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SEE PAGE 7



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Friday, January 6, 2006

Volume 101 • No. 1461

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Nikki Shelton • Stephanie Rojas

Car torched on Fenton lot thought to be arson

By MARILYN POWERS
Staff Writer

A vehicle fire Thursday at Fenton Motors of Pampa is the sixth suspicious blaze within two weeks, prompting a call to the state fire marshal's office, according to Capt. Gary Winton of Pampa Fire Department.

Two units and three firefighters responded to a call at 11:42 p.m. Thursday at the dealership at 123 N. Hobart concerning the fire. A 2005 Chrysler Crossfire was destroyed, and a PT Cruiser parked next to it sustained \$1,600 damage to the paint and a side mirror, according to a dealership spokesman.

Winton said the car's value was estimated at \$40,000.

A one-gallon gasoline container and a towel were found beside the vehicles, Winton said.

Pampa Police Department also responded to the call, and the case has been turned over to the criminal investigation division as an arson. No suspects have been identified, according to PD records.

Firefighters had the blaze under control at 11:46 p.m., and the fire was out by 11:51 p.m., Winton said. He termed the circumstances of the fire "suspicious."

"We had four grass fires Dec. 30 that were suspicious," Winton said. "Then the Christmas trees, and now

See FIRE, Page 2



Pampa News photo by MARILYN POWERS

A 2005 Chrysler Crossfire was destroyed by fire Thursday night in an apparent act of arson. A gasoline can was found near the vehicle. A PT Cruiser parked next to the Crossfire was also damaged by the blaze.

Just hangin' around



Pampa News photos by
MARILYN POWERS

Shawn Johnston of Amarillo, son of C.J. Johnston of Pampa, caused vehicles to slow down and eyes to turn skyward Wednesday afternoon as he soared above the northwest part of Pampa in his powered paraglider. The paraglider's engine can be turned off while airborne to glide, and then be restarted for powered flight. Johnston was using vacant land behind Wal Mart as his base of operations.



3 arrested near Vega with pot

VEGA — Three people were arrested Wednesday afternoon on Interstate 40 when Texas Department of Public Safety troopers reportedly found marijuana inside their vehicle following a traffic stop.

At 2:29 p.m., troopers stopped a 2006 Chevrolet van traveling eastbound on I-40, four miles east of Vega, for a traffic violation. After consent to search was given, 86 pounds of marijuana was found hidden in a large box wrapped like a Christmas present in the cargo area, according to Trooper Wayne Beighle, public information officer, of the Amarillo DPS office.

Arrested and booked into Oldham County Jail in Vega were Ricky Mason, 40, Glendale, Ariz.; Deryck A. Patterson, 25, South Bend, Ind.; and Ruthallyn Louise Dozier, 29, Glendale.

See ARRESTS, Page 2

Natural Resources Conservation Service deadlines near

Sign-up deadlines for three programs administered by Natural Resources Conservation Service have been announced.

While sign-ups are continuous or ongoing, deadlines are announced to rank and provide funding to approved applications within the present fiscal year.

Sign-up deadline for the Wetland Reserve Program is March 3. The WRP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water and related natural resource concerns on private lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner.

The WRP provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to restore, protect and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture. Three enrollment options are available through the WRP; these include permanent easements, 30-year easements and restoration cost-share agreements.

Sign-up deadline for Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program is Feb. 17. WHIP is a voluntary program that encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations.

Through WHIP, technical and

financial assistance is provided to develop upland, wetland, riparian and aquatic habitat areas. Riparian areas are the banks of bodies of water such as ponds and rivers.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program is also a voluntary program that provides assistance to farms and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land.

Through EQIP, assistance is provided to agricultural producers to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals, optimize environmental benefits, and help farms and ranchers meet federal, state, tribal and local

environmental requirements.

In Gray County, practices such as existing sprinkler system conversions, pipelines, livestock wells, watering facilities, brush management and other practices as identified by the Gray County Local Work Group are eligible for cost share.

For more information or to sign up, call or visit the Natural Resources Conservation Service office at 12125 E. Frederic, Suite B, or call 665-1751.

More information is available online at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/>.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

from The Pampa Chamber of Commerce

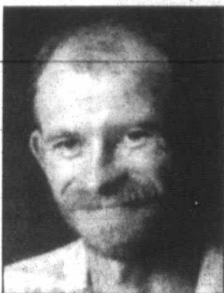
Obituaries

Robert James 'Jammer' Hicks, Jr., 37

SKELLYTOWN — Robert James "Jammer" Hicks, Jr., 37, of Skellytown, died Jan. 4, 2006, at Skellytown.

Memorial services will be announced at a later date. Cremation and arrangements are under the direction of Carmichael-Whitley Funeral Directors of Pampa.

Born April 19, 1968, at Atascadero, Calif., Mr. Hicks had been a lifelong Skellytown resident, attending school there as



Hicks

James well as in White Deer and Boys Ranch.

He was preceded in death by his father, Robert James Hicks, Sr., in 1994.

Survivors include one son, Dakota James Hicks Collins of Skellytown; his mother, Ella Mae Hicks of Skellytown; and a brother, William James Hicks of Skellytown.

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

Mary Elouise 'Mimi' Wells, 84

Mary Elouise "Mimi" Wells, 84, of Pampa, Texas, died Jan. 6, 2006, at Pampa. Services are pending with Carmichael-Whitley Funeral Directors.

Mrs. Wells was born Aug. 30, 1921, in Erath County. She had been a resident of Pampa since 1950. She married J.V. Wells in 1950, and he preceded her in death in 1976.

She was a member of the Home Extension Club "Lovers on Wheels" for 15 years. She was a 50-year member of the First Christian Church.

She loved camping, fishing, and spent a lot of years with grandsons, Stacy Pierce and Clint Lindsey. She had a lot of camping stories to tell and she was an avid doll collector.

Survivors include three daughters, Anita Johnson and husband Gene of Clarendon,

Gail Compton and husband Bert of Amarillo, and Laura Lindsey and husband Bob of Pampa; one stepson, Billy Wells and wife Blanche of Dallas; one brother, J.W. Gresham and wife Margie of Springfield, Mo.; two grandsons, Stacy Pierce and wife Samantha and Clint Lindsey and wife Yvonne, all of Amarillo; three stepgrandchildren; and two great-grandchildren, Kaison Lindsey and Max Pierce, both of Amarillo. She was preceded in death by two sisters, Lavell Byas and Lois Reasoner.

The family requests memorials be to First Christian Church, 1633 N. Nelson, Pampa, TX 79065 or Odyssey HealthCare, The Atrium at Coulter Ridge, 6900 I-40 West, Suite 150, Amarillo, TX 79106.

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



Wells

Gray County Weather

Today: Mostly sunny, with a high near 64. Southwest wind around 10 mph.

Tonight: Mostly clear, with a low around 37. West-southwest wind around 10 mph.

Saturday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 75. Wind chill values between 29 and 34 early. West-southwest wind between 10 and 20 mph.

Saturday Night: Mostly

clear, with a low near 38. West-southwest wind between 15 and 20 mph.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high around 62. North-northwest wind between 10 and 15 mph.

Sunday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 29. East wind around 5 mph.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high around 54. East wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Monday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 29.

South-southeast wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Tuesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 58. South-southwest wind between 5 and 15 mph.

Tuesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low near 30.

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high around 61.

Wednesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 35.

Thursday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 67.

Stocks

The following grain quotations are provided by Atterbury Grain of White Deer:

Wheat 3.44
Milo 2.96
Corn 3.94
Soybeans 5.06

The following 9:30 a.m. N.Y. Stock Market quotations are furnished by Edward Jones & Co. of Pampa:

OXY 86.30 +2.30
BP PLC ADR 68.03 +1.53
Cabot Corp 37.76 +0.46

Celanese 19.79 +0.02
Cabot Oil Gas 48.22 +1.30
Coca Cola 40.89 +0.13
VLO 55.75 +0.98
HAL 65.65 +1.06
TRI 41.10 +0.33
KMI 95.26 +0.83
XCEL 18.61 +0.04
Kerr McGee 94.37 +1.31
XOM 59.05 +0.77
Nat'l Oilwell 69.30 +1.39
Lund 22.54 +0.15
Williams 22.86 +0.06
MCD 33.97 +0.11
Atmos 26.79 +0.13

Pioneer Nat 53.74 +1.17
JCP 55.34 +0.05
COP 60.03 +0.50
SLB 105.47 +1.27
Tenneco 20.69 +0.17
CVX 58.80 +0.61
Wal-Mart 45.29 +0.40
OKE 27.78 +0.10
NS Grp 43.67 +0.48

New York Gold 524.80
Silver 8.75
West Texas Crude 62.71

Arrests

Continued from Page 1
The marijuana, which

has an estimated value of \$36,600, was believed to have originated in Glendale and was headed for South Bend, Beighle said.

Martha Stewart conviction upheld

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal appeals court today upheld the conviction of celebrity homemaker Martha Stewart months after completing her sentence of five months in prison and five months of house arrest.

Stewart was convicted in 2004 of lying to the government about a stock sale. She served five months in prison in West Virginia before beginning five months of home detention last March at her Westchester County estate, north of New York City.

Emergency Services

Pampa PD

Pampa Police Department reported the following incidents for the 24-hour period ending at 7 a.m. today.

Eighteen traffic stops were made. A traffic complaint was made from an unreported location.

Vehicle accidents were reported in the 2200 block of Perryton Parkway and the 100 block of East Harvester.

Agency assistance was rendered in the 1000 block of Gordon, the 700 block of North Nelson, the 1300 block of Garland, the 1300 block of East Foster, the 1100 block of Seneca and the 1000 block of Huff Road.

Civil matters were reported in the 300 block of North Davis and the 700 block of Bradley.

Violation of a city ordinance was reported at the intersection of 19th and Evergreen streets.

Warrant service was attempted at two locations.

A 911 hangup call was received from the 1900 block of Coffee.

A suspicious person call was received from the 100 block of South Wells.

Disorderly conduct was reported in the 1200 block of North Hobart.

A domestic disturbance was reported in the 600 block of Lowry. An arrest was made in connection with the incident.

Assault was reported in the 100 block of West 30th and the police department lobby.

Criminal mischief was reported in the 800 block of North Dwight. A fence was damaged. Estimated cost of damage is \$30.

Arson was reported at Fenton Motors of Pampa, 123 N. Hobart. A vehicle was set on fire. Estimated value of loss is \$40,000.

Criminal trespass was reported in the 1700 block of Coffee.

Identity theft was reported in the police department lobby.

Theft was reported in the 900 block of South Banks and the 1200 block of North Hobart.

bad check.

Joshua Steven Urban, 19, of Pampa was arrested by PPD on capias pro fines for no insurance, expired motor vehicle inspection and failure to appear.

Fred Pitt, 47, of McLean was arrested by GCSO on a warrant for a probation violation for possession of a controlled substance, and a bond surrender for driving while license is invalid.

Cody McKay Ellis, 17, of Pampa was arrested by a Gray County Constable on a warrant for failure to attend school and capias pro fines for four counts of non-payment of court costs and fees.

Friday, Jan. 6

Alton Glenn Cook, 22, of Pampa was arrested in the 600 block of Lowry for assault causing bodily injury and public intoxication.

Fire

Pampa Fire Department reported the following call during the 24-hour period ending at 7 a.m. today.

Thursday, Jan. 4

11:42 p.m. — Two units and three personnel responded to a vehicle fire at Fenton Motors. A 2005 Chrysler Crossfire worth about \$40,000 was destroyed.

Sheriff

Gray County Sheriff's Office reported the following arrests today.

Thursday, Jan. 5

Jason Dewey Kysar, 30, of Clarendon was arrested in the 1100 block of Seneca by Pampa Police Department on a warrant for issuing a

Fire

Continued from Page 1

this."

The Christmas trees being collected on the parking lot of the old Warner-Horton Building in the 900 block of Duncan burned in a suspicious fire just after midnight Wednesday. The tree fire also blackened a street lamp post around which the trees had been clustered, and some traffic safety cones.

Dorothy Clark of Keep Pampa Beautiful said Wednesday it was uncertain if the annual Chipping of the Greens, scheduled for Jan. 21, would be held this year

due to the fire.

The Dec. 30 grass fires included one south of Caprock Apartments, one near Price Road and one at the eastern perimeter of Pampa.

The four grass fires occurred within a couple of hours, Winton said, and occurred at about the same time of day as this week's Christmas tree and vehicle fires.

"These last two were within an hour of each other," he said. The call concerning the Christmas tree fire was received at 12:29 a.m. The time frame for the grass fires was also fairly close together, Winton said.

The string of suspicious fires isn't the first in recent

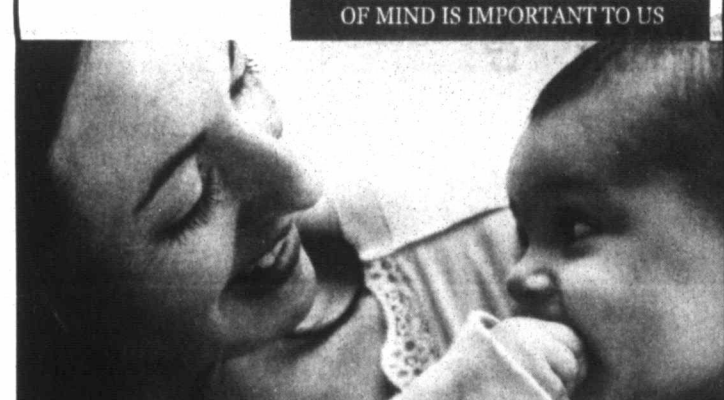
history.

"There were 14 vacant structure fires in 2005, most of which appeared to be very suspicious," Winton said. "Those have quieted down." All of the structure fires occurred between 11:30 p.m. and 1:30 a.m. on the various dates, he said.

The Nov. 6 fire at the abandoned metal packing plant in the 12000 block of East Frederic prompted a call to the state fire marshal's office. Some juveniles were interviewed, and no further structure fires have occurred, Winton said.

PFD has been without a fire marshal since the retirement of Gary Stevens on Sept. 2.

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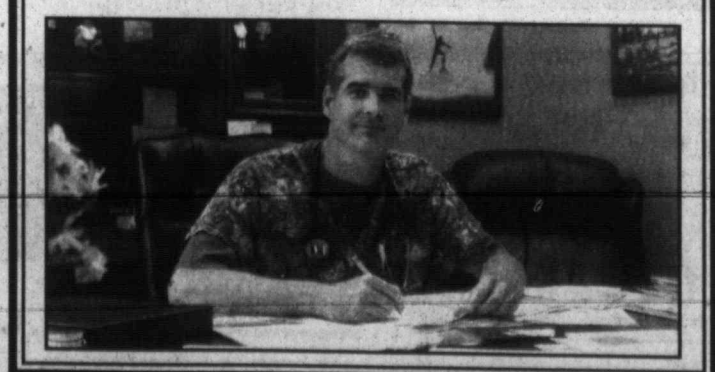
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Religion

MINISTER'S MUSINGS

Seeking God's guidance ...

Have you ever sought God's guidance for your life? Do you know what the hardest thing about discerning God's guidance for our lives is? It is that His guidance might not be the same as what we have already decided we want. Too often we say, "I'm seeking the Lord's leading for my life." Most of the time we don't really mean that, just like many people who walk into a counselor's office aren't really looking for counsel. What are they looking for? Someone to agree with what they have already decided, and too often this even describes Christians, too.

I once met a family here in Pampa who I knew from when I was a kid growing up here. We renewed our acquaintance and discovered that both of us had become committed Christians. I asked them about what church they were members of. Their response was, "Well, we visit several churches, but aren't really members of any one church."

I mentioned that I thought this was a very poor decision, and that I believed that if they would ask God for guidance on this subject that He would prompt them to get plugged into a particular church.

We continued to see each other around town from time to time, and they even visited my church a couple of Sundays. One Sunday evening during a fellowship dinner here at Hi-Land Christian, the husband called me and asked if I could come over and visit with them about being members at HCC. I was excited and said that I would be right over.

When I got over to their home, we start-

ed drinking tea and visiting about the weather. I was confused and after a few minutes asked, "Wasn't I coming over so that we could visit about you becoming members at our church? Why don't you begin by telling me what brought about this call."

It seems that God had put both the husband and wife under conviction concerning getting totally plugged into one church and that bouncing around and being a member "at-large" was not a good thing.

They had visited several churches after God had put them under conviction, including ours, but could not discern what the Lord would have them do. Then the day before they had a special prayer time and asked the Lord for a sign. They asked God to have someone call and invite them to church so that they could know for sure where the Lord wanted them to get plugged in. Within just a short while, one of our church ladies called to invite them to a special service that we were having. They had their answer.

I congratulated them on receiving their answer and asked them about announcing their membership on Sunday. That is when they said, "Well, before we join we first want to talk to you about your church's beliefs."

I got up, put on my coat and headed for the front door.

They asked me, "Where are you going? Aren't you going to talk to us?"

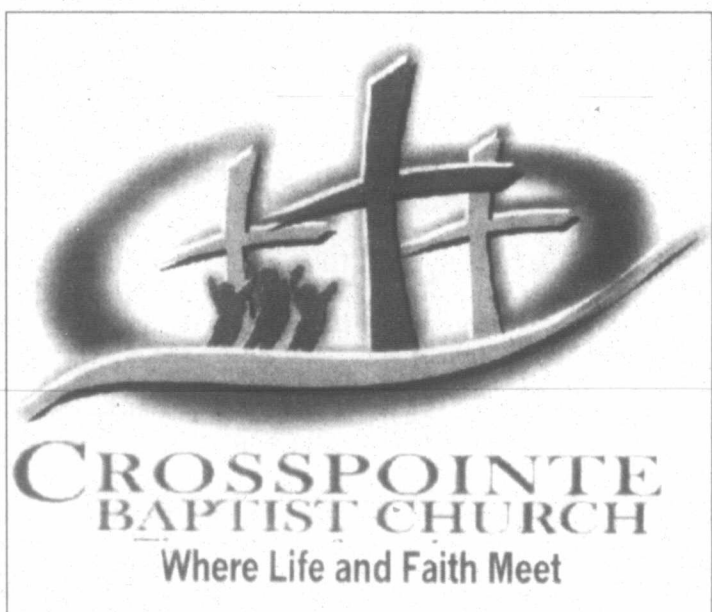
I said something like, "After you join our church, I'll be happy to visit with you about what our church stands for. But if

See SUBLETT, Page 10

Mike Sublett
Hi-Land Christian



Crosspointe announces new 'Extreme Home Makeover'



"When it comes to raising kids and maintaining a marriage, a little outside help can make all the difference between success and failure," a press release from CrossPointe Baptist Church said.

"To build a successful family in today's world we need help from the 'Master Architect,'" the press release said.

Crosspointe will initiate an "Extreme Home Makeover" Jan. 8. Services will begin at 10:30 a.m. The church meets in the Masonic Lodge building at 1507 W. Kentucky. For more information, call 662-9356.

Photographer turns his lens on churches

NEW YORK (AP) — Camilo Jose Vergara has spent the last three decades taking his camera to some of the poorest neighborhoods in the country, documenting places few outsiders ever visit.

Over the years, he noticed that urban areas emptied by blight were filling up with storefront churches. The pastors were cab drivers and retired steel and transit workers with little or no formal religious training, yet they took on an important role in their communities.

Vergara, author of the book "The New American Ghetto," saw these churches as part of the story he's been trying to tell with his photography about the lives of the poor. After four years of Sundays spent in churches from the Bronx to Detroit to Los Angeles, he has published a book of photos called "How the Other Half Worships."

"The work I've been doing all of these years is for the country to come together. See CHURCHES, Page 10

Church brief

Zion Lutheran will hold a Divine Service for the Feast of Epiphany at 7:30 p.m. today at the church located at 1200 Duncan Street. All are welcome.

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Viewpoints

Robin Hood and the state of school finance

The financing of the public schools of Texas is a topic that has most people's attention now because of the state Supreme Court's ruling that the current system of paying for schools through property taxes is, in effect, an illegal state property tax. While the tax is levied and collected at the local level, the judges determined that it is in reality a state tax because most school districts in the state have been forced to assess a tax rate at the legal maximum of \$1.50 per \$100 of value. The court gave the Texas legislature until June 1, 2006, to develop a legal way of paying for public education in the state.

Educating the young people of a community is a complicated and expensive venture. School budgets are difficult to craft each year because of the uncertainty of the revenue flow. While there are several sources of revenue for schools, one of the most important is the revenue generated by local property taxes. In fact, last school year, the majority (59%) of the money that we had to spend in the Pampa Independent School District came from local property tax collections.

Big swings in local values can affect the revenue a school has at its disposal each year. If values are up,

there is a bit more money to spend that year. If values are down, there is a bit less to spend.

However, swings in values even out over time because of the state's plan for funding schools nicknamed Robin Hood. With Robin Hood, each school district must have about the same amount of money to spend per student each year.

To do that, money is taken from wealthy school districts and given to poor school dis-

tricts. The plan resulted from an earlier Supreme Court decision that said that the quality of the education a child receives should not be



Barry Haenisch
Columnist

determined by the child's ZIP code.

In other words, students in areas with mineral wealth do not, according to the opinion, deserve a better education than those living in the poorer areas of the state.

By the definition the state uses, the Pampa Independent School District is a poor

school district. We do not send money to the state. In fact, we receive more than two million dollars more each year because we are poor.

Robin Hood is your school's friend, and Robin Hood is not the problem the courts identified in financing schools. The problem found by the courts is the state's over-reliance on the local property tax to fund schools.

If more funding had been infused into the system from sources other than local property taxes (through Robin Hood), local property taxes may have been lower, the state maximum tax rate might not have been reached

in most school districts, and the system would have been legal.

As the legislature meets in the spring to create a financing system that meets the muster of the Supreme Court, it is very important for the local school tax rate to be reduced. However the Legislature accomplishes this job, it is critical that local tax dollars are replaced with money from a system that provides a dependable source of revenue.

Texas school children need a system for financing education that grows with the state to assure that they have quality chances to succeed.

Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Jan. 6, the sixth day of 2006. There are 359 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 6, 1412, according to tradition, Joan of Arc was born in Domremy.

On this date:

In 1540, England's King Henry VIII married his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves. (The marriage lasted about six months.)

In 1759, George Washington and Martha Dandridge Custis were married.

In 1838, Samuel Morse first publicly demonstrated his telegraph, in Morristown, N.J.

*'You gain strength,
courage and confidence
by every experience in
which you really stop to
look fear in the face. ...
You must do the thing
you think you cannot
do.'*

— Eleanor Roosevelt
American first lady
(1884-1962)

president George Herbert Walker Bush married Barbara Pierce in Rye, N.Y.

In 1967, U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese troops launched Operation Deckhouse Five, an offensive in the Mekong River delta.

In 1982, truck driver William G. Bonin was convicted in Los Angeles of being the "freeway killer" who had murdered 14 young men and boys.

Ten years ago: President Clinton, bowing to months of Republican demands, offered a seven-year balanced-budget plan using Congressional Budget Office figures. Republican candidates kicked off the 1996 presidential campaign year by shadowboxing with absent front-runner Bob Dole at a televised debate in Columbia, S.C.

Five years ago: With the vanquished Vice President Al Gore presiding, Congress formally certified George W. Bush the winner of the achingly close and bitterly contested 2000 presidential election.

One year ago: Attorney General-nominee Alberto Gonzales, under scorching criticism at his confirmation hearing, condemned torture as an interrogation tactic and promised to prosecute abusers of terror suspects. Congress certified President Bush's re-election. Former Ku Klux Klan leader Edgar Ray Killen was arrested 41 years after three civil rights workers were slain in Mississippi.

Hillary hates if her strings show

Whom did the Valerie Plame leak hurt? Valerie, who went from undercover to on the cover when she posed for Vanity Fair? Joe Wilson, who got a best-selling book out of the deal?

The current leak, however, of classified material relating to National Security Agency tactics in intercepting conversations between people abroad and those within the United States is a vastly serious proposition that may have materially compromised investigations in progress and tipped terrorists off to our methods so that they can hide among us undetected.

This leak, far more than the Valerie Plame incident, deserves a full investigation to identify who spilled the beans and to whom and how. The consequences of this leak alone merit an independent investigation and, perhaps, a trial for treason.

Why does Bush need to use taps without warrants in the fight on terror? The answer is obvious: We often don't know who or what we are looking for.

Our analysts' best hope of catching and exposing terror plots against us lies

in combing the airwaves, listening for suspicious words and phrases or patterns. Unlike criminal investigations, which are deductive — predicated on a single suspect or a number of alternative suspects — terror investigators want to find out what is going on and only an inductive approach — amassing lots of material and searching for patterns — has any chance of success.

For example, in 2002 the federal government tipped off the New York City Police Department that there was a lot of chatter about the Brooklyn Bridge. The resulting police tactics stopped the attack and eventually led to the apprehension of the would-be bomber.

What warrant could the anti-terror investigators have gotten to allow such a search? They had no name, no phone numbers, no idea of what to look for. But a careful analysis of the data averted a massive tragedy.

Politically, the left is making a big mistake in

focusing on the issue. Bush is well-served by bringing the terrorism debate home. Isolationists — about 40 percent of the nation, divided between the two parties — will not back him



Dick Morris
Columnist

on a war in Iraq but sure will support him against attempts to handcuff homeland security in the name of privacy or civil liberties. By raising this issue — and the concomitant issue of the Patriot Act renewal — the Democrats are snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

Iraq is a winner for the left. Homeland security is a loser.

Hillary's Strings Are Showing.

Anyone who wonders about Hillary Clinton's nuanced position on the war in Iraq need look no further than the polls she is seeing.

To outside observers, Mrs. Clinton's position — that she takes "responsibility" for her vote but that she wouldn't have voted for the war if she knew then what she knows now but we

shouldn't withdraw but we should set a series of milestones to use in deciding when to withdraw but we shouldn't set a timetable for pulling out — seems a trifle tortured. But to her pollster, Mark Penn, it makes perfect political sense.

Unable to keep the puppet strings from showing, Penn blabbed to Washington Post political writer John Harris. In a strategy memo to Democratic moderates, Penn and Democratic Council President Al From warned that "Democratic leaders could be playing with political dynamite if they call for an immediate pullout of American troops." Penn and From argued that a middle path is better, in which Democrats reject troop withdrawal but endorse "clear benchmarks" to measure progress and set a path to a victory and a pullout.

Curiously, that is exactly what Hillary said!

A warning to Mark Penn: Hillary doesn't mind being a puppet, but she does mind if the strings show!

—Eileen McGann co-wrote this column. Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years.

Let's look at pluses, minuses of Iraqi war

Now that President Bush has launched a new propaganda campaign to convince Americans that we are winning the war in Iraq, it's a good idea to go back to the basics and look at the pluses and minuses of this war.

The minuses we all know. The war was sold on false pretenses, there being neither weapons of mass destruction nor ties to al-Qaida, which after all, was responsible for the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. Saddam Hussein's government was secular, and the majority of people in Iraq are Shiites. Al-Qaida is a fanatical religious movement that is Sunni, which is why you need never fear that al-Qaida will take over Iraq.

The other minuses are the loss of American prestige, nearly 2,200 dead, about 16,000 wounded, and \$221 billion and counting in money. So, that's the downside of the Iraq War. What's the upside?

Well, for the sake of argument, let's assume we do win the war, however strangely the Bush administration might decide to define victory. But let's assume we win. The insurgents are defeated. An elected government of pro-

Iranian Shiites is in charge. What are the benefits to the American people?

When a young Marine asked that of Vice President Dick Cheney, he reeled off a list of benefits for the Iraqi people, but said not a word

about Americans. Since victory (stipulated only for the sake of argument) is paid for by American blood and American treasure, some benefit should accrue to the American people. What?

I can't think of any. That's too high a price just to feel good that we did a bunch of foreigners a favor by relieving them of their home-grown dictator. You could argue, I suppose, that after a victory Americans could visit Iraq as tourists, though on this beautiful planet Iraq is not quite — but almost — dead last on the list of scenic places to visit. Besides, it will be decades before Iraqis get over their hostility to Americans, who since 1991 have made their lives miserable with two wars, periodic bombings and cruel sanctions.

Americans jolly well won't be safer. The pathetic and infantile argument that if the terrorists weren't fighting us in Iraq they'd be in New York is not worth talking about. Ninety percent of the people fighting us in Iraq are not terrorists, but insurgents who resent the occupation of their country by a foreign power. The other 10 percent are using Iraq as a training ground. After we leave Iraq, some of those might attack us in other places, but they would have anyway. Just because it's been four years since the 9/11 attacks doesn't mean al-Qaida has given up or even been thwarted by our bureaucrats. There was a long time gap between the first attack on the World Trade Center and the second. Al-Qaida is patient.

That, by the way, is another downside to the Iraq War. Al-Qaida was our enemy, not Iraq, and we have aided al-Qaida by invading a Muslim country as well as diverting resources that could have been directed at finding and killing Osama bin Laden.

As for the original neo-conservative belief that a democratic Iraq would infect the rest of the Middle East and Israel could live peacefully, that was a joke from Day One. The only friends Israel and we have in the Middle East are the dictators we pay, in one way or another, to be our friends. Popularly elected governments would make it quite clear they hate Israel and the U.S.

I can tell you one positive thing about this war, if the American people will learn from it. We should never, ever again allow a bunch of academic ideologues and Washington lawyers who don't know crap about the real world to gain control of American foreign policy.

The next American president should ask two questions of all the people who present themselves as Middle East experts. Have you lived in an Arab country? Do you speak and read Arabic? If the answers are no, then he should say, "Hit the road, Jack." Twenty-two hundred Americans probably would be alive if Bush had asked those questions of his neoconservative warmonsters.

THE PAMPA NEWS

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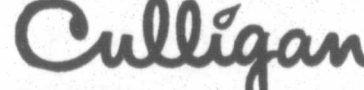
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JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME
YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER
HEBREWS 13:8

Dear Abby...

By Pauline & Jeanne Phillips

DEAR ABBY: I am a 48-year-old woman who was known by my nickname, "Pudge," while I was in high school because so many other girls had the same common name. After high school, I went back to my given name, and I have carefully told all my old friends that, while my nickname was cute for a 15-year-old, it no longer suited me. Most of them have made the change out of respect for me. What should I tell my doctor's receptionist, who did not know me before, but insists on using my nickname? I have told her I prefer my given name, but she refuses to use it. I don't want to hurt her feelings, but I think she should address me as I introduced myself. I see this doctor four times a year, so I see her often. She also uses the nickname on mail sent to my home. The best she has ever done is to preface it with "Mrs." What should I do? -- **NO NICKNAME, PLEASE**

DEAR N.N.P.: Because you have already spoken to the receptionist, and your request has been ignored, your next step should be to address your complaint to the doctor. Tell him how annoying it is that she continues to address you by a nickname you'd prefer to forget, and even puts it on your mail. And be sure to let him know that you expect him to put a stop to it, because if he doesn't, you will take your business elsewhere. That should "cure" the problem.

DEAR ABBY: I have been happily married for five years to a wonderful man I met on the Internet. He moved here to Idaho after our marriage. (He's from Minnesota). We have traveled by road or by plane four or five times over the last five years to Minnesota to visit his relatives.

However, my in-laws have made only one attempt to come to visit us. My father-in-law has since passed away. We flew to Minnesota for his funeral. We have attempted many times to coax my mother-in-law to come to Idaho to visit us and the four grandkids we have had over the last five years, but she claims she's afraid of flying. When we suggested taking a bus, she came up with another excuse. We invited his mother to Idaho for Christmas and again she refused, saying e-mail, Internet photos and phone calls are enough for her. She is very involved with her friends, card games, weight-loss programs, Red Hat Society, etc. She is only 72 and healthy and wealthy. I am very hurt that she makes no effort at all to see us. We can't afford to fly six of us there even once a year to visit. Have you any suggestions? I think she is being selfish, but don't know how to fix the problem, and my husband is very hurt by it. -- **FORGOTTEN IN IDAHO**

DEAR FORGOTTEN: You can't change another person; you can only change the way you react to that person. Your mother-in-law appears to be selfish and self-centered, but much as you would like to, you can't change her. Continue to send her cards, photos and updates on her grandchildren's progress. However, you and your husband will be less hurt and disappointed if you accept the fact that his mother is flawed, do not personalize it any further and go on with your lives. Trust me on that!

For Better Or Worse



Zits



Garfield



Beetle Bailey



Marvin



Crossword Puzzle

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Significant
- 6 Longed
- 11 "— there yet?"
- 12 "Kootchy-kootchy" star
- 13 Friend of Will and Grace
- 14 Garnet unit
- 15 I strain
- 16 Bette Midler film
- 18 Monk's title
- 19 Down
- 20 Set a course
- 21 Till fill
- 23 Fixes
- 25 Lightning
- 27 General address
- 28 Poll
- 30 Fancy
- 33 Pipe material
- 34 "East of Eden" brother
- 36 Big snake
- 37 Montana neighbor
- 39 Hot-dog holder
- 40 "Spider-Man" director
- 41 Skating division

DOWN

- 1 Cope
- 2 Spanish province
- 3 "The King and I"
- 4 Need to pay
- 5 Leases
- 6 Consents
- 7 Blacken
- 8 "The Carpet-baggers"
- 9 Clear
- 10 Was
- 11 choreographer
- 17 Deli choice
- 22 Lush
- 24 Tiny taste
- 26 Bemoans sight
- 28 First song
- 38 Issue
- 42 Lend a hand
- 29 Squealer
- 31 Origin
- 32 Ginger-bread eater
- 33 Proof-reader's mark
- 35 Over-sight
- 38 Issue
- 42 Lend a hand

Yesterday's answer

- 1 Cope
- 2 Spanish province
- 3 "The King and I"
- 4 Need to pay
- 5 Leases
- 6 Consents
- 7 Blacken
- 8 "The Carpet-baggers"
- 9 Clear
- 10 Was
- 11 choreographer
- 17 Deli choice
- 22 Lush
- 24 Tiny taste
- 26 Bemoans sight
- 28 First song
- 38 Issue
- 42 Lend a hand
- 29 Squealer
- 31 Origin
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THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane

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1-6

"My mom said, instead of magazine subscriptions, we should sell housecleaning services."

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Flo & Friends



Blondie



Sports Day



This year's Pampa High School Lady Harvester basketball team is (left to right)- senior Callie Cobb, junior Halie Skinner, senior Jackie Gerber, junior Kelsie Wyatt, junior McKinsie East, sophomore Haili Kotara, senior Krissie Alexander, junior Britteni Rice, senior Audrey Dunn, junior Tamara Trevathan and senior Felicia Urban.

Lady Harvesters open district season tonight with trip to No. 6 Palo Duro

By MICHAEL J. STEVENS
Sports Editor

Preseason is over, time to put those playoff plans into action. The chase for the District 3-4A girl's basketball title starts tonight. And Pampa head coach Troy Fry knows his team is coming out of the gate facing a big challenge.

The Lady Harvesters travel to Amarillo to take on the No. 6 ranked Lady Dons of Palo Duro (18-3). PD has much of the team still intact from last season — a team that made it to the Regional Tournament.

However, Coach Fry makes it very clear all his team has been through over the past couple months was meant to do one thing — prepare them for this night and those that follow. "We have been preparing for this day since November. The schedule that we have played I hope has prepared us for what lies ahead of us," said Fry.

Pampa also made the playoffs for the first time in more than a decade last season. And though most are picking Palo Duro and Randall to set the pace, it would be unfair and unwise to discount the Lady Harvesters or the other members of the district which includes Hereford, Caprock and Dumas.

But tonight's focus is Palo Duro. Does Fry put much stock in the fact the Lady Dons are so highly ranked? "Palo Duro is ranked 6th in the state and that does mean a lot," he said. "There are a lot of good teams and to be ranked means you are playing well and beating good teams. It also adds momentum for the team to keep their ranking each game they play."

When asked what his team's strength is going into tonight's meeting, Fry responded, "The team's strength

right now is our defense which will be tested tonight. I also think our desire to play hard is a strength of ours."

The Lady Harvesters have had a week off to prepare for Palo Duro and the start of the district schedule. Time Fry says they have used to work on defense and rebounding. "Rebounding will be the key tonight," said Fry. "We have also been working on handling their (PD's) pressure."

When asked for one word that best describes his team, Fry said, "Overachievers." He explained, "I don't think they really know how well and capable they can actually play when they want to."

Fry says the Lady Harvesters are healthy and ready to start the district season. "Tonight we have nothing to lose. I just want the girls to come out tonight relaxed, play basketball and have fun."

Tonight's game can be heard on AM 1230 KGRO and on the web at www.centramedia.com. Game time is 7:30 p.m.

DISTRICT 3-4A

Other games of interest

District 3-4A teams and current records as of today:

Palo Duro 18-3, 0-0
Dumas 8-10, 0-0
Randall 8-11, 0-0
Pampa 8-13, 0-0

Caprock 3-14, 0-0
Hereford 0-0, 0-0

Tonight's games:
Pampa @ Palo Duro
Randall @ Caprock
Dumas @ Hereford

Pampa Optimist Youth Club set to open basketball season

"We have completed the Fifth and Sixth Grade Division sign-ups, we have our coaches, we have conducted our draft and we are ready to start," declared Optimist President Ronnie N. Hayes referring to Optimist Boys' Basketball.

Jeremy Silva will serve as Commissioner of the Fifth and Sixth Grade Division while Huey Green was be in the same capacity over the Third and Fourth Grade Division. The following are coaches in the Third and Fourth Grade Division: Kent Dyson, Pistons; Scott Troxell and Russell Hughes, Mavericks; Janice Miner and Candy Allen, The Heat; Kevin Hunt, Spurs; and Jeremy Silva, Celtics. Coaching the teams in

"We have our coaches, we have conducted our draft and we are ready to start."

—Ronnie N. Hayes
President, POYC

"We have 56 fifth and sixth graders and 41 third and fourth graders," Haynes said.

"We will have seven teams in the older group and five teams in the younger group."

Both divisions will play a 12-game regular season followed by a City Tournament.

Games are scheduled to begin the week of Jan. 16 in the Optimist Gym.

The Pampa Optimist Youth Club is a Pampa United Way agency.

Pampa hosts Plainview tonight in final tune-up before district season

By MICHAEL J. STEVENS
Sports Editor

While the Pampa High School junior varsity boy's basketball team competes at the Perryton Tournament, Coach Dustin Miller and his varsity squad will host the Plainview Bulldogs at The Pit tonight with a tipoff set for 7:30.

Pampa is 14-4 with just this game left before opening the District 3-4A season a week from tonight at Randall.

The Harvesters and Bulldogs met Dec. 20 in Plainview with Pampa coming away with the loss.

Miller and his team hope for different results tonight in the friendly confines of McNeely Field House.

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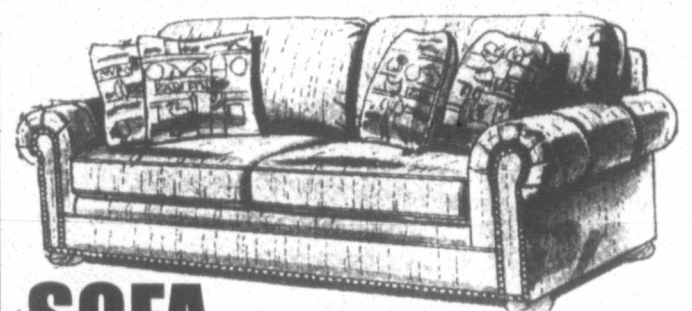
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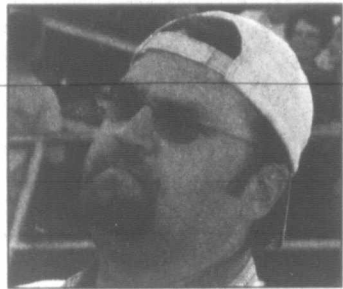
Stevens takes week 18 as clock winds down on season

Week 19 Games

NFL Wild Card Games

Saturday
Washington @ Tampa Bay
Jacksonville @ New England

Sunday
Carolina @ NY Giants
Pittsburgh @ Cincinnati



Michael J. Stevens
Last Week: 15-5-0 (1)

Washington
New England
NY Giants
Pittsburgh



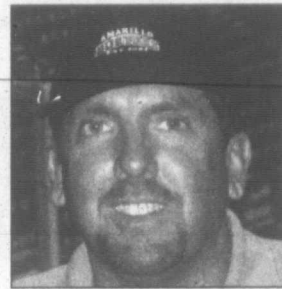
Sean Smith
Last Week: 9-11-0 (4)

Washington
New England
NY Giants
Cincinnati



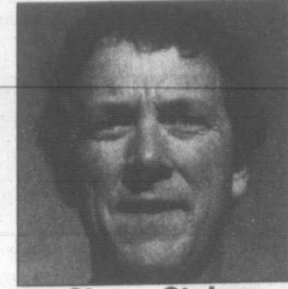
Donny Hooper
Last Week: 13-7-0 (2)

Tampa Bay
New England
NY Giants
Cincinnati



Ray Boring
Last Week: 10-10-0 (3)

Washington
New England
Carolina
Pittsburgh



Shane Stokes
Last Week: 10-10-0 (3)

Tampa Bay
New England
Carolina
Cincinnati

Registrations continue for volleyball leagues

The City of Pampa Recreation Department will be sponsoring women's and mixed adult volleyball leagues. Women's and mixed 4-on-4 divisions will be offered (four players on each team). Players must be fourteen years old to participate. Entry deadline will be 5 P.M. Jan. 13. The season will begin the week of Jan. 23. Entry fee (sponsor's fee) is \$100. Player's fee is \$15 per player with a minimum of five players per team. Roster forms, fact sheets, and league bylaws are available at the Recreation Office at City Hall, Room 204. For more information call 669-5740 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Two Cougars coaches quit

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston defensive coordinator Ron Harris and receivers coach Rodney Blackshear have resigned after a 6-6 season that ended with a loss to Kansas in the Fort Worth Bowl. Harris spent three seasons in Houston and coached the defensive line for the first time in 2005. Harris and Houston coach Art Briles were Texas Tech assistants from 2000-02. The coaches resigned Thursday, athletic director Dave Maggard said. Briles was recruiting in Dallas and not immediately available for comment today, spokesman Chris Burkhalter said.

Central Hockey League standings

NORTHERN CONFERENCE						
Northeast Division						
	W	L	OTL	Pts	GF	GA
Bossier-Shreveport	13	12	3	29	92	87
Youngstown	12	17	1	25	94	107
Fort Worth	10	17	4	24	80	113
Memphis	11	15	1	23	76	90
Northwest Division						
	W	L	OTL	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	23	6	2	48	118	90
Oklahoma City	18	11	1	37	110	93
Wichita	16	9	5	37	116	106
Tulsa 14	12	3	31	85	94	
SOUTHERN CONFERENCE						
Southeast Division						
	W	L	OTL	Pts	GF	GA
Laredo	19	8	3	41	112	82
Rio Grande Valley	16	11	1	33	102	88
Corpus Christi	12	15	1	25	81	93
Austin	10	17	2	22	73	109
Southwest Division						
	W	L	OTL	Pts	GF	GA
Odessa	18	8	3	39	101	84
Lubbock	14	14	1	29	82	79
Amarillo	12	13	2	26	88	95

NOTE: Two points are awarded for a win, one point for loss in overtime or shootout. Overtime or shootout losses are only denoted in the OTL column, not the loss column.

Friday's Games
Amarillo at Colorado
Odessa at Lubbock
Oklahoma City at Memphis
Bossier-Shreveport at Wichita
Youngstown at Laredo
Fort Worth at Corpus Christi
Austin at Rio Grande Valley

Saturday's Games
Lubbock at Colorado
Bossier-Shreveport at Memphis
Laredo at Austin
Youngstown at Fort Worth
Odessa at Oklahoma City
Corpus Christi at Rio Grande Valley
Wichita at Tulsa

PASSINGS

Trojans' Dedeaux was colorful, successful

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Rod Dedeaux was a colorful character and a remarkable baseball coach. Dedeaux, who guided Southern California to a record 11 NCAA baseball championships and helped mold such major league greats as Mark McGwire, Randy Johnson and Tom Seaver, died Thursday. He was 91. Dedeaux headed a thriving trucking business and he once said of his reported \$1 annual salary at USC: "I always say everyone gets paid what they're worth. I could cash my check on the bus." A twinkle in his eye, Dedeaux was quick with a quip. — On friend Casey Stengel's often indecipherable speech: "People talked about Stengelese, but I understood every word. Of course, I'd occasionally wonder if there was something wrong with me because I was the only person in our group who did understand." — On longtime pal Tommy Lasorda: "I love the guy. But when people say we look alike and think we're brothers, it's really insulting because he's so ugly."

— On his two-game major league career: "I had a cup of coffee with no sugar in it." Dedeaux, who coached the Trojans for 45 years before retiring in 1986, died in suburban Glendale of complications from a Dec. 2 stroke, the school said. Nearly 60 USC players under Dedeaux went on to big league careers, including Dave Kingman, Fred Lynn and Roy Smalley. "Rod Dedeaux was one of a kind. I consider myself fortunate enough to have been his friend," Seaver said through New York Mets spokesman Jay Horwitz. "He never forgot you. Even though I was only there for one year, it seemed like I played for him for 10 or 20 years. There's no one who has ever been like him." Dedeaux had a record of 1,332-571-11, the most wins in Division I history until Cliff Gustafson of Texas surpassed him in 1994. Dedeaux's record currently ranks seventh among Division I coaches. He had winning seasons in 41 of his 45 years with the Trojans, and during one stretch, USC went 37 years without a losing season.

NASCAR drivers competitive on eve of bobsled race

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. (AP) — As soon as John Morgan opened the drivers' meeting inside the Winter Olympic Museum, Dick Trickle voiced a concern. "Some pushers are way better than others," Trickle, a former NASCAR driver, said Thursday night on the eve of the Geoff Bodine Bobsled Challenge. "Yeah, they're already thinking about cheating," Morgan replied, a big smile on his face. "We'll get every driver to sign an affidavit they won't bribe the pusher." Welcome to NASCAR on ice. Trickle is one of 10 current or former drivers who are taking part in this unique event, an effort to raise funds to keep the U.S. men's and women's bobsled teams at the forefront of international racing. And even at age 64 and retired, Trickle doesn't like to lose. "You try to run the best line," Trickle said not long after he and his son Chad had completed three runs down the 6-year-old bobsled track at nearby Mount Van Hoevenberg. "I had about the fifth-fastest time, but I think a couple of guys got sleds that are house sleds. They've got their own name on them, that kind of stuff."

"I had about the fifth-fastest time, but I think a couple of guys got sleds that are house sleds. They've got their own name on them, that kind of stuff."
— Dick Trickle
NASCAR Driver, Retired

Especially Stanton Barrett, whose family has lived and breathed winter sports for decades.

His grandfather was a coach on the U.S. ski team and his mom skied World Cup and won a medal at the World Championships. "I've always been fascinated by it," said Barrett, a former ski racer and motocross star. "I used to watch ski jumping, alpine skiing and bobsled with my mom until 2 in the morning." Still, like most of the others, he had never seen a bobsled track in person until Thursday, and he was quickly hooked. No pansy 34-degree banked turns like at NASCAR's so-called bullring in Tennessee. "It was just like for a fan to go to Bristol. Holy Cow!" Barrett said. "You see it on TV, but you don't realize that's a flat, vertical bank they're driving. I can't wait to go tomorrow and race."

For the record, Geoff Bodine said he had the fastest time of the drivers, who learned on the bottom two-thirds of the track. Then again, he has the most experience, having driven the track last month in testing the two-man training sleds the drivers are using. "Everyone is enjoying it," Bodine said. "Now that they've driven, you can't get the smile off their faces. They want to race all night."

Not surprisingly, all are aiming for the same thing. "We're competitors, we're here to beat everybody else," Lepage said. "We want to go home to Charlotte and go to Daytona to test and say we were the best bobsled driver. I didn't come here to run second."

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FOUND Christmas night, 4 mo. old fem. kitten @ Courtyard Apts. Call 669-9712 to describe.

14d Carpentry

Carpentry, Roofing, Re-placement windows, steel siding & trim Jerry Nicholas 669-9991, 662-8169

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14h Gen. Serv.

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14s Plumbing/Heat

JACK'S Plumbing & Faucet Shop, 715 W. Foster, 665-7115- faucets, plumbing supplies, new constr., repair, remodeling, sewer / drain cleaning, septic systems installed. Visa/MC

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CALDWELL Production needs Oilfield Pulling Unit Operator. Paid holidays, 1 wk paid vacation per yr. Top wages for top operator. Hwy. 60 West, Pampa, 665-8888.

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PHYSICIAN Assistant wanted for busy orthopedic practice. Salary is competitive and insurance will be provided. Please send resume to Box 06, c/o Pampa News, P.O. Box 2198, Pampa, Tx. 79066-2198.

CTW Brake Rims Inc. Is now accepting applications for welder/fabricators • competitive pay • 50+ hrs./week • health insurance • paid holidays **Apply in person @ 8855 County Rd 12 1/2 Hwy 60 East. 665-0289**

FULL-TIME Yard/Delivery Worker. Must have good driving record. White House Lumber 101 S. Ballard.

NEED Exp. Cook. Apply in person at Granny's Home Cookin', 328 E. Frederic. No Phone Calls

W&W FIBERGLASS IMMEDIATE OPENINGS FOR CDL TRUCK DRIVERS Field Labor/Swamper Fiberglass Manufacturing General Labor •40+ hrs./wk •Salary based on exp. **Apply in person: 100 N. Price Rd., Pampa**

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Wheeler Nursing and Rehabilitation is seeking caring, dedicated employees for the position of 6-2 P.M. Nurse Aid (will certify). Please apply in person to Donna Cox RN DON, 1000 S. Kiowa

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CALDWELL Production needs Secretary. Oil & gas related exp. preferred. 1 wk. vacation, 6 pd. holidays. Hwy 60 West, Pampa. 665-8888.

SONIC DRIVE-IN is now accepting applications for dependable, mature, enthusiastic, friendly crewmembers for all shifts, all positions. Apply in person at 1404 Hobart EOE

21 Help Wanted

JOB Opening for Assembly Work. Must Have Integrity, Be Punctual & Reliable. Will Train. Valid Texas Drivers License & Background Check Required. Call Jim @ 665-5010.

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69a Garage Sales

1816 Lynn, 9 am.-7 Fri. & Sat. Lots of kid's stuff, toys.

STORE CLOSING SALE (due to parents are ill) All merchandise, fixtures decorations up to 50% off Spoiled By Right 302 W Foster 665-0990 10:30 AM - 5:30 PM

MCCOY Rare Coins Vintage Clothing, Coca Cola, Lamps, Pictures, Knives, Toys, Tools, Models & Collectibles Shop, Save, Enjoy. HNY! 2218 Perryton Pkwy. Raggedy Andy, 669-2499

69b Garage Sales

AXYDLBAAXR is **LONGFELLOW**

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

1-6 CRYPTOQUOTE

DQF JFPP M UFQIBF JMVF
NQMPDJFH'P YSDQFH DQF
OMKQD UFCSHF, DQF YSHF M
JSSV JMVF QFH DQF YSHOMOK
ICDFH. — DIJTJTIQ UIOVQFIG

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IF HELP AND SALVATION ARE TO COME, THEY CAN ONLY COME FROM THE CHILDREN, FOR THE CHILDREN ARE THE MAKERS OF MEN. — MARIA MONTESSORI

69a Garage Sales

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FREE to good home in White Deer, 3 month old lab mix puppy. Call 662-2209.

2BR., 1ba., ch/a, siding, storm windows, 236 Henry, and only \$400 per month. Call 665-1665.

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NICE remodeled, 3 bdr., 1 ba., gar., w/d hookups, cellar, 712 Deane. 663-6121, 669-2139.

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frig., completely renovat-

ed, new carpet. All bills

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ter pd. 3, 6 mo.-1yr. lease.

800 N. Nelson, 665-1875.

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bdr. unfurn. apt. avail.

Ref. dep. req. 669-2981

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Churches

Continued from Page 3

other people's lives, people who tend not to be in the media, the next time you find yourself there it becomes more meaningful."

The title is a nod to the influential Jacob Riis book of photography published in 1890, "How the Other Half Lives," about tenement life on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Vergara, also a New Yorker, filled his book with photos of churches in unlikely places: a former car dealership, a shutdown Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant, a former furniture store. Many still have iron bars and metal gates that had been used to protect merchandise inside.

A few of the congregations are located in houses of worship that once served another faith. A Jewish synagogue in a destitute section of Brooklyn has become a Latino church called La Sinagoga. Stars of David still adorn the facade and sanctuary.

Inside, the churches were often decorated with paintings by congregants, or items they found in vacant churches or bought cheaply in local stores. Hanging on the walls of one church was contact paper from a home supply store with a pattern that worshippers said reminded them of stained glass.

As compelling as the buildings are, Vergara said he was struck even more by the devastation that surrounded them.

He once saw a body being pulled from an abandoned building near La Sinagoga. In Camden, N.J., he photographed a brightly painted white church with a tall steeple — a former Ukrainian Catholic Church that became a Pentecostal congregation — which sits at the end of a row of crumbling houses with overgrown front lots and boarded-up windows. Vergara wrote that the church looked like it was from "another planet."

Amid this decay, many of the congregations thrived, providing aid to the poor and homeless, a social network for church members and a human presence in areas that had been all but abandoned. Vergara, a native of Chile who was raised Roman Catholic but is no longer active in the church, found a range of religious traditions in the neighborhoods.

Among the congregations were affiliates of the Churches of God in Christ, a black Pentecostal denomination with a large membership nationwide; independent churches promoting hardline traditional views of the Bible; and Spiritualist churches, which believe in communication with the dead. Many immigrant groups started their own congregations and churches generally were organized according to ethnicity or native country.

Vergara was particularly fascinated by the pastors. He said many were retirees who "in the pecking order of society, weren't really high up," but had become revered within their own churches, he said. The startup congregations also gave worshippers a chance to play important roles they could not fill in larger, more established churches, he said.

er," said Vergara, recipient of a 2002 MacArthur Foundation "genius grant." "If you get beyond what you know and you begin to get into

Burn ban in effect at Lake Meredith

FRITCH — The National Park Service has issued a temporary ban on all open fires at Lake Meredith National Recreation Area starting Jan. 6 and continuing until further notice.

Fire danger readings are high to extreme and are expected to remain dangerously high, park officials say, until a substantial amount of rainfall is received and/or excessive wind speeds subside.

"Wild fires are burning all across the South Western United States and several grass fires have occurred in the Panhandle of Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma during the past week," said Fire Management Officer Mike Davin.

The Southwest has been experiencing drought for several years as well as an infestation of tree-killing beetles.

All Type One and Type Two fire fighting crews are in use, including crews from Lake Meredith. Park employees have assisted the Texas Forest Service and other state and federal agencies on fires across the country for some time.

The continuing drought conditions, storms with lightning but no precipitation, and the ever-present

Panhandle winds are making conditions favorable for wildfires, the park service said.

Unseasonably warm temperatures have led to increased visitation at Meredith, even though the lake level is 61-feet and falling. Visitors may use charcoal grills in the following designated campgrounds: Bugbee, Blue Creek, Chimney Hollow, Blue West, Rosita Flats, Harbor Bay, Fritch Fortress, Cedar Canyon, Sanford Yake, and Spring Canyon.

Cooking stoves, such as Coleman stoves, may be used in areas outside the designated campgrounds. Park officials ask that visitors be extra careful with charcoal or with stoves. Keep charcoal fires small and completely extinguish the coals with water.

Cigarettes should be put completely out and disposed of in a metal container. Keep all vehicles on established roadways or parking areas to ward against blazes set by automotive catalytic converters.

Park officials say the burn ban will be lifted as soon as conditions permit. For more information, contact park headquarters at (806) 857-3151.

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Continued from Page 3

you think that I'm going to visit with you now, so that you can decide whether or not you are going to join, well, then, you are sadly mistaken. You have a plain, bold answer to your prayer from God, and the only thing you need to do now is join. You have no right to decide anything now; just be obedient. Good-bye."

Well, they joined the next week, stayed for a couple of months and then just started wandering again. One day I bumped into the husband and asked him if the Lord had released them from our church. His response was, "Well, we just felt like we didn't fit very well at your church."

I said, "Well, I agree with you, but that isn't the point. I don't know why in the world God would send you to our church. There are several churches that I think you would be a much better fit with. However, God sent you to our church for a reason. You cannot expect to disregard God's leading and then be blessed by Him. You need to repent, and you can't do that until you go back where God sent you."

Have you ever pulled a stunt like this? Have you ever asked God for guidance only to disregard it when He sent you something different than you wanted?

All of us Christians need to remember four things: 1) whatever guidance God sends is right; 2) He never sends wrong guidance; 3) He often sends guidance that doesn't seem to make sense to our pea-sized brains; 4) if we disregard His guidance we are in rebellion and will be held accountable.

Got some guidance from God that you have been chewing on for a while? Well, stop chewing, and go do it.

God bless.

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