

VALENCIA VOICE

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Important Dates

Phi Theta Kappa Green Day

Wednesday March, 12
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Winter Park Campus

Caribbean Day

Thursday, March 13
Noon - 2 p.m.
East Campus

ICC Children’s Festival

Saturday, March 15
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
East Campus

Clinton faces must-win situation

By Frank Tobin
Valencia Voice

With the newest batch of primaries right around the corner, Hillary Clinton has come to what could be considered the make-it or break-it phase of her political career; while Barack Obama has pulled away after a strong showing in last month’s series of statewide elections.

Barack Obama gained the lead in delegates with a

win-streak of 10 states earlier this month, and with a lead in the polls going into the next round of primary voting could end up being the undisputed Democratic presidential nominee.

Obama’s lead, and his pledge to meet with Cuba’s new leader Raul Castro, have caught the attention of the sitting president. And the political posturing has already begun.

George W. Bush last week sharply criticized foreign policies advocated by the Democratic front-run-

ner, saying it would be a mistake to meet the leaders of Iran and Cuba without preconditions, or to swiftly change course in Iraq.

“I’m not suggesting there’s never a time to talk, but I’m suggesting now is not the time ... to talk with Raul Castro,” Bush told a White House news conference after being asked about Obama’s willingness to meet with the new Cuban president.

“It will send the wrong message. ... It will give

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East Campus gets ethnobotany lesson

By Sarah Soliman
Valencia Voice

The Performing Arts Center’s auditorium filled up quickly at Valencia’s East campus on Feb. 26 when ethnobotanist Dr. Michael Balick spoke about his profession.

As an ethnobotanist, Dr. Balick studies the relationship between people and plants by working with cultures who have maintained their traditions in desert, tropical, and subtropical locations. Some of these locations include Belize, Brazil, Mexico, and Costa Rica where Balick works with traditional cultures on understanding their development of plant knowledge and how their traditions carry on throughout the years.

Over the years, Balick has completed 56 international expeditions that have led him to the titles he carries today. Dr. Balick is the co-founder of the New York Botanical Garden Institute, which conducts a Ph.D. program for graduate students majoring in the field of ethnobotany. The Garden has also teamed up with the U.S. Cancer Institute to survey countries in Central America, South American, and the Caribbean on potential plants that may hold cures to cancer and AIDS.

Balick also holds the title of Director and Philecology Curator of the Institute of Economic Botany.

But the study of plants and indigenous cultures isn’t all of Balick’s work. He is also an expert in ethnopharmacologist in which he investigates plants that contain medicine that are used by healers in various traditional cultures around the world.

His studies have led him to the discovery of medical plants such as the Piper Methysticum, better known as Kava, which is used in various countries as an herbal medicine against insomnia, stress, and anxiety.

Balick also conducts underwater ethnobotany because he believes the oceans may hold answers to future medical plant discoveries.

However, “all that is natural is not all that is good”, Balick states. It is important for people to remember that not every plant in these regions are appropriate for healing. He finds great importance in preserving forests and all that is natural including the traditional cultures he works with.

It is also important for these traditional cultures to continue to pass down their knowledge to future generations in order to preserve their kind. However, through his extensive research, Balick has found that the recent generations are not interested in learning the healing procedures of their culture, which poses a problem.

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Photo by Deborah Grew / Valencia Community College
Dr. Michael Balick discusses humans interaction with nature at Valencia’s East Campus Feb 26.

Rwanda moving past genocide

By Shashank Bengali
McClatchy Newspapers

KIGALI, Rwanda — When President Bush visited last month on his five-nation Africa tour, he paid a solemn visit to the site where 250,000 victims of the 1994 genocide are buried, laying a wreath and strolling quietly along a row of concrete slabs marking mass graves.

But government officials here say Bush’s more important act that day was something else: He signed a deal to promote bilateral U.S.-Rwandan investment.

Rwanda hasn’t forgotten the genocide, but it’s moving forward, and 14 years later this tiny central African nation boasts one of the most stable and rapidly expanding economies in the region. Poverty and illiteracy are declining, immunization rates are up, HIV and malaria have been dramatically curtailed, and new industries from coffee to information technology are experiencing sudden

booms.

The country’s rebirth under President Paul Kagame — a bookish former rebel leader — was noted last year by the Ibrahim Index, a scale that rates African countries on political and economic freedoms. It called Rwanda the most improved country over the past five years.

“After the genocide everyone was down, and there was a lot of confusion. Now we are on the right track,” said Kainamura Issa, co-founder of Index, a local magazine that covers the burgeoning technology sector.

Under Kagame, the government has pumped money into the country’s roads and electricity networks and slashed red tape on businesses in a bid to lure foreign investors. Since 1994, the country’s economy has grown at a robust 6 percent clip annually.

Lured perhaps in part by its tragedy-to-triumph story, American corporate giants have been drawn to this

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Photo by Mahdi al Dulaimy / MCT Campus
At least 400 people took to the streets of the Sunni city of Fallujah in Iraq to protest a visit by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the country on March 2.

Mixed reviews for Iranian president’s visit to Iraq

By Leila Fadel
McClatchy Newspapers

BAGHDAD — Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Sunday became the first Iranian head of state to visit Iraq in three decades and immediately became the focus of demonstrations that underscored Iraq’s sectarian split.

In Fallujah, Sunni Muslim protesters demonstrated against his visit, calling him the killer of Iraqi children. Iraq’s Sunni vice president showed up late for a reception for Ahmadinejad hosted by Iraq’s Kurdish president.

Meanwhile, Iraq’s Shiite ruling elite, many of whom had been taken refuge during Saddam Hussein’s time in Shiite Iran, listened to Ahmadinejad without need of translation into Arabic, clearly comfortable hearing his Farsi.

American officials stayed far away from the visiting Iranian delegation. At a joint press conference with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki, Ahmadinejad claimed that “Iraqis don’t like Americans.” Ma-

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Fuel Tool

Lowest prices for regular unleaded gasoline in Orlando (as of March, 3):

\$3.08⁹

Sam’s Club
7810 W. Colonial Dr.
Orlando FL, 32818

\$3.09⁹

7-Eleven
8003 Lake Underhill Rd.
Orlando FL, 32822

\$3.09⁹

RaceTrac
701 S. Goldenrod Rd.
Orlando FL, 32822

Source: www.gasbuddy.com
Compiled by Robert Navaille / Valencia Voice

Casino Night rolls onto West Campus

By Erica Teamer
Valencia Voice

Between the dance floor and Blackjack, West Campus' first Casino Night was definitely a night to remember.

Feb. 28 gave many West Campus students a chance to have a good time, yet reside in a trouble free and safe environment from 6-9 p.m.

Casino Night worked like this. People could earn money by either dancing or simply asking an SGA member for something to start off with. Once given any amount of money, it was possible for an individual to play a few games and earn more money (or lose some in many cases).

When the DJ announced he was giving away money to dancing people, pandemonium struck. It seemed as if the entire population raced to the dance floor, enjoying themselves and then receiving money.

Participants could cash in their counterfeit income or chips and receive raffle tickets. More money earned means more raffle tickets given. The more raffle tickets someone obtains, the greater their chance at winning a prize.

SGA had an impressive number of members present including TJ Cole, Bryanna Burke, Allen Collins, Jeannie and Krystal Roseme, Jamee Givens and many others to support this event, amplifying its meaning and helping others have a good time.

Victor Collazo also made sure that Valencia students got what they deserved after earning a great deal of money from the casino.

A wide variety of prizes were present, including an iPod Shuffle, a wireless mouse, a



Photo by Izvorinka Jankovic / iStockphoto

A roulette table spinning for hopeful participants.

wide assortment of DVDs, a book bag, two Valencia blankets and much more.

As the night progressed, I found myself wedged between a gentleman by the name of Brett Shouse and his dealer in a game of Texas Holdem. Shouse intricately explained that this was "a game of numbers and percentages" and that although the game was luck, you bet on the highest percentage and hope you win.

When asked about the night, Shouse stat-

ed that when things are free it allows people to learn. Decision making as well as math skills are necessary in every game present.

Although he left the night empty handed, he appreciated the chance to learn something new at no expense.

"Even places where you buy tokens to play and learn aren't free," Shouse explains. "It might be five dollars you lose or something, but it isn't free."

The dealers were gracious, the music was

excellent, the food was great and the experience was well worth every second.

As TJ Cole, West Campus President, drew tickets from a hat, excited faces lit up after each number announced.

Shouse and many others appreciated the experience provided by West Campus' Student Government Association. Despite the disappointment of not winning, many students claimed they would come again in a heartbeat, calling Casino Night a success.

Professor works toward expanding Honors Program

By Sarah Soliman
Valencia Voice

The Honors Program at Valencia is the largest in Florida carrying 750 Honors students. Tracy Harrison is the new Interim Director for the Honors Program at Valencia and works hard to improve and expand the Honors curriculum at the college. But before taking on the role of what she labels as 'an adviser', Tracy taught Developmental Reading for 4 years at Valencia.

As a teacher, Tracy familiarized herself with the true needs of a student and became deeply involved with providing the unique experiences they need to succeed.

Today, as the Honors Program's Director, she feels the same way towards the students enrolled in the program even though she doesn't necessarily meet with them on a daily basis. Her main priority as director is to "develop a community of learners", Harrison states.

However this community of learners doesn't just develop on its own. This process involves top notch professors who comprehend the amount of support an Honors stu-



Photo by Deborah Grew

Professor Tracy Harrison. Student requires.

Although the Honors Program may sound a little intimidating, Harrison explains that "honors courses do not mean more work, they just mean different work."

But along with this "different work" comes great perks. For instance, Honors students have the opportunity to receive scholarships, have their own advisers, get an advanced university education, have access to the Honors Resource Center, and the most popular amongst Honors

students, priority registration.

If these perks aren't enough, Tracy is working on increasing the courses offered in Honors towards not only A.A. degree seeking students, but also students earning an A.S. Degree.

Another change that is sure to be fun for Honors students is partnership to Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), a National Honors Society greatly active here at Valencia. By joining forces, Tracy hopes to encourage people to meet and develop leadership skills through various activities such as the leadership training camp which starts in Summer 2008.

Also, the program encourages social aspects by providing travel and cultural opportunities for a reasonable cost.

Tracy is also working on providing Honors students with more scholarship opportunities in the Fall of 2008.

"I feel like I'm the cheerleader on the sideline who wants to see all my students succeed and get involved", she states. Tracy thinks it is important for Honors students to know that even as the director of the program, Honors students are more than welcome to drop into her office and talk to her about concerns they

have with the Honors Program or with their classes in general.

So, how can you be a part of the Honors Program and receive all the benefits that come along with it? The admissions criteria requires students to have a 3.25 GPA after completing 12 college level courses, not including preparatory courses. Honors student also have the option of earning an Honors Certificate with 12 credit hours of honors courses, or an Honors Degree with 24 credit hours of honors courses.

It is important to realize that "Honors courses are embedded into the credits you already need towards your degree", Harrison explains.

Being an Honors student also alleviates the stressful process of transferring to a university.

Tracy Harrison continues to put all of her time and effort into improving the Honors Program and hopes more students will take full advantage of the program or work towards getting into the program as it will enhance your college experience tremendously.

To learn more about the Honors Program and what it has to offer, go to <http://valencia.edu/honors/>.

Soul Food Fest satisfies East Campus students

By Ilona Horvath
Valencia Voice

"The turn out is great," said A2CS adviser, Vertrilla Hunt, who directed traffic and answered questions as students and faculty alike gathered Thursday to form a line that trailed all the way out of the double doors of building 3 of Valencia's East Campus to await a steaming plate of Soul food. A2CS put on the second Soul Food Festival of the year with double the success!

The event began at 1p.m. and ended promptly at 2p.m., at which time the line began to thin visibly as stragglers and latecomers scrambled to grab what was left of the food. People in the line could be heard talking, laughing and using their cell phones to urge family and friends to come out for the event.

Tables were set up in front of the stairway in building 3, and food was doled out assembly line style, with a selection of foods that included everything from simple dishes like yellow rice to more complicated items like meatloaf.

Outside, students at the end of the line swayed to the sounds of Cassidy's "My Drink N' M 2 Step," among others,

played by local radio station 102 JAMZ. The station was there to celebrate Black History Month with Valencia students as they waited in line to be served.

Although there have been issues with inadequate supplies of food in the past, the members of the A2CS came prepared to feed a multitude of students with an expanded menu of foods.

"We added more food," said Hunt. "And this is just a sampling of some traditional dishes with deep roots in African-American history."

The purpose of the event is to honor Black History Month and is held every year in February with increasing participation from members and a growing student interest.

"I think it's fun and exciting to have the opportunity to taste and enjoy foods of another culture," said student and A2CS member, Lindsay Rivers. "This is like a modern spin on some recipes that date back to the slaves."

Rivers was responsible for manning the refreshment table, where sweet tea and utensils were available for those in line for food, as well as information pamphlets on the tradition of marching bands and their impact on students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU'S).



Photo by Ilona Horvath / Valencia Voice

Hungry students file into Building 5 of East Campus to fill up on the assembly line of Soul Food.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the A2CS club or simply wanting information about future events should attend the next meeting on West campus on March 10 between 2:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Page design by Sarah King

Green event success for VCC environmental clubs

By Erica Teamer
Valencia Voice

Valencia’s environmental club, The Green Team hosted Go Green Day alongside Phi Theta Kappa.

Witnessing Amber Lengacher, President of The Green Team and Katie Farney, Vice President of Phi Theta Kappa, enthusiastically take pictures and harvest signatures for a petition was inspiring.

“We’re trying to get the cafeteria to stop using Styrofoam and have them switch to using more paper.” Lengacher carefully explains. “It’s easier to recycle and the price is just about the same.”

Although environmentally friendly efforts are often ignored, West Campus students seemed to show some interest in the provided entertainment. As club supporters strategically placed their heads in a homemade sun cutout for the camera, other Valencia students, such as Ashley Venson, had their faces painted by Mick

Velasquez.

Sources state that the environmental efforts are working and Valencia has already set up dates with vendors to come to the campus and meet.

“They’re really looking into better recycling,” said Lengacher, adding to her many encouraging statements to students.

Performer Dani Shay donated her time and musical services to the cause; her green face paint, guitar strumming and voice in to the microphone caught a lot of attention.

Above all, this entire event wasn’t about the Universal Studios employee who painted faces or the interesting musical entertainment. The environment is important to both Phi Theta Kappa and the environmental club.



Photo by Erica Teamer / Valencia Voice

This “Go Green Day” banner is one of many put up by Valencia’s Green Team and Phi Theta Kappa to urge students to get involved and help the environment.

Professor’s name cleared of recent fabrication charges

By Karoun Demirjian
Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO—The dean of Northwestern’s Medill School of Journalism did not break any rules, administrators announced Friday, after an investigation into unattributed quotes in columns he wrote last year.

Dean John Lavine came under fire from students and faculty in past weeks for not being able to verify, through notes or emails, the identity of “a Medill junior” he quoted giving positive comments about new courses in his alumni magazine column, “Letter from the Dean.”

But in a letter emailed to students, faculty, and alumni Friday morning, Provost Daniel Linzer said that a

three-person panel of experts determined Lavine had accurately captured the essence of student sentiments, and that there was “no evidence” to suggest any part of the column had been fabricated.

“The author of a piece like the ‘Letter from the Dean’ could not reasonably be expected to have retained for a year the notes or e-mails documenting the sources of quotations used in the letter,” Linzer wrote. “While I join Dean Lavine in wishing that the material demonstrating the sources of the quotations was readily available, I have determined that no violation of University policy has occurred.”

Lavine, who apologized to the journalism school for being unable to produce the relevant documents last

week, said he intends to turn the episode into an opportunity to teach and discuss the ethics of using unnamed sources.

But many students, faculty members and alumni remained unsatisfied.

“It is a hard and fast rule in journalism that when quotation marks are used, they should reflect what a source actually said, not merely their quote-unquote sentiments,” said David Protess, a professor of investigative journalism at Medill. “If simply capturing the mood of unnamed sources is good enough to be used in quotation marks, then our standards as a journalism school are slipping.”

— MCT Campus

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Book discussions spark student interest in reading

By Shaneece Dixon
Valencia Voice

Get Into Reading hosted a book talk for Harper Lee’s novel “To Kill a Mockingbird,” on Feb. 27, in the terrace above

“During the 1960s it would have been very hard for her to talk about the issues with prejudice. It was like her own soap box.”

—Avidor Ben-Avraham

the cafeteria from 1:00p.m. to 2:00p.m. Hoping to encourage active reading among students, everyone was placed into small groups, each focused on discussing the novel.

A definite opener for the discussion was the so called “ice breaker”—a small pink slip of paper with simple questions such as “which, cartoon character relates to you the most,” “what country would you like to visit,” and “what is your favorite book.”

The latter question sparked much conversation for one group led by Paulette Smith, the reference librarian for the West Campus library.

“It doesn’t matter if a student likes Harry Potter. That helps us out in the future when we get students to read something that they enjoy,” said Smith.

Of course, the conversation got a bit more serious as the discussion related both to themes in the book as well as issues within society. Probably the most controversial issue discussed was racism and students each added their own take on the issue.

“I don’t think social or racial injustice will ever fade away,” said Ricky Zarza, one of the students in Smith’s group.

The novel is about a young girl named Jean Louise Finch, better known as Scout, who lives in Maycomb County, Alabama. Taking place during the Depression, racism and prejudice are definitely factors in the Southern town. Both Scout and her brother, Jem, search for the meaning of good and evil within their town, especially with the different forms of racism that they are forced to witness among the townspeople.

As the book continues, Scout grows older and wiser, learning from the small microcosm of Maycomb.

They soon learn their biggest lesson about love and hate when their father and attorney, Atticus Finch, must defend Tom Robinson, a black man who is falsely convicted of raping a white woman. Not only does the novel bring to light the early injustices of racism but also, through the eyes of a little girl, exposes the innocence and purity that is left to be manipulated and abused by societal standards.

Judging by the fact that by writing the novel, Lee was making her statement about prejudice in her surroundings, students seemed sympathetic to the fact that it took a lot to make such a controversial statement.

“During the 1960s, it would have been very hard for her to talk about the issues with prejudice. It was like her own soap box,” said student Avidor Ben-Avraham. “In a sense this book was written in the time setting of the 1930s to tell that story.”

Overall, Valencia students were able to get involved, learn and discuss about issues concerning a book that still manages to relate to people now just as it did decades ago.

Page design by Ilona Horvath

Opinion

Our Position:
Indecisive faith

A war is being waged against religion, people are switching to atheist-friendly faiths, and a general feeling of dissidence towards man-made deities is prevailing; all this could point to a decline in societal standards.

Or could it?
Religious groups often claim that upsurges in crime and violence occurred as the result of US Supreme Court decisions that removed prayer and unison Bible verse recitation from the nation’s public schools.

Those rulings including Engel v Vitale (1962), which struck down a government-composed prayer in New York state known as the “Regent’s Prayer,” and the combined cases Abington Township v Schempp and Murray v Curlett (1963) which challenged prayer and Bible verse reading in classrooms.

According to HistoryChannel.com, critics of these decisions often cite the early 1960s as a benchmark in American culture which “kicked God out of our schools,” resulting in a corresponding decline in morality. Everything from rising rates of teen pregnancies, drug abuse, juvenile violence and other behaviors have been cited (often with little supporting evidence) as the result.

Specifically speaking about one of the major religions in the country, Catholicism, 31.4% of U.S. adults say that they were raised Catholic, but only 23.9% of adults identify with the Catholic Church, according to an La Times article.

This statistic doesn’t accurately reflect the supposed “national liberal anti-God” movement proposed by leading conservative political talking heads; ever heard of the “culture war?”

The culture war is a metaphor used to claim that political conflict is based on sets of conflicting values. The term frequently implies a conflict between values considered traditional or conservative and those considered progressive or liberal. The culture war is sometimes traced to the aforementioned 1960s school prayer rulings, and has taken various forms since then.

In a 2004 column, Pat Buchanan, a paleoconservative commentator, said the culture war had reignited and that Americans no longer inhabited the same moral universe. He gave such examples as gay civil unions, the “crudity of the MTV crowd,” and the controversy surrounding Mel Gibson’s film, Passion of

the Christ.

He said in his article: “Who is in your face here? Who started this? Who is on the offensive? Who is pushing the envelope? The answer is obvious. A radical Left aided by cultural elite that detests Christianity and finds Christian moral tenets reactionary and repressive is hell-bent on pushing its amoral values and imposing its ideology on our nation. The unwisdom of what the Hollywood and the Left are about should be transparent to all.”

He went on to say: “The agenda [Bill] Clinton and [Hillary] Clinton would impose on America — abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat — that’s change, all right. But it is not the kind of change America wants. It is not the kind of change America needs. And it is not the kind of change we can tolerate in a nation that we still call God’s country.”

A distinct analysis can be extrapolated from this belief: maybe it’s not the country’s willingness to dissent from organized religious practices that’s causing a rise in immoral social behavior, but the forcefulness of top political and cultural leaders in their crusade against the supposed faith-void in everyday life.

Take, for instance, an atheist-friendly religion such as Buddhism; the prime focal point of Buddha’s practice is awakening from the “sleep of ignorance.” Paraphrased from “Buddhism for Dummies” (an actual book) a Buddhist is not constrained by useless deity-based dogma, and political doctrine. When was the last time you heard of a Buddhist suicide bomber, or a Buddhist KKK member?

It can be proposed that a lack of religion, but not a vacuum in faith, can be perceived as a progressively positive step in the right direction.

Mahatma Gandhi, if you don’t know him then do a Google search, once said “I like your Christ; I do not like your Christians. They are so unlike your Christ.”

Can religion, but not faith, be construed as a cancer in our society, or is it the liberal movement that’s trying to infiltrate gay rights and “abortions-for-all” that could very well lead to the apocalypse? Ultimately, the decision is yours to make.

Besides the fact their changing
Some people gave up together
They say they’re unaffiliated
This could change America forever

Let’s think of the political standpoint
How will this affect our “perfect” nation
While people ignore our national issues
And sit home playing Playstation

We must realize what could happen
If this issue goes checked
We could spiral out of control
Or end up like all the rest

It’s as of now just a concern
So keep a watchful eye
And support our country’s freedom
From now until you die

By Carlos Minet
Valencia Voice

If there’s one thing the country’s known for
It’s that we try hard to be fair
You can be whatever religion you want
And no one really cares

But recently the world is changing
And people are changing as we go
When it comes down to religion
No one really seems to know

They all claim to be one thing
And now say they’ve changed their minds
Look around for a person with a clue
And it’ll be pretty hard to find

Freedom:
silent struggle

By Carlos Minet
Valencia Voice

Throughout this entire world
There are people without rights
There’s separation of the religions
Separations of black and white

There are people that can’t have basic liberties
People who are banned from being free
People who aren’t allowed to practice free religion
And it doesn’t make sense to me

Why can’t we all just have the liberties
That people have died to have
Why can’t we just be tolerant of each other
Instead of seeing each other as bad

It happens every day out of this country
In the Middle East they banned YouTube
In Afghanistan people are prosecuted every day

And what are we to do

How can we help people that won’t help themselves
People that feel like they’re better than all the rest
People who won’t hear other people’s ideas
They think their ideas are the best

The vicious and fascist dictators
Don’t know what it means to be free
They don’t realize how great they could have it
The don’t know how great it could be

If they would only open up their eyes
And live like the rest of us
Open to new ideas and concepts
It’s about love, hope, and trust

So let’s hope we rub off on them
In every single way
And pray for them as we all sit free
God Bless the USA

Opinion:
Cuba’s future

Joel Brinkley
McClatchy Tribune

I was chatting with a senior administration official about Syria not long ago. Why, I asked, does the United States maintain an embassy in Damascus if, as the administration claims, Syria is a state sponsor of terror _ providing support to Hezbollah in Lebanon and anti-American insurgents in Iraq?

“If you close the embassy,” this official said matter of factly, “then you close off your ability to influence events there.”

Which brings me to the subject of Cuba. For almost 50 years, emotion-driven political considerations have governed America’s relationship with Cuba _ with a total absence of logic. Every presidential candidate feared alienating the 800,000 Cubans in South Florida who frame their lives around their fervent hatred of Fidel Castro.

Well now that Castro has retired, Washington has a brief, unique window of opportunity to influence events in Havana.

Cuba’s relationship with America is a paradox. Castro built his career around vilification of Washington. And yet, for decades tens of thousands of Cubans have risked their lives to reach America. No country has a greater potential to wield influence there. But time is short.

Across the island the promise of change hangs like humidity in the air, and right now the United States can wield influence with little if any political cost. Bush is not running for re-election. And if Cuban-Americans erupt in anger, John McCain can simply say he disagrees with Bush’s decision.

On Sunday, the central committee selected Raul Castro, Fidel’s 76-year-old brother, as president. In his acceptance speech, he said once again that he is unhappy with the status quo. While serving as acting president last year, he said more than once that he would like to improve relations with Washington. Now is the moment to see if that is so.

A year from now, after a new president takes office in Washington, Cuba’s new leadership team will have settled into the palace —as well as the perks and privileges that come with absolute power. Their single ambition will be to hold onto their jobs.

A year from now, the new American president will already be worrying about re-election — and the votes he or she may lose by alienating Cuban-Americans in Florida.

President Bush has a singular opportunity. But he says he will not talk to Cuba’s leaders until they begin creating a democracy. That’s

been the American line for decades. What other nation do we hold to that standard? Not China. Not Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya ...

Part of the reason, Bush explained last week, was that the Cuban people have “suffered under Fidel Castro.” No doubt.

But under Kim Jung Il’s leadership, North Koreans are subjected to successive famines, floods, fuel shortages, pandemics and mass assignments to gulag labor camps. And yet, senior American officials have met with Kim and his aides several times in recent years, to discuss North Korea’s nuclear program and other issues. This week, the New York Philharmonic is performing in Pyongyang.

The United States holds Omar al-Bashir, the dictator-president of Sudan, responsible for genocide in Darfur that has claimed more than 200,000 lives. But the United States maintains a full embassy in Khartoum. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her deputies frequently meet with Bashir, including one time when his guards beat up members of Rice’s staff.

The State Department has this to say about conditions in Zimbabwe last year:

“Unlawful killings and politically motivated kidnappings occurred. The state sanctioned the use of excessive force and torture, and security forces tortured members of the opposition, union leaders and civil society activists.” And yet the United States maintains an embassy in Harare.

Compared to citizens of those states, Cuba’s people almost seem privileged. And given the economic deprivation of the last 40 years, Cuba stands as a hungry new market for American goods.

Washington fought hard to win a free-trade agreement with Costa Rica, which has a population of 4.1 million. “A lot of people are benefitting” from that agreement, Bush averred last year. Cuba’s population is nearly four times as large. Wouldn’t the benefit be four times as great?

Why not task Thomas Shannon, the assistant secretary of state for the region, to meet with Cuba’s new leaders. I know and respect Shannon; he is not an ideologue. I bet he would relish the assignment.

Perhaps he could lay out a reciprocal series of steps Cuba and the United States could take with the eventual goal of normal relations. To start, the United States could liberalize visitation policies for Americans while Cuban begins releasing political prisoners.

Tell me: What harm would come from trying?

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‘Semi-Pro’ offers audiences stale performance, little humor

By Kevin Norris
Valencia Voice

In the past decade comedian Will Ferrell has starred in numerous sport parodies including 2005’s “Kicking and Screaming,” 2006’s “Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby,” and last year’s spoof on figure skating, “Blades of Glory.” Unfortunately for Ferrell, his latest satire on the basketball era of the 1970’s, “Semi-Pro,” fails to bring the humor seen in his last films.

“Semi-Pro” is director Kent Alterman’s first film since he produced the awful ping-pong-mocking “Balls of Fury.” Alterman’s adaptation of Scot Armstrong’s script starts with a witty design but falls short on its promise of big laughs. “Semi-Pro” received an R rating, which is Ferrell’s first R-rated role since 2003’s “Old School,” also written by Armstrong.

The more mature rating disastrously failed to liberate the comedy; instead Ferrell felt the excessive need to use foul language to make up for the lack of uniquely droll one-liners that he usually mutters in his films.

Ferrell’s alter ego, Jackie Moon is the self-proclaimed owner-coach-promoter-power forward of the semiprofessional American Basketball

Association team, the Flint Tropics. When ABA league commissioner (David Koechner) announces that his pathetic league is planning to merge with the flourishing National Basketball Association, Moon pushes his team to actually win games, raise attendance, and crawl up in the standings to be one of the four teams to join the NBA.

In order to reach his dreams, Moon trades a washing machine for the washed-up Monix (Woody Harrelson). Half way through the season Monix takes over coaching duties when Moon decides to focus more on the choreography of his half-time shows, which consist of bear wrestling, tropical costume dancing, and corn dog give-a-ways. The bear wrestling along with a poker scene that hinges on the phrase “jive talker” are hands-down the only enjoyable parts of “Semi-Pro.”

“Semi Pro” is mind numbingly repetitive at beating a dead horse, dull and inconsistent in laughs. Aside from “Kicking and Screaming,” this is probably Ferrell’s weakest comedy to date.

For those who are interested in “Semi-Pro” it would be more beneficial to watch the films trailer than wasting \$10 dollars on this semi-amusing, semi-entertaining comedy.



Paramount Vantage

Jacki Moon (Will Ferrell) and Monix (Woody Harrelson) argue with the referee over unfair calls.

‘Boleyn Girl’ seduces audiences through deception

By Ashley McBride
Valencia Voice

Love, honesty, compassion, and loyalty, are qualities one may attribute to a sibling. This is not the case in “The Other Boleyn Girl.” It stars Natalie Portman, (known for her role as Queen Amidala in the newer “Star Wars” trilogy), as conniving Anne Boleyn and Scarlett Johansson stars as her naive younger sister, Mary. While the roles seem very backwards at first glance, they portray the characters almost flawlessly.

The movie is based on the book by Philippa Gregory, of the same title. The book is a whopping 661 pages, and they

manage to cram in most of the story in 115 minutes. Unfortunately, because they did this the movie feels rushed. It goes from scene to scene at an alarming rate that may be hard to keep up with.

The film does not keep everything in tact with Gregory’s story. They leave out the birth of the first child Mary Boleyn has by King Henry VIII, a girl she names Catherine after Queen Katherine, in the book, her brother George chastizes her for the choice, because after all it is Queen Katherine’s husband’s child. They also did not quite grasp the full spitefulness of Anne. The film had so many scenes so fast that the characters did not have all that much time to

develop.

But the film was entertaining, and the costumes and scenery were extraordinarily done. Eric Bana, “Hulk” and “Troy”, plays King Henry VIII of England. Because the film is trying to cram in so much of the story into just under two hours, King Henry’s attention span seems even shorter when it comes to women, than in the book. He seemed to genuinely care for his mistresses and many wives, but due to the pace of the film, King Henry seems very fickle, (which he may very well have been), but in Gregory’s story, he seems a little less heartless.

A couple of things in the movie differed so much so that I had to stop and go, “wait a second, that never happened in the book.” One scene in particular, King Henry lets himself in to Anne’s room, and appears to rape her; she had previously refused his advances saying that she couldn’t do anything with him until she was married to him.

Anne ends up married to the King but after all that does not appear to be happy. She has one child, a girl she names Elizabeth. She loses her second baby, and instead of telling him, she asks her brother to help her get pregnant so the King will not know that the baby was lost. And so begins her downfall. Accused of treason and adultery, King Henry sends her to court where she is found guilty. Mary tries to save her sister, who has been awful to her previously. Mary goes to King who actually has grown to respect her, and ask for him to spare Anne. Mary tells King Henry when pleading for Anne’s life, “I beg you. Spare my sister.” He replies, “Why are you here for her?” And she says, “Because she is my sister.

And therefore, one half of me.”

The King deceives Mary saying she has his word, but then he revokes it. The ending is both sad and liberating. After being manipulated by this man who is so used to getting everything he wants, Mary does one final thing, the one thing she can do to help her sister. As dramatic as the story is, it does echo sibling rivalries today to some extent. Siblings fight, and then siblings make up. Siblings would also more than likely try to save the other if their life was in danger.

The film reminds me of the Showtime series, “The Tudors.” In the show, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, (“Match Point”), plays King Henry VIII with conviction. He comes off sometimes as a little whiny, whereas Bana’s Henry does not. Both play a convincing King Henry VIII. “The Tudors” however, does have the advantage in that it is a television series and is not limited to the 115 minutes that “The Other Boleyn Girl” is constrained to.

Overall, the film is a good rendition of Philippa Gregory’s novel. She adds elements and plotlines into the spots that are question marks on history, while leaving some of the historical facts intact. It is an intriguing read and an entertaining film. The screenwriters did a good job getting as much as they could into the 115 minutes, and the only way some of the hardcore “The Other Boleyn Girl” book fans would be completely satisfied, would be if the film was four hours long. If you have a sibling, go see it with them, because even if they are getting on your nerves, they cannot possibly be as bad as the sibling rivalry that goes on between Anne and Mary Boleyn.



Paramount Vantage

Anne Boleyn (Nathalie Portman) and Mary Boleyn (Scarlett Johansson) star opposite each other as sisters and enemies.

“Push” novel makes controversial topics relatable

By Shaneece Dixon
Valencia Voice

“Push,” written by Ramona Lofton, better known to readers as Sapphire, is one of the grittiest, heart-felt novels ever written. Emotionally raw and completely intentional, the story is about a 16 year-old named Precious Jones, who is pregnant with her second child. Alienated from her first child, Little Mongo, who has Down Syndrome (to which she ignorantly refers to as “Down Sinder”), Jones is physically abused by her mother and sexually abused by her father, who is HIV positive.

The story is written from her point of view, but with a twist-the reader discovers that she cannot read or write. Afraid to admit her academic weaknesses, she sits in the back of the classroom and uses her tough girl attitude to cope with the fact that she does not exist to others around her.

She remains trapped in junior high school, dismissed by her teachers as just another “Harlem casualty,” and is kicked out of school by Ms. Lichenstein, the school principal of I.S. 146, after becoming pregnant.

Through Ms. Lichenstein, however, Precious finds out about an alternative school called

“Each One Teach One,” where she is placed in a class among young, troubled women like herself who struggle with reading and writing.

Her teacher, Ms. Blue Rain, not only helps her achieve her literacy, but also gives Precious hope for a life for herself and her second child, Abdul. For someone with such a tragic past, her determination to make herself visible to the world that has regarded her as otherwise is admirable.

I did not expect this book to be as forward as it really was, which makes that much more pleasurable to read. Sapphire has managed to use all the negative black stereotypes and create a powerful character that many readers can truly relate to.

The constant colloquialism can be a bit redundant for some, and at times hard to read around, however, the imagery makes up for it by placing the reader in Precious’ shoes as she struggles to find inner freedom.

The fact of the matter is that this novel makes a straightforward statement about every issue it touches, from poverty to sex, to the academic expectations of minorities and even to homosexuality. Controversy is the name of the game in this book, but do not let that scare you off. It is just as beautiful a story as it is open in detail, so do not let the idea of a typical drama story fool you and give this book a read.

Jerry Springer launches “Back to School” tour

By David Hiltbrand
The Philadelphia Inquirer

WEST CHESTER, Pa.—Jerry Springer is in the midst of a college tour. Which is ironic because the whole purpose of going to college is to decrease your chances of ever appearing on Springer’s syndicated sleazefest.

On this brittle February night, the P.T. Barnum of talk-show hosts is in Asplundh Concert Hall on the campus of West Chester University, addressing the student body.

The kids, who occasionally erupt into the familiar battle cry — “Jerry! Jerry! Jerry! Jerry!” —are getting the full dog and pony show. Literally.

One of the episodes shown is “I Married a Horse,” during which a Shetland pony is led out onto the stage of Springer’s Chicago studio to kiss a decrepit man in visored sunglasses. The host’s on-air introduction: “Today we have a love story.”

Earlier in the day at his hotel in Philadelphia, Springer, 64, sardonically distanced himself from this particular spectacle. “The guy who slept with his horse? I came out against it. I said it was wrong,” he says with a smirk. “So let it never be said that I don’t have a moral compass.”

That’s Jerry’s shtick: He watches with amused astonishment his show’s sick pageant of midgets, trannies and crackpots but he never steps into the slime pit himself.

“One of the reasons I work (in this role) is that people see me as a regular guy in the midst of the chaos,” he says at the hotel. “My role is purely reactive. I don’t know anything about the guests beforehand. All I have is a card with their name on it. Every segment always opens with me saying, ‘So what’s going on?’ Then they tell me their story. And I ask them questions and make jokes.”



Talk show host Jerry Springer takes the stage at West Chester University, Feb. 20, in West Chester, PA, during his “Jerry Springer: Goes Back to School” tour.

That disingenuous blend of shock and mock has kept “The Jerry Springer Show” on the air for 16 seasons.

“If you aim a show at high school and college kids you can be on forever because there’s always new kids coming along to watch,” he says. “If you aim a show at a 30-year-old, by the time they’re 33, they’re bored with the show. But you always get new kids.”

“I really think that explains our longevity,” Springer says. “Because the show is mindless. It serves no purpose. But it stays on because of the giggle factor.”

Later in West Chester, the students are shown a prepackaged clip reel, narrated by Matt Lombardo, the sports editor of the campus newspaper, who has been drafted as moderator.

It traces the arc of Springer’s talk-show career, starting in 1991 when he was an ear-

nest news anchor in Cincinnati trying to assume the mantle of Phil Donahue.

Another highlight is the 1997 episode “Klanfrontation,” when militant members of the Jewish Defense League were brought on to “debate” robed and hooded Ku Klux Klan members.

To no one’s surprise, a full-scale, chair-throwing riot broke out in the studio. The attendant controversy and ratings spike marked a turning point for the show.

The rest of the reel is sheer Springer bedlam: brawls, food fights, gender atrocities and romance gone terribly awry. You’ve never seen this many women in wedding gowns throwing haymakers.

By the way, if you do choose to get married on “The Jerry Springer Show” by the in-house man-of-the-cloth, the seedy Rev. Shnorr, you may want to have the legitimacy

of the ceremony checked by local officials.

After the clips, there’s a brief Q&A session with the audience (“What keeps you interested?” “My bills”). Then Springer asks the crowd’s forbearance for “four minutes to talk about what’s going on in the world right now.”

He delivers an impassioned case for universal health care, advising the kids to hold all the presidential candidates accountable. “You say to them, ‘If we don’t have national health insurance by the next election, you who I voted for will never get my vote again as long as I live.’”

Then comes the part of the evening that everyone came for, as Jerry moves to a side table and the kids line up to have their pictures taken with him by their friends with cell phones.

It’s a perfectly modern moment, made peculiar only because Springer himself is something of a Luddite. “We’ve become subservient to the technology,” he said at the hotel. “My staff always makes fun of me because I don’t use a computer. It’s not a world that I want to participate in. I have no e-mail. I have a cell phone with no numbers (programmed) on it.”

That Jerry. He’s all about irony. He insists that his goofy, outrageous program has, almost unwittingly, made the culture more tolerant. “The intent of the show is pure entertainment,” he says. “But the effect is that we’re more accepting, more open as a society.”

Wait, are you trying to tell us that in a few years marriages between people and ponies will be commonplace?

Springer laughs. “We did a follow-up show,” he says. “The horse left him. It’s not as open as you think. Horses are so judgmental.”

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Iranian president receives mixed greeting from Iraqis

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liki didn't challenge the assertion.

Ahmadinejad's trip was a visible sign of what have been growing economic and cultural ties between the two countries since American-led forces toppled Saddam. Iranian economic investment is growing, especially in southern Iraq, millions of Iranians visit Iraq's holy cities of Najaf and Karbala on religious pilgrimages, and Iraqi officials frequently travel to Tehran and other Iranian cities. Iraq's most influential political party, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, was founded in Iran.

The visit also was the first by any regional leader since the end of Saddam's rule and while President Bush and British prime ministers also have visited, Ahmadinejad was the first leader to receive the full trappings of a state visit.

He was met at Baghdad International Airport by Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari and Maliki's national security adviser, Mowaffak al Rubaie. He was whisked from the airport in a black BMW to President Jalal Talabani's compound, where a marching band welcomed him with the Iranian and Iraqi national anthems and a series of other marches.

Iraqi officials lined up to welcome the visiting president, but the Sunni vice-president, Tarik al Hashemi, was noticeably absent. He appeared about 50 minutes after Ahmadinejad arrived. There was no explanation for his delayed arrival.

No U.S. soldiers were in sight near Talabani's home and security was provided by Kurdish soldiers known as the peshmerga.

At an afternoon press conference with Maliki, Ahmadinejad dismissed longstanding U.S. accusations that Iran trains, funds and arms Shiite militias in hopes of destabilizing Iraq.

"You can tell Mr. Bush that accusing others will increase the problems for America in the region and will not solve the problem," he said.

"The Americans have to accept the facts of the region. Iraqi people do not like Americans."

When asked if Iran and Iraq trusted one another, Ahmadinejad took another swipe at the Americans.

"If you look to the two peoples, Iranian and Iraqi, we can see they have a joint history, culture and geography," he said. "If they don't trust each other in spite of all these characteristics in common can they trust countries which are 12,000 kilometers away from Iraq and Iran?"

Maliki welcomed Ahmadinejad and called his visit "the first visit of its kind." He said the visit would "deepen" the relationship between the two nations.

"We believe that there is not stability except through understanding and discussion," he said.

Iran has long touted its historical, geographic and cultural connection to Iraq as more powerful than the tens of thousands of U.S. troops here. Iranian officials claim that the continued U.S. military presence is the real destabilizing factor.

But Sunni Muslims bristled at Ahmadinejad's visit. In downtown Fallujah, which at one time was the center of the Sunni-dominated insurgency, about 400 people held signs and chanted anti-Iran slogans.

"The teacher's association protest the visit of the Iranian president, killer of Iraqi children," one sign read. Said another, "We demand the Iranian president stop supporting the militias which are killing the Iraqi people." Others accused the group of supporting the Sunni insurgent group, al Qaida and another accused Iran of stealing Iraqi oil.

Last week, 500 people demonstrated against the visit in Diyala province, and Arab leaders in Kirkuk rejected the visit in a written statement.

— MCT Campus

Clinton on thin ice

Continued from Page 1

great status to those who have suppressed human rights and human dignity," Bush added, saying there was no difference between Raul Castro and his brother, Fidel, who recently stepped aside as president because of ill health.

It was the first substantial instance of Bush implementing his show of democratic dissension into the presidential race. Up until now, Bush had not vocally given his opposing view toward one candidate or another.

"I believe Senator Obama better stay focused on his campaign with Senator Clinton, neither of whom has secured their party's ... nomination yet," Bush added.

Obama quickly fired back, saying: "The American people aren't looking for more of a do-nothing Cuba policy that has failed to secure the release of dissidents, failed to bring democracy to the island and failed to advance freedom for 50 years."

The Senator from Illinois had previously stated that he advocates the pursuit of diplomacy with major world leaders in order to salvage the damage done by Bush's failed diplomatic protocols.

"The next president has a job to do to repair our image and to send a signal ... that a new era is being ushered in and that we are not afraid to talk to anybody, including those who we have grave problems with," Obama said.

As for Clinton, the road has traveled to a do-or-die attitude.

Texas and Ohio are now her "primary" focus. "We need to raise the stakes," said one Clinton adviser, in an interview with AP.

That political imperative helps explain the foreign-policy speech Clinton delivered in Washington last week, as well as the "Economic Solutions Summit" she held in Ohio.

"We've seen the tragic results of having a president who had neither the experience nor the wisdom to manage our foreign policy and safeguard our national security," Clinton said. "We can't let that happen again. America has already taken that chance one time too many."

Relying on her "extensive experience in the field of health-care," as stated by her advisers, Clinton will have to appeal to the more solid base she has founded with the political maneuvers she has made in the past.

"Hillary's plan gets more respect from the health-policy world than does Obama's," says John McDonough, executive director of "Health Care for All," a consumer health-advocacy organization. "If your goal is universal health care, then at some level there have to be mandates in the system. To say that you are going to do it in a voluntary way does not add up."

This could be her trump card for a seemingly sagging political life.

Ethnobotanist Visits East Campus

Continued from Page 1

"In indigenous cultures, knowledge became orally transmitted rather than taught by a textbook until globalization became a great force", Balick said.

The effect globalization has had on recent generations is massive. This poses a threat to traditional cultures and the plants they use for healing because if the knowledge does not continue to be passed down, it will eventually become extinct and from there,

the world may miss out on important medicine. Dr. Balick gave significant advice to students who wanted to learn more about what they can do to help their environment and learn the relation between plants and people. He suggested that volunteering in your community and attempting to make the government aware that forest preservation is a necessity is a huge step forward. Also, in voicing others beliefs such as traditional healers who tend to be ignored, we as a community can make a difference in the world we live in.

Ending genocide helps to boost Rwandan economy

Continued from Page 1

tiny, hilly nation, where 8 million people are crammed into a space smaller than Maryland.

Starbucks and Costco have signed exclusive deals with Rwandan coffee growers to sell their smooth, aromatic beans in U.S. stores. Government officials say Microsoft has floated a plan to equip the country's Senate chamber so that lawmakers can draft and edit legislation electronically.

"There is a wave of enthusiasm right now for Rwanda," said Josh Ruxin, a Columbia University public health professor who lives in Rwanda.

Rwanda's upward trajectory is belied by its sleepy-looking capital. Kigali, a city of about 1 million people, has the feel of a quiet small town, with orderly, tree-lined streets that meet at intersections where drivers use their turn signals more than their horns. Men hawking cell phone airtime run up and wave the scratch cards in people's faces, but they plead for a sale with their eyes, not their lungs.

The silence is subtle but unmistakable. It's as if everyone has a secret.

It's tempting to ascribe the feeling to the memory of the genocide, but many in Kigali say it has more to do with the current political climate.

To restore order after 1994 _ when Hutu militias slaughtered 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus over 100 days _ Kagame's Tutsi-led government assumed complete control.

Kagame has a reputation as a micro-manager, overseeing everything from the AIDS policy to something he has dubbed "Vision 2020," a high-minded if quixotic plan to turn this overwhelmingly rural nation into a regional hub for information technology.

More worryingly, say human rights groups, he has imposed strict laws over free speech to stop people from inciting ethnic hatred, and some journalists who have published critical stories have been beaten, jailed or driven into exile.

The U.S. State Department last year cited reports that Rwandan security forces engaged in extrajudicial killings and arbitrarily detained and arrested countless people, including street children, vagrants and Jehovah's Witnesses. But the department's annual human rights report also noted that police officials fired more than 70 officers for indiscipline and formed a unit within the police force to investigate citizen complaints of abuse and corruption.

"Significant human rights abuses occurred," the report concluded, "although there were important improvements in some areas."

Rwandan officials prefer to discuss the country's record on AIDS. Experts say the country has made a turnaround thanks to the capable management of donor funding, including more than \$300 million from Bush's global anti-AIDS program. The plan has helped put 50,000 Rwandan AIDS patients on life-saving drugs, although an additional 25,000 still lack access.

Six years ago, the U.N. estimated that 8.9 percent of Rwandan adults were living with HIV; by last year that had fallen to 3 percent.

The changes are evident in a redbrick HIV clinic in Nyagasambu, perched on a verdant hillside a half-hour's drive from the capital, Kigali. The clinic was built by the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, a Washington D.C.-based charity, with Bush administration funds. Now dozens of HIV patients from the surrounding villages troop in for regular check-ups.

"Now we have the medicines we need; we have the lab equipment we need," said Theogene Ndayambaje, the clinic's assistant administrator. Motioning to a gaggle of brightly clad women waiting for their check-ups, he added, "Three years ago, they would not have lived."

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California denied waiver to reduce gas emissions

David Whitney
McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Environmental Protection Agency head Stephen Johnson was told by staffers that California had a compelling case for the federal Clean Air Act waiver that he later denied and that the agency was likely to lose in court if sued, Sen. Barbara Boxer said Wednesday.

EPA spokesman Jonathan Shrader didn't dispute Boxer's conclusions, based on a Senate committee investigation.

"Her staff has been shown all the information unfiltered," Shrader said. "What this shows is that the administrator was provided a wide range of

opinions upon which to make his decision. He feels he made the right decision."

Johnson's denial of the waiver stopped California from moving ahead with its tough laws to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and trucks. Sixteen other states were prepared to follow California's lead had the waiver been issued.

Boxer, D-Calif., heads the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which is investigating the EPA's rejection of the waiver. Under the Clean Air Act, California is the only state that can obtain a waiver allowing it to have tougher emission standards than those imposed by the federal government. But once the waiver is granted, other states can adopt similar rules.

Boxer said in a statement that she'll closely question Johnson about his decision when her committee holds a hearing Thursday on the waiver denial.

Johnson denied California's request in December, saying there was nothing unique about its situation that supported issuance of a waiver. A briefing document prepared for Johnson was handed over last week to Boxer's investigators, but virtually all of the text was redacted.

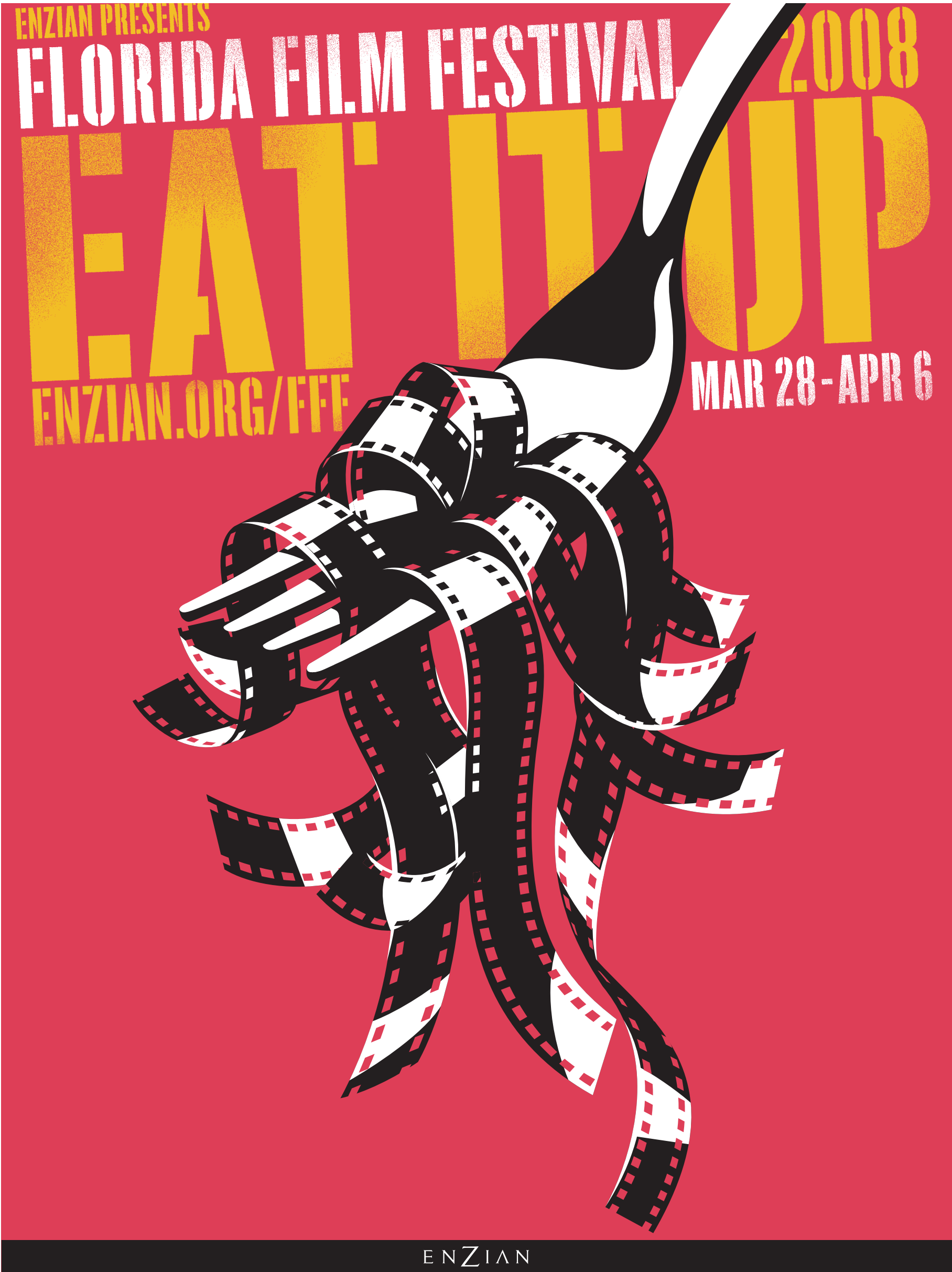
Investigators were permitted to look at the full documents and take notes from them, however. At a news conference Wednesday, Boxer released excerpts from the notes showing that EPA staffers apparently believed that California had a solid case for the waiver.

The notes quoted Johnson's briefing memo

as saying that the agency was likely to be sued regardless of what decision it reached. The memo said that the EPA was "almost certain to win" if a lawsuit was brought by the auto industry because the waiver had been granted and that the EPA was "likely to lose" a suit brought by California if the waiver was denied.

"California continues to have compelling and extraordinary conditions in general (geography, climatic, human and motor vehicle populations — many such conditions are vulnerable to climate change conditions) as confirmed by several recent EPA decisions," Boxer's staff quoted the memo as saying.

—MCT Campus



Myspace records reveal alleged teen rapists

By Peyton Whitely
The Seattle Times

SEATTLE — Four teens have been charged with rape in the alleged assault of a 16-year-old Bellevue, Wash., girl last November.

According to Bellevue police, the attack was described in messages on the Internet.

The youths were all 17 when the alleged assault was reported. Hearings are scheduled next month to determine if they should be tried as adults. One defendant has turned 18 since the alleged attack.

According to court filings, the attack occurred Nov. 18, when four teens picked up the girl at her home in Bellevue and provided her with alcohol.

The girl later told police she remembered going to a grocery, buying alcohol, and being in the back seat of a car, where she was repeatedly raped.

She was returned to her home about three hours after the teens picked her up. Her mother, alarmed at her appearance, took her to Overlake Hospital. An examination determined she had been raped, and police were called, according to

court filings.

The girl went to MySpace.com, found profiles for two of the teens and identified them as two of her assailants, according to a police affidavit.

Police got a search warrant for MySpace.com records and found descriptions of the attack.

"The messages included details of the assault . . . and confirmed that four males were involved," Detective Carl Kleinknecht said.

In other messages, two suspects and other recipients exchanged ideas that included possibly killing the girl if she went to police, concocting a

cover story and even boasting of the attack.

Police interviewed one of the teens, who identified three other suspects.

A car believed to be the one where the alleged assault took place was located and impounded.

The teens, from the Kent and Federal Way, Wash., were charged as juveniles Feb. 20. In addition, two of them face charges of unlawful possession of a firearm for having a .22-caliber semiautomatic rifle on Jan. 24.

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Valencia Foundation invites colleagues, alumni and friends of Valencia Community College to our annual international wine sampling and auction. This year guests can sample fine wines donated by more than 100 vintners from around the world.

The evening will include a silent auction with hundreds of selections, including spa treatments, trips to exotic locations, gift certificates to local restaurants and attractions and, of course, wine. Also, Valencia will present its prestigious 40th Anniversary Award to 40 recipients, 10 from each decade, for the distinction they have brought to the college.

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SPORTS

Pirates, Phillies set losing standard

By Jim Salisbury
The Philadelphia Inquirer

BRADENTON, Fla.- Remember last summer and how the Philadelphia Phillies constantly were reminded that they were approaching the ignominious distinction of becoming the first professional sports franchise to reach 10,000 losses?

Now it's the Pittsburgh Pirates' turn to deal with the friendly reminders that they have suffered more than a few losses, especially recently.

The Pirates are riding a streak of 15 consecutive losing seasons. One more and they will tie the major-league record set by, you guessed it, the Phillies from 1933 to 1948.

Last season, as the 10,000th loss approached, members of the Phillies organization, from the front office to the field, did their best to ignore all talk of the inglorious milestone. The loss came July 15 and quickly was forgotten as the team surged down the stretch to win the National League East for the first time in 14 years.

New Pirates president Frank Coonelly wants his team to take a similar approach in dealing with its streak of losing seasons.

"In my first meeting with the team, I told the players they don't own it, it's not their streak," Coonelly said last week. "They are the '08 Pittsburgh Pirates. The streak will be mentioned in newspapers, but they should not feel they are defined by it."

That said, breaking the streak of losing seasons is not necessarily their goal this season.

"We want to build and sustain a championship-caliber team," Coonelly said Friday. "Winning 82 games is not going to make you a championship-caliber team. We're optimistic we can be a winning team this year, but our long-term goals are more important than simply snapping the streak this season."

Coonelly, 47, joined the Pirates late last season after nine years as Major League Baseball's senior vice president and general counsel of labor. From day one, the former high school hockey player has said he intends to change the culture of losing that has grabbed hold of one of baseball's oldest franchises.



Photo by David M. Warren/Philadelphia Inquirer/MCT

The Philadelphia Phillies' Geoff Jenkins arrives safely at second base on a steal attempt in the second inning against the Pittsburgh Pirates. The two franchises, although still proud, represent the standard for losing in baseball.

"Building and sustaining a championship-caliber team starts with developing a broader and deeper farm system," he said. "There's no question it's not as broad as it needs to be."

Coonelly believes that his club can contend in the NL Central this season. If the Pirates don't, veterans such as outfielder Jason Bay could be dealt for young players who will help in the rebuilding. Otherwise, the Pirates will be reconstructed through the draft.

That raises a fascinating issue.

During his time in the commissioner's office, Coonelly regularly doled out economic advice to clubs, particularly when it came to player contracts and signing bonuses for drafted players.

Several years ago, in an effort to curb escalating draft costs, the commissioner's office instituted guidelines for signing bonuses. Each pick in the draft was assigned a value, and teams were encouraged to follow the guidelines, which became known as the slotting system. Coonelly and former MLB executive Sandy Alderson are the founding fathers of the slotting system.

While some teams, such as the Phillies, follow the slotting system religiously, others, such

as the Red Sox, Yankees and Tigers, aren't afraid to bust slot if it means signing a premium talent.

It will be interesting to monitor the Pirates' economic approach to the draft under Coonelly. They have the second overall pick in June. Would they bust slot?

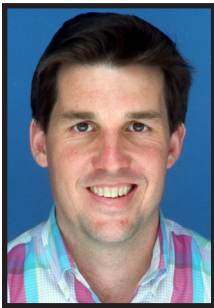
"We'll pay attention to the slot, but we'll take the best available player that we believe we have a chance to sign," Coonelly said. "If we think a player's value is over the slot, we'd certainly consider it."

Coonelly was such a star and important cog in the commissioner's office that he occasionally was mentioned as a possible successor to commissioner Bud Selig, when and if he ever retires.

"With the commissioner's office, I advised and serviced 30 teams," he said. "I thought it was time to join one club and try to help the Pirates become a winner. Pittsburgh is a great sports town. It's a great opportunity to have a positive impact."

And after 15 straight losing seasons, the Pirates are ready for something positive.

Moss deal helps Patriots the most



By Tim Cowlshaw
The Dallas Morning News

With their legacy tarnished- or at least placed on hold until we hear from Matt Walsh- the New England Patriots needed Randy Moss more than he needed them.

The deal, which got done Monday, is for a reported \$27 million over three years. That means Moss chose the chance to win Super Bowls over dollars because on the open market he could have received more. Probably much more.

Still, it's a good move for Moss, who has the opportunity to continue to make history with Tom Brady. But it's a better deal for the Patriots.

New England was one of just three franchises in the four major professional sports that could talk about dynasties this century. The Los Angeles Lakers of Shaq and Kobe won three straight titles from 2000 through 2002.

The San Antonio Spurs have captured three of the last five NBA Finals. And the Patriots won three Super Bowls from 2001 through

2004 before losing this year's game to the New York Giants.

That's it. That's the entire list.

In baseball, only the Boston Red Sox ('04, '07) have won twice. In the NHL, only the New Jersey Devils ('00, '03) have done it.

But the Patriots' reign was tainted the opening week of the season when New York Jets coach Eric Mangini pointed out a Patriots employee illegally taping the Jets' signals on the sideline.

After that came the massive fine and the loss of a first-round pick (although Commissioner Roger Goodell should have taken their highest pick, obtained from San Francisco, and not their own end-of-the-round pick).

That, of course, did nothing to taint this season but it did cast suspicions about their past championships. Then came the week of the Super Bowl, when reports surfaced that Walsh, their former video assistant, claimed to have taped the St. Louis Rams' walkthrough practice prior to the Patriots' first Super Bowl victory.

Until the NFL finally gets to speak with Walsh, we don't know how much validity to give to his story. There appeared to be holes in it, for sure. For one, he claimed to ride a media bus from the Superdome back to the hotel.

There aren't any media buses going to teams' walkthroughs at Super Bowls.

But when he does speak, the NFL has to make his tale public. And if he has a tape, it must be seen, rather than destroyed.

The decision to destroy the evidence the Patriots turned in after they were caught remains the single worst move in Goodell's brief tenure.

If we are to fairly assess the Patriots' place in history, we need to know the truth or at least get as close to it as we possibly can. The NFL can't hide the evidence again.

Then we can establish whether Bill Belichick is a genius or just a cheat, and go forward, which brings us back to Moss.

If the Patriots' legacy does ultimately become tainted, then Brady and the remaining players need to add to their Lombardi trophies. They can't do that without Moss.

There simply is no better combination of elite quarterback, deep threat and possession receiver as Brady, Moss and Wes Welker. Remove any one of those three components, and the system breaks down.

Moss will be only 31 next year. I think he has more than three good years left.

The team that strove for perfection, fell short against the New York Giants and now finds itself scrambling to retain players and its reputation, has to hope that's true.

THE RUNDOWN

What's Coming Up in Sports

Week of March 5 through March 12
NBA Basketball



Saturday, March 8th
Golden State Warriors @ Orlando Magic
Amway Arena
7 p.m.

TV- Sun Sports HD

Radio- 580 AM

Storyline- Expect a play-off type atmosphere as the high flying Golden State Warriors come to down, intent on keeping their spot as the eighth seed in the historically competitive Western Conference, and the Magic continue to try and improve their seeding in the Eastern Conference, with hopes of usurping Boston still alive.



MISL Update

Orlando Sharks 5
New Jersey Ironmen 27

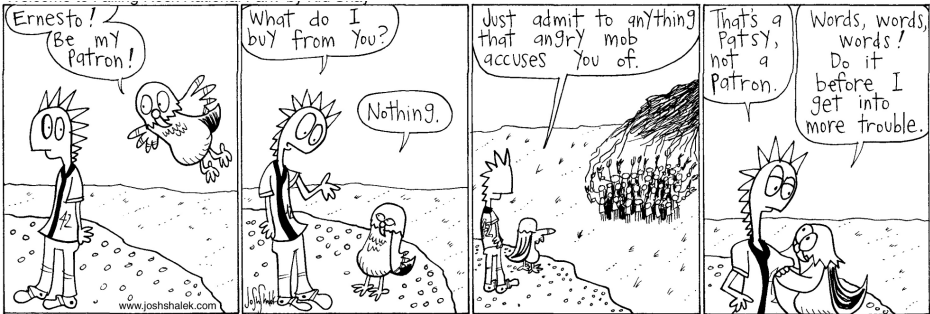
RECAP- Unlike their previous three meetings this season, this fourth and final match-up was never close. The Sharks (3-21) fell behind early to the Ironmen (12-10) and were never able to rebound. The Sharks highlight of the final quarter was midfielder Damien Pottinger going one-on-one against goalkeeper Meola. Pottinger slammed the ball into the net for a two-pointer. With the final score New Jersey 27, Orlando 5, the Sharks look to put this one behind them as they prepare for Detroit Friday at the Amway arena.

Comics and Games

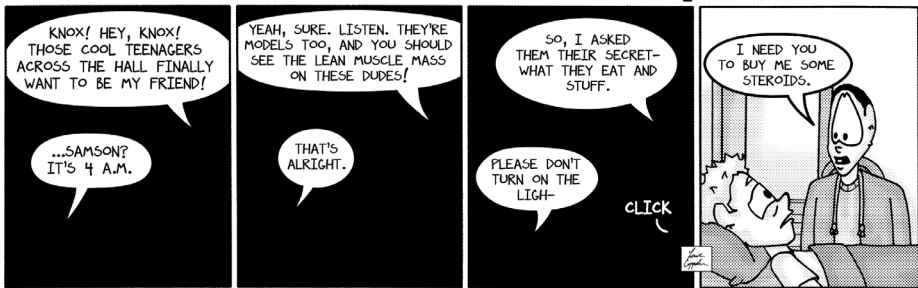
Brothers Watt by William Wilson



Welcome to Falling Rock National Park by Kid Shay



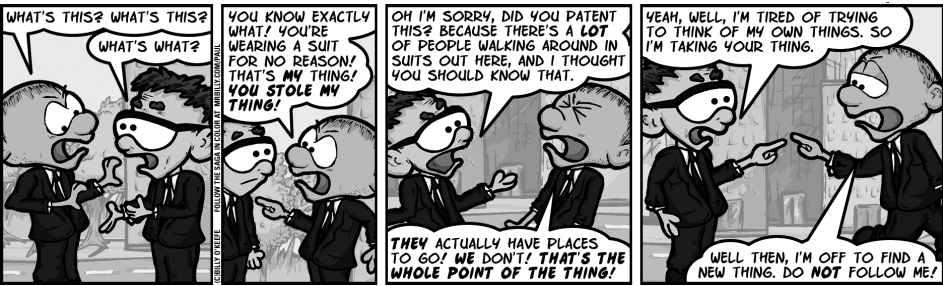
Dream Nation by Louis Coppola



Retro Geek by Dickenson & Clarke

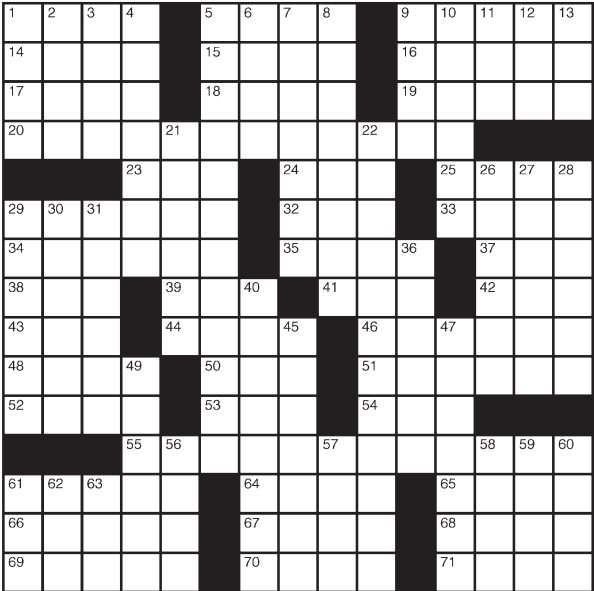


Paul by Billy O'Keefe



Crossword

- ACROSS
- 1 "Sweeney —"
 - 5 Arrived
 - 9 Headliners
 - 14 Vicinity
 - 15 Wading bird
 - 16 Pygmy antelope
 - 17 Goneril's father
 - 18 Cozy home
 - 19 Restrict
 - 20 Popular picnic pick
 - 23 Time of note
 - 24 Building wing
 - 25 Part of U.A.E.
 - 29 Symbolic image
 - 32 Stout cousin
 - 33 One Simpson
 - 34 Danny of "Radio Days"
 - 35 500 sheets
 - 37 Kaline and Jolson
 - 38 Go on snow
 - 39 NBC classic
 - 41 Theater sign
 - 42 Ring of flowers
 - 43 Chasing game
 - 44 Actress Gray
 - 46 Relent
 - 48 Biblical garden
 - 50 Indefinite pronoun
 - 51 Companies of people
 - 52 Fragrant bloom
 - 53 Zodiac cat
 - 54 That woman
 - 55 Nutritional regimen
 - 61 Utter boredom
 - 64 Jamboree
 - 65 Inactive
 - 66 "The Man Who Be King"
 - 67 Pin box
 - 68 Foster film
 - 69 Ferber and Best
 - 70 Prognosticator
 - 71 Highlander
- DOWN
- 1 French chalk
 - 2 Black-and-white cookie
 - 3 Honey
 - 4 Infielder Coles
 - 5 Breakfast menu item
 - 6 Aid in wrongdoing
 - 7 Make a listening error
 - 8 Getty and Winwood
 - 9 Fly by oneself
 - 10 Of primitive groups
 - 11 Purpose
 - 12 Slugger's stat
 - 13 Make a lap
 - 21 Bully's closer
 - 22 Dispel tensions
 - 26 Bridge of Venice
 - 27 In the arms of Morpheus
 - 28 Mooring areas
 - 29 Christian celebration
 - 30 Gilbert and Sullivan opera, with "The"
 - 31 Light browns
 - 36 Buoyed up?
 - 40 Ancestries
 - 45 Incubator occupant



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3/8/08

Solutions



- 47 Crossing by wading
- 49 Interstellar cloud
- 56 Helpful hints
- 57 Fingerprint, e.g.
- 58 Conception
- 59 Fashion magazine
- 60 Narrate
- 61 Ram's mate
- 62 Silent assent
- 63 Church sister

Announcements & Classifieds

Elementary School Tutoring Opportunity!

Looking for community service hours? Volunteer at one of the 16 Elementary Schools listed below! Only 30 minutes once a week. All materials are provided. All we need is you!!

- Bellalago Academy: Maryellen Troffer (407)-933-1690 x0249
- Canoe Creek Charter: Nancy Martinez (407)-891-7320
- Central Avenue Elementary School: Cheryl Vicari (407) 343-7330
- Chestnut Elementary School: Kathe Weisheyer (407) 870-4862
- Cypress Elementary School: Pam Ollis (407) 344-5000
- Deerwood Elementary School: Louise Steurer (407) 870-2400
- Hickory Tree Elementary: Deanna Fertic (407)-891-3120
- Kissimmee Charter Academy: Wendi Molina (407) 847-1400
- Mill Creek Elementary School: Maritza Torres (407) 935-3660

Scholarships Available

The study trip to Poland's Holocaust sites with Professor Gair will be June 1 - 10. To be eligible you must fill out the application, attach the photos it requests and attach the deposit fee of \$450. With the scholarships we estimate the cost to the student will be approximately \$1600 to \$1700, this does not include passport fees. I must have the applications and deposits in the hands of the travel company by the start of March. For more information please contact: Professor Richard A. Gair East Campus, Building 8, Office 132 407-582-2641

The Enigma Machine

In World War II, Peter Hilton first worked on breaking the Enigma Code. He then switched in 1943 and worked on a very new German code called, in English, the Secret Writer. He will describe the problems presented in the successful efforts to break this code. The work done at Bletchley Park was important to the ending of WWII. West Campus, Building 4, Room 120 March 13, 7 p.m.

Stop Da Violence N' Roc Da Mic

Got Talent? Sign up for Talent Tuesday Spring term Location: SGA Office Building 4 or Contact Allen Collins: acollins25@atlas.valenciacc.edu Prizes: 1st prize- \$250 & Rufus Hawkins II Trophy 2nd prize-\$150 3rd prize- \$100 Join SGA West Campus in our support of stopping violence in our communities. If you have any information or want to contribute please use contact previously stated. Talent Tuesday returns March 11 SSB Patio 1 - 2 p.m.

Gates of Choice

The Valencia Character Company will present the world premiere of South Florida playwright Michelle Rosenfarb's play, The Gates of Choice, Beginning March 18 - 22 in the Black Box Theater on Valencia Community College's East Campus. Curtain time is 7:30 p.m.

CLASSIFIEDS

Nice condo for RENT. 3/2, washer & dryer included. Goldenrod/University area. New kitchen & wood floors. Call Marvin 321-299-3516

The Army is currently offering sizeable bonuses of up to \$40,000. In addition to the cash bonuses, you may qualify for up to \$73,836 for college through the Montgomery GI Bill and Army College Fund. Or you could pay back up to \$65,000 of qualifying student loans through the Army's Loan Re-payment Program. To find out more, call 407-345-8701.

Purchase items from categories like healthy, personal & beauty, electronics, home, food & beverage, apparel, baby, jewelry & fragrances, holiday (toys, more electronics, apparel, and gift wrap). Also clearance deals and b2b items (paper, cleaning agriculture and coffee & syrup products. All located under the shop categories, and brands links at www.quixtar.com. I also sell SMC products such as kitchen & household, inspirational, family, candles & scents, fountains, home & garden décor, bath & body, travel, just for her, just for him, bulk buys (large quantity), crystals, travel, and design & style items. If you're interested in any quixtar or SMC products, email me at bummers8@yahoo.com, or bummers7@hotmail.com. You can also call 321-662-0050.