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Street sign thefts causing hazards

by David Bowser

dbowser@thepampanews.com
 The City of Pampa is reporting an increase in the stealing of street signs.
 Donny Hooper, interim director of public works, said it presents both a financial problem and a safety problem.
 Hooper said it costs the city hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to replace stolen street signs. He said replacing a sign can cost as much as \$300 per sign.
 Safety is another concern.
 When yield signs, stop signs or directional signs are stolen, Hooper said the likelihood of

an accident increases.
 Three people were killed in Florida about five years ago, he said, after thieves stole a stop sign. A driver rolled through the then unmarked intersection and collided with another car killing three 18-year-olds.
 Police tracked down three people who were accused of taking the stop sign. Each was charged in the deaths of the teenagers, convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison.
 "There is also the potential for danger when emergency responders cannot locate a street because a sign is missing while responding to an emergency call," Hooper said.

Interfering with ambulance, fire or police calls carry tougher legal penalties.
 "The City of Pampa along with the Pampa Police Department will be stepping up their efforts to catch those responsible for stealing street signs within the City of Pampa."
 Ed Turner, street superintendent for the city, said stop signs, yield signs and street signs are popular among thieves. He said his department saw a large increase in the number of signs being stolen over the holidays.
 Hooper said anyone with information on stolen signs should call the Pampa Police Department, 669-5700.

White Deer teen makes All Star Rodeo team

by David Bowser

dbowser@thepampanews.com
 A White Deer girl has been named to the National High School Rodeo Association's Wrangler Division All Star Rodeo Team.

Lesley Chester, 14, earned a position on the team based on leadership, academics and athletic achievements, according to Jeff Chadwick, special events manager for Wrangler Rodeo.

"She's the only Texan in the family," said her mother, Gayla Chester, as Lesley put her horse Socks through her paces at the family horse operation west of Pampa.

The Chesters, Mrs. Chester said, moved to the Pampa area from Frederick, Okla., before Lesley was born.

"We've been here 15 years," Mrs. Chester said.

With the spring rodeo season about to begin for the Wrangler Division, Lesley's life is about to get a whole lot busier.

"They have their own rodeo," Mrs. Chester said of the Wrangler Division of the high school rodeo association.

The Wrangler Division is specifically for middle school students.

They have rodeos in 50 states, including Hawaii, plus in Australia.



Lesley Chester and her horse Socks round a barrel. Chester has been selected for the Wrangler Junior High Division All Star Rodeo Team

See Teen, Page 3

Texas House speaker throws in the towel

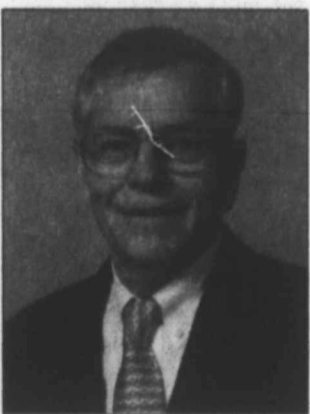
AUSTIN (AP)— Texas House Speaker Tom Craddick, the longest serving Republican in state elective office, has given up his hard-fought bid for a fourth term.

Craddick aides and allies said the Midland oilman, the first Republican to lead the House since the Civil War era, told his supporters that he did not have enough votes among his fellow members to remain in the powerful job.

"I talked to the speaker. He has dropped his candidacy and released his pledges," Rep. Will Hartnett, a longtime Craddick supporter, said Sunday. "He just decided it was getting too tight."

Craddick had been campaigning for another term as the presiding officer over the 150-member chamber, but his dwindling support became insurmountable as Rep. Joe Straus, a relative newcomer to the political arena, gained strength.

Shortly before word of Craddick's surrender spread, Straus, R-San



Texas House Speaker Tom Craddick, R-Midland, in Austin, Texas. Craddick, the first Republican speaker in modern times, is dropping his bid for a fourth term.

Antonio, released a list of 85 pledges of support, more than enough to win the election on Jan. 13.

"It is time for a new tone and an atmosphere of trust in the Texas House of Representatives," Straus said, upon announcing that he had secured enough support to win the race. "Having received the com-

mitment of a strong majority of my colleagues, it is my goal to restore civility, fairness and transparency to the House of Representatives and its public-policy making process."

Republicans hold a 76-74 majority in the House. The narrow partisan split and divided GOP loyalties mean House Democrats will play a decisive role. All but four House Democrats endorsed Straus.

Most Republicans threw their support behind veteran Amarillo Republican Rep. John Smithee, who entered the race Sunday.

"We're going to need a little bit of help from a higher power and that's where we're looking," Smithee said after members of the Republican caucus meeting Sunday night voted to support him.

Hartnett, who said he would be supporting Smithee, said Straus is inexperienced and "virtually unknown in the House." "Smithee is known, he's



Rep. Joe Straus, R-San Antonio, talks to well-wishers from a downtown office Sunday, Jan. 4, 2009, in Austin, Texas. Straus becomes the top Republican to replace Texas House Speaker Tom Craddick, R-Midland. The vote officially takes place on Jan. 13, opening day of the next legislative session. (AP Photo/Harry Cabluck)

known, trusted and respected and I think everyone in the House would feel comfortable with him as speaker," said Hartnett, R-Dallas. "Obviously, it's a horseshoe right now but Smithee is very popular."

Craddick's allies said he also endorsed Smithee. Hartnett told reporters he

thought Craddick would return to the chamber as a rank-and-file member and serve out his two-year term.

At a downtown Austin steakhouse, where Craddick addressed the House Republican caucus, Craddick rushed through a

See Speaker, Page 3

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PAMPA FORECAST

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
High 49 Low 24	High 64 Low 32	High 62 Low 34

Tuesday: Partly sunny, with a high near 49. Wind chill values between 15 and 25 early. North-northwest wind between 15 and 20 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 24. Wind chill values between 16 and 21. North-northwest wind around 10 mph.

Wednesday: Sunny, with a high near 64. West wind between 10 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Wednesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 32. West-southwest wind 5 to 10 mph becoming north-northwest.

Thursday: Sunny, with a high near 62. North-northwest wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Thursday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 34. South-southwest wind between 10 and 15 mph.

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Lotto Texas results

AUSTIN (AP) — Results of the Lotto Texas drawing Saturday night: Winning numbers drawn: 6-12-15-21-22-29. Number matching six of six: 0. Number matching five of six: 33. Prize: \$1,242.

Number matching four of six: 1,735. Prize: \$35. Number matching three of six: 30,717. Prize: \$3. Estimated jackpot for Wednesday night drawing: \$7 million.

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Pic 3 results

AUSTIN (AP) — The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Saturday night by the Texas Lottery, in order: 8-9-2. Sum It Up: 19

(eight, nine, two. Sum It Up: 19)

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Daily 4 results

AUSTIN (AP) — The winning Daily 4 numbers drawn Saturday night by the Texas Lottery, in order: 1-6-3-8. Sum It Up: 18

(one, six, three, eight. Sum It Up: eighteen)

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Cash Five results

AUSTIN (AP) — Results of the Cash 5 drawing Saturday night: Winning numbers drawn: 16-17-21-25-26. Number matching five of five: 1. Prize: \$26,783

Winning number sold in: Dallas

Matching four of five: 89. Prize: \$135

Matching three of five: 2,747. Prize: \$10

Matching two of five: 27,760. Prize: \$2

Next Cash 5 drawing: Monday night.

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Obituaries

Services tomorrow

BROWN, Dorothy Norene — 2 p.m., Carmichael-Whatley Funeral Directors Colonial Chapel, Pampa.

Dorothy Norene Brown, 90

Dorothy Norene Brown, 90, of Pampa, Texas, died Jan. 4, 2009, at McLean, Texas.

Services will be at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009, at Carmichael-Whatley Colonial Chapel with the Rev. Albert Maggard, pastor of the First Pentecostal Holiness Church, officiating.

Burial will be in Hillcrest Cemetery in McLean under the direc-

tion of Carmichael-Whatley Funeral Directors.

Mrs. Brown was born Oct. 28, 1918, in Sayre, Okla., to George and Ollie Mae Nichols. Dorothy married Herman M. Brown on Jan. 15, 1938, in Wheeler. He preceded her in death on April 25, 1990.

She has been a resident of Pampa since 1945 moving to Rowlett, Texas, three years ago to be with her daughter.

Mrs. Brown was a seamstress in Pampa where she owned her own upholstery business. She also was a partner with her husband in H.M. Brown Tax Service for many years. She was a Girl Scout Leader for 15 years, a member of the Rebekah Lodge and she was Pentecostal.

Dorothy was preceded in death by her son, Herman Maurice Brown Jr.; a daughter, Linda G.

Seitz; and a grandson, Bryan Thomas Seitz.

Survivors include one brother, Wayne Nichols of Amarillo; three sisters, Lola Allen of Ft. Collins, Colo., Bonnie Keller of Tacoma, Wash., and Pauline Hinkle of Liberal, Kan.

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

Kathy Jean McDade, 57

SKELLYTOWN, Texas — Kathy Jean McDade, 57, of Skellytown, died Jan. 2, 2009, at Skellytown.

Services are pending with Carmichael-Whatley Funeral Directors of Pampa.

Mrs. McDade was born Dec. 11, 1951, in Amarillo and was a 1970 graduate of Amarillo High School. She attended Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, earning a degree in Psychology.

Kathy joined the U.S. Navy in 1977, and after

serving her country, she returned to the Panhandle to be closer to her family. She lived for her family and will be greatly missed.

Kathy is with our Lord and endures no more pain. She was preceded in death by a sister, Billie J. Parker; and brother-in-law, Mark Parker.

Survivors include her mother and stepfather,



McDade

Nelda and Lovell Kennard of Skellytown; her father and stepmother, Walter and Grace McDade of Spearman; sister, Lee Tice and husband Mike of Skellytown; two brothers, Roger

Kennard of Kansas and Eddie Rodgers of Spearman; niece, Kala Tice of Skellytown; four nephews, Kory Tice and wife Kara, and Mikah

Tice, all of Skellytown, and Mark Parker and David Parker, both of New Braunfels; and great-niece, Breklyn Tice of Skellytown.

MEMORIALS: American Cancer Society, c/o Gerry Caylor, 2130 Charles, Pampa, TX 79065, or City of Pampa Animal Control, Fund 12, P.O. Box 2499, Pampa, TX 79066-2499.

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

Elizabeth Holden Pepper, 82

Elizabeth Holden Pepper, 82, of Pampa, Texas, died Jan. 4, 2009, at Pampa.

Services are pending with Carmichael-Whatley Funeral Directors.

Mrs. Pepper was born Jan. 30, 1926, in Balko, Okla., and was a graduate of Balko High School. She married Floyd Pepper on July 13, 1954, in Miami. He preceded her in death on July 7, 1990.

She had been a resident

of Pampa since 1959, moving from Borger. She was a member of the Pampa Chapter #65 Order of the Eastern Star and was on the board of Phil-Pet Credit Union.

Elizabeth was always involved in her children's activities such as Cub Scouts and Brownies, and she loved to garden.

She was a former beauty operator and cosmetologist in Miami. She was a homemaker.

Survivors include one son, Jim Pepper and wife Robbie of Pampa; daughter, Jan Morrow and husband Kenneth of Decatur; brother, Chet Holden of Dumas; sister, Arina Holden of Denver, Colo.; sister-in-law, Juanita Holden of Surprise, Ariz.; granddaughter, Stacy Pepper of Fort Worth; two grandsons, Aaron Pepper of Evanston, Ill., and Matt Nichols and wife Amber of Waco.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials to the Alzheimer's Association, 415 W. 8th Ave., Suite 300, Amarillo, TX 79101; American Diabetes Association, P.O. Box 50433, Amarillo, TX 79159; or First Christian Church, 1633 N. Nelson, Pampa, TX 79065.

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

Jose Dolores Romero, 49

Jose Dolores Romero, 49, of Pampa, Texas, died Jan. 3, 2009, at Dallas, Texas. Memorial services will be at a later date.

Mr. Romero will be available for viewing Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009, and Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009, at Carmichael-Whatley Funeral Home.

Cremation and arrangements are under the direction of Carmichael-Whatley Funeral Directors.

Mr. Romero was born Oct. 8, 1959, in Favela, Chihuahua, Mexico. Jose

married Lucille Davis on June 5, 1978, in Pampa. He was a resident of Pampa for 31 years.

Mr. Romero was a foreman for West Texas Landscape. Jose was a member of the First Pentecostal Holiness Church.

Survivors include his wife, Lucille Romero, of the home; one son, Nicholas Romero of Pampa; three brothers,

Felipe Romero and wife Regina of Pampa, Manuel Romero and Ramon Romero, both of Cuahatemoc, Mexico; three sisters, Socorro Romero and Alicia Romero, both of Cuahatemoc, Mexico, and Herlinda Favela of Chihuahua, Mexico; two grandchildren, David Lloyd and Mercedes Romero, both of Pampa; sister-in-law,

Amanda Smith and husband Luke of Pampa; brother-in-law, Ray Davis of Pampa; mother and father-in-law, Wanda and Johnny Davis of Pampa; and many nieces and nephews.

MEMORIALS: Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Donor Services, P.O. Box 4072, Pittsfield, MA 01202.

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

Emergency Services

Sheriff

Gray County Sheriff's Office recorded the following arrests.

Saturday, Jan. 3
Kyle Lee Boaz, 18, of Grand Prairie was arrested by Pampa Police Department for possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, minor in consumption of alcohol and on bond forfeitures for running a stop sign, no driver's license and failure to appear.

Hugh Jackson Parman, 20, of Pampa was arrested by Pampa PD for possession of marijuana and possession of drug parapher-

nal. Eleazar Soto Jr., 45, of Pampa was arrested by Pampa PD for possession of a controlled substance, driving while intoxicated-third or more offense, no valid driver's license and no insurance.

Charles Franklin Mejia, 23, of Pampa was arrested by Pampa PD on a bond forfeiture for theft of services out of Potter County.

Pampa PD

Pampa Police Department reported the following incidents and calls Friday, Jan. 2.

Friday, Jan. 2

Officers conducted 29 traffic stops. A stop in the 700 block of West Brown resulted in at least one arrest.

A total of 11 calls and/or stops concerning animals was reported.

A sexual offense was reported in the 1000 block of South Farley.

An alarm was reported in the 400 block of North Somerville.

Suspicious persons were reported in the 900 block of East Frederic, at Darby and Lefors streets, and in the 1400 block of North Evergreen.

Burglary of a motor vehicle was reported in the 900 block of North Gray. Stereos were reportedly taken from two vehicles.

Theft was reported in the 200 block of East Tyng.

Theft was reported at Fenton Motors, 100 N. Hobart. License plates were reported stolen from a vehicle.

Theft was reported at the PD.

A traffic complaint was reported at Gwendolyn and Faulkner streets.

Motorist assistance was provided at 23rd and Primrose streets.

Theft was reported at 25th and Comanche streets.

Found property was reported at the PD.

Telephone harassment was reported in the 1600 block of North Sumner.

Criminal mischief was reported in the 200 block of North Nelson.

Disorderly conduct-language was reported in the 500 block of North Powell.

Disorderly conduct was reported in the 1100 block of South Varnon Drive, the 1300 block of North Starkweather and the 300 block of South Miami.

Domestic disturbances were reported in the 300 block of North Warren and the 2600 block of North Rosewood Lane.

A prowler was reported in the 1400 block of West Somerville.

Grain prices

The following grain quotations are provided by Attebury Grain of White Deer for the close of the last open market day.

Wheat	5.29
Milo	5.40
Corn	7.18

Senator seeks end to straight-ticket

AUSTIN (AP)— A San Antonio state senator wants to revive efforts to eliminate the straight-ticket voting option, even after Texans hit a 10-year high in the percentage of ballots sticking entirely with one party.

Republican Sen. Jeff Wentworth plans a second run at deleting the straight-ticket option during the legislative session that starts Jan. 13. His repeal proposal didn't advance in 2007.

"Both political parties need to stop being quite so partisan," Wentworth said in Sunday's editions of the Austin American-Statesman.

Texas Democratic Party spokesman Hector Nieto said straight-ticket voting was "a good thing for both parties" and accused Republicans of trying to disrupt the inroads Democrats have made in urban counties, notably Harris and Dallas counties.

"It's clear Republicans have seen Democrats organizing in a better manner and using straight-ticket voting to our advantage," Nieto said. "Instead of competing, they just want to do away with it."

Wentworth said his proposal had nothing to do with giving either party an advantage. Rather, he said, Texas needs to join the majority of U.S. states in not allowing straight-ticket voting. Nationally, 16 states offer the option. Five states have repealed it since 1994.

The straight-ticket option has been mentioned in Texas law since 1911.

If a voter wants to favor every Republican or Democrat on a ballot, "that's fine with me," Wentworth said.

"I'm not trying to tell them how to vote," he said. "I'm just saying they ought to be more informed by seeing the name."

Wentworth acknowledged that his interest in the issue goes back three decades when he was running for Bexar County Commissioners Court. Despite working for support from black voters, he said he didn't draw much. He found out later that some who voted a straight ticket said they would have voted for him had they seen his name.

The state GOP had no comment on Wentworth's proposal. Patrick Dixon, chairman of the Libertarian Party of Texas, said his party supports removing the straight-ticket choice.

"It's not a monumental issue," Dixon said. "But the sense is when a lot of people vote, they check the party and don't go down the ballot and look at the candidates. We think people should value the candidates more than the party."

Straight-ticket voting represented nearly 58 percent of votes cast in Texas in November, according to Austin Community College's Center for Public Policy and Political Studies. Voters going straight Republican outnumbered those on the Democratic side by 1.3 percent. That was the GOP's smallest straight-ticket edge since 1998, the center said.

Fire fatalities at homeless shelter

PARIS, Texas (AP) — The fire chief in Northeast Texas town of Paris says more than one person was killed at a fire at a homeless shelter.

Fire Chief Ronnie Grooms confirmed the fatalities to The Associated Press in the fire early Monday morning, but he would not say how many. He said that they got the alarm at about 3 a.m. He said the shelter is run by a nonprofit faith-based

organization. The Paris News reports that the American Red Cross has moved about 26 people to an emergency shelter at the First United Methodist Church of Paris.

A firewall confined damage to the southern part of the building, a brick structure near downtown that was formerly a business.

Grooms says no cause has been determined.

Paris is about 100 miles northeast of Dallas.



Lesley Chester with her horse Socks. staff photo by David Bowser

Teen

Continued from Page 1

"They're separate from the high school rodeos," Mrs. Chester said.

Each state has a fall and spring season with the top eight state finalists going to the state finals. The top four from the state finals go to the national finals in Gallup, N.M., in August.

Lesley competes in barrel racing, pole bending, goat roping, breakaway roping, and ribbon roping.

Last year, Lesley went to the state finals in Gonzales, but in the second go round, hit a barrel.

"That knocked her out," Mrs. Chester said.

Right now, Lesley is leading region one in the state race in barrel racing and pole bending. She's fourth in goat roping, fifth in breakaway roping and ribbon roping.

More importantly, Lesley is second in the all-around contest.

Lesley has only been riding for a little over four years.

Her best friend is Socks, a 10-year-old mare that Lesley rides in competition.

"Now and forever," Lesley said as Socks nuzzled her.

The family bought Socks five years ago, but Lesley wouldn't ride her for a year. Then one day, Lesley came home from school, saddled up and took off.

"She got off the school bus," her mother said, "and decided to ride."

Since then, Lesley's won five saddles and 20 belt buckles.

"She's doing well," Mrs. Chester said.

Lesley was the Panhandle Barrel Racing Association's All Around Cowgirl in 2007 and 2008.

In addition to being active in various riding and rodeo groups, Lesley plays eighth grade basketball at White Deer and is a cheerleader. She also runs track and is on the cross-country team.

Speaker

Continued from Page 1

throng of reporters to get into the restaurant.

Republican Rep. Leo Berman, of Tyler, said the caucus members were not deterred by Straus' hefty list of supporters. He said they would start calling them to bring them to their side. Berman said he wasn't worried that they were already pledged to Straus because he said they had previously been pledged to Craddick.

He said Straus didn't stand for Republican values.

Craddick has been a lightning rod of controversy in Austin. He famously faced down a rebellion at the end of the 2007 session after replacing his rules advisers and claiming "absolute" authority to brush aside challenges to his rule.

When first elected in 1968, Craddick became one of only eight Republicans in the 150-member chamber. The longest-serving member of the Legislature, Craddick's adept fundraising skills helped the Republicans win an 88-62 majority in the House in 2003. It was the first time the GOP led the chamber in more than 130 years. His grateful colleagues promptly chose

Craddick, an oilfield mud salesman, to be their leader. Ai and Texas' first Republican speaker since 1871.

Since the GOP glory days of 2003, the party's majority has shriveled to the narrow 76-74 lead.

In his first term, Craddick quickly pushed through a conservative agenda of congressional redistricting and lawsuit limitations.

"Speaker Tom Craddick has served with distinction in the Texas House for four decades," Straus said. "I have great respect for him personally, and honor his service to the state."

Craddick's tenure has been marked by complaints from Republicans and Democrats that he rules the chamber like a dictator and forces lawmakers to bend to his will.

Straus served in the presidential administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.

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Hispanic radio pioneer dies

HARLINGEN, Texas (AP) — McHenry Taylor Tichenor Sr., who helped develop the Hispanic radio industry in the United States, has died at the age of 76.

Tichenor died Saturday in Round Rock of natural causes. His family owned Tichenor Media Systems, which merged in 1997 with Heftel Broadcasting to create what was then the nation's largest Hispanic radio group with 38 stations spanning every major Hispanic market in the U.S.

Tichenor worked in sales at TMS and later managed the company's Spanish radio and CBS television station, both with the KGBT call letters. He became president of the company in 1967 and led company expansion.

He was survived by long-time companion Priscilla Flores, five children and numerous grandchildren.

Graveside services are set for Wednesday in San Benito.

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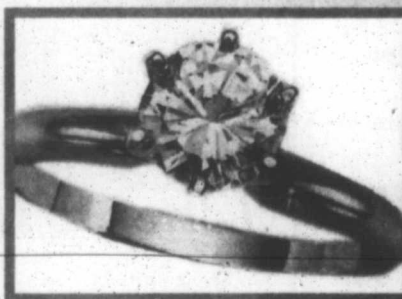
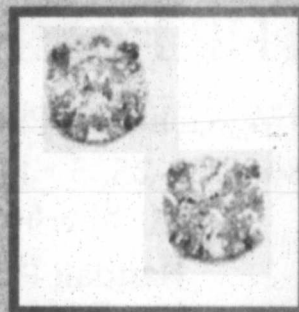
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Viewpoints

Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Jan. 5, the fifth day of 2009. There are 360 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:
On Jan. 5, 1896, an Austrian newspaper, Wiener Presse, reported the discovery by German physicist Wilhelm Roentgen of a type of radiation that came to be known as "X-rays."

On this date:
In 1781, a British naval expedition led by Benedict Arnold burned Richmond, Va.

In 1809, the Treaty of the Dardanelles, which ended the Anglo-Turkish War, was concluded by the United Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire.

In 1925, Nellie T. Ross became governor of Wyoming; she was the first female governor in U.S. history. (She succeeded Frank E. Lucas, who had served as acting governor following the death of Ross' husband, William B. Ross.)

'The most certain sign of being born with great qualities is to be born without envy.'

— Francois de La Rochefoucauld, French author

In 1933, the 30th president of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, died in Northampton, Mass., at age 60.

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In 1949, in his State of the Union address, President Harry S. Truman labeled his administration the Fair Deal.

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed assistance to countries to help them resist Communist aggression; this became known as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

In 1970, Joseph A. Yablonski, an unsuccessful candidate for the presidency of the United Mine Workers of America, was found murdered with his wife and daughter at their Clarksville, Pa., home. UMW President Anthony Boyle and three others were convicted of the killings.

In 1994, Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, died in Boston at age 81.

In 1998, Sonny Bono, the 1960's pop star-turned-politician, was killed when he struck a tree while skiing in South Lake Tahoe, Calif.; he was 62.

Five years ago: NASA released a 3-D, black-and-white panoramic picture of the bleak surface of Mars snapped by the newly landed rover Spirit. Baseball pitcher Tug McGraw died near Nashville, Tenn., at age 59.

Today's Birthdays: Former Vice President Walter F. Mondale is 81. Actor Robert Duvall is 78. Football Hall-of-Fame coach Chuck Noll is 77. King Juan Carlos of Spain is 71. Talk show host Charlie Rose is 67. Actress-director Diane Keaton is 63. Actor Ted Lange is 61. Rhythm-and-blues musician George "Funky" Brown (Kool and the Gang) is 60. Rock musician Chris Stein (Blondie) is 59. Actress Pamela Sue Martin is 56. Actor Clancy Brown is 50. Singer Iris Dement is 48. Actor Ricky Paull Goldin is 44. Actor Vinnie Jones is 44. Rock musician Kate Schellenbach (Luscious Jackson) is 43. Actress Heather Paige Kent is 40. Rock singer Marilyn Manson is 40. Actress January Jones is 31. Actress Brooklyn Sudano is 28.

Other editors say

Daily News, New York, on Israeli raids on Gaza:

There is terrible guilt to be ascribed in Israeli raids on Gaza, and it falls squarely and solely on the shoulders of the death-to-Israel fanatics of Hamas.

It was rocket-firing, suicide-bombing Hamas that broke a six-month-long truce by raining missiles down on southern Israel, necessitating a stern, and remarkably precise, military response.

The predictable cries of outrage across the Arab world notwithstanding, two of the most interested parties in that axis, Egypt and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, took the remarkable step of pinning blame for the Palestinian lives that have been lost and the Palestinian blood that has been shed on the terror gang that rules Gaza.

With the death toll standing at approximately 300, Hamas forces transformed themselves in front of television cameras from defiant fighters into supposed victims of supposed Israeli excess.

It was the same old story line, the one about brutal, brutal Israel, and it just doesn't wash. Israel's actions were, in fact, quite measured.

There is no doubt civilians are among the dead or wounded. And there is guilt for that carnage.

It belongs to Hamas, which has woven terrorism into the very fabric of life in the Gaza Strip, placing mortar-firing militants side by side with children and exposing them to the risk of harm by a country forced to defend its own people.

Pensacola News Journal, Pensacola, Florida, on President Bush's role in the transition to a new administration:

It has been widely reported and noted by commentators, but it bears repeating: President George Bush is presiding over one of the smoothest administrative transitions in U.S. history.

And not by accident. By all accounts Bush is determined to smooth the way for the incoming administration as much as possible.

It is Bush's finest hour since his initial display of leadership immediately after 9-11, when the nation was still in shock and he delivered the best speech of his presidency.

And it's not just symbolic. Bush's handling of the proposed auto bailout is an example.

After Congress rejected the bailout proposal, Bush authorized a stopgap measure: He dipped into previously authorized funds for just enough money to keep the Big Three auto companies alive until next year; but not as much as they wanted, or as had been proposed in Congress.

Why? Bush noted that while ultimately the right decision might be to let the auto companies fail, "I feel an obligation to my successor. I've thought about what it would be like for me to become president during this period. ... I believe that good policy is not to dump him a major catastrophe in his first day of office."

Yes, Bush has like presidents before him proposed a blizzard of last-minute rules changes to satisfy his

corporate and ideological supporters, many of which the Obama administration will reverse.

But otherwise, Bush is acting presidential in his final days in office.

Chicago Sun-Times, on Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich's Senate choice:

The people of Illinois didn't need another reason to throw Gov. Blagojevich out of office.

They had plenty already. But on Tuesday, the governor gave the state one more excellent reason, this time by going back on his word and appointing a replacement to fill President-elect Barack Obama's Senate seat.

By doing so, Blagojevich stole from the voters the chance to select their own senator through a special election.

And whom did the governor choose? Just another Illinois politician, Roland Burris, the former attorney general whose political career is notable only for its lack of notable achievements.

We don't know why Blagojevich chose Burris, who as Illinois comptroller was the first African American elected to statewide office.

But this is not about race, though Rush is right about the appalling absence of African Americans in the Senate.

This is about a politically and ethically bankrupt governor making a decision that should have been turned over to the voters.

We don't know what will happen next.

While Senate Democratic leaders have vowed to refuse Burris his

seat, they may not have constitutional authority to do so.

All we can predict with confidence is that the entire matter will wind up in court.

Every day that Rod Blagojevich remains governor is another bad day for the state.

Fort Worth Star Telegram, Fort Worth, Texas, on the saga of Bernard Madoff:

Investors ranging from wealthy individuals to charities were once mad about Wall Street money manager Bernard Madoff, mad as in crazy about the guy, because of the stellar investment returns he produced for them.

Those investors continue to be mad about Madoff, but it's now a far different mad, as in angry and resentful.

As astonished Americans learn of the enormous damage wrought by the \$50 billion Ponzi scheme that prosecutors say was perpetrated by Madoff, timeless aphorisms come to mind. They might be cliches, but that doesn't make them any less worthy in terms of lessons learned and relearned.

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Investors enticed by the lure of exceptional double-digit returns year after year from Madoff's firm ignored this adage at their peril.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Some investors and long-standing charitable and humanitarian organizations entrusted virtually all their money to Madoff, rather than spreading the risk.

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Letter to the editor

Dear editor,
Whilst waiting in line to wash my auto this past Saturday afternoon, I couldn't help but notice, as the strong southwest wind was bending the trees, an inordinate amount of trash ablating northward up Hobart Street. Let me restate - In another city, the amount of trash ablating would be inordinate. In Pampa, it's quite the norm... I was four deep in the line to wash my car, and as time went by, so did alot of trash, including an obviously sated white plastic bag full of - trash...

Await with window down, I felt the sudden cold blast from the latest cold front's north wind; which, in turn, was equally as strong as the southwest wind it replaced. It was

amazing folks, all the trash ablating northward up Hobart, was now ablating southward, down Hobart! Still awaiting my turn, I then noticed - the sated white plastic bag of trash, also atumble southward...

Without a doubt, Pampa has been in the throes of a litter crisis of Biblical proportion for much to long a period of time. It is time folks, for those of you qualifying as a litterer, to stop the nonsense and use the appropriate container. It is time, Pampa business'es, to mandate that your employee's properly dispense your waste by crushing boxes and insuring that your dumpster lids are always closed. It is time, City of Pampa, to enforce the anti-litter laws on your books, as well as those

mandated by the state.

When litter is no longer a problem in Pampa, I will cease to honor the city's current flag - the white plastic bag hooked and aflap in the highest possi-

ble branches of my elm tree, and will once again honor Pampa's lawful flag - If we have one?

Dennis Palmitier
Pampa

We welcome your letters

To insure publication, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Letters should be brief and to the point. All correspondence will be edited for length and clarity.
- All letters must be signed. Submit your name, address and telephone number with the letter for verification. Only your name and city will be published.
- Defamatory comments will not be published.
- E-mail submissions are welcome.

Comics

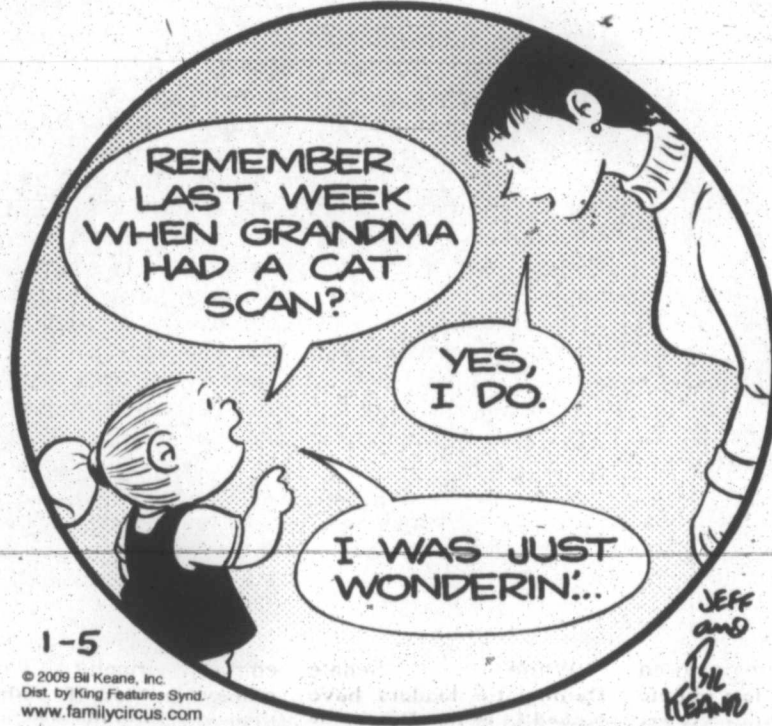
Marmaduke



"I suppose if I was a dog, I'd wonder, too, why we bring it in for a few weeks, then take it out."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



"... for little kids do they have kitten scans?"

Daily Crossword Puzzle

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 41 Sailors, in

1 "Memory" slang

musical

5 Musical

9 Kid's book feature

10 Frenzied primates

12 Singer fear

13 Like gymnasts

14 Stand-up stuff

16 Like '60s fashion

17 Wallet bills

18 Recently

21 Leather shade

22 Wall paintings

11 Surrender

23 Used oars

24 "Scram!"

26 Spinning toy

29 Year parts

30 Short skirt

31 Quarterback

Manning

32 Lead

34 Painter

Degas

37 Licorice-like herb

38 Musical pace

39 Ranch beast

40 Velocity

DOWN

1 Sun halo

2 Early

3 Melodies

4 Went fast

5 Place for a mud bath

6 Humorist

7 "20 Questions" category

8 Airline employees

9 Embroidered loop

15 "Dream on!"

19 Worry

20 Young fellow

22 Butterfly's cousin

23 Scoundrel

24 More brassy

25 Puffy

26 Neater

27 Burdens

28 Pan, for one

29 Track competition

30 Devilfish

33 Sunup site

35 Fitting

36 Surgeon eggs

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Saturday's answer

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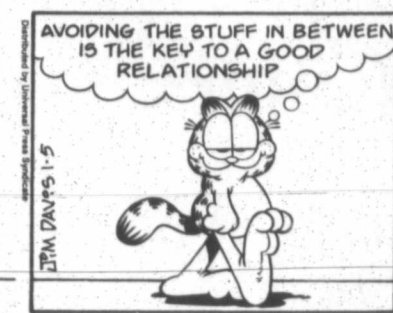
For Better Or Worse



Zits



Garfield



Beetle Bailey



Marvin



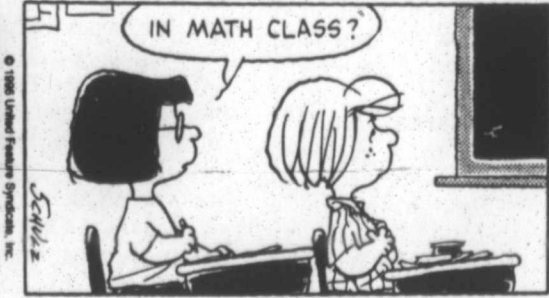
B.C.



Haggar The Horrible



Peanuts



Blondie



Flo & Friends



More schools getting in tune with mariachi

DALLAS (AP) — Jose Perez often butted heads with his grandfather, who emigrated from Mexico years ago and feared his American-born grandson didn't appreciate the sacrifices his family made. Then the teenager started playing the music of the elder's homeland.

Perez, 14, took a mariachi music class at his Fort Worth high school, and gained a cultural connection to his grandfather as he learned how to strum the five-stringed vihuela (pronounced vee-way-la).

"He used to always yell at me because I didn't want to do my chores," Jose said. "But as soon as I got into mariachi, I guess we developed a better relationship."

Mariachi not only gave Perez closer ties with his family, it gave the North Side High School freshman one more reason to stay in school.

With soaring dropout rates among Hispanic students, mariachi education programs, long popular in parts of South Texas and California, are springing up in schools across the country to help keep the nation's largest and fastest-growing ethnic group academically engaged.

"You don't have to worry about your kids joining gangs, we provide the gang," said William Gradante, a master mariachi teacher and chairman of the National Association for Music Education's Mariachi Advisory Committee.

Daniel Sheehy, director and curator of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings in Washington, D.C., said hundreds of public schools have mariachi education programs. They're striking a hopeful chord in some unlikely places, from Washington state and Idaho

to Illinois, Virginia and the Carolinas, often wherever there's an influx of Mexican immigrants.

Aside from encouraging Hispanic students, mariachi is bringing parents into schools who might have been too intimidated to visit before. School concerts are often packed with parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles who know all the old songs and are often heard singing along.

When their children come home donning traditional mariachi garb and asking their advice on proper pronunciation of Spanish songs, the music becomes "a kind of cultural glue or family glue in some cases," Sheehy said.

"Families come from Mexico and don't speak English and two generations later their kids don't speak Spanish," he said. "Mariachi is kind of a bridge."

Mariachi is an alternative to traditional band, orchestra or choir for students who already love the music or seek exposure to something new. Ensembles typically include a couple of trumpets, a guitar, violins and ethnic instruments: two vihuelas (resembling little guitars) and a guitarron, the big-bellied bass.

"It's really a very high art form that requires virtuosity playing," said Alan Lambert, mariachi director for the Grand Prairie School District, near Dallas.

Lambert, who launched the mariachi program in his district two years ago, said most people in America have not been exposed to the music's serious side. He shadowed a mariachi group in Guadalajara last summer where musicians played some of the best violins in the world: a Stradivarius and a Guarnerius.

EARLY MORNING ANTICS



Horses play in the cold, early morning air just north of Pampa.

staff photo by David Bowser

The Southwest hosts many mariachi festivals and "the level of musicianship is incredibly high," said Donna Emmanuel, a music education professor at the University of North Texas who teaches the history of mariachi to teens at a mariachi summer camp.

In Texas, where 500,000 students participate in music classes, mariachi ensembles are competing for the first time this year for bragging rights through the University Interscholastic League.

Although some see the sanctioned statewide competition as further proof of mariachi's acceptance, others say it comes at a cost.

Traditionally, mariachi stems from an aural tradition, passed down from

musician to musician because little was written and improvisation played a role. Some purists worry that the budding standardization in the classroom will kill the celebratory, spontaneous nature of the music, in the way that jazz has become more academic.

Others point to the more pressing challenges these programs face as they spread.

Beyond the expense of instruments and uniforms, there is a shortage of degreed music instructors with a strong understanding or appreciation of mariachi music, experts say. There's also a dearth of sheet music and mariachi method books, though some scholars are scrambling to fill that void.

"It's very popular," said Marcia M. Neel, a music educator who helped start Clark County School District's mariachi program in Las Vegas in 2001. It has grown to include more than 2,000 students.

Greg Chavez, a sophomore at Sam Houston High School in Arlington, Texas, began playing the guitarron last year. His parents played mariachi music, but he said he never paid attention until he got older.

"I really love the music," said Chavez, a 15-year-old first-generation Mexican-American. "I just wanted to try something different and traditional to Mexico."

"Some kids, they're like 'What? Mariachi? Why do you play that?'" he said. "Well, it's fun to play."

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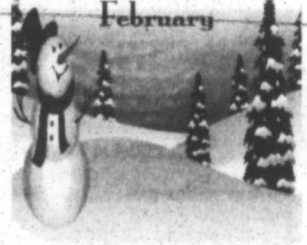
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