

Ex-wife claims Alves threatened her life with knife

By Nikki Namdar
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Ana Regina Myrrha, the ex-wife of Marcelo Alves, the ex Valencia contractor accused of sexually assaulting a young woman in March, filed for dissolution on Apr. 1 of this year, but in Oct. 2007, she filed for an injunction towards Alves.

"Marcelo threaten to punch me on my face in front of the two children," Myrrha, 48, claimed in the report. "He then got a butcher knife and put on my throat saying that he was going to kill me. He pulled down the garage door out of the rail, so I could not flee with the children."

When Alves was incarcerated on March 17 for sexual battery with a deadly weapon, Myrrha claimed in a follow-up report that the knife was the same knife put to her throat.

Myrrha stated that the Department of Children and Families investigated, but the verbal abuse continued.

Myrrha also said in the report, "Since then he has called the house and insists that he will not accept our divorce to be final and will be with me again."

Myrrha and her attorney, Warren T. Channell, of Channell Law Firm, declined to comment on the matter.

Alves declined the request by The Voice to interview him.

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Light rail bill pulls into Crist station

By Matt Dixon
The News Herald, Panama City, Fla.

PANAMA CITY, Fla. — Sen. Durrell Peaden's closed-door meeting Monday with Gov. Charlie Crist ended simply enough.

"I said, 'Charlie, I just can't vote for your train,' " said Peaden, whose district runs from Bay County to Santa Rosa County along the Alabama line.

The Senate passed a commuter rail bill Tuesday afternoon by a 27-10 margin. The bill would, in part, help lay the groundwork for SunRail in Central Florida.

Peaden was the lone member of Northwest Florida's three-member Senate delegation to oppose the measure, with Sens. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, and Al Lawson, D-Tallahassee, supporting it.

Gaetz, one of the bill's co-sponsors, said assurances the state would not spend "one dime" to purchase track for the project helped win his support.

"The state of Florida will not be obligated to purchase track from

CSX or anybody else," Gaetz said. "I think that really helped contribute to the lopsided vote."

The SunRail plan is a proposal to purchase 61.5 miles of track from rail carrier CSX near Jacksonville and use the track for commuter rail. Now that there are assurances the state will not obligate funds to purchase the track, the onus falls on Central Florida's transportation planning organizations, and the counties affected to fund the project.

Local Department of Transportation districts also can obligate funding for the project.

The SunRail project had gotten bogged down in the Senate during the past two regular sessions. Because of vocal opposition from those who feel the project is too costly — and because of concerns from the labor unions — the bill was expected to have a tough go in the Senate.

Lawson, whose district extends into Panama City, said an agreement over labor issues was reached less than an hour before the final vote.



Colin Dever / Valencia Voice

Governor Crist intends to sign a bill to begin construction on an Orlando light rail.

"You know it was constant negotiation in the past couple days with the unions to try and solve the issues where they would not lose their jobs," Lawson said. "We finally came to some consensus about 30 minutes before we went to session."

"We got them some comfort language," he added.

Lawson said though the project will not directly affect the Panhandle, by lending his support to the bill, it helps build political capital.

"Our delegation is small," Lawson said. "This way it offers us

the opportunity to go back to our peers and get support for projects we want in the coming session."

Outside of cost, Peaden said his no vote was a direct reflection of his constituents' opposition.

"If people had been calling me telling me they wanted a train, I would have voted for the thing," he said. "I pay attention to my district, and not one person called and said they supported it."

Along with SunRail, the bill obligates an additional \$15 million for South Florida's cash-strapped Tri-Rail system.

Lawmakers convened for a special session to pass the bill because it is seen as an important step in the state becoming eligible for \$2.5 million in federal stimulus dollars. That money would be used to build a high-speed rail system from Orlando to Tampa.

Lawmakers were told earlier this year that to be eligible for the stimulus money, they needed to support the state's current rail projects.

— MCT Campus

VCC professor is dog's best friend



Collin Dever / Valencia Voice

Professor Patricia Boyle teaches humanities and loves dogs.

By Roxy Smith
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The most valuable asset Valencia Community College has to offer to the students is its professors; without them Valencia would have no purpose.

Professor Patricia Boyle has been teaching 20th Century Humanities at Valencia for 12 years and enjoys every minute of it. "I genuinely like the subject matter," said Boyle, "if I wasn't teaching it, I would be reading about it and studying it."

Boyle received her degree from Montclair State College in New Jersey and has taught at other institutions like the University of Central Florida, Seminole Community College and on United States Navy ships during the Gulf War in the early nineties.

Humanities isn't just about art and history, it is about people.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Thousands mourn slain Washington police officers

The Seattle Times

TACOMA, Wash. — Red-and-blue lights flashing, a 2,000-car procession of law enforcement and emergency vehicles arrived at the Tacoma Dome just before noon Tuesday, on a day Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire called “the darkest day in the history of law enforcement in Washington.”

The enormous contingent represented more than 300 agencies and thousands of law enforcement officers, among them an estimated 600 from British Columbia, 100 each from Chicago and New York, and others from Boston, Bozeman, Mont., Spokane Valley, Salem, Ore., and every corner of Washington state.

Lakewood police Sgt. Mark Renninger and officers Tina Griswold, Gregory Richards and Ronnie Owens were gunned down by Maurice Clem-

mons on Nov. 29 at a Pierce County coffee shop.

The memorial was so large that cars were still leaving McChord Air Force Base as the lead cars — four white hearses holding the bodies of the officers — arrived at the Tacoma Dome eight miles away.

About 20,000 mourners, mostly law-enforcement officers, were anticipated at the memorial, making it the biggest such event in Washington state history. The crowd was expected to include as many as 2,000 out-of-state officers.

“We’re here to respect the officers and to show our support,” said Everett police officer Gregory Sutherland, 37, a 15-year veteran who was waiting to join the procession. “There’s a real sense of commonality, even with people you don’t know. Because of the profession, this is the ultimate sacrifice these guys made.”

After leaving McChord Air Force Base at 10:05 a.m. under a bright, sunny sky, the long line of cars stopped at the Lakewood police station, where several hundred people gathered outside in 23-degree cold. A large American flag hung from crossed fire ladders erected by the University Place Fire Department.

The procession was joined there by a motorcade of hearses and limousines carrying the fallen officers and their families as well as four Lakewood police units, each with a black band over the front door in the officers’ memory.

The sight of the four hearses brought home the tragedy for some of the onlookers. Eileen Melberg, who works at a law firm along the route, said the sight of the flag-draped coffins made her gasp. “This isn’t a picture. This is a person who should still be alive.”

Ron and Una Ripley of Lakewood stood near the front, holding an American flag. They have two



Drew Perine, Tacoma News Tribune / MCT Campus

Members of the East Pierce Fire Department salute as pallbearers escort the caskets of the fallen Lakewood police officers at the Tacoma Dome, Tuesday, December 8, 2009, in Tacoma, Washington.

sons, one in the Coast Guard and one in the Army.

“These are people in uniform. They’re serving our country. They’re someone’s sons, fathers and wives,” said Una Ripley of the four officers. “It just breaks our hearts.”

The procession would continue on to the Tacoma Dome, where thousands of uniformed officers waited outside. Heavily armed SWAT team members patrolled the perimeter of the arena, while camouflaged snipers were in position on the roof.

At the service, American flags will be draped over the casket of each of the slain officers and then presented to their families. The event will be capped by a 21-bell salute.

Josh Warner, a military police officer from Fort Lewis, said he used to have coffee with Renninger and Owens. Owens, he said, responded earlier this year to a domestic-violence call involving a family friend and spent hours helping her fill out paperwork.

“He was the kind of officer who would go above and beyond,” Warner said. “They will be missed very much.”

Across the street from the McChord gate where the procession began, Jerome Wahl, 33, sat with a table of coffee and cookies for officers and a 4-foot sign reading, “Comfort Design supports the Lakewood Police Department and their families.”

“I live in the area; I do all my shopping in Lakewood,” said Wahl, service manager for the window and door company across the street. “We appreciate the police department in everything they do and we are deeply saddened by this tragedy that happened right here in our back yard.”

The memorial, including the procession of cars, was arranged in less than four days. Lakewood police dispatches were expected to compile a recording with the radio call letters of each slain officer, to be called out at the service.

— MCT Campus



Drew Perine, Tacoma News Tribune / MCT Campus

A giant flag strung between two fire trucks is displayed during the memorial for four slain Washington policemen



Collin Dever / Valencia Voice

Professor Patricia Boyle, shown above, is a co-founder of Buddies for Life, which is an organization dedicated to rescuing animals.

Boyle loves helping animals, environment

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I have a natural curiosity about what makes people tick and why things happen," said Boyle.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower believed that you can "promote peace through understanding." Humanities is sought to do the same thing, by understanding people and the history of a different culture we can learn to respect and appreciate the people and land.

Boyle's real love is in helping animals and being kind to the Earth, which is the main focus of the Humane Education class she teaches.

Humane Education has only been of-

fered at Valencia for the last three years and has just recently become an official class that is now recognized statewide.

"This class isn't just about helping animals," said Boyle, "it is about how humans relate to each other."

The class frequently has guest speakers and goes on different field trips throughout the semester. Some of the field trips include going to the Orlando Science Center, The Holocaust Center, the pound, animal shelters and the humane society.

Boyle has given humane education presentations at elementary and high schools. The presentations focus on how to treat animals properly and the importance of preserving the environment.

In 2003, Professor Boyle and a few of her friends got together to form their

own organization to help and rescue animals. Buddies for Life, Inc. is about humane education and the importance of pet adoption.

Buddies for Life's motto is, "A vision of a loving, permanent home for every pet." They have rescued and successfully adopted 1,012 animals.

The organization mostly rescues dogs, but they occasionally get a few cats. When they receive an animal they get them updated on their shots and have groomed before they are put up for adoption.

"I love animals and I want to do what I can to help," said Boyle.

Professor Boyle strives to make a difference in the life of her students and animals through teaching humanities and humane education classes.

Valencia observes World AIDS Day

By Karen Raffaello
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ORLANDO, Fla. – Miracle of Love, Bridges to Success, and peer educators of west campus presented Worlds AIDS day Dec. 1.

HIV testing was held in various rooms, including the miracle of love bus parked in front of the SSB patio.

"College students do have sex," said Roxanne Cobben, a peer educator for west campus. "I understand abstinent only education but I don't agree with it, people are going to do what they want to do."

Peer educators provided pamphlets on sexually transmitted disease and safer sex, handed out free condoms, and free was given to anyone who was tested for HIV.

They also provide information on drunk driving, smoking, and safe spring breaks.

"We need better education that focus more on safer sex," said Denise Elmore, a Valencia student who waited to be tested.

"We need to be more open with our children and be realistic, sex education needs to start in Pre-K and up, not in graphic detail, but some kids

don't know anything about sex until they get to high school."

Not all of the participants agreed that sex education at a young age is the way to go.

"Some young people are getting out of hand," said Joe Easley, a Valencia student who was getting tested. "They talk about sex like its nothing and where loosing them when they are young."

Miracle of love does HIV testing every Tuesday at west campus in building three room 232, there is a sign up sheet to make appointments.

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OUR VOICE

Gaseous emissions spawn new round of regulation

It happened so quickly, the days of Reganomics are gone, the idea that being free is to be safe from the government intervening on something that hardly effects you. The conservative movement that drove America for the better part of three decades is over, and how did it come about?

In uproarious applause and claims of hope and change. But that's old news, what is important now is what is being changed and how much hope is left for the future of the way things are handled. As it stands now, the government just became a whole lot more organized.

Instead of the fly by the seat of our pants, fix the problems as they come, don't speak about it now or we'll have to defend our actions government that has been operating under the past four presidents, yes all four of them; we now have an administration in place that is making sure regulations are put in place. They now manage how credit is handled by banks, who is and who isn't defined as a war criminal and how we should treat them and who should get health care coverage.

It's even a priority for this administration to regulate our gaseous emissions. As of Dec. 7, the EPA has declared several greenhouse gasses hazards to the public's health, the likes of which are to be regulated by the government, god forbid, in efforts to limit the use or do away with the use of these gases from automobiles, factories, power plants, etcetera, entirely. Why is this a bad idea, if the government believes that certain chemicals are hazardous to our health then what exactly is the problem with trying to bring the problem to a minimum?

And there in lies the conflict that has gone on the past few decades, how to police the things we use in our day to day lives. Making sure the water we drink is safe, making sure our money is being kept safe, making sure that when students start looking for ways to go to college they have options, provided by the government, on how they can pay for their education.

These things aren't bad, regulations help control the big guys so the small guys have a fair shake, it keeps companies and governing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Nate Beeler



"Washington could provide incentives for homeowners and businesses to make buildings more energy efficient."

— Christian Science Monitor

"The Obama administration has settled on using unspent bank bailout funds to pay for a new jobs measure."

— The Freelance Star

"Many small business owners and business organizations have voiced their displeasure with being shut out of these events. So what are we waiting for? Let's hold our own jobs summit."

— Entrepreneur.com

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POLL

Humanity and celebrity clash again

Fame doesn't change a person's urges but does increase temptations

By Tommy Tomlinson
McClatchy Newspapers

I'm not interested in whether Tiger Woods owes us an explanation; I'm more interested in the explanations we owe him or, maybe, ourselves.

Can we explain why we buy stuff just because Tiger says so? He endorses Tag Heuer watches, AT&T telephones, Gatorade drinks, Gillette razors and Nike everything. Tiger delivers an audience of grown men (and some women) who buy from those companies because he tells them to.

He makes much more from this than he does from winning tournaments. Tiger's real job is no longer golf; his real job is advertising.

I can understand why somebody might buy a putter if the world's greatest golfer says it's good. But a watch? Or a certain type of razor blade? Does that make any sense at all?

The finest singers, the boldest painters, the most brilliant politicians, as people, they're no better than the rest of us, except they're faced with more temptations. Yet we keep trying to link great skill with great morality, even though when they match up it's just dumb luck.

It's fine to admire Tiger for his ability to stripe a drive down the fairway

of the 18th hole at the Masters. But that's what he does. It's not who he is. To believe otherwise is to be like a child who believes Batman is real.

Can we explain why we think we know people we've never met? It's fair to conclude, from Tiger's statement, that he fooled around. But we don't know how many times, with how many women, for how long.

He might be a serial hound; he might be a doofus who made one huge mistake.

We don't know how much it hurt him to betray his wife like that, how much he regrets it, how sincerely he promised her, and himself, to never do it again. We don't know if this will break their marriage, or if it will just leave a crack that never quite seals.

The reason we don't know those things is that we don't know Tiger Woods. All we know is the little bits we see on the golf course, and the professionally crafted images on commercials, and now this sad little moment in his driveway at 2 in the morning.

Those pieces don't add up to a real human being.

And maybe the last thing we need to explain to ourselves is why we think they do.

— MCT Campus

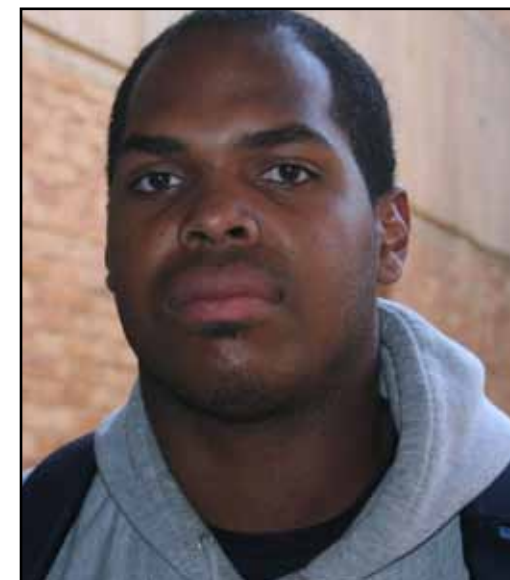
What is your opinion of the Woods scandal?

Photos by Kenny Wagner



>> He lost his integrity, it makes him another person, not as trustworthy.

— Alexa Wilson



>> It's going to hurt his career but that doesn't hurt my opinion, he's still a great golfer.

— Jeffrey Phillippe



>> I can't imagine myself ever being in his situation.

— Barry Mohan



>> I'm not bothered by it, he's a man all men do that.

— Michelle Nanfang



>> If I had his money I wouldn't even be married.

— Joshua Lettman



>> He committed himself to someone, it's not right for him to cheat.

—Gigi Hyppolate

YOUR VOICE

Laissez - unfair

Government intervention often benefits few

By Manny Colon
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When the word regulation is mentioned, it feels like nails on a board.

Regulation is the government's tool to control society's behavior, but they tend to regulate things that are very complicated to regulate, and they don't regulate what they should.

Plato once had a government structure that was excellent by design. It was divided into three classes: the ruling class, the auxiliary class (military and police), and the merchant class.

Each class however had certain regulations to prevent corruption. The ruling and auxiliary class had power over the state, but couldn't own property, while the merchant class could own as much property as possible, but had no say in politics.

This type of regulation is justified by the fact that too much power corrupts and everyone has a role to play in the state and must not bleed out into other affairs (like merchants having political power, and immense wealth).

In today's American society, this certainly is the case. Many juggernaut industries like Big Oil, and health insurance have their hands in the cook-

ie jar when it comes to politics.

Companies like these are the ones that should be regulated.

These industries bleed out the masses for their own personal gain, and have little regard for anybody else (unless there's some way they can benefit from you of course).

They should be regulated, and monitored and all times. Why should the masses pay hundreds of dollars a month in order to get insurance that can at least cover doctor visits and prescription medicine?

I say regulate how much they are allowed to charge for a vital necessity.

Health insurance shouldn't be free, but it should be affordable, and the government should regulate this. Regulation however, hasn't been much of a success in American government for the past hundred years.

Prohibition utterly failed, and many "corporate buster" politicians like Theodore Roosevelt have also failed because these industries hold a majority stake in trade politics.

Instead of focusing on trite issues like marijuana and prostitution, they should avert their attention to the real issue: how can they stop major industries from driving this country into the ground?

Regulation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

bodies in control and that is never a bad thing. It is about making sure the United States is first and foremost looking to regulate the quality of life so that we don't have to worry about all of the little things like the airlines or the automobile industry.

We can take solace in the fact that the government is worrying about the little idiosyncrasies that most people don't have time for or ignore. Sometimes the government can over step its bounds, these regulations become costly, require more paper work and create bureaucracy, but all of these functions have to exist in order to insure the safety and happiness of the people.

Arguing that Americans are freer because of deregulation just isn't true. It doesn't impair our ability to do just as we were doing before, it doesn't limit the ways we can spend or receive money and it doesn't affect our ability to exercise our fundamental constitutional rights.

The same gasses that are being called harmful to our health now were always harmful, and the government has always known about it. If that is what deregulation gets you and it is what most proponents have called it, a "freer system" then it is hardly a fairer one.

—opinion@valenciavoice.com

Plus sized pupils prevented from progressing

By Tiffany Janiczek
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You're final semester is almost over, finals are days away, graduation is so close you can taste it. Then days before the term ends you find that you are ineligible to graduate. Why? What class did I miss? How could I have forgot to take a class?

Well if you attend Lincoln University in South Chester County, Penn. and your Body Mass Index is over 30, the class you're missing is Physical Education.

Instituted 3 years ago, students with a BMI over 30 are required to take P.E. in order to graduate.

As a campus wide initiative to "make everyone healthy" this rule is only in place for overweight students and instead of promoting health what this is making "fat people feel excluded."

In my opinion this rule is ludicrous, just because someone is thin doesn't mean they are any healthier than an overweight person.

I have many friends who are thin, yet they have high blood pressure, cholesterol through the roof; they never work out and eat whatever they want because their metabolism allows them too.

I work out, eat healthy, take vitamins, drink more water than my thin friends, have normal blood pressure, and low cholesterol, I just realize that my metabolism is slow, and no matter how hard I try I will never be a size two. Yet if I went to Lincoln University, I would be considered

unhealthy and be forced to take a P.E. class to make me healthier

In an image conscious society, where the numbers of people with eating disorders is sky high, isn't it more important to be comfortable with yourself? Sure, I'd love to be a size two, but even if I were it doesn't mean I'd be healthy. Instead of making fat kids take this class, just because of their BMI, why not test everyone, and make the unhealthy kids, regardless of size take this class. Better yet...do away with the rule altogether.

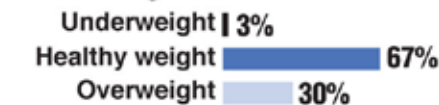
Views on obesity

A majority of those polled say they have a healthy weight, despite government statistics showing 64 percent of Americans are overweight or obese.

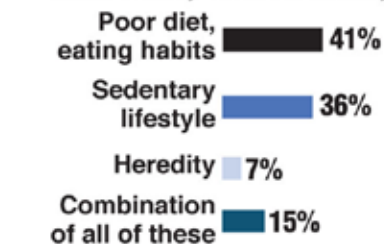
• How important a health problem is being overweight or obese for you, your family?



• Your weight is:



• What is likely cause of obesity?



Source: Ipsos-McClatchy poll of 1,000 adults, July 30-Aug. 3, 2009; margin of error: +/- 3.1 percentage points
Graphic: Judy Treible © 2009 MCT

Last novel excites fans

Crichton's 'Pirate Latitudes' satisfies readers

By Jimmy Tater
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From the legend who wrote the "Jurassic Park" novel and created the long running television show "ER" comes "Pirate Latitudes." This manuscript by the late Michael Crichton was discovered by his son among his father's personal possessions and was published posthumously.

The story begins in the small village of Port Royal in Jamaica when Captain Charles Hunter hears a tip about a vulnerable Spanish ship that is loaded with treasure.

He quickly gathers a group of nautically gifted men, each with their own special talent. Immediately, they leave Port Royal in the Cassandra under false pretenses.

Although extracting the treasure as they intend to is considered piracy and is punishable by law, they will claim something similar to self-defense; with the support of Port Royal's governor Almont.

While at sea they encounter many different obstacles associated with 17th century boating and struggle to return to Port Royal alive.

The end notes claim that there once was a Captain Hunter in the 1600's and notes on him were preserved at Trinity College in Cambridge, making this story a work of historical fiction.

Luckily, there is no better setting for Crichton's team of pirates to explore than the Carib-

bean before there were GPS devices or even an engine on their ship.

Their many chance encounters with death, which go as quickly as they came, all threaten their ability to get home safely.

There is a big element of man versus his environment in this story, like when Captain faces an enormous squid that attacks the ship and sends him overboard or the hurricanes they try to avoid while at sea.

Crichton does a great job of not allowing old English dialects and phrases to impede his ability to tell the story by forcing modern English readers to decode them.

There is a little of the colonial manner of speaking with words and phrases like "shall" or "I beseech you" but the author does not complicate it further by writing it phonetically or with an accent.

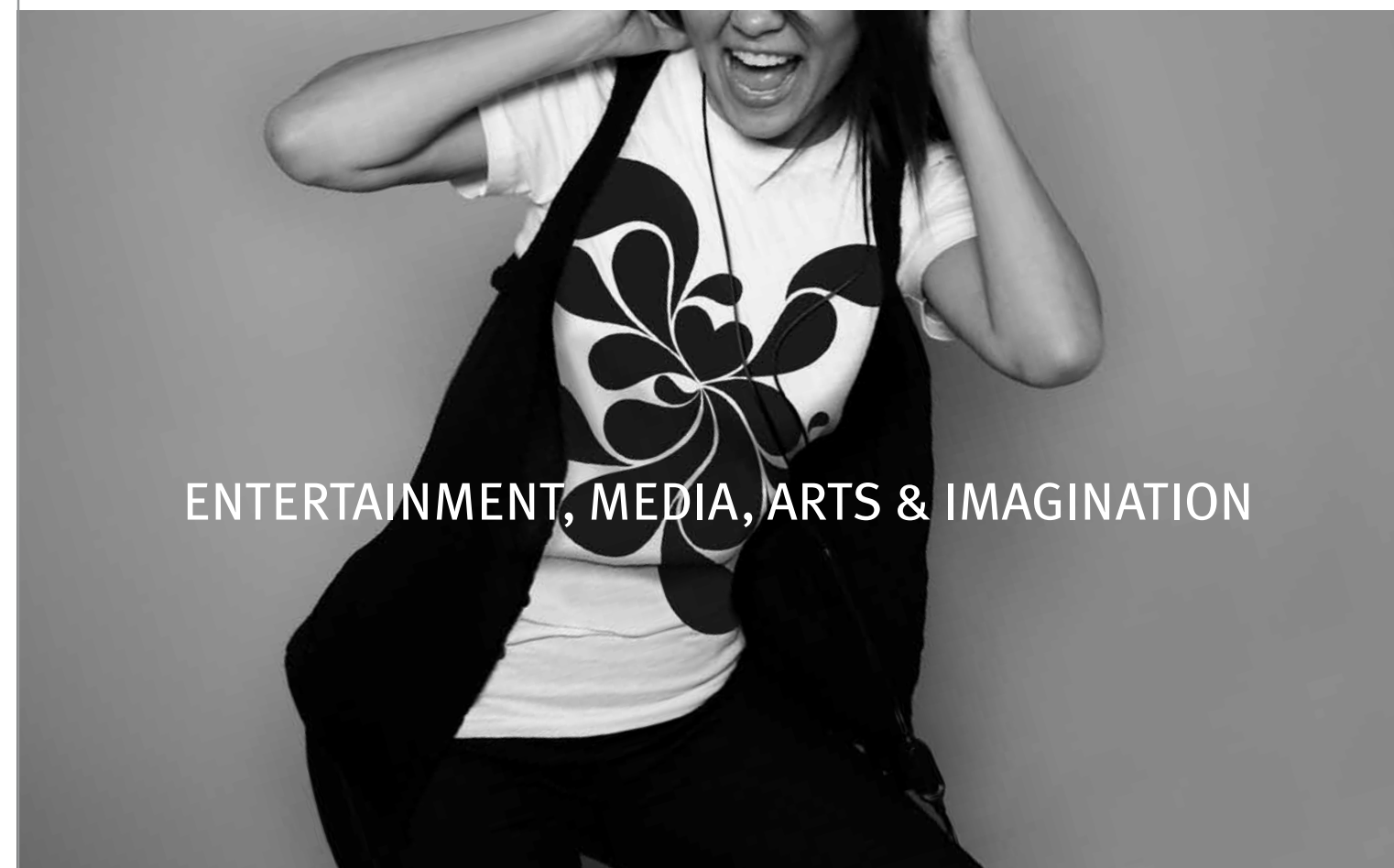
Overall, the dialogue is cleaned up well for the reader considering that it's a story that starts in an English colony during the 1600's. Its more like the colonial dialect is inserted sparingly as a novelty more than anything else.

This may be the last release by Michael Crichton unless there is another acceptable manuscript found among his possessions.

This is one of the better accounts of pirates and nautical adventures in pop culture, even more so, if you're not bought by the make-up and the Disney magic in the "Pirates of the Caribbean" series.



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'Assassin' wins with gamers

'Creed' sequel improves upon its predecessor

By Manny Colon
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The "Assassin's Creed" series is defined by its manipulation of history by filling in blanks that the history books don't mention.

Don't get me wrong though. "Assassin's Creed 2's" game-play has been greatly improved since the first installment adding more weapons and gadgets like an extra hidden blade to perform double assassinations, smoke bombs and even a hidden gun for powerful long range kills.

Ezio can also hire courtesans and thieves to provide distraction, and mercenaries to fight beside him.

The player can also select different weapons and armor, allowing for more variety in the game.

With over 200 missions (about half of them being part of the main storyline), it's going to take a while to finish, even if it's played non-stop.

The storyline, however, continues to be the most impressive feature along with its stunning visuals.

The game's protagonist, Ezio Auditore da Firenze, witnesses his father's death (along with his brothers), so he bows vengeance against the conspirators, which include the likes of Rodrigo Borgia (Pope Alexander VI), and the Pazzi family.

He's then taken in by his uncle, Mario (an assassin), and learns many of the assassin's techniques even though Ezio is not an initiated assassin.

The storyline takes the player across the elegant Italian states of Florence and Venice, and other cities like Forli and even Rome.

I'm still amazed at how the developers fill in

blanks of history with Templar conspiracy theories, and add to that some historical figures, like Niccolo Machiavelli, are actually assassins.

So whether you're in it for the gruesome assassinations, the stunning graphics, or the mind-boggling storyline, "Assassin's Creed 2" is destined to be one of the best games of 2009.



Games Press

Ezio Auditore da Firenze, the main character in "Assassin's Creed 2," is performing an assassination.

'Season' knits family tale

By Jimmy Tater
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Kate Jacobs attempts to tell a warm holiday story set in England about family in "Knit the Season: A Friday Night Knitting Club Novel."

Dakota Walker who is the heir to the arts and craft store Walker and Daughter, is deciding whether to boost her career over the winter holidays or spend time with her family.

She is excited about the culinary arts, so she considers an internship at a local hotel that would require her to work through the holidays. Her Aunt Anita is planning to get married but, after the postponing several times she shows signs of doubt. Also, there are several flashbacks to the life Dakota's mother, Georgia, lived before she died of cancer.

Although Dakota is the protagonist, she is best described as a non-hero. She is in her early twenties and wants a career in both the culinary arts and knitting. The problem is that she overwhelms herself with both activities.

In the section when she surrenders and opts to spend winter vacation with her extended family, she gets back to her apartment and is inhibited because she is too tired to pack. Imagine this weary character starting an internship when winter vacation starts.

Jacobs may be trying to make a statement with this character about young people who overwork themselves at the expense of relationships with their relatives. But, it is more like a failed attempt to use Dakota to relate to kids, as if thriving as a perfectionist is the norm.

This character forces herself into misery by try-

ing to live up to high expectations that she puts upon herself - I think it is too much for Jacobs to ask the reader for sympathy there or to relate in a masochistic fashion as that.

In addition, the underdeveloped knitting club that was given some life in the early pages was ultimately unimportant and obstructive to rest of the story, and was ineffectual when Jacobs ended with it.

There was an opportunity lost by the author to bring entrepreneurs nigh with this book. Dakota is a female in her early twenties that is slated to operate Dakota and Walker once a veteran business partner moves to France.

Yet, there is little mention about the aspects of business someone of her age would face for the first time.

There is mention that the shop recently had a renovation, cryptically referred to as a "reno," for unknown reasons. But, it only reveals to the reader that the business is in a little debt as a result, and Dakota is under more pressure.

The better part of this book was the gathering of various family members at Dakota's grandparents' farm. It mainly held scenarios where she spent time getting to know her relatives better and compares nicely to the solitude she would have felt if she worked into the holidays.

Sure, this story could alienate the boldest of male readers, like when the aunt's wedding is finally executed, the reader is informed that it advised to plug things up when wearing white- just in case.

But, if you're willing to navigate that and other attempts to build an audience specific book, you might appreciate a story about family or marvel at a non-hero in this work of contemporary fiction.

'Princess and the Frog' brings animation back

By Roger Moore
The Orlando Sentinel

Disney's "The Princess and the Frog" is an instant classic and one of the year's best films. An enchanting story told with a healthy helping of heart, it marks a return to the style of animation that made Walt Disney's studio famous. And it's a return to form for a studio that milked 2D animated fairytales to death in the '90s.



Courtesy Disney Enterprises, Inc. / MCT Campus

Princess Tiana, left, and Prince Naveen in "The Princess and the Frog."

Disney's first African American "princess" tale is set in Roaring '20s New Orleans, with the classic frog prince story translated to hard-working waitress Tiana (voiced by Dreamgirl Anika Noni Rose) who tries to help a suave frog (Bruno Campos, very Antonio Banderas) become a prince again with a kiss. But she's not a real princess, and the ne'er-do-well prince, Naveen, who is visiting "N'awlins" to soak up the jazz and marry a rich girl, needs to learn the value of hard work and true love.

So Tiana is transformed into a frog, too, and each of them learns a better way to live and love as they're dodging gators and the minions of The Shadow Man (Keith David, perfect) who has set up a fake prince with designs on finally having the money to rule the city.

Disney summoned its Little Mermaid team to direct this, and John Musker and Ron Clements zero in on the emotional center of the story even as they and their co-writers find jokes and jokey characters to juice this thing up. So we see Tiana grasp that achieving her dream — her own restaurant — without love would be empty, and Naveen learn to think of someone other than himself.

There are story elements borrowed from many a Disney 'toon, even The Jungle Book, as and a trumpet-playing gator wants to be human so he can blow that jazz. Musker and Clements even name a blue tick hound "Stella" just so Big Daddy La Bouff can summon his dog Tennessee Williams style.



Courtesy Disney Enterprises, Inc. / MCT Campus

Walt Disney Pictures introduces its first African-American princess, Tiana, in "The Princess and the Frog." Pictured are characters Princess Tiana, left, and Prince Naveen.

"STEL-laaaaa!"

Big Daddy spoils his daughter Lottie (Jennifer Cody, an adorably daft voice to match her character), but never thinks of lending his daughter's lifelong pal Tiana the money to open her own restaurant. That's just as well, as this movie's "hard work" ethos suggests that she wouldn't take anyway.

Randy Newman, a songwriter with deep New Orleans roots, conjures up a dazzling collection of tunes, with a couple of gospel-inspired call-and-response show-stoppers — "I'm Almost There" and "Dig a Little Deeper" (a bayou chorus of roseate spoonbills!). And if this lyric doesn't give the city a new theme song — "Rich people, poor people, all got dreams. And

dreams do come true in New Orleans" — somebody's missing the riverboat.

Musker and Clements invent a great new Disney villain in The Shadow Man, and, like Walt and the Brothers Grimm, don't shy away from letting death show its face, lending urgency and poignancy to the tale.

It's been 20 years since The Little Mermaid, but with this classic story classically told, The Princess and the Frog can proudly take its place among Disney's great princess pictures. Yes, "EVERY little girl is a princess" is true. And if the spirited Tiana inspires more African American princesses to don tiaras, their daddies will just have to live with it.

— MCT Campus

'Men of a certain Age' fun for all ages

By Chuck Barney
Contra Costa Times

"Men of A Certain Age," a new comedy-drama from TNT, is about three dudes pushing 50 and all the horrific gloom that entails. You have to wonder if it landed in prime time purely by accident.

Isn't television, after all, supposed to be youth-obsessed? Doesn't the most prized TV demographic start at age 18 and flat line at 49? What kind of companies would be caught dead advertising with such a show — other than Rogaine and Lipitor?

Yet, here we are being asked to hang out with guys in relaxed-fit jeans who strain to read menus and still listen to Neil Sedaka, for crying out loud. At least they're played by familiar actors — Ray Romano, Scott Bakula and Andre Braugher. And at least they manage to be as endearing as they are pitiful.

If it doesn't work, blame Romano. After spending nine seasons headlining one of the most popular sitcoms in recent memory, he returns — significantly less buffoonish — in a very different kind of series as a co-creator, writer and executive producer. Yes, we're about to find out if everybody still loves Raymond.

He plays Joe, a slightly neurotic, recently separated father of two who once had dreams of being a professional golfer (Cue up Springsteen's "Glory Days"). Now he struggles to curb a gambling problem and runs a party store where his teen employees openly deride his "old man music."

Joe still finds time to chill out with a couple of pals from college. There's Terry (Bakula), a past-his-prime actor and part-time temp who still manages to attract pretty young wom-

en with scant effort. Rounding out the trio is Owen (Braugher), a stressed-out husband and dad stuck in a dead-end job at a car dealership owned by his sadistic father.

Midlife, they have discovered, can be a bummer, man. They're coping with health scares, memory lapses, self-doubt, declining relevance and expanding bellies.

Occasionally, they get touchy-feely and whine about their miseries while dining out — a la Carrie Bradshaw and company. In fact, this show is a lot like "Sex and the City," only without the sex and the really hot shoes.

It all sounds somewhat depressing, and it can be. The Dec. 7 pilot episode occasionally turns flat and aimless and is too light on laughs. At one point, I found myself poised to declare "Men of a Certain Age" only "slightly more fun than a prostate exam."

But like some things in life, "Men" gets better with time. By the second and third episodes, I started to bond with these guys and empathize with their issues. And being of, um, a certain age myself, I chuckled right along with some of their observations, like when Terry announces he's dating a 25-year-old and Joe warns, "Now you're going to have to see all the 'Twilight' movies!"

Still, while I applaud TNT for attempting to bring some maturity to prime time, it's difficult to envision "Men" becoming a mass hit. The humor is more low-key than laugh-out-loud, the plot lines more tedious than tantalizing, the cast more grizzled than chiseled.

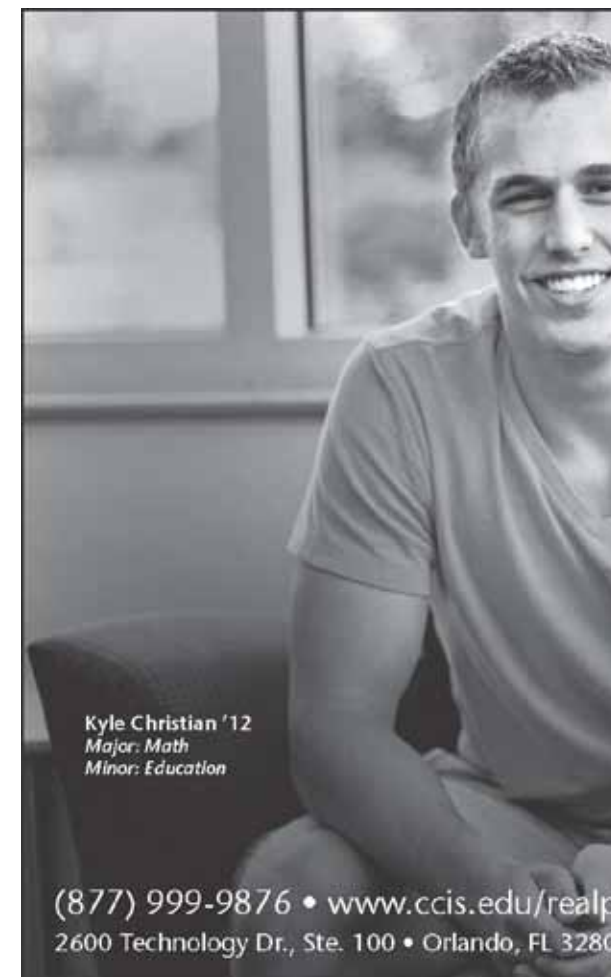
Considering all that, Romano and his pals will never be close to generating "Twilight"-like buzz. So that's the bad news. The good news? At least they all still have their hair.

— MCT Campus



Art Streiber, TNT / MCT Campus

Scott Bakula, Ray Romano, and Andre Braugher star in TNT's new drama/comedy, "Men of a Certain Age."



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McCoy, Tebow among Heisman finalists

By Kate Hairopoulos
The Dallas Morning News

Texas quarterback Colt McCoy, Stanford running back Toby Gerhart, Alabama running back Mark Ingram, Nebraska defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh and Florida quarterback Tim Tebow are the finalists for the 2009 Heisman Trophy. Tim Brown, the 1987 Heisman winner, announced the five names Monday evening on ESPN. Which snazzy dressed player will be named the most outstanding in college football Saturday night in New York's Nokia Theatre? Well, that certainly is the question.

"It's going to be a really fractured race," said Chris Huston, the creator of Heismanpundit.com, "with a lot of guys bunched together in point totals."

Indeed, no player has been able to separate himself all season. Huston's final poll — which included input from 13 of the 925 voters, whose voting deadline was late Monday afternoon — had Ingram on top, followed by Gerhart. McCoy tied with Suh for third. Tebow was tied for sixth in the poll.

The finalists represent a turn from last season, when only three were invited to New York, all quarterbacks. Suh, who had a dominating performance against McCoy and the Longhorns in last week's Big 12 title game loss, would be the first defensive player to win since Michigan's Charles Woodson in 1997.

McCoy, who played a gracious runner-up to Oklahoma's Sam Bradford last season, will make his second straight appearance as a finalist. Monday, Huston still warily considered McCoy as the slight favorite, considering he's a senior, a well-known name playing for a program that will compete for the national championship and is the winningest quarterback in major college football.

McCoy may have put together his signature game in the Longhorns' dramatic win over rival Texas

A&M on Thanksgiving. But, Huston said, he may have given some of that back in the Big 12 title game, when he was sacked nine times and threw three interceptions. Ingram is Alabama's career single-season rushing leader with 1,542 yards. He rushed for 113 yards and three touchdowns in the SEC title game victory over Florida. Alabama has never had a player win the Heisman, or place second in the voting.

Gerhart, who also plays baseball for Stanford, leads the nation with 26 touchdowns and ranks second in rushing average (144.7 ypg) after tallying 1,736 yards in 12 games. He's lifted Stanford (8-4) to its first winning season since 2001. Tebow, the 2007 Heisman winner and 2008 third-place finisher, earned another invitation even after Florida fell to Alabama in Saturday's SEC title game.



Richard W. Rodriguez, Fort Worth Star-Telegram / MCT Campus

Colt McCoy hoists the Big 12 Championship trophy after UT beat Nebraska, 13-12, on Saturday, December 5, 2009.

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(Picks are winners, they do not take odds into account.)

LAST WEEK



Alex Barrett

143-47
9-7



Reese Wallace

115-75
11-5



Manny Colon

116-74
11-5

PIT @ CLE			
NO @ ATL			
GB @ CHI			
NYJ @ TB			
MIA @ JAX			
DET @ BAL			
SEA @ HOU			
DEN @ IND			
BUF @ KC			
CIN @ MIN			
CAR @ NE			
WAS @ OAK			
STL @ TEN			
SD @ DAL			
PHI @ NYG			
MONDAY NIGHT ARI @ SF			



Robert Duyos, Sun Sentinel / MCT Campus

By Reese Wallace
rwallace@valenciavoice.com

A quarterback is defined by his supporting cast. For the first time in a long time, Peyton Manning's cast features a star of equal billing.

The team of Manning and Joseph Addai has quietly combined to dominate most stat categories and rack up an undefeated record at the same time.

Manning is still the consummate field general and may as well be his own offensive coordinator.

He can make every throw to every receiver and can read a defense like it was "Hop on Pop."

Addai on the other hand is only now reaching his fullest potential.

The former LSU standout has become an

every down back and a guaranteed broken first tackle. He promises 100 yards and touchdown every week and is worth his wait in myrrh.

Manning continues his winning ways and if he gets you less than 250 yards in a game than you're probably watching the Giants.

They reaffirmed their ability by crushing the resurgent Tennessee Titans.

Addai was a draft day steal this year because he hasn't quite matched the category of top tier runningback, but this year, with this team, he is as big a threat as anyone you'll come across in the NFL.

The Colts are somehow flying under the radar with a 12-0 season. But don't be shocked to see the lucky horse-shoes prancing about with the Lombardi trophy at the end of this season.