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TODAY IN SPORTS



Wednesday, June 6, 2012 www.thepampanews.com Volume 108 • No. 52

75¢ PHS graduation photos Seniors we'll miss, part 2
 \$1.50 weekend More from Saturday's commencement | p8A Glover: More PHS graduate athletes we wish well | p1B

Relay for Life preparations right on schedule

Survivors and Caretakers Dinner set for June 18; scholarships to be announced

MOLLIE BRYANT
 mbryant@thepampanews.com

Preparations for this year's Relay for Life, scheduled for June 22 at Recreation Park, are steaming full speed ahead.

"On Monday, June 18 at 6:30 p.m. at Briarwood Church is our Survivors and Caretakers Dinner, sponsored by Altrusa," said Christy Robinson of Relay for Life. "We're announcing our scholarships at that time. Two different (busi-

nesses) donated scholarships. They'll come from H&M Leasing and Top O' Texas Ice. We'll also have two from Clarendon College. The scholarships do not come out of Gray County Relay for Life Funds. This is the first time we've done this, and we've already had people asking about next year."

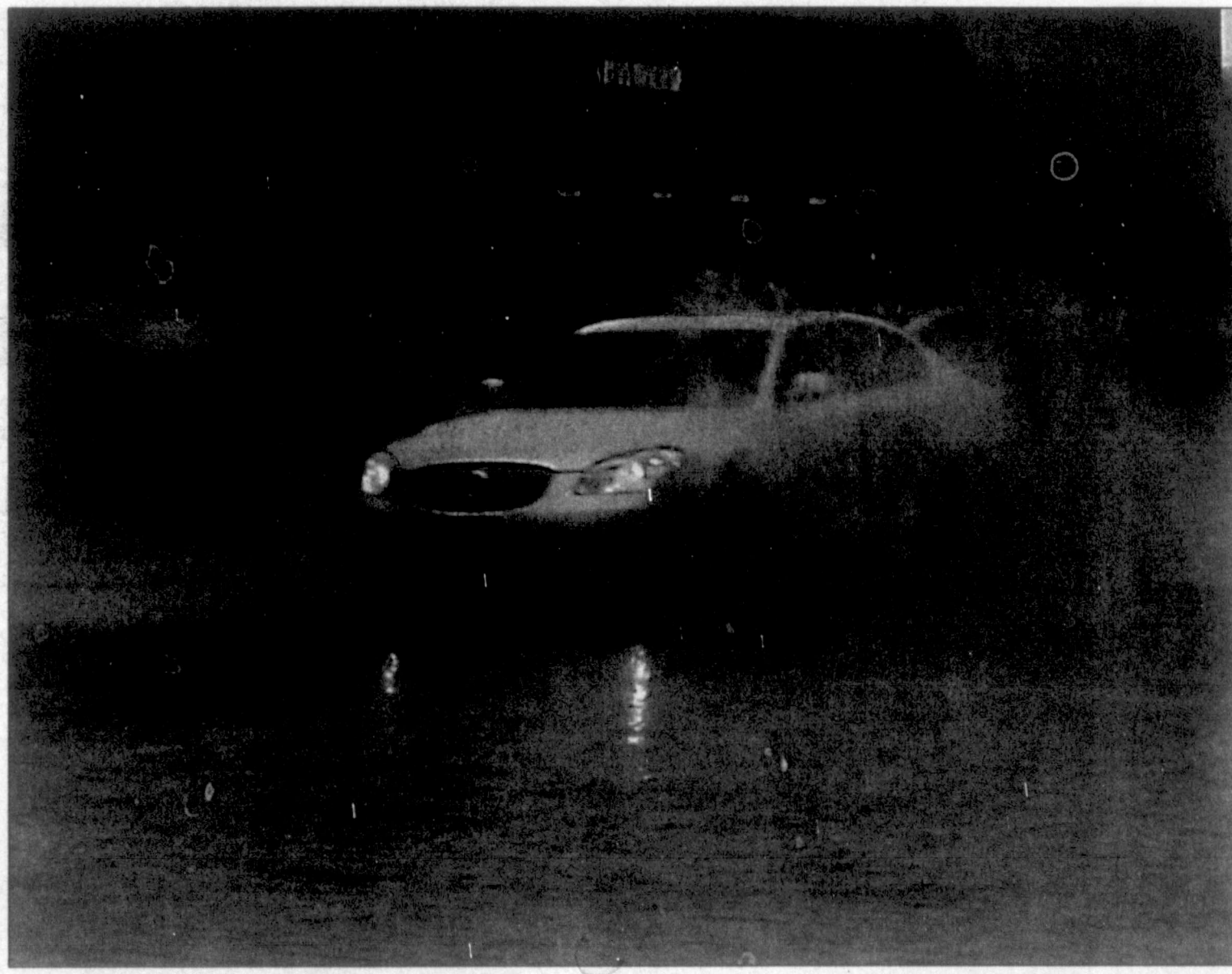
Robinson said Ashtin Sackett, the Relay for Life Hero of Hope, will attend the dinner, where all survivors and caretakers are welcome to attend. Sackett,

a senior this last year at Pampa High School, was diagnosed last fall with stage three osteosarcoma, a type of bone cancer that most commonly affects adolescents.

The dinner will lead up to the relay on June 22 at Recreation Park.

"We've had gobs of participation and underwriting with new sponsors," said Robinson. "We have about 18 teams, and all of them have been having fundraising events."

SPLASH AND DASH



staff photo by **Arnie Aurellano**

The dips of downtown Pampa's roads were makeshift ponds as Tuesday afternoon's skies opened up for a spat of short storms. Hopefully, local drivers were traveling with their boating permits.

DPS pushing commercial inspections

MOLLIE BRYANT
 mbryant@thepampanews.com

The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) are currently pushing commercial vehicle inspections during a statewide enforcement effort ending tomorrow. The inspections take place as an effort to promote motor carrier, vehicle, driver and cargo safety.

DPS troopers will focus on 18-wheelers and buses, trying to pinpoint those with equipment violations or drivers not in compliance with state and federal regulations. Inspections will examine brakes, tires, lights and loading standards, while troopers will look into driver licenses and log books, which document a driver's time on the road. DPS will also keep their eyes peeled for aggressive passenger vehicle drivers, which are the main cause of commercial vehicle crashes.

"Operating commercial vehicles across multiple states, you're dealing with vehicles weighing 8,000 pounds or more," said Trooper Daniel Hawthorne of DPS Public Affairs Office. "It's important to check and make sure they're properly equipped and their equipment is properly maintained to keep the citizens of Texas and our guests here safe."

During last year's program, DPS and **DPS** cont. on page 5A

Automotive scholarships at the heart of Burnin' the Bricks

Donations, sponsor money from event go towards education for local youth

ARNIE AURELLANO
 editor@thepampanews.com

It's the cars, of course, that are the main attraction at Pampa's yearly Burnin' the Bricks, but there's much more to the event than motor oil and burnout smoke.

At its heart is a generosity fueled by a group of old gearheads who want to pass their passion along to a new generation.

"Back in the 60s and 70s when we grew up, your car was your identity," said Randy Stubblefield of the High Plains Cruisers, organizers of the annual Burnin'

the Bricks festivities. "If you had a new fancy car, that was great. If you had an old car that you were hands-on and worked on yourself, made it shiny and made it fast, that's even better. Anyone can go buy a fast, shiny car, but to go build one was something else. When we see kids do that today like we did back then, whether it's a screamer or whether it's any kind of car that they're proud of, we're proud of them."

That's in part why the group started Burnin' the Bricks in the first place, according to Stubblefield.

"Our event is based on two precepts," Stubblefield

said. "Number one, to bring a quality event to the citizens of Pampa by bringing in all these cars. ... It gives young kids a chance to see what the old muscle cars looked like, how we've evolved from the Model A to the new Dodge Vipers. It's important for us to bring that and educate the kids in that manner."

"That ties in to the second part a little. We want to help these kids get a head start and carry on the tradition of working on these old cars, carrying on the hands-on schooling that some kids are better-suited to than the book schooling."

Financial contributions from Burnin' the Bricks fund the Cruisers' yearly scholarships, given to local high school kids who are looking to pursue educations in the automotive field. Four Pampa High School students were the recipients of this year's awards: Sam Cain, Trevor Smith, Ty Linder and Jaden Howard.

SCHOLARSHIPS cont. on page 5A



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PAMPA FORECAST

Today Thursday Friday



High 84
Low 62



High 81
Low 64



High 89
Low 66

Today: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly sunny, with a high near 84. South southeast wind between 5 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Tonight: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 62. South southeast wind between 10 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Thursday: Partly sunny, with a high near 81. South wind between 5 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Thursday Night: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 64. South southeast wind between 15 and 20 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Friday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 89. South wind between 10 and 20 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Friday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 66. South wind around 20 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.

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

6-6 CRYPTOQUOTE

Y Z U J R M Z R J N Z P N J R U

F P F Z V R U U N J H Z V Q

— V S U H Z U N Z U .

— H Z V R U S V G N A M G N Z B B

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: A SUCCESSFUL MAN IS ONE WHO MAKES MORE MONEY THAN HIS WIFE CAN SPEND. A SUCCESSFUL WOMAN IS ONE WHO CAN FIND SUCH A MAN. — LANA TURNER

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403 W. Atchison • Pampa, TX 79065
806-669-2525 • Fax: 806-669-2520

ReDonn Woods
Publisher
rwoods@thepampanews.com

Bernie Frazier Advertising Representative bfrazier@thepampanews.com	Arnie Aurellano Editor editor@thepampanews.com
Dana Whinery Advertising Representative dwhinery@thepampanews.com	Mollie Bryant Reporter mbryant@thepampanews.com
Beverly Taylor Classified Advertising classified@thepampanews.com	Andrew Glover Reporter aglover@thepampanews.com
Marijane Kent Composing composing@thepampanews.com	Holley Bimson Composing composing2@thepampanews.com
Carrie Hair Accounting bookkeeper@thepampanews.com	Marcus Elkins Press Supervisor press@thepampanews.com
Tabitha Sharp Subscription Manager tsharp@thepampanews.com	Chico Ramirez Circulation Manager Circulation2@thepampanews.com

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For the record

Police Department

The Pampa Police Department reported the following incidents for the 72 hour period ending Monday, June 4 at 7 a.m.

Pampa PD reported 24 traffic-related incidents.

Pampa EMS, the Pampa Fire Department, the Lefors Volunteer EMS and the Lefors Volunteer Fire Department responded to 19 medical calls.

Animal Control agents and the Pampa PD reported 16 animal-related incidents.

Friday, June 1

A suspicious person was reported at the 900 block of North Hobart.

An accident occurred at the 100 block of West 30th.

A theft occurred at the 2800 block of North Charles.

Fraud was reported at the 2100 block of North Wells.

An accident occurred at Harvester and Duncan.

A hit and run occurred at the 1200 block of North Hobart.

An accident occurred at Frederic and Barnes.

Criminal mischief occurred at the 500 block of North Hobart.

Endangerment of a child or elderly person was reported at the 1200 block of North Hobart.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 400 block of North Nelson.

Domestic disturbances occurred at the 900 block of East Francis and the 300 block of North Dwight.

Fraud was reported.

An accident occurred at 23rd and Hobart.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 500 block of

East Foster.

A suspicious person was reported at the 2500 block of North Perryton.

A burglary occurred at the 1100 block of South Hobart.

A domestic disturbance occurred at the 1000 block of South Farley.

A suspicious vehicle was reported at the 2500 block of Perryton.

Saturday, June 2

A suspicious person was reported at the 500 block of East Francis.

A grass fire occurred at Highway 2375 and County Road 13

A hit and run occurred at the 900 block of Terry.

A grass fire occurred at the 8200 block of FM 2300.

Criminal mischief occurred at the 2400 block of North Dogwood.

A theft occurred at the 400 block of North Nelson.

Identity theft occurred at the 1700 block of North Hobart.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 1100 block of Juniper.

A theft occurred at the 2100 block of North Wells.

An assault occurred at the 1300 block of West 22nd.

A suspicious vehicle was reported at the 2500 block of North Perryton.

Criminal mischief was reported.

A domestic disturbance occurred at the 1200 block of North Duncan.

An accident occurred at the 1200 block of North Hobart.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 500 block of East Foster.

A theft occurred at the 1500 block of Coffee.

Disorderly conduct occurred at Beryl and Jean.

Criminal mischief occurred at the 500 block of North Cuyler.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 1400 block of

West Harvester.

A domestic disturbance occurred at the 700 block of East Mora.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 1100 block of South Nelson.

A suspicious vehicle was reported at the 2500 block of North Perryton.

A suspicious person was reported at the 1700 block of North Hobart.

An accident occurred at the 2800 block of Perryton.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 1500 block of North Hamilton.

A domestic disturbance occurred at the 900 block of South Faulkner.

Sunday, June 3

A suspicious person was reported at Craven and Finley.

A suspicious vehicle was reported at the 100 block of South Starkweather.

A theft was reported.

A suspicious vehicle was reported at the 2300 block of North Primrose.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 1700 block of North Coffee and the 300 block of South Anne.

A theft occurred at the 400 block of East Brown.

A theft was reported.

A domestic disturbance occurred at the 200 block of South Miami.

Domestic disturbances occurred at the 100 block of West Albert and the 200 block of South Sumner.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 200 block of South Sumner.

An accident occurred at 21st and Banks.

Harassment was reported at the 500 block of South Barnes.

A domestic disturbance occurred at the 1300 block of North Coffee.

A suspicious person was reported at the 2200 block of North Charles.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 1100 block of North Seneca, the 1000 block of North Hobart and the 100 block of East Harvester.

A suspicious vehicle was reported at Crawford and Barnes.

Monday, June 4

Phone harassment was reported.

Disorderly conduct occurred at the 1300 block of North Coffee.

A suspicious person was reported at the 700 block of East Frederic.

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MORNINGRUSH

Texas lawmakers review biz tax

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas businesses think the state's tax system is mediocre at best and downright disastrous at worst.

Business owners and lobbyists on Tuesday shared their views with the House Ways and Means Committee on how to improve the way the state taxes businesses.

The Texas margins tax, also known as the franchise tax, levies a tax based on company's revenue, after some exclusions. Big capital-intensive businesses say the current tax is barely acceptable, while service industries complain the system is unfair to them.

Since the Texas Constitution bans income taxes, that means some companies that lose money have to pay taxes anyway.

Democratic lawmakers complain that the business tax consistently underperforms. Republicans have promised to improve the system. The Legislature meets again in January, when they will likely amend the tax.

Texan arrested for drugs

SIKESTON, Mo. (AP) — A Texas man is in custody after authorities allegedly found 300 pounds of marijuana in his car following a traffic stop on Interstate 55 in southeast Missouri.

The Sikeston Standard Democrat reports that 42-year-old Michael McHale of Austin, Texas, was stopped by a Missouri State Highway Patrol trooper on Saturday for following too closely and a window tint violation.

The patrol says a drug-sniffing dog led authorities to 12 bundles of marijuana in the trunk and behind a passenger door.

McHale is jailed without bond. He does not yet have a listed attorney.

Bail sought after conviction tossed

LINDEN (AP) — Prosecutors are seeking bail of at least \$500,000 for a Northeast Texas woman whose capital murder conviction in the beating death of her 13-year-old adopted son was overturned by an appeals court last month.

Cass County District Attorney Clint Allen says in a court filing the seriousness of the charge warrants substantial bail. An attorney for Cynthia Hudson says she has no criminal history and complied with bond conditions before her first trial.

Prosecutors allege that Samuel Hudson was beaten and starved before his death in 2008.

Cynthia Hudson was sentenced to life without parole in 2010. An appeals court ruled the jury should have had a manslaughter option.

The Texarkana Gazette reports that Allen plans a retrial if the state's highest criminal appeals court doesn't side with him.

Judge considers delaying meeting

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A federal judge is considering a motion filed by a group of Chesapeake Energy Corp. shareholders who want to delay the company's annual shareholders' meeting.

U.S. District Judge Vicki Miles-LaGrange heard oral arguments Tuesday but did not issue a ruling. She did not indicate when she'd make a decision. The meeting is set for Friday.

A group of shareholders wants to postpone the meeting until the company releases more information about CEO Aubrey McClendon's compensation as well as loans he secured against his stake in company wells.

The motion says information released by the company needs to be corrected so it is complete and not misleading.

Chesapeake has argued in court filings that the meeting shouldn't be postponed and that shareholders have plenty of information about McClendon's loans.

Donor saves Tulsa teacher jobs

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — The superintendent of Tulsa Public Schools says an anonymous donation of \$600,000 will save 15 teacher jobs that were recently eliminated because of a decrease in federal funding.

Superintendent Keith Ballard says an additional 16 or 17 jobs will be saved by keeping vacant administrative positions open.

The Tulsa World reports that 75 positions had been eliminated because of the end of federal Jobs Bill funding.

Supporters of Eliot Elementary School raised \$42,000 to save the job of one science teacher. Ballard says it's admirable the community stepped up — but that the Legislature should be funding the public schools, not donors.

About 45 jobs are still at risk, and the district says it's searching for funding.

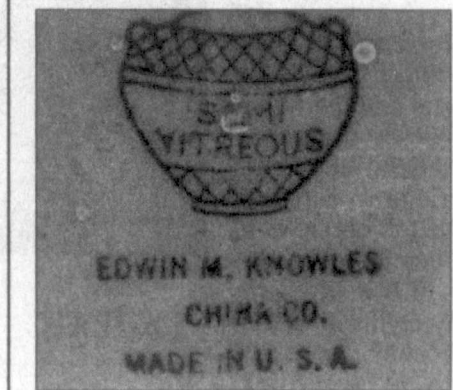
Children's dishes are an amazing legacy

Q: This is a photo of a set of child's dishes that were my mother's. She was born in 1928, and the set was given to her when she was a child. The bowl's nest and the lid also can be used as a trivet, and the cookie jar has a woven handle. They are all marked "Japan" and in excellent condition. She also had a set of lusterware doll dishes that she played with. I found a matching set of her lusterware dishes in a museum, but I haven't found anything similar to these.

If you know of any background or history and could give me an idea of the value of this set, it would be greatly appreciated.

A: Your set of children's dishes is unusual and very collectible. The cookie jar is most often referred to as a biscuit barrel. Without a manufacturer's mark on the dishes, it can be impossible to identify the name of the factory where they were made. Knowing your mother played with these dishes, it is amazing they are in such good condition.

The value of your set would probably be \$75 to \$125.



Edwin M. Knowles China Co. was founded in 1900.

Q: I have enclosed a photo of the

Antique OR JUNQUE?



Unusual children's dishes were made in Japan.

mark that is on a set of dishes that I have. There are 16 dinner plates, 15 salad plates, 16 soup bowls, eight cups, 13 saucers, two sugar bowls with covers, two creamers, and one teapot. Each dish is decorated with multi-colored flowers in the center and gold filigree design on the border. They are all in very good condition.

I believe the numbers on the mark "45-11" mean the dishes were produced in November 1945. I would like to know more information on the Knowles Co. and the approximate value of my dishes.

A: Edwin M. Knowles China Co. was founded in 1900 by Edwin Knowles in Chester, W.V. In 1913, they added another plant in Newell, W.V. Semi-vitreous is a type of

porcelain and is also called semi-porcelain. Knowles produced dinnerware, toilet ware and utilitarian ware. Dinnerware decorated with floral and filigree borders was popular in the 1930s and 1940s. Not all patterns were documented, making identifying the pattern names sometimes impossible. Because there are pieces missing, you have a service for 8. You are correct; the mark "45-11" shows the dishes were made in November 1945.

Your dishes would probably be worth \$150 to \$250.

Address your questions to Anne McCollam, P. O. Box 247, Notre Dame, IN 46556. Items of a general interest will be answered in this column. Due to the volume of inquiries, she cannot answer individual letters.

State agencies told to propose cutbacks

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — State agencies were told Tuesday to find ways to shave costs by another 10 percent for the next budget cycle, despite growing tax revenues that have raised hopes of restoring freshly slashed public services and jobs across Texas.

The governor's office and the nonpartisan Legislative Budget Board asked agencies in a letter to hit the same reduction target as the one prior to last year's legislative session, when Republicans pushed through about \$11 billion in budget cuts they said were necessary belt-tightening in tough times.

Each agency is now being asked to submit a cost-cutting proposal to the board, which keeps track of how much money lawmakers have to spend. The board will assess the plans and make recommendations, but lawmakers will ultimately

decide what cuts, if any, will be made when they reconvene in January.

Revenue projections for the state are rosier than when lawmakers drafted the current two-year budget. In February, Legislative Budget Board director Jim O'Brien told lawmakers the state raised \$1.6 billion more in revenues because of the improving economy.

However, Gov. Rick Perry and other state Republican leaders on Tuesday stressed the need for fiscal discipline.

"I know that there are programs that aren't funded to levels that people would like to see funded. I don't argue that," Perry said at a luncheon at San Antonio. "But I've been given a responsibility to be a leader ... to not put this state in a position of this precarious condition."

The request wasn't a

surprise following similar requests in past years. Texas Forest Service spokeswoman Linda Moon, whose agency fought one of the most destructive wildfire seasons on record last year, said the agency has its marching orders and will begin mapping out a budget that prioritizes protecting families.

The 10 percent request is a starting point. Agency directors were told not to submit budgets with a higher price tag than their current budgets, which are

already leaner than in years past for many agencies. Though some of the state's costliest programs have permission to request more money, including funds for Medicaid entitlements, foster care and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

"While our revenue growth has been healthy this year, we must plan conservatively, which is why we have asked agencies to

CUTS cont. on page 5A

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Viewpoints

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, June 6, the 158th day of 2012. There are 208 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 6, 1944, during World War II, Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy, France, on "D-Day," beginning the liberation of German-occupied western Europe.

On this date:

In 1799, American politician and orator Patrick Henry died at Red Hill Plantation in Virginia.

In 1844, the Young Men's Christian Association was founded in London.

In 1862, the (first) Battle of Memphis took place during the Civil War as Union naval forces annihilated a Confederate fleet and captured the Tennessee city.

In 1912, the greatest volcanic eruption of the 20th century took place as Novarupta in Alaska began a series of explosive episodes over a 60-hour period.

In 1925, Walter Percy Chrysler founded the Chrysler Corp.

In 1932, the Senate approved, and President Herbert Hoover signed, a Revenue Act containing the first federal gasoline tax, which was one cent per gallon.

In 1933, the first drive-in movie theater was opened by Richard Hollingshead in Camden County, N.J. (The movie shown was "Wives Beware," starring Adolphe Menjou.)

In 1934, the Securities and Exchange Commission was established.

In 1966, black activist James Meredith was shot and wounded as he walked along a Mississippi highway to encourage black voter registration.

In 1978, California voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 13, a primary ballot initiative calling for major cuts in property taxes.

In 1982, Israeli forces invaded Lebanon to drive Paestine Liberation Organization fighters out of the country. (The Israelis withdrew in June 1985.)

In 1985, authorities in Brazil exhumed a body later identified as the remains of Dr. Josef Mengele, the notorious "Angel of Death" of the Nazi Holocaust.

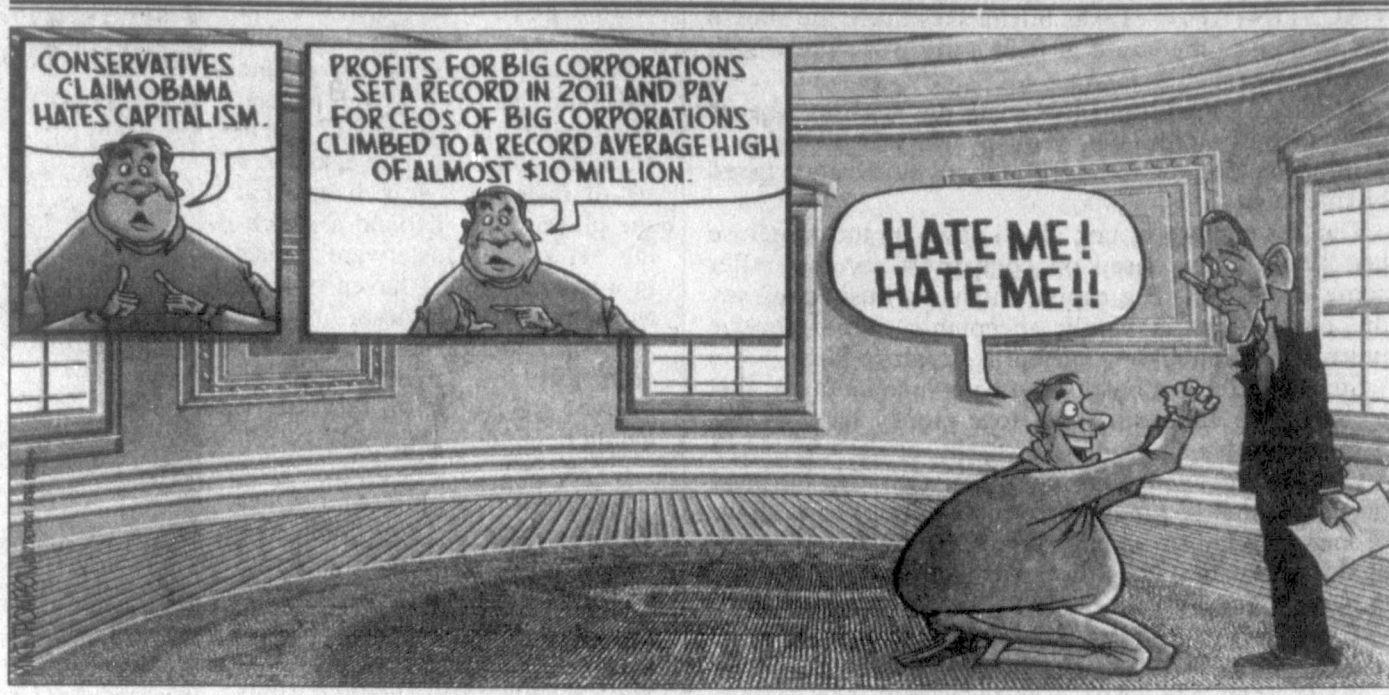
Ten years ago: Stung by intelligence failures, President George W. Bush called on Congress in a nationally broadcast address to remake the government with a terrorist-fighting Department of Homeland Security. Israeli troops stormed Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's headquarters in response to a Palestinian suicide attack on a bus that killed 17 Israelis.

Five years ago: The Group of Eight summit opened in Heiligendamm, Germany. Police arrested a suspect in the abduction and death of 18-year-old Kelsey Smith, whose body was found in a Missouri park four days after she'd disappeared from a Kansas store's parking lot. (Edwin R. Hall later pleaded guilty to capital murder and was sentenced to life in prison.) Police in Connecticut looking for clues in the yearlong disappearance of a 15-year-old Bloomfield girl found her locked in a hidden room in a West Hartford home owned by an acquaintance of her parents. (Adam Gault later pleaded guilty to kidnapping and sexual assault.) The Anaheim Ducks captured the Stanley Cup with a 6-2 victory over the Ottawa Senators in Game 5. Bob Barker taped his last episode of CBS' "The Price Is Right."

One year ago: After days of denials, New York Democratic Rep. Anthony Weiner confessed that he had tweeted a photo of his bulging underpants to a woman and admitted to "inappropriate" exchanges with six women before and after getting married; Weiner apologized for lying but said he would not resign (which he ended up doing). Former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, popular among social conservatives, plunged into the 2012 Republican presidential sweepstakes. (Santorum suspended his campaign in April 2012.) The Bowl Championship Series stripped Southern California of its 2004 title after the Trojans were hit with heavy NCAA sanctions for rules violations committed during the 2004 and '05 seasons.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Billie Whitelaw is 80. Civil rights activist Roy Innis is 78. Singer-songwriter Gary "U.S." Bonds is 73. Country singer Joe Stampley is 69. Actor Robert Englund is 65. Folk singer Holly Near is 63. Singer Dwight Twilley is 61. Playwright-actor Harvey Fierstein (FY'-ur-steen) is 60. Comedian Sandra Bernhard is 57. International Tennis Hall of Famer Bjorn Borg is 56. Actress Amanda Pays is 53. Comedian Colin Quinn is 53. Record producer Jimmy Jam is 53. Rock musician Steve Vai is 52. Rock singer-musician Tom Araya (Slayer) is 51. Actor Jason Isaacs is 49. Rock musician Sean Yseult (White Zombie) is 46. Actor Max Casella is 45. Actor Paul Giamatti is 45. Rhythm-and-blues singer Damion Hall (Guy) is 44. Rock musician Bardi Martin is 43. Rock musician James "Munky" Shaffer (Korn) is 42. TV correspondent Natalie Morales is 40. Country singer Lisa Brokop is 39. Rapper-rocker Uncle Kracker is 38. Actress Sonya Walger is 38. Actress Staci Keanan is 37. Actress Amber Borycki is 29.

Thought for Today: "A great man is one who leaves others at a loss after he is gone." — Paul Valery, French poet and essayist (1871-1945).



Gay marriage headed to the Supremes

One way or another, the issue of gay marriage seems squarely headed to the Supreme Court. Two federal appellate court decisions, one in Massachusetts and the other in California, have set the stage for challenges to federal and state laws limiting marriage to a union between a man and a woman. But the bigger news is that a confrontation in the court, which many civil libertarians and gay rights activists originally feared would come too soon, now seems to be proceeding at just the right pace.



SUSAN ESTRICH

The politics of gay marriage have changed, and that cannot help but affect the legal battle. Courts can only get so far ahead of the public, and in this case, they aren't nearly as far ahead as they would have been a few years ago.

In the Massachusetts case, which challenged the federal Defense of Marriage Act's prohibition of benefits to married same-sex couples, the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit held that the federal law unconstitutionally interfered with the autonomy of states, in this case Massachusetts, to define marriage.

Now, for anyone who followed the recent arguments on Obamacare, you may remember that it was conservatives who were pushing the argument that the federal government couldn't tell states what to do about health care. In the gay marriage case, by contrast, the state is using the same argument to support the liberal position that the federal government can't tell them which marriages can be recognized.

In theory, federalism has always been a double-edged sword, usually wielded based on political

considerations. But in recent years, at least, it has been the conservative justices who have used federalism to strike down federal laws limiting state autonomy. Certainly that was the thrust of the argument

you heard on Obamacare from the four-man bloc led by Justice Scalia. So what do conservatives do now that the table has turned? Stand by their usual dedication to state autonomy, or rule that it doesn't matter when it's same-sex marriage at issue?

In the California case, the state Supreme Court originally held that same-sex couples were entitled to marry under the California Constitution. The Prop 8 initiative, passed by the voters, overruled that decision. With real concern and indeed some opposition from the gay community afraid of teeing up the issue for defeat, a coalition brought suit in federal court claiming that Prop 8, in revoking the right to marry, was itself unconstitutional.

The district court so held; the Ninth Circuit panel, by a vote of 2 to 1, upheld that decision, and the court as a whole, over four dissents, ruled on Tuesday that it would not rehear the case before a panel of 11 judges, known as en banc review. That means the next step, which the losing side has vowed to take, is to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Now, the Supreme Court can always decide not to hear cases,

even those that technically are appeals as of right. Neither case raises the unadorned question of whether the Constitution requires that states grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples: The Massachusetts case is about the autonomy of a state that chose to do so; the California case raises the issue of whether a state, having granted the right, violates the Constitution when it takes it away. Even so, reversal in either would be a major blow for the proponents of same-sex marriage; affirmation, a major triumph. The betting is that one or both of these cases will end up in the Supreme Court -- and with a decent, maybe very decent, chance of winning.

How things have changed. The gay marriage issue today is in a different place from where it was a few short years ago. The sky didn't fall in Massachusetts. It isn't falling in New York -- or Connecticut or New Hampshire or Vermont. The president himself has endorsed it, which is something no national candidate would do even in 2008. And while the polls can be read both ways, no one thinks Obama stands to lose ground by his support.

Perhaps more to the point, it seems clear which way the wind is blowing. Sooner or later, and probably sooner than anyone would have dared predict, same-sex marriage will be accepted for what it is: a matter of personal choice that is really no one's business beyond the two people involved.

Susan Estrich is a lawyer, professor, author, political operative, feminist advocate, and political commentator for Fox News.

Letter to the Editor

Shame on you, whoever you are

No morals!
What kind of lowdown, sneaky, sink thieving skunk would steal a footlocker with gifts for soldiers?
I spent a long time finding the "right" gifts. Thirty-five millimeter manual

cameras (2X2) and put film (with 36) in each one. I had small recorders for playback, filled with the sound of the surf, rainstorms, just gentle rain and crickets chirping, any choice.

What hurt the most was the huge U.S. flag that I had Phil Gramm fly over the U.S. Capitol for the veterans and servicemen on Valentine's Day 2002. That makes me furious! It had already served one purpose. Next,

was going to Arlington Cemetery to be flown for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Whoever you are that took this, I don't have to worry about vengeance. God will get you, and it's interesting how He fits the punishment to the crime. It will come back to get you.

Jequita Risley
Pampa



We welcome your letters

To ensure 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.
- The views and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of *The Pampa News* or its staff.

Board calls for modern Texas Ethics Commission

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas Ethics Commission too often focuses on minor infractions and unduly stigmatizes politicians for unintentional mistakes, a legislative advisory board said in a report Tuesday.

The members of the Sunset Advisory Commission found that the current complaint system and rules are too often used to damage the reputation of a political opponent.

"Almost any error is a potential violation, and filers found to be in violation of disclosure laws in even minor ways may be stigmatized as ethics violators," the commission's report said. "This stigma can mislead the public as to a person's character, be devastating to political careers, and provide incentives to misuse the agency's complaint process for political purposes."

The review also found that the commission's technology was outdated and the filing system antiquated. The advisory board recommended allowing the ethics commission to charge a filing fee to candidates, elected officials and political committees to raise money to improve the system.

The Sunset Advisory Commission is made up of state representatives and senators and regularly reviews state agencies to recommend improvements.

The Texas Ethics Commission was set up to bring more transparency to politics by requiring politicians, lobbyists and top state officials to file personal financial disclosures and to report how campaign money is raised and spent. The commission keeps all of the information and makes it available to the public. Texas has no limits on political spending, and the

reports are the only real method of monitoring donations to politicians.

Government watchdog groups complained that the reforms recommended by the advisory commission did not go far enough.

"Lobby disclosures and gift and travel reforms have reined in some unethical behavior," said Laurie Vanhoose of Common Cause of Texas. "But the Ethics Commission has never been effective; its appointees are too close to the people they are supposed to watch. It's no surprise that in 20 years, they have never taken any meaningful enforcement steps against their friends."

While the Ethics Commission has the power to investigate violations of the disclosure rules independently, all of the cases so far have originated with public complaints that someone did not follow the filing rules. The investigation and final judgment of those complaints is supervised by the eight commissioners who oversee the agency, and in most cases the offender is required to refile their paperwork or pay a fine.

The sunset board suggested separating investigations from judgments.

"The agency's full commission is involved in both developing proposed enforcement actions and sitting as final judge to take final action on sworn complaints. This process could bias commissioners as to the outcome of a complaint since they actually were involved in its investigation," the board's report said.

Lawmakers will consider the Sunset Advisory Commission's recommendations when the Legislature meets again in January.

Lawyer gave judge money 'as friend'

BROWNSVILLE (AP) — At the very start of the first trial stemming from a broad federal investigation of judicial corruption in South Texas it became clear that the focus will be on the crooked judge who was the probe's original target as much as on the lawyer facing the jury.

Testimony Tuesday illustrated how the federal corruption probe that began more than four years ago with former state district Judge Abel C. Limas has expanded. Limas was widely known among lawyers to be in financial trouble. He showed himself willing to cross ethical lines by engaging in inappropriate private conversations with lawyers who had cases before his court and cross bright, bold legal lines by soliciting money from some.

But as Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Wynne reminded jurors, Limas was not on trial, Port Isabel lawyer Ray Marchan is.

The federal investigation has swept up a dozen people, half of them lawyers, since someone tipped the FBI in late 2007. For most of 2008, investigators were listening in on Limas' cellular and home phones, intercepting some 40,000 calls.

But even in Wynne's opening remarks, Limas' name arose repeatedly, as it would throughout the day. The former judge, who is expected to be a star prosecution witness, has pleaded guilty to racketeering and awaits sentencing.

Marchan faces seven counts, including racketeering and conspiracy, and is accused of paying Limas bribes totaling more than \$11,000 in 2008.

"There's enough that was intercepted to give you a very good idea of what Mr. Limas and other attorneys were doing in abusing the court system

and paying for official action," Wynne told jurors.

Marchan paid Limas twice in 2008 in order to be appointed as ad litem attorney in civil cases, according to the indictment. The third payment, also that year, was a case in which Marchan paid Limas \$5,000 to deny an opposing attorney's motion for \$21,000 in sanctions against Marchan.

Wynne said the government has audio recordings and photographs of Limas coming to Marchan's office to pick up the bribes.

But Noe Garza, Marchan's lawyer, attacked Limas' credibility as a witness before he had even entered the courtroom. He said Limas was carrying more than \$400,000 in debt after his last election campaign, his wife and kids were involved in illegal activity and to keep them out of prison, Limas began telling investigators what they wanted to hear in 17 separate interviews with the FBI.

"I will not stand here and deny that Mr. Marchan did give (Limas) money," Garza said, adding that Marchan gave his long-time friend money to help with his debts.

Marchan was doing the same thing as Brownsville attorney Charles Willette, the prosecution's first witness, Garza said.

Prosecutors and defense lawyers played several conversations between Limas and Willette. The retired lawyer, who said he had known Limas since the judge was a rookie police officer in Brownsville in the 1970s, had multiple chats with the judge while representing an insurance company that was part of a civil lawsuit before his court.

Limas appointed Marchan to represent a child in that case, and Marchan was paid \$12,000 — an amount agreed to by both sides and approved

by Limas — for that service. Prosecutors claim Marchan then kicked back some of that money to Limas.

The recorded conversations covered court matters as well as more banal, and at times bawdy, topics. In one, Limas tells Willette that he heard Marchan was heading into bankruptcy again and really needed money. Willette said the recordings were "troubling, embarrassing" and admitted that such private conversations between judge and an attorney for only one side were inappropriate.

Willette, who retired this year after 37 years practicing law, has not been charged with a crime.

Under cross-examination Garza pressed Willette about his friendship with Limas and Limas' father, his private conversations with the judge and several hundred dollars he loaned the judge while Willette's case was before him. Willette said Limas asked for the money to pay for one of his children's school books. He asked if that should be considered bribery.

"Abel sounded like he was in dire need of the help, and I felt compelled to help as a friend of the family," Willette said.

"I didn't do it to bribe him," Willette said. "He asked for help and I helped him."

Garza said Marchan was doing the same.

Other lawyers snared in the investigation include, Jose Santiago "Jim" Solis, a former state legislator who pleaded guilty to an extortion charge and awaits sentencing, and Cameron County District Attorney Armando Villalobos, who faces twelve counts of corruption-related charges and just lost his bid for the Democratic nomination to a new congressional seat last week.

Cuts

hold the line on spending," Republican House Speaker Joe Straus said.

Cost-cutting by the Legislature last year led to a \$4 billion reduction in public education spending to help balance the budget. The fight over education funding defined the 2011 session, setting off packed teacher protests at the Capitol and triggering a special session.

Higher education coffers also took a hit, at the same time Perry called for campuses to make tuition more

affordable. Democratic state Rep. Mike Villareal said a leaner budget can't do that with more and more students enrolling in colleges.

"The reality is that educating our growing number of college students isn't free," Villareal said. "Saying you oppose tuition increases while quietly cutting funding for college students is disingenuous."

Bills are already piling up for the state even before the budget proposals are submitted. The Medicaid shortfall is more than \$4.1 billion,

and the state must also come up with \$183 million to cover the cost of last year's wildfires and \$60 million for child care costs.

A supplemental budget bill will cover those costs when the Legislature meets in January.

The state's Rainy Day Fund is expected to have \$7.3 billion by October, but Perry on Tuesday reiterated his longtime stance that the fund needs to remain stocked as an emergency piggybank for disasters such as hurricanes.

cont. from page 3A

Scholarships

cont. from page 1A

The group started giving out a \$2,500 scholarship nine years ago and was soon able to add a second annual scholarship in the same amount; for the first time ever this year, two \$2,500 and two \$1,000 scholarships were handed out.

To date, the club has awarded \$50,000 in scholarships to area students.

"What we were seeing is that kids are graduating from high school and not everybody's suited for a four-year (academic) college," Stubblefield said. "A lot of kids, they go through hands-on training in auto mechanics class and industrial mechanics-type work in school. When they get out, sometimes they want to go on into diesel mechanics or industrial arts or something like that. Tying this in with our cars and the fact that we want to continue kids learning to work on the old cars and new cars, we decided to start giving out these scholarships and give kids a boost to go to these high dollar trade schools."

It's the least they can do, Stubblefield added, to help cultivate the love of cars — and the perseverance, ingenuity and dedication that goes along with it — in the youth of today.

"It's just something that we want to pass on," Stubblefield said. "I've got three cars that are pretty well finished, and I have three or four that's in the project stage. We want to be able to have these kids look at a finished car and say, 'Man, that's great,' and look at a project car and say, 'I think I can turn that into this car over here.' We want to pass on that passion, that interest that we know and we have. ... It makes us proud to see a kid that takes a car and he just works and polishes, to know that these kids still have the interest."

At least one recipient of a High Plains Cruisers scholarship has taken that education and put it right back to good use in his hometown, said Stubblefield.


"(One of the kids) we gave a scholarship to two years ago, he went off to school, and he's back now at Fenton Motor Company as a diesel mechanic. By helping him, we've allowed him to fulfill his dream and come back home and put it to use, and we're tickled to death to be able to do that," Stubblefield said.

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DPS

cont. from page 1A

Texas law enforcement agencies inspected almost 8,000 commercial vehicles, discovering about 27 percent of them with serious violations. About 200 drivers also were taken out of service for violations that included driving under the influence and improper documentation of driving hours.



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Worship

Too many 17ers, not enough 18ers

If hard pressed to narrow my favorite Bible verses down to 5, one would certainly be Daniel 3:16-18: "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If the God we serve is able to deliver us, then he will deliver us from the blazing furnace and from Your Majesty's hand. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, "Your threat means nothing to us. If you throw us in the fire, the God we serve can rescue us from your roaring furnace and anything else you might cook up, O king. But even if he doesn't, it wouldn't make a bit of difference, O king. We still wouldn't serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."

For at least a couple of generations now, Christians have found themselves living in a Christendom that has been ravaged by the prosperity gospel; aka the health/wealth gospel or word of faith. This teaching is not only a total perversion of what Jesus lived and taught, but of what his disciples (the apostles) also lived and taught.

On almost any given day radio stations, the internet and television stations can be found spewing some version of these perversions from early morning until late at night. No wonder so many Christians expect to have their earthly socks blessed off by the God who just can't wait to smother His kids in material blessings and wealth.

Much of this garbage dumping could be stopped if the average Christian would just read and study their Bible. It requires no scholarship to read the Gospels and see that Jesus was poor and that He was murdered. Not much earthly prosperity there, huh. What about the apostles? None of them were wealthy, having to be supported by churches and believers in order to spread the gospel. And each of them, with the exception of John, also died as a martyr. And what of the early church in the New Testament? What we find there is that the largest church was very poor, needing believers to sell their property just to help feed all of the



MIKE SUBLETT

the good word

poor church folks. And in Revelation when the 7 churches are inspected by Lord Jesus, He only finds 2 churches that He can give a double thumbs up to: Smyrna and Philadelphia. And both of them were small

churches and poor. So where is all of that prosperity?

So what is the answer? I believe that Daniel 3:17-18 can really help.

Today, our churches have way too many members who are almost completely focused on verse 17 and not even all of that verse, just a handpicked part of the passage: "he will deliver us". And that tunnel vision has been fed for years via the prosperity gospels. What happened to the other part of that verse: "If the God we serve is able to deliver us." They understood that God might not be able. Not that He wouldn't be strong enough, but that His will and His plan might not let Him deliver them. God might need to use their martyrdom for His purposes and His glory.

We see the clarity of their belief in verse 18: "But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." They understood that their commitment and dedication to God and their allegiance to Him were not connected in any way to their deliverance from the fire.

That's why I say: we have way too many 17ers in our churches and not enough 18ers. They sometimes resemble each other, but only 18ers turn the world upside down. Only 18ers are singing as the lions spring on them. Only 18ers are the real deal. Now don't get me wrong. 18ers believe in verse 17 too. 18ers look to God for deliverance and blessing. However, their faithfulness has nothing to do with when and if it comes. If it comes, PTL (Praise the Lord)! If it doesn't come, PTL! They are faithful to God regardless!

Mike Sublett is the pastor at HI-Land Christian Church.

CHURCH SPOTLIGHT

Zion Lutheran studying parables on Wednesdays

ANDREW GLOVER
aglover@thepampanews.com

Zion Lutheran Church is studying New Testament parables through the month of June at 7 p.m. on Wednesdays.

The study started on May 31. Rev. Michael Erickson said he had a good turnout.

"We had about nine to 10,"

Erickson said. "For the size of my congregation that's pretty good."

Erickson said the purpose is to understand parables better.

"Our purpose is to find out about the parables," Erickson said. "Learn what is a parable and interpret them for our lives today."

Zion Lutheran is located on the 1200 block of Duncan Street.

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GOD'S GOOD NEWS

It's tough, but leadership can be taught

I have had the privilege to be Senior Pastor for over 40 years in three wonderful churches, and to serve as President and Chancellor of Tennessee Temple University.

I was given an article written anonymously entitled, "It's Tough Being a Leader." In Romans 8:12 the Bible says, "he that leads, let him do so with diligence."

Maybe this information will help you:

Pastor, you know you're having a really bad day when you finally

remember the name of the person you promised to visit in the hospital— while reading the obituaries; you can't find the Book of Obadiah while leading a Bible study; your treasurer sends you a postcard from Geneva.

We all make mistakes, but in them we learn humility, grow in our experience, and learn to look to God for our strength.

David Boulter is a pastor at Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tenn.



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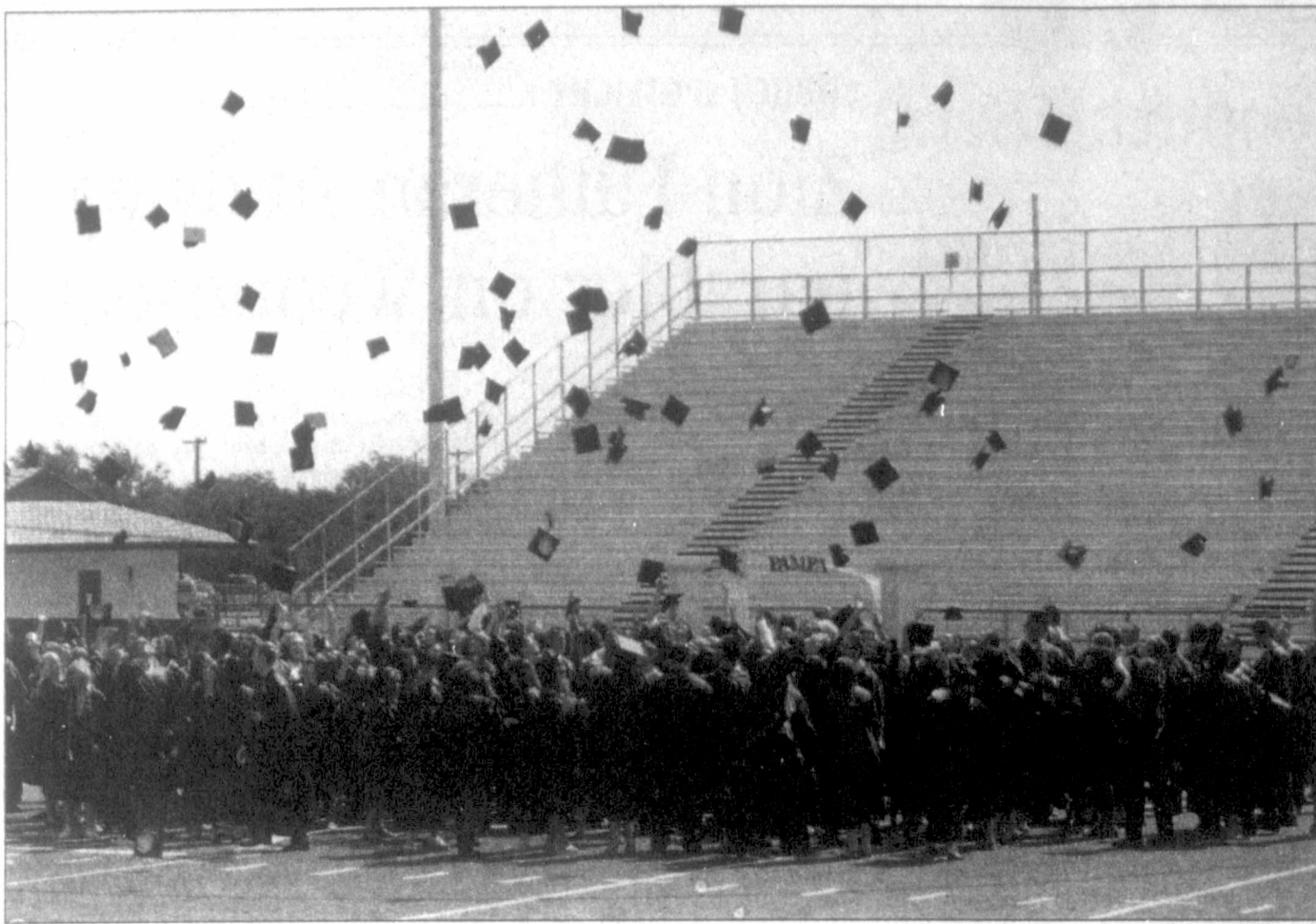


photo courtesy of Diane Jennings

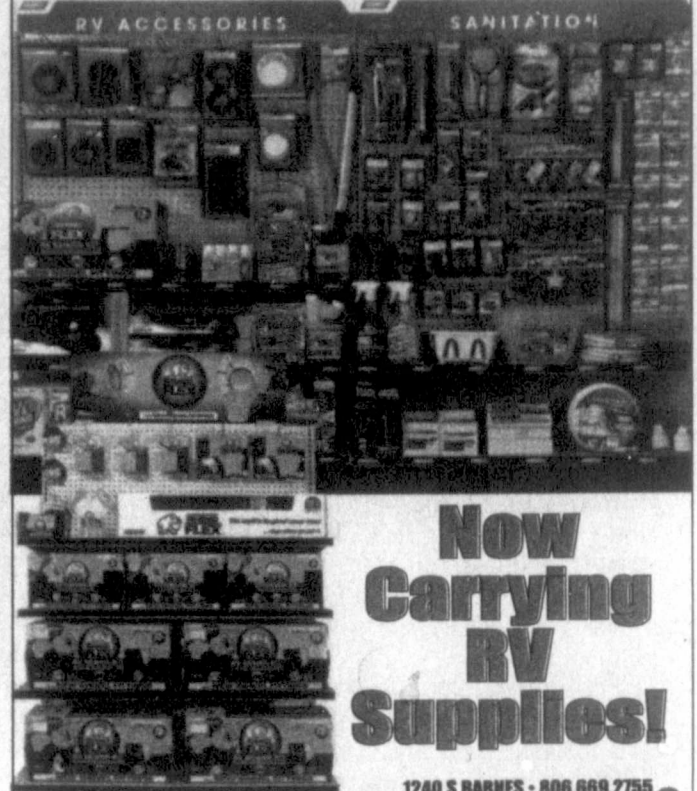
The Pampa High School Class of 2012 throws their mortarboards in the air in celebration after Saturday's commencement ceremony.



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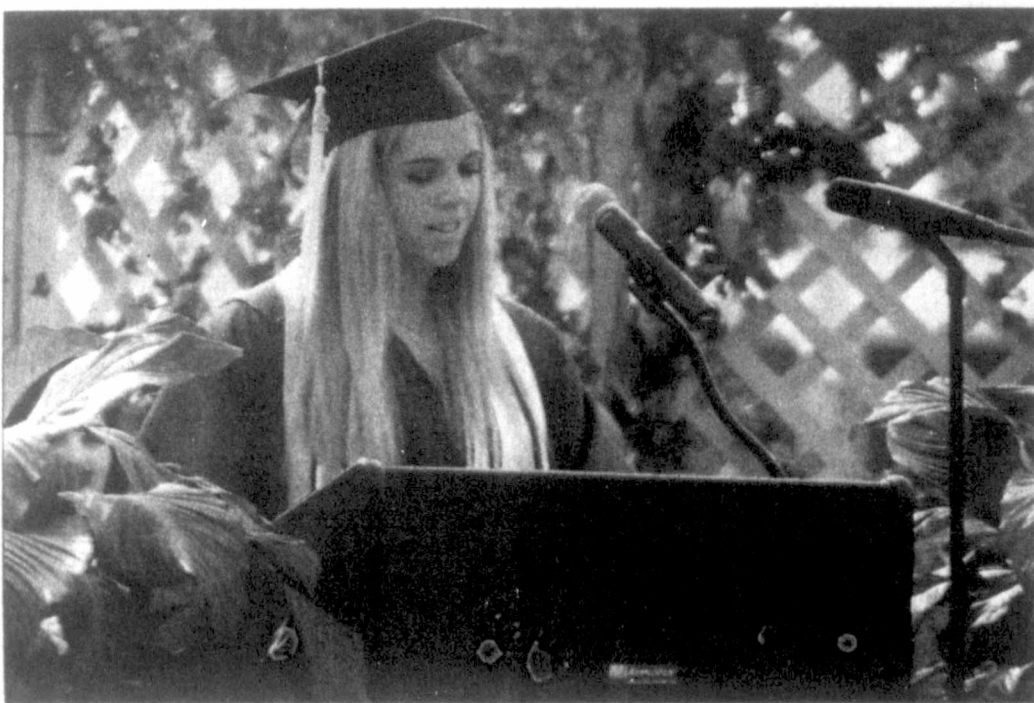
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staff photo by Mollie Bryant

Senior class president Heather Coffee shares a few words of wisdom with her classmates.



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Caylee Steward adjusts the tassel on fellow senior McKinlee Stokes' mortarboard.

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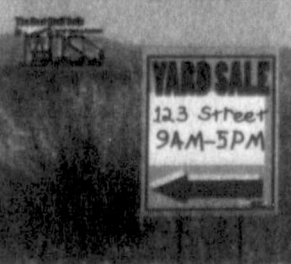
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Senior Harvester athletes we're going to miss, Part II

In my weekend column about seniors we will miss in 2012-13, I guess my brain was scattered, thinking about the NBA Playoffs and the Stanley Cup. I accidentally left off some deserving seniors and apologize for the omission.

In boys cross country, the Harvesters will miss Trent McAnear. The last time the boys had a state qualifier was in the 1990s. Who knows when the next qualifier will come.

The swim teams are going to miss Spencer Estes and Kendle Ramey. Estes was one of the fastest swimmers in the state in the backstroke. Ramey was one of the fastest swimmers in the 500-yard freestyle.

The golf teams will miss Logan Reagan and Lindsey Brown. Reagan made regionals two years in a row. Head coach Alan Segura admitted earlier in the season that he would be hard to replace. Brown was a great golfer and leader for the girls.

We will miss all the track seniors. Though I do think Pampa will return the same number of people to regionals next season, it may be in different events.

Last week, the National Football League decided to renew the Pro Bowl for 2013. Some of our readers are asking what that is, because they probably don't watch it.

For those who don't know the Pro Bowl is the All-Star competition between the American Football Conference and the National Football Conference played the week before the Super Bowl.

This may not be a pressing issue and those who haven't watched won't tune in. I think it's great that the NFL is keeping the game, but there is one problem, though. The league didn't make changes to the game that was booed at Aloha Stadium because of the low quality of play. At the end of the 2012-13 season, the NFL will be left with the same problem.

Before I dive into my proposals to change the game, let's explore what's wrong with the game. First the NFL has different rules for the Pro Bowl, one of them being no blitzing allowed. This gives the quarterback unlimited time to find an open receiver. With the "best-of-the-best" playing, they will find someone open. That's why we see both teams combining for over 100 points and a lower quality game. The NFL taking away blitzing is like the National Hockey League taking away checking or Major League baseball not allowing steals or breaking balls. I know the NFL did this to limit the possibility of injuries, but the fans want to see the game the way it was meant to be played. With the current Pro Bowl rules, the game



ANDREW GLOVER

might as well be a 30-minute flag football game as part of the Super Bowl festivities.

Next, we aren't getting the best stars. This is for several reasons. Before 2010 the Pro Bowl was played the week following the Super Bowl. The last three have been played the week before; as a result the players who are playing in the Super Bowl aren't able to play. In 2010, The Saints and Colts combined for 14 players. The Packers and Steelers combined for

13 the following year. The Patriots had seven and the Giants had two in last year's game. If you add in the players who didn't play because they were injured or chose not to play, you are going to have some positions with the sixth best player in the conference starting. Not having the best players reduces the intrigue and fan interest to the game.

There are several ways the NFL could improve the game. It could follow what MLB did and make the Pro Bowl "count." When baseball made that move in 2003, it made the All-Star game more than just an exhibition game and players and coaches played to win. Fans were more excited about the game, especially if they were fans of a contending team. The NFL could do this by making the winning league "win" the coin toss at the next Super Bowl. The Pro Bowl is coached by teams that lost in the second round of the playoffs. Odds are those coaches would be contenders next season. Just like baseball, it would give the teams incentive to give their effort.

Another possibility is moving the Pro Bowl to before the season and play it as the "Hall of Fame Game." I don't know any football fans that get pumped about watching the Hall of Fame preseason game. The only year I was excited about it was in 2002 during the Texans' inaugural season.

Yes, Canton, Ohio isn't as luxurious as Honolulu. Moving the game to the beginning of the season would eliminate most excuses players have for not participating. The All-Stars on the Super Bowl teams would be able to play. Most players would be recovered from injuries and are excited about playing football again. Having the Pro Bowl be the Hall of Fame Game would give every team an equal amount of preseason games.

Finally, the NFL could have fans vote for teams but not have a game. To me, that would be pointless,

because it would practically be another All-Pro team.

For my suggestions to work the NFL needs to allow the Pro Bowl to be played the 17-week regular season and the playoffs. This would put a much better game on the field. Also, players would only be allowed to receive bonuses if they played in the game or if injuries kept them out.

If the NFL doesn't make changes, then maybe the fans can force its hand. The NFL would get the message if the 2013 game is played in front of a half-filled Aloha Stadium.

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NBA PLAYOFFS

Thunder one win shy of Finals with momentum well in hand

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Down and nearly out less than a week ago, the Oklahoma City Thunder are riding a momentum shift to the brink of the NBA finals.

With three straight wins, the Thunder have changed the conversation from how anyone can stop the San Antonio Spurs' record-setting 20-game winning streak to how Oklahoma City needs just one win on its home court in Game 6 on Wednesday night to play for the NBA title.

Hundreds of fans waited in the middle

of the night for the Thunder's plane to land after Game 5, and thousands more will pack Chesapeake Energy Arena to cheer Oklahoma City on. Yet coach Scott Brooks urged Tuesday that riding the momentum isn't enough to get the job done.

"We have a great opportunity, we're on our home floor but that doesn't guarantee automatic victory," Brooks said during a day off at the team's practice facility. "They're not going to give us the game."

THUNDER cont. on page 4B

Glo-Valve Service downed Texas Rose Steakhouse 14-3 Friday in Pampa Optimist 11-12 Cal Ripken League action to set up a showdown with first place Cabot Corporation this week. Cabot's record is 5-0-1 in league play while Glo-Valve holds down second place at 4-2. The teams play Monday and Thursday at 5:45 p.m. at Optimist Park with Glo-Valve needing wins in both contests to nail down the league championship. Logan Martindale picked up his third win of the year limiting Texas Rose to four hits. He struck out seven and walked four. Chase Voss pitched a perfect inning of relief for Glo-Valve striking out one. Todd Fleetwood, Seth Langley and Chance Kerbo pitched for Texas Rose. Jace Ware led off the top of the first inning for Glo-Valve with a walk. He stole second, moved to third on a ground out and scored on an error. Voss struck out, raced to first when the ball got to the catcher and wound up at third on a throwing error. He scored on a single by Brayden Fry. Texas Rose came back to tie the score in the bottom of the first on singles by Braden Danner and Langley, a double steal and a double by Zerrick Arzen. Glo-Valve scored nine times in the top of the second on consecutive walks to Kade Parker, Brenden Courtney, Tyler Orand, Chris Gowin, Tyler McCarn and Ware, a single by Thomas Costley, a pair of errors and a single by Parker. Texas Rose got a run back in the bottom of the third on a double by Langley, a wild pitch and a ground out. In the top of the fourth, Ware led off with his third walk of the game, stole second and hustled home on a single by Costley. Costley was sacrificed to second by Martindale, took third on a single by Voss and came home when Parker struck out but all hands were safe when the ball got by the catcher. Voss was forced in with the final run of the game when Courtney was hit by a pitch. Costley, with two hits, two runs and two RBI, was the leading hitter for Glo-Valve. Arzen, with a single, a double and two runs was the leading offensive player for Texas Rose. Ware made the outstanding defensive play of the game for Glo-Valve by scurrying after a wild pitch and throwing out a runner trying to advance to third.

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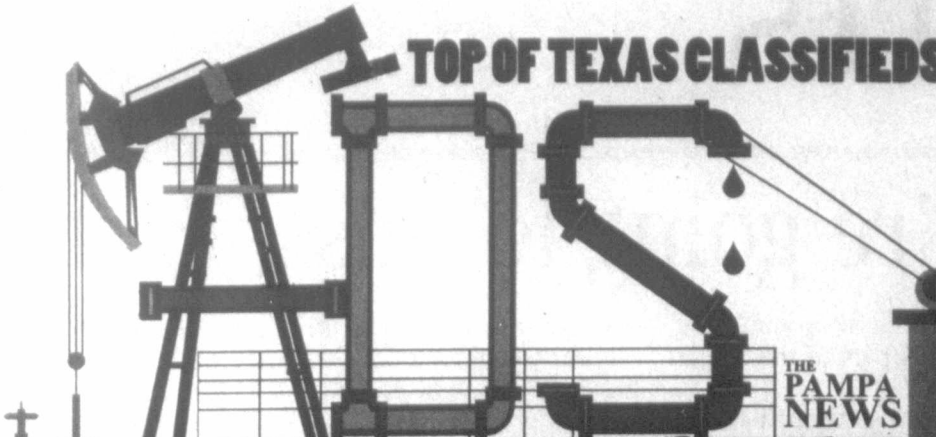
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Thunder

cont. from page 1B

They're not just going to say, 'We've lost three in a row, we're going to give in.' We know we have a tough challenge ahead."

Brooks stood near the same spot just a week earlier, surprised when a reporter told him that only 6 percent of NBA teams over the years had overcome an 0-2 deficit in a seven-game series. Now, his Thunder could become only the 15th team to pull off the feat — and the eighth since 2004.

"The percentages, you can't really feed into that because you know that there's always a chance," Brooks said. "There's 48 minutes to prove that you're the better team that night, and we have an opportunity tomorrow night to do that again."

A series of defensive adjustments by Brooks helped turn the series, with 6-foot-7 Thabo Sefolosha switching onto All-Star point guard Tony Parker in Game 3 the most visible change. The Spurs have been tinkering ever since to get back in the groove they'd been riding since mid-April but instead have lost three straight games for the first time all season.

Coach Gregg Popovich put sixth man Manu Ginobili in the starting lineup for Game 5, getting a playoff-best 34 points from the Argentine guard but disrupting the bench rotation in the process. He has also gotten DeJuan Blair back in the mix after benching the former starter for the first part of the playoffs.

"I think we have the right game plan," Spurs All-Star Tim Duncan said. "We just need to play a little better for a little longer."

After being blown out by 20 in Game 3, the Spurs have lost the last two by a combined nine points and now must find a way to snap Oklahoma City's seven-game home win streak.

"It's not that we have a Game 8 or 9 to recover, so it's either win or go home," Ginobili said. "So we have to. It's our job. So nobody is going to feel sorry about ourselves, we've just got to go compete. We know it's hard to beat them there, but it's what we have to do. We've got to step up and play the best game of the season."

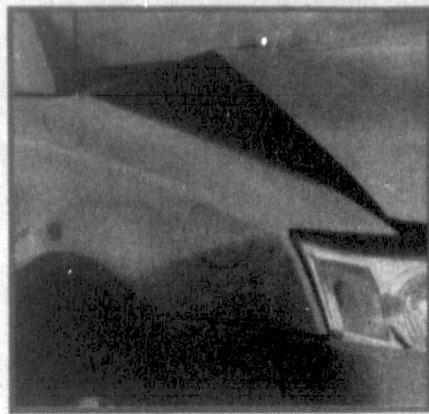
Ginobili downplayed the changes in Xs and Os and said it comes down to making a couple key plays at the right time. For instance, Oklahoma City's James Harden hit a clutch 3-pointer with the shot clock running down in the final 30 seconds of Game 5, and Ginobili missed a 3 that could have tied it with about 5 seconds left.

Switch those up, and the series looks different. "It is the first team to four wins, so there really isn't anything to celebrate or get happy about until you win the series," Thunder guard Derek Fisher said. "This team made it to the conference finals last year and I don't think anybody was happy with the final result, so who cares if we are up 3-2 now? If we don't finish our business, it does not mean anything and that has to be our mentality going into it."

After all, if momentum swung once in the series, it could again. The Spurs hadn't lost at home all postseason either — until Oklahoma City pulled off its win Monday night.

"We don't pound our chests, we don't tell everybody how good we are," Brooks said. "We feel that our worth is through our work, and if we continue to work hard and if we continue to play together, we're going to have some good results. The expectations always have been there for us."

But never has the reality been so close.



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