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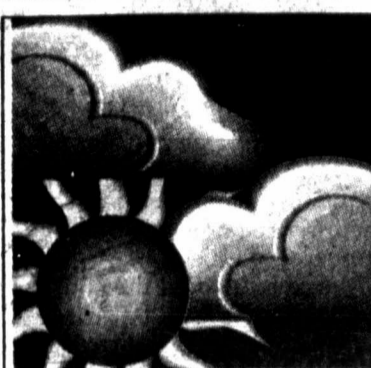
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Pampa

Vol. 90 No. 239 • Pampa, Texas
50¢ Daily • Sunday *1

Local bankers look forward to 1998 with enthusiasm



Low tonight 33 degrees.
High Friday 58.
For weather details, see
Page 2.

Both the retiring and new presidents of a local bank say Pampa's economic future looks bright.

"I am very optimistic about the future of our bank and the future of Pampa," said Jerry Foote, the new president of National Bank of Commerce. "We have some positive economic indicators which are deserving of mention."

Foote cited the renewed activity in the oil and gas industry in the area.

"There is a lot of drilling taking place," he said. "Service companies are busy and leases

are being sought and sold."

Foote said he foresees the demand for natural gas getting stronger nationwide.

"We have an abundance of reserves in this immediate area," he said.

"The ag area is also very strong and getting stronger," said Ben Shackelford, retiring president of the bank. "There are some excellent farmer's in this area."

Foote pointed to an increase in retail sales in Pampa as an indicator of a stronger economy.

The stronger economy has led to a shortage of housing which could mean even more jobs and a better economy for 1998.

"The real estate market is strong and it appears that it is only a matter of time before a new subdivision is started in Pampa," Foote said.

Commercial real estate occupancy is also on the increase, he said.

"If you drive down Cuyler Street, Hobart Street or Price Road, you see very few vacant

buildings," Foote said. "That was not the case two or three years ago."

Foote also praised the Pampa Economic Development Corporation.

"There is new industry in town primarily because

of the efforts of our economic development corporation," he said. "It is very important that we are able to compete with other panhandle towns in

attracting new business. In order to do so, it is imperative that we pass the tax referendum in January to reinstate the funding mechanism for the PEDC."

Shackelford said he thought Pampa was a good place for business.

"If I were not retiring," Shackelford said, "Pampa is where I would want to be in the banking business."

"I am very pleased to be named president of the National Bank of Commerce and to have raised my family in Pampa," Foote said. "We have a lot to be thankful for in Pampa."

LAS CRUCES, N.M. — The U.S. imported more feeder cattle from Mexico in 1997 than it did in 1996.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported this week that year to date figures showed 651,679 head of cattle being imported from Mexico to be fed out in U.S. feedyards. This figure compares to 431,479 head in 1996.

In 1996, there were also 816 head of cattle that were imported to the U.S. for slaughter. This year, no cattle were imported for slaughter, USDA officials reported.

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — American and Vietnamese veterans set off today on a 1,200-mile bicycle journey from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City intended to create bonds of friendship among the one-time battlefield foes.

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Tempers were short and election fraud accusations rampant today in Kenya's capital, where riot police moved in to settle a dispute at a ballot-counting center after President Daniel arap Moi's supporters objected to the results.

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Burundian rebels attacked a military camp and village just outside that country's capital early today, leaving at least 132 people dead, a radio report said.

In an hours-long battle with the army, at least 30 rebels and two soldiers were killed, Lt. Col. Mamert Sinarizzi told Burundian radio.

• James William "Bill" Mathews, 97, lifelong resident of Hemphill County.

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Sports 7

Happy New Year!



The veterans and auxiliary of Foreign War Post #1657 hosted their third annual Black-eyed Pea and Cornbread Feed today. As Pampans gathered for the free feed today at the post on Cuyler, the veterans accepted donations for repair of the post's north wall. The wall borders von Brunow Park at Cuyler and Foster. As the building on the corner was torn down this past year to make room for the park, city workers discovered the wall of the VFW post did not appear structurally sound. Clockwise from the top left, Dean Carson dishes up a bowl of black-eyed peas while, top right, Joyce Carson and Dorothy Gallimore and, lower left, Selma Heard, Minnie Emmons and Bula Flynn serve the New Year black-eyes. Lower right, Gary Pettit and Maurice Heard enjoy the fruits of the post's labor.

New year brings major vote on city's economy

The new year has just begun but for Lew Mollenkamp of the Pampa Economic Development Corporation the most important day of the year is nearly at hand.

The city votes Jan. 17 whether to extend the PEDC's mandate or to have it expire in 2001. Mollenkamp said that vote will have a major effect on his office and the future of the community.

Mollenkamp said even if the vote goes against the PEDC, the agency will still remain in business for half a decade.

"We'll still do economic development, we'd still be in business for five years," he said. "We'll keep the office open and take care of the deals we've already done and do a very limited amount of other deals. Just try to be as creative as possible."

The reason that the kind of deals the PEDC can make are limited now is they can't commit to more than five years and some large projects need longer terms than that.

"If the vote passes, what that really enables us to do is first of all do better deals because we can tie the businesses we do a deal with to a longer term commitment," he said. "And we can be more competitive and be able to compete for some of the bigger and better projects."

He said his goal for this year is to get the first business into the industrial park.

The first business is the hardest, he said, because no business wants to be first. In order to do that, they must determine what kind of buildings can be built out there.

Personally, Mollenkamp said, he hopes to play more golf this year. He said he hopes that every year, but it doesn't usually happen.

Gray County Commissioners Court accepts insurance bid

By MIRANDA G. BAILEY
Staff Writer

A workers compensation insurance bid for \$42,493 from Duncan, Fraser and Bridges was accepted by the commissioners court. The bid was chosen yesterday at the court's special session over another bid for \$44,407 from The Texas Association of Counties.

Other decisions made at the meeting include the acceptance of a renewal for a Challenge-Cost Share Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service. A new contract will allow the county to

continue to contribute some in-kind services for projects at Lake McClellan in conjunction with funding from the Forest Service.

Commissioners also voted to renew the Interlocal Agreement for Conducting Hearings and Proceedings for Court-Ordered Mental Health Services with various panhandle counties. Gray County and County Judge Richard Peet's office will continue to conduct hearings of mental health service cases for persons over the age of 65 in the county.

In related matters, the court also agreed to renew the

Interlocal Agreement for Conducting Hearings and Proceedings for Court-Ordered Mental Health Services with Potter County for cases of persons under age 65.

Other decisions passed at yesterday's session include:

- A request from District Clerk Yvonne Moler to place Gaye Honderich's signature on various accounts
- A request from Sheriff Copeland to transfer one Deputy Sergeant position to a Jail Sergeant position
- The creation of an emergency budget amendment to pay

retired County employee George Britton for the month of December

- The payment of bills and salaries as approved by the County Auditor
- The consideration of transfers as recommended by the County Auditor
- Consideration of intrabudget transfer requests.

The water and sewer systems to businesses long Price Road, the GIS/911 system, the airport project and the use of Constable James Lewis to the City of Lefors were issues discussed without action.

Commissioners look at new emergency geographical information system

By MIRANDA G. BAILEY
Staff Writer

The hunt for rural residences during 911 emergency situations could become a thing of the past as the effort to implement a Geographical Information System (GIS) in Gray County becomes the wave of the future.

County commissioners were asked for \$20,000 toward the purchase of the system during yesterday's special session.

An additional \$60,000 in funding is available if Gray County agrees to a \$20,000 financial or in-kind services commitment. Commissioners expressed interest but chose to table the decision until they could evaluate county resources more thoroughly.

A GIS is a pictorial computer mapping system with attached information systems containing data on the location, size and ownership of property. It can be programmed with facts about every residence in the county.

The commissioners were briefed about the system by Nielsen and Bagley in December. Accepting the funds for the system, the commission would be required to re-number rural addresses for area emergency response systems. The PRPC is the agency which has headed up 911 in the 26 county panhandle area in the past. Representatives from a number of local governmental entities have expressed interest in the system during the course of the last two meetings.

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Another Kennedy tragedy

By JENNIFER MEARS
Associated Press Writer

ASPEN, Colo. (AP) — America's first family, dogged for more than half a century by tragedy and controversy, has lost another member once thought to be its next political star.

Michael Kennedy, the 39-year-old son of the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy who inherited his family's propensity for politics and scandal, was killed in a New Year's Eve skiing accident on Aspen Mountain.

Kennedy, a father of three, was with several family members, including his mother, Ethel, on a slope groomed for those of intermediate skill Wednesday afternoon when he crashed into a tree, witnesses and resort and sheriff's officials said.

A witness, Court Hay, a New York City publicist on a ski vacation, told the *New York Daily News* that members of the Kennedy clan were playing football on skis with a snow-packed water bottle when the accident happened. He said Kennedy went out for a pass, caught the ball and slammed head-first into a birch tree.

Kennedy had been recording the game on video, skiing and shooting at the same time, Hay said.

"Michael's death is a terrible tragedy for his children, his wife, Vicki, and his entire family," said his older brother, Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II. "We will miss him dearly."

Kennedy was skiing at the end of a clear, mild day on snow described by other skiers as very fast when he crashed. The ski patrol began administering first aid within four minutes, and he was brought to the base of the mountain for more care.

"There was blood all over the snow," Hay said. "Several of the Kennedys were on their knees saying the Lord's Prayer."

Kennedy was pronounced dead at 5:50 p.m., about 90 minutes after the crash.

Kennedy, a father of three, was with several family members, including his mother, Ethel, on a slope groomed for those of intermediate skill Wednesday afternoon when he crashed into a tree, witnesses and resort and sheriff's officials said.

family in Aspen," the Aspen Skiing Co. said in a statement. "He was a special and wonderful father, son, brother, cousin and friend, and his family would appreciate your prayers during this tragic time."

It was a stunning blow to a family long-stricken by tragedy. Kennedy's father was assassinated in 1968; his uncle, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated in 1963; another uncle, Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., died in a plane crash during World War II. An aunt, Kathleen Kennedy, also died in a plane crash.

Once considered a likely traveler along the well-worn political path of his family, Michael suffered a fall from grace last spring when he was accused of having had an affair with his family's baby-sitter.

The Boston Globe reported in April that Kennedy's estranged wife, Victoria Gifford Kennedy, daughter of sportscaster Frank

Kennedy was earlier this year he was undergoing treatment for alcoholism. A statement after the mandatory toxic investigation was that he had no alcohol in his system.

While Kennedy had announced that he was separating from his wife of 16 years, recent reports indicated that the couple had reconciled.

Kennedy headed Citizens Energy Corp., a nonprofit organization that supplies heating fuel to the poor, and managed his uncle Edward Kennedy's Senate re-election campaign in 1994.

Edward Kennedy, the family's patriarch, said he was heartbroken over his nephew's death. "We loved him and we will miss him very much."

Vice President Al Gore, who is close to the elder Kennedy and was also vacationing in Aspen, telephoned the family Wednesday night to offer condolences. President Clinton, vacationing in South Carolina, called the Kennedys just after midnight, White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said today.

Clinton "was pretty shocked ... and said the prayers of the first family would be with (the Kennedys) as they endured yet another personal tragedy," Lockhart said.

Funeral arrangements were not immediately available.

School construction must go on ...



(Pampa News photo by David Bowser)

Neither rain nor snow nor sleet shall stay these workers from their rounds, although the holiday snows did slow things down a bit. Silhouetted in the new year sunshine, Marcos Stubbs works on a wall at Wilson Elementary School in Pampa. While most of the construction planned by the Pampa Independent School District was completed prior to classes beginning last fall, the addition and remodeling at Wilson is scheduled to be completed in August, 1998.

Mauro files for governor, says has support of attorney general and former governor

AUSTIN (AP) — Garry Mauro, who has filed to be on the primary ballot seeking the Democratic nomination for governor, says former Gov. Ann Richards and Attorney General Dan Morales have agreed to be honorary co-chairs of his campaign.

Mauro, who filed Wednesday, is the only Democrat to announce for the race so far. The filing deadline is Friday.

On the Republican side, Gov. George W. Bush, who filed for office a month ago, has drawn one primary opponent, R.C. Crawford, of Round Rock.

"I'm running for governor because I want to change the way things work in Austin," said Mauro, who has been land commissioner since 1983. "Lobbyists and Austin insiders put their clients and the special interests first. I'm running for governor to put Texas families first."

After filing, Mauro reiterated his campaign themes of:

- Working to eliminate the sales tax Texans pay when they buy a car, truck or sports vehicle.

- Giving Texans greater choice in choosing their doctor.
- Ending the use of portable classrooms and certifying teachers in the subjects they teach.
- Fighting the U.S. Supreme Court to keep felons from being released early from Texas prisons.

Karen Hughes, a spokeswoman for Bush, said Mauro can't claim to be an Austin outsider.

"Garry Mauro is a 16-year Austin insider," Ms. Hughes said. "Governor Bush is already changing the status quo in Austin. He has reformed our schools. He's moving people from welfare to work, enacted tougher juvenile justice laws and improved the business climate."

Mauro said he will announce a

statewide steering committee next week.

In other developments:

- Gary Dugger, an Austin real estate broker, has filed to seek the Democratic nomination for the Railroad Commission.
- Dugger said the Railroad Commission isn't doing enough to punish oil and gas companies that pollute.
- "With Gary Dugger as Texas Railroad Commissioner, the safety and well-being of Texas communities and the environment will come first," Dugger said.
- The Railroad Commission is responsible for overseeing the state's oil and gas industry, promoting alternative fuels and ensuring railway safety at road crossings.

New Year's Resolutions

Did you make any to...Lose Weight - Try Thermogenics and/or Citri Max. • Quit Smoking - Try "Smoking Withdrawal" or "Nico Stop" and "Withdrawal Support or Detox..." • Eat Better - Educate yourself on how to eat healthier by reading books such as; "Eat Right to Live Long", "Why Should I Eat Better.", "The Power of Your Plate", "Healthy Habits - 20 Ways to Improve Your Health". • Get in Shape - Read "Smart Exercise": by Covert Bajley and take Amino Balance, Sports Pep Fitness Creative. • Stop Drinking - L-Glutamine, shown to help in the treatment of alcoholism by reducing alcohol craving. Also B-Complex, Withdrawal Support.

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New Year's tax breaks give many Americans something to celebrate

WASHINGTON (AP) — New Year's tax breaks could leave many American families with a little more cash to spend in 1998.

"The changes will help taxpayers from the childhood years to the education years, and from the savings years to the retirement years," said Rep. Bill Archer, R-Texas, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

People will have to wait until they file their 1998 tax forms over a year from now before reaping most of the benefits from the tax code changes that were included in a balanced federal budget deal and took effect today.

But families who qualify for a new \$400 credit for each child under age 17 could start keeping some extra cash immediately if parents adjust their 1998 payroll withholding. A mother of three children, for example, could ask her employer to take \$100 less out of her paycheck each month for taxes, and spend her \$1,200 in child credits throughout this year.

The child credit is available to families with incomes below \$75,000 if they file a single tax return and \$110,000 if a mother and father file jointly. Families with higher earnings can get partial credits — reduced by \$50 for every additional \$1,000 in income.

Congress estimates the tax breaks could cover 48.3 million children.

Families will also be able to take a \$1,500 tax credit for each of the first two years of a child's college education. Alternatively, they may choose a one-time \$1,000 credit to continue a child's education after high school — including vocational school.

Other tax changes ringing in with the New Year:

- Qualifying families can save up to \$500 a year for each child in new savings accounts that are tax-free when spent on college or other education beyond high school.

- Senior citizens between the ages of 65 and 69 will be able to earn \$14,500 a year, up from \$13,500, without losing any Social Security benefits. For working people paying Social Security payroll taxes, the maximum earnings taxable will rise to

\$68,400 from \$65,400.

- People who work or volunteer for charities will be able to deduct 14 cents a mile for transportation, up from 12 cents.

- Americans repaying college loans can take a \$1,000 tax deduction on the interest.

- People with higher incomes qualify for tax deductions on savings in individual retirement accounts known as IRAs. Eligibility for the deduction will begin to phase-out for single filers with earnings starting at \$30,000, up from \$25,000. For joint filers, eligibility will begin to phase out at \$50,000, up from \$40,000.

- Americans with savings in IRAs will be allowed to make penalty-free withdrawals to continue their education in college, graduate school or through vocational training.

- A new kind of IRA, called a Roth IRA, will be available for retirement savings. Unlike a traditional IRA, money kept in a Roth IRA will not be taxable when it is withdrawn after retirement. However, there is no up-front tax deduction as savings are accumulated. Annual Roth IRA contributions of up to \$2,000 will be allowed for single filers with incomes below a phase-out range of \$95,000-\$110,000. Joint filers with incomes below a \$150,000-\$160,000 phase-out range will also qualify.

- The value of estates exempt from taxes after a person's death rises to \$625,000 from \$600,000. For small family farms and businesses, the exemption rises to \$1.3 million from \$600,000.

- Small business owners will be able to deduct from their taxes 45 percent of the cost of their health insurance premiums, up from 40 percent.

- Also, the alternative minimum tax for corporations with less than \$5 million in sales is repealed.
- And fewer youths who earn money working summer jobs or after school will owe taxes as deductions and exemptions rise on their earnings.

In addition to the New Year's changes, many Americans are already benefiting from capital gains tax breaks that kicked in last May, including an exemption from taxes for the first \$500,000 gained on the sale of a home by joint filers.

Abandoned tiger finds new home in Chatham County

PITTSBORO, N.C. (AP) — The 350-pound pet tiger found chained to a tree in downtown Houston three months ago finally made it to his new home thanks to a two-day van trip after his airplane ride fell through.

The 6-foot cat named Tigger arrived in Chatham County Tuesday night. On Wednesday, he went into a pen at the Carnivore Preservation Trust, where 27 tigers already live.

Tigger was emaciated when he was found but was nursed back to health during his long stay with the Houston SPCA. Exxon officials heard about his plight and donated \$10,000 to build him a new pen in North Carolina.

Exxon's longtime corporate symbol is a tiger.

Getting to North Carolina took longer than expected.

Continental Airlines offered to fly the tiger to Raleigh-Durham International Airport, but Tigger's crate wouldn't fit through the jet's cargo door. So three trust workers drove last weekend to Texas in a

panel van. They loaded Tigger and his cage early Monday and returned late Tuesday.

Carnivore Trust staffers hoisted his metal cage on poles Wednesday and placed him in his new pen. The cage door was opened, and Tigger bounded across a 3,000-square-foot enclosure.

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Media spending

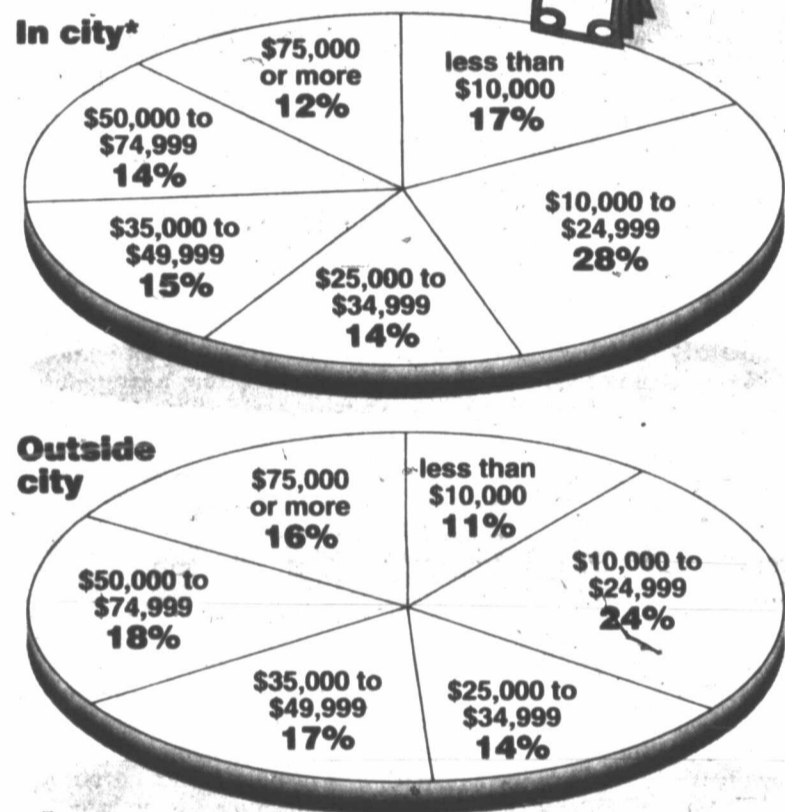
Media spending per capita for top-ranking and bottom-ranking countries, 1996

Rank	Country	Per-capita media spending
1	Japan	\$2,137
2	United States	\$1,861
3	France	\$1,845
4	Germany	\$1,593
5	Netherlands	\$1,517
6	Denmark	\$1,504
7	Belgium	\$1,357
8	United Kingdom	\$1,286
9	Hong Kong	\$1,180
10	Australia	\$1,166
126	Tanzania	\$4.10
127	Vietnam	\$2.92
128	Nigeria	\$2.77
129	China	\$2.62
130	Laos	\$0.41

According to the most recent figures, Japan spends more media dollars per capita than any other country in the world, and significantly more than even the United States.

Household incomes

1995 income distribution of households by 1996 residential status.



*Note: excludes population in central cities that don't meet data-disclosure population requirement

Populations outside of cities tend to have a somewhat higher percentage of people in higher income levels. Sixteen percent of households outside of cities had incomes of \$75,000 or more.

Shop Pampa first!

Just A Reminder!
The Following Pampa News Subscription Rate Changes Take Effect Immediately

Monthly - \$8.00
 Quarterly (3 mos.) - \$22.00

All other rates remain the same

Pampa Optimist Club

Boy's Basketball sign-ups will be on Jan. 4th, 5th & 6th. 4th and 6th graders who played last season need to sign up on Sunday, Jan. 4th from noon till 6:00 p.m. 3rd & 4th graders who did not play last year will need to sign up and try-out Monday, Jan. 5th from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. 5th and 6th graders will need to sign up Tuesday, Jan. 6th from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sign-ups will be limited, so be early. Coaching spaces available. For more information call Rusty Gallagher at 669-7179.

Associated Press poll: Many think these will be the good ol' days...

By HOWARD GOLDBERG
 Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK (AP) - Stocks are up - and down. Consumer confidence surges, but holiday sales are tepid. Murder's down, but the news is full of crime.

Americans take in these mixed signals, and most come away optimistic about the new year.

An Associated Press poll finds six in 10 U.S. adults think their community will have more job opportunities and better schools, and their family will have more money in 1998.

Fifty-eight percent say their streets will be as safe or safer than before, up from 37 percent in an AP poll four years ago. Only 39 percent fear an increase in street crime, down from 60 percent, and 45 percent expect a rise in racial tension, down from 67 percent four years ago.

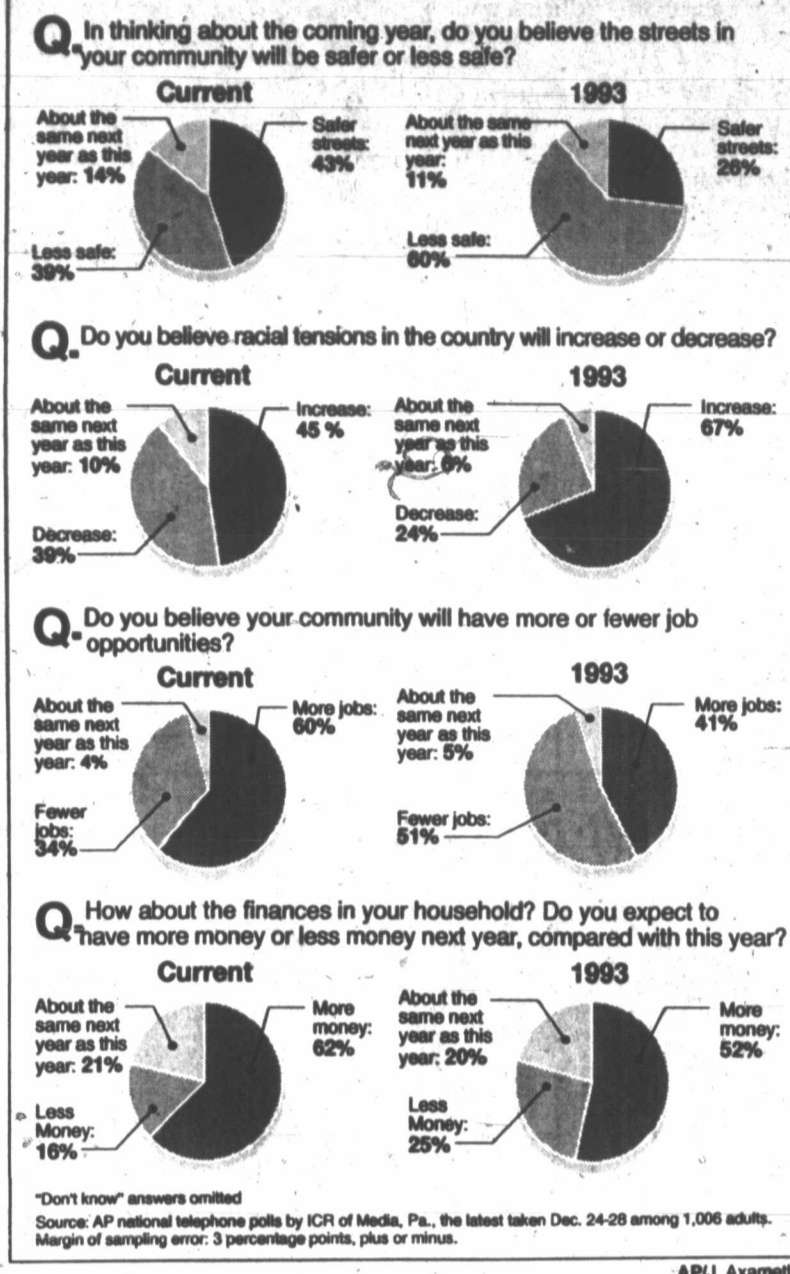
Feelings of safety and prosperity don't just affect people's personal decisions, such as whether to spend that Christmas bonus on an alarm system or a big-city vacation. There's also an effect on public policy, as lawmakers decide whether to be hardhearted or generous with welfare and immigration, whether to cut taxes or spend more on social needs.

The poll of 1,006 adults was taken by telephone Dec. 24-28 by ICR of Media, Pa. Results have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Fifty-eight percent think their public schools will improve, and 33 percent say they will get

Associated Press Poll

Americans grow more optimistic



worse - a fear especially prevalent among those worried about more crime and racial tensions.

All types of Americans except for the elderly expect to have more money in their household this year than before - 62 percent forecast less income, down from 25 percent four years ago. The rest think it will be about the same, or they are not sure.

"I have an excellent job, so I'm really planting a lot of seeds and watching them grow," said Olivia Mendez, 20, of Seattle, who is establishing herself as an entertainment photographer by making contacts with artists and musicians.

One-third in the poll think their community will have fewer job opportunities next year, but that's down from 51 percent four years ago. And the 60 percent who expect more jobs are not just those who live in wealthy areas, but also a majority of low-income respondents.

Hope for a decrease in racial tension runs at 39 percent. Blacks, people under 35 and people living outside metropolitan areas are significantly more pessimistic about race.

"I think racial tension will increase. There are too many people out there fomenting the race business," said Dan Sullivan, 46, of Burnsville, Minn.

Ken Bowman, 52, said his experience on the job makes him optimistic about people getting along.

"We have gays, blacks, Jews, Christians, a wide range of people, and everybody tries to respect one another," said Bowman, partner in a San Diego engineering and architectural firm. "I only have my little world, but I hope it's reflective of what's going on in the rest of the country as well."

Brother of earlier hostage taker surrenders

MCKINNEY, Texas (AP) - James Ricardo Lipscomb had a long history of domestic abuse with his common-law wife, Denise Roach, that apparently figured into his holding her and their three children against their will at knifepoint, officials said.

Lipscomb, 43, surrendered peacefully about 1 p.m. Wednesday after an attorney he knows got on a special phone line and promised that SWAT officers surrounding her duplex apartment would not shoot him down if he came out.

Two weeks earlier, Lipscomb's brother, James Monroe Lipscomb Jr., held 80 children and five adults against their will at the day care facility in nearby Plano, where his wife was an instructor.

That standoff lasted about 30 hours. Police said the two events did not appear related, although domestic disputes figured in both. During extended negotiations with several teams of negotiators, Lipscomb never mentioned his brother, police said.

After holding his wife and children for almost 42 hours, Lipscomb walked out the

back door of his wife's duplex apartment and dropped to his knees on the lawn. Tactical officers handcuffed him and took him away.

Seconds later, his wife emerged, followed by daughters, Sherissa Lipscomb, 12, and Jamia Lipscomb, 7, who was carried out in an officer's arms.

Ms. Roach and the children were whisked away by ambulance to Medical Center of McKinney where they were found to be in stable condition, treated and released.

"Monday night, when police arrived at the duplex in response to a domestic disturbance call, Lipscomb's son, James, was among those he forbade to leave. But a few hours later the child was free.

"We snatched his son," police chief Larry Robinson said, declining to say exactly how. "He did not allow him to be released."

Lipscomb was taken to Collin County Jail, where bond was set at \$250,000 on a charge of aggravated kidnapping. His brother was held without bond at the same jail for the Plano incident.

McKinney is about 40 miles north of Dallas and about 15 miles north of Plano.

Lipscomb spent several short stints in jail on misdemeanor offenses in Collin County, and was ordered to undergo a psychiatric exam to determine whether he was competent to stand trial for violating a protective order a judge had issued on Ms. Roach's behalf.

According to results of that 1995 evaluation by Dr. James G. Shupe, Lipscomb suffered from an illness he called a bipolar disorder. While the illness "likely influenced his behavior at the time of the alleged offense ... (it) did not prevent him from knowing right from wrong," the psychiatrist said in the report.

During the course of his 80-minute exam, the physician wrote that Lipscomb admitted to mood swings and bouts of depression. He said Lipscomb "has been a frequent user of street drugs since his teenage years."

Although Lipscomb also abused alcohol, the doctor said, "his drug of choice for the past 10 years has been crack cocaine."

Briefs

Oakwood, a central Illinois town of 1,500 where residents rarely lock their homes or cars.

"You don't have drive-by shootings here. You don't have random bombings. The most crime is a little vandalism to someone's home or yard," said Ted Ashcraft, who felt the blast from his job at a car repair shop a block away.

Investigators have ruled out gas and electric utilities and believe a bomb was the source of the blast, Hartshorn said. The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has joined the investigation.

Several other volunteers and the pastor were in the church at the time of the explosion, which caused only minor damage to the building.

Plawer was the superintendent of nearby Kickapoo State Park.

"He was such a good guy," said Ruth Goulding, who was also helping out at the church Tuesday. "I thought everybody liked him. He sang in the choir. He was a liturgist. He was on the

board. He was always helping."

Californians scoff as smoking ban arrives

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Told that they were smoking in violation of the law, many Californians kept right on puffing away at bars early today as the New Year and a new ban arrived.

Nearly 200 rebellious smokers at the Pine Cove Inn tavern in Sacramento continued puffing on cigars and cigarettes after midnight, when the state's strict no-smoking ban officially went into effect.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you are all officially breaking the law if you are smoking," hollered tavern manager Gerry Sherman. He was met with jeers and cat calls - and everyone kept smoking.

At San Francisco's Gold Dust Lounge, Jake McClean, 21, kept smoking his cigar right through midnight.

He didn't plan to stop, "unless they pry it from my fingers." California banned smoking in

most indoor workplaces in 1995, including the non-bar areas of restaurants. Bars and casinos were temporarily exempt.

Hot stuff

Estimated and projected retail sales for hot foods, in billions of dollars, 1994 and 2000.

Category	1994	2000
prepared foods	\$1.5	\$1.5
processed peppers	\$1.0	\$1.0
sauces/condiments/spices	\$0.5	\$0.5

Source: Packaged Facts, New York, NY

Spicy foods are growing in popularity. In particular, the market for sauces, condiments and prepared foods that are spiked with hot peppers has grown dramatically.

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Leaving Las Vegas: Gambling capital is nation's growth capital

By ROBERT MACY
Associated Press Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Every month thousands of Californians like Barbara Smith move to Las Vegas to escape pollution, congestion and traffic snarls only to get an unpleasant surprise.

"We're going to be another L.A.," Mrs. Smith complained as she left a Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles office. "We came here because we wanted to move to a smaller city."

Buoyed by a multibillion-dollar hotel-casino construction boom, this gambling capital has become America's growth capital — with all the growing pains of a surging metropolitan area.

Figures released today by the U.S. Census Bureau show Las Vegas was the fastest-growing metropolitan area in the country between 1990 and 1996, with a 40.9 percent increase in population, compared with 6.7 percent nationwide.

Nevada's population grew by 4.8 percent from 1996 to 1997, making it the fastest-growing state for the 12th consecutive year. Arizona was second at 2.7 percent, followed by Georgia and Utah with 2.1 percent.

The migration to Las Vegas isn't making a dent in Southern California's population. The Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County metropolitan area recorded the highest population gain in the country — 963,626 new residents — between 1990 and 1996. The Atlanta metropolitan area was second with a gain of 581,730, and Dallas-Fort Worth third with 537,279.

The New York City metropolitan area — which reaches into New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania — remained atop the 1996 population rankings with 19,938,492. The Los Angeles area ranked second with 15,495,155, followed by the Chicago metropolitan area with 8,599,774.

The West had the highest growth rate — 1.6 percent — between 1996 and 1997. The South recorded a rate of 1.3 percent, the Midwest 0.5 percent and the Northeast 0.2 percent.

But back to Las Vegas. The city's metropolitan area grew from 852,646 in April 1990 to 1,201,073 in July 1996, a gain of 348,427. The area drew

Booming cities

Top 10 fastest-growing metropolitan areas, 1990-1996



Rank	Area	Percent Increase
1	Las Vegas	40.9%
2	Laredo, Texas	32.7
3	McAllen, Texas	29.2
4	Boise City, Idaho	25.9
5	Naples, Fla.	23.7
6	Fayetteville, Ark.	23.7
7	Austin, Texas	23.1
8	Phoenix	22.7
9	Provo, Utah	21.3
10	Brownsville-Harlingen, Texas	21.1

Top 10 largest metropolitan areas, 1996

Rank	Area	Population
1	New York	19,938,492
2	Los Angeles	15,495,155
3	Chicago	8,599,774
4	Washington-Baltimore	7,164,519
5	San Francisco	6,605,428
6	Philadelphia	5,973,463
7	Boston	5,563,475
8	Detroit	5,284,171
9	Dallas	4,574,561
10	Houston	4,253,428

Source: The Census Bureau API/Amy Kranz

another 70,000 new residents between January and November 1997, according to the UNLV Center for Business and Economic Research.

Mayor Jan Jones wasn't surprised by the numbers. She said the three biggest problems facing the area are traffic congestion and air quality, education funding and recreational amenities.

The construction industry accounts for more than 10 percent of the Las Vegas workforce, experts say, compared with about 2.5 percent nationwide. A steady stream of megaresorts, beginning with The Mirage Hotel in 1989 and stretching through at least 2000, is pumping billions of dollars into the industry.

The attractions of Las Vegas? Lifestyle, weather, no state or estate tax, job opportunities and low cost of living, said R. Keith Schwer, the UNLV center's director.

"Problems include growth issues, air quality, availability of water, traffic, crime — typical concerns that communities of 1 million or more face," Schwer said.

Water is a major concern, but officials believe they have a solution through a plan announced this month by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. It would allow Nevada to store excess water from its Colorado River allotment in Arizona aquifers until it is needed after the turn of the century.

Other problems cry out for quicker solutions. The Clark County School District is the fastest growing in the nation and can't build schools fast enough to accommodate the influx of students.

With only two freeways, traffic is becoming a nightmare as the growing number of local residents jockey with millions of visitors who come by car and bus.

Increased traffic, heavy construction equipment and dust from building sites often create a blanket of pollution that envelops the valley, putting Las Vegas on the Environmental Protection Agency hit list.

Mrs. Smith, who moved here with her husband two years ago from Del Mar, Calif., said developers should provide more roads and other infrastructure to accommodate the growth.

"We have major problems," said Dina Titus, a 20-year resident of the city and political science instructor at UNLV. She is also a state senator whose bill to limit area growth failed in the 1997 Legislature.

"We have overcrowded schools, schools in double sessions," she said. "We have to build a school a month to keep up with the population."

College crunch

Top 10 states for projected percent increase in full-time college enrollment, 1997-2007.



State	1997 full-time	2007 full-time	% change
Utah	78,964	118,514	50.1%
Alaska	22,748	31,352	37.8%
Nevada	56,114	74,580	32.9%
Arizona	159,972	209,076	30.7%
New Mexico	60,112	75,827	25.8%
Oregon	105,657	132,137	25.1%
Colorado	139,032	173,054	24.9%
Missouri	172,413	214,286	24.3%
Florida	477,873	593,049	24.1%
Texas	740,891	918,178	23.9%

Between 1997 and 2007, Utah is the only state projected to have a greater than 50 percent increase in college enrollment.

Civic Center to hold annual Country Peddler Show

AMARILLO — American Country Shows of Fredericksburg, Texas, will sponsor the Country Peddler Show Jan. 16-18 at the Amarillo Civic Center, 401 S. Buchanan. The show will last from 4-9 p.m. Friday, from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday and from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. This original folk art and decorator show will feature a broad selection of quality personal apparel and furnishing and decorator accessories including baskets, textiles, furniture, carving, pottery, paintings, potpourri, porcelain, stenciling, dolls, bears, jewelry and hair adornments.

According to company president, Robbin Ramsey, this will be the eighth year for the Country Peddler Shows to be held in Amarillo.

With more than 100 peddlers booked for the January show, the entire Civic Center will be filled to capacity with exhibitors. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$2 for seniors and children under 12 get in free of charge.

Fall Street

The 10 largest percentage drops in the history of the Dow Jones Industrial Average

Date	Points	Percent
Oct. 19, 1987	508.00	-22.61%
Oct. 28, 1929	38.33	-12.82%
Oct. 29, 1929	30.57	-11.73%
Nov. 6, 1929	25.55	-9.92%
Dec. 18, 1899	5.57	-8.72%
Aug. 12, 1932	5.79	-8.40%
March 14, 1907	6.89	-8.29%
Oct. 26, 1987	156.83	-8.04%
July 21, 1933	7.55	-7.84%
Feb. 1, 1917	10.57	-7.75%

When the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 554 points on Oct. 27 of 1997, it lost more than seven percent of its value. But that only ranks as the 12th largest drop in the history of the Dow.

South Koreans dig deep to help offset IMF debt

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Park Joong-hung set the two gold medals he earned during his 20 years at Samsung Corp. on a desk in a conference room at the company's posh headquarters.

A moment later, a gold expert examined them, weighed them and handed him a receipt: "Two gold medals, 56.3 grams (1.97 ounces)."

The medals' market value in South Korea — \$400 — is a minuscule dent in the \$57 billion Park's nation owes the International Monetary Fund for bailing out the collapsing economy. But Park, a 49-year-old executive, is not alone in responding to the campaign launched today by state-run TV to collect gold to help repay the debt.

About 100 Samsung employees wearing yellow ribbons that said "Let's overcome the foreign currency crisis by collecting gold" stood in line in front of the collection desk, gold rings, bracelets and other glittering personal items in hand. Samsung estimated the export value of the gold collected from its employees today at \$418,000.

"The medals are very meaningful to me," said Park, who received them as rewards for his service to a trading arm of the Samsung group, one of South Korea's largest conglomerates. "But it is time of a national crisis. We all should help in some way."

Another Samsung employee, Lee Sang-hwa, 28, brought his mother's gold ring. "I support the spirit of the campaign, and my mother was happy to help," Lee said.

The gold campaign began after a television station reported last week that individual Koreans are believed to have about 2,000 tons of gold worth \$20 billion, or about one-third of the IMF's bailout fund.

People can either donate their gold or sell it to exporters at less-than-market prices. They would

be paid within a month, and the gold would be made into bars and exported. Fifty gold experts volunteered to help with the collection.

South Korea imports tons of gold every year. Gold trinkets and gifts commonly are exchanged on birthdays, wedding anniversaries and other important milestones. Wealthy Koreans often collect gold in bars or in shapes of cow and other animals.

In announcing the campaign, state KBS-TV and its cosponsor, Korea Housing Bank, appealed to people to save the nation with patriotism.

The campaign immediately received warm and widespread support. Twenty-three civic organizations announced their participation; Consumer, religious, environmental and wom-

en's groups were urging people to bring in their gold.

Kim Young-ja, who sells blouses and skirts at the Namdaemun Market in downtown Seoul, said she would bring in her gold rings next week.

"Ever since the idea came out, merchants here have often talked about it. We all agree it's time to do something for the nation," said Kim, 55.

Other merchants near her nodded their approval.

Koreans have begun to compare the effort with a similar movement 90 years ago to pay back huge debts their country owed to Japan, then its colonial ruler. The 1907 campaign was started by about a dozen civilian leaders and received nationwide support. People donated money, gold and other jewelry worth one-sixth of the total debt.

IN MEMORY OF HAZEL ROBINSON
Beloved wife and mother

*We little knew that morning
God was going to call your name.
In life we loved you dearly
In death we do the same.
It broke our hearts to lose you
But you did not go alone.
For part of us went with you
The day God called you home.
You left us beautiful memories
Your love is still our guide.
And though we cannot see you
You are always by our side.
Our family chain is broken
And nothing seems the same.
But as God calls us one by one
The chain will link again!*

By Wanita Deford

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Book Helps Wife Handle Verbally Abusive Husband

DEAR ABBY: Like so many others, I have learned from you and your readers for years. I finally feel I must respond to a recent letter from a woman who described her husband as "good-looking, well-educated, clean, but also mean, bad-tempered, abusive, name-calling, complaining and usually absent." My husband also fits that description.

For years, I adjusted, adjusted and adjusted! Then, about a year and a half ago, I found a book at my bookstore by Patricia Evans called "The Verbally Abusive Relationship," which described my experience as a "T." My husband became angry when he saw me reading it, but I have used the suggested techniques with success.

Verbally abusive relationships are more prevalent than anyone suspects. We need to bring them out of the closet. Author Robert Fulghum said, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will break our hearts."

Please, Abby, get the word out. There are far too many husbands out there like "Eager to Switch in Ohio's" and mine.

I'm grateful there is a forum such as your column for getting information like this to the public. Sign me ...

I'D RATHER BE ALONE

DEAR I.R.B.A.: Although I have devoted much space to the problem of physical abuse,



Abigail Van Buren

SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

you have provided me with an opportunity to address the issue of verbal abuse — which is even more widespread.

Criticism and angry words can cut like a knife, leaving emotional wounds that fester and poison what should be loving relationships. Before speaking out in anger, it's better to ask oneself, "Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it kind? And what will I accomplish by saying this?" If the answer to any of those questions is negative, leave the room and cool off.

DEAR ABBY: I agree with your advice to tell children the truth about Santa Claus. When a child first begins to question whether there really is a Santa Claus, it's time for the parent and child to have a heart-to-heart talk.

Almost 30 years ago, my mother was faced with this duty when my then 8-year-old brother began hav-

ing doubts about Santa Claus. His friends were teasing him unmercifully because he still "believed," and shouting and shoving matches occurred. My mother sat down and told him the truth. My brother was heartbroken — so much so that, with tears streaming down his face, he wailed, "Oh Mama, why did you have to tell me now? Why didn't you just wait and let my wife tell me?"

Sixteen years later, my late father told this story at the rehearsal dinner the night before my brother's wedding. At the end of his toast, he welcomed the bride into the family by saying she was the best gift "Santa Claus" could have brought us.

Everyone shed happy tears that night! My brother and his wife have two little "believers" of their own now, and we all have a sweet memory to cherish. Sign me ...

SANTA'S HELPER, MOBILE, ALA.

DEAR SANTA'S HELPER: Thank you for sharing this wonderful story. Since your brother and his wife are the parents of two little "believers," I wonder who enlightened him about the stork.

For Abby's favorite family recipes, send a long, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$3.95 (\$4.50 in Canada) to: Dear Abby, Cookbook No. 1, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, Ill. 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)

Horoscope

Friday, Jan. 2, 1998

Additional focus will be placed on your work or career in the year ahead. The way you conduct yourself and handle matters could ensure a raise, promotion or recognition.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Your involvements must be thought through every step of the way today, or complications could arise that will make it difficult to pry you off the flypaper. Get a jump on life by understanding the influences that will govern you in the year ahead. Send for your Astro-Graph predictions by mailing \$2 to Astro-Graph, c/o this newspaper, P.O. Box 1758, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156. Be sure to state your zodiac sign.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) Be your

own person today and don't be coerced by friends into doing things that you prefer not doing. If you yield to pressure, you won't enjoy yourself.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) Guard against inclinations today to seasaw regarding your primary objectives. If you are indecisive, you'll be ineffective as well.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) Associates tend to hold your abilities in higher regard than you do. Do not minimize your feelings of self-worth today, because others won't.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) People you know little about must be dealt with carefully today so that you aren't disadvantaged in any way. Be selective in choosing companions.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) In collective endeavors today, be certain that each party understands their own responsibilities. If not, efforts could be ineffectively duplicated.

CANCER (June 21-July 21) In a testy career matter today, don't let your emotions overrule your logic. Things could fall

apart if you let your feelings serve as your reasoning power.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Even though your intentions will be good, you could make loved ones feel uncomfortable today by being overly protective or possessive.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Do not let outsiders play a prominent role in a family dispute today, especially if it involves you and your mate: Their contribution could be explosive.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) It is best not to tackle a complicated task today that you do not understand thoroughly. Your limited, ill-informed contribution could make things worse.

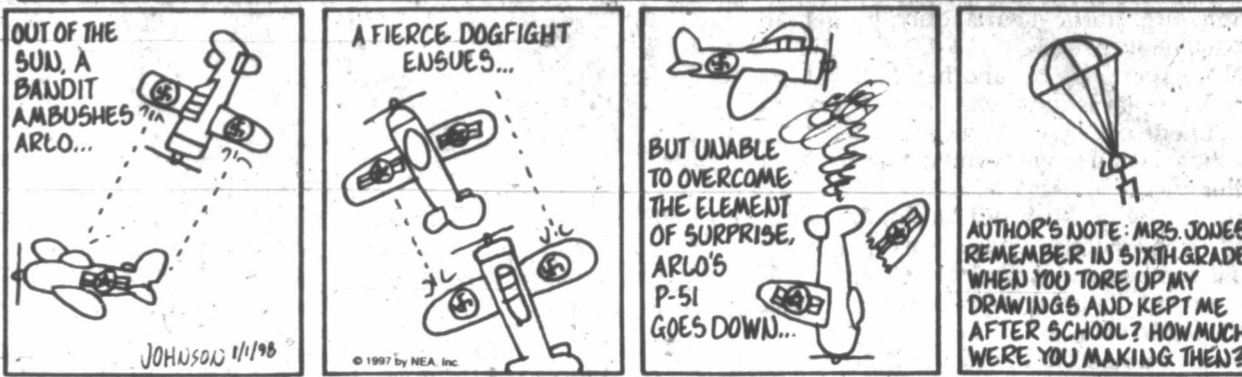
SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) A costly social obligation you've been trying to avoid might have to be dealt with today. You might as well bite the bullet and respond graciously.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) Outside demands might prevent you from fulfilling your goals today. If so, lessen your frustration by being tolerant, amicable and easygoing.

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For Better or For Worse



Arlo & Janis



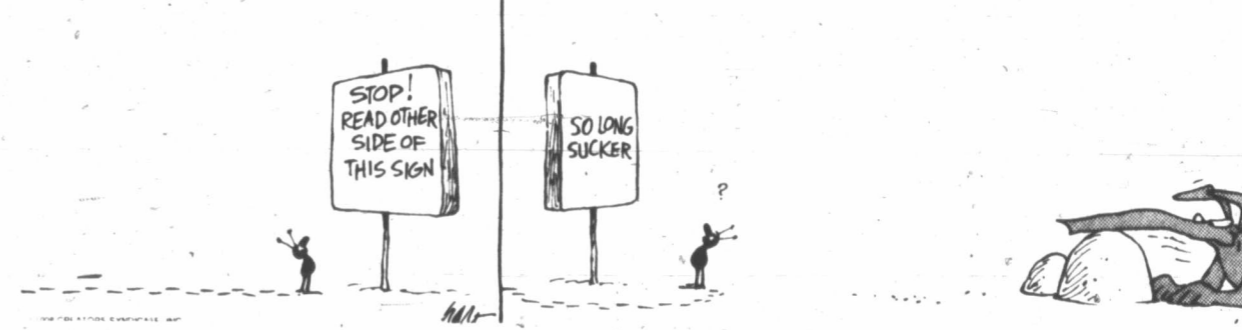
Garfield



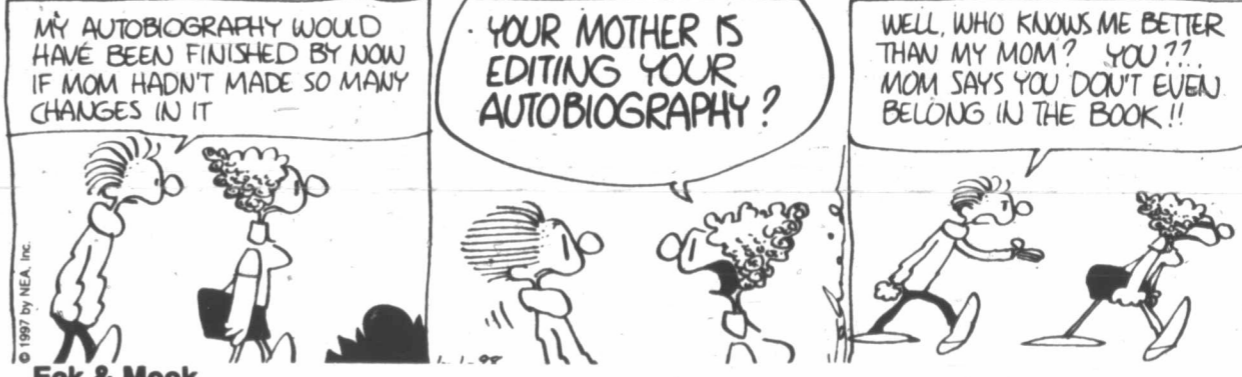
Walnut Cove



Marvin



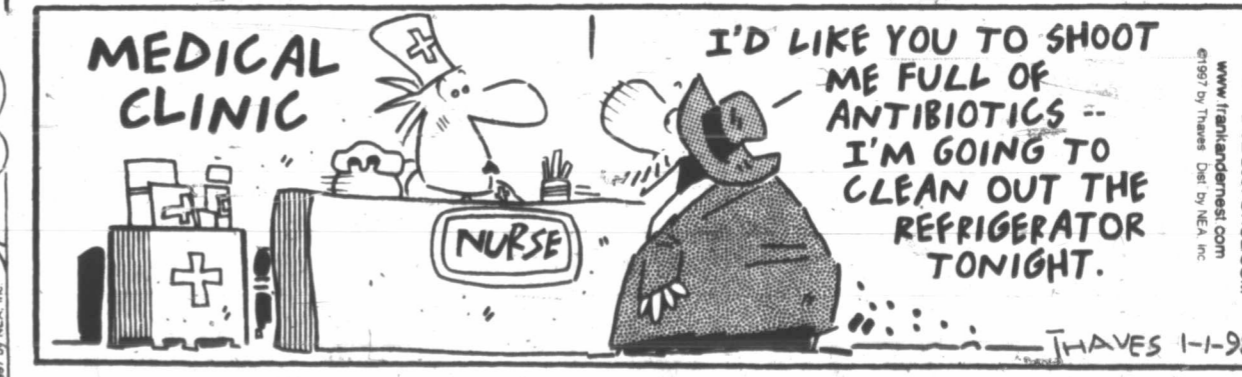
B.C.



Eek & Meek



The Born Loser



Medical Clinic



Frank And Ernest



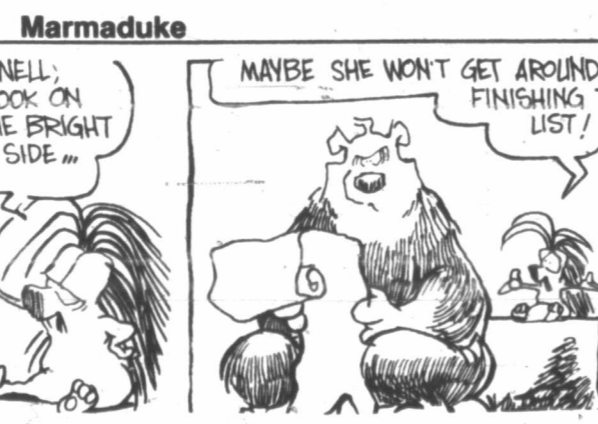
"Christmas is my favorite month. What's yours?"



"We threw the Christmas tree out and he dragged it back in."



The Family Circus



Marmaduke



Grizzwells



Alley Oop



Peanuts



Mallard Filmore

Baby Bells:

Federal judge declares portions of Telecom Act unconstitutional

DALLAS (AP) - Moving the "Baby Bells" a step closer to offering long-distance service, a federal judge has struck down part of the landmark Telecommunications Act of 1996.

U.S. District Judge Joe Kendall of Wichita Falls ruled Wednesday that Congress unconstitutionally singled out and barred regional Bell subsidiaries from providing long distance and other services.

The chairman of SBC Communications, which filed the lawsuit in July, said the ruling was the single most important victory for phone customers and competition since the divestiture of the Bell system in 1984.

"We intend to provide our customers with one-stop shopping for all their telecommunications needs by offering the simplest, most affordable long-distance plan available," said Edward Whitacre Jr., head of San Antonio-based SBC.

Liz Rose, a spokeswoman for the Federal Communications Commission, said the agency likely will ask the Justice Department to appeal.

"I am extremely concerned about what seems to be a court's invalidation of much that Congress, this commission and the affected phone companies have done to bring consumers the benefits of competition," FCC Chairman William Kennard said.

Mark C. Rosenblum, AT&T vice president for law and public policy, called the ruling "inexplicable and clearly erroneous." Courts, Congress and regulators "have long recog-

nized that the Bell monopolies differ from other local companies in size and scope," he said.

The Bells see their local markets as an opportunity to offer one-stop communications most cheaply and efficiently. But these markets are where the federal entry requirements are toughest - and they are where the potential is the greatest for local phone companies to have customers subsidize the companies' investment in long dis-

"We intend to provide our customers with one-stop shopping for all their telecommunications needs by offering the simplest, most affordable long-distance plan available," said Edward Whitacre Jr., head of San Antonio-based SBC.

ance, which is not allowed.

The 1996 law deregulating the telecommunications industry allowed the Bells to seek permission to provide long-distance service in local phone regions. The law frees local and long-distance companies to enter each other's businesses, subject to regulatory approval.

So far, no regional company has been cleared by the FCC to provide long-distance service within the states of its region.

In its lawsuit, SBC contended the act was unfair because rather than establishing classes or categories, it identifies Baby

Bells by name and bars them from entering the long distance and other businesses - such as electronic publishing or electronic alarm monitoring - that other local phone companies may provide.

The suit was filed after unsuccessful attempts by SBC to enter the long-distance business in Oklahoma, a state served by its subsidiary, Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. It also operates under the Pacific Bell and Nevada Bell names.

The company challenged only the portion of the act that singled out and excluded SBC from competing in certain business, said Lonny Morrison, a Wichita Falls attorney who represented the company.

SBC said the ruling will enable it to provide long distance in its service region of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, California and Nevada. Whitacre said the company plans to seek permission to offer long-distance service first in Oklahoma.

Another Bell company, Bell Atlantic, said it will file an application with the FCC soon to provide long-distance service in New York and eventually to other states.

"Bell Atlantic never thought it was the intent of Congress to impose burdens to keep some players out of long distance and allow others in," spokeswoman Susan Butta said.

Sol Trujillo, president and chief executive officer of US West Communications, said the ruling "will further accelerate the day when consumers can see the benefits of full competition in the long-distance market."

Brazilian police storm prison, free hundreds of hostages

SOROCABA, Brazil (AP) - In a land where inmate rebellions are a weekly occurrence, the events that unfolded over three days at Sorocaba Prison - ending with a raid by police in which not a shot was fired - shocked Brazilians.

The government said no one was killed in Wednesday's raid, although an inmate and a woman died Sunday when prisoners took hundreds of hostages, including guards and inmates' relatives.

In the climax of the rebellion Wednesday, at least four riot police and 10 prisoners were wounded, the latter with knife and club injuries. Police said the knife wounds were the result of prisoner-on-prisoner fighting.

As a squad of 250 riot police took control of Sorocaba Prison - exploding "shock" bombs designed to scare, not injure - hostages streamed out the front gate, screaming and crying. Some said police had beaten them and inmates.

Black smoke rose from inside the prison, but no gunshots were heard and the raid was over within an hour.

"From what I saw the cops acted very well to put this thing down without any major abuses," said Daniel Azevedo Noronha, president of the human rights defense council of the state of Sao Paulo.

The violence of the standoff 50 miles west of Brazil's largest city,



Sao Paulo, dismayed even Brazilians accustomed to prison rebellions that stem from anger over overcrowding and long pre-trial waits. At Sorocaba Prison, there are 900 inmates, though it was designed to hold 500.

During the standoff - the second at the prison in 1997 - inmates hung guards by their ankles and tortured them with knives, sticks and iron bars, according to Selma Giron, a prison official who said she heard the reports from people in the prison.

One of the guards who was freed in the police raid, Ademir Jose Tobias de Carvalho, said he had been held in a cell and beaten often with the flat side of a knife. According to Carvalho, the prisoners had semi-automatic weapons and .38 caliber pistols.

Earlier in the day, it appeared that the standoff might be resolved peacefully. Prisoners had agreed Tuesday night to release the 17 guards Wednesday, along with 621 visitors. Several deadlines passed, but eventually the inmates began releasing some of their hostages.

Then, police said negotiations had broken down.

The raid became necessary because inmates had begun to dig a tunnel, according to Police Col. Rui Cesar, who was in charge of the riot troops.

Those freed earlier in the day looked haggard and drawn as they were led from the prison by police.

"This is the greatest present God could give me for the New Year," said Izilda Fatima Silva, holding her two 6-month-old grandsons. Silva had been visiting her son, who is serving a sentence for armed robbery.

Standing by her side was Silva's 8-year-old granddaughter Nora, who looked frightened by the attention but said she had not been mistreated. "I played board games mostly. No one ever hurt me and I ate well."

Heart disease costs expected to rise in 1998

DALLAS (AP) - The cost to research and treat cardiovascular disease is expected to climb by about six percent next year as the nation's population ages and suffers more heart attacks and strokes, the American Heart Association reported Wednesday.

Cardiovascular diseases could cost the nation an additional \$15 billion next year, according to figures released in the American Heart Association's 1998 Heart and Stroke Statistical Update.

"Costs are rising for several reasons," said Martha N. Hill, American Heart Association president. "As the population increases and ages, more people will be having heart attacks and strokes. And while we're developing new and better ways to treat those diseases, the treatments do cost money."

Dr. R. Sanders Williams, chief of cardiology at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, said the heart association's estimates are consistent with the trends he's seen.

"Many people in their minds don't worry about heart disease," Williams said. "Everyone's afraid of cancer and AIDS is certainly a scourge, but people think heart disease is not so bad - that if they get it, they can fix it."

Money spent on cardiovascular disease is expected to climb to \$27.2 billion from \$25.1 billion in 1997. That estimate includes the cost of physician and

professional care, hospital and nursing home services, medications and home health equipment.

The Dallas-based heart association also is factoring in lost productivity because people have been ill or have died from strokes and heart attacks.

In 1995, the most recent year for which totals are available, 960,592 people died of cardiovascular disease in the United States. That was 41.5 percent of all deaths that year and an increase of nearly 11,000 from 1994, the heart association said.

That's partially because people are heavier than ever before. The heart association found 65.7 million Americans exceeded the healthy weight range defined by U.S. dietary guidelines during a 1988-94 study. That's a 43 percent increase over figures compiled for 1960-62.

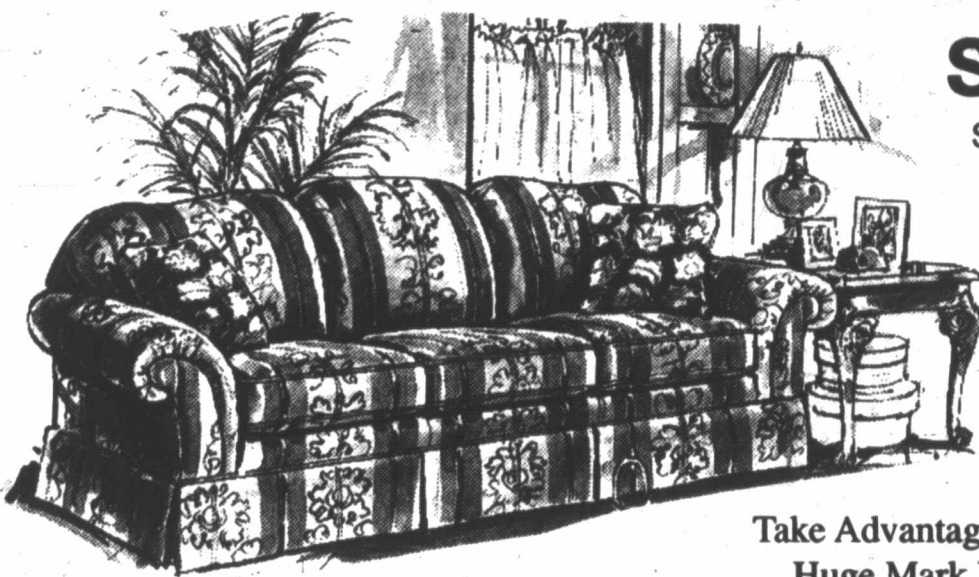
"Being overweight is serious," Ms. Hill said. "Overweight or obese people are more likely to develop heart attack and stroke even if they have no other risk factors. Excess weight is also linked to coronary heart disease mainly because it influences blood pressure and blood cholesterol can lead to diabetes."

To prevent heart disease, Williams suggested people maintain a healthy body weight, eat a diet recommended by the American Heart Association and have their cholesterol level and blood pressure checked regularly.

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