

GOOD MORNING

WEATHER

Today: Breezy, mostly cloudy and mostly dry. High 40, low 24.
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MAGIC VALLEY



Feeling the pinch: Human service agencies sometimes find themselves in need during holidays.
Page C1

RELIGION



Give your heart away: More folks are finding better ways to give on Christmas.
Page D1

SPORTS

Awards time: Twin Falls' Miller leads all-area football selections.
Page B1

OPINION

Merry Christmas: Editorial board gives up space for holiday cheer.
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COMING UP



2004 in review
U.S. economy recovers by degree, a pace that frustrates workers.
Sunday in The Times-News

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FELIZ NAVIDAD



Patricia Montoya, right, wipes a tear from her eye as she recounts spending last Christmas away from her six children, including (from left) Alejandro, 12, Edgar, 6, and Christian, 11. Patricia moved to Heyburn from Mexico in February of 2003, leaving her children with their grandparents until she could afford to bring them here. She still has two children living in Mexico, and hopes to bring them as soon as possible.

Immigrant family spends its first Christmas in America

By Chip Thompson
Times-News writer

HEYBURN — Patricia Montoya has no Christmas tree, no presents for her children and almost no food for dinner.

But for her and four of her children, this is the best Christmas in memory. Speaking through an interpreter, Montoya, a 30-year-old single mother, said she came to the U.S. from Mexico nearly two years ago hoping to earn enough money so that her six children could soon join her.

"It feels good because I love her very much," said Montoya's 12-year-old son, Alejandro. "Even without gifts, I'm glad to be here."

Shortly before coming to the U.S., Alejandro said he quit school to go to work scaling fish for \$15 per week. His younger brother Christian, 11, earned \$4 per 12-hour day cleaning chickens.

"It was very hard," Alejandro said, holding back tears. "My aunts told me my mother left us and wasn't coming back so I had to take care of the family."

In fact, fear that her children would be forced to leave school for work is precisely what drove Montoya to emigrate. "I saw there could be a better life here," Montoya said. "But 'better' is a relative term."

Looking around her tiny apartment, devoid of any sign of Christmas except for a turkey given to her by her employer, Montoya responded with a matter-of-fact "nada" when asked how she planned to celebrate with

her children. Christmas is a luxury the Montoyas simply can't afford. Montoya works at a potato processing plant and, as they are for countless agricultural workers, the winter months are slow.

She recently got a raise to \$6 per hour but only works four hours each day between November and February. She said the family often goes without food and other necessities in order to pay for utilities.

Because she doesn't know how to drive and speaks little English, Montoya said she's been unable to find extra work during the winter months.

"It was very hard. My aunts told me my mother left us and wasn't coming back so I had to take care of the family."

— Alejandro Montoya, age 12

War tops big stories of 2004

The Associated Press

BOISE — Nearly every Idaho resident was touched by the war in Iraq in 2004, whether they had a loved one fighting overseas or simply paid record gas prices to keep the car running. Its little wonder, then, that newspapers and news websites were filled with stories about the largest deployment of National Guard soldiers in state history — and the deaths of six Idaho soldiers and Marines.

The war and its effect on Idaho was voted as the state's top story in 2004, according to a survey of Idaho newspaper editors and broadcasters.

As oil prices shot up, residents paid a record high of \$2.10 a gallon for gasoline. Restaurants turned away smokers after the Legislature passed a ban on smoking in nearly all public places.

The headlines of 2004 also chronicled local battles between the religious right and gay rights advocates and the tug-of-war over Idaho's scarce water supply. Charter schools continued to spring up around the state as lawmakers dramatically loosened the laws governing them. And a graduate student at the University of Idaho was deported to Saudi Arabia after he was acquitted by federal jury of terrorism charges.

Boise Cascade Corp. dropped its name and its wood and paper products operations, because of its role in a Dravotrans transaction.

Meanwhile, the Boise State football season, undimmed with the highest national ranking in school history.

Thousands of families celebrated the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays early, before their loved ones were deployed to Iraq for a year in the largest National Guard call-up in state history. Gov. Dirk Kempthorne flew to Alexandria, La., to see the 1,600 Idaho soldiers as they deployed. This month the unpopularity of concern made it safely to their status in the embattled country, becoming part of it. Please see **REVIEW**, Page A2

Rumsfeld bolsters troops in Christmas Eve visit to Iraq

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Bearing gifts of praise and encouragement, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld paid a Christmas Eve visit to some of the most dangerous areas of Iraq and told U.S. troops he believes they will defeat the insurgency that still threatens the country.

"When it looks bleak, when one worries about how it's going to come out, when one reads and hears the naysayers and the doubters who say it can't be done, and that were in a quagmire here," one should recall that there have been such doubters "throughout every conflict in the history of the world," he said. He ended his day in Baghdad meeting with top American commanders and holding talks with the president of the interim Iraqi government, Ghazi al-Yawar, who told Rumsfeld that he shared the Bush administration's optimism about establishing a stable Iraqi democracy.

"We want to think big," al-Yawar said. "We know the situation is tough, but I have no doubt in my mind that we will succeed — it's just a matter of time." He said the Iraqis are eager to see that "all those sacrifices" of American and Iraqi casualties

Israel sends Christmas greetings to Bethlehem in a sign of warming ties

The Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, West Bank — Israel freed up travel into Bethlehem on Christmas Eve and handed out candy to Palestinian and foreign pilgrims at roadblocks, the latest signs of warming Israel-Palestinian relations since the death of Yasser Arafat.

During more than four years of fighting, Christmas in the traditional birthplace of Jesus has been marked by gloom, military curfews and violence. The town is ringed by Israeli checkpoints and a massive separation barrier.

However, on Friday, troops eased restrictions at roadblocks leading into Bethlehem, allowing Palestinians and foreigners to pass more quickly. Military officials said they expected about 5,000 visitors for the two-day holiday, one that 200 Palestinians from Gaza came to the city. Israeli troops also handed security responsibility for Bethlehem to the Palestinian security forces for the duration of Christmas, allowing the Palestinian police to carry their weapons in the city, officials said.

Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah led a procession of about 1,000 Christians through Bethlehem to begin the celebrations. A Palestinian scout group band accompanied them playing bagpipes and clashing cymbals as the crowd slowly moved through the town. By early evening, much of Manger Square — the stone-paved courtyard outside the Church of the Nativity, which Christians believe is built on the grove where Jesus was born — had cleared out. Several



A Palestinian boy waits for customers as he sells Santa balloons during Christmas festivities outside the Church of the Nativity (background) Friday in the West Bank town of Bethlehem. The Church is the site traditionally believed by most Christians as the birthplace of Jesus Christ. Hundreds of people, most of them Palestinian teenagers, walked through the nearby streets. With a cold rain coming down, vendors sold nuts and other snacks, and people drank coffee to keep warm. Under heavy security, interim Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas arrived in Bethlehem after nightfall to join the Please see **BETHLEHEM**, Page A2

Inside

- GIs relish holidays and family. Page A3
- Suicide-themed videos boost 'martyrdom' spirit. Page C6
- Energy shortages upset some Iraqis. Page E2

"should start bearing fruit." More than 1,300 Americans have been killed in Iraq. The Pentagon shrouded Rumsfeld's trip in unusual secrecy out of concern for security. The stealth trip came on the heels of several difficult weeks for the defense chief. Several high-profile Republicans have publicly criticized him, and he faced another firestorm this week because he was not personally signing condolence letters to the families of dead soldiers, as the president does.

Before leaving the country, Rumsfeld had a Christmas Eve dinner with troops at a base outside Baghdad. For the occasion, he donned a plastic apron and helped serve food to the troops. As the troops ate, Rumsfeld told them it would be dangerous to underestimate the power of the Iraqi insurgency, saying, "I don't want in any way to paint a picture that is pretty." Rumsfeld said he could not predict that the level of violence would abate after Iraqis scheduled for 30 elections, but he said the conflict now amounts to a test of will. "They (the insurgents) are determined, but so are we," he said.

TWIN FALLS FORECAST

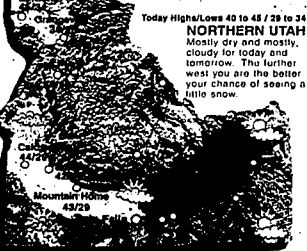
Today: A mostly cloudy and mostly dry Christmas. Highs near 40.
 Tonight: Mostly cloudy with a small chance of late snow showers. Lows in the middle 20s.
 Tomorrow: Cloudy skies and cool temperatures with a small chance of light snow. Highs in the upper 30s.

BURLEY/RUPERT FORECAST

Today: A mostly cloudy and mostly dry Christmas. Highs near 40.
 Tonight: Mostly cloudy with a small chance of late snow showers. Lows in the middle 20s.
 Tomorrow: Cloudy skies and cool temperatures with a small chance of light snow. Highs in the upper 30s.

IDAHO'S FORECAST

SUN VALLEY, SURROUNDING MTS.
 There will be a little bit of Christmas snow today. The northern and western mountains will likely see the most of the snow with a few inches possible. Scattered snow showers are also likely on Sunday.
 Today Highs 22 to 28 Tonight's Lows 8 to 18
 It will be a cloudy and cool Christmas with scattered rain and snow showers. Travel conditions should not be affected too much, especially at lower elevations.



Yesterday's State Extremes: not available. Low: not available. Weather key: sun, partly cloudy, mc, mostly cloudy, ec, cloudy, dr, drizzle, rain, shower, flurries, flurries, wind, m, missing.

TWIN FALLS FIVE-DAY FORECAST

Today	Tonight	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	City	HI	LO	Prcp
Breezy mostly cloudy and mostly dry	Mostly cloudy with a late snow shower or two	Cloudy and cool with a small chance of showers	Mostly cloudy and mostly dry	Mostly cloudy, breezy and scattered showers	A little color with scattered snow showers	Boise Burley Caldwell Coeville Idaho Falls Lewiston Lowell Moscow Pocatello Rupert Shoshone Twin Falls Vernon Wallace Zona	n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a	n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a n/a	
High 40	Low 24	39 / 26	41 / 26	40 / 25	38 / 23				

ALMANAC - TWIN FALLS

Temperature	Precipitation	Humidity	Barometric Pressure	Sunrise and Sunset	Pollen Count
Yesterday's High: 36 Yesterday's Low: 17	7.7, Jan to Date: 0.00"	Yesterday's Maximum: n/a Yesterday's Minimum: 0%	6:19 AM Yesterday: 5:21 P	Today: Sunrise: 8:06 AM Sunset: 5:10 PM Monday: Sunrise: 8:07 AM Sunset: 5:11 PM Tuesday: Sunrise: 8:07 AM Sunset: 5:12 PM Wednesday: Sunrise: 8:07 AM Sunset: 5:13 PM	TP Pollen Level: none TF Leaf Level: none

REGIONAL FORECAST

City	Today	Tomorrow	Monday
Boise	42-51	43-52	43-52
Butte	37-48	38-49	39-50
Burley	39-50	40-51	41-52
Coeur d'Alene	37-48	38-49	39-50
Elgin	40-51	41-52	42-53
Idaho Falls	41-52	42-53	43-54
Lowell	42-53	43-54	44-55
Moscow	43-54	44-55	45-56
Pocatello	44-55	45-56	46-57
Rupert	45-56	46-57	47-58
Shoshone	46-57	47-58	48-59
Twin Falls	47-58	48-59	49-60
Vernon	48-59	49-60	50-61
Wallace	49-60	50-61	51-62
Zona	50-61	51-62	52-63

NATIONAL FORECAST

City	Today	Tomorrow	Monday
Alaska	42-51	43-52	43-52
Arizona	42-51	43-52	43-52
California	42-51	43-52	43-52
Colorado	42-51	43-52	43-52
Connecticut	42-51	43-52	43-52
Delaware	42-51	43-52	43-52
District of Columbia	42-51	43-52	43-52
Florida	42-51	43-52	43-52
Georgia	42-51	43-52	43-52
Illinois	42-51	43-52	43-52
Indiana	42-51	43-52	43-52
Iowa	42-51	43-52	43-52
Kansas	42-51	43-52	43-52
Kentucky	42-51	43-52	43-52
Louisiana	42-51	43-52	43-52
Maine	42-51	43-52	43-52
Maryland	42-51	43-52	43-52
Massachusetts	42-51	43-52	43-52
Michigan	42-51	43-52	43-52
Minnesota	42-51	43-52	43-52
Mississippi	42-51	43-52	43-52
Missouri	42-51	43-52	43-52
Montana	42-51	43-52	43-52
Nebraska	42-51	43-52	43-52
Nevada	42-51	43-52	43-52
New Hampshire	42-51	43-52	43-52
New Jersey	42-51	43-52	43-52
New Mexico	42-51	43-52	43-52
New York	42-51	43-52	43-52
North Carolina	42-51	43-52	43-52
North Dakota	42-51	43-52	43-52
Ohio	42-51	43-52	43-52
Oklahoma	42-51	43-52	43-52
Oregon	42-51	43-52	43-52
Pennsylvania	42-51	43-52	43-52
Rhode Island	42-51	43-52	43-52
South Carolina	42-51	43-52	43-52
South Dakota	42-51	43-52	43-52
Tennessee	42-51	43-52	43-52
Texas	42-51	43-52	43-52
Utah	42-51	43-52	43-52
Vermont	42-51	43-52	43-52
Virginia	42-51	43-52	43-52
Washington	42-51	43-52	43-52
West Virginia	42-51	43-52	43-52
Wisconsin	42-51	43-52	43-52
Wyoming	42-51	43-52	43-52

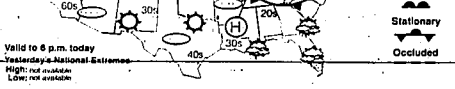
U.V. INDEX

The higher the index the more sun protection needed.

WORLD FORECAST

City	Today	Tomorrow
Alaska	42-51	43-52
Arizona	42-51	43-52
California	42-51	43-52
Canada	42-51	43-52
China	42-51	43-52
Europe	42-51	43-52
Hawaii	42-51	43-52
India	42-51	43-52
Japan	42-51	43-52
Mexico	42-51	43-52
South America	42-51	43-52
U.S.	42-51	43-52

TODAY'S NATIONAL MAP



Every Thursday In The Times-News Call Today
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CANADIAN FORECAST

City	Today	Tomorrow	Monday
Calgary	31-41	32-42	33-43
Edmonton	32-42	33-43	34-44
Vancouver	43-53	44-54	45-55

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Review

Continued from A1
 4,300-member "stability and security" team patrolling northern Iraq.

Back home, drivers placed yellow magnetic ribbons on their cars to show support for the troops. Soldiers' families turned to letters, photos and e-mails and phone calls from Iraq for comfort.

For six families, the letters stopped.

- Army Pfc. Clarence Roney, 20, of Rupert, died March 31 with four other soldiers when a bomb exploded under his armored personnel carrier.
- Marine Pfc. Chris Reed, also 20, of Cottonwood, died in July when the vehicle he was riding in overturned.
- Army Spc. Brandon Titus of Boise was killed when a roadside bomb exploded near his bright backpack, and the 20-year-old became the first veteran buried in the state's new veterans cemetery.
- Marine Capt. Alan Blake Rowe, 35, of Gooding, was killed in September when a bomb went off as he returned from inspecting a bridge.
- Army Capt. Eric L. Allison, 34, of Boise, died that month when he was hit by a mortar.
- Army 1st Lt. Luke C. Wullenwaber, 24, of Lewiston, was killed in November by a suicide bomber.

The rest of top 10, as voted on by AP members:

- The price of gasoline set a state record Oct. 29, pinching household budgets with an average price of \$2.10 a gallon, according to a survey by the Idaho Automobile Association of America.
- That was 50 cents higher than it was at the beginning of the year, and 15 cents higher than just a month earlier.
- Weary travelers could stop at nearly any restaurant in the state and have a smoke-free meal. But if they needed a nicotine fix, they had to step outside.
- Republican Sen. Brent Hill of Rexburg convinced lawmakers to ban smoking in nearly all public places except bars and bowling alleys.
- Another ban proposed in the Legislature — this one on gay marriage — was defeated. Key senators blocked the floor vote, arguing that the state already had a 1996 law banning gay marriage.
- Republican U.S. Rep. Michael Simpson also has said the U.S.

Bethlehem

Continued from A1
 was born here in the city, but unfortunately peace is missing still in this city," Nasser said.

But there was some cheer at the heavily fortified main crossing from Jerusalem into Bethlehem. An Israeli Tourism Ministry sign decorated with bells and a red ribbon read, "Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year" — it was hung below the army's permanent sign asking visitors in Hebrew, Arabic and English to prepare documents for inspection.

"A call to all people of faith: Visit the Holy Land now," declared other Tourism Ministry signs hanging on the concrete slabs near the checkpoint.

Israeli handed out baskets of candies to Palestinians and foreign pilgrim crossing into Bethlehem, said Rafi Ben-Hur, the Israeli Tourism Ministry's deputy director.

The pilgrims were asked to give the candies to Palestinians in Bethlehem, he added.

"This is our personal greetings for a happy holiday from Israel," Ben-Hur said. "We see the pilgrims as a bridge for peace."

Soldiers were instructed to treat visitors to Bethlehem with the utmost respect, said Lt. Col. Aviv Feigel, head of the Israeli military liaison office in the area. "We certainly hope that



Catholic altar boys wait for the arrival of the traditional Christmas procession at the entrance of the Church of the Nativity on Friday in the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

Christmas

Continued from A1
 walked into the room after the tree was in place and the lights were on.

He studied the tree carefully, unsure how such a beautiful tree came from the small box.

"We've never had a Christmas tree before," he said with a widening grin. "This is our first real Christmas."

Times-News writer — *Glip Thompson can be reached at the newspaper's Mini-Cassia bureau at 677-4042, ext. 788, or by e-mail at thompson@gmagicvalley.com.*

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The Montoya's first real Christmas
 Friday morning, Jeannette Goni from the Idaho Community Action Network's Burley office arrived at Montoya's office bearing gifts and an artificial tree.

Once the tree was set up, Montoya's 10-year-old daughter Guadalupe proudly retrieved a craft project her mother had helped her make — an angel to top the tree.

Until Friday, Guadalupe had no place to display it.

"As of yesterday, that was going to be the same as it was in Mexico," Montoya's father, Julian, 70,

Christmas

Continued from A1
 walked into the room after the tree was in place and the lights were on.

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GIs relish holidays and family

PORT STEWART, Ga. (AP) — While waiting to return to Iraq with his military intelligence unit, Staff Sgt. David Smith-Barry conducted a secret mission to make the most of Christmas.

Visiting his wife in The Woodlands, Texas, during two weeks of December leave, Smith-Barry would take her to work every morning and then go shopping — for files and cabinets, brick and paint colors, a lot and a builder.

"I bought her a house," said Smith-Barry, grinning at the thought of his gift for his wife, Amanda. "She doesn't know anything about it."

For the 19,000 soldiers of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, whose tanks and armored Bradley vehicles led the assault on Baghdad last year, being home for the holidays is a bitter-sweet prelude to a busy new year.

In January, the Fort Stewart-based troops will begin returning to Iraq for their second tour of duty.

The first Army division to go back since the March 2003 invasion.

"When the information finally came that we were going to deploy after Christmas, there was definitely a sigh of relief," said Smith-Barry, who will be among the first wave to leave. "It's definitely been a positive, good for morale."

The assignment comes as no surprise to the 3rd Infantry troops at Fort Stewart and Fort Benning. The soldiers began training for a second tour almost as soon as they returned home in late summer 2003. The Pentagon officially announced their return trip last March.

Now, 15 months after the troops' homecoming, yellow ribbons again hang along with Christmas lights on utility poles in neighboring Illinois.

In early December, soldiers began loading their tanks, helicopters and other war



Sgt. Mark Matekovic, of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, prepares his Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Dec. 16 in Fort Stewart, Ga., before it is loaded and shipped off to Iraq. Matekovic is a gunner aboard the Bradley and will be deployed along with most of the division next month for their second rotation for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

machines onto Navy freighters bound for the Middle East.

"I believe the majority will be gone 12-14 months," 3rd Infantry commander Maj. Gen. William C. Webster said earlier this month. While much of the 3rd Infantry will not be in place for the Jan. 30 elections in Iraq, Webster said his troops will play a key role in providing security for follow-up elections in the spring and summer.

A number of Fort Stewart soldiers who had planned to leave the Army after their first combat tour remain in the ranks, their enlistments extended as part of the Army's "stop-loss" program.

"I was hoping I'd be moving on," said Spc. Desmond Lackey, 21, a machine-gunner who was slated to leave the Army in March 2005 but learned last month that his enlistment has been extended until April 2006.

"Personally, I'd like to get out and go back to college."

Lackey had time to spend Christmas with family in Jay, Okla. He said he particularly looked forward to seeing his grandmother, who had heart surgery this year.

"The bad thing about being in the military is you always have to have that 'what if' thought: 'What if he didn't come home?'" said his wife, Victoria. "So I wanted to make sure his grandmother and mother got to see him and tell him they love him."

During the past year, 3rd Infantry troops have trained for a vastly different type of conflict from the war they fought last year.

More than 1,300 U.S. troops have died in Iraq, with more than 1,100 killed since President Bush declared an end to major combat operations in

May 2003.

The soldiers who are going back have been honing their urban warfare, riot-control and hand-to-hand combat skills.

"I think it's more dangerous this time, because they know us better," Sgt. Mark Matekovic, a Bradley gunner, said of the Iraqi insurgents. "Now they're not wearing uniforms. It makes it a little trickier."

Matekovic spent the week before his holiday leave tuning up his tracked vehicle, making sure its armor and weapons were in working order.

Then he was leaving for Kansas to spend Christmas with his 4-year-old son, Anthony.

"It's my first Christmas with him — I already missed three," said Matekovic, who spent the 2002 holidays in Kuwait during the buildup to war. "I have to try to be a part of his life."



Joe Firilli of Wappingers Falls shops with his daughters Patricia, 9, center, and Joanna, 7, at Best Buy in the Poughkeepsie Galleria on Friday in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Mandy Alnwick, left, a store supervisor, explains some of the features of the camera.

Procrastinators flock to stores on Christmas Eve

The Associated Press

Shoppers — some holding out for bargains, others delayed by storms in the Midwest — hit the nation's malls and stores Friday, looking for last-minute gifts and snapping up gift cards on the day before Christmas.

After struggling with disappointing sales throughout the season, retailers were heartened by an uptick at malls this week, and customer traffic appeared solid Friday. But the industry is resigned to the fact that the 2004 holiday shopping season won't be stellar — the question is whether the last-minute boost

will be enough for stores to meet their modest goals.

The exceptions have been online shopping, with sales at the high end of projections, and luxury stores, which have continued with robust sales from their well-heeled customers.

That means merchants are finding themselves in the same position as they were last year, relying on those last-minute shoppers, who seem to be delaying their buying even later than a year ago. But with many stores struggling with high inventories this year, plenty of customers looking for bargains were pleased with the options.

Police shoot carjacking suspect who took hostages

GARDENA, Calif. (AP) — Police shot and critically wounded a carjacking suspect who ran into a casino early Friday and took two patrons hostage.

The man hijacked a luxury car on Thursday and led police on a 30-minute chase after they spotted the vehicle early Friday, authorities said.

With the car still rolling, the man jumped out at the Luxtel Casino, a Gardena card club owned by Hustler magazine mogul Larry Flynt.

The suspect shot at police officers in the casino's parking lot, but one was hit, Los Angeles Police Department Assistant Chief Jim McDonnell said.

The gunman then ran into the crowded casino and took a hostage. He later released the hostage, but took another, police said.

An LAPD officer shot the suspect in the head, McDonnell said. The man was in critical condition at a hospital Friday, McDonnell said.

Patrons and casino employees poured out of the casino when they heard shots being fired.

Up to 1,000 patrons were inside the casino when the suspect ran inside with a weapon, so you can imagine the chaotic situation," McDonnell said.

Former doctor will face charges in abortions

MIRAMAR, Fla. (AP) — A doctor whose license was revoked for botching abortions, including leaving fetus parts inside a patient, was arrested on charges he kept performing the procedures.

Roberto A. Osborne, 44, turned himself in to police Wednesday and was released on bond. He was charged with performing medicine without a license, a third-degree felony.

The state Department of Health contacted police about Osborne last month after receiving a tip about Osborne performing abortions at a Cyn Diagnostic Center in Miramar.

Judge sends adopted boy back to mother

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — A couple must return a 3-year-old boy they adopted shortly after birth to his biological mother, a judge has ruled.

Evan Parker Scott has lived with Dawn and Gene Scott for most of his life, but the adoption petition was dismissed because the boy's biological mother did not get consent from the father.

Judge Waddell Wallace III last week ordered the Scotts to take the child to a naval base in Illinois where his biological mother lives.

The mother, Amanda Hopkins, will have custody, but the court ordered that the boy's biological father be given liberal visitation rights.

The Scotts are "trying to prepare Evan the best way we know how for the horrible event he faces," the couple said in a statement. "We are spending our last few days together as a family preparing for Santa and trying to make a happy holiday time for Evan."

Hopkins and the boy's father, Steven A. White Jr., never married, and she did not learn she

was pregnant until she sought medical treatment for injuries suffered when she was assaulted in the residence they once shared, court documents show.

Hopkins supported the Scotts' adoption of Evan until it appeared the court might grant White's request for custody.

"She took an adversarial position against them because she felt it was not in Evan's best interest to live with the father," said Debbie Grabarkiewicz, director of case advocacy for Hear My Voice, a nonprofit network of child advocates.

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4 Button
Leather Jacket
\$129⁹⁷ Reg. \$229

Sport Coats
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\$109⁹⁷ Reg. \$155

5 Colors to Choose From
Cashmere Blend
Top Coats
\$229⁹⁷ Reg. \$285

Entire Stock
2 Pant Suits
\$199⁹⁷ Reg. to \$225

Select Group
Ladies Sportswear
1/2 Price

Select Group
Suits by Marco Carrelli
Starting at
\$189⁹⁷

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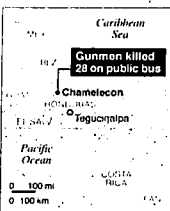
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WORLD

Assailants shoot 28 people on bus

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP)—Assailants claiming to be members of a revolutionary group opposed to the death penalty ambushed a bus filled with people bringing home Christmas gifts and killed at least 28 people, including six children, in an escalation of the battle between gangs and Honduras government.



Gang members killed 28 on public bus

The bus with more than 50 people aboard, most of them women and children, was driving through a heavily populated neighborhood in the northern city of Chamelecón on Thursday evening when a car of gunmen cut in front of it and forced it to stop, police spokesman Deputy Commissioner Wilmer Torres said.

The assailants jumped out of the car and began shooting, with attackers in several cars fired from behind and then alongside the bus, he said.

Sixteen of the victims were killed aboard the bus while 12 others, including two children and 10 women, were being taken to a public hospital in the nearby city of San Pedro Sula, Torres said. More than a dozen others were injured. Many of the passengers were coming home with bags filled with gifts and food for Christmas, Torres said.

The driver of the bus, Guillermo Salgado, died in the attack. His body was found slumped over the steering wheel. The attack took place in the San Isidro district of the city, 125 miles north of the capital Tegucigalpa.

Police arrested a suspect driving a car similar to one identified by witnesses as having been at the site of the attack. The suspect is an alleged member of violent gangs that have terrorized residents, mostly in the poor neighborhoods of Honduras' major cities.

The suspect was carrying a 30-caliber pistol and several automatic weapons, Torres said.

The assailants left a large piece of paper taped to the windshield of the bus with a

message saying they represented a revolutionary group that opposes the death penalty. The message contained "vulgar words" against President Ricardo Maduro, Congress President Porfirio Lobo Sosa and Security Minister Oscar Alvarez, Torres said.

The note warned "people should take advantage of this Christmas, because the next one will be worse," Torres said.

The attack came amid an escalating fight between gangs and the government. Two days earlier, Alvarez announced authorities had uncovered plans by drug traffickers and criminals to assassinate the Honduran president and his family.

"The reports establish that drug traffickers and organized crime have given the gang members the necessary information for them to carry out the attack against the president ... and that, verifies us," Alvarez said at the time.

Honduran gangs claim more than 100,000 members and control poor neighborhoods in major cities, where they are known for extorting "protection" money from residents.

Maduro has waged a zero-tolerance campaign against gang activity. At his bidding, Congress

approved a law in August 2003 that sentences gang members to up to 12 years in prison. Gangs have responded with gruesome attacks, including the beheading and dismembering of victims, whose bodies have been left in public places.

Maduro said Monday he was increasing security for himself and his family. After Thursday's attack, he offered his sympathy to the families of the victims and said he would fly to San Pedro Sula to meet with them.

"My government won't tolerate the kind of massacre that has been the objective of threatening and scaring the people ... We are reacting with force," he said.

Earlier this year, Alvarez claimed al-Qaida was trying to recruit gang members to carry out terror attacks, but U.S. and other Central American officials have said there is no evidence to support that.

Lobo Sosa is one of four candidates who will compete in February to determine the ruling National Party's presidential candidate for November elections. Lobo has suggested instituting the death penalty for severe crimes such as murder, rape and kidnapping. Honduras abolished the death penalty in the 1950s.



An elderly Palestinian woman looks for her name in a voter list during municipal elections in the West Bank town of Jericho on Thursday.

Ukraine's election rivals finish campaign

KIEV, Ukraine (AP)—Opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko, on Friday warned the government that it would be a grave error to allow or support any violence in this weekend's runoff election.

Rumors abound that Ukrainians loyal to Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich are being armed and preparing to head to Kiev in case Yushchenko wins

Sunday's vote.

Yanukovich's campaign headquarters has repeatedly denied the allegations.

"I think it will be a colossal mistake on the part of the current regime if even one drop of blood is shed in the coming days," Yushchenko said. The Interior Ministry and Ukraine's security service must "do their job," he told in a news conference.

Yanukovich's backers received a bitter bill from the Supreme Court, citing massive fraud, canceled his victory in the Nov. 21 runoff and ordered the new vote.

If Yanukovich's supporters descend on Kiev, the opposition should "warn them, feed them" and invite them to Independence Square.

Square, Yushchenko said, referring to the heart of the opposition protests that clogged central Kiev for days after Nov. 21.

Officials from Ukraine's top law enforcement bodies said Friday they were ready to maintain law and order during Sunday's election.

"State security will do everything to prevent attempts by certain groups to violate law, order and people's constitutional rights," said Thor Smeshko, head of Ukraine's State Security Service.

Hamas makes strong showing in elections

NAHLUS, West Bank (AP)—The radical Hamas movement made a surprisingly strong showing in local Palestinian elections, according to preliminary results obtained Friday, signaling a drop in popularity for the ruling Fatah movement ahead of next month's presidential poll.

Elections for local councils were held Thursday in 26 communities perceived as Fatah strongholds, with some 150,000 eligible voters choosing from among more than 800 candidates. Sixteen percent of the 360 local council seats were reserved for women.

According to preliminary results obtained by The Associated Press, Fatah won a majority of council seats in 14 towns, while Hamas, participating for the first time in Palestinian elections, took control in nine communities.

In two towns, a joint Hamas-Fatah slate won, indicating that

local issues and clan loyalties blunted the rivalry at times. The outcome of the vote in the community Yabed, was not immediately available.

"This is an outstanding result for Hamas," said Palestinian analyst Ali Jerbawi, a former head of the Palestinian Election Commission.

"The 26 localities were selected from the beginning (as) strongholds of Fatah. So the results should have been more for Fatah than Hamas."

Hamas has been at the forefront of anti-Israeli violence, carrying out suicide bombings and other attacks, even as it has emerged as the strongest political challenger to Fatah, the PLO faction led by the late Yasser Arafat.

A Hamas spokesman in Gaza, Sami Abu Zuhri, said the result reflected strong support for the group but suggested that Hamas was ready to forge coalitions with Fatah.

Bombing kills two in Thailand

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—Millions set off a bomb near a market frequented by soldiers Friday, killing two people and wounding eight others in southern Thailand, where a Muslim insurgency has left nearly 500 people dead this year.

The blast in Sungai Kolok near the Malaysian border targeted government soldiers, but many of the victims were from the local Muslim majority, including the man who was killed, police officials said.

It was the latest in a spate of violence in three southern provinces since early this year, when Thai Muslim militants rekindled a decades-old dream of a state separated from the Buddhist-dominated country.

The bomb Friday was planted on a motorcycle and triggered by a mobile phone signal after a military truck stopped at a nearby market where soldiers eat daily, said police Col. Krajang Sitvanarat in a telephone interview. Four soldiers were wounded, including one who died later at Sungai Kolok Hospital. Dr. Wichai Wichienwattanaehai, the hospital's deputy director said.

Ethiopian orphans draw increasing numbers of foreign adoptive parents

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP)—Four-month-old Thomas Bekele lies in a crib in the Kidane Meheret Children's Home awaiting an HIV test, the result of which will determine his chances of being adopted and growing up in a Western country.

His mother died a month ago of tuberculosis, a telltale sign of HIV. He is one of 150 children at the home, most of whom lost their parents to AIDS.

The healthy ones in the orphanage run by Franciscan nuns may become part of Ethiopia's newest export: adoptable children.

More than 70 million live with more than 5 million orphans, their parents lost to famine, disease, war and AIDS — a catastrophe which the government has said is "tearing apart the social fabric" of the east African nation.

Caring for the orphans costs \$115 million a month in a country whose annual health budget is only \$1.6 billion.

So Ethiopia has gone out of its way to make adoption easier, and the numbers reached a record in 2003 with 1,400 children taken abroad, more than double the number in the previous year. The number of adoption agencies in Addis Ababa, the capital, has doubled



Genet Girma, 15, who just arrived from a poor area in the countryside, explains to sisters of the Kidane Meheret Childrens Orphanage that she cannot afford to look after her twin babies, in Addis Ababa, Dec. 3.

in the past year to 30. The government says it faces a moral dilemma.

"We want people to invest in Ethiopia rather than take our children," said Dr. Bultu Getema, who heads the government's adoption authority.

However, "We can't afford to look after every orphan," he said, sitting in a decrepit government office that exemplifies Ethiopia's standing as the world's third-

poorest nation, with almost half the population living less than a dollar a day.

"Adoption is the last resort because it doesn't help alleviate poverty in Ethiopia," he said.

Ethiopia has enacted strict laws to thwart dubious adoption agents, ensure that the orphan in question exists, the paperwork is not fraudulent and no AIDS-infected children are being passed off as healthy.

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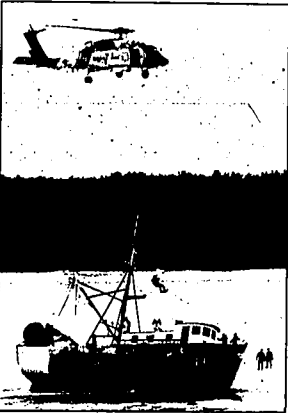
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Rescue illustrates Coast Guard's limitations



A coast guard helicopter rescue crewman from the fishing boat, 'Nabby' after the boat became trapped in the ice Jan. 26 in the Cape Cod Canal just off the shore of Wareham, Mass.

BOSTON (AP) — In the end, the fishing boat captain's urgent cries for help from the Coast Guard proved futile. His own efforts were all that would matter. According to a radio transmission released by the Coast Guard, Tony Alvernaz had set off the Coast Guard search for five New Bedford scallopers lost in the raging sea. "It's an emergency! You need a chopper! You need a chopper out!" But the 40-hour hunt for the Northern Edge and its crew was marked by brutal weather and major mechanical problems, including malfunctions in all four of the Coast Guard's available helicopters. The problems left a three-hour gap in the middle of the night when no Coast Guard personnel were searching the area. Alvernaz and his crew on the Diane Marie saved the only survivor of the fast-sinking wreck, pulling Pedro Furtado aboard after he clung to a life raft for a half hour early Monday evening.

Coast Guard officials said despite the problems, they were confident they'd find all they could. But the search and the difficulties it encountered highlighted how multiple responsibilities have stretched the Coast Guard's resources thin. "I think the American people know we work with what we have, and we work hard," said Coast Guard Petty Officer Andrew Shim. The first sign of problems on the Northern Edge came at 4:44 p.m. Monday when Coast Guard operators received an emergency distress signal from the boat. At 5:08 p.m., Alvernaz called, identified the Northern Edge as the vessel in distress and gave coordinates, according to the radio transmission. "Ma'am, all I see is flares," he later said. "I lost the contact on radar! I lost the contact on radar... Come as soon as possible with some lights. We need... some lights."

The operator soon informed Alvernaz, OK, sir, just wanted to let you know we have a helo en route, a helicopter en route, and we have some of our cutters en route at this time, also. But the first flyback helicopter was forced to land because of a de-icing problem almost immediately after it took off from Air Station Cape Cod at 5:45 p.m. The Coast Guard immediately began to prepare a second helicopter in the 6-degree weather, which took off at 6:38 p.m. and reached the scene a half hour later. It searched for more than three hours, hampered by a malfunctioning radio system, and returned to base. The crew switched to a third helicopter, but it was grounded by a frozen switch. The same crew took the fourth helicopter up at about midnight, but was forced back by an engine problem. A second crew eventually took over at about 3:10 a.m. — about two

hours after the first cutters arrived. That left roughly a three-hour gap when no Coast Guard personnel were at the accident site — between the second chopper's departure between 9:30 and 10 p.m. and the cutters' arrival. Shinn said the problems with the helicopters were due to the extreme weather, rather than their age. "While certainly that's frustrating, it's not something we feel would have made a difference in this case," Shinn said. "Since the Sept. 11 attacks, the Coast Guard's responsibilities have increased greatly and it's been a battle to get proper funding," said Steven Schwadorf, Chief of Staff for U.S. Rep. William Delahunt, who served in the Coast Guard. Recent years have seen increased funding for the agency, founded for search in rescue missions, but now involved in everything from coastal security to the effort to breaking ice in frozen harbors, he said.

Spacecraft will release probe to study Saturn moon Titan

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — The Cassini spacecraft hurtled through space on a Christmas Eve mission to release a probe that will "plunge" through the smoggy atmosphere of Saturn's mysterious moon Titan. The probe, named Huygens, is equipped with instruments to sample the chemistry of Titan's thick, hydrocarbon-laced atmosphere, and reveal whether the moon's surface really has lakes or seas of liquid methane and ethane, as scientists have theorized. Huygens is scheduled to hit Titan's atmosphere on Jan. 14 and open a huge parachute that will allow it to make a 2.5-hour descent while radioing findings back to the mother ship. After touching down at 15 mph, it may continue sending data for up to 30 minutes, when either its battery fails or Cassini vanishes over Titan's horizon. Cassini will later turn its antenna toward Earth and send

the data home. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory expected to receive a signal confirming the release of the probe around 8 p.m. PST Friday. It takes more than an hour for radio signals to cross the hundreds of millions of miles between Saturn and Earth. Cassini was equipped with springs to gently push the 705-pound probe away at a rate of one foot per second and impart a stabilizing spin of seven revolutions per minute. The aim had to be good because Huygens has no maneuvering system to adjust its own course. Cassini is on a \$3.3 billion mission to study Saturn, its spectacular rings and its numerous moons, situated an average of about 890 million miles from the sun. Scientists believe Titan may have organic — meaning carbon-based — compounds similar to those that existed on the early Earth.

Bigger than the planets Mercury and Pluto, Titan is the only moon in the solar system known to have a significant atmosphere. Rich with nitrogen and containing about 6 percent methane, the atmosphere is 1.5 times thicker than Earth's. Titan has a surface temperature of minus 290 degrees. Its surface puzzles scientists, despite close flybys in which Cassini's cameras have tried to peer through Titan's haze. Scientists have discerned distinct dark and light areas, sometimes toying with such words as "islands" to describe features, but conceding they have yet to find a certain type of reflection that would indicate liquid. The Cassini mission is a joint project of NASA and the European and Italian space agencies. Cassini was launched from Cape Canaveral, Fla., in 1997 and arrived at Saturn in June.

Howard Hughes' gravesite remains on radar of many Houston tourists

HOUSTON (AP) — Howard Hughes probably would have liked Friday, his 89th birthday. With temperatures around the freezing mark in normally balmy Houston, the gravesite of the man whose name was invariably prefaced by "reclusive eccentric billionaire" was devoid of visitors. That is not always the case for the final resting place of the businessman, whose name has been back in the news with the nationwide release this weekend of the Leonardo DiCaprio movie "The Aviator," about Hughes' Hollywood years. Nearly three decades after Hughes died of kidney disease at age 72 on a plane from Acapulco, Mexico, to his native Houston, his grave at 133-year-

old Glenwood Cemetery remains a popular tourist site. The 50-by-50-foot family plot also includes the grave of his father, Howard Hobart Hughes, who died in 1924 and whose oilfield drilling tool company became the basis for the family fortune. His mother, who died in 1922 when her son was 16, also is buried there. The gravesite is surrounded by an iron fence with a padlocked gate. On Friday, the gate was decorated with a pair of Christmas wreaths. The back of the site is bordered by 6-foot-high semicircular concrete wall sculpture that includes a half-dozen brass vases. Legend has it the granite tombstone was commissioned

by Hughes to be modeled after a key job his father used to carry. The site, while distinctive, does not prominently display the Hughes name and is dwarfed by far grander memorials elsewhere in the cemetery, where some 22,000 people are buried. The billionaire was buried in 1976 in an \$8,100 casket and \$2,100 vault, according to probate court documents. In his later years, Hughes was a recluse with shaggy hair, long fingernails and a morbid fear of germs. It was not until 1990 that his estate, estimated at \$1.13 billion, was settled in the courts, since he left no verified will and dozens of purported will surfaced after his death.

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EDITORIAL

Good tidings of joy this Christmas Day

Following our Christmas Day edition, *The Times-News* editorial board is pleased to surrender this space for a seasonal and eternal holiday message from a guest writer. *St. Luke.*

Merry Christmas to all.

The Editorial Board
Brad Hurd
Chris Steinbach
David Cooper
Steve Crompt

Now it came to pass in those days, that a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken. This first census took place while Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all were going, each to his own town, to register. And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judaea to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem — because he was of the house and family of David — to register, together with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child.

And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger ...

ings of great joy which shall be to all the people; for today in the town of David a savior has been born to you, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign to you: You will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will."

And it came to pass, when the angels had departed from them into heaven, that the shepherds were saying to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."

So they went with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they had seen, they understood what had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard marvelled at the things told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept in mind all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken to them.

— Luke 2:1-20

The Times-News

Brad Hurd ... Publisher
Chris Steinbach ... Editor
The members of the editorial board and writers of editorials are
Brad Hurd, Chris Steinbach, Steve Crompt and David Cooper.

LETTER

Elves made season bright for one couple

Dear Santa:
I know you are very busy this time of year. We are too, but not nearly as busy as you are. But I thought you might like the following story. You see, Santa, I would like you to forward this message to a group of "local" elves who have been busy doing your work here in our small hometown. I want them to know their caring and unselfish love have given us great joy.

It all began a little over a week ago. We have a good friend who rings the doorbell really fast and a lot of times so we thought nothing of it when the doorbell rang that way on the 12th day before Christmas. Answering the door we found a little sack on the step. The card read, "On the 12th day of Christmas, someone who cares for me gave me — a Christmas towel so bright and cheery." We thought the elves had the wrong address, but when the doorbell rang the next night, it stirred the most unbelievable sense of humbleness. Who would take the time and effort to do this when the elves' parents were probably busy moms and dads? We are

amazed, Christmas can be a little hard on those of us who have no children living at home. Well, at least the "Santa" side of Christmas. To think someone wanted to share their "elf" family is truly a remarkable feeling.

Every night, we turned on the outdoor light. Those elves didn't need to trip on anything and hurt themselves. Each night, we waited excitedly for the sound of the doorbell. Not just for the gift inside but for the gift inside the hearts of the elves who have shared their Christmas packages with two middle-aged people who needed a little twinkle of youthful spirit.

So, Santa, please keep our little elves at the top of your "good" list. And pass our thanks to them. Oh, and Santa, thank their parents for teaching them to care about others. The joy the young elves have shared was no doubt because of guidance from their parents. Parents who have taught their children that it is a blessing to share the gift of Christmas love. Thank them for us. PS: Do you really know when we are sleeping or awake?
PAM CRAWFORD
Wendell

Birth of a babe, and an entire culture

With Christmas nearly behind us for another year, even those who might concede that non-Christians do have a point. The super-sizing of Christmas has become a fustled impetus to excess that pleases no one but America's retailers. Nothing makes my heart sink faster than trundling into CVS for I-fall-overen candy only to find a fake silver Christmas tree festooned with red bows.

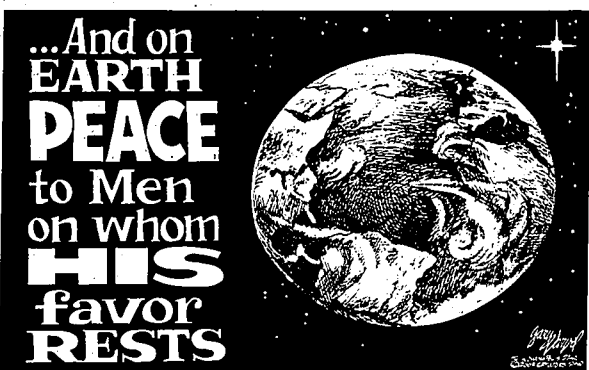


KATHLEEN PARKER

I can't hear the sound of "Jingle Bells" more than two weeks in advance of Christmas nor one minute after. And the sight of a wilted poinsettia or a brownish bundle of mistletoe even one second after New Year's sends me searching for the Prozac fairy.

It is one thing to love Christmas. It is another to be subjected by it. On the other hand, it is useful as we debate the merits and demerits of Christmas in these secular times to imagine a world without Christmas or the gifts bestowed in Jesus' name. I'm not talking about colored lights and trees, or wreaths, or gifts, or Santa's raids on Toys R Us.

No small feat for a mere mortal. The church, of course, was a product of this life, death and resurrection, and so have been all good things that flowed from there. Arguably the paradigmatic



Western university — the University of Paris — was a product of the church.

Most important Western music, art and architecture up until about 1900 was inspired by Christianity and, in many cases, sponsored by the church. The aesthetic impulse that art should inspire and uplift grew from Christ's inspiration.

You can have "Jingle Bells," if you compromise demands it. But could we really live without Handel's "Messiah"? Or Mozart's "Ave Verum Corpus"? What about Notre Dame de Paris? And Charms? The Vitruvian Man? The Sistine Chapel? Michelangelo's sculpture of Beethoven's "Mass in C Major" or Bach's "Mass in B Minor"?

Beyond such things sublime, the Christ in Christmas gave us our notions of charity, *noblesse oblige* and charity. The Christian concept of charity, and loving both one's neighbors and one's enemies, was and is a radical concept. The idea that the poor and despised were deserving of human dignity also was born of Christianity.

Obviously, an itemized list of the ideas and creations that gift our heritage vis-a-vis Christi-

ty would fill a thousand columns and more. They fill libraries after all. Without them, Europe would cease to be a tourist destination, or might never have become at all.

Which is not to say that the world's other major religions haven't contributed to the good and greatness of mankind. Read Thomas Cahill's "The Gifts of the Jews" for a primer on all we have to be grateful for, not least of which — just to quiet your appetite — is the "weekend."

Islam is credited with advances in mathematics, medical innovations and with translating the ancient Greek texts. For art and architecture, look no further than 9th-century Cordoba, Spain, which the conquering Moors made their capital city.

Home to an international university (some consider this to have been the first), Cordoba at the time also was considered Western Europe's most beautiful city, complete with streetlights.

On a personal note, if I could have a dream castle, it would look like the Alhambra in Grenada, Spain — a 13th-century Moorish masterpiece.

Christmas, nevertheless, is unique because Jesus was

unique, as confirmed by the fact that Westerners measure historical time by his life and death. Were he merely a man, the Western world would be populated with statues dedicated to his immense influence.

Imagine a Jesus in every town square. Instead, we have monuments and law suits and edicts dedicated to his removal from any public sphere. I can't agree more with critics that by commercializing Christmas, we've done more to erode Christ from his day of celebration than have atheists and activists. I also agree that we should do better.

For it is a fact that of all the babies born and placed in mangers owing to a lack of room (not to mention charity) in Bethlehem — or of all Judea during a census, only one of them is responsible for Western civilization.

Even in the absence of Jesus' divinity, celebrating his birthday seems a small gesture by comparison.

Kathleen Parker, a syndicated columnist for the Orlando Sentinel, welcomes comments via e-mail at kparker@kparkercia.com.

An unabridged history of Christmas

BILL FERGUSON

modern Christmas holiday occurs around the time of the solstice.

Roman pagans celebrated a solstice holiday called Saturnalia before Christianity rose to prominence in that culture. Saturnalia was a weeklong celebration that occurred between Dec. 17-25, and it was one heck of a party.

The sale of law was more or less suspended during Saturnalia, and people took to the streets to do pretty much whatever they pleased. Food and strong drink were in abundance, and at this time all social roles were reversed, with slaves being served by their masters. (This may have been a direct precursor to the modern tradition of the office Christmas party.)

There are even some stories of communities appointing a young male to play the part of

the "Lord of Misrule" during Saturnalia. This was a good deal during the celebration, as he would be allowed to do absolutely anything he pleased, and it did mean anything. But at the end of the week, he was ceremoniously killed in a symbolic effort to restore order to the community.

Unsurprisingly, the Christian church took a dim view of the raucous Saturnalia celebration and they initially sought to stamp it out completely when they rose to power in the Roman Empire. But they found that there are few things more difficult than taking away a people's right to party, so they settled on a compromise. They decided to Christianize the holiday and arbitrarily declared that the last day of the festival was Jesus' birthday.

(In fact, no one has the slightest clue as to which day of the year Jesus was born.)

This proved to be a good strategy for the Church for both the long and the short term. For

the people continued to ring in the solstice much of their allegiances had, though of course they changed the name of the holiday in deference to the new religious authority.

As the years passed, however, the idea that the birth of the Saviour was the ending of the long nights of winter was the true "reason for the season" gradually took hold, and today many people are not even aware of the original Pagan roots of the holiday.

So perhaps, with all this in mind, we can all take a healthy dose of "lighten up" and try to relax and enjoy Christmas, or Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa, or the Winter solstice, or just a few days off from our routines, and declare a holiday cease fire in the culture wars. There'll be plenty of time to straighten out the unenlightened idiots who don't share our particular point of view after New Year's.

Bill Ferguson is a columnist for the *Alton (Ga.) Telegraph*.

LETTER

Noh leaves a deep legacy of service

As Sen. Laird Noh's long and distinguished legislative career fades into the sunset, I thought I would write to offer some reflections on the man I consider to be a mentor and a friend. I worked for the Kimberly Republican as an intern my senior year at Boise State University while completing my political science degree. Having been born and raised in his district, I strongly envy his integrity and devotion to the public good. But working for him, I learned even more.

As the longtime chairman of the Senate Resources and Envi-

ronment Committee, Noh was known for his keen knowledge of water law. Indeed, many of the water laws on our books are the work of his pen. Few other people in the statehouse are as well versed in the intricacies of this complex, contemporary policy sphere as he. On fish, wildlife and environmental issues, he was willing to work with the federal government to get the best deal for the state, rather than against it, fighting unwinnable wars.

A true moderate to the end of his political career, his votes were often cast opposite his party leaders. And while his views may not always have paralleled those in his district, he

was a veritable trustee of the public; his constituents say fit to return him to office 11 times.

His ambitions were static. He could have been pro tempore majority leader long ago had he desired. Yet he was content to chair the Resources Committee for 22 years, where he felt he could be most efficacious. Noh was a citizen legislator in the truest sense. His special interest was the public interest; he neither raised nor spent a dime on re-election in the last decade.

The longest serving legislator in the statehouse, and his most respected, Laird Noh set the modern-day standard for fairness, presence, constituent service and institutional loyalty.

The citizens of Ivin Falls County and Idaho owe this public servant a debt of gratitude.

Senator, you but is off to you. More than anything, you taught me that public service can be a noble profession. It is the quality of public servants that makes it noble. Even though I told the Republican Party to shove it years ago, I would vote for you any day. Thank you for your service to Ivin Falls County and to Idaho. We are all the better for it.

ERIK HEDDEMANN
Columbus, Ohio
(Editor's note: Erik Heddemann, formerly of Ivin Falls, is pursuing a Ph.D. in political science at Ohio State University.)

Doonesbury



By Garry Trudeau



Mallard Fillmore



By Bruce Tinsley



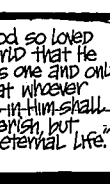
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whomever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



Lord, please give your peace, strength and guidance to our torn and troubled world on this day and all others...



Amen.



What happens to e-mail after death?

As life becomes more digitized, more questions are raised.

NEW YORK (AP) — As more of our personal lives go digital, family members, estate attorneys and online service providers are increasingly grappling with what happens to those information bits when their owners die.

Sometimes, the question involves e-mail sitting on a distant server; other times, it's about the photos or financial records stored on a password-protected computer.

This week, a Michigan man publicized his struggle to access the Yahoo e-mail account belonging to his son, Marine Lance Cpl. Justin M. Ellsworth, 20, who was killed Nov. 13 in Iraq. Though Yahoo's policies state that accounts "terminate upon your death," John Ellsworth said his son would have wanted to give him access.

"He was wanting to forward his e-mail from strangers," Ellsworth said. "They were letters of encouragement. He said all their support kept him motivated. We've talked back and forth about how we were going to print them out and put them in a scrapbook."

To release those messages in such circumstances, Yahoo said, would violate the privacy rights of the deceased and those with whom they've corresponded.

"The commitment we've made to every person who signs up for a Yahoo Mail account is to treat their e-mail as a private communication and to treat the content of their messages as confidential," spokeswoman Mary Osako said in a statement.

But Osako said the company was dealing with uncharted territory and was willing to continue discussions with Ellsworth. One option could involve Ellsworth getting a court order, which Yahoo would abide, Ellsworth said, he preferred to avoid litigation.

Other service providers, including America Online Inc., EarthLink Inc. and Microsoft Corp., which runs Hotmail, have provisions for transferring ac-



Marine Lance Cpl. Justin M. Ellsworth is shown in an undated photo provided by his family. Ellsworth, 20, died Nov. 13, from enemy action in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Ellsworth's father, John Ellsworth, is trying to persuade Yahoo! to allow him access to the e-mail account of his son.

counts upon proof of death and identity as next of kin.

AOL spokesman Nicholas Graham said the company gets dozens of such requests a day and has a separate fax number, mailing address and full-time service representative devoted to fulfillment.

Nonetheless, some privacy advocates question whether that's a good approach.

"People might decide what they want family members to see or keep secret sometimes for family harmony reasons," said Peter Swire, an Ohio State University law professor who served as former President Bill Clinton's chief privacy counselor. "They may know secrets of other family members that they hold in confidence. The sister had an abortion; the father had a first marriage."

Swire said Yahoo's policies are stricter than those for medical

records — and rightly so. He said quick access to medical records is needed for emergency care, and such records are unlikely to trample other people's privacy rights, as e-mail could.

Rather than maintaining an either-or policy, perhaps service providers could ask users when they sign up whether they'd like e-mail disclosed upon death, said Jason Catlett, president of the privacy-rights group Junkbusters Corp.

"If you put money into an IRA (individual retirement account)

or a mutual fund, they will ask you for the next of kin," Catlett said.

But Graham said cell phone providers and fitness centers don't make similar requests, and doing so with Internet service "is simply a turnoff and it's not necessary. We already have a process that works quite well and quite responsibly."

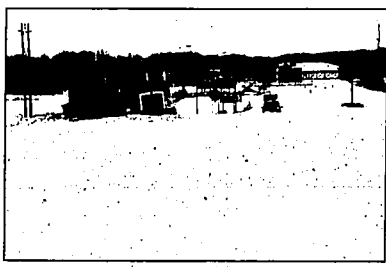
For now, such disputes are rare, and most struggles for access involve family members who need to obtain financial records on a computer, said Bob Weiss, president of Password Cracker, Inc., a Maryland company that recovers lost passwords. Less than 2 percent of Weiss's business involves relatives of the deceased, he said.

Still, "as more of our lives go online, hosted faraway, we will want to think carefully about the disposition of those bits," said Jonathan Zittrain, a professor at Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet & Society.

Decades of laws and court decisions already guide physical possessions, especially when there is no will. What makes online assets different is the fact that they often involve some service contract with an outside company, said R. Michael Daniel, an estates attorney in Pittsburgh.

The easiest approach, Internet scholars say, is simply to leave behind a password.

"I think this (Yahoo) case will be helpful to people who are thinking about issues not only of inheritance but planning," said Jonathan I. Ezor, a professor of law and technology at Touro Law Center in Huntington, N.Y. "When one family member tells another where the important paperwork is, the will, safe deposit box key etc., the list of passwords is going to be added to that."



Semi tractor-trailers and other vehicles are stuck along I-64 in the snow early Thursday just outside of Elberfeld, Ind.; I-64 has been closed to traffic with southern Indiana in a state of emergency.

Authorities struggle to open snowy roads

The Associated Press

Authorities struggled to remove abandoned cars and reopen still-slick highways across the nation's midsection Friday after a record snowfall buried the region and stranded holiday travelers and shoppers.

Kentucky highways remained hazardous, with temperatures dipping below freezing in many areas, and biting winds creating 5-foot snowdrifts.

"They're about half-scared to drive fast today," state Trooper Barry Meadows said.

A portion of Interstate 64 in Indiana reopened, a day after more than 100 stranded travelers were rescued from their snowbound vehicles. But the road was still treacherous because of hundreds of abandoned vehicles along a 25-mile stretch near the Illinois line.

Some Indiana churches can-

celed Christmas services to keep people off the road after much of the state was buried in up to 2 feet of snow.

"We were not asking parishioners to be out when police say to stay in," said the Rev. Dave Ferry, pastor of Englewood Baptist Church in Bedford, Ind.

I-40 reopened in parts of Arkansas, where stranded travelers awoke in shelters.

With frigid temperatures forecast for Ohio on Saturday, some 275,000 homes and businesses — about a half of them in Columbus — were without power, and ice-covered tree branches kept falling onto power lines.

Wind chill readings below zero did not freeze out the live Nativity scene in Normal, Ill., but Monsignor Eric Powell of Epiphany Catholic Church said the role of Jesus was played by a doll instead of a baby.

"That we wouldn't want to risk," Powell said.

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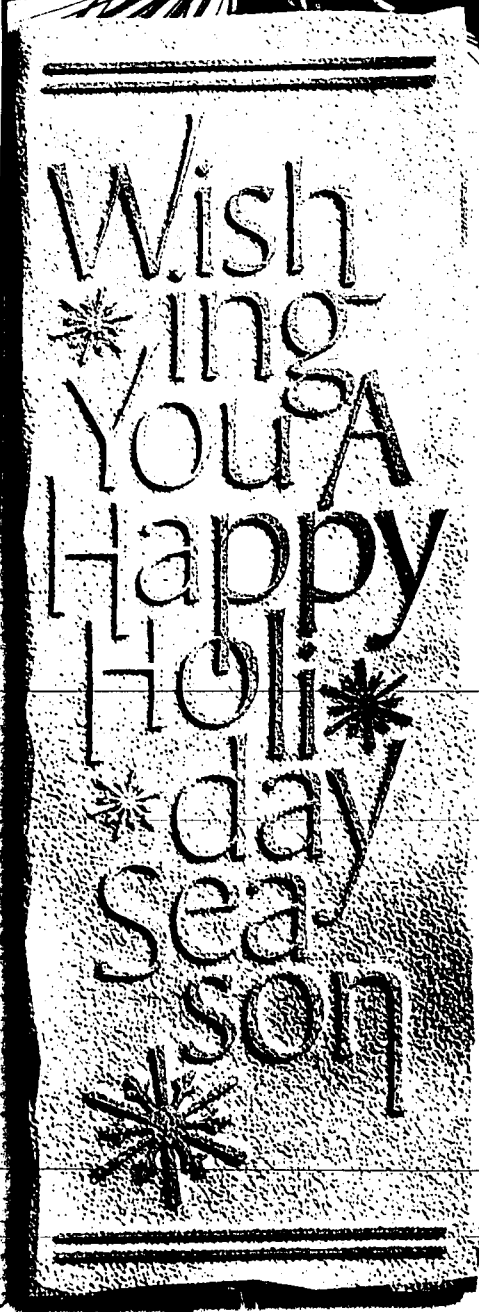
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- Brad Hurd, Publisher, *The Times-News*

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The Corvette takes on the mountain.

SPORTS

NBA Scores and stats B2 Baseball B4

Sports Editor: Joe Paisley, 735-3239 (Hours: 2-11 p.m.)

MORNING LINE

SPORTSQUOTE

As if the Christmas Day showdown between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Miami Heat needed any more fuel, now come rumors that Shaq's dog once made an unwelcome sniff at Kobe's pooch.

- Dwight Berry of The Seattle Times

TRIVIA

QUESTION: Has an NFL quarterback ever rushed for 1,000 yards in a season?

...answer below

IN BRIEF

CSI offers baseball camp Dec. 27-29

TWIN FALLS — The College of Southern Idaho will be holding its 22nd annual Southern Idaho Baseball Camp, Dec. 27-29. The camp will be held inside the Eldon Evans Expo Center on campus. The camp offers instruction in the following fundamentals: hitting, pitching, fielding, catching, infield/outfield skills, and base running. Instructors include major league players, professional scouts, college coaches and CSI staff and players. For an application or more information, visit http://www.csi.edu/Student/athletics/baseballcamp.htm, or call Skip Walker at (208) 732-6650 or (208) 734-6285.

Minico Boosters set January meeting

MINICO — The Minico Booster Club will meet at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 24 in the Minico High School Library. Parents with students in grades 9-12 are urged to attend. Call (208) 436-5670 for more information.

Jerome Rec District holds open gym

JEROME — The Jerome Recreation District will have an open gym for basketball on Monday, Dec. 27 through Thursday, Dec. 30. Call (208) 324-3389 for more information.

Bruin camp will take place in January

TWIN FALLS — Registration is currently being held for the Bruin Basketball Little Dribblers Camp. The boys and girls grades K-3 camp will be held on Saturday, Jan. 15 and Saturday, Jan. 22 from 10 to 12 p.m., and on Monday, Jan. 24 from 6-7 p.m. at Baum Gymnasium. The K-3 camps will perform at half-time of the final Bruin girls game on Thursday, Jan. 27. The boys and girls grades 4-6 camp will be held on Saturday, Jan. 15 and Saturday, Jan. 22 from 10 to 12 p.m. in Baum Gymnasium. Competition finals will be held on Monday, Jan. 24 from 7:30-8:30 p.m. Every camper will receive a reward.

Cost of the camp is \$25. There is a 200¢ camper limit for each session. All Little Dribblers will receive a camp T-shirt and a custom Bruin basketball. Camp forms have been distributed to local elementary schools, or may be picked up at Donnelly Sports or the Twin Falls High School office. For more information, contact Matt Hart at (208) 737-5208. Ext. 3059.

TRIVIA ANSWER:

No. Chicago Bears quarterback Bobby Douglass holds the single-season record at 968 yards, set in 1972.

2004 TIMES-NEWS ALL-AREA FOOTBALL TEAM

It was more than Miller's (40-dash) time



Miller smarts the Times-News

Twin Falls High School running back Brody Miller has been named The Times-News 2004 Football Player of the Year. Miller rushed for 2,169 yards and 32 touchdowns on 328 carries while leading the Bruins to the Class 5A state championship.

By Eric Larsen Times-News writer

TWIN FALLS — Contrary to popular belief, Twin Falls junior running back and 2004 Times-News Football Player of the Year Brody Miller is more than a 4.4-second 40-yard dash. Miller's speed can't be denied. It is why he turned numerous draws and counters into 70-yard touchdown romps. It is a big reason Miller carried on 328 carries during the 2004 season. It is also a big reason the Class 5A Twin Falls Bruins finished a 10-1 season with the program's first state championship in 53 years.

But to package Miller as a stopwatch readout in football pads doesn't do him justice. What would Miller say to those who say his speed is the lone reason for his success? "I would say I don't think it's just because I'm fast," Miller said. "You have to have strength and you have to read your blocks and know when to cut and when to juke. It's more than just speed. I think you have to be smart."

Smart and driven — two traits Miller has an abundance of. A lot of that drive comes from growing up with older brother Brett, a standout catcher and basketball player while at Twin Falls High School. The now 20-year-old Brett was a big influence on Miller's athletic development. "A lot of people might have thought that we were cocky," Miller said. "But we have always been confident in ourselves and what we could do. I've just tried to grow into his shoes."

"Ever since I was younger, he was the basketball player. I kind of wanted to be something like that where people would look up to me because I was a role model like him. "To live up to that standard, Miller pushes himself through a year-round schedule of football, basketball, and track participation. He loses hours in the weight room and practice in a single-minded pursuit to be his best. "I sacrifice some money in my pocket," Miller said. "I don't have time for a job and sometimes for homework, but I think it's worth it."

"I don't think I'm missing out on anything. The people that don't play are missing out. It's not every year you win a state championship. The guys that didn't play are now saying they wish they did." But after hearing about the kind of beating Miller takes during every game, squeamish would-be might change their mind.

"It's kind of hard to walk the next day (after a game)," Miller said. "My legs are bruised up and down and my back is always sore. The worst was against Mountain View. I didn't know if I was going to be able to get out of bed that Saturday. I had at least 13 bruises all over my legs from helmets, but at the end it was worth it for a state championship."

The 170-pound Miller's durability was his biggest question mark heading into his first season as the Bruins' feature back. Offensive coordinator Mark Schaal was worried before the season about Miller's ability to take the kind of punishment a Class 5A football schedule can dish out. "He took a lot of pretty good hits and kept playing," Schaal said. "He's fairly physical and he's been able to withstand the punishment."

Miller isn't pleased with his progress as a football player yet. He hopes to pack 200 pounds onto his 5-foot-6 frame. Though he'll carry the "undersized" tag with him the rest of his football career, Miller also carries big dreams. "I don't really care about what people say," Miller said. "Most of the NFL skill players aren't much bigger than I am. Guys like (Kansas City Chiefs receiver) Dante Hall. I think about that. How if those guys can do it, I can too."

"It's hard to foretell the prospects of a 16-year-old kid, but Miller has already drawn high praise from multiple sources, including Schaal. "It's like one coach told me," Schaal said. "I'd rather have an average offensive line and a great back than a dominant offensive line and a decent back. We didn't have any Division I prospects on our line, but if they occupied someone, Brody would make things happen and he'd be gone. A lesser back, the defense is going to catch up."

Now, the cut is out of the bag. Though Miller is unlikely to surprise any defenses with his speed during the rest of his high school career, he will continue to rely on a steady effort to see the open lanes to the end zone. "There wasn't a single play this year that I didn't think I could score off of," Miller said. "It didn't matter if we were backed up to our own 5-yard line. I'm never going to be the biggest, but I can still go out there and be the best."

And this season, he was undeniably the stars' best. "Times-News sports writer Eric Larsen can be reached at 1-800-658-3863. Ext. 639, or eblarsen@mtgvalley.com.

Minnesota Vikings safety Corey Chavous, right, stands as Green Bay Packers wide receiver Donald Driver, left, scores on a Brett Favre 3-yard pass in the fourth quarter Friday, in Minneapolis. Driver caught 11 passes for 162 yards and one touchdown as the Vikings beat the Packers, 34-31, in the final seconds.

AP photo

Packers shine as division champs

By Dave Campbell Associated Press writer

MINNEAPOLIS — Brett Favre bounced back from one of his familiar costly mistakes and rallied the Green Bay Packers to another big victory — and another division title. Favre drove his team 76 yards to set up Ryan Longwell's 29-yard field goal as time ran out, lifting the Packers to a 34-31 victory over the Minnesota Vikings on Friday. That clinched a third straight NFC North crown for Green Bay. The Packers (9-6) defeated 31-24 with 8:18 left after Favre's third-down throw from his end zone was intercepted by Chris Price. Please see PACKERS, Page B2



AP photo

AP selects Tuberville as coach of the year

By Ralph D. Russo Associated Press writer

NEW YORK — Tommy Tuberville followed the most difficult season of his coaching career with the best. A year after he was nearly replaced by Auburn, Tuberville was selected by the Associated Press coach of the year. In his sixth season at Auburn, Tuberville has led the SEC-ranked Tigers to a 20-0 regular season and its first Southeastern Conference championship in 15 years.

But it's not quite a perfect year, despite the perfect record. The Tigers failed to reach the Orange Bowl to play for the Bowl Championship Series national title. Auburn never could get past Oklahoma and Southern California in the BCS standings and will play Virginia Tech in the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 3. Tuberville was a runaway winner, getting 35 of the 63 votes from the panel of media members. LSU's Nick Saban was last year's winner. Utah coach Urban Meyer was second with 14 votes. USC's Pete Carroll and Iowa's Kirk Ferentz received four votes. California's Jeff Tedford got three votes and Texas-El Paso's Mike Price got two. Oklahoma's Bob Stoops and Louisville's Bobby Petrino each received one vote.

A very sporty Christmas

Shopping carts are colliding. On the ice, they are sliding. A tragic sight. I spent Christmas Eve night shopping at the Magic Valley Mall. Between the darkness encroaching on the Magic Valley as early as 4 p.m. and the influx of seemingly first-time drivers on the Twin Falls streets, I have only one thing to say about the Christmas season. What a load of Yule.

But not even my Ebenezer Scrooge-ism could stop old Saint Nick from sliding down the Twin Falls' air ducts and dropping off our sports staff a few presents. We'll have to wait for a good rain and a stiff breeze to take care of the presents his reindeer left on our roof, though.

Sports editor Joe Paisley got his Christmas present early. Thanks in part to a pair of former Oregon State University wide receivers — Chad Johnson and T.J. Houshmandzadeh — his Cincinnati Bengals aren't totally inept this season. If they keep drafting receivers, there's a chance the Bengals can upgrade their official website's major sponsors.

This season, the www.bengals.com question of the week is brought to you by Roto-Rooter. Santa granted College of Southern Idaho's beat writer Kevin Colbert's wish — mandating that former CSI radio broadcaster Logan Tusov be called upon for one more area game over the airwaves. But this time, make it a Class 1A high school basketball game. We've all hoped for the day

2004 All-area football team

Player of the Year — Brody Miller, junior, Twin Falls Coach of the Year — Tomie Smith, Twin Falls

First team

Offense

- QB — Mike Smith, senior, Twin Falls RB — Aaron Eggen, senior, Declo RB — CJ Tackett, senior, Rait River WR — Mitch Smith, senior, Twin Falls WR — Bjorn Christensen, senior, Declo TE — TJ King, junior, Wendell OL — David Van Eps, senior, Twin Falls OL — Timothy Osterhout, senior, Declo OL — Zach Reiterik, senior, Wendell OL — Tanner Patterson, senior, Jerome OL — Josh Benedictus, junior, Filer K — Ryan Simmons, sophomore, Twin Falls

Defense

- RE — Nate Robertson, sophomore, Twin Falls DT — Steven Toone, junior, Gooding DT — Andrew Wilkin, senior, Twin Falls LE — Taylor Korlis, junior, Burley LB — Martin Pothier, senior, Twin Falls LB — Tyson Rymasa, senior, Wood River LB — Brad Silvester, senior, Filer CB — Cole Bitzenburg, senior, Filer CB — Shawn Anthony, senior, Twin Falls FS — Zach Schaal, senior, Twin Falls SS — Layne Tombergson, senior, Minico LB — Nate Tombergson, sophomore, Twin Falls

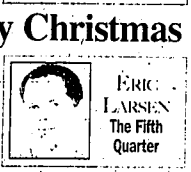
Second team

Offense

- QB — Cody Rogers, senior, Gooding RB — Dakota Dulan, senior, Camas County RB — Zac Davis, junior, Wendell WR — Paulen Baker, junior, Rait River WR — Cody Brigham, senior, Minico LB — Braden Barrett, senior, Rait River LB — Bill Thomas, senior, Rait River RB — Andy James, senior, Rait River OL — Eric Look, senior, Rait River OL — Brad Clark, junior, Malco OL — Matt Shaw, senior, Declo K — Joey Sibley, senior, Kimberly

Defense

- RE — Bill Thomas, senior, Rait River DT — Brynna Barrett, senior, Rait River DT — Laine Bailey, senior, Twin Falls FS — Justin Pavlett, senior, Glens Ferry LB — Will Howerton, junior, Wendell LB — Alan Bianch, senior, Rait River LB — Victor Vazquez, senior, Richfield CB — Gernah Nix, senior, Malco CB — Todd Cook, senior, Twin Falls FS — Cameron Allen, senior, Kimberly SS — Matt Myers, junior, Wendell P — Jared Denton, junior, Filer



ERIC LARSEN: The Fifth Quarter

when I saw can sign off from a Carey Panty on the Richfield Tigers game. And that's life on the road in the Magic Valley Northside."

For sports part-timer Dennis Phillips, Santa brought a pair of earrings to help drive the full-time writer's chatter, fueling ways to make Slave NBA players' last names sound NBA has become a favorite pastime around the office.

All over the girls basketball game. I relayed to the staff the story of how I caught a bounce pass — right in the Turkoglus. "That night, Diane learned there's more truth in the term 'fraternity of sports writers' than we'd like to admit. Santa ripped a few pages out of fellow part-timer Nathaniel Garrabranti's thesaurus for Christmas. The Westminster College (Salt Lake City) English Department graduate recently left the rest of the sports staff scratching our heads after working the word impunity into a high school basketball game story. "It's not that we didn't know what the word meant. We just had no idea 16-year-old girls did anything without impunity — without the help of a parent's VISA. ... Please see LARSEN, Page B2

SPORTS



Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant (8) and then-Laker Shaquille O'Neal stand near half court during a Phoenix Suns free throw in the second quarter in this Jan. 4, 2003 photo. In Phoenix, O'Neal and Bryant fussed, feuded and won three championship rings during a chaotic eight seasons with the Los Angeles Lakers. Now O'Neal is gone. Bryant's still around, and they'll play against each other for the first time Saturday at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

How Kobe, Shaq aligned

By Michelle Kaufman
Knight Ridder Newspapers

MIAMI — This is the tale of two men and their inability to share one ball.

Their union led to three straight NBA titles despite a stormy eight-year relationship battered by jealousy, sniping, accusations, denials, recrimination, and a highly publicized rape trial. The once placid marriage ended in a bitter divorce last July.

The two parties continue to fire cross-country verbal barbs and will meet face to face for the first time on Christmas Eve in front of a sold-out Staples Center crowd in Los Angeles and a national television audience. Tickets for this spicy reunion are going for as high as \$3,000 on e-Bay. A suite is selling for \$25,000.

Will Miami Heat center Shaquille O'Neal and Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant shake hands? Or will they snarl? Stay tuned.

In the meantime, settle into a cozy chair, and let's review how two of the best players in National Basketball Association history got to this volatile point.

Our story begins on April 29, 1995, when Bryant, a 17-year-old phenom from a rich suburban Philadelphia high school, decided to skip college "I am going to the NBA," he brazenly announced at a news conference attended by his friends from the pop group Boyz II Men. Within a few days, Bryant and Adidas put the final touches on a \$10 million contract.

The son of former NBA player Joe "Jelly Bean" Bryant and a dotting mother who cooked him Cream of Wheat every day for breakfast, Bryant led the pampered life and was no stranger to the spotlight.

The family lived in Italy for much of Kobe's childhood while Joe played pro ball, and little Kobe entertained fans at halftime with his lacy dribbling. When Kobe returned to the United States at age 14, he didn't quite fit in. He was somewhat of a loner, and spent many an evening watching videotapes of himself or his NBA idols in action. Basketball was an obsession, and it was clear very early that he had a special talent.

Before high school graduation, he had already won a state title, started in national prep tournaments, and worked out with the Philadelphia 76ers. When it came time to pick a

date for the senior prom, the kid aimed way beyond the hallways of Lower Merion High. He dined longhairs girlfriend Jocelyn Ebron and invited pop star Brandy, whom he had met briefly at the Essence Magazine awards.

"He told me that his agent wanted him to ask Brandy because it would help him gain attention," Ebron told Newsweek magazine. "I was hurt, but he said it was for the best, so I had to accept that."

Return of Showtime

Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, Lakers General Manager Jerry West was concocting a plan to bring Showtime back to the Forum. The Lakers had won a championship in eight seasons and hadn't reached the Finals in five years. The glory days of the 1980s, the days of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Magic Johnson teaming for five titles, were becoming a distant memory. Magic Jordan was king in 1980, and his Chicago Bulls dominated the league.

West had an idea: What if the Lakers could limit the slick Philly kid and O'Neal, the seven-foot-one, 350-pound Orlando Magic center? O'Neal, the most dominant big man in the game, was about to become a free agent at 24 after four titleless years with the Magic. He loved Orlando, built a megamansion there, but he loved the West Coast business, too, so perhaps he could be wooed with L.A. glitz and glamour.

'A Big Fish'

"I want to be a big fish in a big pond with a lot of other big fish," O'Neal said of joining the Lakers. And then, the walking salesman added: "I just want to be young, have fun, drink Pepsi and wear Reeboks."

Upon O'Neal's signing, the cheapest Lakers tickets soared from \$3.50 to \$21 and the most expensive from \$500 to \$600.

Showtime was back, and L.A. was buzzing. Kobe was the power. Both were fabulous talents. Both had spent parts of their childhood in Europe — O'Neal's stepfather, an Army drill sergeant, was based in Germany during Shaquille's junior high years.

It seemed, at the time, the perfect partnership. "No one can worry about who is scoring, who is getting all the attention," O'Neal said. "We can't worry about that stuff."

But they did.

tumbled eventually worked up the courage to roll by and mug me. Ebron was enough.

But if I had one wish for Santa, it would be for one of those fire extinguisher guns that shoot souvenir T-shirts at NBA games.

You'll shoot your eye out kid! Hey, who said that? I will not. Anyway, Merry Christmas.

Times-News sports writer Eric Larson can be reached at 1-800-636-7899, ext. 769, or elarsen@magicvalley.com.

NBA has new version of 'Bad Boys'

By Nancy Armour
Associated Press writer

At least the "Bad Boys" kept their shenanigans on the court when they were wreaking havoc in the NBA.

Nowadays there are enough mugshots out there to spawn a new trading card industry. Players are doing and saying things that defy common sense, annoying fans with their high-priced whines. Wins seem to rank only slightly ahead of endorsement opportunities and "monster" contracts, and those "knuckleheads" Karl Malone once dismissed haven't gotten a clue yet.

Even the Christmas Day games, once a showcase for the class of the league, have attitude. One game is Kobe vs. Shaq, dueling egos that helped bring down what could have been the NBA's next dynasty. The other is the first meeting of the Pistons and Pacers since that Nov. 19 brawl that spilled into the stands, one of the ugliest fights in sports history.

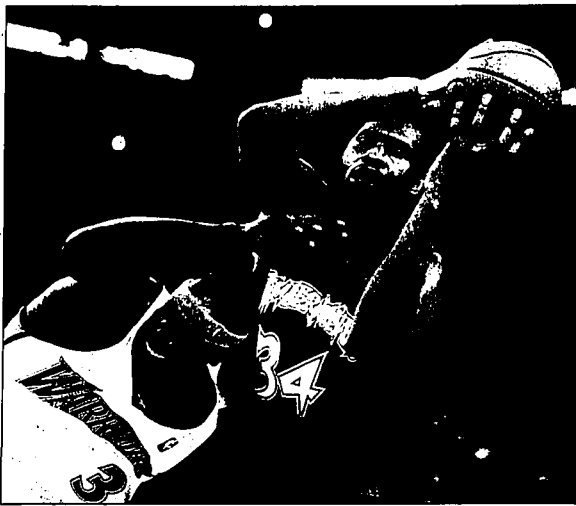
What happened to all that love and goodwill created by Michael, Magic and Bird?

"People don't realize the things we do as players can really affect a lot of lives," said Antonio Davis, first vice president of the players' union. "We're not trying to take away their own sense of self. If you want to braid your hair, wear your jeans hanging off your butt, do some of those things because they're you, that's fine. But regardless of what organization, corporation you work for, you can't go out and have run-ins with the law, hurt the people that drive your business," Davis said. "You just can't do some of those things."

Like everything else in society, the NBA goes through cycles. This latest one seems to be driven, largely, by the influx of younger players. The average age in the league has dropped by almost a year, down from 27.82 in 1998 to 27.028 this year.

Mope and more kids are jumping straight from high school to the pros, a record eight were taken in last summer's draft, all in the first round — and those who do go to college rarely stay all four years.

Many of the youngsters coming into the league check fundamental, making their first few years an on-the-job training program. Some never learned the life lessons necessary for the adult world, either, put on pedestals at increasingly young ages.



Golden State Warriors' Clifford Robinson (3) and Minnesota Timberwolves' Michael Olowokandi, of Nigeria, struggle for a rebound during the first half, Dec. 1, in Oakland, Calif. Although the fans haven't turned their backs on the NBA, players' personal antics, like Olowokandi's legal woes, don't help his image. Police had to use a stun gun on Olowokandi last month to get him to leave an Indianapolis bar.

Couple that with the huge salaries players get these days and there can be problems. Teenagers who had to ask their parents for spending money only a year or two ago are suddenly millionaires carrying \$100 bills for pocket change. Tricked-out SUVs are a given, and some players sport more bling than Jennifer Lopez.

"I really do think that the perception from the fans is that players are selfish, that the only thing that matters is the money — because the money has gotten so big — and the players don't really respect or care about the fans," said Chicago Bulls general manager John Paxson, who won three NBA titles as a player.

"I don't think that's necessarily the reality, but as they say, perception is reality."

The personal antics don't help. Kobe Bryant no longer faces criminal charges, but he's still being sued by a woman who claims he raped her. On Police had to use a stun gun on Michael Olowokandi last month to get him to leave an Indianapolis bar.

Carmelo Anthony has been

in a bar fight, charged briefly with drug possession after a friend's marijuana was found in his backpack and seen on a homemade DVD with a man who warns that people who put police about drug deals "get a hole in their head" — and that's just since September.

And, of course, there's the brawl, Ron Artest, last year's defensive player of the year, has been suspended for the rest of the season after charging into the stands in Detroit and punching a fan, and eight other players got suspensions ranging from eight to 30 games. Five Indiana Pacers are facing charges, and the civil lawsuits are already starting.

An arbitrator this week recommended O'Neal's 25-game suspension by 10 games, allowing O'Neal to play for Indiana against the Pistons on Christmas. A federal judge upheld the reduction, pending his ruling on an NBA suit challenging the arbitrator's authority. All the other suspensions were upheld by the arbitrator.

"Any professional sport has a problem to some degree when

an incident like this takes place," San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "The salaries that professional athletes make can be a problem if players aren't aware of what that responsibility might be, what comes along with that contract. Some players understand it, some teams understand it, some don't."

"But to make a broad stroke, 'The NBA or this sport or these players have a problem,' I think, is dangerous."

But one of those guys who paved the way for the NBA's phenomenal success in the last two decades has no doubt the kids will be all right.

It's not easy making the jump from high school to the pros, either on the court or off. Pacers president Larry Bird said. Give the young players some time, and they'll figure it out, Bird said.

"I've got a good feeling that the league, in a couple of years, is going to be a lot better than it is today," he said. "Some of the young players, they're only going to get better. They're great players now, but they'll figure it out and get better."

No. 12 Washington throttles Houston, 110-63

By Jim Coar
Associated Press writer

SEATTLE — The Washington Huskies look ready to make a run at the Pac-10 championship.

Robby Jones scored 22 points to lead five Washington players in double figures, in a 110-63 victory over the Houston Cougars on Friday.

Jamaal Williams added 19 points, Tre Simmons and Brandon Roy each scored 16, and Nate Robinson had 11 for the No. 12 Huskies (10-1), who avenged a 15-point loss at Houston last season.

Jones, a starting forward, shot 9-of-9 and led the Huskies with nine rebounds in 25 minutes. Roy, a junior swingman who is regarded as Washington's top all-around player, played in his second game after undergoing knee surgery.

Washington scored 100 points or more for the third time in four games and won its sixth in a row since losing to No. 13 Gonzaga by 12 points on Dec. 1. The Huskies beat Sacred Heart 114-53 Wednesday night at home and their 224th in two games set a school record. It was the second time they had

scored 100 points in consecutive games and the first time since December 1971.

The Cougars (8-4) were led by Chris Lawson's career-high 18 points and Andre Owens with 17. The frustrated Cougars were whittled for three technical fouls.

Washington led from wire to wire, scoring the game's first nine points as Houston missed its first seven shots before Danny Dyer scored on a dunk with 6:53 gone.

The Huskies led 13-7 before going on a 10-0 spurt, including seven points by Jones. Jones started the run with a 3-pointer and ended it by sinking two free throws after fouling Robert Cherington, who was charged with an intentional foul. That gave Washington a 23-7 lead with 8:24 left in the first half.

The Huskies led 48-26 at halftime. Houston never got any closer than 19 points in the second half.

Washington finished second to Stanford in the Pac-10 regular-season race and the conference tournament last season. The Huskies open Pac-10 play against California and Stanford next weekend in Seattle.



Washington's Will Conroy, left, pressures University of Houston's Chris Lawson, right, as he brings the ball past half court in the first half of the game in Seattle on Friday.

Packers

Continued from B1

Claiborne and returned 12 yards for a touchdown.

The Vikings (8-7), however, couldn't get what they needed from a punt defense that has struggled all season long. Donald Driver — who had 11 receptions for 162 yards — made a nifty, falling-down catch of Favre's pass on fourth-and-3 to tie it at 10-10 with 3:34 remaining after an 80-yard drive.

Minnesota, which can clinch a wild-card playoff spot with a loss by either Carolina or St. Louis this week, appeared on its way to retaining the lead.

But a holding penalty on Matt Birk — the Vikings were flagged nine times for 78 yards — wiped out a 16-yard run by Michael Bennett that would have given them the ball at the Green Bay 40 just before the 2-minute warning.

After a punt, Favre got the ball at his 13 with 1:35 left. Twelve plays later, Longwell's kick sailed in to tie it at 10-10 — sending the Packers into celebration on their biggest-rivals-home field.

Favre finished 30-for-43 for 365 yards, three touchdowns and the interception. Alman Green, who left briefly with a

head injury, carried 19 times for 64 yards and a score.

Daunte Culpepper went 46-for-23 for 285 yards, no turnovers and three touchdowns — on three consecutive passes in a wild second quarter in which 38 points were scored.

Nate Burleson, who had a career day against the Packers last month, caught two passes for 110 yards and a score. Randy Moss had a touchdown among his two catches and 30 yards, and Michael Bennett finished with 159 total yards on 20 touches.

Larsen

Continued from B2

As for yours truly, I didn't need a jolly old elf to grant my Christmas wish. Instead, a magical spirit came from Winona, Minn., to take care of that duty. New managing editor, Chris Steinbach, OK'd my move from the wild west outpost of burley to the big city and our Twin Falls main office.

It's not that I didn't enjoy living in Burley. It's just that the first day I moved there, I watched as tumbleweed rolled to the big city and our Twin Falls main office.

Coming Sunday

A look at Boise State linebacker Corey Hall.

SPORTS

SPORTS IN BRIEF

SCORES AND STATS

BASKETBALL

NBA

Table with NBA game results including teams like New York, Boston, and Miami, with columns for W, L, Pct, and GB.

WRESTLING CONFERENCE

Table with wrestling conference results for various teams like San Antonio, Dallas, and Memphis.

Wrestling

Table with wrestling results for various weight classes and teams.

Baseball

Table with baseball game results including teams like Toronto, Boston, and Chicago.

Baseball

Table with baseball results for various leagues and teams.

Baseball

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WHAT'S ON T.V.

Basketball

Pistons at Pacers, ESPN, 10:30 a.m.

Hockey

Heat at Lakers, ABC, 1:15 p.m.

Football

Raiders at Chiefs, CBS, 3 p.m.

World Junior Championships

Russia vs. U.S., ESPN2, 8:30 p.m.

Area ski report

Due to the early Christmas Eve deadline, the Area Ski Report will appear in today's newspaper. Updated ski report information will be found at http://www.mtnmag.com/area/.

FOOTBALL

NFL

Table with NFL game results including teams like New England, Buffalo, and Baltimore.

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Jerome Rec needs youth hoops coaches

JEROME — The Jerome Recreation District is in need of coaches for all levels for its youth basketball program, which begins in January.

More umpires will regain their jobs

NEW YORK — Three more umpires will be rehired by major league baseball and six more will split \$2.3 million in severance pay as part of a settlement of the mass dispute that cost 22 umpires their jobs in 1999.

Shane Spencer signs with Japanese club

TOKYO — Outfielder Shane Spencer signed with Japan's Hanshin Tigers after a seven-year career in the majors in the United States.

AP Coach of the Year List

Table with AP Coach of the Year nominees for various sports including Football, Basketball, and Soccer.

HARRAH'S ODDS

Table with Harrah's odds for various events including NCAA Football, NFL, and College Basketball.

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McGahee's status remains uncertain

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Bills running back Willis McGahee practiced for the first time since his season-ending injury last Sunday's game at San Francisco.

Tommy Linton and Eric Gregg

Tommy Linton and Eric Gregg are expected to start if McGahee is sidelined by a game-time decision.

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SPORTS



Pittsburgh Steelers broadcaster Myron Cope works the Steelers game against the New York Jets on Dec. 12, at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh. Cope is in his 35th season broadcasting the Steelers.

Yoi!

Myron Cope completes 35th season in the Steelers booth — and that's no garganzola

By Alan Robinson
Associated Press writer

PITTSBURGH — As the Pittsburgh Steelers troop into a hotel lobby the night before a game, scores of black-and-white-wearing fans huddle anxiously, waiting for their favorite star. Player upon player goes by, yet he still hasn't shown up, and the crowd is growing nervous.

Finally, amid a sea of mountaineers, men who tower over him by at least 6 inches, a septuagenarian man appears. To a frenzied response: "Myron! Over here! Sign my terrible towel! Myron, give me a hug!"

It's a familiar scene for Myron Cope, who, at age 75, remains as popular in Pittsburgh as the players whose deeds he describes on radio. That he does so at 100 decibels with a one-of-a-kind voice — think of a car careering in a screening stop — adds to the allure, as does his invention of the towel that two generations of fans have twirled at Steelers games.

"He doesn't play, he doesn't put on a pair of pads, but he's revered probably as much or more in Pittsburgh than Franco (Farris), all the guys," said running back Jerome Bettis, who, like countless other Pittsburghers, occasionally performs a Cope impersonation. "Everybody probably remembers Myron more than the greatest players, and that's why."

One Cope accepts with a cackle of delight, just as he does the news that, in his 35th season, his career predates ABC's "Monday Night Football" by one year. Cope, who has a franchise quarterback named Terry Bradshaw both debuted Sept. 20,

1970. The first Monday night telecast was a day later.

"Amazing," Cope said, marveling at his own endurance. He didn't become a broadcaster until age 40, and only when radio station WTAZ asked the Sports Illustrated freelance writer to do daily commentaries. The Steelers wanted to sell more tickets at their Three Rivers Stadium, and after hearing Cope, owner Art Rooney and publicist Ed Kiehl thought his knowledge and unique style would bring the team more attention.

At first, Pittsburghers didn't know what to make of this man of modest size and many wags, some not in any dictionary.

A Steelers touchdown — rare in the day — elicited a "Yoi!" He dismissed doubtless from an opposing coach as "garganzola." New coach Chuck Noll was the "Emperor Chuck." The despised Browns were the "Cleveland Browns," the mistake-prone Cincinnati Bengals the "Bungles." Something meriting his approval was "fok-dok-dok."

As former Steelers lineman Craig Wolfley said, "I just thought the guy had some loose screws going on."

Within a few seasons, the Steelers were Super Bowl champions, and Cope had a highly rated talk show that lasted until the mid-1990s. He wrote five books, none about the Steelers, but one returned to influencing writing. His radio jobs provided health care for an outcast son — and, too, a fame he never got as a writer.

Every Steelers employee has a Cope tale to tell.

One day Cope was in a tight end Dave Smith, holly dressed in uniform and pads, into a crab for

a hectic ride to the airport after Smith missed the team bus. He got sick during a December river swim to celebrate an unexpected win. He talked a then-retired Frank Sinatra into attending a 1972 practice to make him an honorary general in Franco's Italian Army fan club. He told Redskins owner Daniel Snyder to "sick his head in a bucket of pain" after Snyder demanded Cope not refer to the team as the "Red Faces."

"Never once have the Steelers censured anything I said," Cope said.

And then there's the Terrible Towel, created by Cope as a good-luck charm. Hundreds of thousands have been sold at \$5 to \$10 each, with profits going to charity.

Still, despite the Steelers' unexpected surge to a 13-1 record, this has not been Cope's easiest season.

Wary after battling sickness for two years, he was ready to check into a care home last spring and friends, including former linbacker Andy Russell, found a specialist who diagnosed a rare but treatable illness. And a concussion forced him to miss a game for only the second time.

"It's hard to believe it's been 35 years, though my aches tell me it's been 35 years," he said. "But when there's a game and I get going, it doesn't seem like it at all."

Count coach Bill Cowher among his longtime listeners. "My dad would listen to his talk show and I would think, 'Why would you listen to that?'" Cowher said. "Then I found myself listening to that. Now I do my tradition show with him, and he makes ME feel young."

in stadium history has been removed, though.

There is now an empty space where Seat 13 used to be in Section 351, Row C among the rows of grating burnt orange seats in the stadium's distant middle deck. The yellow seat that marked Willie Stargell's mammoth 535-foot homer off Wayne Twitchell on May 20, 1978, has gone to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Back in the team's offices, a nondescript black binder sits on a shelf behind Delorme. He began to put its contents together three years ago and said it proved an invaluable resource in winding up the team's operations in Montreal. "It's basically a to-do list,"

Delorme said. "There were checks for every department and every individual. From disposal of the office furniture to ensuring that the alarm and telephone systems were canceled, it addressed the nuts and bolts of our operations."

The worst part of the job for Delorme was whittling down the staff. No one was surprised by the move, though the shock was significant after years of rumors.

Media relations and services director Monique Giroux finished up work in her official office Wednesday after sending out the Expos' last official press release, which indicated how the team's artifacts were being distributed among various caretaker institutions.

Concrete floor presents hard truth in Montreal — Expos are long gone

By Sean Farrell
The Associated Press

MONTREAL — The artificial turf is missing, leaving a concrete floor at barren Olympic Stadium and an even harder truth in Montreal: The Expos are long gone.

Since the end of the season, Claude Delorme, the Expos' executive vice president for business affairs, has overseen the task of winding up the team's operations in Montreal.

Delorme's unenviable new role began in earnest on Sept. 29 when team president Tony Danza confirmed the franchise's long-anticipated move to Washington, D.C., for 2005. The Expos played their final game at Olympic Stadium that evening, an anticlimactic 9-1 loss to Florida.

Now, the protective screen behind home plate is rolled up, though it remains suspended from the desolate stadium's roof — for the moment, the paddled blue outfield walls — 325 feet in the corners, and 404 feet to dead center — have been placed in storage in the bowels of the building.

Net that served as foul poles have been removed, though the bright orange lines on the roof survive as reminders of a Dave Kingman moment that necessitated a new ground rule and a perilous paint job.

A familiar and long-serving reminder of the longest homer



The former Montreal Expos store sits empty at Olympic Stadium in Montreal on Thursday.

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Back in the team's offices, a nondescript black binder sits on a shelf behind Delorme. He began to put its contents together three years ago and said it proved an invaluable resource in winding up the team's operations in Montreal. "It's basically a to-do list,"

Delorme said. "There were checks for every department and every individual. From disposal of the office furniture to ensuring that the alarm and telephone systems were canceled, it addressed the nuts and bolts of our operations."

The worst part of the job for Delorme was whittling down the staff. No one was surprised by the move, though the shock was significant after years of rumors.

Media relations and services director Monique Giroux finished up work in her official office Wednesday after sending out the Expos' last official press release, which indicated how the team's artifacts were being distributed among various caretaker institutions.

Varitek agrees to \$40M contract

By Howard Ulman
Associated Press writer

BOSTON — Jason Varitek has a new four-year deal, three new starting pitchers to catch and a new title: captain of the Boston Red Sox.

The catcher's new deal with the World Series champions will pay him \$40 million through the 2009 season, according to a lawyer with knowledge of the negotiations, who spoke to the Associated Press on the condition of anonymity.

At a news conference Friday to announce the signing, the Red Sox made Varitek just the third team captain since 1923. Jim Rice, who retired in 1989, was the last player to serve as captain. Other than Rice, only Carl Yastruzewski has borne the title over the past 81 years.

"I can do half of what they do statistically, I'll be all right," Varitek said.

A day before finalizing the deal with Varitek, the club announced it had finalized a one-year, \$1.5 million agreement with starter Wade Miller, who became a free agent when Houston didn't offer him a contract by Monday's deadline. On Wednesday, the team wrapped up a three-year, \$27.5 million deal with another right-handed starter, Matt Clement.

They'll join lefty David Wells, who signed a two-year, \$8 million contract on Dec. 14, and holdover starters Curt Schilling, Tim Lincecum and Bronson Arroyo.

Schilling is expected to miss opening day after undergoing knee surgery, while Miller hopes to be ready by spring training after missing the second half of last season with a frayed rotator cuff.

Despite losing free-agent Pedro Martinez to the New York Mets, "Our depth is significantly improved," general manager Theo Epstein said during a conference call Thursday. "You can never assume health and readiness to go, so we'll be very fortunate if we're in a situation where we have six guys ready to go at the same time."

And one very important catcher.

In an e-mail to The Associated Press, principal owner John



Boston Red Sox catcher Jason Varitek leaps into the arms of pitcher Keith Foulke (29) after the Red Sox beat the St. Louis Cardinals 3-0 to sweep the World Series in this Oct. 27 photo, in St. Louis.

Henry called Varitek "the rock solid leader of our club."

The anticipated opportunity to work with Varitek helped secure Clement, a free agent who pitched for the Chicago Cubs last season.

"A huge thing for me was the catching situation. I hope that's the same as it's been for a while," he said. "When I watch catchers, I think, 'Man, I'd like to throw to this guy.' I remember saying that a lot of times" about Varitek.

Varitek also is an offensive force, having hit a career-high .296 with 18 homers and 73 RBIs last season when Boston won its first World Series since 1918. Since his trade from Seattle in 1997, he has a .271 batting average with 97 homers and 418 RBIs in 832 games.

He was Boston's top priority among its four high-profile free agents. The others were Martinez, right-hander Derek Lowe,

whom the Red Sox are not pursuing, and shortstop Orlando Cabrera, who signed with Anaheim before Boston signed Edgardo Benayza to play his position.

Varitek will receive a \$4 million signing bonus, paid over four years and annual salaries of \$9 million. The sides compromised over his desire for a no-trade clause, working out a solution that will cover a large part of the contract but not all of it.

The combined average annual salary of Clement — \$5.8 million, Wells (\$4 million) and Miller (\$1.5 million) is just \$560,000 more than Boston offered Martinez in a three-year, \$10.5 million deal.

Miller, 29, had spent his entire career in Houston's organization. He plans to begin throwing the first week of January and to report to spring training in Fort Myers, Fla., a couple of weeks early.

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AROUND THE VALLEY

Many offices will be closed today

TWIN FALLS — Many offices, agencies and places of business will be closed today for Christmas.

Here's a rundown of what's closed:

- City, county, state and federal offices will be closed.
- U.S. Post Offices will be closed.
- Banks will be closed.
- The Twin Falls Public Library will be closed.
- The YMCA/Twin Falls City Pool will be closed.
- Magic Valley Mall will be closed.

Festival reports raising \$171,000

TWIN FALLS — The Magic Valley Regional Medical Center Foundation's annual Festival of Trees raised \$171,000 in gross revenues this year, according to a press release from the foundation.

About 300 people attended the gala dinner. Special displays during the festival included: Seniors—Day Ladies Night Out and Children's Day, where more than 250 children made Christmas gifts and participated in other activities.

The money raised will be given to the Magic Valley Regional Medical Center Foundation's Women's Health Fund and area quick response units.

The foundation wishes to thank all sponsors, donors and volunteers for making the festival successful.

For more information about the Magic Valley Regional Medical Center Foundation's events, contact Merrily Hatcher, Annual Programs coordinator, at 737-2481 or merrilyh@nmvrmc.org.

Newspaper seeks home school families

TWIN FALLS — The Times-News is looking for families that home school.

We would like to learn more about the "hows" and "whys" of home education.

If you're interested, please e-mail Karin—Kowalski—at kkowalski@magicvalley.com.

Blue Cross will issue new ID numbers

BOISE — In an effort to protect its members' privacy and prevent identity theft, Blue Cross of Idaho has announced that it will no longer issue enrollee identification on Social Security numbers, according to a news release from the insurance company.

Instead of using members' Social Security numbers, identification numbers will be randomly assigned.

Most of the 380,000 members in Idaho will receive their new identification cards in the mail during the first week of January.

Blue Cross of Idaho does not anticipate that the change will cause any disruption of service.

Incidents of identity theft have increased during the past several years, the news release said.

According to a U.S. Federal Trade Commission survey, in the past five years 27.3 million Americans have been victims of identity theft. Consumer out-of-pocket expenses in the past year alone totaled \$5 billion, the news release said.

— compiled from staff reports

Snowpack levels

Watershed	% of Avg*	% snowpack
Salmon	77%	27%
Big Wood	80%	28%
Little Wood	75%	26%
Big Lost	79%	27%
Little Lost	78%	28%
Henry Fork/Teton	79%	28%
Upper Snake Basin	72%	27%
Henry Canyon	107%	90%
Salmon Falls	133%	124%

*A comparison of basin snowpack, on this day, with a 30-year average.
 **A predictor of basin snowpack for the active snow season, which peaks in late February.

NEEDY GIVERS



South Central Community Action Partnership employees Julie Latta, right, Ken Robinette, center, and Ken Whiting load up a truck with gifts for underprivileged children. The organization has seen more families request assistance during the past year.

Human services agencies feel pinch this year

By Sandy Miller
 Times-News writer

TWIN FALLS — 'Tis the season of giving, but everything from hurricanes to a deployment of local troops has taken a toll on local human services agencies.

In addition, more and more families and seniors are struggling to make ends meet, said Leanne Trappen, community services director at South Central Community Action Partnership, a local human services agency that helps people with food, clothing, heating for their homes and other needs.

"Our numbers are huge this year," Trappen said. "Last year, we helped 4,000 families. This year it's already over 6,000 families. We've had more people who have had to ask for help who haven't had to ask before."

Trappen blames a lot of the problem on Idaho's low wages. "The cost of living keeps increasing, but wages aren't keeping up," Trappen said. "Our wages are fairly low. It takes \$14 an hour just to meet the basic needs. People here, on the average, make \$7 an hour. If you don't have two people working full-time, you really have a problem."

Representatives from area human services agencies meet

Help for military families

Soldiers and their families in any branch of the military can find help with resources by calling Sonya Nowland, family assistance coordinator at the Family Readiness Center at the National Guard Armory at 734-2404, Ext. 7039.

once a month to discuss the community's needs and make sure they're not duplicating services, Trappen said.

Maj. Eddie Patterson of the local Salvation Army said his agency has also been stretched thin. Even the hurricanes in Florida affected local agencies' coffers.

"Money went out of the community and a lot of agencies felt the pinch," Patterson said. "The last two months have been really tight."

And when local National Guard troops were deployed to Iraq, many of their families found themselves needing help for the first time.

Weekend warriors suddenly found themselves full-time soldiers in the U.S. Army and had to leave their full-time jobs behind.

The Salvation Army set up a special fund for soldiers and their families with money from

a foundation. "The troops have had an impact, but it's a cause we backed 100 percent," Patterson said.

Trappen said military families face special problems.

"Sometimes they're over the income limit for some programs, but they're struggling because suddenly they're a single-parent family," Trappen said.

When it comes to local soldiers, the agency that has been impacted the most is the American Red Cross of Greater Idaho, which provides a number of services to military families.

"We offer multiple things," said Polly Gorley, executive director of the local Red Cross office. "First and foremost, we have 24-hour notification for births, deaths or serious illnesses. There's definitely been an increase since the National Guard deployments. We have seen a significant increase in the number of Armed Forces Emergency Services cases. As the conflict goes on, the number will continue to rise."

The Red Cross phones are ringing a lot more these days. "Our call volume is a lot higher now with people trying to get in touch with their loved ones and needing financial support," said Amy Bateman, public affairs director for the

Red Cross of Greater Idaho. Still, when it comes to the troops, the community has come out in force to make the holidays a little merrier for the families left behind.

"There's been an outpouring from the community," said Sonya Nowland, family assistance coordinator at the Family Readiness Center located at the local National Guard armory. "They've come in saying, 'I want to sponsor a family in need at Christmas.'"

Nowland said people have brought food, gifts, groceries and warm coats, hats and gloves.

"I just match them up with families and their needs," Nowland said. "We've been able to assist at least 10 families this year."

Nowland said one person came in and donated a \$100 gift certificate.

Another person walked in and paid a family's utility bill. She said seeing the expressions on families' faces when they receive the anonymous gifts makes her day.

"It makes me cry," Nowland said. "It makes this job so worthwhile."

Times-News writer Sandy Miller can be reached at 735-3264 or by e-mail at smiller@magicvalley.com.

New high school could be completed as early as May

Construction on facility remains on schedule

By Sandra Wisecaver
 Times-News correspondent

BUHL — Construction of the new Buhl High School is back on schedule.

Grant Haycock, the Buhl School Board's top official on

the project, said construction crews have penciled in May as their completion date. "I think we can pencil it in for July — so somewhere in between would be a realistic" date, he said.

The exterior bricks are in place and being cleaned. Some veneer brickwork still has to be done at the media center corridor walls.

Water running into the unfinished building could mold in some of the sheet rock. Damaged materials are being

removed and replaced, Haycock said.

The price tag to furnish the school is up slightly.

Principal Gary Moor's original budget included shelving and cafeteria tables. That will cost an additional \$129,000.

By substituting less costly brand names in the office equipment list and deleting other items, Moor said he can stay within his \$100,000 budget for furnishings. He has deter-

mined some items, including wall mats for the gym, are included on the contractor's list as part of the construction and can be removed from his list.

The Buhl Rotary Club will contribute the funds for the display of the U.S. and state flags in the foyer.

Plaques will be installed to recognize the Rotary Club donation and dedicate the contribution to the memory of the late John M. Barker, a longtime resident and member of

Forest trail system depends on public comments

Plan will determine level of motorized vehicle use

By Michelle Dunlop
 Times-News writer

TWIN FALLS — If your idea of a good time includes riding all-terrain vehicles in the Sawtooth National Forest, then break out your maps and markers and submit a request to keep your favorite trails open.

"It is critical that we get the assistance of forest users in developing a system that meets their needs and expectations and protects natural resources," said Jerry Clark, recreation and natural resource staff officer for the Sawtooth National Forest.

In September, officials from the Sawtooth National Forest

held public meetings to discuss their new proposal for travel within the forest. The plan prohibits cross-country off-road vehicle travel and restricts motorized travel within the Mindoko, Ketchum and Fairfield Ranger Districts to designated trails. Officials are encouraging forest users to submit comments on which trails should remain open to specific types of use.

"They told us if there were any additional comments they're wanting us to submit them," said Jim Bolon, treasurer of the Magic Valley Trail Machine Association.

The Forest Service hopes to receive feedback by mid-January in order to keep the process moving forward. After compiling comments, the federal agency will develop an action plan including a list of trails that

will be kept open. The Forest Service also will recommend a specific type of use for each trail such as four-wheel or two-wheel all-terrain vehicle, bicycle or horseshoe riding use.

"With the increase in all-terrain vehicle use in Idaho, it is very important that users help identify desirable roads and trails that can be developed to standards that can safely and

properly accommodate ATV use," Clark said.

Bolon's organization met with representatives of the Forest Service this autumn and highlighted routes that members of the group use and recognize. The Forest Service sent the organization a reminder, recently asking for

input on which trails should be available for access.

■ **The latest:** Officials are reminding residents to submit comments by Jan. 14.

■ **What's next:** The Forest Service will devise a proposal that will be available for public comment in the spring or summer 2005.

Please see PLAN, Page C3

Newspaper worker gets the best gift possible

By Julie Pence
 Times-News writer

TWIN FALLS — A couple who met at *The Times-News* 10 years ago and have worked together at the newspaper ever since got the best Christmas present ever this past week: The gift of life.

And they say it's other *Times-News* employees, local police and medical personnel in Twin Falls and Boise who gave them that gift.

The drama began Tuesday night when Eldon Knutson, 41, keeled over from a sudden cardiac arrest while he was working in the newspaper's mail room with his wife Tanya, Knutson, 50.

"We were standing across from one another laughing and talking," Tanya said. "I turned around to grab another handle when I heard him hitting the floor. I turned back around and saw his glasses going across the floor."

When Tanya reached him, at first she thought he was choking. But soon she and other workers realized he had probably suffered a heart attack.

Co-worker Jamie Garwood began checking for a pulse and tilting Eldon's head back in order to keep the airways open. The newspaper's worker, Sherry Hayes began breathing for Eldon while route driver Jim Hutchison did compressions on Eldon's chest. Hayes said the incident was his second time administering CPR, and "it's not something I ever want to repeat again."

Eldon's co-workers were buying time until an ambulance crew arrived with an electrical defibrillator to shock his heart back to life. Officers from the Twin Falls Police Department also showed up and helped with the CPR until Eldon reached Magic Valley Regional Medical Center.

Eldon's cardiac arrest, doctors from the electrical current in his body becoming disrupted, causing the heart to quiver in rhythm. That kind of heart attack usually occurs without prior symptoms. Eldon's heart had stopped until emergency

Please see HEART, Page C3

WANTED in the Magic Valley

Name: Stephen Raye Edwards
Age: 29
Description: 5-foot-11, 210 pounds, brown hair, hazel eyes.
Wanted for: Failure to appear.
Bond charge: Possession of a controlled substance.
The Twin Falls County Sheriff's Department asks anyone with information about Moore's whereabouts to call 735-1911 or Crime Stoppers at 732-5387, where you can remain anonymous and might be eligible for a cash reward.

MAGIC VALLEY/IDAHO

OBITUARIES

For obituary rates and information, call 735-3278 Monday through Saturday. Deadline is 4 p.m. for next-day publication. The e-mail address for obituaries is obits@magvalley.com...

W. Nolan Victor

W. Nolan Victor, Twin Falls, passed away peacefully on Thursday morning, Dec. 21, 2004. He was in his real estate office of 47 years (Ace Realty) where he collapsed at his desk...



He was preceded in death by his parents. He served in the Navy during World War II, graduating first in his class of 200 as an airplane mechanic...

man and realtor for the past 50 years, owning and operating Ace Realty. Nolan was a true conservative and loyal patriot who ran on the Independent ticket for Idaho State Governor in 1974. He was very active in the American Independent Party and served as Idaho's chairman for eight years. He was an active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, serving as a Bishop and many other positions. Blessed with a very loving, positive, quick-witted, hard-working, motivated personality, he accomplished many wonderful things during his lifetime. He will be greatly missed by his wife, family and friends! A funeral will be held at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2004, at the Maurice Street LDS Chapel, 421 Magic E. in Twin Falls, Idaho. Interment will follow the service at Sunset Memorial.

Daniel Byron Gorrell

Daniel Byron Gorrell, 74, of Twin Falls, passed away peacefully at home Dec. 23, 2004. Dan was born July 13, 1930, in Granby, Idaho, to Byron Corwin and Dorothy Lehman Gorrell. Dan and his family moved to Gooding, Idaho, when Dan was 5 years old where he was raised and attended school. Dan married Shirley Fancher Nov. 15, 1947, in Gooding, Idaho.



young people, without caring who they were or where they were from, began their rodeo career with the help and encouragement of Dan.

He is survived by his wife, Shirley; three sons and one daughter, son, Byron "Skook" Caldwell, Idaho, his daughter, Sara (Terry) and her sons,

lace and Tyler; son, Steve (Bobby) of Idaho, Idaho, and his son, Clay, (Aris Shipley); daughter, Beverly (Mc) Wiseman of Shoshone, Idaho, her son, Buddy Brunson (Jolie) and his children, Zackary, Torin, Gunnar, and McKayla; and two step-children, Zakery and Britni, her son, Casey Brunson and his daughter, Hayden, and her son, Billy (Amy Scout Brunson); and son, Jerry (Jug) (Gayle) of Glenns, Ferry, Idaho, and their son, Sam and his daughters, Jade and Bailey. Dan is also survived by his brothers, Alvin Gorrell, Calvin Gorrell and David Prince, all of Gooding, Idaho. His surviving sisters are Audrey Davis of Jerome, Idaho, and Joyce Krahn of Boise, Idaho. His parents and three brothers preceded Dan in death. The Gorrell family is so very grateful to Hospice for their warm and caring service and to the many friends that came to visit during the last few months. A gathering for family members and friends to celebrate Dan's life will be held at 1 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 27, 2004, at the Basque Center in Gooding. Cremation arrangements are under the direction of Demary's Gooding Chapel. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that memorial donations be made in Dan's name to the American Cancer Society.

Tracy Corwin

Tracy Corwin went home to her Lord, Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2004. Tracy was the daughter of Eugene and Linda Corwin. Tracy was born Feb. 3, 1970. She lived in Colorado and later moved to Idaho. Tracy was a most loving and caring person. Her willingness to mount anyone on his horses and offer some assistance is a tribute to his interest in youth and his sharing personality. Many

She leaves behind her father, Eugene; brother, Chris; best friends, Monte Bailey and John VanVleet; and numerous loved ones at the Mustard Seed and Twin Falls Reformed Church. A memorial service will be held in her honor at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2004, in the Chapel at Twin Falls Reformed Church. Cremation was under the direction of White Mortuary, "Chapel by the Park." Family suggest memorials to Mustard Seed Food Pantry, 455 Main Ave. E. in Twin Falls, Idaho.



John Westley DePew

Early afternoon on the 22nd of December, John Westley DePew, 56, of Brigham City, Utah, and formerly of Jerome, passed away at Pioneer Nursing center in Brigham City, Utah, due to heart complications and a long battle with diabetes. John was born in Wendell, Idaho, to Joe and Ethel DePew, May 7, 1948. John grew up in Idaho and went on to serve in the U.S. Army for four years. After an accident in transit to another military base, John was honorably discharged due to disability. John did not make a complete recovery; however, John made the very best of life. He was living on borrowed time. He was married twice, had five children and has three grandchildren and one on the



John is survived by, and will be most loved and missed by his five children, Hobbin, Joe, Steven, Kristy and Camille DePew; and his three grandchildren, Jessica and Jordan Fernandez and Allison DePew.

He is also survived by his brother, Clayton DePew; and his sister, Alice Schuyler. A memorial service for John will be held at 10 a.m. Monday, Dec. 27, 2004, at Farnsworth Mortuary Chapel, 1343 S. Lincoln, Jerome. Please join us in the celebration of John's life. All those who were close to John DePew knew of his love for the outdoors. "Granddad's Cabin" was one of his favorite spots. We would love all of his family and friends to join his children in laying him to rest at that place, too. On July 4, 2005, we will all be gathering at Patterson Creek. All family and friends interested in coming to celebrate John's life please contact Joe DePew at Kayak457@blackfoot.net or (406)726-0917.

OBITUARIES

Ciera Michelle Livia

Ciera Michelle Livia, age 8, daughter of Laura Johnson and Cesar Livia, died Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2004, at Magic Valley Regional Medical Center in Twin Falls, Idaho, as the result of an auto pedestrian accident near Buhl, Idaho. Ciera was a third-grade student at Buhl Elementary school. Survivors, in addition to her parents, Laura and Cesar, include her siblings, Mariah, Erik, Ryan and Alshia; grandparents, Rocella Livia, Leona Hill, Frank and Debbie Johnson; great-grandmother, Afon Johnson; numerous aunts, uncles and cousins. A funeral will be conducted at 1 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2004, at the Buhl Middle School, Visitation and viewing will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 27th, at Demary's Wendell Chapel, 164 E. Main.



tion and viewing will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 27th, at Demary's Wendell Chapel, 164 E. Main.

Mary Mae Boyd

Mary Mae Boyd, 93, passed away Dec. 21, 2004, at Olympic Memorial Hospital in Fort Angeles, Wash. Mae was born April 3, 1911, to Charles Lehl Randall and Sylvia Emily Meacham at Yoss, Utah. She was the third of 10 children born to this union and was preceded in death by her four brothers, Robert, Clarence, Harold, and Frank, and her sisters, Addred Perkins, Bessie Shear, Opal Boden and Florence Lee. She married Robert Clifford Boyd, March 16, 1935. They farmed in Murtaugh for many years and in other areas in Southern Idaho. Clifford passed away Dec. 24, 1989. She and her son, Ricky, lived in Burley for 25 years before moving to Sequim, Wash., to be close to her daughter. She was sealed to her husband, Feb. 10, 1972, in the Los Angeles Temple. She was a wonderful, loving mother, and was devoted to all her family, and many friends as well. She will be missed by all that knew and loved her. She is survived by two sons, Robert Gayle and Ricky Lynn; and two daughters, Donna Mae, Villet and Karen Dee Newman; as well as 22 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren; her sisters, Addred Perkins, Bessie Barks and Ormetta Bailey. A funeral will be conducted at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 29, in the Murtaugh LDS Chapel. Interment will follow in Sunset Memorial Park. Friends may call from 1:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Wednesday at the church. Services are under the direction of White Mortuary, "Chapel by the Park."

tion and viewing will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 27th, at Demary's Wendell Chapel, 164 E. Main.

Dollie Louise Miller

Dollie Louise Miller, age 90, of Shoshone, Idaho, died Thursday, Dec. 23, 2004, at the Shoshone Rehabilitation & Living Center. Dollie was born April 15, 1914, in Sesser, Ill. She was raised in Illinois and it was there that she received her education. In the 1930s she moved to Idaho and married Willard L. Johnson of Richfield. To this union three children were born, Dottie, Emily and James. They were later divorced. Arrangements will be made by Miller and resided in Ketchum and in Oregon. He preceded her in death in 1994. She continued living in Oregon until returning to Idaho in 1999 and for the past four years had resided in Shoshone. Survivors include her son, Jim D. Johnson of Shoshone; and a daughter, Emily Brockway of California; one brother, one sister and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her daughter, Dottie Johnson. There will be no formal services.

band, Feb. 10, 1972, in the Los Angeles Temple. She was a wonderful, loving mother, and was devoted to all her family, and many friends as well. She will be missed by all that knew and loved her. She is survived by two sons, Robert Gayle and Ricky Lynn; and two daughters, Donna Mae, Villet and Karen Dee Newman; as well as 22 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren; her sisters, Addred Perkins, Bessie Barks and Ormetta Bailey. A funeral will be conducted at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 29, in the Murtaugh LDS Chapel. Interment will follow in Sunset Memorial Park. Friends may call from 1:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Wednesday at the church. Services are under the direction of White Mortuary, "Chapel by the Park."

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SERVICES

Alvin David Schaab, funeral at 2 p.m. Monday at the Twin Falls Seventh Day Adventist Church, 131 Grandview Drive. Friends and family may call from 4 to 6 p.m. Sunday at Park's Magic Valley Funeral Home, 2551 Kimberly Road, Twin Falls.

Home, 2551 Kimberly Road; funeral at 11 a.m. Tuesday at the Wendell Cemetery.

Reuben A. Ward of Albion; funeral at 11 a.m. Monday at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Albion Ward Chapel; friends may call from 6 to 8 p.m. Sunday at Payne Mortuary, 221 W. Main St. in Burley; and from 10 to 10:45 a.m. before the funeral at the church.

Alberta D. Grant of Eden, service at 10 a.m. Wednesday at White Mortuary, 355 E. 16th St., Burley; and from 10 to 10:45 a.m. Wednesday at the church.

Sydney Herbert McNeely, funeral at 11 a.m. Monday at the Beautiful 17th Ward Chapel, 2200 S. 650 E. Friends may call from 6 to 8 p.m. Sunday evening at the Russon Brothers Beautiful Mortuary, 221 W. Main St. and from 10 to 10:45 a.m. Monday before the service at the church.

Julieanna Kudrna of Hollister, graveside service at 11 a.m. Tuesday at the Wendell Cemetery.

Clairinda Merrill Green of Burley; funeral at 11 a.m. Monday at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Burley West Stake Center, 2420 Parke Ave. Friends may call from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m. before the funeral at the church (Payne Mortuary).

Gladys Johnson BURLY - Gladys Johnson, a 90-year-old Burley resident, died Friday, Dec. 24, 2004, at her daughter's home in Eagle Mountain, Utah. Arrangements will be made by Payne Mortuary, 221 W. Main St., Burley.

Edmond Felix Philippet of Twin Falls, memorial service at 2 p.m. Monday at the Twin Falls Masonic Lodge, 805 Blue Lakes Blvd. N. (White Mortuary).

Gladys Johnson BURLY - Gladys Johnson, a 90-year-old Burley resident, died Friday, Dec. 24, 2004, at her daughter's home in Eagle Mountain, Utah. Arrangements will be made by Payne Mortuary, 221 W. Main St., Burley.

Mary Jane Conrad of Murtaugh; funeral at 1:30 p.m. Monday at Twin Falls First Church of the Nazarene, 1231 Washington St. N.; friends may call from 4 to 8 p.m. Monday at White Mortuary.

Erin Elizabeth Attkins Hobson BURLY - Erin Elizabeth Attkins Hobson, age 24, of Pocatello, formerly of Burley

Idaho man dies in Iraq attack

LEWISTON (AP) - An Army sergeant with strong ties to northern Idaho was one of the 13 American soldiers killed Tuesday during a suicide bomb attack at a mess tent in Mosul, Iraq. Staff Sgt. Darren VanKomen, 33, was serving with the Stryker Brigade based at Fort Lewis, Wash., when he was killed in the blast. Although the Army lists VanKomen's home town as Bluefield, W.Va., he spent his childhood in the Lewiston area and graduated from Culecasc High School in 1991. The youngest of 10 children, VanKomen joined the Army after graduating from high school. His family described him Thursday as a loving family man who was dedicated to his country and military. "He was not afraid to serve his country," said his mother, Betty Clemens, of Orofino. "He said 'Mom, don't worry about me. This is something I'm going to do and so something I was trained for and if I die that is God's will.'"

A military service at Fort Lewis is planned for Wednesday, after which his body will be cremated. VanKomen worked in supply and had previously been promoted and re-enlisted for another six years of duty. He was married to Stephanie VanKomen of Olympia, Wash., and had a 12-year-old stepdaughter, Chelsea. "My little girl was his world," said his sister, Tina McDaniel, 40, of Culecasc. VanKomen met his wife at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, where he was visiting. Stephanie told her sister-in-law she would marry him just moments after they met. "She thought I was crazy. I didn't even know his first name," Stephanie said. Nevertheless, he called her for a date the same day and they went out later that night. They were married six months later. His brother, Bill VanKomen, 45, of Post Falls, said his brother was a perfectionist who will be missed not only by his family and friends but by the Army.

Stephanie told her sister-in-law she would marry him just moments after they met. "She thought I was crazy. I didn't even know his first name," Stephanie said. Nevertheless, he called her for a date the same day and they went out later that night. They were married six months later. His brother, Bill VanKomen, 45, of Post Falls, said his brother was a perfectionist who will be missed not only by his family and friends but by the Army.

DEATH NOTICES

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

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SERVICES

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

Arrangements will be made by White Mortuary.

MAGIC VALLEY/IDAHO

Swiped bike inspires officers to play Santa with teenager

BOISE (AP) — It's no wonder Boise dispatchers are calling police Cpl. John Tudbury "Santa" instead of officer.

Tudbury bought a bicycle and other gifts for a teenage boy whose bike was reportedly stolen Wednesday as the teen was going to the mall to buy a Christmas present for his mom.

Cpl. Shane Hartgrove offered to split the expense with Tudbury when he heard what happened. And employees at Shopko, where Tudbury bought the bike, also pitched in to help, too.

"This was just the right time and the right thing to do for this kid," Tudbury said.

Matt Brooks, 15, was riding his bicycle to Boise Towne Square when he met an 18-year-old boy as he traveled along Cole Road, said.

They began talking and taking turns riding Matt's bike. Then the 18-year-old suddenly rode away, Matt said.

Tudbury drove around with Matt for more than an hour searching for the bike.

The pair eventually found the 18-year-old, who said someone else had the bike and he wasn't sure where to find it.

Matt decided not to press charges after the older teen apologized and promised Matt he would send him money for the bike he took, Tudbury said.

Convinced the 18-year-old wouldn't return the bike, the of-

ficer tried to change Matt's mind, but the boy refused.

"The only idea he could stand the idea of someone taking advantage of Matt, whose only transportation was the old Schwinn BMX-style bike.

"It's the kind of lesson you shouldn't have to learn at 15," he said.

After taking Matt home, Tudbury decided to go to the nearby Broadway Avenue Shopko to buy the boy a new bike and a gift for his mom.

Tudbury had learned Matt had just spent on his mom's Christmas gift during their time together.

The family doesn't own a phone or a car, and money is tight, Matt's mother, Annette Brooks said.

"It couldn't afford to buy him a bike," Annette said. "We're just barely making it."

Tudbury called Hartgrove, his on-duty sergeant, to tell him about his shopping plans.

"He says, 'I'll meet you there,'" Tudbury said. "Not only does he support me, but he splits the cost."

"John told me about it and I just thought, 'We've got to do something about this,'" Hartgrove said.

Tudbury and Hartgrove bought Matt a mountain bike worth about \$90, a bike lock and another surprise Matt will give his mother on Christmas Day.

The two officers went to

Matt's house later Wednesday night to give him the bike.

"The just went nuts," Tudbury said. "He was out in his bare feet just screaming."

When Matt first saw the shiny, red bike in front of his house, he said he tried to tell the officers they found the wrong bike. Then they said they bought the bike for him.

"I was like, yeah!" Matt said. "He was hugging it," his mother said.

Shopko employee Scott Irish decided to help as well after hearing what the Boise officers did. Several employees pitched in to buy a \$60 gift card for the Brooks family.

Irish also plans to give Matt a bike helmet.

Hartgrove has been with the police department for 29 years and will retire in about 5 months.

"He said officers often want to pitch in to help crime victims, but they can't help in every situation because their finances are limited."

Hartgrove and Tudbury used their own money to buy the gifts.

Other officers offered to help after hearing the story, they said.

Tudbury, who has been with the department 21 years, said the bike surprise made his Christmas.

"It was absolutely priceless seeing him," Tudbury said. "He was just beaming."

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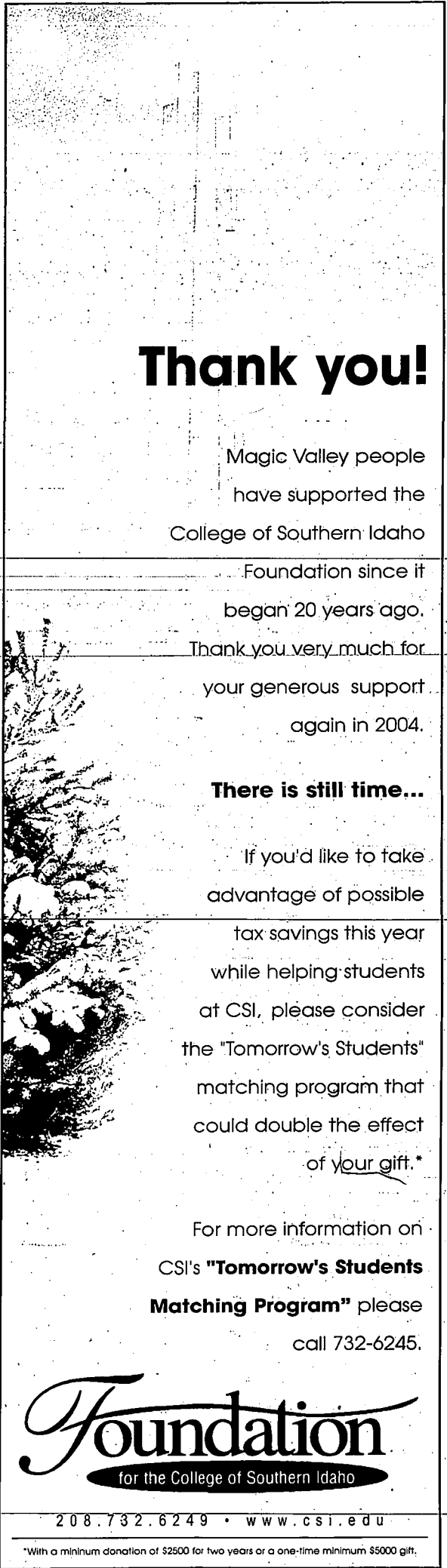
could double the effect

of your gift.*

For more information on CSI's "Tomorrow's Students

Matching Program" please

call 732-6245.



Plan

Continued from C1

Further input.

"So far, I've seen a good effort on the Forest Service's — the district offices — part," Bolton said. "It's been encouraging that they've made multiple contacts with the user groups."

After the Forest Service develops its plan, the public again will have the chance to comment.

The proposal is expected to be released during the spring or summer of 2005.

"Those who participated were very supportive of the process," Clark said. "People look maps and provided helpful comments during those meetings. What we need now is to remind people to get the maps completed and sent back to us."

About the plan

■ Current status of restricted/unrestricted motorized vehicle use in the Sawtooth National Forest:

- Approximately 38 percent — about 800,000 acres — of the Sawtooth National Forest is open to cross-country use.

- Fifty percent of the Fairfield Ranger District remains open to cross-country use. Most of the unrestricted use falls in the southern portion of that district.

- In the Ketchum Ranger District, cross-country use is allowed on 76,000 acres. Unrestricted use in that region can be found around the Green Horn and Deer Creek areas, south of Warm Springs and near Cove Creek on the east side of the Wood River Valley.

- The Minidoka Ranger District

will be affected most by the new travel plan. Nearly 81 percent of its land is open for cross-country use.

- Motorized vehicle use has increased sevenfold over the last 30 years — from 5 million in 1972 to 36 million in 2000.

■ Ways to comment:

- The public may call at any Sawtooth National Forest office during normal working hours, to view maps and obtain information.

- Written comments and maps can be sent to the Sawtooth National Forest headquarters located at 2647 Kimberly Road E. in Twin Falls.

- Public input is requested by Jan. 14.

Heart

Continued from C1

medical workers administered electrical currents to it with a defibrillator, causing it to start beating again. But the CPR helped maintain Eldon's circulation until a defibrillator could be applied.

Eldon said he doesn't remember much of the event.

"I was just working away, and the next thing I knew I was on the ground," Eldon said.

His first memory afterward was of his being loaded onto an air ambulance early Wednesday afternoon to be transported to St. Luke's Hospital in Boise. Doctors there outfitted him through a surgical procedure with a device inside his chest to regulate his heartbeat.

"They've put in what we call his on-board paramedic," Tanya said.

She described it as a "thing they just put in under the skin with a lead wire that goes to the heart." Though Eldon's family has a history of other kinds of heart disease, a series of tests showed that other than the serious problem of an irregular heartbeat, Eldon's heart is in good shape, Tanya said. She drove him home to Twin Falls Friday night.

Eldon won't be able to do heavy lifting or reaching for a while. And he has to stay away

CPR facts

- CPR provides a trickle of oxygenated blood to the brain and keeps these organs alive until defibrillation can shock the heart into a normal rhythm.

- If CPR is started within 4 minutes of collapse and defibrillation provided within 10 minutes, a person has a 40 percent chance of survival.

- Sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in adults. Most arrests occur in persons with undetected heart disease.

- CPR doubles a person's chance of survival from sudden

cardiac arrest.

- 75 percent of all cardiac arrests happen in people's homes.

- The typical victim of cardiac arrest is a man in his early 60s and a woman in her late 60s.

- Cardiac arrest occurs twice as frequently in men compared to women.

- CPR was invented in 1960

- There has never been a case of HIV transmitted by mouth-to-mouth CPR.

Source: University of Washington Medical School

from anything that has magnets. Plus, from now on he has to wear a medical bracelet and also carry a card to show to airport screeners where to avoid training their wands in case he gets the extra screening treatment, Tanya said.

And now that Tanya has her husband home for Christmas, it'll be a quiet time with some family and friends filtering through the house," she said.

"The doctors pretty much want him to kick back and not do anything," she said.

But, "The main thing we want everybody to know is, we thank you so very much," Tanya said, unable to hold back

the tears.

Times-News writer Julie Pence can be reached 735-3211 or jpence@magicvalley.com.

Cooking Classes At Rudy's...
THE ABC'S OF SOUP
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 B for Borscht!
 C for Cheese, as is Blue Cheese and Bacon Soup
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NATIONAL TREASURE
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LEMONY SNICKET'S
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SHARK TALE
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2004 Holiday Photo Album



Demara Barkes
Merry Christmas, Sweetie!
Love, Mom



Esmeralda DeLaRosa & Isabelle Yepiz
Saludos cariñosos de amor y felicidad en la Navidad y el Año Nuevo.
Love, Mom



Squirt
Meoww Christmas to my Little Queen
I Love You, Jan



Makenzie & Macy Erdmann
Happy times ~ twins on your First Christmas
Hugs & Kisses, Great Nana Joyce



Camille Collins
Merry Christmas Camille!
Love, Mommy and Daddy



Sissy & Grandpa Wally
Merry Christmas Grandpa Wally!
Love, Sissy



Zachary Hollon
Merry Christmas to our lil' buddy!
Love, Mom & Dad




Samantha, Patrick, Tanisha & Mike Jr.
Merry Christmas ~ The DeZorzi Clan
Love & Kisses, Nana & Papa




Nolan Harrison
Merry Christmas! We love you lots,
Grandpa & Grandma A.



Kylie & Jade Moretz
Merry Christmas
Love Always, G.G.



Jim and Shawna Childs
Merry Christmas!
Love, Jason, Jami, Maggie, Annabelle, Skid and Spud




Damien Green
Ho! Ho! Ho!
Lots of Love, Gramma & Grampa Johnson



Kieran Green
It's wonderful having a grandchild like you!
Love, Baboo and Damma Johnson



Lillian Grace
She's Sugar and Spice...
Hugs & Kisses from Gramma and Grampa



Lil' Man & Sissy
Merry Christmas You Guys.
Love, Mom & Dad



Tori, Whitney & Kallie Bailes
Merry Christmas to our 2 1/2 Angels!




Madyn Riley Black
Merry Christmas "Bootiful"
From Grammy Nita & Grampa Pete




Peace and Good Wishes to All!

2004 Holiday Photo Album




**Pedro A.,
Oswaldo
& Brian**
*You are
the gift
to us!*
Love,
Mom
and Dad



**Brystal
Brady**
*We Love
You*
Love Dad,
Grandpa &
Grandpa
Brady



Logan Smylie
Merry Christmas!
Mom & Dad



**Shay
Louder**
*Merry
Christmas
Aunt Shay-
I love you!*
Love,
Brinnley

Christmas




Georgee & Grizz
Merry-Christmas!
Tawnya



**Schuyler
& Saxon
Enneman**
*Merry
Christmas
to our two
special boys.*
Love, Mama,
Uncle Bryan,
Papi & Grandma
(Nana)




Kaden Annis
Merry Christmas!
Love, Dad & Mom



**Happy
Birthday
to our
Christmas
Carol**
Love,
Mom & Dad



Ellis
*Guess who's turning 50?
Happy Birthday Christmas Baby!
Your Secret Admirer*



**Boomer
&
Brenda**
*Boomer
looks as if
to say 'bah
hum-bug'...
We love him
anyway.*
Merry Xmas
Boomer T.



**Dennis
Maughan**
*Merry
Christmas,
Sweetheart.
"You are so
Beautiful to
me."*
Love,
Pammy K.



**Brinnley
Lynn
McDonald**
*Merry
Christmas
Sugar!*
Love,
Daddy,
Mommy,
Nana & Papa




**Grayson
and
A.J.
Stone**
*Special
Memories
of
Christmas
Past*




**Madyn Riley
Black**
*Merry
Christmas
"Bootiful"*
From
Grammy Nita
&
Granpa Pete




**Jordan
Robinson**
*Merry
Christmas*
From all your
Grandmas
at The
Times-News



**Mercedes, Morgan & Tye Pearson;
Lexi, Hannah,
Makena
Bybee**
*Merry
Christmas ~*
Love you,
Gram and
Gramps



**Samantha
Ann**
*I don't need
anyone to tell
me about
heaven because
I can look at
my daughter
and believe...
Daddy Loves
You, Samiel!*
Robin Tachell



**Alek
Luper &
Brady
Volkler**
*Merry
Christmas!
We love you
lots,
Grandpa &
Grandma A.*

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

WORLD

Militant videos celebrating suicide bombers help promote 'martyrdom'

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Like a groom at a wedding, Abu al-Harith al-Dhousri is surrounded by singing well-wishers. He smiles as masked men holding rifles and rocket launchers line up for a final farewell.

One by one, they shake his hand, embrace and pat him on the back.

In a propaganda tape posted on the Internet that appears aimed at recruiting "martyrs" for a holy war against the U.S.-led forces in Iraq, al-Dhousri waves a last goodbye, then climbs into a truck said to be loaded with 3.5 tons of explosives.

"That's all there is to it. Just a button," he says from behind the steering wheel, next to a

button and some wires.

"Then you leave this world after you've paid your dues to God," he adds before he drives away and the truck bursts into flames near a bridge that spans the Euphrates River in Khadidyah, west of Baghdad.

Al-Dhousri appears on a tape that shows a variety of attacks in Iraq, featuring footage of powerful explosions and casualties and fiery songs.

"The authenticity of the tape, available for some time on Web sites devoted to militant Islamic ideas, couldn't be verified."

The tape is just one example of how extremists are striving to create a suicide culture of sorts, teaching that the martyrdom of suicide bombing is a coveted honor and a ticket to heaven.

On the tape, al-Dhousri explains his decision to sacrifice himself.

"How can I enjoy life when God's holy places are being violated and the lands are being usurped and the infidels ... are insulting our religion?" he says.

"How can I and others live when our brothers in the prisons of the Americans in Iraq are yelling 'Oh muhajeed ... just kill us and relieve us from this,'" he adds in an accent that doesn't sound Iraqi.

A black cloth with the words "There is no God but Allah" is wrapped around his forehead.

Like al-Dhousri, many suicide bombers seem to be driven by religious zeal and anger at the presence of foreign troops in a Muslim country.

Indonesia's environment minister makes accusations of negligence

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — The Indonesian environment minister on Friday accused U.S.-based Newmont Mining Corp. of gross negligence over alleged pollution at a gold mine in Indonesia, saying the company "cut corners" to boost profits.

Tachmat Witoejar told The Associated Press that the government was confident five

company executives — who will soon be charged over the alleged pollution — would be found guilty.

The comments underscore the difficulties facing the world's largest gold miner in Indonesia. The Denver-based company, which operates on five continents, has faced a string of pollution accusations in Peru, Turkey and the state of Nevada.

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Kinsey
- 3 Golden Globe Nominations
- Best Dramatic Movie
- Best Actor *LIAM NEESON*
- Best Supporting Actress *LAURA LINNEY*
Today 2:15-4:30; 7:30-9:15

What the BLEEP Do we (k)now!?
Today 2:30-4:45; 7:15-9:15

Magic Valley Mall Holiday Hours 12/19 thru 12/25

	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Mall Stores	10-8	9-10	9-10	9-11	9-10	8-6	Merry Christmas
Santa (Center Court)	12-6	2:30-7:30	2:30-7:30	12-7:30	11-7:30	10-2:30	

Now at the Odyssey 6
(PG) Today 12:15 - 2:30 - 4:45 - 7:00 - 9:15

Now at the Twin Cinema
(PG) Today 12:45 - 3:00 - 5:15 - 7:30 - 9:45

Now at the Odyssey 6
(R) Today 12:30 - 2:45 - 5:00 - 7:15 - 9:30

Now at the Odyssey 6
(R) Today 5:00 - 7:20 - 9:45

Now at the Twin Cinema (PG)
Today 1:00 - 4:00 - 7:15 - 9:45

6th Smash Week
Now at the Twin Cinema (PG)
Today 12:45 - 3:00 - 5:15 - 7:30 - 9:45

Now at the JEROME CINEMA (G)
Today 12:30 - 3:30

Now at the Twin Cinema (G)
Today 12:15 - 2:30 - 4:45 - 7:00 - 9:15

8th Big Week
Now at the Twin Cinema (PG)
Today 1:30 - 4:30 - 7:15 - 9:55

Now Twin Cinema (R)
Today 1:30 - 4:15 - 7:25 - 9:55

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Twin 12 164 Eastland • Twin Falls • Today 12:15 - 2:30 - 4:45 - 7:00 - 9:15

Now at the Odyssey 6 (PG)
Daily 12:15 - 2:30

Now at the JEROME CINEMA (PG13)
Today 7:00 - 9:30

Now at the TWIN CINEMA (PG13)
Today 12:15 - 3:30 - 6:45 - 9:30

Now at the JEROME CINEMA (PG)
Today 12:30 - 3:30 - 7:00 - 9:30

Now at the TWIN CINEMA (PG)
Today 12:15 - 3:30 - 6:45 - 9:30

Now at the JEROME CINEMA (PG)
Today 1:00 - 4:00 - 7:10 - 9:45

Now at the TWIN CINEMA (PG)
Today 12:30 - 1:00 - 3:45 - 4:00 - 6:45 - 7:15 - 9:30 - 9:55

Now at the JEROME CINEMA (13)
Today 1:00 - 4:00 - 7:10 - 9:45

Now at the TWIN CINEMA (13)
Today 12:30 - 1:30 - 3:45 - 4:30 - 7:00 - 7:30 - 9:30 - 9:55

Some secrets should never come to light.

Now at the Odyssey (13)
Daily 12:45 - 3:00 - 5:15 - 7:30 - 9:45

Some Men Dream The Future - He Built It!

Leonardo DiCaprio Cate Blanchett
Kate Beckinsale Jude Law

Now at the Orpheum (PG13)
Daily 4:00 - 7:30

Now at the Odyssey 6 (13)
Daily 1:00 - 4:00 - 7:00 - 9:30

Now at the Odyssey 6 (R)
Daily 2:30 - 7:30

COMICS

Classic Peanuts

By Charles M. Schulz



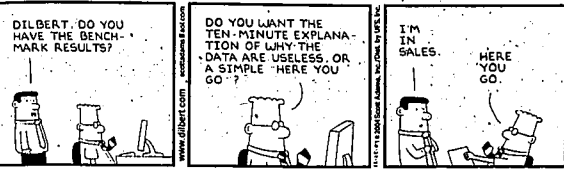
For Better or For Worse

By Lynn Johnston



Dilbert

By Scott Adams



Blonde

By Dean Young & Stan Drake



B.C.

By Johnny Hart



Pickles

By Brian Crane



Garfield

By Jim Davis



Dennis the Menace

By Hank Ketchum



THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bill Keane



Hi and Lois

By Chance Brown



The Wizard of Id

By Brant Parker & Johnny Hart



Rose is Rose

By Pat Brady



Hagar the Horrible

By Chris Browne



Zits

By Jim Borgman and Jerry Scott



Beetle Bailey

By Mort Walker



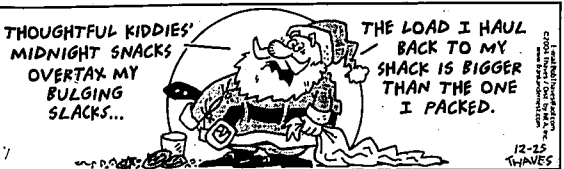
Luann

By Greg Evans



Frank and Ernest

By Bob Thaves



Strange Brew

By John Deering

Non Sequitur

By Willey



The Bom Loser

By Art Sansom & Chip



IDAHO/WEST

Class trades Tolstoy for Tolkien

REXBURG (AP) — A high school's offerings class on hobbits, dwarves and elves. Madison High School students have traded Tolstoy for J.R.R. Tolkien's classic "The Lord of the Rings" as part of an elective English class.

Their teacher, Lyle Wakefield, says he's abandoned what can be an ordinarily stuffy approach to the language and delved into the adventure trilogy popularized by three recent films.

And he's taking a page from university programs that have embraced Tolkien from the realm of fantasy and goblins and added his work to their high-level curricula.

Aston University in Birmingham, England, for instance, is planning a six-day conference in August to mark the 50th anniversary of the trilogy's complete publication.

"I enjoy Tolkien's language," says Wakefield, who also teaches English at Rexburg's Brigham Young University-Idaho. "I enjoy reading a good book. And if I can get students interested in reading good books like these, they'll be interested in reading other good books."

The three books — which follow the travels of an outnumbered collection of men, dwarves and elves fighting to find a ring that could sweep the whole of Middle Earth under the thumb of an evil deity — are 1,000 pages thick, with appendices.

In any other English class, Wakefield might expect groans from such a weighty reading assignment.

"But when I pass them out at the beginning of the class, the reaction I get is, 'Sweet!'" he says.

Students must read 25 pages a night and are quizzed on what they read, sometimes with questions Wakefield creates, sometimes with those of fellow classmates. They're also required to complete a multimedia project, including a written essay.



Rancher Jim Hall leans out of his pickup truck on the family ranch near Gillette, Wyo., Dec. 10. Voluntary agreements between landowners and natural gas developers are common in the mineral-rich Wyoming.

Landowners seek more clout with large energy companies

GILLETTE, Wyo. (AP) — Jim Hall and his dad knew it was just a matter of time before the companies holding the rights to the natural gas under their ranch came knocking. They knew, too, there wasn't a thing they could do legally to keep the developers off their land.

So like many of their neighbors, they began negotiating with the companies, hoping to reach a deal that would allow the developers access to gas deposits as required, while ensuring their own interests — and land — were not trampled in the process.

The companies agreed among other things to pay Hall to reseed land disturbed by their work and to control the spread of weeds — neither of which they were required to do.

"It's been a good experience, in our case," Hall said.

Such voluntary agreements between landowners and natural gas developers are common in Wyoming. But now, some landowners, conservationists and others are pushing the state

Legislature to make such negotiations mandatory. They say such a law is needed to give landowners more bargaining power in dealings with developers.

"They have you over a barrel," said Jill Morrison, an organizer with the Powder River Basin Resource Council, a conservation group. "You're not negotiating on a level playing field."

Montana already has a similar law on the books, but some are hoping to strengthen property owners' rights by requiring the two sides try to reach agreement on such things as road placement and efforts to minimize dust and other disturbances.

These recent efforts have been spurred in large part by the rapid pace of coal-bed methane development in the Powder River Basin of northern Wyoming and southeastern Montana. Coal-bed methane is natural gas trapped in underground coal seams.

Across the West, owning the land does not always mean owning what is beneath it. The

rights to minerals, oil or gas often are held by someone else, including the federal government, a situation commonly referred to as a "split estate."

Industry leaders say the requirements being proposed in Wyoming and Montana are unnecessary. They contend that energy developers commonly reach amicable agreements with landowners, and prescribing terms may just slow development.

"I don't think it will affect the way we treat landowners," but legislation, creates additional steps that haven't been proven to be needed," said Susie Manicom, a spokeswoman with Tulsa, Okla.-based Williams Cos.

Among the landowners who would welcome such a law is Steve Adams, who said he felt at a disadvantage when a company came to his ranch near Buffalo in 2003 with an agreement he said was presented as "nonnegotiable." Drilling has started, and Adams said his ranch now reminds him of an industrial park.

Group uncovers abandoned base

HENRY'S LAKE (AP) — When the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics invaded Finland Nov. 30, 1939 — 65 years ago — the outnumbered Finnish army temporarily pushed back the Russians using soldiers mounted on skis.

Those skills were almost duplicated by the United States when a mountain training base at Henry's Lake was partially constructed in 1941 but suddenly abandoned the following year.

None in the area at the time knew why.

Ashton farmer and amateur military historian Tom Howell, with the help of about 10 different sources, found out what happened.

Howell says he's always heard the old story of the U.S. Army building a training base across from what is now the Henry's Lake Station at Valley View before pulling out without an explanation.

"It's an enduring mystery to Fremont County," he says.

As the story goes, following the Russian invasion of Finland a group of Vermont men headed by the founder of the National Ski Patrol System tried to convince the U.S. Army and U.S. War Department that winter-skilled troops were needed just in case of a mountain invasion. By April 1941, two colonels were ordered to investigate sites suitable for the year-round training of mountain troops.

The site needed mountains, a truck highway and railroad and 1 to 1 1/2 million gallons of water a day. The Henry's Lake area was ideal.

According to a report in an August 1941 issue of the St. Anthony newspaper *Teton Peaks Chronicle*, the then-Targhee Forest Supervisor M.S. Benedict said, "The Henry's Lake section is a perfect location. The weather is severe with sub-zero temperatures for most of the winter. The area has about

four feet of snow and the many slopes in that area are ideal for training ski troops. There is mountains country, too, which could be used for toughening the soldiers. High velocity winds sweep across the area on occasions during the winter and, of course, there has been considerable difficulty in keeping the highway open for traffic."

A plan was made up calling for a 100,000-acre training base capable of accommodating 30,000 plus men. Construction started in the fall but was later stalled for the winter.

Then, in the spring of 1942, the project made an about-face. Without warning, the Army called off the project and ordered the buildings to be torn down.

The public was given no notice or legitimate reasons for the abandonment.

Two articles (in the *Teton Peaks Chronicle*) that fall were hyping up the coming of the base, Howell says. "Later that spring there was no mention of the pull-out."

It turns out, trumpeter swans were the cause.

Howell uncovered the information with the help of a number of sources, including McKay Jenkins of the University of Delaware and Island Park fly fishing guru Charles Brooks.

The officers who had selected the site failed to note Henry's Lake was a refuge and breeding ground for one of the last remaining populations of the then nearly extinct trumpeter swan. Word spread that caused angry protests among conservationists and bird lovers.

But what may have had the heaviest pull was that one of the advocates was President Franklin Roosevelt's uncle, Frederick Delano. The land is now owned by Wendell Winegar of Utah, and the training base is nothing more than concrete footings.

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Faith isn't always believing the unseen

What's it like to feel God in your life? To know he's really there beside you or above you, reaching out to you like a best friend, taking your hand like a loving father or mother?



KEN GARFIELD

Read the accounts of the people who introduce us today to the God they know. Let them tell us what it's like. And in the telling, let them remind us that faith isn't always believing in the unseen.

They've seen, heard and felt the God in whom they believe.

I'm not surprised we received an outpouring of fascinating stories when we asked readers to share the moment they felt God's presence in their lives. People who believe can't keep it to themselves. But what has stunned me in reading and rereading the 150 reflections that came by e-mail and regular mail is the spirit that connects one to another.

Don't get me wrong. No two encounters with God are alike, as you'll discover when you read these testimonies about earth, death, divorce, the Bible, rambunctious children, ailing parents, a special hymn, a riveting movie, a lost necklace and so much more. Proof that God works in mysterious and different ways. Shelby Ashcraft of Oakboro, N.C., shares the day and time faith struck. Lindsay Lane of Charlotte shares a God who comes to him consistently on the long, steady walk through his believers are alike either. We heard from men and women, rich and poor, Christians who sit quietly in their pew and born-again who can't keep still.

What's the bond they all share? It's the confidence in knowing they are not alone, the calm that comes in believing there is someone to turn to even when there's a gun to your head, literally, as Karen Sellers of Salisbury, N.C., recounts.

Buried in the mountain of stories that graced my desk this holiday season was a lone lament from a skeptic. "What about those of us who would like to tune in to God," he wondered. "but can't find the frequency no matter how we turn the dial?"

History's greatest minds and hearts have struggled to come up with an answer. All I'll say to the skeptic just before Christmas is:

There are some folks I'd like you to meet today.

Looking to the star I met God on a long car trip.

I was 7, riding in the middle seat of a station wagon next to my father. It was night and the windowpane was cold against my cheek. I looked at the stars, searching for something real.

I found it. At that moment, I knew God was watching over me, protecting me for some greater task to come. And I knew that my mom and dad were there in the stars, too, watching and worrying over me. It was such a great comfort to feel their attention. I made me think of the moment when Mary discovered that she was to be the mother of Christ, at once awesome and humbling.

—Pam Turner, 39, Charlotte, N.C.

March 22, 1974, 12:20 p.m.

I was watching a religious broadcast when I accepted Jesus as my Lord. I had watched many broadcasts before and nothing happened because I didn't follow through in faith. On this day — Friday, March 22, 1974, around 12:20 p.m. — I followed through in faith and immediately felt the burden of sin and guilt lift from my being. There was no thunder or lightning just a knowing that I had been changed. Seeing as this is the most

At Christmas, more folks are finding better ways to give

By Loretta Burkhardt Times-News writer

TWIN FALLS — When the earth received its first Christmas gift 2,000 years ago, even the wrapping was worthy of note. In a message of such magnitude it merited angels, shepherds on Judean hillsides were told they could "find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger."

In honor of his birth, Christians worldwide continue to rehearse the manger scene, but the gift-wrap issue continues to lose its glory to a commercialized — in the growing industry of giving.

For a home-bound boy in Jerome, a big part of the overall fascination is the festive wrapping on his unexpected cache of presents. His surprise gifts arrived after his family became recipients of a growing movement to avoid commercialism. Gifts bought for the needy is done in an effort to bring the reason-for-the-season back into the gift-giving mix.

And where Isaac Dudley is concerned — not until the gift-wrap comes off of his packages — some time this morning — will the eight-year-old end a vigil he's kept — all week long. According to ReligionLink (http://www.religionlink.org), an effort to help the needy is a growing movement nationwide. And while giving gifts is a meaningful practice in all cultures and in most religions, the growing movement against commercialism is picking up the pace.

Likewise, on a local scale, the move away from commercialism is making significant changes in the traditional practices.

Throughout the Magic Valley, the number of organizations and individuals participating in "alternative gift" programs is on an upswing.

In the past, the Twin Falls firm of Cooper Norman in accounting replaced a longstanding office gift exchange for the alternative gift idea.

On their spiral upward, an individual donor was made by the company and was matched by the firm's employees. With the generous amount, four Magic Valley families became the recipients of a collective desire to



LeAnn Dudley, center, and her sons Isaac, right, and Zaqh talk about all the gifts that had just been delivered to them by Cooper Norman, a local accounting firm, for the holidays.

give.

The true meaning of Christmas "is not in receiving," said the firm's administrator, Bonnie Harpster. "It's in the giving," Harpster said.

And through a group effort, special gifts for individual family members became the company's new reason for the season in 2004.

But buying the gifts was only part of what the team at Cooper Norman had to offer.

Following a Christmas supper hosted by the company, the group spent the remainder of their evening wrapping specially selected gifts.

For Isaac, their efforts were worth the while.

"And immediately" after the gifts arrived — hand delivered — Isaac began his self-imposed watch.

"And he's hardly took his eyes off the tree," said his mother, LeAnn Dudley.

There's a medical reason for that. "My little boy is developmentally delayed," his mother explained.

Isaac can neither walk, nor talk — and is totally dependent on the assistance he receives from his mom and brothers, Zach and Jake.

Still, when he "really likes something," he knows how to

make it known. With warm-brown eyes, he gives undivided attention to the object he desires.

Though he wasn't able to communicate — with words, nevertheless, where the gifts from Cooper Norman were concerned, it didn't matter.

When the gifts were placed under the Christmas tree, he had eyes for only one area of the room.

On a watch destined to last a week, the fresh-cut cedar became the main attraction.

"And I'm overcome with happiness," said the single mother of three.

The effort the firm has made is right in line with the thinking of Dr. Brad Hobbs, a Twin Falls ophthalmologist and a spokesman for the Mormon Church.

"Christmas is the season when we reach outside ourselves and treat others as brothers and sisters," Hobbs said.

And while there's no set policy concerning gift-giving within the church, still, according to Hobbs, the season itself is a reminder that that it's more blessed to give than to receive.

It's also a perfect time to implement the words of Christ when he encouraged his followers to "do unto others as you

would have them do unto you," he added.

But under the influence of the American culture, striving to "do unto others" could be a trip down a road that may lead to debt, said the Rev. Brian Thom.

All too often, "we respond to our culture and not to our highest values," the pastor of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Twin Falls.

"Our American culture says that 'the more I buy for you — the more I love you,' and that's not the way it should be," Thom said.

Although some special efforts toward the less fortunate are beginning to catch on, the desire to lend a helping hand is nothing new for Lloyd and Evelyn LeClair.

For the past 17 years — three nights a week — and on a strictly volunteer basis, the husband-and-wife team has been looking out for the needs of others.

But for the 75 to 100 people who frequent their soup kitchen — on a regular basis — in the parish hall at St. Edward's Catholic Church in Twin Falls, the fill of gift-wrap is not a necessary part of the take.

Still, in a nice clean setting, "we stay away from the soup-kitchen idea."

"Here, they sit down — and we serve them."

Lloyd says site setting is much like a restaurant. "except everybody works for nothing."

On a smaller scale, local Unitarians Michael and Tracy Becerra "choose to serve the less fortunate, as well."

For the past seven years, the couple adopt one family a year and presents the individual members with an entire, personalized Christmas.

And the gift the Becerras give goes beyond the toys for toys. "We buy all of the ingredients needed for a holiday meal," Tracy Becerra said.

The commercialism of Christmas is what got them started.

Tracy began using the money she would have spent "on relatives who don't need anything" on people who did.

In Kimberly, the East End Providers are also doing their part of keeping commercialism out of Christmas. Located at 325 Madison, helpers under the supervision of Cecile Griffith, are making Santa's job a little easier. And this year, with a \$6,000 donation more is being done.

The substantial donation came from "some big guys on big Harley's with big hearts," Griffith said.

Times-News writer Loretta Burkhardt can be reached at 735-3243, or written to her at burkhardt@magicvalley.com

Heavenly host: Angels through the ages

Knight Ridder Newspapers

In the drama of the Christmas story, a young peasant girl in Nazareth 2,000 years ago is told she is going to hear God's Son. This message is brought to her by an angel named Gabriel.

In the centuries since, the angel Gabriel has been immortalized in art, drama and music, particularly during the season when Gabriel and other angels are featured prominently in the Gospel account of Jesus' birth. But the traditions of Christian faith is not the only one with angels. Angels appear in stories of other faith traditions, such as Judaism, Islam and Mormonism. And in each, one of their roles is that of messenger.

In keeping with the season, following is a sample of angel stories.

Gabriel visits Mary

The birth of Jesus is a wonderful Bible story in the Christian tradition, said Terry Wilder, New Testament professor at Midwest Baptist Theological Seminary. It begins with Gabriel, the only angel named in the Gospels, whose name means "man of God" or "God is strong," he said. As the Gospel writer Luke opened the scene, Gabriel visited a young woman named Mary who lived in a town called Nazareth in Galilee. "Now Gabriel stands very

close to God and serves him," Wilder recounted. "And God sent his very special angel, his personal emissary to Mary with a very important message. Gabriel told her that she was going to have a baby but not just any baby."

"The angel told her that God was going to do something very special through her. She was going to give birth to Jesus, God's Son! Mary was confused by what the angel had to say and asked how this thing could happen because she was a virgin and not married yet to Joseph. Gabriel assured Mary and promised her the Lord's presence. He told her that nothing is impossible with God and that God would take care of this through his Holy Spirit.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Mary was amazed and said that she was God's servant and willing to do whatever God wanted. And then the angel left. "The significance of Gabriel's message is that God's promise to Mary that she would give birth to Jesus came true. Wilder said. That is the message of Christmas, he said. Jesus, the Savior was born to save his people from their sins. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever



'The Annunciation' by El Greco, painted between 1600 and 1610.

or believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Jacob's ladder

One of the stories in the book "A Gathering of Angels" is about the angels on Jacob's ladder, who appear to the Old Testament character in a dream. The book's author, Rabbi Morris B. Margolies, tells this story: "Because of the wrath and jealousy of his twin brother, Esau, Jacob was forced into exile, leaving his parents, Rebecca and Isaac, his native land of Canaan and all that he had grown to cherish."

The 28th chapter of Genesis describes how Jacob, while in exile, fell asleep and had a dream in which there was a ladder on the ground with its top reaching to the sky and angels going up and down it. Then God tells him; "I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

The angels in Jacob's ladder represent the ups and downs of life. Jacob had to leave home because his brother was threatening to kill him. He has this enlightening dream. He didn't believe God was with him in his outcast state, and he believed that if God could be with him, how could it be an out-cast?" But Margolies explained in an interview that the angels going up and down is symbolic of life being two-directional: "Its valleys are as normal as its peaks, its defeats as frequent as its triumphs. In this light, exile can be seen as the prelude to going home." Please see HEAVENLY, Page D3

RELIGION

Church holds musical program

TWIN FALLS — A special musical program will precede the 10 a.m. worship service Sunday at the First Presbyterian Church, 209 Fifth Ave. N.

Larry King interviews LDS leader Hinckley

SALT LAKE CITY — An interview with President Gordon B. Hinckley, leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, will be featured on CNN's "Larry King Live" Sunday evening.

Church news

Hinckley has been interviewed by King, who is considered one of the nation's most influential talk show hosts.

Church sponsors global healing meditation

TWIN FALLS — In the early morning hours on Friday, men, women, and children around the world will gather to participate in a world healing

meditation, one of the most comprehensive prayer activities in history.

In Twin Falls, the healing meditation begins at 5 a.m. at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, 371 Eastland Drive N.

The first annual World Healing Meditation occurred on Dec. 31, 1986. It is estimated that more than 500 million people representing all religious faiths and more than 500 spiritual and peace-related organizations worldwide participated in the event.

While the healing meditation occurs at 5 a.m. in this time zone, it is synchronized to happen si-

multaneously with people all over the world. The meditation occurs at Noon Greenwich Mean Time, which encompasses all time zones during a 24-hour period.

T.F. church will show movie 'The Passion'

TWIN FALLS — Mel Gibson's "The Passion" will be shown Friday at the Agape Four-square Church, 401 Morrison Ave.

The New Year's Eve service begins at 9 p.m. and concludes with communion at midnight.

MISSIONARIES

Several young men from the Magic Valley area have been called to serve or returned from serving missions for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Called to serve:

Elder Curtis L. Gilles will serve in the Dominican Republic.



Curtis Gilles, Kimberly High School.

Elder Nelson Keith Richards will serve in the Pennsylvania Harrisburg Mission.



Nelson Richards, Kelson High School.

Elder Logan Berg will serve in the Brazil Sao Paulo North Mission.



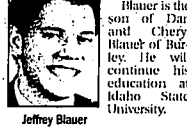
Eric Berg, Burley High School.



Bret Wardle

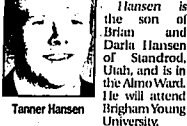
Returned from serving:

Elder Jeffrey D. Blauer served in the Brazil Florianopolis Mission.



Jeffrey Blauer

Elder Tanner Hansen served in the Minnesota Minneapolis Mission.



Tanner Hansen

Elder John Tracy served in the France Paris Mission.



John Tracy

A SEASON OF CHANCES

Holidays become a time of opportunities for churches

BOSTON (AP) — To describe his feelings at the pulpit during a jam-packed Christmas worship service, the Rev. Paul McPheeters talks "Minday Night in Heaven."

The excitement of speaking in front of a big holiday crowd is like a player's during the prime-time game, he says. So many worshippers attend only on the holidays, and every preacher wants the service to be memorable and moving.

The result, says McPheeters, of Forestdale Community Church, is that when he stands in the pulpit he's just "a little more jacked up about it" than on a typical Sunday.

So are many of his colleagues. Around the country, ministers in churches big and small are preparing to welcome the annual rushing of visitors who attend just on Christmas or Easter. These "Holiday Christians," as some call them, come for many reasons — whether they're dragged by family members or attracted to a hopeful message during what can be a time of loneliness.

Pastors and priests say they strive to be friendly, inspirational and clear about the Christmas message of God coming to earth to redeem humanity.



The Rev. Paul McPheeters, pastor at the Forestdale Community Church in Malden, Mass., stands outside his church, Tuesday.

Despite its commercialization, Christmas remains a time of personal and spiritual reflection, and that makes people open to the Christian message, said Gerald Mann of the Riverbend Church in Austin, Texas.

"This is the time of year to shine the light on all the dark places in your head," Mann said. "I think it's God's declaration that no matter how secular society gets, you can't kill God."

Pastors say they don't want holiday visitors to feel guilty be-

cause of their infrequent attendance or embarrassed because they're unfamiliar with church rituals. Some churches don't take offerings, so visitors won't feel the church is just after their money. Others remove religious readings that visitors might be unfamiliar with, or make sure to explain them in church bulletins.

"We don't want people singled out or feeling awkward," said the Rev. Gordon Hugenberger, pastor the historic Park Street Church in Boston. "We're thrilled they're here."

Churches offer a variety of ways to tell the Christmas story, from simple candlelight services to elaborate musical presentations. For instance, the "Christmas Bursts Into Heavly" presentation at Washington Cathedral in Redmond, Wash., features a live manger scene, soloists and harpists.

Involving children is a way to grab the attention of visiting "parents" and grandparents who come to watch them. It also emphasizes how God came to earth as a child, said the Rev. Ervin Lutzer of the Moody Church in Chicago. He gathers his congregation's children around him to tell the Christmas story during his service.

And, yes, he and other pastors get nervous when they look out at the congregation.

"I think that there's extra excitement at Christmas time. There's a certain mood," Lutzer said. "We all want to do well. We want to make Jesus look good; if I can put it that way."

The Rev. Joseph Jakubik, associate pastor at St. Peter and Paul Parish in Milwaukee, said Christmas is one of those times "when you really wish you could preach well."

"What happens is that's usually when you feel satisfied," said Jakubik, also the director of the Preaching Institute at Saint Francis Seminary.

McPheeters said that, for the first five of his 20 years in ministry, he thought he'd become the Christmas service was "Lord, get me out of here." But as years have passed, he's learned to rely on God to work through him, he said. Benedictine monk Howard said that kind of thinking can help.

"Perhaps that is what unbinds the tension in this," he said.

Treasured moments I can't think of an exact encounter with God, but rather have several treasured moments when I felt or knew God was surely present.

The look on my mother's face as she watched my son David, then age 5, light his candle on Christmas Eve, then hold it as we sang "Silent Night."

The shivers that went up and down my spine when I heard Jewish music sung by a cantor on a first visit to a synagogue.

The feeling of thankfulness when I look into the face of my young surgeon, who took the tumor out, and later told me he was proud of me!

Hearing my two sisters sing duet on "O Holy Night," at Dilworth United Methodist Church many years ago.

Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" and G.S. Lewis' "Surprised by Joy."

Couples dance around December dilemma

The Dallas Morning News

For interfaith couples, this is the season of the December Dilemma.

It's OK to put up a Christmas tree. What about presents for the kids? Should Christian spouses take part in Hanukkah celebrations?

More than any other time of year, interfaith couples wrestle with what to do during the December holidays. That's when the emotional tug of family memories can force religious and cultural differences to the table.

Even when an interfaith couple is living almost exclusively a Jewish life, the non-Jewish spouse may want a Christmas tree, said Renee Karp, who teaches at Dallas Temple Emanu-El, where interfaith couples make up 15 to 20 percent of the congregations' 2,600 families.

"It is a big issue," she said. "Jews, in particular, increasingly fret that interfaith holiday celebrations will undermine traditional Jewish observance. According to a survey by United Jewish Communities, there are 5.2 million Jews in America, and nearly a third are married to non-Jews. In the last five years, nearly half of the American Jews who married chose non-Jewish spouses."

The December Dilemma grows even more complicated with rituals and celebrations involving extended families.

One young Jewish mother, for instance, said she didn't want her infant to receive Christmas gifts. Karp suggested that she ask her in-laws as early as June if they'd give Hanukkah presents instead.

"The last thing you should ever do is offend his family," Karp said. "There are people we love for whom Christmas is important. What do you do? You honor them."

Veteran journalist Steve and Cokie Roberts have done just that for 20 years and could be the poster couple for a successful interfaith marriage.

Steve, a columnist and former New York Times reporter, is deeply committed to his Jewish faith. Cokie, a news analyst for National Public Radio and ABC News, is a devout Catholic.

8 tips for handling the December holidays

- 1. Remember that it's OK to participate in the holiday as a way to respect your spouse and extended family.
2. Keep the focus on the children's needs. What kids love most about Christmas is not the presents but the family togetherness.
3. If your Jewish child is uncomfortable with singing Christmas carols at school, ask the principal to broaden the holiday song repertoire to include Hanukkah songs.
4. Rather than asking in-laws to give Christmas or Hanukkah presents, ask them to give gifts wrapped in paper that indicates the holiday the children celebrate.
5. If your children want a Christmas tree in your home, sit down with your partner and discuss what the holiday means to each of you.
6. Giving in on a holiday becomes less significant if you remember that the main concern is to decide how your family will live religiously throughout the year, not just in December.
7. Allow your initial decisions to change as you and your family evolve.
8. Develop new traditions together.
9. Don't let the holiday breed resentment, but negotiating a mutually acceptable way to celebrate will strengthen the relationship and unify the family.
10. One of the things that attracted us to each other, Steve said in an interview.

Unseen

Continued from D1.
viable experience one could ever have, I don't know why anyone would doubt the validity of knowing the day and time it transpired.

— Shelly Ashcroft, 54, Oak Hills, N.C.

Then I began to listen it was a rainy, early-morning school day. My then 13-year-old son had rushed downstairs to catch his ride school. He had been sick with a respiratory infection and I said, "Put your jacket on; you need to stay warm and dry or you will get pneumonia."

I sat down on the couch, tears stinging at my eyes, saying to myself, "I just want what's good for him, I tell him and I tell him, but he won't listen to me."

Then a strange and ethereal thought rushed into my head and God said to me, "That's what I tell you. I tell you and I tell you, but you won't listen to me. I just want what's good for you."

From that day, I committed to listen to the instructions given to us — to love, to give and to forgive, and to have faith, as God as promised, that he will abide with us and be our provider and protector.

Reaching for the Bible Being a flight attendant in the 1970s gave me a life of fun, money and travel. But in my heart was an emptiness I couldn't explain.

I remember chatting with some passengers, and they challenged me with reading the Bible to fill that void. As I tried to read it, it made no sense. One night while trying to read in bed as a child after hearing this is truly your word, then help me understand it. I then tossed the Bible to the side of the bed and went to sleep.

I woke up with an overwhelming fear I had never felt before. My first reaction was to reach for that Bible. As I touched it, I felt a peace that surpassed understanding. It was close to a peace I experienced as a child after hearing myself and running to find mom. As soon as I was picked up, I knew that everything would be all right. The Lord was saying to me, "You need me. Read my word, I will comfort you. I will direct you, and I will give you the peace you're looking for."

— Tamara S. Johnson, 51, Charlotte, N.C.

A voice in the night Many years ago, a beautiful baby boy, Michael, joined our family. He was born seven weeks early with multiple heart defects. My husband and I were

thankful we lived in Charlotte, where first-rate medical care was available. Our love for this child knew no bounds. While other young mothers moaned about middle-of-the-night feedings, I treasured those quiet hours when I could hold and love him.

Michael died during open-heart surgery at the age of six months. "Devastated" is too mild a word to describe my grief. While no child can ever replace one you've lost, we decided that another baby to love was the right course of action. When I found out I was pregnant, my prayers to God intensified about the health of this unborn child.

One night while I was in prayer, a clear voice said, "Jean, this baby will be just fine." It was the middle of the night, everyone was asleep and there was no other explanation for the voice I heard. Instantly, I felt so peaceful. While friends and family worried and medical tests were performed, I knew we were having a healthy baby. I even teased God in prayer that he could've told me whether we were having a girl or boy.

Our beautiful daughter Dee Dee is turning 17. She is the picture of health that God assured me of during that middle-of-the-night conversation. — Jean Welborn Odum, 48, Charlotte, N.C.

Kon Garfield is the religion editor at The Charlotte Observer. Write to him at The Charlotte Observer, 600 S. Tryon St., Charlotte, N.C. 28232.

LETTER

A THIRST FOR 'HEAVENLY BREW'

Drink lures more people to church

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON—Since introducing its own brand of lager this fall, St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill has seen an influx of twenty- and thirty-somethings on Sunday mornings.

"I can't say it's a compelling reason," Rector Paul Abernathy said when asked whether the addition of Winged Lion Lager to Sunday's pub lunch menu had anything to do with the new faces.

But he acknowledged the coincidence and said with a smile, "I'll find out."

Pub lunches are a long-standing tradition at the 135-year-old church, whose 700 members pride themselves on their fellowship and conviviality, Abernathy said.

Sharing a brew in a family atmosphere is one way they take part. Every Sunday after the 11 o'clock service, more than 100 people gather in the parish hall for pub-style fare that includes soup, sandwiches, salad, bread, beer, soda and wine.

For 31 years, the beer selection was dominated by commercial brands such as Samuel Adams. That changed last summer, when parishioner Rick Weber rented a kettle at Shenandoah Brewing Co. and cooked up a batch of Winged Lion.

At the church's fall fair in September, the parish's own "heavenly brew" premiered—in bottles featuring a winged lion, the symbol of Saint Mark—the Evangelist. The first five cases, 120 bottles, lasted only a few weeks, and Weber made a second batch.

For holiday variety, Weber, 45, decided to make an English-style nut brewer ale with touches of nutmeg and chocolate malt and headed to the brewery a third time. The congregation snapped up all 60 bottles of the Christmas Cheer ale at a church fund-raiser two weeks ago.

With the Christmas Cheer gone and the Winged Lion down to a few bottles, Weber plans to brew a Johnny porter for Mardi Gras. Weber, a journalist, said he enjoys brewing time because Shenandoah's do-it-yourself area "has a laundromat feel." People chat or read books while waiting specified intervals before stirring the hops and other ingredients.

After the cooking process, which lasts about two hours, Weber transfers the liquid into a fermenting cask, where it sits for several weeks. He then uses a hand-operated machine to put the beer into bottles and adheres specially made labels.

On a personal level, he feels joy at "seeing something everybody at the church was excited about, something that contributed to the sense of community and belonging."

Parishioners buy pub tickets for \$10, a donation to the church, and redeem the tickets for food and beverages.

Abernathy welcomes the excitement Winged Lion Lager has generated. And he makes no apologies for serving alcoholic beverages in the parish hall.

"This is a religious community made up of people, people who do drink socially," the priest said. "We also serve non-



Last summer, Rick Weber made the first batch of Winged Lion Lager for St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill. His brews are popular at the church's pub lunches.

alcoholic beverages in a way that is as attractive as alcoholic beverages. We do not encourage or dissuade people from drinking (beer or wine). And we do offer a choice."

Criticism only increases Christian principles

In today's world, there seems to be an increased onslaught against Christians and Christian principles. My advice is to be a warrior or feel in doubt about your beliefs because these and other events were written in prophecy thousands of years ago.

An attempted example to pit Christian beliefs in doubt was Darwin's Theory of Evolution. This was a pitiful effort by man to explain the deep mysteries of life so non-believers would have something to believe in even though it's just a theory. One of this century's greatest scientists, Albert Einstein, stated, "science

without religion is blind."

Many happenings today confirm that our Savior and Heavenly Father lives, as does their word.

As it has always been with people who believe, all is well. Merry Christmas, everyone. GLEN CAPPS Jerome

The Times-News welcomes letters on religious topics of 200 words or less from readers. Letters should include the writer's signature, mailing address and telephone number. Letters considered libelous, obscene or in violation of our content and style policies will be rejected. The Times-News reserves the right to edit all letters.

Heavenly

Continued from D1

home again—if you have faith that God is by your side whether you are, and that even when you hit the bottom rung of the ladder, you are still in the company of angels."

Disguised angel

A story that Abdalla Idris Ali, an Islamic scholar, relates from the Muslim tradition conveys a lesson about being grateful for God's blessings. In the story, God sends an angel in the form of a man to test three persons—a leper, a bald man and a blind man. All were in a great deal of distress over their situation, said Ali, director of the Center for Islamic Education.

"To the first person, the leper, the angel asked him what he wanted most to have. The leper said, "All that I wish for is for my skin to change and to have good skin. People do not want to be around me; they want nothing to do with me. I am all alone."

The angel wiped over the leper's skin, and it changed to a very beautiful skin. The angel then asked him what he wanted to start his new life with. The man said, "I'd love to have camels." So the angel gave him a beautiful fertile camel, and from that he ended up with a big herd of camels."

for God's blessings."

Moroni's mission

From the Mormon tradition comes the story of the angel Moroni, who appears to Joseph Smith. The following account comes from "The Pearl of Great Price," by Smith.

Smith wrote that while he was in prayer, a bright light appeared in the room and "a personage" in an "exceedingly white" robe, whose "whole person" was glorious beyond description, appeared in the air at his bedside.

"When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me," Smith wrote. "He called me by name and said unto me that he was a messenger from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do. . . . He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source—from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants. . . ."

"While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and I distinctly saw the place again when I visited it."

"After this communication, I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so until the room was again left dark, except just around him; when, instantly I saw, as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended till he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance."

The angel then went to the bald man and asked him the same questions. People had made fun of him and made his life miserable because he had no hair. After the angel rubbed his hand across the man's head, hair appeared. In response to the angel's second question, the man said he wanted cows, and he ended up with a large number of cows.

A similar thing happened to the blind man, who lamented that he was deprived of seeing things and trees and sky. He had heard people talk about these things, but he could not imagine what they looked like. As the story goes, he received his sight and ended up with a large number of goats.

"Each one was very rich and happy," Ali said.

A few years passed, and the angel in the form of a leper returned to the former leper and told him the same things that he had said when he had been a leper. The angel also told him he looked familiar. But instead of offering help, the man scorned the leper, telling him he had gotten all of this wealth with his own hard work and wasn't going to give any of it away.

"The angel replied: 'If you lied about what you are and you are not grateful, I pray that God will turn you back to where you were.' And the man turned back to being a leper again."

The angel, in the form of a bald man, went to the former bald man, asking for help and was likewise refused, and that man suffering the same consequences because he did not show gratitude.

Finally the angel, in the form of a blind man, went to the man who had been blind, again seeking help.

"This man said: 'I was a blind person and God gave me my sight; I was destitute, and all I have is a blessing from God. I don't want anything. It is all a blessing from God, so take what you want, and I will not demand anything from you.'

"So the angel said: 'May God bless you; God is pleased with you because you have been grateful. For the other two, they have gotten the wrath of God because they were ungrateful

later additional visits and tutoring from Moroni during the next four years, Smith was allowed to obtain the record, which he translated into English by the "gift and power of God," said Brent J. Staples, former education system coordinator, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"During the process, other angels—including John the Baptist, Peter James, John—visited Joseph Smith and his scribe and restored priesthood authority to the earth," Staples said.

"The translated record bears the title The Book of Mormon—Another Testament of Christ, of which more than 100,000,000 copies have been printed in about 100 languages.

"Moroni was the last in a line of prophet-leaders in the Western Hemisphere whose history is recorded in the Book of Mormon. Latter-day Saints believe John the Revelator foretold Moroni's angelic ministry: 'And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people' (Revelation 14:6).

He added, "Because Moroni's mission was vital to the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a statue of Moroni as a herald sounding a trumpet had been placed on several Latter-day Saint temples, such as those in Salt Lake City, Los Angeles and Washington."

They may be Christian, but not into Christmas

Knight Ridder Newspapers

In Kendall, Fla., the Sunset Church of Christ isn't decorated for Christmas.

Indeed, the nondenominational Church of Christ doesn't officially celebrate Christmas; its leaders decided more than a century ago not to celebrate the

holiday since the early Christians never wrote of marking Jesus' birthday, nor did they mention what day Christ was born.

When and how to mark the birth of Jesus has been an issue for theologians and ordinary Christians for centuries. Even after the church agreed on a date for the celebration, in 349 A.D.,

debate raged over just what kind of celebration was appropriate.

In the early days of the United States, the Puritans fined people who celebrated Christmas. It didn't become a national holiday in the United States until 1870.

Even today, some Christians do not celebrate Christmas. At the home of E.J. "Joe"

Backloupe Jr. — a minister and assistant manager at the Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses — you'll see many a Christmas tree, card, wreath or present.

"Christ never told his disciples — there is no record of this — for them to celebrate his birthday," Backloupe says.

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Team Kid - 6:30 p.m.

Friday
Ladies Bible Study - 10 a.m.

And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them,

"Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!!

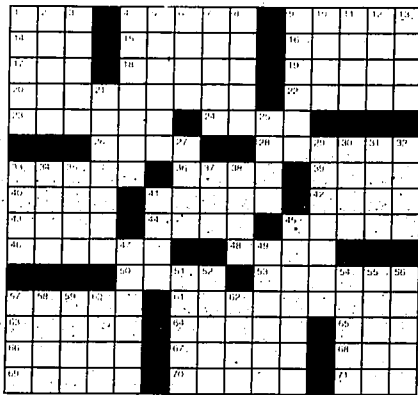
Keep up
Read the Computers and Technology page every Tuesday in The Times-News

To advertise your church services and events call Karen at 735-3270.

MORNING BREAK

ACROSS

- 1 Table protector
- 4 Coagulates
- 9 Baxter and Boleyn
- 14 Back when
- 15 Artifact
- 16 Fair stall
- 17 Light brown
- 18 Swelling
- 19 Dreadlocks wearer
- 20 Took passive action
- 22 Yep!
- 23 Type of inspection
- 24 Invitation letters
- 26 Nuisance
- 28 Coral islands
- 33 Eyeglasses, informally
- 36 Attention-getter
- 39 Inside in
- 40 Prefix with dyne or drome
- 41 Scuzzball
- 42 Sicilian peak
- 43 Proceed
- 44 Wolf's wall
- 45 Pays to play
- 46 Nothing to
- 48 Lays a lawn
- 50 Type of dive
- 53 Greater in volume
- 57 Damascus land
- 61 Aquatic Olympic game
- 63 Big name in pickle packing
- 64 Martin (007's car)
- 65 Sidekick
- 66 Desert spring
- 67 Ripped off
- 68 Paris summer
- 69 Greek letter
- 70 Promoted to excess
- 71 Affirmative
- DOWN**
- 1 Bread for
- 2 Passover
- 3 Once more
- 3 Sugar servers



Friday's Puzzle Solved

OMAHAMA FOAM RSVR
 TATUM LICE OHTIO
 TEEOTOTALER MALEE
 ROW CLARET
 MASCOT EXHANE
 UNTRUE XRAY HAS
 MORES SCANS OWL
 BROW POINT SLAY
 LABSALTS CADRE
 EKEIRALE SHREDS
 LIZARD HEARST
 DRIVEL JAR
 YOGI LCOMOTIVE
 ASHEBOY OWNED
 NETS LIDS TONTO

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Widow feels betrayed by friend who's not ready for a serious commitment

DEAR ABBY: I'm a widow in my mid-60s — attractive, petic and active. I have been alone. I have a friend I'll call Barney who is in his 70s. Barney is a wonderful dancer and a polished gentleman. We've known each other for 10 years.

About a year ago, our friendship evolved to the next level. We became intimate. I fell in love with Barney and thought I had finally found my soul mate.

Last month, I asked this wonderful man if he was looking for a committed relationship.

Barney's answer shocked me. He said he didn't want to fall in love because he'd been hurt too many times.

Then he told me he is also in a relationship with someone else. I was devastated. I cried all the way home. Barney still calls me and invites me out.

When I hear his voice, I melt.

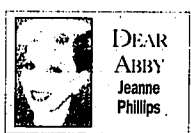
My best friend, "Bea," is having a 60th birthday party next week.

She has just informed me that Barney is coming and bringing his girlfriend!

Abby, the only reason Ben invited Barney is that she and I both thought he'd bring me. I'd like to call him and ask him not to come and embarrass me.

Oh, should I just stay home? I really need advice.

— HEARTSICK IN SAN FRANCISCO



DEAR ABBY
 Jeanne Phillips

DEAR HEARTSICK: Your "soul mate" either suffers from a sensitivity deficiency or he's trying to send you a message: "Don't count on him, because he has a girlfriend." I sympathize with your disappointment, but don't let it stop you from attending the party. While you're there, get the lady's phone number and invite her for coffee. She might be interested to know how much of both of you have in common.

DEAR ABBY: I am 14. My friend, "Heidi," is well-endered. Yesterday, she told me her stepdad pulls on her shirt so she can look down it. He says he doesn't mean anything by it, but it makes Heidi really uncomfortable. She has told her mom, but her mom just says he's not doing it on purpose, and ignores it. What should I do? Should I tell someone, or let her and her family settle it?

— SHOCKED IN FAYETTEVILLE, N.C.

DEAR SHOCKED: By ignor-

ing it, Heidi's mother is allowing it to continue. The first thing to do is tell your mother what's going on. Then urge your friend to speak to a trusted teacher or counselor at school about what her stepfather is doing. They are mandated to report it. Go with Heidi for moral support if necessary. Her safety depends on it, because the girl's stepfather's behavior is extremely inappropriate.

DEAR ABBY: I am a 15-year-old girl who sweats abnormally. I can be sitting in class and my underarms are drenched, which is embarrassing because it can be seen through my clothing. My hands and feet are always moist, and my nose often has beads of sweat.

Please help me. I'm not sure what to do.

— EMBARRASSED TEEN IN DALLAS

DEAR EMBARRASSED: You may have a condition called hyperhidrosis (overactive sweat glands). Your pharmacist can recommend a special anti-perspirant that will help — or, alternatively, ask your mom to schedule an appointment for you with a dermatologist. There are therapies for it. Good luck.

CONFIDENTIAL TO MY CHRISTIAN READERS: A Merry Christmas to you, one and all.

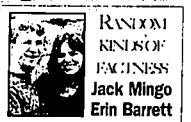
Christmas inspires cease-fire in 1914

This day in history: On Dec. 25, 1914, France's battle-scarred Argonne Forest saw troops emerging cautiously from their muddy foxholes on the front lines. The Germans on one side, the British on the other, met face-to-face in the open — and played a game of soccer. After a while, they shook hands and went back to their foxholes to begin shooting at each other again.

Most Christmas songs were not actually written on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, but we know of three that were: "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" and "Silent Night."

According to one recent study, about 75 percent of Americans put up a Christmas tree each year. A little more than half — 54 percent — use an artificial one.

According to folklore in Silas, a region that includes parts of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Germany — a child born on Christmas day will be-



RANDOM KINSHIP
 JACK MINGO
 Eric Barrett

come either a lawyer or a thief.

When the National Biscuit Co. (today's Nabisco) first introduced Barnum's Animal Crackers in 1902, the package was made of tin and meant to be used as a Christmas tree ornament.

According to Greek tradition, the kallikantzaros show up on the night before Christmas to play practical jokes on you. The little centaurs aren't too clever, though.

Some of their more common tricks include stealing your hen's eggs, braiding your cow's tail, and putting out your family's hair by tying on it.

To ward off these pesky kjesters, folklore suggests burning

an old shoe and hanging a pig's jawbone on the door.

Greek tradition further has it that if you're born on Christmas, you may actually join the ranks of the kallikantzaros.

Famous folks born on Christmas include Sissy Spacek, Charlie Chaplin and Frankie McDaniel; musicians Benny Balfitt, Barbara Mandrell, Cab Calloway and Annie Lennox; film stars Bud Seling, Isaac Newton and Clara Barton. But Jesus — no.

At last count, United States residents send upward of 3 billion Christmas cards each year.

You may be wondering why there's a "santa" in Santa Claus, when "santa" means "female saint" in Spanish. Blame it on the Dutch.

Their name for Santa was "Sint Nikkolas." After they colonized the New York City area, the hard-edged regional accent made the name sound like "Smertniks," which to the English colonials' ears sounded like "Santa Claus."



Santa talks with children in the Santa's village on the Arctic circle on Dec. 15 in Rovaniemi, Finland. Things haven't gone entirely well for Santa Claus this Christmas. Finland, which lays claim to the cheek to his log cabin on the Arctic Circle, was horrified when a British family went public with complaints that he gave them the brushoff.

Santa becomes an industry; some fear magic will be lost

SANTA'S VILLAGE ON THE ARCTIC CIRCLE (AP) — Santa Claus takes a long look at two English children sitting on his knees.

"Have you been good?" he asks gently.

The question might well be thrown back in his bushy-bearded face, considering the fuss a British family caused this month by complaining that they spent a "fortune" to come to Santa's village on the Arctic Circle, only to be given the brushoff.

Hilary Hughes, who brought two daughters and four grand-children to visit Santa, claimed to the Guardian newspaper in London that they were told he was too busy to see them, then finally received them in a dining room cluttered with dirty plates.

Finns, highly sensitive about their nation's image, were horrified, and tabloid newspapers passionately bemoaned the damage to Santa's prestige.

"This was most unfortunate, and we can only apologize profusely," lamented Jyrki Niva, manager of the firm that arranged the trip.

He blamed a delayed flight, adding "We had 1,600 guests that weekend, and there were no other complaints. Everything else went smoothly."

But the story may be just a symptom of a deeper concern that the Christmas spirit is getting lost as the Santa industry gets bigger and more regimented.

The Finns have always claimed a special relationship with Santa, and since the 1960s the idea that Santa's home is in Lapland has been strongly promoted by travel agents, the government and Finland, the national carrier, which calls itself Santa's official airline.

Tourism took off in 1985 when Santa's first workshop opened here, 320 miles north of Helsinki, the capital.

Since then millions have flown in to sit on Santa's knee, ride reindeer sleds and snow-mobiles, and visit the husky farms that dot the snowy landscape. Some 600,000 are expected this year, with more than 250 chartered flights this month alone arriving in Rovaniemi, the capital of Finnish Lapland, 3 miles south of Santa's village. That's 20 percent more than last year.

To get all those multitudes off the plane, onto Santa's knee, around the attractions and out again calls for clockwork timing.

"There is a danger we will be swamped by the growing numbers, so we have to be very careful when we plan," said Niva. "Quality must come before quantity."

Santa's log cabin, originally built for a visit by Eleanor Roosevelt, widow of the U.S. president, is now directed by Santa's Office and workshops. The Santa post office that receives more than 500,000 letters

Santa is serious business in Finland

Some 600,000 visitors will visit Santa's Village in the northern reaches of the country.



a year from all over the world, and dozens of souvenir stores. A new theme SantaPark, a deep-ecology where visitors listen to the sounds of Lappish nature and throw frozen snowballs, and a bar where drinks are served from ice glaciers at a room temperature of 14 degrees Fahrenheit.

At the newly opened Santa's Technology Park, companies work by tourists and communication technology, including answering Santa's letters and making DVDs about Santa and Lapland.

And of course, Rovaniemi boasts a hotel Santa Claus. In fact, three quarters of the workforce in the town of 35,000 directly or indirectly services the \$460 million annual tourism industry.

Is the Santa business gotten too big? No one will say so on the record for fear of hurting their own livelihood, but privately, some are worried. One waitress fears that "Santa saturation" — tourists are shunted in and out as though on conveyor belts — will ultimately cause a backlash.

In his quiet, cozy grotto, Santa won't be drawn into the debate. His real identity is a secret and he won't answer questions about himself. His unchanging message is the well-being of children.

"It's nice that children can have lovely presents, but the most important thing is that they should be made to feel secure and happy," Santa said. "In this way we can all have a better, safer world."

For 18-year-old Gary Johnson from England, the magic is still very much there.

The Santa he met in London under the surface, he said, "knowingly after meeting Finland's Santa. This is the real Santa. He lives here. It was fantastic."

Leo: Take pride in your loved ones

IF DECEMBER 25 IS YOUR BIRTHDAY... What is most important and dear to your heart has been shifting over the past year — and you have different priorities and an altered perspective. By the end of January you will be ready to settle into a routine and establish your life behind you. Don't neglect past obligations in August or October when people will be less likely to give you the benefit of the doubt or grant inflections of the rules. But do look forward to the answers to your prayers, opportunities to improve your life and the realization of your fondest dreams late in 2005.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Including in holiday feasts could mean you need to walk off excess calories. Invite a suitable companion along for a trek through the woods or make small tasks around the house a social event. Others will admire your prowess.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): The sounds of reindeer feet on your rooftop may awe interrupted your sleep, but there is plenty of time to sleep late tomorrow. There is much to do and your leadership abilities could be needed to keep activities on track.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Don't get tangled in tinsel when grabbing for gifts under the tree.

HOROSCOPE

Jeraldine Saunders.

Christmas has unique memories to preserve, so whether you celebrate this holiday or not get the chance to capture this moment in time.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Holiday magic is in the air, so enjoy pleasant times with loved ones. Don't brood if Santa forget to put something in your stocking, but investigate the unneeded goodies you did receive with good grace.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): This season of miracles is when you can be proud of your loved ones and take joy in the little things in life that mean so much. Feel free to attempt something different or exotic. Change traditions to reflect your values.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Enjoyment is guaranteed if you give in to the urge to experiment. A few moments of perfect communication with that special someone will take this day to treasure. Give your imagination free rein.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Let your exuberance shine and don't be afraid to make the first move. It is concerning if it is OK to get your hands dirty

putting together a new gift, as it won't detract from your allure.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): All your energy may be focused on bringing a smile to someone's face. Jump right in and follow your impulse to act like a Christmas angel, spreading happiness wherever you go.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You have much to be grateful for this holiday season and the electric charge in the air can set off fireworks with the one under the surface, he said. New possessions may light the way to new skills.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Santa Claus knows who has been naughty and who has been nice. Little tensions lurking under the surface need to be overlooked for the next few days. Be appreciative of attempts to compromise.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Christmas magic brings smiles to children's faces and a feeling of shared joy between lovers. Make this atmosphere create happy memories by building a snowman or taking a drive to enjoy holiday lights.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Perfect mental harmony with that special someone may have you humming a joyous Christmas carol. Take a break from the pressure of routines and don't let past problems spoil today's pleasures.