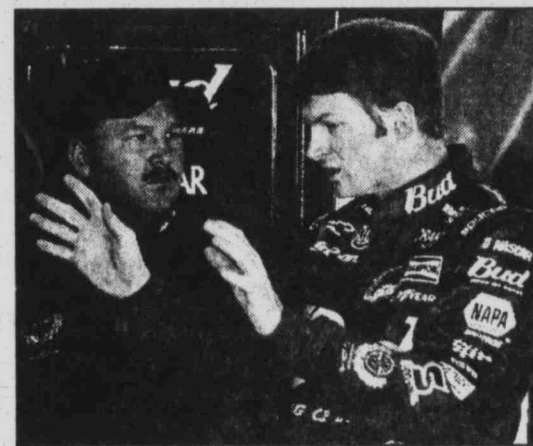
LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

Who's your pick for Nextel Cup driver of the year?

Number of votes: 10,827

Driver	No. of votes	Percent
Jeff Gordon	3,043	28%
Dale Earnhardt Jr.	2,897	27%
Jimmie Johnson	2,256	21%
Someone else	1,516	14%
Kurt Busch	1,115	10%

RACIN' NOTES



JEFF SINGER/KIT

After a fifth-place finish in the Nextel Cup points standings, crew chief Tony Eury Jr. and driver Dale Earnhardt Jr. will part ways next season.

Earnhardt Jr. hopeful about changes to team

Dale Earnhardt Jr. said he believes he and his cousin, Tony Eury Jr., can both enjoy more success in NASCAR now that they're no longer on the same team.

"I'd always heard it's hard to work with family, but I never experienced that. It had always been great," Earnhardt Jr. said of Eury, who along with Tony Eury Sr. headed up the No. 8 Chevrolet team until the recent shake-up at Dale Earnhardt Inc. "(Tony Jr.) knows exactly what I am thinking at the track at all times. That was a little bit of our downfall at times, we probably expected too much out of each other."

Earnhardt Jr., who finished fifth in the final Nextel Cup standings this year, will have Pete Rondeau as his crew chief next year. Rondeau, along with the core members of his crew, will move over to the No. 8 from Michael Waltrip's No. 15 Chevrolets. Eury Jr. and members of Earnhardt Jr.'s crew from this year will move to Waltrip's team, with Eury Sr. assuming the role of director of competition. Steve Hmiel moves from that job to technical director.

Earnhardt Jr. said he had input into the decision to make the changes. "I wasn't in there smashing all the buttons," he said, "but I had input. ... I wanted to make sure everything was fair."

Earnhardt Jr. admitted "it was miserable a lot of the time between the good times" as he worked with the Eury's. The driver's relationship with Eury Jr. was particularly volatile.

"He and I both agreed that each of us needs to work with different people to learn the maturity and the respect side of it that we didn't have for each other," Earnhardt Jr. said. "I think it will be better for both of us. There will be a higher level of respect both ways, coming or going."

Earnhardt Jr. said he knows that Rondeau will be under scrutiny as crew chief for the driver who was named Nextel Cup's most popular driver for a second straight year.

"He'll be OK," Earnhardt Jr. said. "He's a pretty quiet guy. It's going to be a big, big relief to work with somebody who's calm and relaxed and not putting any pressure on me. If I tell him I think there might be a problem with the car, he's going to look all over it to find it. That's kind of what I have missed."

— David Poole

Drivers share the lessons they learned about this year's Chase

At any time, NASCAR will never learn the obvious lessons about its annual awards ceremony. Clearly, it's not hard to ask a Nextel Cup driver to sit in a TelePrompTer or sink a putt on a median who's been alerted to the evening.

You have to dismiss the banqueting as a lost cause. So we move on and begin looking forward to a new season that begins Feb. 20 with the 2005 Daytona 500.

We don't know if NASCAR will make changes to the Chase for the Nextel Cup under which Kevin Busch won this year. But given that Busch won by just eight points over Jimmie Johnson and 16 over Jeff Gordon, any change at all could impact how things turn out.

Busch won his first career title on the strength of nine top-10 finishes in the 10 Chase races, consistency that allowed him to hold on as Johnson closed the

year with four wins in the final six races.

Of the 100 finishes in the Chase by the drivers competing for the title, 48 were top 10s, while 22 were 30th or worse. Busch was the champion despite finishing 42nd at Atlanta, the lowest finish by any Chase driver in the final 10 races, supporting the conviction that a Chase driver can afford one slip-up and stay in contention.



DAVID POOLE

That's just one year's worth of data, though, and as the teams learn more about how the Chase works they may have to alter their approach in the Chase.

"My biggest mistake during the race in the final 10 was that I was really wor-

ried about what the other guys were doing," said Elliott Sadler, who wound up ninth. "If they took two tires and we took four, I was worried about it being a mistake."

Dale Earnhardt Jr., who wound up fifth, says he'll start his different approach long before the Chase races. "I won't take all of the first 26 races so seriously," Earnhardt Jr. said. "I will have a little more fun with it. I think you can still have fun and still be successful. It doesn't matter if you're 10th, fourth or second going into the Chase, you just have to get there."

Jimmie McMurray learned that lesson this year, falling just short of 10th place after the 26th race at Richmond to miss the cut for the Chase. He wound up 11th in the standings despite having 23 top-10 finishes, second only to Gordon for the year.

"I think the thing that we maybe missed out on was bonus points," said McMurray, who had only 30 of them

for leading laps after 26 races. Ryan Newman, who got the last spot in the Chase by just 15 points over McMurray, had 80 bonus points at that stage.

"Maybe we'll stay out and lead a lap if we're the last car in the lead lap and it's early in the race to go ahead and get those five bonus points," McMurray said. "We were just racing trying to win every race and not looking at the big picture. That's something we'll definitely acknowledge next year."

Teams will have to consider their testing strategies. Several teams saved the majority of their tests for late in the season, hoping to use them to bolster their bid to come out on top in the Chase. But with smaller spoilers and new tires on the cars for the start of

2005, can teams afford to stick to that plan and risk falling behind early, knowing they have to be in the top 10 after 26 races to make the strategy make any sense at all?

Of course, there's another way of looking at the whole thing.

"The strategy is simple, but it's difficult," Newman said. "If you win you take care of everything, whether it's in the first 26 races or the last 10. ... You just have to focus on doing the best that you can and winning every race, just like everybody else, and that's what makes it so difficult."

"If you win it takes care of everything, just like in any other sport. If you win and go undefeated you're going to be the champion. We know it's not going to happen, but that's the goal."



Newman



McMurray