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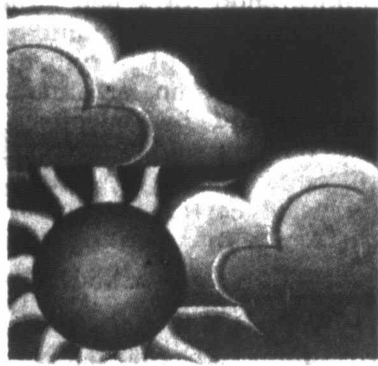
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# PAMPA NEWS

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Pampa, Texas

50¢ DAILY/SUNDAY \$1



Low tonight in low 20s, high tomorrow in low 50s. See Page 2 for weather details.

**PAMPA** — Government agencies have reported closings for the Christmas holidays.

All offices of Pampa City Hall except the police and fire departments will be closed today and Wednesday; they will reopen for regular services on Thursday. Lovett Memorial Library also is closed today and Wednesday.

Gray County offices will be closed today and Wednesday.

The Department of Human Services, Texas Workforce Commission and the Department of Public Safety driver's license office will be closed today, Wednesday and Thursday.

The Department of Agriculture and the United States Post Office will be closed only on Christmas day.

All banks and other financial institutions will be closed on Wednesday.

There will be no edition of *The Pampa News* on Christmas, and all departments will be closed. Regular office hours and newspaper delivery will resume on Thursday.

**WHEELER** — Wheeler County Sheriff's officers were investigating an early morning burglary today in Wheeler.

Law enforcement officers said burglars apparently broke into a convenience store overnight by knocking a hole in the wall of the store.

Authorities said the burglary at the Speedi-Mart convenience store on Alan Bean Blvd. was reported about 5:30 a.m. today.

**PAMPA** — The staff of the Coffee Memorial Blood Center wants to remind residents there will be another blood drive on Friday, Dec. 27, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the second floor conference room at the Columbia Medical Center.

Holiday hero T-Shirts will be given to each donor.

The Blood Center staff reminds donors they can donate every 56 days.

For more information, call (806) 358-4563.

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The flight plan has been filed and official clearance given for Santa Claus' annual Christmas Eve flight, the Federal Aviation Administration announced Monday.

Acting in the spirit of the holiday, the FAA gave the jolly old gent special clearance to operate below the 1,000-foot minimum flight level, and inspectors said he has been checked out in tricky rooftop landing maneuvers.

Santa's sleigh has been issued the special tail number, N-HOHO.

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## Memo: Gore, Buddhist sect leader had meetings

WASHINGTON (AP) — In seeking a White House meeting between Vice President Al Gore and the leader of a Taiwanese Buddhist sect, a Democratic fund-raiser reminded Gore's office of his previous visits with the leader and group members, a document shows.

John Huang set up the meeting in March, a month before Gore attended a controversial fundraiser at a Buddhist temple in California, which Huang organized. In a memo to a Gore aide, Huang noted that Gore as a senator had met with the Buddhist leader in 1989 in Taiwan and as vice president with some of his followers in 1993 and 1995 in Los Angeles.

The memo, which was among thousands of pages of documents that the Democratic National Committee recently turned over to congressional investigators, suggests that Gore had more extensive contacts with the Buddhist group than previously acknowledged.

The memo indicates that Gore's office approved the March 15 meeting with Venerable Master Hsing Yun, whom Huang described as the "highest Buddhist leader in Taiwan."

White House special counsel Lanny Davis confirmed Monday that the meeting did occur, but

he declined further comment. Huang was working at the DNC at the time he made the request.

Gore acknowledged this fall that the Democrats erred in arranging the fund-raiser with Asian Americans at the Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple in Hacienda Heights, Calif., in April. Gore said he thought it to be a "community event." The Democratic committee has returned some of the \$140,000 raised by the event because of questions about the origins of some contributions.

Similarly, a note from Huang to his fund-raising boss at the DNC, in which he pleaded the case of a South Korean businessman seeking a meeting with President Clinton, provides insight into the sort of favors big donors received.

Huang sent the memo to Richard Sullivan, the DNC finance director, on April 8, the same day the U.S. subsidiary of the businessman's electronics company, Cheong Am America Inc., gave \$250,000 to the Democrats. The DNC returned the money in September after responding to reporters' questions and finding that the money really came from the South Korean parent company.

Under federal law, foreigners who are legal U.S. residents and U.S. subsidiaries of foreign com-

panies are allowed to make campaign donations if the money was earned here.

In a related development, the White House confirmed there were a total of four meetings this year in which presidential aides were briefed on suspicious donations that had been delivered this spring to Clinton's legal defense fund. Those donations were returned in June because of concerns about their origins but the matter wasn't disclosed until last week.

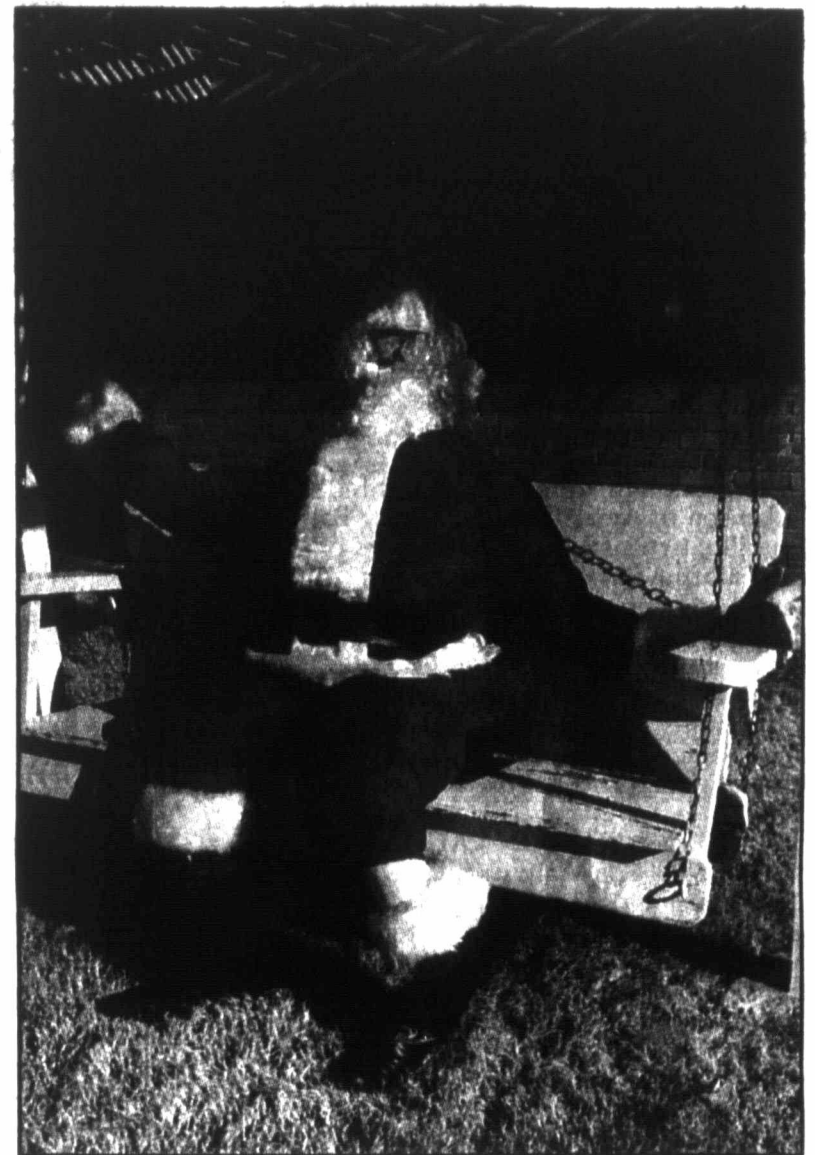
The AP reported Sunday that at a May 9 meeting, six senior aides, including the president's confidant, Bruce Lindsey, attended a briefing and raised concerns about offending donors if the money was given back.

An administration official said that in addition to the May meeting, Lindsey attended another meeting in November, and two more in December, the last just a week before the public announcement of the returned money.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official described the meetings as "informational," in which the fund's director briefed White House aides on the latest developments.

The subject of informing the public about the problems did not come up until the December meetings, he said.

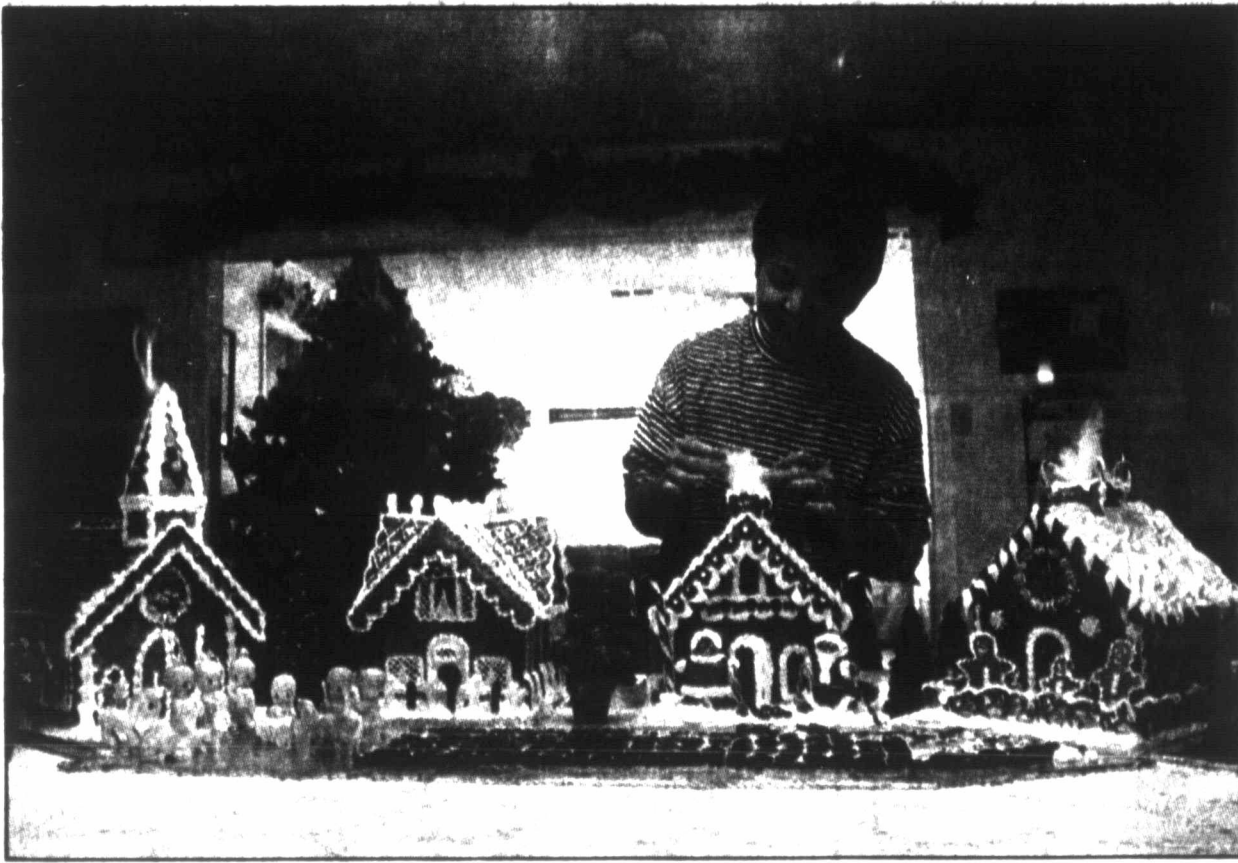
## Friendly Santa



(Pampa News photo by Darlene Holmes)

Passersby in the 2700 block of Navajo may find themselves surprised to see Santa just taking it easy on a sheltered bench. The Santa was placed outside their home by Ken and Carolyn Hall using a Santa suit that had been purchased as a kit. Grandmother Francis Hall painted the face which greets people traveling along the street during the holidays.

## Gingerbread village



(Pampa News photo by Darlene Holmes)

Lelet Haesle, 2111 Chestnut, shows the gingerbread village she created for the Christmas holidays this year. She had always wanted to make a gingerbread house for Christmas and decided "to go crazy" and make a whole village. She spent one whole day baking the gingerbread and then began the decorating process. Her husband John said he felt like he didn't have a wife for two weeks, approximately how long it took to do all the decorating. Mrs. Haesle is a full-time registered nurse at Columbia Medical Center and worked on the village a few hours a day. The village can be stored for up to two years, she said, saying she plans to add to it next year.

## Christmas countdown: Last-minute shoppers

By RACHEL BECK  
AP Business Writer

Even President Clinton had to sneak out for some last-minute shopping, joining millions of other Americans who crammed into the nation's stores in the days before Christmas.

Despite the president's help, the burst of last-minute buying may not be enough to jolt sales to the levels that retailers had hoped for at the start of the season.

"This is turning out to be just an OK Christmas," said Terence McEvoy, a retail analyst at Janney Montgomery Scott Inc. "While the weekend was strong, sales for the season will probably be on the lower end of expectations."

After a dismal Christmas a year ago, retailers were optimistic that shoppers would

spend enthusiastically this year, thanks to a healthy economy, low inflation and high levels of consumer confidence.

Also buoying retailers' hopes was increased consumer spending, which the Commerce Department reported Monday rose 0.5 percent in November, beating analysts' estimates.

But five fewer shopping days between Thanksgiving and Christmas, coupled with high levels of consumer debt and foul weather in some parts of the country may produce a ho-hum holiday season.

"The cost of living is going up," said Teri Lutz, a mother of three who was looking for gifts at Woodland Hills Mall in Tulsa, Okla. "Prices are so high. It's just so hard just buying the normal things" on her gift list.

Whether this season is a suc-

cess or not, however, depends largely on spending volume in the last days before Christmas.

President Clinton plunged in among the nation's last-minute Christmas shoppers Sunday at glittering mall at Union Station, toting back a pair of shiny gift bags to the Oval Office.

A new survey of 800 homes by America's Research Group found 12 percent of respondents said they still had all their shopping to do as of late Sunday and 7 percent said they may have some gifts to buy. Eighty-one percent said their Christmas shopping was done.

"It's going to be a late, violent peak," predicted C.O. Wilson, assistant store manager for J.C. Penney Co. Inc. at The Empire mall in Sioux Falls, S.D., where bad weather hurt business last week.

## Amarillo couple die in head-on collision

Two Borger men were in a Pampa hospital today with injuries suffered in a head-on collision that killed an Amarillo couple.

Marvin Edward Stimson, 27, and Will Knott, 26, both of Borger, were in stable condition today at Columbia Medical Center in Pampa with injuries suffered in a two-truck collision near Lefors shortly after 5 p.m. Monday that killed an Amarillo couple. Knott was in the hospital's Intensive Care Unit.

Ruie Howard Miller, 62, of Amarillo, died at the scene, according to Gray County Justice of the Peace Bob Muns. His wife, Patsy Miller, 62, of Amarillo, was airlifted by helicopter to Northwest Texas Hospital in Amarillo. Authorities said she died shortly before 7 p.m. in Amarillo.

Officers said two pickup

trucks collided head-on about 5:10 p.m. Monday on a bridge six miles north of Lefors on Texas Highway 273.

Department of Public Safety officials said Stimson was north bound in a 1985 Ford pickup when he apparently crossed the median into the south bound lane of Texas Highway 273. Ruie Miller was south bound, driving a 1991 GMC Sonoma pickup, officers said. The two truck struck head-on in the south bound lane of the highway, officers said.

Authorities said Department of Public Safety troopers were investigating the cause of the accident this morning. They said that alcohol did not appear to be involved.

Drivers and passengers in both vehicles were wearing seat belts at the time of the accident, authorities reported.

## Cattlemen making profit despite swing in prices

AMARILLO — Cattle men are making a profit at year-end on fed cattle, according to a Texas economist, but it will be 1998 before feeder cattle prices rise.

The \$18 swing in fed cattle prices was hard to contend with in 1996. Jim Gill, economist for the Texas Cattle Feeders Association, said Monday during year-end comments at the association's headquarters here.

"In 1996 we started with cattle making about \$10 a head," Gill said. "By April the market had deteriorated to where cattle were losing a \$150 a head, but it came back and got in the black on the profit side. At the end of the year, we're probably making \$20 to \$25 a head."

Cattle liquidation began in 1996, especially in Texas because of a drought, and will

grow nationwide through 1997, he said.

"I think because of the liquidation in 1997, feeder cattle prices will continue under pressure," Gill said. "It will be 1998 before we really see the full liquidation take effect and feeder cattle price will rebound some then."

He predicted beef production would be up one percent to over 25.5 billion pounds, close to record production.

Gill expected pork production to increase another one percent and poultry production to increase another three percent.

"In 1996, 650 pound feeder cattle traded about \$60," Gill said. "That compares with \$68 in 1995 and \$80 in 1994."

Gill said that with the Freedom to Farm Act going into effect, he hopes that \$10 grain prices are history.







## Arlington couple mutilate youngster

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — A woman and her boyfriend face felony charges of injury to a child for injuring the woman's four-year-old son's genitals while disciplining him during toilet-training.

The injuries forced doctors to amputate part of the boy's penis, and he has since undergone reconstructive surgery, police spokesman Dee Anderson said.

"A lot of people who deal with childhood injuries were just shocked," Anderson said. "This boy was in pain for 10 to 14 days before he was brought to the hospital. They could not imagine the amount of pain this child was going through."

The mother brought the boy to Dallas-Fort Worth Medical Center in Grand Prairie on Nov. 10.

Felony charges of injury to a child and injury to a child by omission have been filed against Angela Christine Thornton, 24, and Jesus Manuel "Chuy" Hernandez, 36.

Ms. Thornton is in Tarrant County Jail in lieu of \$100,000 bail. She was in custody on an unrelated charge of violating ten years' probation she received in July for food stamp abuse.

Hernandez had not been arrested as of this morning, a spokeswoman said.

Serious bodily injury to a child is punishable by up to 99 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

At the time of the child's hospitalization, Ms. Thornton and Hernandez denied any prior knowledge of the injury and told police that the child bathed, dressed and cared for himself, Anderson said.

"The mother claims that the day she brought him to the hospital was when she learned of his injury," Anderson said. "She said she saw it while he was bathing."

Authorities contend the couple tied a string around the boy's penis to keep him from wetting his pants and left it there for 10 to 14 days.

Anderson said investigators needed more than a month to obtain arrest warrants because of the statements from doctors and medical records needed for the investigation and the lengthy process of determining who was responsible for the injury.

Officials with Child Protective Services took emergency custody of the boy on Nov. 15, said Helen Grape, an agency spokeswoman.

Child Protective Services took the boy and three of his siblings — who are eleven months, two and five — from their home and placed them in foster care.

CPS officials said the boy's biological father has expressed interest in obtaining custody of the child.

## AAL aid for Good Samaritan



Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) Branch No. 4049 at Zion Lutheran Church in Pampa recently had a fund raiser for Good Samaritan Christian Services Inc. AAL matched the \$450 that was raised in the fund raiser, called Helping Hands, with the money always going for needy people and related organizations. Presenting the check for Good Samaritan are, from left, Joy Thomas, AAL branch president; John Norris, Good Samaritan board representative; and Hilmar Heinritz, AAL branch treasurer.

## Shots fired in Belgrade during street clashes with government opponents

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Shots were fired today from a crowd of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's supporters during street clashes with government opponents. A witness said two people were shot, one in the head.

Witnesses reported the gunfire as a group of anti-Milosevic activists cornered a smaller pro-Milosevic gathering on Belgrade's main Knez Mihajlova street. Radio Index said at least two shots were fired.

A witness, Zlatko Mihajlovic, told The Associated Press that a man was shot in the head and a woman was also wounded. Doctors at a hospital where the man was taken said he was shot above the right ear, but his condition was not life-threatening. No information about the woman was available.

Witnesses said police detained the gunman.

Hundreds of helmeted riot police intervened, surrounded government buildings in downtown Belgrade and separated demonstrators. After appeals from their leaders, most opposition supporters moved away.

The gunfire and the police action dramatically escalated tensions in what had been more than four weeks of relatively peaceful demonstrations against Milosevic and his annulment of Nov. 17 local elections won by the opposition.

Before the shooting, several skirmishes had broken out in central Belgrade, with opposition demonstrators hurling mud and sticks at Milosevic supporters.

Several people were injured in the melee that erupted after the gunfire.

Swinging clubs, police tried to separate opposition crowds from the tens of thousands of Milosevic supporters gathered on Terazije Square.

The square, site of a rally orchestrated by lieutenants of the Serbian president, is only 500 yards away from Republic Square, where the opposition was gathering today for a 35th straight day of protests against Milosevic.

The opposition demonstrators shouted, "Fascists, fascists" at the police.

Earlier, tens of thousands of student opposition demonstrators charged at Milosevic supporters with sticks and hurled mud at them. Several exchanged blows before the pro-government demonstrators retreated.

The opponents tore up a Milosevic banner and set his picture on fire.

## Arafat, Netanyahu fail to reach agreement

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — A meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat ended today without a deal on a troop pullback in Hebron, the last West Bank city under Israeli control.

Both men left the meeting without speaking to the media.

Dennis Ross, President Clinton's Mideast envoy, called the meeting "extremely productive" and said it had moved the two sides closer to an agreement. But "we don't have an agreement yet," he said.

Ross said negotiators from both sides would meet again Wednesday morning to continue their work, and that Arafat and Netanyahu would "try to get together again soon."

The two leaders met at the Erez Crossing between Israel and the autonomous Gaza Strip in what was only their third meeting since Netanyahu was elected in May. They met alone for more than an hour before being joined first by Ross and later by other negotiators.

"Both sides feel that they made real progress today," Ross said. "There is clearly a sincere effort being made by both sides."

After an intensive mediation effort by Ross, who arrived in the region over the weekend, negotiators had predicted that a deal could be reached by today.

Marwan Kanafani, a spokesman for Arafat, said after the meeting that the gap between the two sides was "narrowing, but it still exists."

Arafat left Gaza by helicopter a few minutes after the meeting to take part in Bethlehem's annual Christmas Eve festivities.

A deal on Hebron would be the first major development in the peace process since Netanyahu took office.

## Letters to Santa

Merry Christmas To Santa,

I would like a motorcycle and a pair of motorcycle close and a motorcycle stand and a gena and a basketball and a bike!!!!!! and ken with a motorcycle seat.  
Chad Winkleblack

the snack time kid and the Barbie tamborghini and that is all

From: Emily Keeton

To: Santa Clause

I want the Barbie Dream House and My Size Dancing Barbie and magic cradle Megan and jewel hair mermaid Barbie and the Barbie minivan and the Barbie movie theatre and the twirling Ballerina Barbie and

Dear Santa Claus,

I would like a Boom box and a Nike hat. Also a GT bike. And a soccer ball with a indoor soccer bag. And \$25 dollars and 50c. Also a Michael Jordan poster. And a hocky stick with roller blades. 20 gallon salt water fish tank. Sega Saturn Games like soccer, baseball, Race car, and Street fighter 2.

From Cam Stewart

## Volunteers work to give orphans happy holiday

WASHINGTON (AP) — An exhausted volunteer trying to make Christmas special for hundreds of orphans walked into a room chaotic with wrapping paper and ribbon and exclaimed: "I need gifts for two young ladies, medium build, 15 or 16 years old."

"One might be perfume — right there," Taewon Kim said pointing to a bottle on the floor.

"Here's a nail dryer," another volunteer said.

"That might work," Kim replied.

Each year, the Orphan Foundation of America aims to find personalized gifts for about 300 foster care children from Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia and West Virginia.

Christmas lists were carefully checked. And the presents — from boom boxes to in-line skates, designer clothes and Walkmans — were bought, wrapped and carefully marked with each child's name.

But when some invited foster care youth didn't show up at a recent party, and others did, gifts had to be rerouted.

After working weeks to provide each child with a special, individualized gift, the helpers found themselves battling the very problem they sought to allay: attaching names to the nameless faces of America's

500,000-plus children in foster care.

About one-third are unadopted adolescents who have lost the love of their natural parents through abuse, neglect, abandonment or death, said Gina Stracuzzi, a spokeswoman for the foundation, which offers scholarships and independent living skills to help them become self-reliant adults.

"Everybody wants to do for the little kids. The teenagers are forgotten about," she said. "They're not cute and cuddly,"

Some of them have little ones of their own.

"I want my kids to have what I didn't have," said Nancy Johnson, a 19-year-old mother of two toddlers.

Johnson spent most her life skipping from home to home — sometimes with her mother, sometimes not. She longed for the day her mother would defeat drugs and become responsible.

They'd have their own home, she dreamed. And at Christmas there would be a turkey, potato salad and a little party — maybe with a nice hip-hop music.

"It was dead — dead, dead. I just got up like it was another day. I was more worried about where I was going to eat next," said Johnson, who lives with a foster family in Lanham, Md.

## Convicted assassin hospitalized

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., was hospitalized in critical condition today.

State Correction Department spokesman Jim Rose confirmed he was in critical condition but would give no details. The Tennessean newspaper reported that Ray was suffering from liver failure, while television station WSMV reported he was near death.

Ray, 68, was transferred Saturday night from Riverbend

State Prison in Nashville to the Columbia Nashville Memorial Hospital, the department said.

Ray pleaded guilty in the April 1968 slaying of King, who was shot on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tenn. He was sentenced to 99 years in prison but recanted his story three days later.

He spent much of the time since then filing a barrage of fruitless appeals. Ray claimed that he was set up by a man named Raoul whom he met in Montreal.

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- ✓ Buy gifts
- ✓ Wrap them
- ✓ Decorate
- ✓ Register Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ Class Begins Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ Late Registration 8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>

**Enjoy Yourself!**

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## MTV cartoon stars make big splash at box office

By LYNN ELBER  
AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) - They're more than teenage TV couch slouches now. *Beavis and Butt-head Do America* posted the biggest December movie opening ever with \$20.1 million in ticket sales during the weekend.

The animated feature, starring the doltish, sex-crazed youths featured in MTV cartoons, overtook the \$18.1 million December record held by 1991's *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*.

Industry experts called the surprisingly strong debut a boost for young MTV films.

"We were shocked ... no one at the studio or MTV Films could have projected this kind of success," said MTV executive Van Toffler.

In other debuts, the horror film *Scream* took fourth place with \$6.4 million, edging out the George Clooney-Michelle Pfeiffer romantic comedy *One Fine Day*, which grossed \$6.2 million.

*My Fellow Americans* had the most pallid debut for a widely distributed film, with a scant \$2.9 million. The film starring Jack Lemmon and James Garner as ex-presidents on the run received mediocre reviews.

A trio of films debuted in limited release: *Ghosts of Mississippi* collected \$175,000 on 21 screens; *Martin's Room* pulled \$50,000 on two screens and *In Love and War* collected \$2,700 on one screen.

The top 10 movies at North American theaters Friday through Sunday, followed by studio, gross, number of theater locations, receipts per location, total gross and number of weeks in release, as compiled by Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc.:

1. *Beavis and Butt-head Do America*, Paramount, \$20.1 million, 2,190 locations, \$9,185 average, one week.
2. *Jerry Maguire*, Sony, \$13.1 million, 2,531 locations, \$5,186 average, \$36.3 million, two weeks.
3. *101 Dalmatians*, Buena

BOX OFFICE	
Top weekend movies	
Weekend of Dec. 20-22, 1996	
All dollar figures in millions	
Gross to date, weeks in release, number of screens	Weekend gross
<i>Beavis and Butt-head Do America</i> \$20.1, one week, 2,190 screens	\$20.1
<i>Jerry Maguire</i> \$13.1, two weeks, 2,531 screens	\$13.1
<i>101 Dalmatians</i> \$9.4, four weeks, 2,901 screens	\$7
<i>Scream</i> \$6.4, one week, 1,413 screens	\$6.4
<i>One Fine Day</i> \$6.2, one week, 1,946 screens	\$6.2
<i>The Preacher's Wife</i> \$15.3, two weeks, 1,989 screens	\$6.2
<i>Mars Attacks!</i> \$16.7, two weeks, 1,565 screens	\$4.7
<i>Jingle All the Way</i> \$47.4, five weeks, 2,112 screens	\$3.1
<i>My Fellow Americans</i> \$2.9, one week, 1,915 screens	\$2.9
<i>Daylight</i> \$20.4, three weeks, 1,980 screens	\$2.4

Source: Exhibitor Relations Co., Inc. AP

Vista, \$7 million, 2,901 locations, \$2,409 average, \$84.8 million, four weeks.

4. *Scream*, Miramax, \$6.4 million, 1,413 locations, \$4,497 average, one week.

5. *One Fine Day*, Fox, \$6.2 million, 1,946 locations, \$3,200 average, one week.

6. *The Preacher's Wife*, Buena Vista, \$5.2 million, 1,989 locations, \$2,605 average, \$15.3 million, two weeks.

7. *Mars Attacks!* Warner Bros., \$4.7 million, 1,955 locations, \$2,391 average, \$16.7 million, two weeks.

8. *Jingle All the Way*, Fox, \$3.1 million, 2,112 locations, \$1,475 average, \$47.4 million, five weeks.

9. *My Fellow Americans*, Warner Bros. \$2.9 million, 1,915 locations, \$1,494 average, one week.

10. *Daylight*, Universal, \$2.4 million, 1,990 locations, \$1,225 average, \$20.4 million, three weeks.

## Software firm creates web site for Santa

AUSTIN (AP) - Santa Claus may be busy wrapping gifts and preparing for his worldwide tour, but that hasn't kept him from chatting a little with children across the country.

Ichat Inc., an Austin software company, has had a Santa chat room on the World Wide Web, part of the Internet, since Dec. 2. Questions from children across the country pour in for four hours each day and Santa responds to each within minutes.

"We've been having a blast," said Charlie Wood, an on-line operations manager for Ichat.

Wood and a University of Texas student have shared the duties of opening Santa's on-line mail. He said questions have ranged from the simple and polite, like "Santa, how are you?" to more difficult queries, such as, "Do you really exist?"

"There are probably 10 or 15 questions we get all the time," Wood said. "Because it is a different set of kids every day, we keep answering them."

Wood and the student have talked to parents who work at the company for advice to make sure children get acceptable answers to even the toughest questions.

In one exchange, a boy identified only as Dustin told Santa he wanted a little brother.

"That's a wonderful thing to ask for," Santa replied. "But I can't bring one down the chimney. You're going to have to ask your parents for that one."

Insisting on Santa's help, the boy asked where his parents could get a little brother.

"They don't just get one, they make one," Santa said. "They can probably explain it better than I can."

Pushing even harder, the boy said, "I'm scared to ask them, and I feel better asking you, so how does it work?"

Santa sent back a private message referring the boy to a priest or family member.

Ichat, in business since August 1995, incorporates chat-room technologies into existing web sites. That allows people logged onto an information site to talk to each other and to talk to the Web site creators.

The Internet is a vast connection of computers across the globe. The World Wide Web is a part of the Internet that incorporates sound, pictures and text.

There's no advertising on [santa.ichat.com](http://santa.ichat.com) and submitting a question requires only minimal registration.

## ST. NICK OF TIME by Jimmy Johnson



## Nation briefs

### Study boosts belief that selenium fights cancer

CHICAGO (AP) - A new study bolsters research touting Selenium, a mineral found in seafood and liver, as a cancer fighter.

The study found that when compared with people who received a placebo, patients who took daily doses of selenium had 63 percent fewer cases of prostate cancer, 58 percent fewer colon or rectal cancers and 45 percent fewer lung cancers.

In the selenium group, there were 50 percent fewer cancer deaths than in the placebo group, researchers reported in Wednesday's *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

But the researchers cautioned that their results need to be replicated because the study initially was designed to measure only whether selenium would help prevent skin cancer - and it didn't.

Dr. Graham A. Colditz, an epidemiologist at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, called the study "promising but preliminary."

### Black lawmakers support proposal to move flag

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) - Black state lawmakers on Monday backed the governor's plan to take down the Confederate battle flag from the Statehouse dome and move it to a monument nearby.

The 35-member black caucus was divided as late as last week over whether to go along with the plan, which Gov. David Beasley offered in hopes of resolving the bitter flag dispute.

"We recognize that not everybody is going to be satisfied in terms of this compromise, but it is a step forward," said state Rep.

John Scott, a Columbia Democrat and the caucus chairman. "It's a beginning."

The plan is identical to a Senate measure that died in the House in 1994. The Legislature has yet to take up the proposal.

The Confederate flag has flown from the Statehouse dome since 1962. Critics say it is racially divisive and a symbol of slavery; supporters say it honors Civil War dead and is part of the state's heritage.

Beasley, a Republican, gathered bipartisan support for the plan to move the flag to an eye-level monument on the Statehouse grounds.

## Teledyne to pay \$11.5 million settlement

WASHINGTON (AP) - Teledyne Industries Inc. has agreed to pay \$11.5 million to settle allegations it defrauded the Air Force and failed to test military equipment properly.

Assistant Attorney General Frank Hunger said Monday that Teledyne will pay \$4.75 million to resolve a case filed under the whistleblower provisions of the False Claims Act. In settling a second case involving the alleged equipment testing the company agreed to pay the government \$6.75 million.

In the lawsuit, the U.S. alleged that from 1986 to 1990 Teledyne adminis-

tered contracts to repair J-69 and J-89 military aircraft at 15 Air Force bases through its operating division at Neosho, Mo. The government said the company's accounting system was so lax that it could not account for all of the aircraft parts, many of which simply disappeared, and altered or destroyed records about the missing parts.

The second agreement settles claims that Teledyne supplied the military with improperly tested aerospace wire and cable during 1993 and 1994. There have been no reports that the wire or cable products failed while in use.

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# Houston factory explosion kills eight, injures two

By JOAN THOMPSON  
Associated Press Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Karin Norred found out that her son had been killed in a factory explosion when someone arrived at her door and said there was a "little problem" at the plant.

"I don't think my son was a little problem," she said Monday.

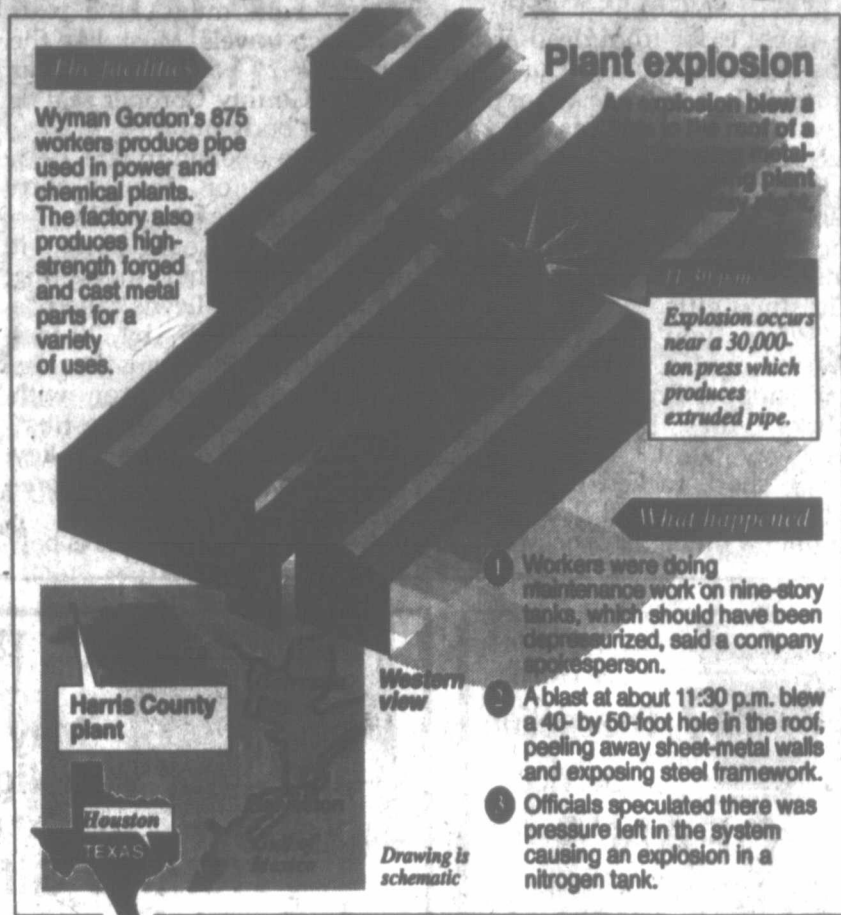
The blast that killed eight workers and injured two others at the Wyman Gordon Forging Co. plant in Houston Sunday night left families and employees mourning on Christmas Eve.

"We work diligently on safety so we would never have a day like this," Dave Gruber, the company's chief executive officer, said in a statement. "Like a family, we've come to be together with those families who instead of celebrating Christmas will be grieving for a tragic loss."

Officials were investigating the cause of the explosion, which occurred as workers were doing routine maintenance on huge pressurized tanks at the plant. The blast blew a jagged hole in the roof and peeled away part of the sheet-metal walls, exposing the steel beam framework.

Body parts were thrown as far as 100 yards from the building, said Erik Petocz, an assistant volunteer fire chief.

"It reminded me of Hollywood," he said, likening the scene to a disaster movie or



Source: AP research, Houston Chronicle

AP/Tracie To

an airplane crash. "You have to tell yourself. Is this really what I'm looking at?"

The factory, which employs 875 workers, produces pipe used in power and chemical plants, as well as airplane engine parts. Wyman Gordon also makes high-strength metal parts for a variety of uses. Workers were to shut

down the plant Monday for the holidays.

Workers were doing maintenance work on nine-story tanks, which should have been depressurized, said Doug Whelan, president of the company's forging division.

"We can only assume there was pressure left in the system," and

the maintenance work caused the explosion in a nitrogen tank, Whelan said Monday at a news conference outside the plant.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration had not received any complaints about the plant, said Diana Petterson, spokeswoman for OSHA's Dallas office. She said OSHA hadn't inspected the factory since 1994, when it was under different ownership.

At another Wyman Gordon plant, in Tilton, N.H., an employee was crushed to death in 1993.

Longtime worker G.H. Bell said the deaths Sunday were especially devastating because some of the victims were related to other workers.

"They were sons of older employees," Bell said.

Four of the dead had worked for the company for four months or less; the other four had 29 or 30 years at the factory.

One of the injured, Greg Dargin, 31, was hospitalized with burns on his chest, face and arm, and metal fragments in his chest, his wife Linda Dargin said. He had been employed at the company for two weeks.

The other injured worker, Jimmy Galindo, 57, was in stable condition.

As holiday festivities gave way to funeral plans for grieving families, Ms. Norred, whose 25-year-old son, Jody, was killed, said her thoughts were with her granddaughter.

## New outbreak of Ebola kills eight in Gabon

GENEVA (AP) — A new outbreak of Ebola has killed eight people in Gabon and health officials worry that the virus may spread into the African country's capital, the World Health Organization said Monday.

Cases of the highly contagious disease were concentrated near the central Gabon town of Booué, about 175 miles east of Gabon's capital of Libreville, the agency said.

One person also died in a district of Libreville and another case was reported at a hospital in the large, central town of Lastourville.

The virus re-emerged in early December after an initial outbreak in October. The number of people afflicted was unclear, the agency said.

"Until all the contacts have cleared the (21-day) incubation period there is always a risk of further spread," said Lindsay Martinez of WHO's Ebola division.

Ebola, one of the world's deadliest diseases, causes massive internal bleeding and is spread through bodily fluids. It kills up to 80 percent of those infected, and there is no treatment or cure.

Ebola has killed about 800 people worldwide since it was first identified in Zaire in 1976. Last year, the virus struck an urban area of Zaire and killed 245 people.

the action if the government doesn't meet their demands for higher subsidies and cheaper fuel.

The 24-day demonstration has dealt a \$1.6 billion blow to the economy, financial analysts said.

Farmers in central Greece drove the last of their tractors and trailers off highways, byways and railroad tracks Monday. Farmers in other regions began lifting the blockades on Saturday after a week-end decision to suspend the protests until January.

Farmers are demanding higher agriculture subsidies, cheaper fuel and a renegotiation of \$1.7 billion in debts owed to the state-owned Agricultural Bank. They have blocked scores of road and rail links with their fleet of about 10,000 tractors and trailers.

## Seven die in shootout in southern Russia

MOSCOW (AP) — Seven people died in a shootout with security troops in a region of southern Russia plagued by ethnic and religious tensions, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported Monday.

The shootout happened Sunday at a checkpoint in the Prigorodny district of North Ossetia when security officers tried to stop a passing car and the occupants opened fire with automatic weapons, the agency said.

All seven people in the vehicle died and three security officers were wounded, ITAR-Tass said.

Tensions between Christian Ossetians and Muslim Ingush have been high in the Prigorodny region for years. The region is near Chechnya, where Russian troops and separatist guerrillas recently ended a nearly two-year war.

## Tony Bennett out of hospital following emergency hernia operation

WASHINGTON (AP) — Singer Tony Bennett was released from Georgetown University Medical Center Monday after undergoing emergency hernia surgery.

Bennett, 70, a six-time Grammy award winner, is in good condition and plans to spend the holidays recuperating in New York with family and friends before resuming his full schedule, according to his publicist, Sylvia Weiner.

Bennett suffered an erupted

hernia just after arriving at the White House on Saturday to attend a holiday dinner hosted by President Clinton and his wife. He was treated by White House physicians and rushed to the hospital for an emergency operation on a double hernia, a condition he was born with and had been scheduled to have corrected in January, Weiner said.

"I would like to thank the many fans, friends and family who have sent their good

wishes to me over the past two days and express my appreciation once again to the President and Mrs. Clinton and the White House staff as well as to the staff of Georgetown University Medical Center,"

Bennett said in a statement.

His next public concert appearance is Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 at Constitution Hall in Washington. Bennett was forced to cancel a sold-out concert in a Philadelphia suburb on Sunday.

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## Republic of Texas orders 'Ranger' badges

AUSTIN (AP) — Jeweler Kelly Smith says he didn't think he would run afoul of the law when he accepted an order in September to manufacture sterling silver "Ranger" badges for the Republic of Texas "defense forces."

"You know what, I'm just an artist," Smith said. "I just make jewelry. I don't care if you want to play 'Roger Ramjet.' I'll make your insignia and I'll make it nice."

The Republic of Texas movement does not recognize Texas law and claims Texas is a sovereign nation illegally annexed by the United States in 1845.

But the Smiths do recognize Texas law. "Texas Government Code 411.017. I know it all too well," said Lisa Smith, Kelly's wife and the marketing partner of the couple's business.

That section of the law prohibits the manufacturing, selling or possession of a badge that bears an insignia similar to that of the Texas Rangers, which is a division of the Department of Public Safety. Violation is a misdemeanor.

It's a felony to send such a badge through the mail.

The badges were never delivered because, the Smiths say, the group did not pay for the badges, leaving them stuck with an inventory of 75 badges they can't sell.

And the Smiths also face possible destruction of their business by the Republic.

"We plan to file a lien against the business for theft of governmental property," Richard McLaren, the group's self-styled ambassador and consul general, said Monday from the group's "embassy" in Fort Davis.

The Republic paid a \$3,500 down payment, but the couple's bank rejected a \$3,496 check to cover the balance.

Attorney General Dan Morales issued a warning this month against accepting checks issued by the Republic because they were drawn on a fictitious Republic of Texas trust.

Lisa Smith said she found out about the badge law only after the bank rejected the check.

"When the Republic defaulted on the contract, I tried to find out what our market was for the badges as collector's items — so I called the cops," she said.

In fact, she called the Texas Rangers.

"He told me, 'Young lady, there's a law about this kind of thing,'" she said.

A local prosecutor couldn't say whether the Smiths would be prosecuted for making the badges.

"Obviously, we don't prosecute children who wear badges that say sheriff on them," said Mack Martinez, chief of the county attorney's intake division. "A decision whether to prosecute would depend on the circumstances in which the badges were used."

## State briefs

### Patients of unlicensed surgical assistants file suit

HOUSTON (AP) — A class-action lawsuit has been filed against some unlicensed surgical assistants by patients.

The lawsuit was filed Monday by a group of patients who alleged civil fraud and deception by such medical personnel and six Houston-area hospitals that have used them.

John H. Kim, a lawyer who filed the lawsuit in state court, contends there are more than 10,000 patients and potential plaintiffs.

Officials of Assistant Surgeons of Texas Inc., one group of such medical professionals, could not be reached for comment Monday, the *Houston Chronicle* reported.

The surgical assistants and

some health care providers have defended the use of surgical assistants, saying they provide quality services while reducing medical costs to consumers.

### Police shoot fugitive after 18-hour standoff

PORT ARANSAS (AP) — A gunman was shot to death Monday after an 18-hour standoff during which he fired more than 200 rounds at officers and police helicopters.

Preston Harrison, 36, was shot at 2:45 p.m. and died several minutes later, authorities said.

Harrison had kept officers pinned down since 8:45 p.m., when police responded to a car

fire in a remote area known as Charlie's Pasture, near the Port Aransas ferry landing.

The gunman fired several shots, hitting a nearby fisherman and Nueces County deputy Jerry Nash. It wasn't immediately clear why the gunman opened fire on the pair, both of whom were expected to recover.

A manhunt was started about 9:30 p.m. Sunday, and officers from several law enforcement agencies secured a four-square-mile area.

As police closed in on Harrison, he opened fire with several weapons he carried, officials said.

"It wasn't just like a war, it was a war," said Port Aransas Police Chief Don Perkins.

## Coroner gift shop packs 'em in for the holidays

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Business is far from dead at the Los Angeles County Coroner's office. In fact, in the last shopping days before Christmas, they've been buried in customers.

For many, Skeletons in the Closet, the agency's gift shop, is the offbeat and irreverent answer to those last-minute Christmas gifts.

"When you've thought of everything else, you come here," said shopper Emmet Ryan, who works for the California Highway Patrol.

The shop, tucked in a small office on the second floor of the coroner's office, is chock-full of

T-shirts, hats, mugs, note pads and beach towels. Most, like the "undertaker" boxer shorts, bear the L.A. County Coroner seal or a chalked body outline.

The shop opened in late 1993, selling one or two T-shirt designs and a beach towel.

About two years later, it moved from what marketing director Marilyn Lewis called "a closet" into a 15- by 20-foot room. About 70 items are on sale, including an apron with "extra hands" and "spare ribs" and a personalized toe-tag key chain — for the perennially prepared.

"A lot of people say this is bet-

ter than the mall," said Ms. Lewis. "I think at first we had a lot of doubters, but people have a curiosity about the coroner."

Monday afternoon, people filed in and out, snatching up items like there was no tomorrow. Phillip Bagues, a local funeral director who dropped by for a few gifts, said he thinks the gift shop is a positive idea.

"This lightens things up a bit," he said. "(Death) is not a bad thing, it's part of life."

Besides, people in Los Angeles are just a bit odd anyway, he said, and others around the world want to buy a piece of California weirdness.

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## New rules allow doctors to use experimental drugs on some dying patients

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dr. Robert Rosenthal tries frantically to revive patients from cardiac arrest knowing he might be dooming the few survivors to life with severe brain damage — and knowing that for four years, potentially brain-saving medicines have gathered dust inside drug companies.

Now a new federal rule that allows doctors to experiment on certain dying patients without their consent has cleared the way for such drugs to finally be tested. But it has some medical ethicists evoking the specter of Nazism.

"1996 is the 50th anniversary of Nuremberg," where trials of Nazi doctors concluded humans should never again undergo such horrific, involuntary experimentation, noted Georgetown University bioethicist Robert Veatch. "In the United States, we are commemorating that event by adopting regulations that flat-out are in violation of the Nuremberg code."

Counters Food and Drug Administration Deputy Commissioner Mary Pendegast: The rule is to try to help patients "on a path to certain death" who now face treatments "that are the modern-day equivalent of blood-letting."

Trauma victims often owe their lives to treatments given while they were unconscious. A doctor may have time to discuss options with family, but ultimately makes an individual decision about which FDA-approved therapy offers the best chance.

But for many victims, like patients whose hearts suddenly stop, there is no good therapy. Even when Rosenthal revives these cardiac-arrest patients at George Washington University's emergency room, lack of oxygen often has ruined their brains. Rosenthal cites a survey of 109 cardiac-arrest victims that found of the 59 survivors, only eight recovered enough brain function to ever return to work and just 20

were even able to go shopping alone.

Yet he knows of drugs that appear to work in animal testing but can't be sold because federal law based on the Nuremberg code said doctors could not give patients experimental treatments unless they or their family first understood the risks and consented. His patients not only are unconscious, but the damage is done within minutes, not enough time to track down a relative.

Only if doctors got a federal waiver saying the research was no riskier than daily living — a standard few emergency treatments meet — were such experiments legal.

But a 1994 congressional investigation concluded some doctors were making maverick decisions to test these patients with no oversight to ensure they weren't harmed.

So the FDA spent two years talking to emergency room doctors, ethicists and others to devise a solution, which took effect last month.

Under the new regulation, doctors can test promising therapies for untreatable, life-threatening emergencies if a panel of hospital experts agrees there is no feasible way to get consent from the patient or a relative. Also, the community must have been informed of the planned experiment to ensure residents find it acceptable. Once the experiment is done, the panel, called an institutional review board or IRB, must tell the community how it fared.

So far, the FDA has approved just one experiment under the new rules, a test of artificial blood that has not yet begun. Now scientists are designing similar trials for drugs to protect brain cells during cardiac arrest, and a sedative for people who overdosed on cocaine and are so violent that doctors can't get close enough to treat a life-threatening complication called acidosis.

## Hostages joke and debate at ambassador's 'party'

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Although the two-story house stinks of the unwashed, freed hostages say civilization persists inside its walls, where rebel captives trade life stories, dreams and jokes.

Japanese ambassador Mochihisa Aoki, still a hostage, wryly remarked that it was the longest cocktail party he had ever held.

And rebels who seized his home during an extravagant reception a week ago debate politics with a brain pool of captives who run embassies, universities and international aid programs.

Inside the walls of the occupied compound, there is no gun-pointing or threatening. Only a routine set up by hostages to stay sane and fit: lectures and debates, card-playing, exercise sessions, toilet-cleaning duty and sleep.

"There's conversation, disagreements, discussions. It's a very special environment, a microclimate," said Javier Díez Canseco, a Peruvian congressman freed Friday.

The Tupac Amaru rebels have freed the majority of their hostages, winnowing their

captives down to a select group of 140 Peruvian and Japanese VIPs.

On Sunday morning, hours before the largest hostage release in the six-day crisis, Catholic priest Juan Julio Wicht said Mass on a stairway inside the compound. Eight in ten men took communion.

The priest was offered freedom Sunday, but chose to remain.

The roughly 20 young rebels patrol the halls calmly, automatic rifles slung over their backs, politely shooing hostages back into their assigned rooms.

The gunmen take turns napping and, unlike the hostages, always look alert. Nobody even thinks about trying to escape, the freed hostages said.

The rebels told hostages early on that they'd mined the rooms, roof and patio where guests at the gala reception dropped their hors d'oeuvres last Tuesday night in the lightning rebel takeover.

"You knew there was no point in any foolishness, or trying to escape," Peruvian pollster Alfredo Torres told the El Comercio newspaper. "We had no proof,

but none of us wanted to test this."

Argentine businessman Julio Soriano, who got out Sunday, at one point encountered a dozing rebel seated on the carpet, his automatic rifle lying in his lap.

"I thought about my son and I decided not to do anything," he told a Buenos Aires radio station.

After the rebels released the women and elderly, the hostages organized themselves. In each crowded room, they elected a governor who delegated the cleaning of bathrooms, the emptying of ashtrays, the collecting and distribution of meals that had to be shared among three to four men.

In some of the plush, carpeted rooms, hostages were assigned a square meter of space after furniture was pushed into corners. In others, they had to sleep in shifts.

One of the three Americans in Andre Deschenes' room "was an example to us because he taught me how to sleep standing up," the Canadian trade official told reporters Monday.

Throughout, Ambassador Aoki was everybody's hero.

**Best Wishes**

May you have a happy Christmas Holiday with family and friends. Thanks so much for your patronage.

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## Hospital Cards Find Right Room If They Are Properly Addressed

DEAR ABBY: I am an 82-year-old volunteer at one of our finest hospitals. Over a period of 45 years, I have accumulated 16,300 hours of service. I am enclosing a letter I clipped from a column you wrote in 1979. Please run it again. It would be extremely helpful to all who volunteer their services in hospitals and nursing homes.

Thanking you in advance, I am ...  
MRS. EDNA S. GREENBERG,  
TYLER, TEXAS

DEAR MRS. GREENBERG: Congratulations for the number of hours you have served as a hospital volunteer. And thank you for the item you saved from my column. I agree, it's worth a rerun, and here it is:

DEAR ABBY: Do you want to do the hospital volunteers a big favor? Please tell your readers that mail addressed to "Buzz" Jackson, "Skip" Jones or "Tootie" Brown will probably not be delivered to patients in a hospital.

Nicknames are not recorded on hospital records. The patients are registered under their legal names (first, middle and last). We have no idea who "Liz," "Corky," "Red" or "Junior" is.

Yesterday I looked for "Al Johnson" and found none. However, I did find a "Henry Alvin Johnson." I later learned that the patient called himself "Al" so he wouldn't be confused with his father, who was called "Henry."

**Abigail Van Buren**  
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

So, please print this, Abby. I could cry every time I see a stack of mail that can't be delivered because it is improperly addressed.

And wouldn't you know, the sender never puts a return address on the envelope, either!  
FRUSTRATED IN PHOENIX

DEAR FRUSTRATED: I'll pass the word. I hope it helps.

DEAR ABBY: Several months ago you reprinted a letter from "Open for Suggestions" about a woman who was concerned about her daughter's classmate who came to school dirty. You advised that she contact the teacher, who would then contact the proper authorities.

I know your heart was in the right place, but really Abby, does our first recourse need to be contacting the authorities? I have been a foster parent and know how frightening the authorities can be to a child and a family.

"Open to Suggestions" wanted to talk to the boy's mother. I think she was on the right track. She should have gotten to know the woman as a friend and then made suggestions about the boy's appearance. His parents may have only needed some friendly educating. And of course, if on her first visit it was obvious that the child was neglected, after that she could have spoken to the teacher.

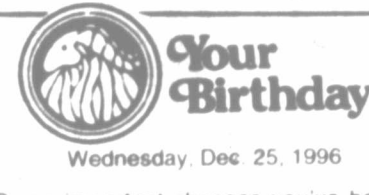
I grew up in a home that was filthy. I often wore the same clothes for days. We rarely washed the sheets, and I had no idea people ever washed floors or windows. But my parents fed and sheltered me. They helped me with schoolwork, marveled at my creations, held me when I cried, remembered my birthday, read me bedtime stories and so much more. The things I learned from them are more valuable than clean clothes. (Later, I learned housekeeping from my mother-in-law.)

These days people don't take the time to know others. If our neighbors are noisy, we call the police. If nearby residents don't mow their lawns, we call city authorities. If a co-worker crosses us, we complain to the boss.

I vote for talking out our differences and calling in help as a last resort. I learned this from my dear parents, who both held master's degrees in the sciences from leading universities — and from you, Dear Abby.

A FAITHFUL FAN

## Horoscope



Wednesday, Dec. 25, 1996

Some important changes you've hoped for might begin to happen in the year ahead. Partners and associates can be a big help, so don't forget these people when it's time to enjoy the rewards.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)** Someone with whom you might share some time today might be under more stress than usual, and it won't take much to provoke an angry exchange. Try to be tolerant and forgiving. Capricorn, treat yourself to a birthday gift. Send for your Astro-Graph predictions for the year ahead by mailing \$2 and SASE to Astro-Graph, c/o this newspaper, P.O. Box 1758, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156. Make sure to state your zodiac sign.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)** It might be difficult to get along with co-workers today. If they are in a bad mood, don't make matters worse by adding fuel to the fire.

**PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20)** Peer pressure might be a bit strong today, but you should not feel uncomfortable. Do not feel obligated to yield to the will of others.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19)** Today you might hear something that someone has said about you behind your back. Before you get all worked up, take a good look at the source of these comments.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20)** A strong personality might try to override your ideas and dominate the conversation today. Do not let this person go too far, but don't start an argument either.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20)** Your thinking cap might not be on too tightly today when you deal with your financial affairs. Proceed cautiously in this area, or avoid it completely if possible.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22)** If you insist on having your way today, it won't please your associates. If you see warning signs, back off as quickly as possible.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)** Some unfinished business from the past might rear its ugly head today and demand attention. Get it off your agenda before proceeding with other matters.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)** You should try to participate rather than hide in the corner today when you are in a social situation. Your warm personality could brighten everyone's spirits.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)** You might not achieve your goals today, because other people's objectives might take priority. Try to remain patient; your time will come.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22)** This will be one of those days when you might unintentionally say something that you shouldn't. Remain on guard, and make sure that you are in control of your conversations at all times.

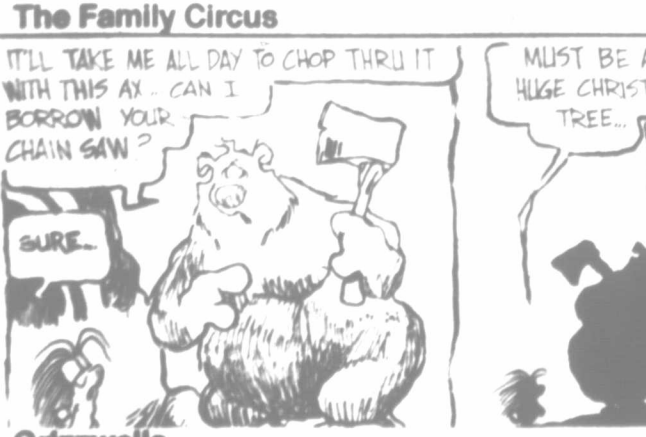
**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21)** Try to be gracious about what you receive today, even though you might think that what you gave to others is far greater than what you got back in return.



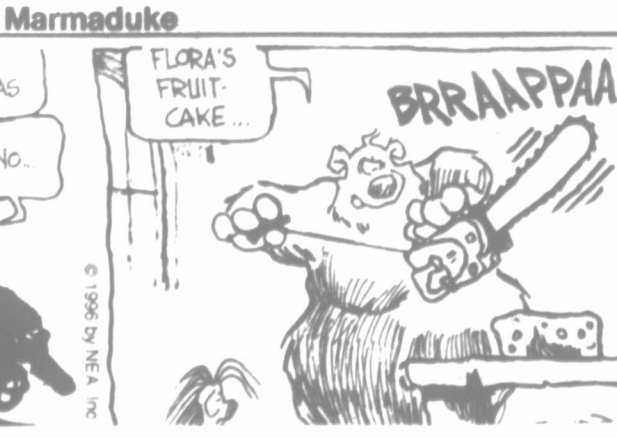
"We have two legs, so why don't we each have two stockings?"



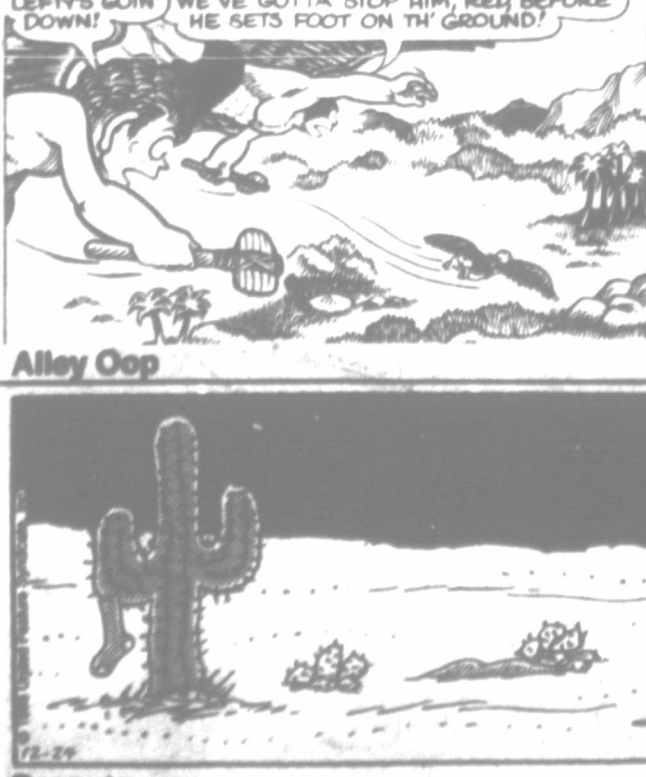
"He wants to get something for me."



"LET'S GOIN'! WE'VE GOTTA STOP HIM, RED, BEFORE HE SETS FOOT ON TH' GROUND!"



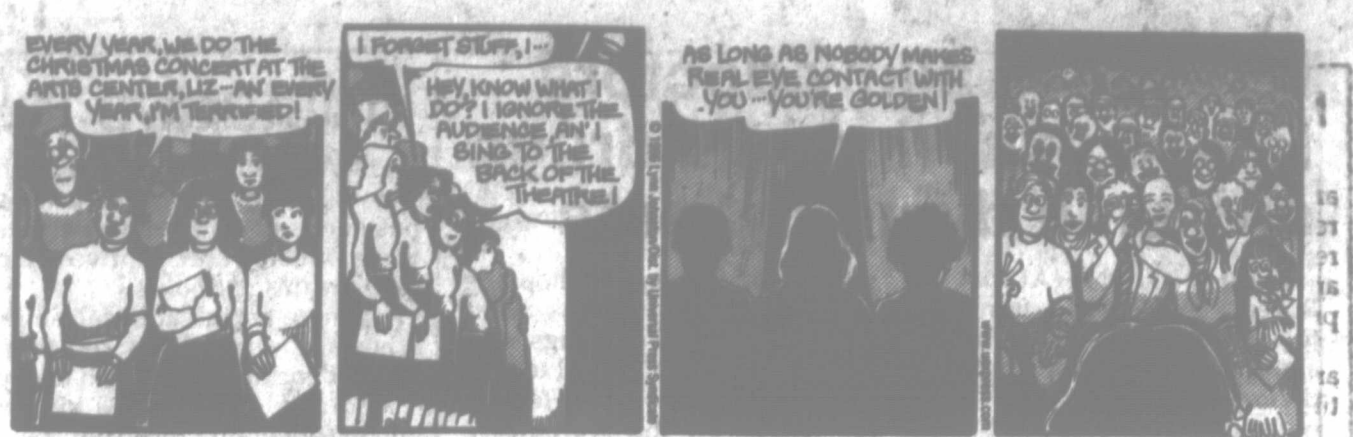
"TOO LATE! HE'S GONNA TOUCH DOWN!"



Peanuts



Frank and Ernest



For Better or For Worse



Arlo & Janis



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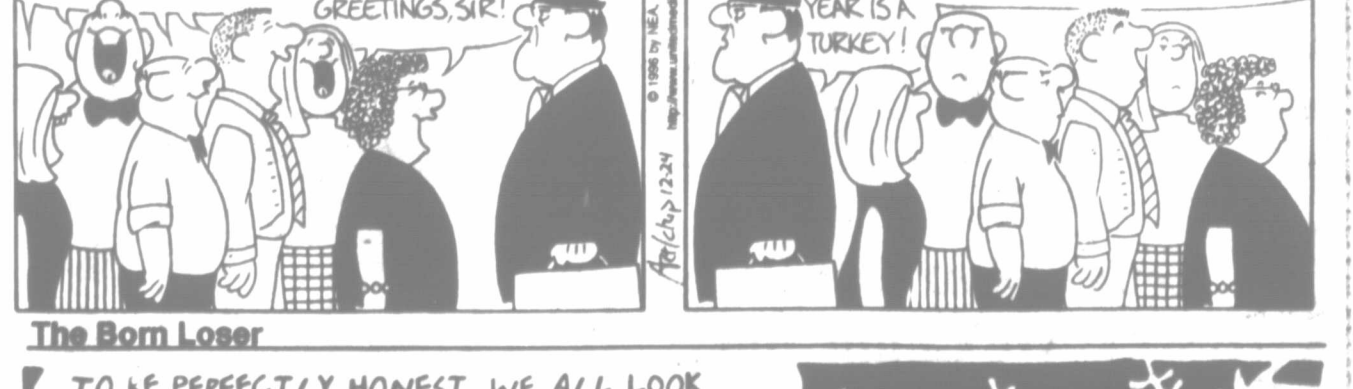
Marvin



B.C.



Eek & Meek



The Born Loser



Frank and Ernest



Mallard Filmore

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### Matt Lauer to replace Brian Gumbel

NEW YORK (AP) — As widely anticipated, Today show news anchor Matt Lauer was named to replace Bryant Gumbel as co-anchor of the top-rated morning program.

Lauer will team with co-anchor Katie Couric for the first time officially Jan. 6.

Lauer, 38, has been groomed for the job since he began doing the show's four news installments three years ago. He would fill in as a host when Gumbel went on vacation.

"From the day I first asked Matt to substitute for Bryant Gumbel, I knew he had the skills and knowledge to one day ascend to the anchor chair," said Jeff Zucker, Today's executive producer.

Since 1992, Lauer has been host of news programs for WNBC-TV in New York City. He

began his television career as producer of the noon news at WOWK-TV in Huntington, W.Va., in 1979 and has worked in Boston, Philadelphia, Providence and Richmond.

Gumbel leaves after 15 years as the program's host on Jan. 4. He still hasn't said what he'll be doing next, although NBC is said to be trying to find another post for him and ABC is also said to be wooing him.

Gumbel's exit comes as Today has been on a ratings high. It has won the weekly morning competition for a year and has widened its margin of victory over ABC's Good Morning America.

Ann Curry will fill in as news reader starting Jan. 6. An announcement on a permanent replacement will come later, NBC said.

### Feds plan to punish doctors who prescribe marijuana

NEW YORK (AP) — The federal government plans to punish doctors who prescribe marijuana and other illegal drugs to seriously ill people under new laws approved by voters in California and Arizona, The New York Times reported Monday.

Authorities plan to prosecute some doctors who help supply such drugs to patients and strip their prescription licenses, officials told the newspaper. Voters in

the two states last month approved measures that relax restrictions on the medical use of some illegal drugs.

"I think we are going to end up with a smaller group of these physicians than we ourselves once expected," Drug Enforcement Administration chief Thomas Constantine said. "And we are going to take very, very serious action against them."

The plan to move against doctors follows

the Justice Department's decision not to challenge the new state laws in court. Federal officials also plan to launch a public-relations campaign to remind Americans of the dangers of illegal drugs. The measures are part of a package of recommendations offered to President Clinton on Friday by Gen. Barry McCaffrey, his drug-policy adviser. The plan was based on recommendations from a half-dozen federal departments.

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### Yeltsin returns to office fired up after hiatus

MOSCOW (AP) — President Boris Yeltsin returned to his office at the Kremlin Monday declaring himself "ready for battle" after six months on the sidelines with heart trouble.

Arriving in his black stretch Mercedes, Yeltsin said he was "full of energy and strength" after his Nov. 5 quintuple heart bypass surgery.

Clad in a fur hat and an overcoat, he emerged unaided from his limousine at about 9:40 a.m. and spoke briefly with reporters as aides hovered nearby.

"I'm ready for battle," he said. Yeltsin's return effectively marks the start of his second term. His heart trouble struck at the end of June, only days before his July 3 re-election victory. Since then, the 65-year-old leader has made only rare public appearances.

The president looks slimmer and more alert than before the surgery, and his breathing seems less labored. Doctors say his heart function is normal and he could work for another decade.

The Russian leader called British Prime Minister John Major, one of several items on a busy agenda that included meetings with his defense and security councils and a special tax commission.

Yeltsin, who always has governed with big, bold strokes, said he was impatient with the country's social problems and warned his staff there would be a reckoning for anyone who slacked off during his absence.

Shaking up his staff would allow Yeltsin to reassert his authority, but it probably wouldn't amount to much more than rearranging the furniture. Most of Russia's entrenched problems can't be fixed by presidential decree.

It remains unclear whether Yeltsin can infuse new life into policies that have failed to solve the country's most important problems: an economy that's still shrinking, millions of workers who have been unpaid for months and lingering tension in the breakaway Chechen republic.

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# BEALLS



49ers defeat Detroit Lions to end regular season play

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — While Steve Young and Jerry Rice piled up personal honors, the San Francisco 49ers took what many called a meaningless game and turned it into a tuneup for the playoffs.

With their postseason place already assured, the 49ers beat the Detroit Lions 24-14 Monday night. San Francisco (12-4) plays host to Philadelphia on Sunday, and Detroit (5-11) simply goes home.

It is the first time the 49ers have gone into the playoffs as a wild card since 1985 — and the team is well aware of the rarity of wild cards reaching and winning the Super Bowl.

Young, who finished the regular season with his fifth passing title in six years, who completed 11 of 14 passes for 96 yards and threw a pair of 1-yard touchdown passes to Ted Popson and Derek Loville, stayed in the game for the first half.

Young, who missed all or parts of eight games because of injuries, finished the season with five solid games, lifting his passing rating to 97.2 and surpassing Green Bay's Brett Favre (95.8). Rice stood on the sidelines with Young after the first half, but caught five passes for 49 yards to boost his season reception total to 108, the most in the NFL.

Behind him is Detroit's Herman Moore, who had eight receptions to finish with 106. Moore stayed in the game, but the 49ers defense worked to make sure Rice kept the title. "I tried, but this man is impossible," Moore said. "It's an honor to be standing on the same field with him. When I watch him it makes me work harder."

While the 49ers were able to hold back Moore, they couldn't stop Sanders, who ran for 175 yards. Sanders finished the season with 1,553 yards, surpassing Denver's Terrell Davis' 1,538 yards. It was his third straight season with at least 1,500 rushing yards.

"The headline might be '49ers win meaningless game.' But it meant something to us," said Young.

By The Associated Press

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Team, Record. Lists top 25 teams in the Associated Press college basketball poll.

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Team, Record. Lists others receiving votes in the Associated Press college basketball poll.

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Team, Record. Lists Monday's College Basketball Major Scores.

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Team, Record. Lists Midweek's College Basketball Major Scores.

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Team, Record. Lists Monday's Sports Transactions.

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Kansas tops basketball poll

Kansas is no stranger to the No. 1 ranking in college basketball, having been there in each of the last five seasons.

The current group of Jayhawks apparently likes the view. In their longest run since the No. 1 streak that began in the 1992-93 season, the Jayhawks (10-0) were on top Monday for the fourth consecutive week.

Last season, they managed to have a three-week run at No. 1. Since moving to No. 1, Kansas has beaten Cincinnati, UCLA, George Washington, North Carolina-Asheville and North Carolina State.

The streak figures to go at least one more week as the Jayhawks' next games are against Washburn and Brown before they begin the Big 12 season.

Wake Forest, Kentucky, Michigan and Iowa State held spots 2-5 for the second straight week, with the Jayhawks again the runaway No. 1 choice of the national media panel with 63 first-place votes and 1,743 points.

Wake Forest (8-0) received six first-place votes and 1,674 points, 75 more than Kentucky (8-1). Michigan (8-0), which beat then-No. 6 Arizona in overtime last weekend, received the other No. 1 vote and had 1,521 points, 101 more than Iowa State (8-0).

Clemson moved up two spots to sixth, the school's highest ranking ever, and was followed by Cincinnati, Utah, Arizona and Villanova.

North Carolina and Duke switched places at 11th and 12th and were followed by Indiana, New Mexico, Minnesota, Louisville, Xavier, Ohio, Texas, Alabama and Texas Tech.

The last five spots were Maryland, Arkansas, Stanford and the newcomers, Oregon and Boston College.

Falling from the rankings were No. 21 Fresno State and No. 24 UCLA.

Oregon (7-0), which beat Fresno State earlier in the season, was ranked for seven weeks in the 1994-95 season and that was the school's first appearance in the poll since 1977.

Boston College (5-1), which lost to Connecticut earlier in the season, dropped out of the rankings last week despite not losing, but returned this week after a road victory over Holy Cross.

Fresno State (6-3), ranked as high as 13th this season, dropped out having lost three of its last four. The Bulldogs beat Massachusetts after losing at Oregon, then lost at Texas and to Texas Tech at Las Vegas.

UCLA (3-3), ranked fifth in the preseason poll, has fallen steadily under interim coach Steve Lavin since an opening home loss to Tulsa. UCLA lost to Illinois last week in its first road game of the season.

Honest coach Dan Reeves looking for new job

By TOM CANAVAN AP Sports Writer

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Minutes before George Young began a press conference at Giants Stadium to officially announce his firing, Dan Reeves greeted two reporters near his locker room.

After shaking hands and expressing best wishes for the holiday season, the reporters wished Reeves luck in finding a new job.

"Dan, you're probably the most honest coach I've ever dealt with," one of the reporters said.

Reeves just smiled. "To a fault," he said.

That pretty much sums up Reeves' four years with the Giants. He came to New York hoping he could work within a system that doesn't give the coach as much say in personnel matters as the general manager and the player personnel director. When he couldn't work within that system, Reeves complained in public and in private, and that cost him his job Monday as much as three straight seasons out of the playoffs.

The complaining almost got Reeves fired after posting a 5-11 record in 1995. A month before the season ended, the 52-year-old created a stir, saying he would not return after his contract expired in 1997 unless the way the front office did things changed.

Reeves and management met in January, and neither side budged. General manager George Young would neither fire Reeves nor change the way he did things. Reeves refused to resign.

Reeves, who led the Broncos to three Super Bowls in 12 years before coming here in 1993, ended up staying this year even though it was obvious the two sides had trouble working together.

"Because an employee asks for changes and doesn't get changes, it doesn't mean you eliminate an employee," Young said.

Owner Wellington Mara felt a successful season might have convinced Reeves that the Giants' way does work.

"I didn't see him as a lame duck this year," Mara said. "I was confident we'd have the kind of year that would make him want to stay."

That never happened. The Giants started slowly, played inconsistently and never got above the .500 mark in finishing 6-10.

About halfway through the season, Young started to feel a change was needed. Two days after the season ended with a 23-22 loss to New England, the general manager terminated Reeves after four seasons and a 31-33 record that included one playoff berth.

"I'm not apologizing for anything," said Young, who fired Reeves after a 10-minute meeting Monday. "We made a decision and

wanted to go in a different direction."

"I'm the different direction," Reeves insisted about 15 minutes later, speaking from the same podium Young had used in the Giants' locker room. "They want someone who is agreeable, not only with the way they do things, but how they do things."

Reeves had serious concerns with how the Giants conducted the NFL draft, particularly their use of a psychological test to evaluate potential choices. He said talented players were taken off the board because of test results.

"The psychological tests are great, but it's only a tool," he said. "You can't use them as gospel. When a psychologist has more to do with the draft than you as a head coach, then I have a problem with that."

Young, who has come under more scrutiny as the Giants' two Super Bowl wins fade into history, refused to address his differences with Reeves.

Mara defended the team's draft procedure. He insisted only a small number of potential draft choices were ever eliminated, and he maintained Reeves probably had more choice in personnel matters than did his two predecessors, Ray Handley and Bill Parcells.

"Dan Reeves is one of the most honest and truthful men I have ever been associated with," Mara said. "His perception of what goes on in our draft room and mine are very different.

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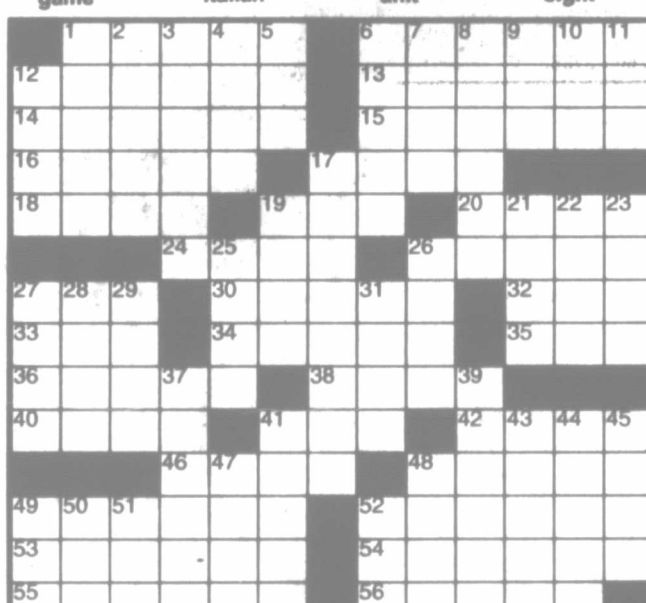
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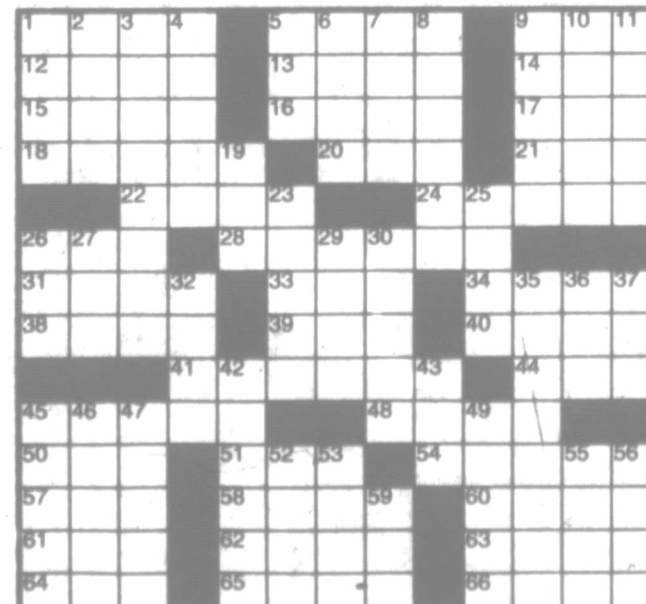
NEA Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS 1 Penny-pincher 6 Provoke 12 I found it! 13 Free-for-all 14 Tired 15 Grieve 16 Campers' homes 17 Actor Danny 18 Existence 19 Illuminated 20 Babu au 24 Shade of blue 26 A 27 Roman dozen 30 Search 32 Explosive (abbr.) 33 Apple pie maker? 34 J. Hoover 35 Language suffix 36 Once upon 38 Regulation 40 Sensible 41 Ungentlemanly one 42 All 46 Confidence game



NEA Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS 1 —one's hat (salute) 5 1966 candidate 9 Run 12 Regulation 13 Performs 14 Author Levin 15 Genius of maples 16 Small quire 17 Short sleep 18 In what place? 20 Madrid Mrs. 21 Compass pt. 22 Use a keyboard 24 Small branches — alai 26 Blacker 31 Actress Bexter 33 Author Anais — 34 Close relative 38 Implores 39 Last mo. 40 Ruse 41 Organic compounds 44 Mao — tung



Answer to Previous Puzzle

WHIP WAIST MIASTIC FRIDAY MISERY LINEUP PLY ERGY ALE SNIPPED FAZE LOS RYAN REIN AURA ERONE WRAP TONE LOS ETIRE SLIGHTER ACE ADORN CSY MODULE INDOOR EDISON PUEBLO SATAN INSET

ACROSS 48 Steak order 49 Chalk remover 52 Noonday nap 53 Diminish 54 City thoroughfare 55 Planted 56 Ancient Roman garments DOWN 1 Pack animals 2 Golf clubs 3 Snow White's friends, e.g. 4 —out (makes do with) 5 Cool (sl.) 6 Musical key 7 Aid in diagnosing 8 Richard Avedon's tool 9 Chill 10 Hoosier shade 11 Superlative suffix 12 Ancient Italian

ACROSS 45 Not clear 46 Bullfight cheer 51 Soap ingredient 54 Goods for sale 57 —the knot (wed) 58 Ripped 60 Talk imperfectly 61 14th letters quire 62 Selva 63 First-rate (2 wds.) 64 Actress Sandra — 65 Computer user's need 66 Irritated DOWN 1 Act like an artist 2 That hurts! 3 Like some glances 4 River boat 5 Dentist's deg. 6 Fumbler's exclamation 7 TV producer Norman —

Answer to Previous Puzzle

MISER EXCITIE EUREKA FRACAS SLOPED LAMENT YENIS HAVE EBBIE HIL RHUM XIII PROBE TINY MOM EDGAR ESE ATIME RULE SAME CAD KHAN SCAM TBONE ERASER SIESTA RECEDE STREET SEEDIED YOGAS

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# Clintons' key aides discussed return of money brought by Trie

WASHINGTON (AP) — A month after learning about suspicious donations to the first family's legal defense fund, six senior White House aides met with the fund's director and expressed concerns about offending donors if the money was returned, officials confirmed.

The high-level meeting on May 9, which is likely to draw the interest of investigators, included the president's most trusted adviser, Bruce Lindsey, and Hillary Rodham Clinton's chief of staff, Margaret Williams, the officials said.

The purpose was to discuss \$460,000 in two large manila envelopes that had been delivered to the defense fund on

March 21 by Charles Yah Lin Trie, an Asian-American businessman and friend of the president. The money was eventually returned because of suspicions about its origins.

Others at the briefing by Michael Cardozo, the fund's executive director, included deputy chiefs of staff Harold Ickes and Evelyn Lieberman, White House counsel Jack Quinn and associate counsel Cheryl Mills, according to the officials. They spoke on condition they not be identified.

Meanwhile, Clinton said he remained reluctant to criticize Trie and another Democratic fund-raiser whose activities have come under scrutiny, John Huang.

"The reason I have not been more critical of Charlie Trie or John Huang is that it is not clear to me ... to what extent they knew exactly what they were doing and whether it was wrong," Clinton said in an interview published in the *Los Angeles Times*.

"One thing we know is that the culture out of which they come doesn't draw the same bright lines between politics, government and business that we do," Clinton said.

Lindsey's attendance at the May meeting marks the first time that the president's closest confidant has surfaced in the week-old controversy.

Williams' presence reflects the contin-

uing interest of Mrs. Clinton, who was among the first people at the White House informed of the questionable donations. Cardozo told them on April 4, two weeks after the envelopes were delivered.

According to one official, Cardozo made clear at the May 9 meeting that trustees for the defense fund felt that, "out of an abundance of caution," the proper course would be to return the contributions.

White House aides expressed concern to Cardozo about offending contributors if their donations were returned, the officials said. A White House aide said Sunday the question was not

whether to return the donations but rather what to tell the donors when the contributions were returned.

While some of the donations were suspicious because they were given in sequentially numbered money orders by supposedly different people, many appeared completely proper.

The White House "was anxious that the donors might feel the money was being returned simply because they were Asian-Americans," said one person familiar with the meeting. "The White House was concerned about what the fund was going to tell the donors if they sent them back their money."

# Queen Elizabeth II sends 22 sketches by Michelangelo to U.S. to exhibit in Washington museum

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michelangelo not only painted immense frescoes and carved massive sculptures, he also liked to do little pen and ink sketches. His friends, amused by the contrast, were happy to get them as gifts.

A powerful duke in Florence is known to have compelled the 16th century master to give him one.

King George III of England two centuries later started collecting the drawings, some smaller than a sheet of typewriter paper.

Queen Elizabeth II has lent 22 of them for an exhibit at Washington's National Gallery of Art and other U.S. museums called "Michelangelo and His

Influence: Drawings from Windsor Castle."

"There was and remains an inherent surprise ... in the painter who could cover square meters of fresco in a day, producing drawings of watchmakerly precision," wrote Paul Joannides, who put the exhibit together.

The drawings had great influ-

ence on artists even in Michelangelo's own day, including his great rival, Raphael. The two lived in Florence and Rome at the same times and must have known one another.

"What Raphael had of art, he got from me," the 67-year-old Michelangelo growled in a letter — still bitter 20 years

after the younger man's death.

Visitors can judge for themselves from two Raphael drawings that are also in the show.

The artist gave many drawings to Tommaso de' Cavalieri, a Roman nobleman who was only 12 or 13 when they first met.

"Michelangelo was then in his late 50s, he would never have

children and it is likely that his love for Tommaso was as much paternal as sexual," according to Joannides.

One of his gifts was a preliminary drawing of Phaeton, the child of the Greek sun god who drove his father's chariot too close to the sun and had to be brought back to earth by a bolt of lightning.

# Crash victim's engagement ring returned

SMITHTOWN, N.Y. (AP) — An FBI official says he's getting an engagement ring back to a woman who lost her fiancé in the explosion of TWA Flight 800 because "it's the right thing to do."

The diamond ring, found floating amid the debris of the plane after the explosion, was to be returned to Julie Stuart. She had fought for the ring's return since the July 17 crash, which killed her fiancé, Andrew Krukar.

"This is bittersweet," Ms. Stuart, 31, said Monday. "I only wish it was the way it was supposed to be, with Andy placing it on my finger. I miss him so much."

Ms. Stuart receives the ring from FBI assistant director James Kallstrom in a private meeting in Manhattan.

"It's the right thing to," Kallstrom said. "My heart goes out to her and all the victims' families all the time, but especially during this holiday season."

Ms. Stuart and her fiancé, 41, had purchased the 1.6-carat ring in June in Bridgewater, Conn., where they lived together.

Krukar took Flight 800 for Paris, the ring tucked in his briefcase inside a burgundy-colored box with gold piping. Ms. Stuart was to meet him there two days later, when the couple planned to formally seal their engagement.

A day after the Boeing 747 exploded over waters off Long Island, searchers recovered the ring box floating in the water. A week later, a friend of Krukar's in Paris spotted a photo of the box in a French magazine and recognized it.

Since then, Ms. Stuart has pressured TWA and others for the ring's return.

"Mr. Kallstrom is the only one to come through for me," she said. "He promised I would get the ring back and now he's personally going to turn it over to me. ... I am very grateful he's done this. It means so much."

Officials have said the return of belongings of Flight 800 victims has been delayed by the investigation into the crash and by the need to positively identify the owners.



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