

**Not guilty**

Trumbull woman, accused of stabbing Hastings woman, declared insane.

Page A5

**Another win**

HC men rally past Dana. Page C1

**Husband bound over in house fire**

**WILL VRASPIR**

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The case of a 31-year-old Hastings man accused of pouring gasoline on his wife and trying to ignite her was sent to Adams County District Court on Wednesday.



Adams County Judge Michael Offner bound over the case of John M.C. Roberts, of 519 S. Sewell Ave., after a preliminary hearing.

Roberts faces charges of attempted murder, first-degree arson, attempted first-degree domestic assault and terroristic threats.

During the preliminary hearing, Rick Schmidt, a detective with the Hastings Police Department, testified he interviewed Roberts' wife, Patti (Lindteigen) Roberts, at 515 S. Sewell Ave., where she went for help and to call police.

He testified Mrs. Roberts explained the couple had been arguing that day about financial problems and the fight escalated through the day. Schmidt testified she said she told Roberts their marriage was over and Roberts threatened to kill them both, as he had done repeatedly since the couple was married in August.

"She said he told her, 'If we can't live together, then we can die together,'" Schmidt testified.

He testified that after Roberts left the house, she locked the door and gathered her things to leave. Schmidt said she heard a noise at the front door and she started in that direction. She told Schmidt that Roberts came inside with a red plastic gas can in his hand and started spreading gasoline around the living room.

Schmidt testified Mrs. Roberts said she backed up into a hall as Roberts approached and she froze in fear. She told Schmidt that Roberts poured gasoline on her head and it ran down her back and onto the floor.

Please see FIRE/page B2

**Troubled teen kills 8, self**

*POLICE: GUNMAN MAY HAVE SMUGGLED RIFLE INTO MALL IN SWEAT SHIRT*

**OSKAR GARCIA**  
 The Associated Press

**OMAHA** — The teenage gunman who went on a shooting rampage in a department store may have smuggled an assault rifle into the mall underneath clothing, police said today.

Police Chief Thomas Warren said the young man "appeared to be concealing something balled up in a hooded sweat shirt" he was carrying, according to a surveillance video.

**Flags at half-staff**

Gov. Dave Heineman is asking that all U.S. and Nebraska flags be flown at half-staff to honor the victims of the Omaha mall shooting.

Moments later, as gunshots rang out over Christmas music, those at Westroads Mall huddled in dressing rooms and barricaded themselves in offices as the shooter, 19-year-old Robert A. Hawkins, sprayed the third floor of Von Maur with gunfire. When the shooting was over, Hawkins killed himself.

His victims included six store employees and two customers, police said.



DAVE WEAVER/AP

**A child (center) is reunited with his mother (left) following the shooting at the Von Maur store in Omaha Wednesday. A Bellevue man with a rifle opened fire at the store, killing eight people before taking his own life.**

The customers killed included Gary Scharf, 48, of Lincoln, and John McDonald, 65, of Council Bluffs, Iowa. The employees killed included Angie Schuster, 36, of Omaha; Maggie Webb, 24; Janet Jorgensen, 66, of Omaha; Diane Trent, 53, of Omaha; Gary Joy, 56, of Omaha; and Beverly

Flynn, 47, of Omaha.

The mall was closed today as authorities continued to investigate what may have motivated the teen to go on the shooting spree. The shooting spree was Nebraska's deadliest since January 1958, when Charles Starkweather killed 10 people in

Nebraska and another in Wyoming.

Hawkins apparently had a troubled past. He recently split with his girlfriend and been fired from McDonald's. He also had a criminal record and had left or been kicked out of his parents' house.

Please see TROUBLED/page B2

**Gunman called 'helpful young man' who just lost job, girlfriend**

**ERIC OLSON**  
 The Associated Press

**BELLEVUE** — A high school dropout with a criminal past, Robert A. Hawkins had struggled to overcome depression. But friends thought he was making strides.

Then, about two weeks ago, he lost his girlfriend. A week later, it was his job. His friends worried he would regress.

"He was a very helpful young man, but he was



Hawkins

quiet," said Debora Maruca-Kovac, a surgical nurse whose family took in Hawkins after her 17- and 19-year-old sons befriended him.

"He didn't cause a lot of trouble. He tried to help out all the time," Maruca-Kovac said. "He was very thankful for everything. He wasn't a violent person at all."

But police said it was Hawkins who went into an Omaha shopping mall on Wednesday and began a shooting rampage that killed eight people. It ended when he turned his high-powered rifle on himself.

Please see GUNMAN/page B4



NATI HARNIK/AP

**A sheriff's vehicle is parked on Wednesday outside the Bellevue home where Robert Hawkins lived.**



TONY HERRMAN/Tribune

**Shannan Theesen, of Hastings, greets his fiancée, Allana Wolf, Wednesday at the National Guard airbase in Lincoln during the Nebraska 755th Chemical Company's homecoming after 15 months in Iraq.**

**Friends since childhood serve together, come home together**

**TONY HERRMAN**  
 therrman@hastingstribune.com

**LINCOLN** — Brian Lynn and Shannan Theesen have been through every step of life together since kindergarten. That kinship now includes 15 months of providing convoy security in Iraq.

The two Hastings-area soldiers were among nine area residents who served in the National Guard 755th Chemical Co. based in O'Neill. They returned to Nebraska Wednesday, landing at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, near the Lincoln Airport.

"It's not very often you can say you've been friends with somebody since kindergarten, graduated with them, went to basic and then went off

to war together," Theesen said.

In all, about 160 soldiers who serve in the 755th Chemical Co. returned Wednesday after leaving in September 2006.

Spcs. Lynn and Theesen were stationed at Camp Anaconda near Balad, which is north of Baghdad.

Lynn described the last 15 months as busy but also boring at times. It was also really loud since it was an air base where aircraft were constantly leaving and returning.

"It feels good, I know that for sure," he said of his return. "It's going to be a little different trying to adjust back, but I don't think it should take too long."

The 160 soldiers returned on two planes an hour apart. After the first plane

arrived, the families of Lynn and Theesen — who were on the second plane — giggled nervously with excitement in a nearby hangar while they waited.

"This whole year has been consumed with a lot of worrying and constant thoughts, but it's like now what will I think about," Lynn's mother, Sherri, said.

Lynn and Theesen attended the old Hanover elementary school, which was about 10 miles south of Hastings. The Lynn family moved to the Pauline area when Brian was in fifth grade.

Both Lynn, 21, and Theesen, 20, graduated from Adams Central High School in 2005. Both joined the National Guard their senior year.

Please see TOGETHER/page B2

**Weather**

Lo: 22  
 Hi: 28  
 Cloudy with a 20 percent chance of light snow Friday.



Art by DJ Zubrod, 9, Longfellow School

**MAN HANGING OUT**  
**GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.** —

They thought it was a man hanging on for dear life. Instead, it was just a "Man Hanging Out."

The life-sized sculpture of Sigmund Freud hanging from atop

**Nation**

the Trade Center Building prompted calls to the police and fire departments Tuesday.

WZZM-TV reports the artwork by Czech sculptor David Cerny is suspended by one hand from a pole, seven stories up. It also has appeared in Prague and London

and was in Chicago over the summer.

The police and fire departments say they weren't informed of the statue's placement, but the owner of an art gallery said she has a permit for it.

The Associated Press

**Inside**

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Obituaries

**JERRY L. WATSON SR.**

Hastings resident, Jerry L. Watson Sr., 67, of 605 East 4th Street, died Tuesday, December 4, 2007, at St. Elizabeth Regional Medical Center in Lincoln.



Watson Sr.

Memorial service is 3 p.m. Friday, December 7, 2007 at Butler-Volland Funeral Home chapel. There will be no viewing or visitation.

Memorials may be given to the family.

Condolences may be sent to [www.lbvfh.com](http://www.lbvfh.com)

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Mr. Watson was born March 13, 1940, in Juniata, Neb., to

Harold David and Irene (Weseman) Watson. He graduated from Juniata High School and served in the U.S. Army from 1963-65. On April 22, 1967, he married Maxine Anderson. He was a life long area resident and worked as a machinist for Western Land Roller.

Mr. Watson was preceded in death by his parents; a brother, Clarence; and a sister, Dona Henderson.

Survivors include his wife, Maxine Watson of Hastings, Neb.; sons, Jerry Watson of Hastings, Neb., and Michael Watson of Hastings, Neb.; daughters, Candy Watson of Springfield, Mo., and Tammy Watson of Beatrice, Neb.; and brother, Butch Watson of Boulder, Colo.

**RICHARD 'DICK' BOYD**

Bladen resident Richard 'Dick' Boyd, 72, died Tuesday, December 4, 2007, at Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital in Hastings.

Services are 10 a.m. Saturday, December 8, 2007, at the United Methodist Church in Bladen with the Rev. Michael Lee Burgess officiating. Private family burial will be in Plainview Cemetery at Bladen. Visitation is 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday at Merten-Butler-Mortuary in Blue Hill.

A memorial has been established.

\*\*\*

Dick was born August 21, 1935, at Bladen, Neb., to Winston R. and Elizabeth E. (Williams) Boyd. He graduated from Bladen High School. He served in the U.S. Army from January 18, 1955, to January 17, 1957. He married Rose M.

Spicknall on September 11, 1964, at Bladen, Neb. He had worked for Bladen Sand and Gravel.

He is survived by his wife, Rose of Bladen, Neb.; two sons, Kevin of Bladen, Neb., and Kelly and his wife Kathie of Blue Hill, Neb.; two daughters, Tannya Adams and her husband Carl of Centerville, Iowa, and Tammy Boyd of Deweese, Neb.; his mother, Elizabeth of Campbell, Neb.; three brothers, Jim and his wife Kathy of Dallas, Texas, Ron and his wife Carol of Bladen, Neb., and Phil and his wife Judy of Bladen, Neb.; one sister, Joan Fischer and her husband Doug of Bladen, Neb.; seven grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

He was preceded in death by his father.

**JUANE E. NIELSEN**

Minden resident Juane E. Nielsen, 68, died Tuesday, December 4, 2007, at her home south of Minden.



Nielsen

Services are 11 a.m. Saturday, December 8, 2007, at Fredericksburg Lutheran Church south of Minden with the Revs. Baron and Nancy Cole officiating. Burial will be in Fredericksburg Lutheran Church Cemetery at Minden. Visitation is 3-5 p.m. and 7-8 p.m. Friday at Layton-Craig Funeral Home in Minden.

Memorials may be given to Fredericksburg Lutheran Church or Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation.

\*\*\*

Juane was born April 20, 1939, in Fort Dodge, Iowa, to James and Esther (Askland) Skow. She was the second of seven children born to Esther and James. She grew up on a farm in rural Bode, Iowa, and graduated from Bode High School in 1957.

Juane received her Elementary Teaching Certificate at Dana College in Blair, Nebraska, and taught 4th grade in Fremont, Nebraska, for two years. Juane was married to Elliott Nielsen, August 6, 1961, at Rutland Trinity Church in Rutland, Iowa. To this union were born three children, Deanna, David, and Denise. Juane and Elliott farmed together in Kearney County Nebraska south of Minden. Juane and Elliott moved to the family farm

where they initially raised livestock for several years and changed over to primarily raising corn and soybeans. They ran the farm as a team, each making their own unique contributions to the operation. Juane was an active member of Fredericksburg Lutheran Church where she taught Sunday school for 36 years. In her free time, Juane enjoyed growing flowers, painting, and genealogy. For the past several years, her passion has been quilting. She enjoyed quilting so much that she made a personalized quilt for each of her eight grandchildren, all between harvest and Christmas. Her many pieces of creative works continue to be enjoyed by a host of friends and relatives.

Juane was preceded in death by her parents; an infant brother Ronald; and a brother Jim.

Surviving her are her husband, Elliott; and their children, Deanna Appel and her husband Steve of Blair; David Nielsen and his wife Tamy, of Minden, and Denise Houston and her husband Jim of Elkhorn; eight grandchildren, Marissa, Dane, Anissa, Anson, Austin, Amy, Sarah, and Mandy; as well as three great-grandchildren, Emma, Ashtian, and Alizabeth; her four siblings, Vanetta Heggen and her husband Lowell of Humboldt, Iowa, Karen Heun of Sartell, Minnesota, Margaret Miller of Brainerd, Minnesota, and John Skow of Dakota City, Iowa.

**BRIAN K. JOHNSON**

Sutton resident Brian K. Johnson, 41, died Saturday, December 1, 2007, at his home.

A memorial service will be at 10 a.m., Saturday, December 8, 2007, at Zion Evangelical Lu-

theran Church in Sutton with the Rev. Judy Terry-Nuss officiating. There will be no visitation, the remains were cremated.

A memorial has been established to the family.

**Cosmetics company sues Teri Hatcher for \$2.4 million**

**The Associated Press**  
**LOS ANGELES** — Teri Hatcher is being told to pucker up and pay \$2.4 million to a skin-care products company that says she promoted the wrong lip gloss.

Hydroderm's lawsuit, filed in Los Angeles Superior Court on Tuesday, claims that a 2005 agreement with ISBE Productions, Hatcher's production company, stipulated the star of ABC's "Desperate Housewives" wouldn't endorse other competing products as part of a \$2.4 million endorsement deal.

According to the lawsuit, the company learned last summer that Hatcher was also promoting CityCosmetics, a lip plumper made by City Cosmetics that competes with Hydroderm's lip plumper, called Volumizing Lip Serum.

Hatcher, 42, appeared in pro-

motional materials for CityLips, said she was a "fan" of the product, credited it with "helping her appear beautiful at an awards event," and gave CityLips gift bags to guests at her birthday party.

The lawsuit also alleges that Hatcher promoted other products, but doesn't name them.

"Hatcher's name, image and likeness have been linked to so many competitors' products (at least 17) that it is anyone's guess as to what product keeps her skin and lips youthful," the lawsuit said.

In a statement, Hatcher attorney Alan Wertheimer called the lawsuit an "unjustified and public assault on Teri Hatcher's good name, reputation and celebrity in a transparent and pathetic effort to distract from its own failure to live up to its end of the agreement."

**Kiefer Sutherland sentenced to 48 days for drunken driving**

**DAISY NGUYEN**  
*The Associated Press*

**LOS ANGELES** — Kiefer Sutherland was sentenced Wednesday to 48 days in jail for racking up a second drunken-driving arrest in three years and immediately reported to a city lockup.

The star of the Fox TV drama "24" was being processed at the Glendale city jail, said Officer John Balian.

Sutherland, 40, who pleaded no contest in October to driving with a blood-alcohol level above the legal limit of .08, appeared in court with his attorney and politely answered the judge's questions, said Assistant City Attorney Dan Jeffries.

His request to serve his time at the Glendale city jail was granted and he was ordered to complete the sentence by March 30, Jeffries said.

NewsMakers

Man of the year



CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP

Actor Josh Brolin, one of the honorees at GQ magazine's 12th annual "Men of the Year" party, poses with his wife, actress Diane Lane, at the event in West Hollywood, Calif., Wednesday.

**INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

**SAN JOSE, Costa Rica** — Mel Gibson met with several Costa Rican government ministers to discuss setting up a film production company in the Central American country.

The 51-year-old actor/director met Tuesday with the ministers of commerce, tourism and economy at an exclusive hotel in the Costa Rican capital of San Jose.

"I'm here exploring opportunities to establish my film business in Costa Rica," Gibson told Channel 13 on Wednesday. Gibson, star of Hollywood blockbusters such as the "Lethal Weapon" series and director of last year's Mayan epic "Apocalypto," said he is considering Costa Rica because "it's a beautiful country, very stable."

"I like its people a lot and they have very good coffee." Gibson already owns a house in Guanacaste on the country's Pacific coast.

In July, he met with Costa Rican President Oscar Arias to discuss making a financial donation to the nation's Indians.

**MORE ZEPPELIN CONCERTS?**

**LONDON** — Will Led Zeppelin's long-awaited reunion lead to more concerts?

Musician Jimmy Page, singer Robert Plant and bass player John Paul Jones will perform Monday at London's O2 Arena, a benefit tribute to Atlantic Records co-founder Ahmet Ertegun, who died last year.

It will be the rock band's first concert in almost two decades.

"I must say that after our initial get-together it was so exhilarating and fun that I did feel I would like to do more," Q music magazine quoted Page, 63, as saying.

"I've got things I've been working on for the past four years that I'm proud of," he says. "Some of the songs I've got ready are as good as anything I've done in the past. I wouldn't necessarily save them for my solo career."

**BIRTHDAYS**

Jazz musician Dave Brubeck is 87. Comedy performer David Ossman is 71. Actor James Naughton is 62. Former Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.) is 59. Actor Tom Hulce is 54. Actor Kin Shriner is 54. Talk show host Wil Shriner is 54. Actor Miles Chapin is 53. Comedian Steven Wright is 52. Country singer Bill Lloyd is 52. Singer Tish Hinojosa is 52. Rock musician Peter Buck (R.E.M.) is 51. Actress Janine Turner is 45. Writer-director Judd Apatow is 40. Actress Colleen Haskell is 31. Actress Lindsay Price is 31.

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

"People who never get carried away should be."  
— **Malcolm S. Forbes**, American publisher (1919-1990)  
*The Associated Press*

**FACT OF THE DAY**

Haiti is the least-developed country in the Western Hemisphere, according to the U.S. State Department. It ranked 154th of 177 countries in the U.N.'s Human Development Index for 2006.

**NUMBER OF THE DAY**

898 — number of steps to the top of the Washington Monument when it was dedicated; since a wheelchair ramp was added, there are now 897.  
*Newspaper Enterprise Assn.*

**LESTER P. ALBER**

Former Blue Hill resident Lester Paul Alber, 77, of Lincoln, died December 4, 2007, at his home.



Alber

Services are 1 p.m. Saturday, December 8, 2007, at Evangelical United Lutheran Church in Lincoln with Pastor Myron Meyer officiating and military honors by Nebraska Army National Honor Guard. Private family burial will be in Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery at a later date. Visitation is 5-9 p.m. Thursday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday, with family present 6-8 p.m., at Lincoln Memorial Funeral Home, and one hour prior to services at the church.

Memorials may be given to the family or Evangelical United Lutheran Church, 5945 Fremont, Lincoln, NE 68507.

Condolences may be sent to [lincolnfh.com](http://lincolnfh.com)

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Lester was born in Blue Hill, April 12, 1930, to William "Bill" and Marie (Meents) Alber. He was baptized and confirmed at the St. Paul Lutheran Church, Blue Hill. He graduated from Blue Hill High School in 1948. Lester was a United States Army veteran, serving 1948 to 1952 in Okinawa. He married Joan Eckhardt in May 1953; they had five children, Ronald, Marcia, Mary, Julie, Kenneth. He earned his Associate's degree in Business from Lincoln School of Commerce

and farmed north of Campbell until 1964, moving to Hastings the same year to work at the Nebraska Department of Labor. He moved to Lincoln in 1969, working for the Nebraska Department of Labor and the Federal Department of Labor until retiring in 1993. Lester married Wilma Wenninger in February 2005. He was a member of Evangelical United Lutheran Church, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #3606, American Legion Post Legion #3, Eagle's Lodge #147. Les had a great love for music and continued to play for friends and family at numerous events.

He is survived by his wife, Wilma (Wenninger) Alber; sons, spouses, Ron and Shelley Alber of Charleston, S.C., Ken and Julie Alber of Lincoln; daughters, Marcia Alber of Lincoln, Mary Alber of Lincoln, Julie Southwick, Raymond; grandchildren, Jarred, Katie Southwick of Lincoln, Emily, Morgan Alber of Charleston, S.C., Jonah, Jacob Alber of Lincoln; great-granddaughter, Emma Glasgow of Lincoln; sister, spouse, Viola (Alber) and Roy Heinrich of Roseland; sister-in-law, Myrtis Alber of Blue Hill; uncle, Roy Alber of Hastings; aunt, Rose Bangart of Colorado Springs, Colo.; numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife, Joan (Eckhardt) Alber; son-in-law, Mark Southwick; brothers and sister-in-law, Don and Elsie Alber, Harold Alber; nephew, Rodney Henrich; niece, Jolene Alber.

Tribland

Adams County Judge Michael Offner Wednesday sentenced Adam M. Jones, 22, of 505 N. Kerr Ave., to one year of probation, \$425 in fines and a 60-day drivers license impoundment for driving under the influence of alcohol and possession of an open alcoholic container July 8. Jones pleaded no contest Oct. 5, and prosecutors dropped a charge of leaving the scene of an accident. DUI is a Class W misdemeanor punishable by up to 60 days in jail and a \$500 fine. Possession of an open alcoholic container is an infraction punishable by up to a \$100 fine.

Southern Hills Golf Course: all golf clubs are on sale, too low to advertise the price. Come out and look! -Adv.  
Eagles, Sunday breakfast brunch 8:00 a.m. All welcome. -Adv.  
Earn extra money! 1984 Ford Ranger with a snow blade, \$3,975. Jackson's Car Corner. -Adv.  
Wink's Children's Gingerbread Christmas this Saturday 9:00 to 2:30. No appointment. Winkelbauer, 462-4171. -Adv.

A vehicle reportedly driven by Ricky L. Meyer, of Glenvil, Tuesday struck a parked vehicle owned by Ryan M. Brandt, of Loup City, on Baltimore Avenue near 14th Street.

Southern Hills Golf Course: 50-percent off all clothing, shoes and sunglasses. -Adv.  
Hastings Symphony Christmas Concert December 9, 3:00 p.m., Masonic Center. Tickets at area banks or at door. -Adv.

A vehicle reportedly driven by Amanda J. Bell-Gray, of 1125 N. Jefferson Ave., Tuesday struck a parked vehicle owned by Jorge A. Santos, of 741 N. Williams Ave., on Eighth Street near Baltimore Avenue.

Seniors, join your friends at Hastings Museum's Senior Tea and Tour on December 11 sponsored by Five Points Bank. Enjoy refreshments at 9:00 a.m., "Dinosaurs Alive!" at 10:00 a.m., planetarium show and museum, all for one low price. RSVP by Saturday, at 1-800-508-4629, option zero. -Adv.

2008 Tribune Pet Calendar to publish Friday, December 7. -Adv.

A vehicle reportedly driven by Shawn L. Hoops, of 1227 N. Pine Ave., Tuesday struck a mailbox owned by Bruce Florian, of 1105 N. Webster Ave., and a lightpole owned by Hastings Street Department, 1010 W. A St., at Seventh Street and First Avenue.

2005 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo, four-wheel drive, red, 28,000 miles. Factory warranty. Jackson's Car Corner. -Adv.

Eagles, Friday, chicken fried steak 6:00 p.m. Jim Barnes, 7:00; cover. Saturday, State President's Project Auction, 3:00; chicken fried steak, 6:00. Sunday, The Calhouns, 6:00 p.m.; cover. All welcome. -Adv.

A garage door owned by the Hastings Fire Department, 1313 N. Hastings Ave., was damaged Tuesday by a vehicle reportedly driven by Bruce Sandahl, of 3010 Wendell Drive, at 1313 N. Hastings Ave.  
For your convenience, the Hastings Tribune now has a drive-up payment box in our north parking lot. This may be used for subscription and advertising payments. -Adv.

Vehicles reportedly driven by Margaret Plock, of Harvard, and Linda M. Jones-Keller, of Saronville, collided Tuesday on Second Street near Burlington Avenue.

Southern Hills Golf Course: Gift Certificate Sale...purchase any gift certificate and receive 20-percent off. -Adv.

VFW bingo, Friday, 7:00; one pig, 56 number bonanza. -Adv.

Area Funerals

Friday, Dec. 7

♦ **Jerry Watson Sr.**, 67, of Hastings, 3 p.m. at Butler-Volland Funeral Home chapel.

Saturday, Dec. 8

♦ **Kenneth Adcock**, 80, of Hastings, 11:30 a.m. at Grace United Methodist Church in Hastings.

♦ **Richard 'Dick' Boyd**, 72, of Bladen, 10 a.m. at the United Methodist Church in Bladen.

♦ **Brian Johnson**, 41, of Sutton, 10 a.m. at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sutton.

♦ **Frances Kort**, 91, of Hastings, 10:30 a.m. at First St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Hastings.

♦ **Juane Nielsen**, 68, of Minden, 11 a.m. at Fredericksburg Lutheran Church south of Minden.

**Nation**

**TEEN BIRTHS RISE**

**ATLANTA** — In a troubling reversal, the nation's teen birth rate rose for the first time in 15 years, surprising government health officials and reviving the bitter debate about abstinence-only sex education.

The birth rate had been dropping since its peak in 1991, although the decline had slowed in recent years. On Wednesday, government statisticians said it rose 3 percent from 2005 to 2006.

The reason for the increase is not clear, and federal health officials said it might be a one-year statistical blip, not the beginning of a new upward trend.

However, some experts said they have been expecting a jump. They blamed it on increased federal funding for abstinence-only health education that doesn't teach teens how to use condoms and other contraception.

Some key sexually transmitted disease rates have been rising, including syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia. The rising teen pregnancy rate is part of the same phenomenon, said Dr. Carol Hogue, an Emory University professor of maternal and child health.

**CHRISTMAS TREE**

**TOO SMALL**

**LONG BEACH, N.Y.** — Residents didn't want to have themselves a merry little Christmas tree. They wanted a big one.

When city officials planted a 7-foot-tall Christmas tree next to a 20-foot-tall menorah in the plaza in front of City Hall, some residents barked. They telephoned City Hall, wrote letters and testified at a public hearing that the tiny tree in the shadow of the huge Hanukkah symbol was an insult to Christians.

"What's up with the giant menorah and the Charlie Brown Christmas tree?" resident Rick Hoffman asked.

City Manager Edwin Eaton said he had looked far and wide — all the way to Canada — for a bigger tree but couldn't find one.

"This year is going to be kind of a 'bah, humbug,' Christmas," Eaton had said.

But on Wednesday the city of about 35,000 residents 25 miles southeast of midtown Manhattan found a tree to match the 20-foot menorah: a 20-foot blue spruce.

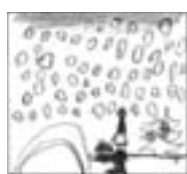
The old tree, a Bacheri spruce, was pruned of its lights, dug up, and taken to a mall.

A lighting ceremony for the new tree is scheduled for Friday.

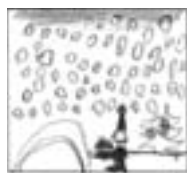
*The Associated Press*

**Tribland five-day forecast**

Art by DJ Zubrod, 9, Longfellow School



**SNOWY TODAY**  
High: 38 Low: 22  
Wind: Southwest 10-15  
Snow and sleet accumulation of 1 to 2 inches possible.



**SNOWY FRIDAY**  
High: 28 Low: 17  
Wind: Northeast 10-15  
Cloudy with a 20 percent chance of light snow.



**SNOWY SATURDAY**  
High: 17 Low: 11  
A 50 percent chance of light snow. Temperatures steady or slowly falling.



**CLOUDY SUNDAY**  
High: 18 Low: 9  
Partly cloudy Sunday night.



**PARTLY CLOUDY MONDAY**  
High: 28 Low: 16  
Partly cloudy at night.

**Today's weather records**

High: 79 in 1939  
Low: -11 in 1950

**Local weather** ♦ From 7 a.m. Dec. 5 to 7 a.m. Dec. 6

High Wednesday	47	Year-to-date precipitation	29.38
High in 2006	63	Jan. to Dec. '06 precipitation	23.41
Overnight low	20	Snowfall last 24 hours	.10
Overnight low in 2006	24	Dec. snowfall	.20
Precipitation last 24 hours	.01	Dec. 2006 snowfall	trace
Dec. precipitation	.61	Seasonal snowfall	1.20
Dec. 2006 precipitation	.00	Seasonal snowfall 2006-07	trace

**Top 10 reasons for knitting**

**H**ere's my top 10 reasons why I knit:  
No. 10: You meet many interesting people by bringing your knitting along with you to different places.



**Robin Stroot**

Knitting will almost always bring on questions of interest.  
No. 9: I grew up in a family with one boy and four girls. My brother was the oldest and I was the youngest of the four girls, I had to do something that was different than my sisters. Knitting was one craft my sister's couldn't do and still don't do to this day.

No. 8: Four-ply, sport, novelty, wool, acrylic, mohair, baby ... which explains the yarn stash on my craft shelves.

No. 7: Afghans keep you warm while you work on them. It takes a little bit of time before you can get some warmth from the afghan. Start several afghans in the late summer or fall season of the year and work them

until they are about 15 inches long then set them aside. That way you'll have plenty of projects ready to choose from and keep you warm for the rest of the cold-weather season. (At least that's MY logical explanation why I have so many unfinished projects.)

No. 6: No heavy equipment or machinery to drag along with you. I can slip most of my knitting projects into a bag or small basket and I'm ready to go out the door.

No. 5: Because I really can knit one and purl two.

No. 4: I can knit without looking at my stitching. However, as a precaution, you may not want to knit during a scary movie or a close football game — the knitting stitches become very tight and you'll have to visit the frog pond and rip-it.

No. 3: I have found a way to do three things at the same time. One, I make different projects for charity; two, I use up some of my yarn stash; and three, I get a chance to use my knitting ability to hopefully make someone's day a little warmer and let them know someone cares.

No. 2: Even knitting "mistakes" can be used on a future project. For example, the technique of felting is purposely shrinking the fiber. In my younger days, my sister did the same thing to my favorite wool sweater when she threw it into the wash load and into the dryer on a hot temperature. My size 10 sweater fit my 6-year-old niece for quite a while. Whether the shrinking was intentionally done is still a family debate to this day.

No. 11: My late mother-in-law and I spent many hours together sharing our love of knitting. She taught me a lot of different knitting techniques and I admired her beautiful knitting. My mother-in-law is also responsible for teaching me that by twisting yarn together on two-color knitting, you close up the "air conditioning" holes. She patiently showed me how to sew a knitted seam together so that it was nice and smooth. I miss our knitting sessions.

**Robin Stroot**, of Hastings, is a columnist for the Tribune. Contact Stroot at 402-461-1252 or e-mail at [tribune@hastingstribune.com](mailto:tribune@hastingstribune.com).

**New fraud charges filed against Philadelphia couple**

**The Associated Press**

**PHILADELPHIA** — A young couple accused of financing a lavish lifestyle through a large-scale identity theft scheme surrendered Wednesday to face additional theft and burglary charges, police said.

Jocelyn Kirsch, 22, and boyfriend Edward Anderton,

who turned 25 Wednesday, used the scam to live affluently in Philadelphia and take international vacations, authorities said.

They were initially arrested Friday and charged with identity theft, forgery, unlawful use of a computer and related offenses. They posted bail and were freed but

turned themselves in Wednesday to face the additional charges.

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**NASA delays Atlantis launch**

**MARCIA DUNN**  
*The Associated Press*

**CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.** — NASA called off today's launch of space shuttle Atlantis after detecting problems with a pair of fuel gauges in the shuttle's external tank.

Shuttle managers said they would try again Friday, provided the problem can be solved before then.

Engineers were testing the four engine-cutoff sensors in Atlantis' liquid hydrogen tank when two of them failed. Even though they were commanded to indicate the tank was empty, the two kept showing the tank was full, said NASA spokesman Paul Foerman.

At least three of the sensors must work properly to proceed with a launch.

Officials said the problem might be related to wiring and connectors, rather than the sensors themselves. It was not immediately clear how any repairs might be made.

The sensors are critical to ensure that the shuttle's three main engines don't shut down too soon or too late during liftoff. Problems with the sensors have delayed shuttle launches before, most recently in September 2006. The trouble began cropping up following the 2003 Columbia disaster.

NASA had been hoping for an on-time takeoff. Each of the year's three previous shuttle countdowns had ended with an on-the-dot departure. Atlantis is loaded with Europe's long-awaited space station lab, named Columbus. The seven astronauts had yet to board their spaceship.

About 750 Europeans con-



**BILL INGALLS/NASA**

**The space shuttle Atlantis and launch pad 39a are seen reflected in a pool of water as workers leave the launch pad late in the night Wednesday at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, Fla.**

nected to the scientific laboratory — a \$2 billion project begun nearly a quarter-century ago — were in town for the launch and had begun gathering at the space center.

It was yet another disappointing flight delay for the European Space Agency, which has been working on Columbus for more than 22 years.

Columbus is "our cornerstone, our baby, our module, our laboratory," Alan Thirkettle, the European Space Agency's station program manager, said Wednesday.

Columbus will be the second laboratory added to the international space station. NASA's Destiny lab made its debut in 2001, and Japan's huge lab Kibo — which means hope — will go up in three sections beginning on the very next shuttle mission in February.

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# WMDs disappear once again

Scripps Howard News Service

Although the Bush White House tried to put the best face on it, there's no getting around the fact that a national intelligence finding that Iran stopped its nuclear weapons program four years ago and that it remains mothballed is a black eye for administration credibility and a blow to its hard line policy toward Iran.

At the very least it should cause the White House to tone down its belligerent rhetoric about a "military option" toward Iran. Indeed, in a backhanded way the finding concludes that the reason Iran froze its nuclear weapons program in 2003 — "primarily in response to international scrutiny and pressure" — was in a sense a victory for Bush's diplomatic policy since the U.S. largely organized that pressure.

At a White House press conference called largely so the president could discuss the new national intelligence estimate, Bush insisted that Iran remains a nuclear threat because it now has the capacity to enrich uranium, a necessary prelude to building weapons, and because of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's bellicosity toward Israel.

Bush said he first saw the intelligence findings last week. But the administration knew last summer that the intelligence agencies had come into possession of information that cast extreme doubt on their 2005 finding of "high confidence" that Iran was developing nuclear weapons.

Yet in the meantime the Bush administration ratcheted up its rhetoric toward Iran. In August the president said Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons put the Mideast "under the shadow of a nuclear holocaust" and in October that ending its weapons program was vital "if you're interested in avoiding World War III . . ." Also in October Vice President Cheney direly warned that the world was prepared to impose "serious consequences" on Iran.

Asked if this sudden reversal was evidence of another intelligence failure, the president said that it was evidence his wholesale reform of the intelligence community had worked. And maybe it has.

Making the findings public must have been embarrassing to the White House, but it frees the president from the damaging charges during his first term that his administration cherry-picked and distorted intelligence to justify its policies and suppressed information that contradicted them.

## Lawmakers

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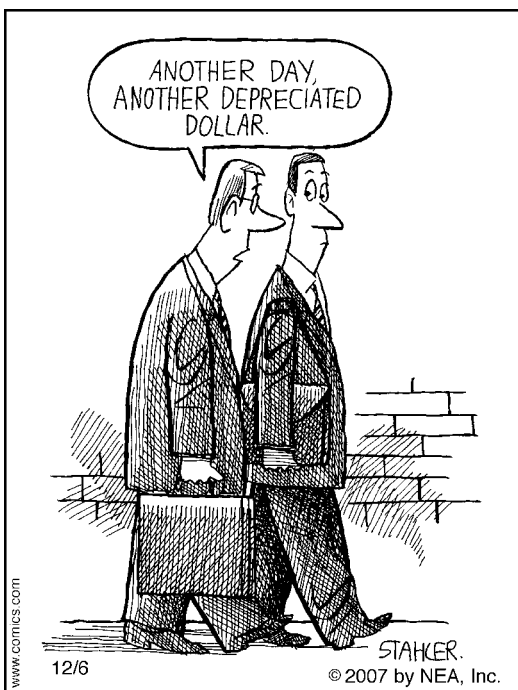
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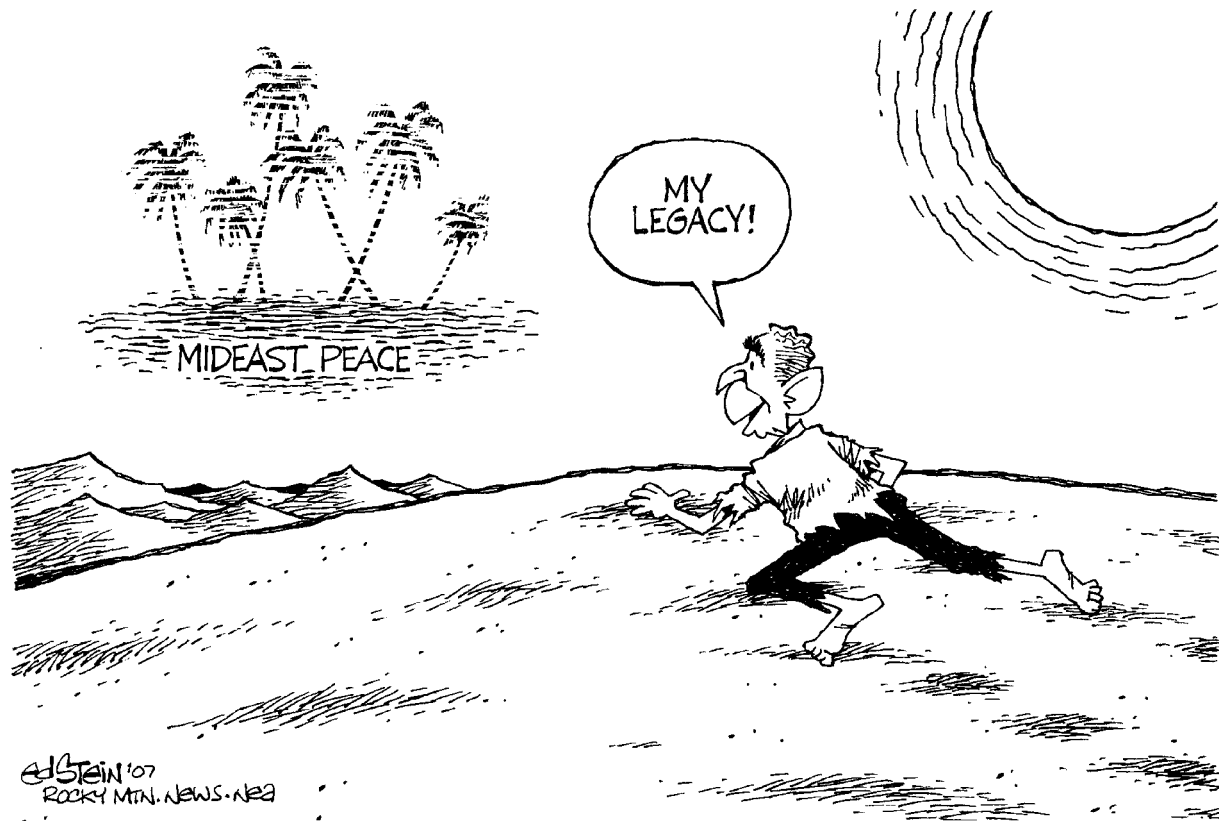
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## Cat on steady diet of macaroni, cheese

I am eating macaroni and cheese. My cat is eating wild salmon stuffed with crabmeat. What is wrong with this picture?

Why is my cat eating like an "Iron Chef" judge while I'm eating chum? This morning the cat had lobster in white wine sauce. I had sugar-free instant oatmeal with skim milk. Remember when pets begged for our table scraps? Now, we should be begging for theirs.

Sure, I know that they just call it "Wild Salmon Stuffed with Crabmeat" when it's really just stuff they squeeze up from the fish-factory floor that wasn't good enough to become cafeteria fishsticks. But still, you'd think the people who package food for humans could at least do the same thing.

Why call it a "hot dog with catsup" when they could call it "spiced pork pate with tomato sauce and herbs"? Is that a grilled cheese sandwich you're eating or a Panini Formaggio? Buffalo wings? Or succulent chicken in cayenne marinade with blue cheese dressing? We know what sounds better, but do our pets?

Some pet food companies are going holistic, organic and vegetarian. Is my cat getting enough Omega-3 oil? Is your dog eating free-range chicken or stringy, old-fashioned caged chickens? Is my cat getting enough fiber? Sure. Sue's house plants are full of it, and that's what she eats when we're not around.



Jim Mullen

Is your pet getting enough treats? Is my cat getting huge? Yes. She's starting to look like a cat-shaped hot air balloon. The vet wants me to put her on a diet. "Maybe I could send her to a spa," I said. He gave me the names a few close by.

"I don't think my cat's healthcare plan covers that."

I told him.

"Who is your provider?"

"Me."

Have you noticed the most crowded aisle in the supermarket is not the baby food aisle, soda or produce aisles, it's the pet food aisle? You can barely get through. It's "Cart Wars" and the woman in front of me is "Darth Shopper." She's trying to decide whether her dog would prefer beef stroganoff with added riboflavin or Coq au vin kibbles with added vitamin D. It's a tough decision. Her dog, she tells me, is a picky eater. Sure. Right now, while she's at the store, the dog is digging up the remains of a dead woodchuck and deciding what tastes better — its decomposing left leg or its rotting head. "I know," he thinks, "Let me drag it home and let my owner decide."

Of course, I don't tell her that, because I do the same thing. We all know that pet food is made to appeal to the pet owner, not

the pet. After all, I'm the one that keeps buying the salmon and crab for my cat because, unconsciously, I'm probably thinking how much more the cat will like me than if I bought her something called rancid fish remnants — as if she would know the difference.

Where would my 10-pound cat ever taste salmon if I didn't buy it for her? Could a 10-pound cat that is scared of the water ever catch a 60-pound salmon? Could a cat win a fight with a lobster? That has Michael Vick written all over it. A lot of dog food says it is made from pure beef. But where would a Chihuahua ever taste pure beef if we didn't give it to him?

If cats spent money at the supermarket instead of humans, the pet food aisle would be full of little cans of "Chopped Colorful Songbirds" and "Raw Mouse Parts with Fur," stuff we well-meaning humans would never buy. How long will it be before pets get celebrity gourmet food? How long before Emeril or Rachel Ray start making pet food? We humans balk sometimes at paying high prices for food that we can prepare less expensively at home. If the stuff we make at home is good enough for us, why isn't it good enough for our pets?

Here's some macaroni and cheese, little buddy.

Jim Mullen is the author of "It Takes A Village Idiot: A Memoir of Life After the City." Contact him at [Jim\\_Mullen@entertainmentweekly.com](mailto:Jim_Mullen@entertainmentweekly.com).

## Voice of the People

### NOT JUST ONE CLIENT

As an employee of the Hastings Regional Center, I am disturbed by how HRC has been portrayed lately in the media. I am concerned that the public is being led to believe that the entire facility is up and running and serving only one client. That is simply not true.

There is one program at HRC that the client population has dropped to one; however, there are other programs at HRC. There is a chemical dependency program that consistently serves 40 youth, which is the maximum capacity for the facility as the regulations are written at the present time. The youth range in age from 13-18 and come to HRC from the Kearney Youth Rehabilitation Treatment Center.

Each is struggling with drug and/or alcohol addiction issues as well as having criminal records. They are under 24-hour supervision, undergoing treatment for their addictions as well as having the opportunity to continue their education. The staff assigned to work with clients from both programs is shared between the two programs.

As a taxpayer, a citizen of the community and an employee of HRC, I feel it is important that accurate information be shared.

One of the goals of the Children's Behavioral Health Task Force, as stated in the draft report is to "work on a plan for creating more mental health and substance abuse services for children in the state, including state wards and nonwards." If a goal is to provide more services, why is there even discussion of closing a facility that is successful in providing the services sought?

The HRC has vacant buildings that could be used to house and treat more clients. In fact, the building being used for the chemical dependency clients has room for additional clients. Before that could happen, laws governing treatment centers would have to be rewritten to expand capacity.

Construction of new buildings would require large amounts of money to be spent up front, while refurbishing costs at HRC could be stretched out over time; however,

quite frankly, I don't believe major renovations are necessary.

The program at HRC is effective. It is centrally located (more so than Lincoln and/or Omaha) and provides opportunities for families to participate in the recovery efforts of their family member. It also worth mentioning that most if not all of the clients served by HRC need to have restricted access to the general public — at least for a short time.

Remember, part of what lands these youth at HRC is the fact that they have acquired a criminal record. Some of them, upon dismissal from HRC, are looking at spending time in detention centers, on probation or parole.

While I truly believe that the ultimate goal is to integrate them into society as productive, contributing members, I also believe that "temporary contained treatment" is a far better option than community-based treatment — at least for this population. Many of these youths need a period of time during which they can focus on their individual issues without the influence of negative peers, bad habits and unhealthy opportunities.

I get the impression that Kathy Moore, a task force member from Omaha, would like to see HRC closed down and have all of the services it provides moved to Lincoln or Omaha. I personally believe this would be a poor choice — not only for the clients and their families but for taxpayers, as well. Yes, it would mean unemployment for more than 100 people, and no, that would not be good for the community. But neither would placing these particular clients in a community setting until they have completed some type of restrictive treatment program.

Kris Sorensen, teacher, Nebraska Youth Academy  
Hastings Regional Center

### CEMETERY NEEDS BETTER

#### ROAD

I wrote to members of the City Council and Cemetery Board, and City Engineer Dave Wacker about my concern that a new

road needs to be a top priority at Parkview Cemetery.

I am referring to the road or the first intersection just inside the north gate. There is a short paved area going north and there is almost always standing water from rain, snow melt and the sprinkler system. At the end of the pavement, there are tire ruts and mud.

When dry, you can still see the marks where the water stood. Continuing north, on both sides and probably more than a block in length, there are many graves. I have seen several handicapped people with canes and walkers try to visit those graves with great difficulty.

During winter, there are wooden stakes placed at the end of this paved area to allow for snow to be pushed and stored in this area, blocking that area off. That area should have appropriate drainage, be brought up to the right height so water no longer stands there and the road should be extended north so people can easily visit gravesites beyond this point. The groundskeepers take such beautiful care of the cemetery but this water has stood there since 1994 and is a problem that needs to be corrected.

Gaule Fandry  
Hastings

## Letter Policy

The Hastings Tribune welcomes letters about issues of public interest. Here are some rules:

- ◆ Letters can be submitted by e-mail: [tribune@hastingstribune.com](mailto:tribune@hastingstribune.com)
- ◆ Letters may be hand-delivered: 908 W. Second St. Or mailed: Voice of the People, P.O. Box 788, Hastings, NE 68902
- ◆ Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. (The address and phone number will not be published.)
- ◆ Letters should be 250 words or less. Letters will be edited for length. They also will be edited for spelling, grammar, clarity and content.
- ◆ Letters should express an opinion or explain why something is important or in the public's interest.
- ◆ Thank you letters and form letters may be rejected.
- ◆ Letters submitted within 30 days by the same author on the same issue may be rejected.
- ◆ Letters of a political nature will not be accepted within seven days of an election.

Local

MUSEUM

ACCREDITATION

The Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History may once again become an accredited museum.

On Wednesday, museum director Becky Matticks gave the museum's board of trustees a final look at the application before it will be sent to the American Association of Museums.

The museum lost accreditation in 1997 because of financial constraints and stringent standards for preservation technology.

With the adoption of a new strategic plan in 2006, the board has been working to meet the goals necessary to become an accredited museum.

By again being an accredited museum, the Hastings Museum will qualify for numerous grants and other programs.

The application is due Dec. 31. Matticks said the museum should receive word within a month if it will be considered to go through the accreditation process.

If the museum is accepted, staff and the board will go through a series of questionnaires and surveys with the American Association staff to receive the official accreditation.

On Wednesday, the board also:

- ◆ Discussed the status of the plan to purchase a new heating, air conditioning and ventilation system for the museum.
- ◆ Discussed the construction of the Lock, Stock and Barrel firearms exhibit, which is set to open in January.
- ◆ Discussed grant opportunities that Matticks plans to pursue in 2008.

State

ANOTHER JUDGE

WASHINGTON

Nebraska is a step closer to receiving a fourth federal judgeship.

Legislation passed Tuesday by the U.S. Senate included language that would give Nebraska's three federal judges some help.

The bill still must go to the House and, if passed, faces a signature review by President Bush.

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts says that on average those three judges presided over 39 completed trials last year — 16 more than in 2001 and more than twice the national average of 19.

The bill would create new temporary judgeships in four other states as well. Nebraska Senators Ben Nelson and Chuck Hagel are co-sponsors.

HOSPITAL THEFT

OMAHA

An Omaha man has been accused of stealing surgical supplies from Creighton University Medical Center and selling them on an online auction site.

Police say 37-year-old former hospital employee Jonathan Lauth has been charged with felony theft. He is accused of stealing surgical hernia plugs — which are small mesh instruments — and selling them on eBay.

The Associated Press

Calendar

HASTINGS

- ◆ Alcoholics Anonymous, noon, 5:15, and 8 p.m. Friday, 521 S. St. Joseph Ave.
- ◆ Hastings College recital, "Holiday Pops" concert by Hastings College Band, 7:30 p.m. Friday, First Presbyterian Church, 621 N. Lincoln Ave.
- ◆ Narcotics Anonymous, 8 p.m. Friday, 401 N. Lincoln Ave.

Lotteries

WINNING NUMBERS

**Wednesday**  
Powerball ..... 1-8-15-21-55-PB41  
(Power Play: 3; Saturday's jackpot: \$26 million)  
Nebraska Pick 3 ..... 5-2-6  
Kansas Pick 3 ..... 1-9-0  
Super Kansas Cash ..... 4-14-24-30-31  
(Super Cashball: 2)  
Nebraska Pick 5 ..... 1-13-14-24-34  
Jackpot: \$54,000  
2by2 ..... Red 2-20, White 10-20  
Hot Lotto ..... 4-11-16-17-20  
Hot Ball 4

# Gunshot victim didn't know he was hit

**JOSH FUNK**  
The Associated Press

**OMAHA** — Jeff Schaffart and his wife had gone to Westroads Mall on his lunch hour, Wednesday, hoping to find a dress for their 2-year-old daughter's visit to Santa.

The little girl was at day care, so they could take a little time to find the perfect dress.

Schaffart, 34, an Omaha attorney, and wife Carrie were on the third floor of the Von Maur department store when they heard shots.

He didn't realize they were shots. Then people started yelling.

"I could hear my wife, Carrie, yell, 'Get down! Get down!'" he said, "but I didn't."

Schaffart said he wandered over to the women's lounge, near the baby-changing area.

"At that time, I realized something bad was going on and that I had been shot," he said during a news conference at Nebraska Medical Center.

He said he saw blood streaming down his left arm, and he felt a stinging pain in his arm.

Witnesses said the gunman fired on shoppers from a third-floor balcony of the department store.

One bullet had gone in and out of his upper arm and another shot had grazed

the pinkie finger on his left hand.

Schaffart said he didn't see the shooter, nor did he see anyone else get shot. He thinks he was hit from behind.

By that time his wife was hiding in a rack of clothes against a wall. He said he called to his wife, but she didn't want to leave her hiding place.

Schaffart remained in the lounge area with another woman, then they went into the women's restroom for safety and called 911. They remained until a sheriff's deputy came.

Once the deputy came, Schaffart reported that his wife was nearby, so the deputy went to get her and took her back to restroom to her husband.

While in the restroom he used his necktie as a tourniquet for his arm wound and put napkins on his finger to stop the bleeding.

He said it was a huge relief when the deputy arrived.

Once Schaffart reached an ambulance, he used his Blackberry to call his office and send e-mails to let friends and family members know that he had been shot but would be OK.

"I feel exceedingly lucky and fortunate to have made it through today," he said. "And my heart goes out to those that didn't, and the families of those that weren't so lucky."

The victims

The Associated Press

A list of those who died in Wednesday's shooting at the Westroads Mall in Omaha:

- ◆ Gary Scharf, 48, Lincoln, Neb., customer
- ◆ John McDonald, 65, Council Bluffs, Iowa, customer. McDonald died in the store before emergency crews arrived, his son-in-law Joe Shehan told the World-Herald.
- ◆ Angie Schuster, 36, Omaha, store employee
- ◆ Maggie Webb, 24, store employee.

- ◆ Janet Jorgensen, 66, Omaha, store employee
- ◆ Diane Trent, 53, Omaha, store employee
- ◆ Gary Joy, 56, Omaha, employee
- ◆ Beverly Flynn, 47, of Omaha, store employee. Flynn died after emergency crews took her from the mall, an NP Dodge co-worker Gena Schriver told the Omaha World-Herald. Flynn worked as a real estate agent at NP Dodge and as a gift wrapper at the store.
- ◆ The shooter, Robert Hawkins, 19, of Bellevue, killed himself, according to police.

## Bush expresses sympathy on shooting

The Associated Press

**WASHINGTON** — President Bush, reacting to a mall shooting spree that left nine people dead in Nebraska, was expected to comment publicly about the killings Thursday afternoon to express his sympathy.

A troubled teenage gunman opened fire with a rifle at a busy department store in Omaha, Neb., Wednesday, killing eight people in an attack that sent holiday shoppers screaming through a mall and barricading themselves in dressing rooms. The young shooter, who left a note predicting, "Now I'll be famous," wounded five others, two critically, then

took his own life.

"It's just terribly sad what has happened there," White House press secretary Dana Perino said Thursday. "This individual unalterably changed so many lives yesterday."

Bush himself was in Omaha on Wednesday for a fundraiser, but left about an hour before the shootings.

"Having just visited with so many members of the community in Omaha yesterday, the president is confident that they are going to pull together and they will get through this," Perino said.



Derek Brooks decorates his gingerbread house Wednesday at Sandy Creek Elementary School.



AMY ROH/Tribune

Carrie Bolton puts frosting on her gingerbread house Wednesday at Sandy Creek Elementary School.

# Holiday tradition

SANDY CREEK STUDENTS DECORATE GINGERBREAD HOUSES

DEANN STUMPE  
dstumpe@hastingstribune.com

**F**AIRFIELD — Before the activity was over, a fine dusting of powdered sugar coated parts of the floor, candy of all colors — especially red and green — was scattered across the tables, and frosting caked the cheeks and clothing of many of the students.

Thirty-four Sandy Creek students were decorating gingerbread houses Wednesday, an annual rite of passage for sixth-graders that has been tradition for almost 20 years.

Sue Kløver, the sixth-grade teacher, said she couldn't remember exactly when she started the activity, but said it was started from a suggestion from students who wanted to use their milk cartons to make the houses.

"They turned out so cute, so it just kind of grew every year," Kløver said of the tradition.

Now, she said the students use cardboard to build their houses. The cardboard is covered with frosting and graham crackers and then embellished with whatever candy the students bring.

"We've been piling up candy in my room for a week," Kløver said.

It was a sea of creativity in the west activity room at Sandy Creek Public School near Fairfield. Students were embellishing their houses with everything from licorice and gumballs to cereal and marshmallows. Some students turned waffle ice cream cones into Christmas trees. Others put sugar Santas on the tops of their chimneys.

Please see HOLIDAY/page B1

## Ginn declared insane

**WILL VRASPIR**  
wvraspir@hastingstribune.com

A 37-year-old Trumbull woman accused of stabbing a 34-year-old Hastings woman was found not guilty by reason of insanity Wednesday.

Adams County District Judge Terri Harder stated that Pamela J. Ginn met the burden of her insanity defense based on a psychological evaluation by Dr. Y. Scott Moore. Moore's report indicated Ginn did not understand the nature of her actions at the time of the incident.

Harder also ordered that a hearing be held to determine if Ginn is still dangerous to

herself or others.

Ginn faced charges of second-degree assault, use of a deadly weapon, burglary and operating a motor vehicle to avoid arrest after allegedly stabbing



Ginn

Mary K. Syring of 2707 W. Bateman St. on Nov. 6, 2006.

During a preliminary hearing Nov. 30, 2006, Syring testified that Ginn broke into her

Please see GINN/page B1

Monetary donations may be mailed to the Tribune at P.O. Box 788, Hastings, NE 68902; and new toys or cash may be delivered to the Tribune offices at 908 W. Second St. The Tribune subscription payment box located in the parking lot behind the Tribune building also be used for cash donations.

New toys also are being collected at Charter Communications, 2303 W. Second St.; Dollar General, 705 W. Second St.; Gordmans, 930 S. Burlington Ave.; Lincoln Federal Savings Bank, 631 W. Second St.; Hastings Middle School, 505 N. Hastings Ave.; Hawthorne Elementary, 2200 W. Ninth St.; Lincoln Elementary, 720 Franklin Ave.; Longfellow Elementary, 828 N. Hastings Ave.; Morton Elementary, 731 N. Baltimore Ave.; Watson Elementary, 1720 Crane Ave.

**Donations list**

Holstein Coffee Club.....	\$25.00
Dick & Phyllis Hawes .....	\$25.00
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$5,540.00</b>

# Kearney County businesses participate in Visitation Program

**TONY HERRMAN**

therman@hastingstribune.com

**KEARNEY COUNTY** — Kearney County businesses helped establish the county's strength and needs, as well as their own, by participating in Nebraska Business Visitation Program earlier this year.

The Visitation Program, which is conducted by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, revolves around business retention and expansion.

This was the first time Kearney County participated in the program. Lisa Stadler, Kearney County economic development director, worked with state officials and local businesses.

The Kearney County Economic Development Agency and Nebraska Economic Developers Association interviewed 34 businesses and engineering production companies in

September. The businesses are located in Minden, Heartwell, Axtell and Wilcox.

According to the state, the Visitation Program yields valuable information as a way to target business assistance programs.

"That's what it is," Stadler said. Results of the process were presented Monday in Minden.

From the results of interviews, Stadler said, program organizers learned quality of life and cost of living were the top reasons businesses were moving to Kearney County.

"The quality of life is phenomenal because we're slower-paced," she said. "We have an awesome school system, and we have new businesses spring up all the time."

Community-based programs like those organized through the Minden Opera House also were beneficial.

Stadler said former Kearney County residents often remember the high quality of life they experienced in the area and return later.

The low cost of living is one factor contributing to quality of life, she said, because those moving into Kearney County typically come from areas out of state where the cost of living is higher.

One of the biggest challenges facing Kearney County is a declining population.

"That spills right over in the workforce," Stadler said.

The current unemployment rate in the county is just 1.9 percent.

"So most people who are needing a job have a job, which is hard for employers, especially when they need specialized talent," she said.

To reverse declining population numbers, Stadler said, local economic

leaders will begin an entrepreneur program in the county's high schools and create a young professional group to encourage networking and opportunities.

"We found we have lots of jobs available. The other challenge we have for the workforce is that we don't have adequate housing," she said.

Minden Mayor Roger Jones said participation by both Minden and Kearney County as a whole was good because of the teamwork it elicited.

Although there probably weren't any surprises that arose from the interviews, Jones said, they showed the area is a little "behind the curve" on issues like affordable housing.

"We're working with developers to put together packages that would be attractive to young couples and also

retirees," he said. "It's slow going because nothing's ever been done like that before."

While it's good to try to attract new businesses to Kearney County, Jones said, it's also important to meet the needs of existing businesses like Royal Plastics Manufacturing and Grayson Tool.

"We need to build on what we have and pay attention to those," he said.

Jones said Village Uniform and Linen Services, which is set to open a location in Minden, also will be a boon to the area.

Stadler said through the interviewing process with the businesses, specific needs came up and program facilitators addressed them.

"Some by financial incentives, some had specific needs, and we were able to direct them to the right resources, which is a big help," she said.



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**\$5.79**



PRICES GOOD THROUGH: DECEMBER 10TH



Local

HC FORENSICS  
TEAM

The Hastings College forensics team competed in the "Outer Limits Swing," Saturday and Sunday in Kearney. The tournament was co-hosted by the University of Nebraska at Kearney and Concordia University.

Team results  
Saturday

Jordan Palmer, senior, first place, prose (qualified for nationals)  
Melanie Hiatt, senior, third place, prose

Aaron Blackman, junior, fifth place, duo; first place, informative speaking (qualified for nationals)

Barrett Graham, junior, fifth place, duo

Carrie Moore, junior, fifth place, informative speaking

Sara Ninabuck, junior, fifth place, persuasion speaking; third place, communication analysis (qualified for nationals in both events)

Paul Martin, sophomore, fourth place, impromptu speaking

Sunday

Jordan Palmer, senior, fifth place, prose, second place, poetry

Aaron Blackman, junior, sixth place, impromptu speaking; fifth place, informative speaking

Zach Oehm, sophomore, fifth place, poetry

FESTIVAL OF WINDS

The following area high school students were selected to participate in an all-day workshop and concert performance at Doane College's 14th annual Festival of Winds Nov. 10:

◆ Adams Central: Ashley Landwehr, Elizabeth Spartz, Elizabeth Urrutia

◆ Deshler: Danny Row, Megan Pohlmann, Isaiah Burger, Emily Petersen, Stacey Duensing, Emily Pohlmann

◆ Exeter-Milligan: Megan Kuska, Tina Kassik, Madelyn Emshoff

◆ Fillmore Central: Cortney Bulin, Caitlin Moore

◆ Franklin: Brittany Ayres

◆ Shickley: Nicole Prinsek, Jolynn Mosier, Krista Swartzendruber

◆ Sutton: Stephenie Stones, Gary Griess, Andrew Wortman, Hayler Brown

# Superior hospital to screen toys for lead

HASTINGS TRIBUNE  
araun@hastingstribune.com

**SUPERIOR** — Parents may determine the level of lead in their children's toys, or in the children themselves, at a free screening at Brodstone Memorial Hospital here from 1:30-5:30 p.m. Friday.

The screening is sponsored by the hospital and South Heartland District Health Department.

According to information supplied by South Heartland, environmental lead

pollution is a major health hazard throughout the world. Even though lead no longer is used in paint, gasoline, water pipes and other products in the United States, a lot of lead remains in the environment.

Lead is toxic and does not degrade, the department said. Lead pipes and deteriorating lead-based paint in older homes, as well as high levels of dust containing lead, are the most common sources of lead poisoning in United

States children.

Research indicates that more than one million children between the ages of one and five have blood lead levels greater than 10 micrograms per deciliter, which is considered an acceptable level.

Recent recalls of children's toys containing lead has raised the awareness level of the danger of lead poisoning.

The hospital has offered to screen up to five toys per family, suggesting that parents bring in toys their children play

with the most or put in their mouths most frequently. Recently purchased Christmas gifts also may be included.

Free testing of the lead levels in the blood of children from ages 1-5 also will be offered. This requires a prick of the finger to produce a few drops of blood. Results will be available in about a week.

Toys that screen high will be referred to the Consumer Product Safety Commission for follow-up.

## Ginn: Woman declared insane

Continued from page A5

house and stabbed her in the abdomen. Syring said after the stabbing, Ginn walked out of the residence.

Syring testified Ginn and her husband were getting a divorce and Syring was dating Ginn's husband.

Syring was taken to Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital where she was treated and released for a small puncture wound to her abdomen.

Hastings police officer Michael Doremus testified he saw Ginn's vehicle on Marian Road near Seventh Street with the headlights off.

Doremus testified the driver of the van led him on a high-speed chase north on Marian Road to Lochland Road, then east to U.S. Highway 281.

Sgt. Paul Weber testified he took over pursuit and followed the van at speeds more than 100 mph to Trumbull.

Weber testified the van was searched before being towed and a 12- to 14-inch long knife was found inside with blood on the tip of the blade.

Second-degree assault is a Class 3A felony punishable by up to five years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Use of a deadly weapon to commit a felony and burglary are Class 3 felonies, each punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment and a \$25,000 fine. Operating a motor vehicle to avoid arrest is a Class 4 felony punishable by up to five years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine.

## Bush touts community health centers

BEN FELLER  
The Associated Press

**OMAHA** — President Bush, on a Midwestern trip to raise Republican cash, stopped by a health clinic Wednesday long enough to tout the benefits of community help for the poor.

The main purpose of Bush's travels was a fundraiser for his former agriculture secretary, Mike Johanns, a Senate candidate in Nebraska. Johanns left Bush's Cabinet in September to seek the seat being vacated by fellow Republican Chuck Hagel.

Already, Johanns has raised more than \$1 million for his campaign and is considered the prohibitive favorite in the race, with a hearty blessing from Bush. The fundraiser was expected to raise \$750,000

at a cost of \$1,000 for individuals and \$10,000 for couples.

While in Omaha, Bush visited OneWorld Community Health Centers, a clinic that provides medical, dental and nutritional aid to poor people. Bush announced that his administration has exceeded its goal of helping launch or expand 1,200 such community health centers.

"The spirit here — the spirit of community, the desire to help people who are less fortunate — is prevalent," Bush said after chatting with health professionals at the site.

"People here feel a great sense of community and accomplishment, and as well they should, because community health centers, not only here in Omaha, but

around the country, provide a very vital service," Bush said.

The administration says the centers are a key part of a "health care safety net," providing primary and preventive care to millions who could otherwise not afford it.

The centers run on a combination of private money and government support.

Earlier, on a blustery airport tarmac, Bush stood with Johanns and praised him at length. He called him a humble man who understands and lives "Nebraskan values."

"If I was a voter in this state, I'd sure pull that lever for Mike Johanns for the United States senator," Bush said. "And if my wife was a voter for this state, she'd try to pull it twice."

## Holiday: Sandy Creek students take part in tradition

Continued from page A5

Austin Timmerman's main embellishments were different kinds of pretzels.

"I wanted to make it look like a log cabin, because I like log cabins and I like the outdoors," he said.

Timmerman said the idea was all his.

"My dad took me to the store and told me to pick out my own stuff," he said.

Kyle Ridgway also had a precise plan in mind. He went through three or four

bags of M&Ms to pull out the green, yellow and brown candies in order to give his house a theme.

"I wanted John Deere colors," he said. "I have a John Deere shirt for every day of the week."

Derek Brooks strayed from the pattern to make a larger house. He said he drew the plans up.

"I draw and build stuff," he explained.

"I want to be an architect."

Brooks even included a large garage and put a Christmas tree inside the house that could be seen through a window.

The students took more than two hours to complete their houses.

"This is challenging because it takes a lot of time," Ashton Garcia said.

Once finished, the houses were taken out to the front hallway where they'll be on display for other students to enjoy.

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Blue Bunny Personal Ice Cream 1/2 Gal.

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KILEY CRUSE/AP

Paramedics rush one of the shooting victims out of Von Maur at Westroads Mall Wednesday.

## Troubled: 19-year-old kills 8, self

Continued from page A1

He dropped out of Papillion-La Vista High School as a senior in March 2006, principal James Glover said today. While he wasn't a loner, he had a very small group of friends and was not involved in extracurricular activities, Glover said.

"It was never a situation where he was out of the loop because people were picking on him," Glover said.

Deborra Maruca-Kovac and her husband, whose sons were friends with Hawkins, welcomed him into their home and tried to help him.

"When he first came in the house, he was introverted, a troubled young man who was like a lost pound puppy that nobody wanted," Maruca-Kovac told The Associated Press.

About an hour before the shooting, Hawkins called her and told her he had written a suicide note, Maruca-Kovac said. In the note, which was turned over to authorities, Hawkins wrote that he was "sorry for everything" and would not be a burden on his family anymore. More ominously, he wrote, "Now I'll be famous."

"He had said how much he loved his family and all his friends and how he was sorry he was a burden to everybody and his whole life he was a piece of (expletive) and now he'll be famous," she told CBS' "The Early Show" today, describing the note. "I was fearful that he was going to try to commit suicide but I had no idea that he would involve so many other families."

Records in Sarpy and Washington counties showed Hawkins had a felony drug conviction and several misdemeanor cases filed against him, including an arrest 11 days before the shooting for having alcohol as a minor. He was due



LAURA INNS/AP

Two women hug after a shooting spree at Von Maur at Westroads Mall on Wednesday in Omaha.

in court in two weeks.

Maruca-Kovac told the Omaha World-Herald that the night before the shooting, Hawkins and her sons showed her an SKS semiautomatic Russian military rifle — the same type used in the shooting. She said she thought the gun belonged to a member of Hawkins' family, but didn't think much of it because the gun looked too old to work.

Mickey Vickory, who worked in the store's third-floor service department, said she heard shots and went with coworkers and customers into a back closet, emerging about a half-hour later when police shouted to come out with their hands up. As police led them to another

part of the mall for safety, they saw the victims.

"We saw the bodies and we saw the blood," she said.

Keith Fidler, another Von Maur employee, said he heard a burst of five to six shots followed by 15 to 20 more rounds. Fidler said he huddled in the corner of the men's clothing department with about a dozen other employees until police yelled to get out of the store.

Witness Shawn Vidlak said the shots sounded like a nail gun. At first he thought it was noise from construction work at the mall.

"People started screaming about gunshots," Vidlak said. "I grabbed my wife and kids. We got out of there as fast as we could."

### Fatal store shooting

Seven were found dead in an Omaha department store. A gunman fired from the store's top floor balcony before killing himself. Victims were found on the top and middle floors. Two died on the way to the hospital.

Westroads Mall, top level floorplan



SOURCE: General Growth Properties AP

## Fire: Man bound over on charges he tried to light wife on fire

Continued from page A1

The next thing she saw was Roberts ignite a lighter and bend down toward her legs.

Lindteigen said she then ran toward the front door to escape and saw flames along the floor on both sides as she tried to open the door, Schmidt testified. She told Schmidt that as she opened the door, Roberts slammed it shut. She forced it open once again and ran outside, escaping serious injury.

Schmidt testified that when he arrived at the scene, he saw Roberts lying face down on the lawn with smoke rising from his body. He said Roberts wasn't wearing a shirt, but Schmidt retrieved a shirt from the street before firefighters arrived.

When Schmidt arrived at the neighbor's house, he testified that Lindteigen was taking a shower. He said the neighbor, Cindy Goff, had gathered Lindteigen's clothing and took them out to the porch because of the gas odor. Schmidt said police collected the clothing in unused paint cans and took them into evidence. He testified another officer found a red gas can near the Roberts' residence and put it into evidence.

Outside, other officers had arrived, including Capt. Adam Story.

Story testified he arrived at the scene before firefighters and emergency personnel and told Roberts he needed medical attention, though Roberts was concerned about going to jail.

"He said, 'I told her I was going to kill her, but I didn't mean it,'" Story testified.

He testified Roberts had burns on his upper body, arms, neck and head. Story said Roberts' mouth and teeth were black, indicating he had inhaled soot or smoke.

Roberts was taken to Mary

Lanning Memorial Hospital in Hastings before being transferred to St. Elizabeth Regional Medical Center in Lincoln, where he was discharged Saturday.

The fire caused significant damage to the house before being extinguished by Hastings firefighters.

During the hearing, Roberts tried to tell the judge the incident was not a murder attempt.

"I love my wife, and I didn't intend for this to happen," he said.

Roberts' attorney, Adams County Public Defender Art Toogood, told Offner that Roberts bending down with the lighter, instead of trying to ignite Lindteigen's head, shows he may not have intended to harm her.

"There's no injury at all," Toogood said. "There's no indication he touched the fire to her at all."

Toogood said since Roberts was injured, he must have stayed in the house and could have been trying to put out the fire that was accidentally started.

Deputy Adams County Attorney Michael Gilmour disagreed. He told Offner that since Roberts went outside to obtain the gasoline and spread it through the living room, he wanted to kill his wife.

"It was Patti's quick thinking and quick flight that kept her from being harmed," Gilmour said.

Roberts' bond has been set at \$1 million, with a no contact order with his wife.

Attempted murder and first-degree arson are each a Class 2 felony punishable by up to 50 years in prison. Attempted first-degree domestic assault and terroristic threats are each a Class 4 felony punishable by up to five years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine.

## Together: Childhood friends back from Iraq

Continued from page A1

"He was very adamant. He said 'Mom, Dad, you got to sign this, otherwise I'll do it later,'" Theesen's mother, Leslie, said. "We knew it was something he chose."

Although they joined Troop A of the 167th Cavalry based in Hastings, it was already deployed when they finished basic training so they were attached to the 755th.

Theesen said he always knew he was going to join the military.

"I've just always liked helping people out, and I think that's the way it is for everybody in the military," he said.

Now home, Lynn and Theesen will live together until Shannan marries his fiancée, Allana Wolf, next June.

Theesen described his relationship with Lynn as "strong as family."

Although they served in the

same company, they served in different platoons.

"He'd go off on a mission, and I might not be on the same mission as him," Theesen said. "When I heard the first platoon lost somebody it immediately jumped in my mind that it might be Brian."

Two members of the 755th were killed in Iraq. Sgt. Jacob Schmuecker, of Norfolk, was killed July 21, and Spc. William "Bill" Bailey III, of Bellevue, died May 25.

"It's always hard to lose soldiers, especially the good ones," Theesen said. "They were doing what they wanted to do, so all you can do is look up to them."

After her son returned, Sherri Lynn had trouble expressing her emotions, sometimes tearing up when she tried.

"We're just so proud of him, and this is all such a new experience," she said.

## Creighton doctors discuss shooting victims

The Associated Press

OMAHA — Only one of the three shooting victims taken to Creighton University Medical Center remains alive.

Doctor Leon Sykes says 65-year-old Micky Oldham was in stable condition this morning

in the intensive-care unit.

She had surgery Wednesday to repair injuries she suffered during the shooting at Westroads Mall, but she'll need more surgery. Sykes says Oldham was shot twice: once in the abdomen and once in

the back.

Two other two patients taken to Creighton died.

Sykes says 56-year-old Gary Joy was dead when he arrived at the hospital. Sykes did not know the details of Joy's injuries.

Sykes says 47-year-old Beverly Flynn died at the hospital. Sykes and other doctors tried to revive her for 45 minutes. She had been shot in the chest.

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**Markets**

Thursday's noon  
local markets

Corn	3.80
Soybeans	10.11
Milo	3.67
Wheat	8.72

Stocks of local interest

The following stocks of local interest were traded today:

	Last	Chg.
BN Santa Fe	85.80	+1.14
Berkshire Hathaway A	147.700	+200
Berkshire Hathaway B	4,924.50	+19.50
ConAgra	25.74	+1.35
Eaton Corp.	93.86	+2.12
Ingersoll Rand	51.67	+14
Level 3	3.46	+0.09
McDonald's	59.82	+31
PepsiCo	76.465	+1.95
TierOne	22.91	-10
Tricon Global Restaurants	38.34	+1.19
Union Pacific	132.25	+2.95
Wells Fargo	32.11	-29
Williams Cos.	35.32	+21
Wal-Mart	48.71	-19

**Region**

**NAYC MEMBERS**

Two students from Tribland have been selected as new members of the Nebraska Agricultural Youth Council.

Derek Jagels, of Davenport, and Dana Christensen, of Hardy, are among the 14 new members identified Monday in a news release from Greg Ibach, director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

The NAYC, an organization of college-age men and women, coordinate numerous ag learning experiences for Nebraska youth. These activities include a farm tour for urban youth, visits to day care centers, and the annual Nebraska Ag Youth Institute for high school students.

Joseph Holoubek, of David City, will serve as NAYC head counselor and NDA ag youth coordinator for the coming year.

**TURKEY DONATION**

The Cottonwood Prairie Toms Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation recently donated more than 300 pounds of turkey and potatoes to help provide this year's Thanksgiving dinner at Hastings' Crossroads Center Rescue Mission.

The group's donation was made as part of the NWTf's Turkey Hunters Care program, which provides turkeys to needy families.

The NWTf has 2,250 chapters across the United States. Since the Turkey Hunters Care program began in 2001, the organization has donated more than 54,000 turkeys to families in need.

For more information about the program, visit the organization's Web site at [www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org) or call 800-THE-NWTf.

**Nation**

**NEW CEO**

**ATLANTA** — In a surprise move, the chief executive of The Coca-Cola Co. will step down after four years as head of the world's largest beverage maker and be succeeded by his second-in-command, the company said Thursday.

Neville Isdell, 64, will step down as CEO on July 1, and will be succeeded by the company's president and chief operating officer, Muhtar Kent, 55.

Isdell, who became CEO in June 2004, will remain chairman of the board until the company's annual meeting in April 2009, the Atlanta-based company said in a statement.

*The Associated Press*

# Ethanol maker files for bankruptcy

FRANKLIN COUNTY PROJECT  
UNAFFECTED BY NEWS

**Staff and wire**

**MEAD** — The company that built a patented closed-loop, methane-from-manure system to power its ethanol production has filed for bankruptcy protection.

A spokesman for the plant owner, E3 BioFuels, said the company is phasing down operations.

"And we're hopeful that, through the reorganization of Chapter 11, we will be able to come out the other side and be fully operational," spokesman R.J. Wilson told the Lincoln Journal Star. A call to his office in Shawnee, Kan., Wednesday from The Associated Press was not immediately returned.

The bankruptcy filing Friday said the 20 largest unsecured claims added up to about \$3.25 million.

Across the country, ethanol plants

powered by methane instead of costly natural gas or coal remain on the drawing board with the notion that such designs would be win-win for the environment and the industry.

"We'll produce ethanol much more efficiently and do it in an environmentally friendly way," said Dennis Langley, CEO of E3, in January. He acquired a majority interest in the \$80 million project in early 2005. A call to his office Wednesday was not immediately returned.

The company boasts that its plant near Mead in eastern Nebraska is the first commercial operation to make ethanol "with virtually no fossil fuels for heat, instead using manure and corn cellulose to make biogas."

Experts say burning methane instead of natural gas or coal cuts the amount of greenhouse gases released into the environment, lowering the plant emissions' effect on global warming.

The plant is next to a 28,000-head cattle feedlot.

According to system designers, if the feedlot were full, the cattle would produce roughly 244,000 tons of manure a year, which would give off more than enough methane to be the plant's sole power source.

Under the system design, corn enters the plant to be processed into ethanol. A byproduct called wet distillers grain is fed to the cattle, which then provide the manure, from which methane is trapped and fed to the plant to provide production power — the closed loop.

Company spokesman Wilson said the manure-methane conversion wasn't a problem but that "startup failures" kept the plant from reaching its production design of 25 million gallons a year.

Lower prices for ethanol, plus high prices for corn also hurt the plant's profit picture.

He said the company could have weathered those problems if it "had achieved substantial completion when we were supposed to."

Todd Sneller, administrator of the Nebraska Ethanol Board, said the company built the plant to match the feedlot next door, leaving it smaller than competing ethanol plants that may have achieved economies of scale.

**NO PROBLEMS HERE**

Franklin County's proposed closed-loop ethanol plant is not in jeopardy even though it was, at one time, associated with E3's parent company, a county economic development leader said this morning.

Jerrell Gerdes, of Franklin, a member of the Franklin County Economic Development Committee, said the parent company split into E-3 and Bio Solutions. The Franklin County project is under the auspices of the latter, which now is headquartered in Omaha.

Gerdes said things are proceeding on track for the proposed plant in Franklin County, and that the projected date for beginning construction is in late 2008.



TERRY PIERSON, The Press-Enterprise/SHNS

Bob Kliver, of Main Street Brewery, removes grain from the mashtun as he makes a batch of India Pale Ale.

## Hops shortage headache for brewers

**GENE GHIOTTO**

*The Press-Enterprise*

Bob Kliver looked over an e-mail detailing a recent purchase of hops for brewing the handcrafted beers at the Main Street Brewery in Corona, Calif.

The cost for about 210 pounds of the beer-making ingredient was more than \$3,900, said Kliver, brew master at the pub. One variety, Millennium, was listed at about \$540 for 22 pounds.

In Murrieta, Calif., Frank Gabriel, owner of the family-run Murrieta Brewing and Pizza Co., was on the hunt recently for hops. His regular suppliers have been unable to provide him what he needs to brew his beers.

"We don't have enough to make anything," Gabriel said, looking at a nearly empty rack in a storeroom.

The cost of hops has gone up three to

four times recently because of a worldwide shortage, thereby increasing the cost to produce the specialty beers.

Varieties of hops that had been less than \$6 a pound are selling for \$18 to \$20 a pound, with some closer to \$25 a pound.

Now, specialty-beer drinkers face shelling out a bit more for their favorite pint of suds.

The shortage was caused by several factors. A 10-year decline in production because of a glut of hops, a fire last year at a hops warehouse in Washington state and poor weather in growing areas of Europe are parts of the problem, according to the Boulder, Colo.-based Brewers Association.

The association also believes the shortage will continue, and that things will get worse before they get better. Along with hops, the price of barley, another beer-making ingredient, has

gone up as some farmers switch to growing corn for ethanol production.

"It caught me off guard when I tried to find a supplier," Johnna McNamara, restaurant manager at the Murrieta Pizza and Brewing Co., said of the shortages.

Gabriel said he noticed an increase — about double — when he bought his last batch of hops earlier this year, but that he first heard of the shortages last month. He said he has enough beer to last through the end of the year but that the future is uncertain.

"In January, we'll try to figure out what we need to do," McNamara said.

McNamara said the Murrieta brewery has been spending \$400 to \$500 on ingredients to produce 240 to 270 gallons of beer. As costs go up, their customers can expect to see an increase in the cost of beer.

## Lawyers spar over insurance policy lawsuit

**JOSH FUNK**

*The Associated Press*

**OMAHA** — A group of State Farm policyholders want the Nebraska Supreme Court to reinstate their lawsuit against the company, because they say State Farm failed to deliver the medical coverage it promised in its automobile policies.

The state's high court was to hear arguments this morning about whether a Douglas County judge's decision in State Farm's favor before a trial should be upheld.

The lawyers for the policyholders will also argue that the case should be treated as a class-action lawsuit for as many as 2,000 people who had claims denied improperly since 1990.

"The documents show State Farm was obsessed with trying to obtain cost savings in its medical payments program," said Christopher Jerram, who represents the insurance customers.

The lawsuit alleges that State Farm charged people for traditional indemnity medical coverage on their policies — meaning they could go to the doctor or hospital of their choice when seeking care after an injury and have their medical bills paid by State Farm.

The lawsuit alleges State Farm provided "managed care" instead and denied all or part of claims that were submitted. And the lawsuit accuses the company of using a biased, unauthorized review process to arbitrarily deny some medical claims.

The policyholders accuse State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co. of violating Nebraska's Consumer Protection Act and the Deceptive Trade Practices Act.

State Farm denies the allegations, and the Douglas County judge granted a summary judgment favoring the company in June 2006.

This week's hearing marks the second time the state Supreme Court has dealt with the case. In 2004, the court limited the case's potential plaintiffs to State Farm policyholders who had filed claims.

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DAVE WEAVER/AP

Crime lab technicians work on the shooting scene at the Von Maur store in Omaha Wednesday.

## Gunman: Hawkins 'helpful young man' who just lost job, girlfriend

Continued from page A1

The rampage was as troubling as it was puzzling for those who knew him.

Hawkins, 19, had been in trouble before. There was a felony drug conviction in March 2005 and the disorderly conduct charge seven months later. He was due in court later this month on charges he contributed to the delinquency of a minor.

But Maruca-Kovac said she saw nothing foreshadowing the horror Hawkins would inflict during his last moments alive. She remembered a gentle young man who loved animals. She regarded him so benignly that when he showed her an SKS semiautomatic rifle the night before his attack, she thought little of it, the Omaha World-Herald reported.

But she had a feeling of despair soon after she learned about Wednesday shootings. By then, she had learned of a suicide note that Hawkins had left behind.

"I had a feeling it could be him," she said.

She said she and her husband let Hawkins stay with them after he left or was kicked out of

his family's house. Court records show that at least once he was termed a ward of the state, which legally removed him from his parents' custody.

With Hawkins living in her home, Maruca-Kovac could see he had a drinking problem and was an occasional marijuana smoker. He enjoyed music and video games — "normal teenager stuff," she said.

"He was depressed, and he had always been depressed," Maruca-Kovac said. "But he looked like he was getting better."

Hawkins had earned a GED after dropping out of Papillion-La Vista High School. He got a driver's license after moving in with the Maruca-Kovacs and five months ago started working at a McDonald's restaurant near their raised ranch-style home in a middle-class neighborhood in Bellevue, Maruca-Kovac said.

He was fired from that job this week, Maruca-Kovac said. Two employees of the McDonald's who were eating there Wednesday said they had been told not to talk to anyone about Hawkins.

Hawkins was not on any

medication for mental illness, but he had been treated in the past for depression and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, Maruca-Kovac said.

Hawkins lived with several friends for a couple days at a time before landing at Maruca-Kovac's house last year, she said.

"He was like a lost pound puppy that nobody wanted," she said. "I felt sorry for him. I let him stay, and we tried to get him on his feet."

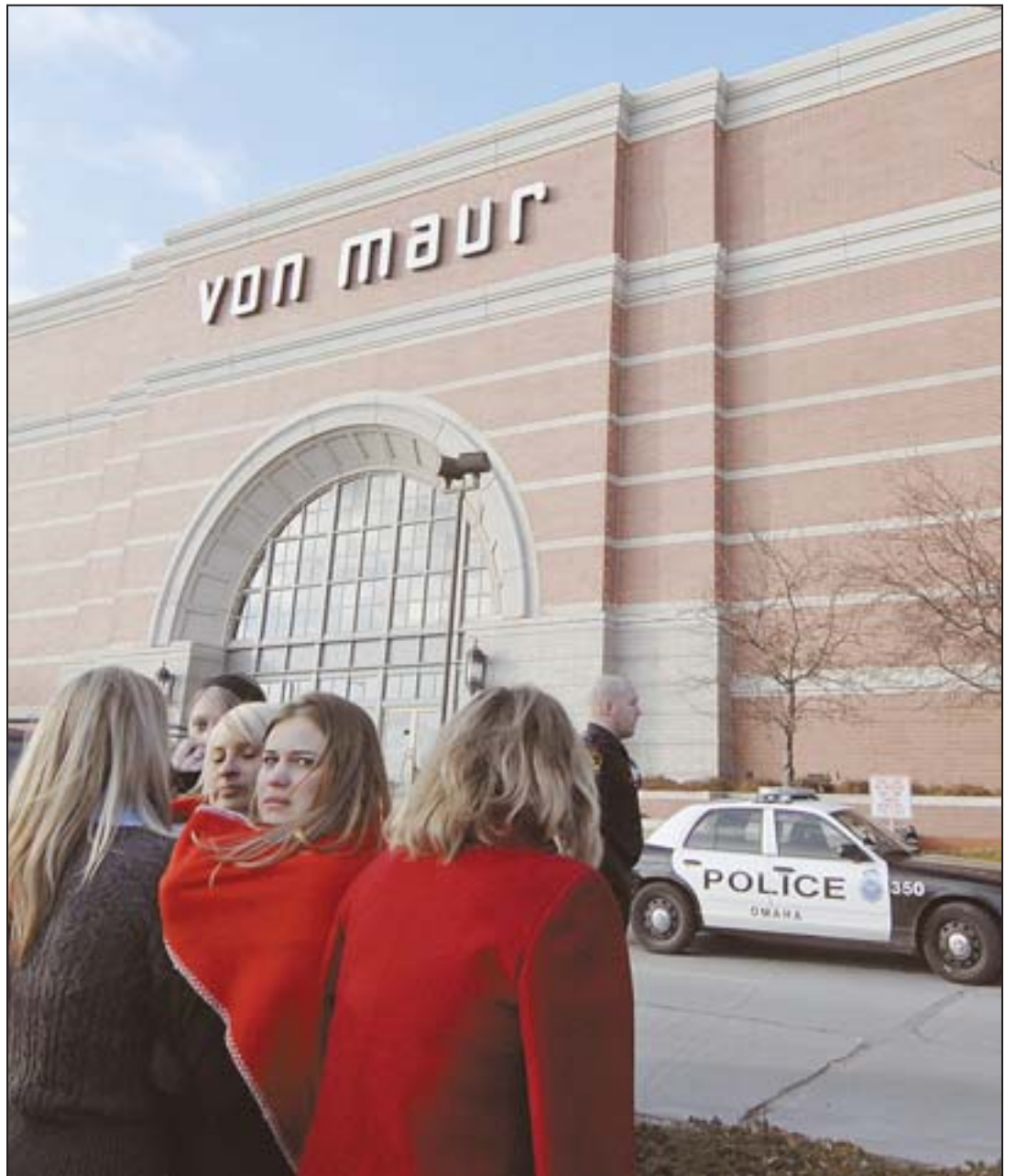
Maruca-Kovac, who works at Nebraska Medical Center, said she was getting ready for work Wednesday when Hawkins phoned her at about 1 p.m., telling her he had left a note. She tried to get him to explain.

"He said, 'It's too late,'" and hung up, she said. She then called Hawkins' mother.

In the note, which was turned over to authorities, Hawkins wrote that he was "sorry for everything" and would not be a burden on his family anymore.

"Now I'll be famous," he wrote.


Maruca-Kovac went to the medical center, where victims of the shooting soon began to arrive.



DAVE WEAVER AND NATI HARNIK/AP

Above: Witnesses to the shooting at the Von Maur store in Omaha stand outside the Westroads Mall Wednesday. Left: A member of the Omaha police stands outside the mall after a gunman opened fire at a Von Maur store Wednesday. The attack made holiday shoppers run screaming through the mall and barricade themselves in dressing rooms.





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## Broncos rally past Dana

### HC MEN CRACK TOP 10

HASTINGS TRIBUNE  
sports@hastingstribune.com

**BLAIR** — All season long, the Hastings College men's basketball team has shown it's a better second-half team a than first-half squad.

Wednesday night against Dana, the Broncos did it to the extreme. Ranked No. 9 in the NAIA Division II poll released Wednesday afternoon,

Hastings overcame a 39-27 halftime deficit by outscoring Dana 44-26 in the second half to capture a 71-65 win on the road.

Hastings trailed virtually the entire game and by as many as 18 points early in the second half, but ended the game with a 16-0 run as the Vikings didn't score over the final six minutes.

With the victory, Hastings improved to 12-0 overall and 4-0 in the Great Plains Athletic Conference

while Dana fell to 6-7 overall and 0-3 in the GPAC.

The Broncos, who were unranked in the preseason poll, are in the top 25 for just the second time under fifth-year coach Lance Creech. Last year, Hastings was in the top 25 for one week.

Hastings shot just 35.3 percent from the field in the first half as the Vikings jumped out to a 12-point halftime lead.

Please see MEN/page C3

## HC women cruise to win

HASTINGS TRIBUNE  
sports@hastingstribune.com

**BLAIR** — The Hastings College women's basketball team picked up its fifth straight win, defeating Dana 87-62 Wednesday.

The Broncos jumped out to an 11-2 lead six minutes into the game and never trailed.

With the win, the NAIA Division II No. 11 Broncos improved to 9-2 overall and 3-1 in the GPAC while Dana dropped to 4-7 overall and 0-3 in the conference.

Lindsay Ducey led the Broncos with 19 points on 7-of-10 shooting as four players

finished in double figures for HC. Kay Broekemeier added 17 points and Haruka Yamashita had 14. Heather McKeon scored 10 points off the bench.

Hastings shot 55.2 percent (32-of-58) from the field for the game. Dana shot 50 percent, but the Vikings committed 24 turnovers. Broekemeier had six steals for Hastings.

Dana got as close as five in the second half and was down 52-44 with 12 minutes to go, but the Broncos put the game away with nine straight points. Dana never got closer than 14 the rest of the way.

Please see WOMEN/page C3



NATI HARNIK/AP

South Dakota State's Kristie Klusaw sets the ball in front of Nebraska's Tracy Stalls during a first-round NCAA volleyball tournament match in Lincoln on Friday.

## Stalls a leader for Nebraska

ERIC OLSON  
The Associated Press

**LINCOLN** — Never mind that her considerable athletic ability alone makes Tracy Stalls one of the top volleyball players in the nation.

It's an intangible, her leadership ability, that her Nebraska teammates admire most.

John Cook says he's never been around as charismatic a player/leader as Stalls in more than 25 years coaching the sport. It's why she's in her second year as team captain, he said.

"She's the one who rallies everybody," Cook said. "She has a tremendous amount of respect from our players because when she talks, it really hits home. It makes a lot of sense. She has a gift."

Stalls, a 6-foot-4 senior middle blocker from Denver, is surrounded by talent on a team that has won 29 of 30 matches leading to Friday's regional semifinal against Michigan State in Madison, Wis.

What sets her apart from others stars, players like three-time Big 12 player of the year Sarah Pavan and Christina Houghtelling, is her knack for inspiring teammates.

"Tracy is very good with her words," fellow middle blocker

Kori Cooper said. "She doesn't let any area of our team break down. We are sound on the court. She takes charge of that. We communicate well off the court. She takes charge of that."

Stalls' credibility is strengthened by her accomplishments on the court.

The first-team All-Big 12 pick is third nationally in hitting percentage (.471) and averages 2.8 kills and 1.1 blocks a game. She has at least 10 kills in each of the past five matches, including a team-leading 11 kills and six blocks against South Dakota State in the first round of the NCAA tournament.

She also is one of three current college players invited to train with the U.S. National Team in January.

Stalls said the leadership role is one she's embraced since her childhood, whether it was in athletics or in classroom group projects.

She said she's a big believer in doing what she preaches; otherwise, one risks losing the respect of teammates.

She says she chooses her words carefully and tries not to get carried away with emotion.

She makes sure her teammates stay on task.

Please see NU/page C3

## Huskers fall in OT

The Associated Press

**BOWLING GREEN, Ky.** — Western Kentucky was 9-of-10 from the free-throw line in overtime, and Tyrone Brazelton hit a key 3-point basket with 34 seconds to play as the Hilltoppers beat Nebraska 69-62 Wednesday night.

Brazelton's basket came after Western Kentucky (6-2) had taken a 60-58 lead in overtime on Steffphon Pettigrew's two free throws and a stop by the Hilltopper defense on the Cornhuskers' (5-2) subsequent possession. The Hilltoppers put the game away by hitting six consecutive free throws in the final 27.8 seconds.

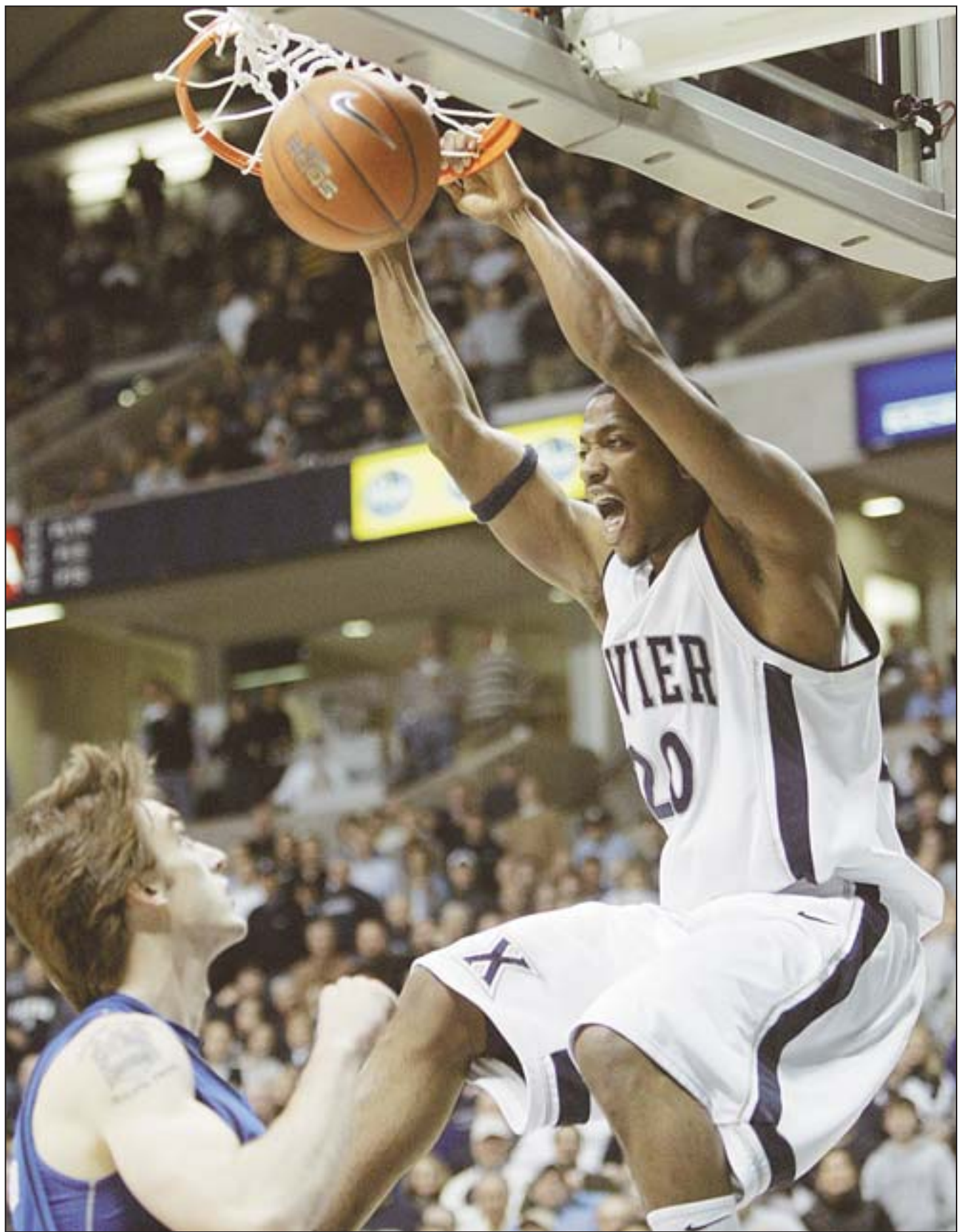
Courtney Lee led Western Kentucky in scoring with 14 points, despite shooting just 4-of-16 from the floor. Ty Rogers scored 11 points, and Brazelton finished with 10.

Aleks Maric scored 17 points and grabbed a game-high 13 rebounds for Nebraska, while Ade Dagunduro also finished with 17 for the Cornhuskers. Ryan Anderson added 12.

The game was sloppy at times, as the teams combined for 44 turnovers and struggled shooting the ball from the floor. Western Kentucky shot just 40.4 percent from the floor (21 of 52), but did make 18 of 21 free throws. Nebraska shot 41.7 percent (20 of 48) from the floor.

Both teams had chances to win the game in regulation, but a shot clock violation by the Hilltoppers with six seconds to play gave the ball back to Nebraska with the score tied at 55.

Cookie Miller drove downcourt but lost the ball out of bounds without getting off a shot as time expired.



AL BEHRMAN/AP

Xavier forward C.J. Anderson (20) dunks over Creighton forward Chad Millard in the second half Wednesday in Cincinnati. Xavier won 79-66.

## CU falls to No. 21 Xavier

JOE KAY  
The Associated Press

**CINCINNATI** — In the first seven games, Xavier point guard Drew Lavender figured out who had the shooting touch and passed him the ball.

"It all depends on who's hot," Lavender said.

In a long-awaited game, no one was hotter.

Lavender scored 17 points in a tone-setting first half Wednesday night, and No. 21 Xavier used another balanced, blink-of-an-eye run to set up a 79-66 victory over previously undefeated Creighton.

The Musketeers (7-1) won their sixth in a row behind their 5-foot-7 point guard, who had been limited to directing their high-powered offense in the early going. Given a chance to shoot, he showed he hasn't lost his touch.

He was the first Xavier player to finish in double figures with points and assists since David West had a triple-double in December 2001.

"In my opinion, it's an easy call that very few point guards in the country are better than him," coach Sean Miller said. "It reminded me a little bit of how I felt when David West played and every once in a while you'd win a game because you had the best player in the gym."

Lavender dribbled through every full-court press that Creighton (5-1) threw



AL BEHRMAN/AP

Members of the Creighton basketball team bow their heads in a moment of silence for those killed in a shooting at a mall in Omaha prior to their game against Xavier on Wednesday in Cincinnati.

at him, then made shots or passed for an easy basket. He finished with a season-high 28 points and a career-high 10 assists.

"It's incredible," said B.J. Raymond, who had 15 points. "He makes the game easy. All you simply have to do is run and he'll find you. Drew does all the work for you. All you've got to do is finish it."

With the score tied at 25, Lavender

got it started. He hit a 3-pointer, a floating jumper and a fastbreak layup after stripping guard Cavel Witter at mid-court, highlighting a 14-2 spurt.

He also had a driving bank shot high off the backboard and a pair of assists in an 8-0 run that put Xavier up 47-29 late in the first half, stunning a Bluejays defense that doesn't give up many more points in a full game.

Please see CU/page C3



# NU: Stalls a leader

Continued from page C1

"I've had to learn how certain players respond, what gets them pumped up or maybe how much space they need," Stalls said. "There's always that balance you're trying to reach."

As the Huskers attempt to play for the national championship for the second straight year, Stalls said, each match comes with greater pressure. She said she spends a lot of time thinking about how she can keep her teammates motivated and in the right frame of mind.

"I'm prayerful about what I do and when I do it," she said. "I don't want to

be too much in control because that's not good, either. It's an interesting balance, and a challenge I really love."

Cooper, a sophomore, said Stalls' impact will continue to be felt after she leaves.

"There is so much you can take away from Tracy," Cooper said. "Mostly how she stays composed throughout hard matches and easy matches. She's very steady. She is just adamant on discipline, never giving up, never slacking. That's something I want to take from her, and the standard we need set for next year, too."

# Men: Broncos rally

Continued from page C1

Dana increased that lead to 18 points three minutes into the second half before the Broncos started their comeback.

The Broncos didn't cut the deficit to single digits, though, until the final seven minutes of the game. Dana made its last field goal with eight minutes to go, increasing its lead to 62-47. But the Vikings made only three free throws the rest of the way.

The Broncos tied the game 65-all on a free throw by Cory Fehringer with 2:35 to go and then took the lead for good on a layup with 43 seconds left by Kyle Wamsley. Jeremiah Slough sank four free throws in the final 30 seconds of the game to seal the deal.

For the game, the Broncos hit 18-of-23 free throws — with all but one of them coming in the second half.

Michael Etzelmiller led the

Broncos with 17 points and eight rebounds, hitting 8-of-8 free throws. Bobby Kempf added 16 points and seven rebounds as the Broncos held a 41-26 rebounding advantage that included 16 offensive rebounds compared to Dana's five offensive boards.

Jeremiah Slough added 10 points and four assists.

Hastings has now outscored its 12 opponents 511-351 while the Broncos' advantage in the first half is just 398-367.

Other GPAC teams in the top 25 are No. 2 Morningside, No. 18 Northwestern and No. 23 Dakota Wesleyan.

Hastings returns to action Saturday with a 4 p.m. home game against Sioux Falls at Lynn Farrell Arena.

Hastings (71)

Michael Etzelmiller 17, Bobby Kempf 16, Scott Wissing 4, Cory Fehringer 9, Derrick Spooner 3, Jeremiah Slough 10, Waid Vontz 6, Kyle Wamsley 4, Jason Zelasney 2.

# Women: Hastings cruises

Continued from page C1

Other GPAC teams in the top 25 in the poll released Wednesday are No. 2 Northwestern, No. 7 Morningside and No. 12 Concordia. The Broncos' two losses this season have come to Concordia and fifth-ranked Dakota State. Hastings was

No. 3 in the preseason poll.

Hastings returns to action Saturday with a 2 p.m. home game against Sioux Falls at Lynn Farrell Arena.

Hastings (87)

Lindsay Ducey 19, Rachel Van Kirk 2, Haruka Yamashita 14, Kay Broekemeier 17, Rachel Isherwood 4, Alyssa Farmer 3, Kim Faimon 5, Maggie Schmaderer 3, Heather McKeon 10, Amber Kulus 2, Breanna Lien 2.

# Nebraska tweaks '08 schedule

The Associated Press

**LINCOLN** — The dates of two non-conference games on Nebraska's 2008 football schedule have been changed, and the Cornhuskers announced the addition of three opponents for 2010.

Western Michigan will visit on Aug. 30, and the game will be Bo Pelini's first as Nebraska's head coach, the athletic department said Wednesday. The game against the Broncos originally had been scheduled for Sept. 27.

Nebraska's game with Virginia Tech will now be played on Sept. 27 instead of the originally scheduled Sept. 20 date. The move gives Nebraska an open date on Sept. 20.

The Huskers will open 2008 with five consecutive home games, marking the second time in four seasons Nebraska has played its first five at home. Following the opener with Western Michigan, Nebraska will play host to San Jose State and New Mexico State. Following the week off, Nebraska will conclude its five-game homestand against Virginia Tech and Missouri on Oct. 4.

The 2010 schedule has been completed, with Nebraska playing Western Kentucky (Sept. 4), Idaho (Sept. 11) and South Dakota State (Sept. 25). A previously announced game at Washington is Sept. 18, 2010.

# Tebow, McFadden, Brennan, Daniel are Heisman finalists

RALPH D. RUSSO

The Associated Press

**NEW YORK** — A Heisman Trophy race that once seemed so muddled has been dwindled to four contenders and even has a favorite.

Florida quarterback Tim Tebow, trying to become the first sophomore to win the Heisman Trophy, has emerged as a front-runner among the finalists who will be in New York on Saturday night vying for the award given to the top player in college football.

Arkansas running back Darren McFadden, the runner-up for last year's Heisman, Missouri quarterback Chase Daniel and Hawaii quarterback Colt Brennan were the other finalists selected Wednesday.

"I think it's a good race," Brennan said at a news conference in Honolulu. "I think anybody can win it."

The Heisman race took a while to develop this season and seemed wide open until the last month when Tebow, McFadden and Daniel emerged as front-runners.

Since the first Heisman was given to Chicago's Jay Berwanger in 1935, all 70 players who have won college football's most prestigious award have been juniors or seniors.

Tebow has a good shot to break that trend. After helping the Gators win a national championship last season as a freshman, 235-pound dual-threat quarterback ran for 838 yards

and a Southeastern Conference-record 22 touchdowns in his first year as a starter.

He's also the nation's second-leading passer, having completed 68 percent of his throws for 3,132 yards, with 29 touchdowns and six interceptions.

Tebow's already pulled off one college football first, becoming the first major college player to run for 20 touchdowns and throw 20 TD passes in the same season.

One thing Tebow has never done is visit New York. He plans to have his parents and some of his siblings along for the trip.

"I'm looking forward to seeing all of it, Central Park, the Christmas tree (in Rockefeller Center), Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, everything," Tebow said. "It's going to be cool, just walking the blocks. I've never been to a city like that."

McFadden was one of the pre-season favorites after finishing second to Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith last year. His candidacy lagged with a mediocre October, but he gave himself a boost with a spectacular November. In the final month of the season, McFadden tied the SEC record with 321 yards rushing against South Carolina, and ran for 206 yards and three TDs and also threw a touchdown pass to lead the Razorbacks to a 50-48 triple overtime victory over then-No. 1 LSU.

Daniel was one of six quarterbacks to reach 4,000 yards pass-

ing this season. He threw for 4,170 yards and 33 TDs to get the surprising Tigers within a victory of reaching the BCS national championship game.

"This shines a huge light, a shining light, on the University of Missouri and the state," Missouri coach Gary Pinkel said in a conference call with the Mizzou Tiger Club of St. Louis on Wednesday.

This season, Brennan led Hawaii (12-0) to the only perfect regular season in major college football and its first Bowl Championship Series appearance, but his numbers were down from last year because he lost time to injuries.

In the Warriors' run-and-shoot offense, Brennan passed for 4,174 yards and 38 touchdowns. He also set the major college record for career touchdown passes with 131.

"It's a great feeling because it's not like I'm the only one getting rewarded here. It's everybody who played with me getting rewarded," Brennan said.

The Heisman finalists are the top vote-getters in balloting by media members and former players.

McFadden and Brennan were among the players who received plenty of pre-season Heisman hype, along with Southern California quarterback John David Booty, Louisville quarterback Brian Brohm, Rutgers running back Ray Rice and Michigan running back Mike Hart.

Booty missed time with

injuries and never made a serious run. Injuries also held back Hart. Brohm and Rice had big numbers, but their teams slumped.

Midway through the season, Tebow and Oregon quarterback Dennis Dixon started separating themselves from the pack. A knee injury ended Dixon's season early and probably cost him a trip to New York for the award presentation.

Dixon and the Ducks were No. 2 in the country heading into their 10th game of the season. His left knee buckled early in a loss to Arizona, and without him the Ducks lost their final two games.

Dixon finished the season with 2,136 yards passing and 20 touchdown passes and ran for 583 yards and nine touchdowns.



AL BEHRMAN/AP

Creighton head coach Dana Altman watches from the bench during a game Wednesday against Xavier in Cincinnati.

# CU: Creighton falls to Xavier

Continued from page C1

"We did a poor job of containing him and his quickness," Creighton coach Dana Altman said. "He really gave us some fits. He didn't do much wrong, especially in that first half."

Creighton came in allowing an average of only 54 per game, seventh-best in the country. No one had scored more than 62 against the Bluejays this season. Xavier topped that mark with 9:39 left in the game.

Creighton went on a 14-4 run and cut the lead to 65-56 on P'Allen Stinnett's driving layup with 5:15 to go, a spurt that included two of Lavender's three turnovers. Lavender's fastbreak layup capped a six-point run that blunted the comeback. Stinnett led Creighton with 12.

Creighton players clasped their hands and dropped their heads during

a moment of silence before pregame introductions to remember victims of a mall shooting in Omaha, Neb., where the Bluejays' campus is located.

The team learned about the shooting while watching film before the game. None of the players had a relative or friend involved.

"It's a tragedy," Altman said. "I'm sure when we get back to town it will hit us a lot harder."

A problem with the overhead lights delayed the tip-off for 20 minutes. Players passed the time by stretching and shooting on the dimly lit court.

Xavier had been looking forward to the tip-off for a long time, viewing it as a measuring stick as well as a chance to settle a few old scores. Creighton won the last three games between the teams by a total of nine points. All three times, the

Musketeers thought they were an up-and-coming team, but wound up getting their comeuppance.

Leading up to this one, Miller acknowledged that the Bluejays had imposed their will in those recent games. His message: Don't let them do it again.

This time, the smallest player on the floor imposed his will. Lavender had season highs in points (17) and assists (seven) in the first half alone.

It also was a good early test for Creighton, which returns only one starter from a team that went 22-11, won the Missouri Valley and lost to Nevada in overtime during the NCAA tournament.

"Our inexperience showed at times," Altman said. "In the first half, they kind of got whatever they wanted. We didn't put up much resistance on defense."

# Dodgers, Andruw Jones reach preliminary agreement

MIKE FITZPATRICK

The Associated Press

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** — Gold Glove center fielder Andruw Jones is set to give the Los Angeles Dodgers the dangerous slugger they sorely need.

Now, they hope he bounces back from a miserable season.

Jones and the Dodgers reached a preliminary agreement on a \$36.2 million, two-year contract late Wednesday as action picked up on the final night of the winter meetings. The deal came hours after Detroit and Florida finished their blockbuster trade that sent All-Stars Miguel Cabrera and Dontrelle Willis to the go-for-broke Tigers.

A winner of 10 consecutive

Gold Gloves with Atlanta, Jones must pass a physical for the agreement to be completed, a person familiar with the negotiations said, speaking on condition of anonymity because no announcement had been made. The deal would give him the fifth-highest average salary in the major leagues.

Scott Boras, his agent, wouldn't confirm the agreement but sounded as if a deal had fallen into place.

"Being on a competitive team was a very, very important part of his process," he said.

Jones is the first major addition for the Dodgers since they hired Joe Torre as manager.



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Sunday Ticket

Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 June honoree
  - 6 Specks of dust
  - 11 Conscious
  - 12 One-moon planet
  - 13 Looked at
  - 15 Manor
  - 16 Unisex wear
  - 18 Inflate
  - 19 College degrees
  - 21 Ms. Zetterling
  - 22 Like half of us
  - 23 Seacoast eagle
  - 25 Loud noise
  - 28 "Forget" a letter
  - 30 Freud topic
  - 31 Hag's cry
  - 32 Place to surf
  - 33 Two-liner
  - 35 Chili pepper dip
  - 37 Hindu Mr.
  - 38 Bake —
  - 40 Stock option
  - 41 In addition
- DOWN**
- 1 Apply makeup
  - 2 Stun
  - 3 Morse code word
  - 4 Attired
  - 5 Shout
  - 6 Jam or pickle
  - 7 Fiber-rich grain
  - 8 Capture
  - 9 Sundance Kid's girl
  - 10 Snakes do it
  - 14 Titled lady
  - 15 Making do with

Answer to Previous Puzzle

H	O	R	N	S	N	I	S	S	A	N	
O	R	I	O	L	E	O	B	L	I	G	E
W	O	O	D	E	N	V	I	O	L	E	
	E	W	E	A	S	P					
I	D	S	R	E	S	I	N	D			
W	R	Y	M	G	M	S	N	A	R	L	
E	O	N	A	Y	E	A	G	G	I	E	
E	N	A	C	T	R	I	B	A	V	G	
D	E	M	O	S	G	N	U	N	E	O	
D	O	T	S	E	C	R	O	N			
	T	A	T	O	B	I					
I	N	S	O	L	E	M	I	D	W	A	Y
L	E	A	N	E	R	E	N	G	I	N	E
L	E	S	S	E	N	G	E	N	T	S	

Astrograph



FRIDAY, DEC. 7

There is a strong probability that in the year ahead you'll make some important changes that will contribute to your security in larger measure. Outside circumstances may inaugurate this transition, but you'll guide it to fruition.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) All those things you are anxious to achieve can be accomplished by first showing others the benefits they will derive from working in tandem with you. Both aims can be satisfied.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) A close, personal pal may need to lean on you a bit more than usual, but you're strong and you should be able to shoulder his or her burdens without a problem. They won't overwhelm you.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) There is no need to be overly concerned if you should get drawn into a competitive development with others. Your track time may be much swifter than you or your opponents anticipate.

**PISCES** (Feb. 20-March 20) An interesting but positive lesson may be in the offing for you. It looks like the events of the day are going to offer a valuable experience on the merits of positive thinking.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19) If you use your business acumen wisely, profit is possible even from situations that are presently giving you trouble. Try a different approach; it'll probably work.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20) A loyal and somewhat forceful friend will speak up on your behalf, with many good things to say about you. When he or she speaks, those who have issues with you will listen.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20) You're exceptionally capable of handling challenging arrangements from which you would normally shy away. Don't hesitate to roll up your sleeves and get going; you'll like the results.

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22) If there is an important situation or project to reorganize, now is the time to start tearing it apart and putting it back together properly. You are more than up to the task right now.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22) Instead of taking on a new project, make a concerted effort to complete all those things you had already begun. You'll operate better after the decks are cleared.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Because your powers of concentration are likely to be far more intense than usual, try to complete all of those difficult chores that require your full attention. They'll seem easy now.

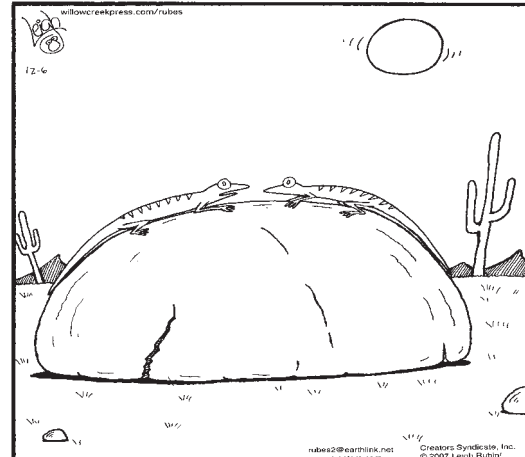
**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) You may get the first signs that conditions are slowly improving, and your chances for adding to your resources are encouraging now. Assert yourself, and you should realize gain.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) Be extra conscious of your appearance because, without you doing anything special, you will definitely be noticed wherever you go right now. A good impression enhances your image.

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Rubes

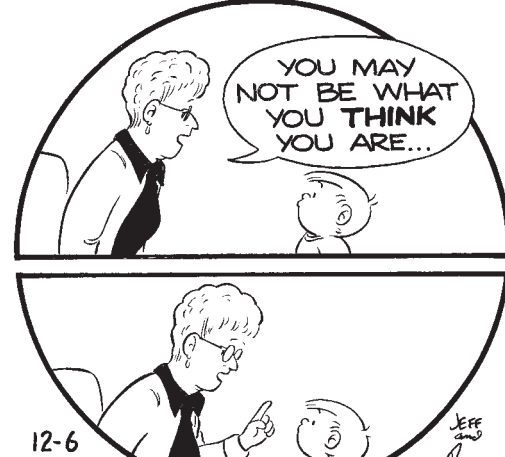
By Leigh Rubin



"Don't be foolish, Harriet, of course I love you. It's just not that easy to be openly demonstrable when I'm not even physically capable of varying my facial expression."

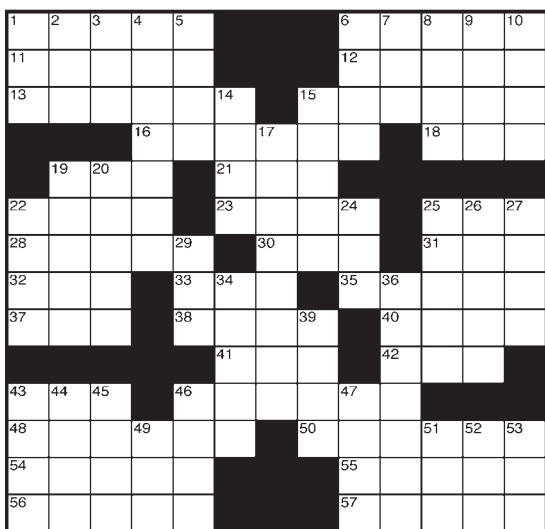
The Family Circus

By Bil Keane



"...But remember, Billy — what you think ... you ARE!"

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Memory of lost friend prompts hunt for high school yearbook

DEAR ABBY: I read the letter from Belle K. in Cadillac, Mich. (Oct. 17), who had only the yearbook from her senior year in high school and would like to purchase yearbooks from the other three. She asked if there was some way to get her hands on them.



Dear Abby

I have a similar problem. I grew up in one Oklahoma town and moved to another, 7 1/2 hours away, the summer between my junior and senior years. I have lost the yearbook from my sophomore year — the last in which a dear friend's photo appeared. She was killed in a car accident in January of our sophomore year. In addition to her class picture, one of her poems is featured in that yearbook.

It would mean the world to me to have that memento back. Because the yearbook would be 14 years old, it's unlikely the school has any left. Can you suggest other options for digging those precious memories out of the ashes of time? — MISSING THE MEMORIES IN OKLAHOMA

DEAR MISSING: I don't have to. After Belle's letter ran, many caring readers offered wonderful suggestions. A sample: DEAR ABBY: Belle should put an ad in the paper where her old high school is located. That's what I did, and I got a response right away. The wife of a former school counselor called and said she had several. Tell Belle I wish her luck. — JUDY IN GREEN RIVER, WYO.

DEAR ABBY: As chairman of my high school reunion committee, I have been successful on a couple of occasions in finding old yearbooks on eBay. There's a large selection there. If she can't find them under the "yearbook" category, she should look under "annuals." — KEN IN KANAB, UTAH

DEAR ABBY: For high school

annuals, contact your local library. Old annuals are occasionally donated and sold at book sales by the Friends of the Library. The staff will alert whoever sorts donations to keep an eye out and let you know if the one you're looking for comes in. — SONIA MURRAY, PRESIDENT, FRIENDS OF BILOXI LIBRARIES

DEAR ABBY: Many historical societies (and public libraries) keep documents such as city directories and yearbooks in an archive. While they normally aren't available for circulation, most organizations have reading rooms where you can peruse the materials, and even take pictures or scans for your own use. (I became familiar with this process through a recent school project.) — KRISTINA IN PORTLAND, MAINE

DEAR ABBY: I found copies of my high school yearbook at an antique/collectibles store in my hometown — at an affordable price. — MICHAEL G., SAN FRANCISCO

DEAR ABBY: eBay or Craigslist! My brother found not only old yearbooks from his era, but class rings as well. — PATTI IN FREMONT, CALIF.

DEAR ABBY: My old high school is now offering yearbooks on CDs, to be viewed in a slide show format. It was a preservation project that's now doing double duty by giving a lot of pleasure to former students whose yearbooks have disappeared for a variety of reasons. Belle should check to see if her alumni association is doing something similar. — E.J.H. IN LAS VEGAS

DEAR ABBY: Most teachers who served as yearbook advisers keep a store of old yearbooks. I have made many an older grad happy who had lost one to fire or flood. Belle should contact the school. She might get lucky. (There might even be an extra in the school library.) — BILL K., OAKLAND, CALIF.

Pauline Phillips, a.k.a. **Abigail Van Buren**, and **Jeanne Phillips** are columnists for Universal Press Syndicate. Write Dear Abby at P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Inexpensive ways to prepare your home for sale

BY SARA NOEL

First impressions are important when trying to sell your home. Extreme changes aren't always necessary. There are simple steps you can take to prepare your house for the market while staying within a reasonable budget. The interior plays a big role, but don't ignore exterior modifications, such as fresh lightbulbs, an attractive mailbox and welcome mat, and shiny doorknobs, to name a few.

The following reader tips can help you get a higher price and go from for sale to sold.

**CLEAN, CLEAN, CLEAN:** Take all personal items, such as pictures and trophies, and box them away. Buyers want to envision the house as their own, and that is hard to do while looking at 500 pictures of little Johnny and Suzie all over the place. Remove clutter, and clean. No one wants to see dirt on the baseboards, cluttered counters or a

filthy microwave. Dust the ceiling fans and stair handrails; sweep, mop, clean the toilets, etc. Mow the lawn, edge it and sweep the driveway, front porch and the curb. Make your flowerbeds look neat and tidy. Consider adding hanging planters and fresh mulch outside, too. — Neely, e-mail

**WHAT'S THAT SMELL?:** Smell is a huge factor. When you open the front door, what smell wafts out? Get someone not living in your house to give you an honest opinion. Put clutter into storage, not the garage. Add vanilla-scented candles in all the rooms. This scent isn't too overpowering and is the most neutral. Go through every closet, cabinet and drawer and pack it up or move it out if you're not using it. Ask your real-estate agent to walk through and give your home a once over. — Laurie, Florida

**TEND TO THE DETAILS:** When I entered one woman's house, it

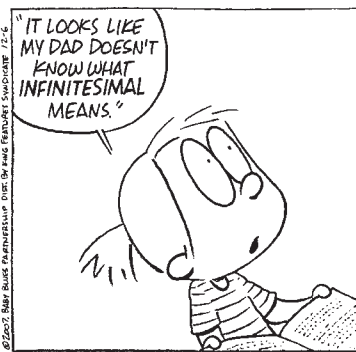
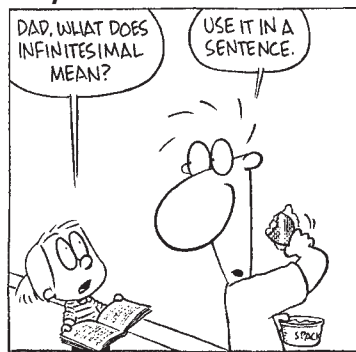
looked nice except that the carpet was awful and the tub was really stained. The blinds are also a big thing to clean because they hide dirt. You want the windows to be open and plenty of light shining through or at least bright interior lighting. If you have a loaf of bread or brownies baking, it really helps offer a welcoming scent, too. — Katie, Virginia

**FIX 'ER UP:** 1. Paint interior and touch up exterior. All neutral colors.

2. Fix minor problems such as a sticking door, leaky faucets and broken/bent mini-blinds. We always figured when we were house hunting that if the small things weren't tended to, the big stuff probably wasn't maintained, either.

3. Be sure to take the trash out. Maybe I'm cynical, but when house hunting, the strong scents made me leery of what smells they were trying to mask.

Baby Blues



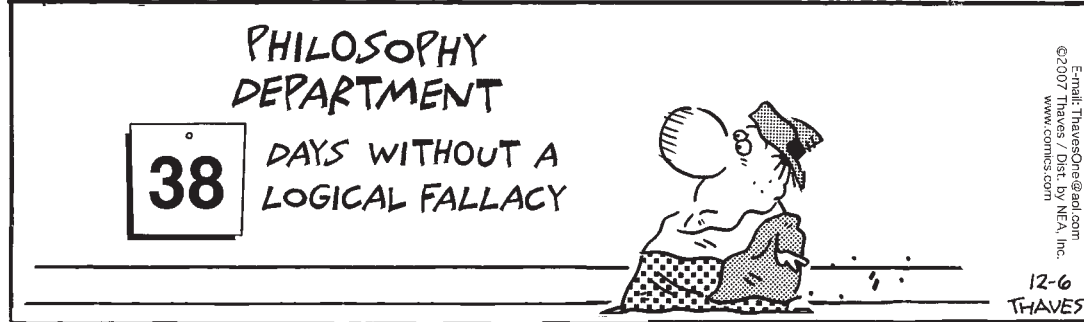
Grizzwells



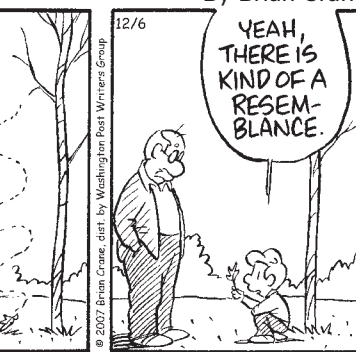
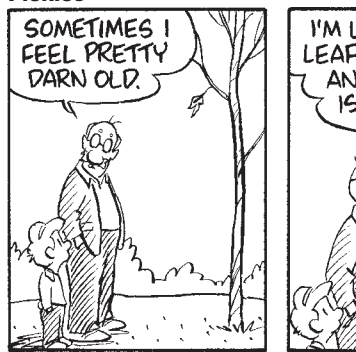
Shoe



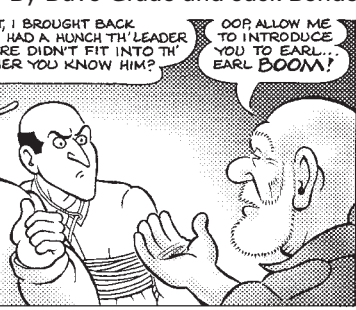
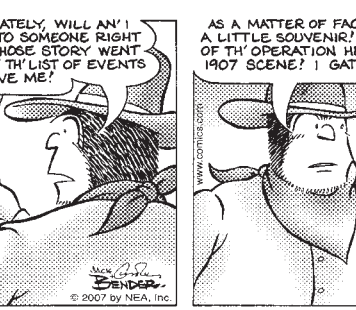
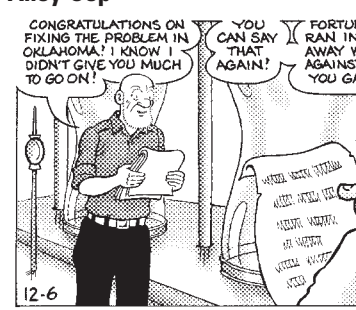
Frank and Ernest



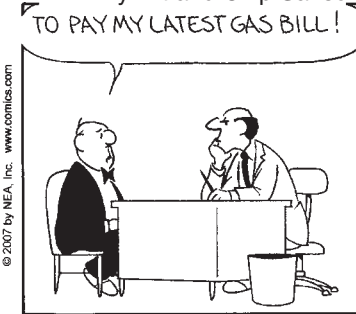
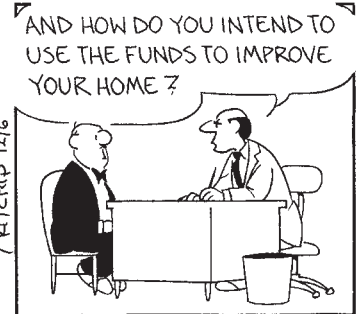
Pickles



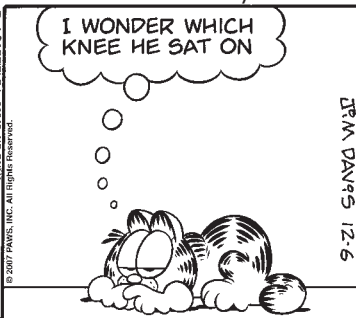
Alley Oop



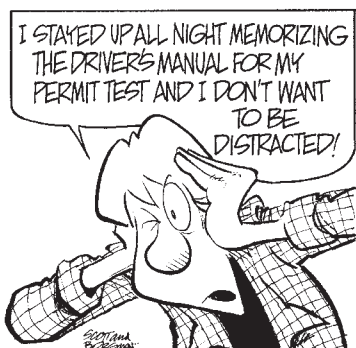
The Born Loser



Garfield



Zits



# Some worry that movie will point kids toward atheism

**CARLA HINTON**  
*The Oklahoman*

Some have called "The Golden Compass" movie "the anti-Narnia."

Set to premiere in theaters on Friday, the film is based on British atheist Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials" trilogy, a fantasy book series about a young orphan girl drawn into an alternate universe. Some religious leaders worry it will prompt youths to read the books, which they say take not-so-playful jabs at God and organized religion.

sent out news releases calling the books "anti-Catholic" and "anti-God." He urges the faithful to boycott the film because he believes Pullman wrote the books to draw youths to atheism.

"Atheism for kids. That is what Philip Pullman sells. It is his hope that 'The Golden Compass' ... will entice parents to buy his trilogy as a Christmas gift," Donahue wrote. "It is our hope that the film fails to meet box-office expectations and that his books attract few buyers."

King Catholic Church in Oklahoma City said "Compass" appears to encourage young people to flout authority. He said a boycott may backfire. "All the controversy just makes people want to go more," he said.

The worthiness of the movie and book series is a topic in Nov. 29's Baptist Messenger.

"While 'The Golden Compass' is seen by some as a wonderfully written piece of harmless fiction, we believe 'The Golden Compass' presents dangerous spiritual perspectives that have

great potential to negatively influence readers and moviegoers, especially children," said Ray Sanders, Messenger executive editor.

Others said the film should not be viewed as an attack on religion but an opportunity for conversation. They see it as a vehicle encouraging people to ask questions about faith and matters of a religious nature.

The Nov. 26 Atheist Alliance International condemned the Catholic League's boycott of the movie, saying the league's actions amount to censor-

ship of an art form. To encourage families to discuss and consider the ideas presented in the movie, the alliance has declared Dec. 9 as Follow-Your-Own-Compass-Day.

Ron Pittser, president of American Atheists Oklahoma, said he sees no "big atheist conspiracy" in the books or movie. He said they are open to interpretation. Besides, he said, faith groups should not be concerned about questions raised about their beliefs.

"If your faith can't stand up to testing, what good is it?" Pittser asked

## More instruction for the improver

**B**ridge Plus, edited by Sally Brock, is published monthly in England in a small-page format. It probably contains more instructive articles and quizzes than any other bridge magazine.



**Phillip Alder**

This deal was provided by Andrew Kambites in a series about leading against a suit contract. Look at the West hand. What would you choose against six hearts?

South opened with a weak two-bid, showing 5-9 high-card points and a six-card suit. North responded with the Grand-Slam Force, asking his partner to bid seven hearts with two of the top three trump honors. (Roman Key Card Blackwood has almost killed off this convention, but it can be useful when the asker has a void.)

Leading your singleton is not a good idea — if partner has an entry, your trump ace will defeat the contract without your needing a ruff. To attack with a heart is also unwise. That leaves the black suits. The club jack is safe but too passive. North was interested in a grand slam. Partner will not have the king and queen of clubs. Instead, lead a spade, hoping partner has the queen.

At the table, North had really dropped the ball by failing to

<b>North</b>		<b>East</b>	
♠ A Q	♠ 10 9 8	♥ 4 3	♦ 10 9 8 7 6 5
♥ K 10 7	♥ 4 3	♣ 6 5	
♦ A K Q J 4	♦ 2		
♣ A K 3	♣ Q 7 4		

Dealer: South  
Vulnerable: Neither

<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>
2♥	Pass	5 NT	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: ??

convert six hearts to six no-trump. South then misguessed the play. He could have taken the spade finesse to get home, but he hoped three rounds of diamonds would stand up. (Diamonds 4-3 — 62.17 percent — is more likely than a 50-50 finesse.) West's second-round diamond ruff and heart ace defeated the contract.

Lead aggressively against small slams, passively against grands.

Full details are available at [www.bridge-plus.co.uk](http://www.bridge-plus.co.uk).

**Phillip Alder** is a columnist for Newspaper Enterprise Association.

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## 'General Hospital' icon 'starts over'



CHRISTOS KALOHRIDIS, Crown Media/SHNS

Genie Francis stars in "The Note," a Hallmark Channel original movie.

**TERRY MORROW**  
*Scripps Howard News Service*

Genie Francis is starting over. "I feel like, for whatever reason, I have been given a second chance," says the "General Hospital" icon, known to millions as Laura Spencer, and now starring in the Hallmark Channel movie "The Note."

It's an odd point in her career to be starting over, considering the success she's had in the past year.

After years enjoying life outside of show business, living in New England with her husband, actor Jonathan Frakes, and their two children, she made a triumphant return to "General Hospital" a year ago.

The short-term visit gave the soap a ratings spike and allowed her to nab her first Daytime Emmy. Viewers were all aflutter she'd be back permanently in her signature role.

When producers did not ask her to come back, despite Francis being very vocal in the press about her desire to do so, she decided to forge ahead.

"Enough time has gone by that it's OK to let the 'Laura'

thing go away," she says. "I was ready to start over, start fresh."

Francis began by reinventing herself. She went on a diet, dropping almost 40 pounds, and auditioned for roles. Once she started on "The Note," she was fine with having 6 inches chopped off from her hair.

Despite her fresh Emmy win, she still had to work to get the role on "The Note" (8 p.m., Saturday), a sentimental and warm made-for-TV movie ripe for the holidays.

"I auditioned for it, but I do feel like (the story) picked me," she says. "As soon as I read it, I definitely felt like it was my movie. I felt like I understood this character."

Francis plays newspaper columnist Peyton Macgruder, who, after a plane crash, finds a note written by one of the victims minutes before his death. She decides to use her column to document her search for the person to whom the note was written.

In the process, Macgruder works through her own pain of being a widow, and her difficulty in moving forward after her husband's death.

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<b>FRIDAY Dec. 7</b> 8:00 p.m.		<b>SATURDAY Dec. 15</b> 8:00 p.m.
<b>SATURDAY Dec. 8</b> 8:00 p.m.		<b>SUNDAY Dec. 16</b> 2:30 p.m.

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### Tribune cartoon caption contest

Here are the other captions that did not win but are worth mentioning:

"Help me down if you want me to finish that honey-do list before I freeze."  
Pat Gizinski, Kenesaw

"Uhhhh, honey, did you get stuck in the Christmas lights again?"  
Garrett Clark, Clay Center

"Am I dead?"  
Christopher Dyer, Clay Center

See next Thursday's Tribune for another cartoon caption contest.

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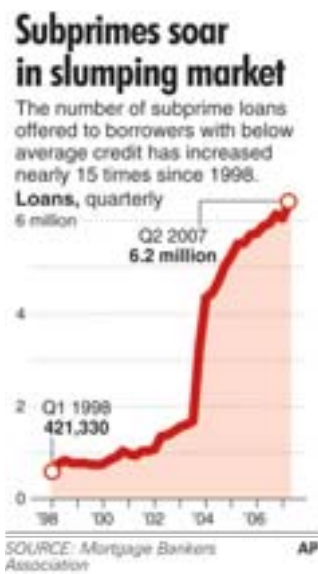
Nettie McGee, 73, a great-grandmother from Chicago with mortgage interest problems, (left) concludes her opening statement on Capitol Hill in Washington Wednesday as she testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on home foreclosures. Mark Zandi, the chief economist at Moody's Economy.com, is second from left.

# Plan freezes mortgage rates

**MARTIN CRUTSINGER**  
*The Associated Press*  
**WASHINGTON** — The Bush administration has come up with a plan to help strapped homeowners facing a daunting jump in their monthly mortgage payments. The proposal, reached in negotiations led by Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson with the mortgage industry, would freeze introductory "teaser" rates on subprime mortgages, preventing them from resetting to higher rates for five years. President Bush, who was scheduled to announce the agreement after a meeting with industry leaders at the White House

today, has stressed that the deal is not a bailout because no government money is involved. The effort is aimed at stemming a threatened wave of foreclosures in coming years as 2 million subprime mortgages, loans provided to borrowers with spotty credit histories, reset from their introductory rates of around 7 percent to 8 percent to levels as high as 11 percent, adding hundreds of dollars to the typical monthly payment. The mortgage companies will offer to freeze the loans at the lower introductory rates as long as the borrowers did not miss any payments at the lower rate. The program is the biggest

effort yet to deal with a tidal wave of mortgage defaults, which have piled up billions of dollars in losses for big banks, hedge funds and other investors as well as roiling financial markets around the globe. The defaults are the latest economic blow from the worst housing slump in more than two decades. Some economists believe the housing bust could become severe enough to push the country into a recession. Two Democratic presidential contenders, Hillary Rodham Clinton and John Edwards, complained Wednesday that, given the risks to the economy, Bush's proposal did not go far enough.



# U.S.: New intelligence on Iran won't alter missile defense plans

**DESMOND BUTLER**  
*The Associated Press*  
**WASHINGTON** — The United States says it will not alter plans to build a missile defense system in Europe despite findings by U.S. intelligence agencies that Iran does not have an active nuclear weapons program. Since U.S. officials have said the threat from Iran was the main reason for building the defense shield, however, the Americans may have a harder time persuading European allies that it still is necessary. Already, a Czech official responsible for explaining the need for the missile defense system to the public in his country says his job has become more difficult after Monday's release

of the National Intelligence Estimate on Iran. The report, reflecting analyses of all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, concluded that Iran suspended its attempt to build a nuclear weapon four years ago. "Czech newspapers are full of headlines saying there is no longer a need for missile defense," said Tomas Klvana, the Czech government's coordinator for missile defense communication, who is in Washington for talks with administration officials and lawmakers. "It is hard for complex arguments to win against simple headlines." The proposed system would include radar installations in the Czech Republic and interceptors based in Poland.

# 5 witnesses to take stand at Guantanamo in case against detainee

**BEN FOX**  
*The Associated Press*  
**GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba** — Witnesses are expected to take the stand today for the first time since the U.S. government began trying to prosecute terrorism suspects at Guantanamo. Prosecutors are expected to present about five witnesses to back their case that Salim Ahmed Hamdan — a former driver for Osama bin Laden — should be charged as an unlawful enemy combatant, in the second day of pretrial hearings to determine whether the military tribunal at this isolated Navy base has jurisdiction over the case. An expert in Middle Eastern

affairs is expected to testify to support a defense argument that Hamdan could have been bin Laden's driver without being a hardcore al-Qaida member with knowledge of terrorist attacks. "This will be the first time you will hear about some of the evidence that the government has had and wanted to present," said Army Maj. Bobby Don Gifford, a spokesman for the military commissions. On Wednesday, a military judge rejected a defense request to talk to the alleged mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks and two other so-called "high value" detainees to bolster their case that Hamdan was at best a minor al-Qaida figure.

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## BURNING ISSUES

◆ The NASCAR audience has expanded ... but not enough for comedian/actor David Spade, who bombed at the Nextel Cup awards ceremonies in New York.

◆ Few events on television are less newsworthy than the acceptance speeches of the 10 drivers featured on the banquet telecast. Take away the subtle digs and humorous asides, and it's not much more than a commercial.

◆ For the first time ever, Jeff Gordon wept even though he didn't win the championship. The birth his little girl got him all choked up when he looked back on the season.

◆ One of the highlights was Barney Hall, whose acceptance speech for the Bill France Award of Excellence was graceful and heartfelt. The longtime anchor of the Motor Racing Network has forgotten more than most racers know.

◆ Only two drivers exceeded \$10 million in earnings once all the points-fund cash was distributed. Johnson's team won \$15,313,920, while Jeff Gordon came in second at \$10,926,687.

◆ Dale Earnhardt Jr. won the Chex Most Popular Driver Award for the fifth year in a row at the Cup awards ceremonies.

◆ The late William C. France received the National Motorsports Press Association's Myers Brothers Award for outstanding contributions to stock-car racing. His widow, Betty Jane France, accepted the award.

◆ Retiring owner Robert Yates received the Buddy Shuman Award, also for outstanding contributions to the sport.

◆ Don Miller, retiring from Penske Racing, won the Home Depot Humanitarian Award.

◆ The DirecTV Crew Chief of the Year Award went to Joe Gibbs Racing's Mike Ford, who directs Denny Hamlin's team.

## HE SAID WHAT?

◆ "I know, 15 years from now, they'll have it figured out, and they'll probably have massaged on the car and fixed a lot of things ..." — Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s optimistic assessment of the Car of Tomorrow.

◆ "I just can't stand to drive this thing. It's terrible, and I hope we can just go out there (at Bristol) and win the race and then tell everybody how terrible it is." — Kyle Busch, to crew chief Alan Gustafson, shortly before he went out and won the first Car of Tomorrow race at Bristol.

◆ "If NASCAR was ever going to fix things or lean in any direction, you'd think they would lean toward the majority." — Jeff Gordon, referring to Earnhardt Jr.'s popularity, after NASCAR officials judged that he was in the lead when a yellow flag waved, at Talladega in April.

◆ "Basically, I had to wreck him to win it, and I'm not going to wreck my teammate for a win." — Gordon, after losing to Jimmie Johnson in a bitterly contested race at Martinsville in April.

◆ "It's time for me to compete on a consistent basis and contend for championships now. I believe I'd have my father's blessing." — Earnhardt Jr., announcing his decision to move to Hendrick Motorsports in 2008.

# Kahne incident among dubious achievements

## MONTE DUTTON NASCAR This Week

Police briefly investigated an incident at Homestead-Miami Speedway involving the unlikeliest of NASCAR drivers: the mild, unassuming Kasey Kahne.

A track security guard alleged that Kahne shoved him to the ground in a dispute over admitting Kahne's brother Kale to the motor-coach lot. The guard told police the incident had "escalated his blood pressure."

Some suggested the track might've hired Fred Sanford to police the lot. In any event, no charges were filed.

## NO SHOTS WERE FIRED

Carl Edwards interrupted a television interview involving Roush Fenway teammate Matt Kenseth. Edwards was angry following an incident during the fall race at Martinsville Speedway. The videotape circulated widely on television and the Internet and created quite the short-term controversy.

Edwards apologized profusely but went public with the view that there was dissension within the ranks at the four-car team. After both drivers finished in the top five at the next race, the media frenzy subsided.

## MOUNTAINS OF JELLO

Officials of the City of Concord, N.C. balked at Bruton Smith's plans to build a drag strip on the grounds of Lowe's Motor Speedway.



Smith

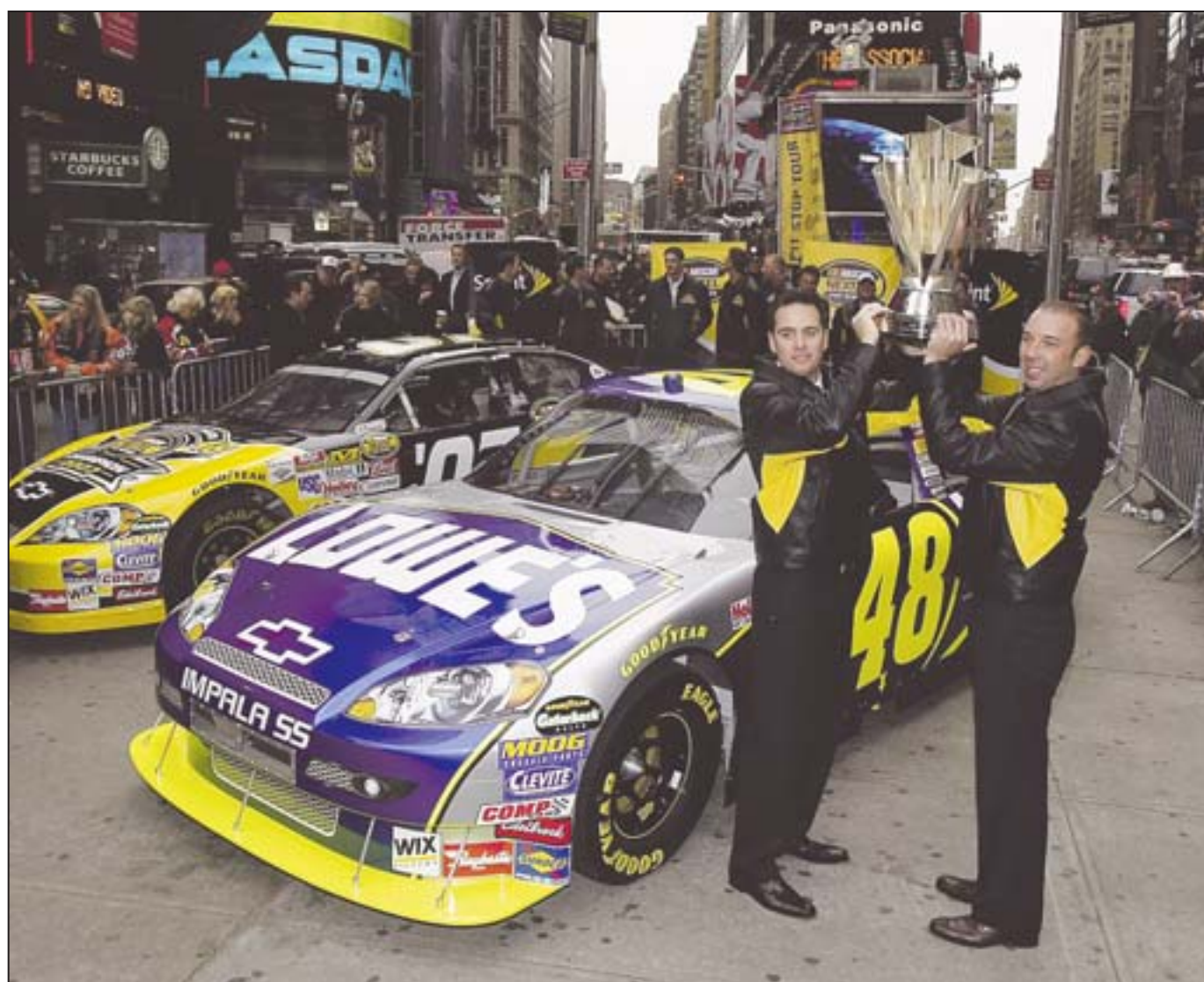
The political officials almost immedi-

ately backed off, but it wasn't enough for Smith, who continued to talk about building a new track and entertained offers of land and/or cooperation from other public officials in both North and South Carolina.

Eventually, Smith announced the existing track would be renovated and graciously accepted a total of \$80 million in incentives from North Carolina, city officials and Cabarrus County.

It seems as if ol' Bruton played this perfectly. That's no surprise — you don't get to be as wealthy as this guy without having the guts of a burglar.

## BIG MONEY



CIA Stock Photo

Nextel Cup champion Jimmie Johnson (left) and crew chief Chad Knaus were a hit in New York's Times Square last week.

# Raising the bar

## JOHNSON BRINGS HOME MORE MONEY THAN ANYONE'S EVER WON BEFORE

**MONTE DUTTON**  
NASCAR This Week  
Over the 219 races that have made up his career, Jimmie Johnson has won more races (33), finished in the top 10 more times (134) and had the best average finish (11.676) of anyone at NASCAR's top level.

Johnson has won consecutive NASCAR championships, but for six seasons, statistically he's been the sport's best driver.

Next up on the challenge list? No one's won three straight titles since Cale Yarborough did so in 1976-78.

Johnson made more money in Nov. 30's awards ceremonies in New York than in the 36 races that comprise the season. Johnson's \$7,646,421 in season earnings were more than matched by \$7,667,499 in championship bonuses, giving him a total of \$15,313,920 for his second consecutive championship.

"The thing I really want to do this year is savor every moment," said Johnson. "Before I knew it last year, it was all gone and we were on our way back to North Carolina, and the banquet was over.

"I wanted to enjoy those moments a little longer."

With postseason bonuses of \$24,068,732 added, the only other driver to surpass the \$10 million mark was Johnson's Hendrick Motorsports teammate, runner-up Jeff Gordon. Gordon's season total was \$10,926,687.

Johnson said the most important consideration for the sport's champion is to "act naturally."

"To be a good champion you need to be, it sounds crazy, but you need to be proud of what you've done and carry yourself with that pride," he said, "and let people see that excitement and all that comes with it and how you act through it.

"The cool thing about our sport? There are all types of personalities. Jeff (Gordon's) a certain way, (Dale Earnhardt) Junior, myself, (Tony Stewart, (Matt) Kenseth, we're all different. There's no way to really say one way is the right way. Our fan base is big and broad, so it would be foolish to say that one guy's personality is the right personality for being a champion, because we're all different."

# Penske announces changes

## MONTE DUTTON NASCAR This Week

Don Miller, president of Penske Racing South (now Penske Racing) since its 1990 inception, announced his retirement. Miller, 68, presided over 75 victories, 95 poles and more than \$90 million in earnings for the team in Cup, Busch and ARCA.

"He's been a partner and great friend," said Roger Penske, "and he will definitely be missed."

Miller was instrumental in many safety advances through the years and also aided the formation and administration of the North Carolina Racing Hall of Fame in Mooresville, N.C.

Mike Nelson, formerly Ryan Newman's crew chief, has moved to vice president of operations, where he will oversee the Penske Sprint Cup and Nationwide Series teams.

Roy McCauley, who has been at Penske since 2002 as a crew chief and engineer, will

reunite with Newman. McCauley was Newman's Busch Series crew chief in 2005 and will now run the Cup team.

## SAME CAR, DIFFERENT NAME

When NASCAR officials implemented the Car of Tomorrow, Dodge elected to put the Avenger brand on its version of the COT. Now the COT is the only model in use. Dodge has decided it's a Charger again.

Inadvertently drawing even more attention to the fact that the shape of all the cars is virtually identical, Dodge effectively decreed that the same car that was an Avenger last year is now a Charger.

According to Dodge's Mike Accavitti, the make's dealers expressed a desire to perpetuate the Charger's identification with racing.

## LABONTE GOING NATIONWIDE

Richard Childress announced that Bobby Labonte would compete in 15 Nationwide

(formerly Busch) Series races next year in the No. 21 Chevrolet.

Labonte's career in the second-string series dates back a 1982 Martinsville race. He won what was then the Busch Series championship in 1991 and the then-Winston Cup championship in 2000.

In Cup, Labonte drives Petty Enterprises' No. 43 Dodge.

## KAHNE RAISED

Kasey Kahne drove his own car to a second-place finish in the Turkey Night Grand Prix at Irwindale (Calif.) Speedway on Nov. 22. It was the 67th running of the race, though it hasn't always been run in Irwindale.

Kahne had to race his way into the field through the last-chance race and stated 17th in the feature, won by Dave Darland.

It was Kahne's first Midges appearance in four years.

## FEUD OF THE WEEK

### KYLE BUSCH AND STEVE WALLACE VS. SNOWBALL DERBY

NASCAR drivers Busch and Wallace, a former winner, were disqualified from the annual Pensacola, Fla., short-track race at Five Flags Speedway. Busch's car was booted



Busch

from competition because of a height infraction. Wallace's car was under the weight requirement when crossing the scales after tech inspection. When the car was rolled off the scales and then back on, Wallace was reportedly nabbed trying to put sockets in his pockets.

**NASCAR This Week's Monte Dutton gives his take:** "It's contagious. Cheating, I mean."

## FAN TIPS

### HELMETS FOR CHARITY

FedEx Racing will auction off 11 helmets worn by driver Denny Hamlin to benefit children's hospital patients and the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Bidding on eBay began on Dec. 1 and runs through Dec. 10. For more information, consult the [www.fedexracing.com](http://www.fedexracing.com) Web site.

## LEGENDS AND LORE

### KNEIVEL IN NASCAR?

Evel Knievel, the motorcycle daredevil who died at age 69 on Nov. 30, once sponsored an entry in the Indianapolis 500. In the 1977 race, Gary Bettenhausen drove the No. 98 Agajanian/Evel Knievel/Dragon/Offenhauser to a 16th-place finish, though the car dropped out with clutch problems after completing only 138 of the 200 laps.

## YOUR TURN

### ONE FAN'S TOP 10

- ◆ 1. Tickets are too expensive!
- ◆ 2. \$50 to \$100 to park a car!
- ◆ 3. Having to pay for tickets at least a year in advance.
- ◆ 4. Service charge to mail tickets.
- ◆ 5. The food is too expensive.
- ◆ 6. Motels \$200 to \$300 ... a night!
- ◆ 7. Inconsiderate people standing in their seats.
- ◆ 8. (Mike) Helton and (Jim) Hunter changing the rules.
- ◆ 9. Boring races.
- ◆ 10. I'm tired of making the rich promoters even richer.

Joe Sukup  
Schodak Landing, N.Y.

Thanks for letting us know how you feel. We'll pass this on to David Letterman.

World

MINE BLAST

**BEIJING** — A gas blast at mine in northern China killed at least 70 people today, with 26 others still trapped, state media reported.

Another 15 miners were rescued or managed to escape after the explosion at the Rui Zhiyuan coal mine in Hongtong county near the city of Linfen in coal-rich Shanxi province, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

The State Administration for Work Safety said earlier in the day that 40 bodies had been recovered, while 74 were still trapped. Another 13 had been rescued.

It was not immediately clear why the figures were different, but mine safety regulations are often loosely enforced, making it difficult to track how many people are working in a shaft. Mining companies, for example, often send in more miners than allowed in order to extract as much coal as possible to meet the country's voracious energy needs.

BROTHERS SLAIN

**BERLIN** — Autopsies were being performed Thursday on the bodies of five young brothers who investigators believe were slain by their mother as authorities searched for clues as to how and when the children were killed.

The bodies of the boys, ages 3 to 9, were found in their home on Wednesday after their 31-year-old mother told a doctor where they were, prosecutor Uwe Wick said. It is believed that they were killed either on Tuesday or on Wednesday, he said.

German news media have reported that the children, who lived in the tiny village of Darry in the northern Germany, were doped with pills and then suffocated with plastic bags, but Wick would not comment on the cause of death.

It was not known when the results of the autopsies would be ready.

The Associated Press

# General: Violence declining in Iraq

PETRAEUS SAYS HE HAS MORE FLEXIBILITY IN DEPLOYING FORCES

LOLITA C. BALDOR  
The Associated Press

**BAGHDAD** — Citing a 60 percent decline in violence in Iraq over the last six months, Gen. David Petraeus said today that maintaining security is easier than establishing it and gives him more flexibility in deploying forces.

Armed with charts showing that as of Wednesday, weekly attacks and Iraqi civilian deaths have plunged to levels not seen here since early 2006, Petraeus said the reduction lets him make force adjustments to address remaining problem areas, which would include north-

ern Iraq. Speaking to reporters at the U.S. military's Camp Victory, he said the improved security is due to a number of factors including a "reduction in some of the signature attacks that are associated with weapons provided by Iran," as well as a cease-fire called by radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr that he said had a particularly noticeable impact what had been one of the most violent areas of Baghdad.

And he said there has been a "reduction in some of the signature attacks" associated with insurgents using Iranian weapons, including deadly armor-piercing rounds.

But, he added, that it is "hard to tell if that's because there has already been a cessation of provision of those items, or if there has been direction to stop."

At the same time, he said the military has detained individuals as recently as October who were trained by Iranians, evidence that the instruction has continued.

Petraeus, who is scheduled to give Congress and the American people an update next March on progress in Iraq, and map out some plans for U.S. force levels down the road, refused to offer too much optimism.

"Nobody says anything about turning a corner, seeing lights at the end of tunnels, any of those other phrases," said Petraeus. "You just keep your head down and keep moving."

He said that around Thanksgiving commanders looked back at violence levels a year ago, and six months ago, and found a declining line in which violence had declined from a time when hundreds of Iraqis were killed and

injured and US troops took heavy losses in a number of horrific attacks, to a time of still somewhat steady but less deadly attacks, to a day last month when there were just 45-50 attacks.

Petraeus met for about an hour Thursday with Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who was in Iraq for his sixth visit in the past year.

The general has overseen the military's build up in Iraq this year, as force levels jumped to 20 combat brigades, with more than 180,000 troops, during certain times when some of the units overlapped as they moved in and out of the country.

"There's nobody in uniform who is doing victory dances in the end zone," said Petraeus, saying it will require more tough work against a very dangerous adversary.



GREG BAKER/AP

Students shout slogans during a protest against Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad, Pakistan, Wednesday.

## Pakistani lawyers protest

SLOBODAN LEKIC  
The Associated Press

**ISLAMABAD, Pakistan** — Thousands of lawyers boycotted courts across Pakistan today while police blocked former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his supporters from marching to the heavily guarded home of the deposed Supreme Court chief justice.

Riot police nearly outnumbered the hundreds of protesters, and blocked the route to the official residence in Islamabad of Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry with concrete blocks, steel and barbed wire.

Chaudhry has been under house arrest since Nov. 3, when President Pervez Musharraf declared a state of emergency and dismissed most of the Supreme Court justices just before they were to rule on the validity of his re-election in October.

Musharraf has since stacked the court with loyalists, who promptly dismissed all complaints against the former general's election.

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Gladys Lampman

Thank you to Dr. Miller, Dr. Adams, the nurses at Mary Lanning, my family, friends and good neighbors on Regency Drive for the kindnesses shown me at the time of my surgery and all the rest of this troubled year.

Wilma Kinley

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