

The Bakersfield Californian

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Final edition

Saturday, January 1, 2000

Welcome, Y2K

Kern sees in millennium with high spirits amid calm, quiet

Inside

Bakersfield woman among freed Indian Airlines hostages

A Bakersfield special education teacher known for her love of foreign travel was among 155 people released Friday after eight harrowing days aboard a hijacked Indian Airlines jetliner.

Jeanne Moore, believed to be the only American on board, was in good health after arriving in New Delhi, India, with the other hostages, U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Elizabeth Corwin said. Corwin couldn't confirm where Moore was staying.

A3

Hijackers given 10 hours to find freedom after releasing hostages

Waving pistols in the air, five hijackers sped off in waiting cars Friday with two Islamic militants and a Muslim cleric released from Indian jails and were given 10 hours to find freedom — ending a tense eight-day standoff.

A3

Woman who took bank employees hostage surrenders

A despondent woman took a group of bank employees hostage Friday in Olathe, Kan., with some escaping during several hours of negotiations with police. Eventually, and after more negotiations, the women surrendered without any bloodshed.

SPECIAL REPORT 3

Yeltsin resigns presidency and offers apology for his mistakes

Pleading for forgiveness, Boris Yeltsin resigned Friday as president, clearing the way for his hand-picked successor to take Russia into a new age and fix the mistakes he admitted having made through eight chaotic years.

A3

Elliot Lee Richardson, former Nixon attorney general, dead at 79

Elliot Lee Richardson, who resigned as attorney general in the Saturday Night Massacre, the historic 1973 showdown with President Nixon over the Watergate investigation, died Friday at 79.

A3

Purists say real millennium not for another 12 months

Millennial excitement aside, Saturday technically is not the start of a new millennium. The actual event is 12 months from now.

Think about it: When counting to 10, we tend to start with one. And that's exactly what Dionysius Exiguus did back in the 6th century. A pope had assigned the monk to figure out the exact date for Easter, when Jesus Christ was resurrected. Dionysius ended up calculating the year of Jesus' birth, too, calling that year 1.

About a thousand years after Dionysius, his calculations were incorporated into the Gregorian calendar put forth by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, a system now used worldwide.

Since the date Jan. 1 in the year 1, a total of 1,999 years have elapsed. That means it's another 366 days — 2000 is a leap year — before we reach 2,000 years.

That makes the start of the third millennium a year away, on Jan. 1, 2001.



CASEY CHRISTIE/THE CALIFORNIAN

Arletta Hardin dances with Bo Bo the Millennium Clown at Centennial Garden on Friday during First Night Bakersfield.



To our readers

This special section was printed after 2 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2000, so we could give our readers the latest possible coverage on events that occurred at and after midnight.

Because of the later press run of this edition, home delivery may be later than usual. We will return to our regular delivery schedule with the editions of Jan. 2.

Caution turns to cheers

► Bug, schmug — revelers happy to discover that all those doomsday what-ifs were just that.

By ROBERT PRICE

Californian staff writer
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Kern County watched the world greet an epochal New Year with a mix of relief and excitement throughout the day Friday, then popped its own collective cork as midnight descended on the Pacific coast, the 22nd of 24 standard time zones to welcome the arrival of 2000.

Bakersfield found its own special reason to celebrate when the hijackers of an Indian Airlines jet released 155 hostages — including Jeanne Moore, a Bakersfield educator who was apparently the only American aboard the plane — early Friday.

Local impact

Moore was held captive for eight days during what was perhaps the final, grand act of terrorism in the terror-plagued 1900s. Her son, a Bakersfield police officer, was to meet her in New Delhi today.

Like every potentially vulnerable spot on the globe, Bakersfield seemed to have escaped the immediate bite of the so-called Y2K bug. The lone glitch was a software problem at the Kern County Sheriff's Department that briefly locked up the office's dispatch computer at about 12:10 a.m. this morning.

Officials at the county emergency operations center said the problem was just a bad line of code in a program that assigns case numbers, and not related to the actual changing of dates in their computers.

Sheriff's dispatchers worked for about 15 minutes the old fashioned way, making notes on incoming calls with pencil and paper. Technicians fixed the problem in about 10 minutes.

Neither Bakersfield nor the rest of the civilized world is in the clear yet, however. People associated with an array of local businesses and institutions will hold their collective breath today and in the days ahead as computers are restarted following the calendar's historic four-digit rollover.

Other than the brief computer hiccup, Kern County law enforcement, emergency and utility officials reported no problems Friday night that might affect the continuity of basic services.

In fact, except for an afternoon bank robbery at the Marketplace in Bakersfield, it was an unusually calm and quiet New Year's Eve.

"There are two types of people (in Bakersfield Friday night) ... half are working and half are too scared to go anywhere," California Highway Patrol spokesman Mack Wimbish said.

Many in Kern County celebrated New Year's Eve at home around the electronic hearth, if they celebrated at all. But among those in Bakersfield who braved the streets, thousands shared the occasion with those closest to them at the city's

Please turn to BAKERSFIELD / 2

Thousands flock to First Night celebration

► First-ever event in downtown Bakersfield proceeds smoothly from noon to midnight.

By JULIA KENNEDY

Californian staff writer

Thousands of Bakersfield revelers hit Truxtun Avenue Friday night for the city's premiere First Night, walking in the street, dancing to live bands and taking pictures with their families.

At midnight, they let loose with cheers and kissed their loved ones as fireworks exploded and Deep Treble sang "Auld Lang Syne."

"Everybody's been waiting for this," declared a jubilant Martin Gonzales, 20, shortly after midnight. "We're here. It's a once-in-a-lifetime thing."

From noon to midnight, crowds ebbed and flowed with teens, elderly people and couples pushing strollers. The sounds of rock, gospel and blues radiated from Centennial Plaza, where a steady stream of bands performed.

As the year 2000 neared, the crowd spilled from Centennial Plaza onto Truxtun Avenue as people danced to Mento Buru. The event was a chance for families to be with loved ones at the dawning of the year 2000, while sharing with the rest of the city in this special New Year's celebration.

"We want to remember where we were and what we did," said Adelina Adams, 62. "So we're out to dance as much as we can."

Adams came from Ontario with her husband, Bob, to be with her brother and his family for the big night. The couple swayed

Please turn to FIRST NIGHT / 2



DAN OCAMPO/THE CALIFORNIAN

Alexa Mirelez, 3, shows her dad, Roy, how she planned to ring in the new year at First Night Bakersfield 2000.



Nervous anticipation turns to celebration

► **As calendars flip over around the world, a new era blows in.**

By **MARCUS ELIASON**
The Associated Press

Millions joyously packed the city streets of Europe and the Americas — including up to 2 million partying in New York City's refurbished Times Square — to join in a worldwide welcome for the new millennium, ignoring fears of terrorist attack and computer collapse to revel in a shimmering spectacle of song, light and fireworks.

From South Sea islands to the southernmost city in the world, from the Eiffel Tower to New York's Times Square, they partied and prayed for a better world.

The drop of a huge crystal ball in Times Square, a ritual almost as old as the century, set off an explosion of fireworks, cheering and tears

as the millennium came to the U.S. mainland.

Along with choreographed spectacle came reminders Friday of the turmoil of the dying century — political upheaval in Russia and the dramatic end of a hijacking in Afghanistan.

Woven together by satellite TV, the world's nearly 200 countries, in their 24 time zones, became a jamboree of disparate cultures — South Pacific islanders singing Handel's "Hallelujah" chorus, Buddhist monks praying for peace in Japan, a German choir singing in a church in Nazareth, Israel, and a huge French-made bell tolling a welcome in Newport, Ky. for each time zone entering 2000.

Fireworks lighted up the skies over Rome, where Pope John Paul II gave thanks for humanity's triumphs and asked forgiveness for its sins.

"What suffering, what dramatic events!" the frail 79-year-old pontiff said of the 1900s. "But, also, what incredible achievements."

Up to 2 million people packed Times Square, "crossroads of the world," for the biggest, splashiest American celebration, guarded by 8,000 police, some equipped to deal with bombs and chemical weapons.

In Washington, President Clinton helped stow artifacts of 20th century America — including Army dog tags and a public library card — into a time capsule to be opened at the 21st century's end.

Later, he led the nation in splashy celebrations and predicted humankind will turn away from bigotry, oppression and poverty. "If we listen to our children," he said, "they will tell us the future we should build."

As the millennial midnight rolled across the country, Americans celebrated in ways large and small, at Las Vegas spectacles, at corner bars, in simple toasts on family homesteads.

More than a half-million thronged Chicago's

lakefront to see the sky set ablaze with fireworks. But downstate, in Springfield, Ill., Ethel Stephens made it a private observance, paying a hospital visit to husband Byron, who is suffering respiratory problems.

"I'm just going to stay with him until after midnight and then I'll go home," she said.

People everywhere worried about the potential for Y2K technological trouble. But they breathed a little easier as the 1999-to-2000 date changes failed to awaken any immediate disruptions of the world's major computer systems. Experts cautioned, however, that problems could still arise in the next few days or even weeks.

An hour before Tonga and Kiribati in the south Pacific became the first countries to welcome 2000, Boris Yeltsin announced he was resigning the Russian presidency to make way for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

As Yeltsin was making his announcement,

word came that the hijack drama in Afghanistan had ended peacefully after eight days.

The freeing of 155 hostages from a hijacked Indian Airlines jetliner, innocent victims of a half-century struggle over Indian-controlled Kashmir, came as the welcome for 2000 was in full swing.

The capitals of Europe, the continent that dominated the past millennium, put on dazzling spectacles. From London to Lisbon, and Rome to Reykjavik, 1,000-year-old cathedrals and medieval citadels of trade were lit up by laser lights and pyrotechnics.

Some 2 million people massed in central Berlin. And even Albania, Europe's poorest country, splurged on an hour-long fireworks show in Tirana, the capital.

The people of a disintegrated Yugoslavia, winners and losers in a wave of civil wars in the 1990s, welcomed the new millennium with hopes for new, peaceful beginnings.

BAKERSFIELD: Pesky millennial bug still may hit

Continued from SPECIAL REPORT 1

inaugural First Night, a family-oriented festival of art, dance, music and general revelry — sans alcohol — staged across a 20-block section of downtown. An estimated 10,000 people attended the 12-hour event, including perhaps 2,500 at the dazzling, eight-minute fireworks display from the roofs of Centennial Garden and the Bakersfield Convention Center.

The ska/jazz/Latin band Mento Buru rocked Centennial Plaza until the electronic billboard began its countdown at 11:59 p.m. and Bakersfield ushered in a new thousand-year cycle of history.

Few revelers at the First Night celebration seemed to care that, technically speaking, the new millennium and the new century are still a year away.

"It is the millennium and it isn't, and I don't care," said Martha Banerdt of Bakersfield.

"This gives everybody the opportunity to hype the millennium all over again, and do things twice," said her husband, Bill Banerdt.

Jim Barber of Bakersfield, still sitting in his seat 10 minutes after the Centennial Garden concert featuring the Smokin' Armadillos, said the day's negative hype obscured its possibilities.

"Some of the niceties have been underhyped," he said. "Things like people getting together for a night this this."

He said he's firmly in the 2001-is-the-real-millennium camp, but he wouldn't let that spoil things for his date with Angie Picinni.

"If everybody's going to party, I'm going to be there too," he said.

Officers of the Bakersfield Police Department, out in force for the First Night celebrations, reported no trouble at the event.

The Sheriff's Department was also visible throughout greater Bakersfield — up to and including Sheriff Carl Sparks, who personally accompanied a team responding to the report of a fight after midnight.

Power companies were at the ready — and bored silly

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. officials had predicted that today — the day after the much-hyped year 2000 rollover — would be like any other.

And they were right.

In fact, things were quieter than usual at the utility company's Wible Road and White Lane offices New Year's Eve.

Instead of scrambling to fix Y2K power outages, workers watched television game shows. The service-truck parking lot remained full.

A restless Terry Scott, account services director, used a blue marker to color in the Kern River on a large PG&E map. "I've always wanted to color this in," he said.

Employees had expected no trouble and that confidence grew throughout Friday as they monitored the new year arriving around the globe.

Auckland, Moscow, Paris, New York. All was fine.

"If all the countries around the world are rolling over without problems, the United States should do the same," Bernie Anthony, emergency response coordinator, said at 9 p.m.

PG&E, which serves west of the Tehachapi mountains, south to Frazier Park and north to the Delano border, was prepared for the opposite news.

Working with regional and national utility organizations, it doubled electric-power reserves and generation resources and stood ready to help other parts of the country if needed.

It wasn't needed.

"On regular nights it's busier than this," PG&E spokeswoman Linda Quiñones-Vaughan said.

All also was quiet at Southern California Edison, which serves areas east of the Tehachapi mountains, Delano and a few Valley floor spots.

The lack of problems locally and globally wasn't surprising, said Mike Christman, Edison regional manager.

"We've been ready and are just happy where we are with this."

Millennium calls up no grief for phone companies

Area phone companies reported no



HENRYA. BARRIOS/THE CALIFORNIAN

Virginia Ramirez and Selestino Garcia get to the dance floor early at Aldo's in Bakersfield.

problems Friday night associated with Y2K.

Pacific Bell, which provides regular and wireless phone service and Internet connections, reported that all operations were working normally after midnight this morning.

GTE spokesman Mike Murray said GTE, which provides regular and cellular phone, pager, Internet and cable services, also had no Y2K glitches.

"We don't have any Y2K issues here whatsoever," Murray said. "There doesn't even appear to be any kind of slow dial tone or anything causing the network any difficulties."

Officials had been concerned that thousands of people picking up their regular or cellular phones just after midnight could overload the systems.

"We are just going to be monitoring — we're all sitting in front of computer screens," Murray said. "We will be here all night and tomorrow as well."

At the GTE station in Taft, employees planned to play cards and watch TV as they waited to see whether Y2K glitches would have any effect on service in the area.

"Everything went over without a hitch," manager Shirlene Potts said just after midnight. "Everything is fine."

Scott Gillam, vice president of engineering for Applied Technology Group Inc., a Bakersfield company that provides cellular service, including service to Hall Ambulance, reported the company had no Y2K problems.

"Everything is still working," he said. "It was uneventful. There wasn't much excitement to it at all."

Water agencies go with flow

Kern County water providers said they had taken precautions and were prepared to deliver drinking water if there were Y2K complications.

But as of 12:30 a.m., most water providers said the systems were running smoothly without a complication in sight.

The Kern County Water Agency, which runs a water treatment plant serving about 90,000 people in northern and eastern Bakersfield, had its storage tanks full at midnight, said urban district manager Jim Beck.

The agency had also installed an emergency generator so that if there was a power failure, it could still provide a base flow of drinking water. The agency had a stock of 45 to 60 days' worth of treatment chemicals in case its

suppliers had Y2K problems.

Local residential water providers such as California Water Service Company, Vaughn Water Company, North of the River Municipal Water District and Bakersfield City Water Resources all had their storage tanks full and generators ready in case of a power failure.

Isabella Dam employees were on hand at midnight to make sure the dam gates remain closed.

Private sector sees no problems

In the private sector, banks and refineries were prepared for the worst but got the best as Y2K's arrival brought no obvious problems.

Kern Schools Federal Credit Union staff celebrated with tostaditas and non-alcoholic drinks. Roughly two dozen employees manned the customer phone lines and data processing systems Friday night at the main branch, on Ming Avenue in Bakersfield.

Marketing manager Patti Reed said the staff was prepared for whatever might come, but spirits were high as banks across the world welcomed the New Year without strife.

"It's a great New Year — a non-event," Reed said a few minutes after midnight. "ATMs, everything — looks good."

No midnight monitor was assigned for San Joaquin Bank, according to Steve Annis, senior vice president and chief financial officer at the bank. He said the real analysis will begin Monday after the first day of processing.

At San Joaquin Refining Co., midnight on New Year's Eve arrived and passed like any other, and work was business as usual.

Because internal systems were ready, Vice President Ed Starbuck said, the only concern was if public utilities went out for a time. They didn't.

Hospitals ease into 2000

As the West Coast counted down the end of 1999, Kern Medical Center's intensive care unit remained quiet under the hissing of intravenous pumps and ventilators.

At the stroke of midnight, a nurse said, "Happy New Year!"

A doctor responded, "The lights are still on and the computers are going."

That was the sentiment shared at Bakersfield's major hospitals, which expected little trouble after their eastern counterparts experienced few problems from the new year.

"All the preparations paid off," said Della Hodson, spokeswoman for

FIRST NIGHT: Vendors get business

Continued from SR1

to Luther Davis and the Blues Jam's rendition of "Stand by Me" shortly after the sun went down.

Organizers of the event said they were happy with the turnout, which First Night spokeswoman Elaine McNearney estimated at 10,000.

"We're extremely pleased with the crowd," said Teresa Shadden, a volunteer at the information booth. Ambulance workers and police reported no major incidents at the alcohol-free event.

The closed streets for First Night stretched from the intersection of Chester and Truxtun avenues to the Beale Library, giving the crowd plenty of space to roam.

"I'd say this is perfect for about anyone," raved Steven Frazier, 12,

who came with his family in the afternoon and planned to stay for the countdown.

Bakersfield's First Night hosted multiple displays of art, including a graffiti piece, painted chairs and an exhibit called "Millennium Voids," of white figures whose heads were made of computer parts. There was music — everything from opera to folk — dance performances, poetry readings and clowns for the kids.

Vendors sold commemorative "First Lights" for \$10, which proved to be popular as their supplies dwindled by 7 p.m.

"It's a very good experience for the first time," said Jerry's Pizza owner Jerry Baranowski, who operated a booth at the event. "It seems like they're really having fun here."

Catholic Healthcare West Central California. "There's not the slightest indication of any problem."

Bakersfield hospitals armed themselves against any Y2K crises with late-night command centers, ham radios and their usual emergency power generators and backup water supplies.

Each Catholic Healthcare West Central California hospital had its 3,000 pieces of biomedical equipment tested for Y2K compliance earlier in the year. About 15 percent of the equipment did not comply and was replaced, said Mike Wood, facilities managers for Bakersfield Memorial Hospital.

Bakersfield Heart Hospital, which just opened in September, expected no problems because all the purchase agreements for their equipment included the provision that it would be Y2K compliant, said Michael Starling, information services manager at the hospital.

Local maternity wards continued the tradition of competing for the first baby of the year and the winner appeared to be Mercy Southwest, when Michelle Salazar delivered Angela Reign Salazar 10 seconds after midnight.

Kern media kept fingers crossed

Local media and communications outlets — including The Bakersfield

Californian, all largely dependent on electricity, were operating without major problems as the clock ticked past midnight early New Year's Day.

Officials at The Californian said they were not expecting any complications for its computers and electronic systems, either at the Pegasus Drive printing facility or its downtown office, where a backup generator could maintain a power supply for the news staff if needed.

Other local electronic communications outlets also appeared prepared for Y2K and possible power outages late Friday and early this morning.

The TV network affiliates are all equipped with generators that allow them to broadcast even if power is discontinued.

Some radio stations in Bakersfield are equipped with generators, while others are not.

Local Internet service providers planned for months for the coming of 2000. A lightspeed.net representative said the company's systems, and its financial transaction abilities, were not hampered during the onset of 2000.

Contributors to this report included Californian reporters Kerry Cavanaugh, Richard Chang, Amanda Gauthier, Julia Kennedy, Steve Swenson, Michelle Terwilliger and Amy White.

Y2K digest

U.S., Russia claim total victory preventing nuclear mistakes

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. — American and Russian officers claimed success Friday in their joint effort to make sure there were no accidental nuclear missile launches caused by the Y2K computer bug.

After nearly 50 years on opposing sides of the Cold War, the two former enemies wanted to ensure, for example, that their systems didn't mistake a radar failure as a threat or misidentify a commercial aircraft as a bomber.

U.S. Maj. General Harry Radeuge said there were no Y2K-related problems at U.S. military bases around the world.

Meanwhile, Pentagon officials said U.S. intelligence had detected three Russian Scud missile launches at rebels in Chechnya. The information was collected at the nearby North American Aerospace Defense Command.

Nation's official timekeeper adds 17,100 years to the date

WASHINGTON — In an ironic Y2K computer glitch, the nation's official timekeeper briefly reported the date as "19100" during the earliest hours of the new year on its Internet site.

The U.S. Naval Observatory, whose master clock in Washington serves as the nation's official source of time, published a Web page to track the time — down to the precise second — exactly as the century ended.

But a bug in the programming of the Web site informed visitors that the current date for U.S. time zones that had already passed midnight was Jan. 1, 19100.

Cmdr. Carl Rusnok of the Naval Observatory said the service's master clock was not affected by the problem. Navy technicians fixed the problem by 2:10 a.m. EST.

At least three sets of twins split by stroke of the millennium

Separated by the stroke of midnight, at least three sets of twins were born on opposite sides of the new millennium.

The births occurred in Indianapolis, Fairfax, Va., and Berlin, Germany.

Neither Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis nor parents Julie and Tim Wallman planned the births to coincide with history, said hospital spokeswoman Leslie Smith.

Jacob Wallman was born at 11:59 p.m. Friday. His sister, Jordan, was delivered at 12:01 a.m. Saturday.

In Berlin, a 25-year-old Bulgarian mother first gave birth to Mircean, four minutes before the end of 1999, doctors at St. Joseph's Hospital said. A minute into New Year's Day, his brother Mircan followed.

The hospital refused to identify the mother, but indicated all three were in good health.

At Inova Fairfax Hospital in Virginia, a woman gave birth to a girl at 11:52 p.m., making her the one of the last Virginians born in the 1990s. The baby girl's brother then arrived at 12:01 p.m. The hospital refused to identify the mother.

Vegas prices retreat as crowds just don't materialize

LAS VEGAS — Thousands of revelers in tuxedos and jeans poured onto the Las Vegas Strip Friday night for a neon-bathed bash of booze, big name entertainment and New Year's Eve excess.

Barbra Streisand, Elton John and Bette Midler were among the headliners at Strip resorts, which had high hopes of cashing in on the New Year. Hefty prices and Y2K fears kept crowds smaller than expected, but some didn't care what a good time cost.

Hotels that had advertised rooms starting at \$2,000 a night were forced to slash prices when the market failed to materialize. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority projected 85 percent of the city's 121,665 hotel rooms would be filled, compared with 91.4 percent occupancy a year ago.

Scalpers tried to unload some show tickets at less than half face value. Shows like Streisand (top price \$2,500) and Midler (\$500) still had tickets available Thursday.

Early in the year, authorities had forecast crowds upwards of 800,000, but said this week that about 240,000 visitors were expected.

